

# YOUTH POLICY MANUAL FOR ARAB COUNTRIES

## How to develop a national youth strategy



Revised version

## Youth Partnership

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



EUROPEAN UNION

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# YOUTH POLICY MANUAL FOR ARAB COUNTRIES

How to develop  
a national youth strategy

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for the Arab world and Southern  
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# Abbreviations and glossary

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**M**any international organisations and United Nations' agencies have special co-ordinating bodies on youth, some of which are included in the following glossary and list of abbreviations and acronyms common in youth policy discourse.

AC	Advisory Council on Youth in the Council of Europe: 30 representatives from youth NGOs and networks who provide opinions and input on all youth sector activities
ALF	Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures
CDEJ	European Steering Committee for Youth in the Council of Europe: governments of the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention designate representatives to oversee the Council of Europe's programme in the field of youth
Council of Europe	A pan-European intergovernmental organisation, established in 1949, with 47 member states (as of 30 April 2013), <a href="http://hub.coe.int/">http://hub.coe.int/</a>
Congress	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, one of the principal bodies of the Council of Europe
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture, led by a Commissioner of the European Commission responsible for issues relating to youth policy and the Commission's programme for young people, <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm</a>
EC	The European Commission, executive branch of the EU, consists of the College of Commissioners and several Directorates-General (DGs) that are comparable to ministries in a national government
EU	The European Union, a supranational European intergovernmental organisation of 28 member states (as of 1 July 2013)
EMYC	Euro-Mediterranean Youth Centre in Turkey
EMYP	Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform in Malta
EMYP	Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament
EYF	European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe

ILO	International Labour Organization
IMWG	Inter-ministerial working group, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LAS	League of Arab States, <a href="http://www.lasportal.org">www.lasportal.org</a>
LCP	Local consultation partner, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
MDGs	The Millennium Development Goals are eight international development goals agreed upon by United Nations member states in 2000 with a target deadline of 2015
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NC	National co-ordinator of the process to develop a national youth strategy as proposed in this manual
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NGYO	Non-governmental youth organisation
NSC	North-South Centre of the Council of Europe: European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity
NYS	National Youth Strategy
OMC	The open method of co-ordination is a mechanism within the EU for harmonising policy in areas where member states set their own national policies, rather than having an EU-wide policy laid down in law. Among these is youth policy
SC	Steering committee – a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
SALTO	Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European Erasmus+ programme
SALTO RC	SALTO Resource Centres. Eight have been established by the EC to focus on training within the Commission's youth programme in the following areas: cultural diversity, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, European-Mediterranean co-operation, inclusion, South-Eastern Europe, training and co-operation, participation and information, <a href="http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/">www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/</a>
TWG	Thematic working groups, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy
UN	The United Nations
UN CRC	The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, currently 196 states parties (July 2013), <a href="http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&amp;mtmsg_no=IV-11&amp;chapter=4&amp;lang=en">http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&amp;mtmsg_no=IV-11&amp;chapter=4&amp;lang=en</a>

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization hosts a Youth Forum every two years
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund, <a href="http://www.unfpa.org">www.unfpa.org</a>
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund, <a href="http://www.unicef.org">www.unicef.org</a>
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHO	World Health Organization
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond – an international strategy on youth adopted in 1995 in which UN member states committed themselves to follow up on 10 priority action areas. In 2005, the number of priority areas was extended to 15
YFJ	European Youth Forum. The pan-European umbrella organisation based in Brussels and consisting of more than 99 member organisations, national youth organisations and international non-governmental youth organisations. YFJ is a main partner of the European and international institutions on issues relating to youth policy issues



# Foreword

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**Y**oung people today live in a very different world from young people a generation ago. In 1988, Europe was still divided between an East and a West, the European Community was a “rich men’s club” of 12 member states focusing on economic development, and travelling abroad was considered a luxury for most people. Today’s dominating communications technologies were unimaginable back then. In January 2011, the Arab world was largely unaware that those very same technologies of the Internet and the camera-equipped mobile phone would be the means of co-ordinating an uprising that would result in the toppling of long-standing governments, of exposing to the world the injustices perpetrated by dictators and for communicating the voice of young people driving those regime changes. Much can be said about the incredible changes that have taken place in the last 20 years and this youth policy manual is not the place for so much history. It is rather a means of supporting the efforts of Euro-Mediterranean countries to improve the lives of young people and involve them at all levels of decision making on issues that have an impact on them. Across the Arab world, as in other parts of the world, governments are developing and revising national youth strategies, youth action plans and youth policy positions in an unprecedented attempt to ensure political and economic integration of young people.

By 2020, according to the United Nations, 3.6 billion people in the world will be aged below 30, and these will constitute the “new global power reshaping the world”. The Middle East and Africa regions will have the youngest proportion of population aged below 30 at 63.9%. Young people have an immense potential for economic development and the creation of economic and social prosperity. However, from an economic perspective, large numbers of young men and women might be seen as a challenge to any government, since the latter has to provide various services, in addition to creating decent job opportunities. That can pose fiscal risks, particularly for such already heavily indebted Arab countries as Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The potential opportunity innate in a large youth population could also be a source of national instability when government policies and programmes fail to turn youth aspirations into assets by providing young people with the right set of skills as well as equal opportunities. A report by Euromonitor International<sup>1</sup> revealed that developing economies in Africa such as Algeria and Morocco, as well as those in other regions, entered a “demographic window” in 2010; Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other countries will enter this phase by 2025. These countries will benefit from an increase in the working-age population – a demographic window that stretches between 30 and 40 years – that will bring improvements in society by allowing more investments in education, health care, technology, and skills to support a growing economy.

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1. Euromonitor International (2012). Available at: <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2012/02/special-report-the-worlds-youngest-populations.html>.

However, the mismanagement or lack of education and investments in infrastructure and job creation may have lamentable consequences on a young population. In many Arab states, job creation remains low due to the lack of government intervention to create policies and programmes that will lead to an increase in employment, in addition to the mismatch between a “higher education approach” and job-market demands. Speaking of education, the insufficient educational opportunities pose another challenge, as education is a critical factor in determining the level of economic development and the business environment of a country. For example, in Morocco and Yemen many universities have low-quality education due to a number of structural problems, despite the expensive annual investment in the sector. Parallel to the social unrest induced by the “Arab Spring” in the Middle East and North African regions, high unemployment and lack of opportunities for young people caused an unprecedented malaise in developed economies like Greece, Italy, France and the USA in 2011. According to the International Labour Organization, of the 620 million economically active youth between ages 15 and 24 globally, 81 million or 13% of that age group were unemployed in 2009 due to the international economic crisis.

Population trends over the next few decades will largely be governed by decisions made by the 3.5 billion young people aged below 30 in 2012, which is the largest generation to enter adolescence, and their decisions regarding size and birth spacing of families will shape population and consumer trends over the coming decades. The Middle East and Africa region had, at 66.8%, the highest proportion of population aged below 30 in 2012, owing to higher birth and fertility rates and improvements in child survival. On the other hand, developed economies in western Europe are facing an ageing population. In 2011, Germany had the highest median age (44.1 years), followed by Italy (43.1) and other economies in Europe. There will be an unprecedented increase in the working age population, giving the labour force a “bonus” of human resources and hence more potential for economic development. Between 2012 and 2020, the working age population in emerging and developing economies alone is forecast to grow by 9.8% to reach 4.3 billion.

It is clear that countries and regions have much to learn from each other’s experiences, although policies must, of course, be adapted to a local context. Still, amid the significant and growing literature on the subject of youth policy, there have been few publications easily available which provide concrete advice and practical examples on how to develop a national youth strategy. For this reason, the original version of this manual from 2009 has been revised and adapted for the modern Arab world and translated into the Arabic language for further adaptation and use in Arabic speaking countries.

This youth policy manual aims at providing concrete and useful information on how to initiate and develop a national youth strategy. It presents examples of how young people can be involved both in the design and the implementation of the strategy, and provides an overview of how regional institutions, as well as the United Nations, work in the youth policy field, and whether it is relevant to speak of an international standard of youth policy. The manual also suggests a model for

how a national youth strategy can be developed from start to finish. However, it must be emphasised that it is just that – a suggestion. There is no unique formula on how to develop a youth policy. But there are a number of principles that should be followed, and these are elaborated in the manual.

In concluding this foreword, some words of acknowledgement are due: James Doorley, Wasel Elgayar, Danijela Jović, Yael Ohana, Aleksandra Vidanović and Howard Williamson for advice in developing the original and revised manuals; youth strategy processes undertaken in several countries (including Algeria, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland and Tunisia) in which Finn Denstad and Robert Thomson were involved provided many useful insights; Robert Thomson and Abdeslam Badre were key persons in rewriting the original manual that had been drafted by Finn Denstad and for bringing it closer to the realities in the Arab countries; Marta Medlinska, Hans-Joachim Schild and Philipp Boetzelen from the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership were instrumental in ensuring the quality of both versions; and finally Susanne Shomali and her team provided the translation into Arabic, profiting from their wide experience in Euro-Mediterranean youth co-operation.

We believe that the success of a national youth strategy in Arab countries lies in its ability to promote the dignity and celebrate the diversity of young people. It is our hope that this youth policy manual will contribute to that process.



# Introduction

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**T**he concept of national youth policy has become well established in many parts of the world. The European institutions, the League of Arab States and the United Nations system as a whole have become strong advocates for the development of national policies that aim at improving the situation of young people. These institutions are pursuing different mechanisms for encouraging their member states to undertake measures to develop cross-sectoral holistic policies that perceive young people as a resource and which actively involve young people and non-governmental youth organisations in decision making on issues that affect them.

During the last 20 years, events of global significance have taken place which have accelerated the development of national youth policy and have the potential to lift it to a whole new level, not only in Europe but in the Arab world as well.

National youth policies vary throughout the world. They have to, since they respond to different challenges, cultural specificities and are developed and implemented in countries with vastly different resources at their disposal. Nevertheless, is it possible to speak of an “international standard” of youth policy? And is it meaningful to present a common model on how a national youth strategy can be developed? This manual suggests that it is possible to respond affirmatively to both of these questions. It discusses the concept of youth policy and youth participation, it explores the policies of the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations system in this field, and suggests a number of elements that must be considered in the process of developing a national youth strategy document. Finally, it proposes a concrete example of how a national youth strategy process can be implemented.

This youth policy manual is intended for young activists in non-governmental youth organisations who want inspiration and “evidence” with which to lobby their governments to improve their youth policy, as well as for politicians and government officials who are looking for new ideas and examples of how a national youth policy can be developed. The manual primarily seeks to offer technical support to countries in the Arab world, which have a limited tradition of applying a resource-oriented and cross-sectoral perspective of youth policy. Furthermore, its content can also be of interest to practitioners of youth policy in the rest of the world.

According to the World Bank's *World Development Report 2007*, there are three main reasons why it is so difficult to develop successful policies directed at young people.<sup>2</sup> First, a successful youth policy requires working across many sectors to develop one coherent, holistic and inter-sectoral strategy, with clear priorities and measures for concrete action. However, youth policy today too often stands alone and is not integrated into the overall national development policy. Second, youth policy fails because young people have not had a voice in the design and implementation of the policies that affect them. And finally, achieving success in youth policy is challenged by the fact that there are few success stories and examples of best practice.

The World Youth Report of the same year pointed out the already urgent need for the development of national and sectoral youth policies (especially concerning employment, participation and gender discrimination) while that of 2003 and the Arab Human Development Report (2002) foresaw the factors – economic, lifestyle, health, education, self-expression and citizenship – whose political neglect would underpin many of the claims made by the protesters in the Arab revolutions.

Besides the three factors mentioned in the World Bank's *World Development Report 2007* (referred to above), youth policy development in the Arab region faces additional region-specific challenges, which include, on the one hand, the lack of bilateral and multilateral synergies, both at governmental as well as non-governmental levels. On the other hand, youth NGOs suffer exclusion from policy-making processes. The two main reasons behind this exclusion could be summarised as follows: the first is related to the absence of the political will of politicians to trust non-governmental bodies in policy making; the second reason corresponds to the lack of expertise and training suffered by youth NGOs in the region. While most NGOs are highly motivated and determined to improve the efficiency of their work, their performance often falls short of its preset goals due to the lack of sound training and experience in the area of policy making, which negatively influences the outcomes of their implementation strategy as well as the impact of their work on young people in the Arab region.

The focus of this youth policy manual is how to develop a national youth strategy while taking into account these challenges. It emphasises the need for intergovernmental co-operation and for maintaining a cross-sectoral approach. Furthermore, the active participation of young people and in particular non-governmental youth organisations is at the core of the model for strategy development which is presented here. As one of the fruits of Euro-Mediterranean youth co-operation, it naturally draws on previous experience in developing national youth strategies in some European countries, which may be applicable and useful to the reader in the Arab world. While the focus of the manual is on developing national policy, it may indeed also be a tool to inspire youth policy development at the local and regional levels.

As a last note, it should be mentioned that the focus of this publication is on the development of a national youth strategy – the articulation of the plan. It includes some reflection on the implementation of policy, but the focus still remains on the methods, tools and references for developing a youth strategy that promotes the dignity and celebrates the diversity of young people at the national level in Arab countries – with their active involvement.

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2. World Bank (2007), pp. 211-212.

## Chapter 1

# What is a national youth policy?

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**A** national youth policy is a government's commitment and practice towards ensuring good living conditions and opportunities for the young population of a country. It can be focused to a greater or lesser extent, it can be strong or weak and it can be broad or narrow in its range. A youth policy is not necessarily articulated in a single specific strategy document (although this is certainly preferable!), but can be a set of established policy practices or rooted in a number of different but identifiable documents, which together determine how a government deals with issues that address young people. It is not a prerequisite that a youth policy (or any other policy, for that matter) should be based on legislation; this will depend a lot on the national context. For a youth policy to be strong and effective, however, it should comply with a number of factors, which will be addressed in this chapter.

There are different ways of defining what youth policy actually is. This is because youth policy is more than just a list of issues that should be included. It is also about methodology, beneficiaries, stakeholders, budgets and so on. In this respect, it is important to distinguish between "law", "policy" and "strategy". On the one hand, law is a system of rules enforced by a given state, society or community. It is meant to regulate the actions and interactions of the community members, and it might be enforced by the imposition of penalties. Policy, on the other hand, is a set of principles on a course of action developed and/or proposed by governmental or non-governmental bodies in order to reach an advantageous goal; and it is meant to provide a framework for decisions or a statement of intent. It is a definite course of action adopted in an effort to promote the best practice necessary for achieving desired results. Finally, a strategy is a plan, or a method of approach, developed by an individual, group or organisation in an effort to successfully achieve an overall goal or objective. However, when thinking about youth strategy, one must also think of tactics. Tactics involves the detail, the procedure, and the order of how to achieve the desired results particular to the strategy. A youth policy thus implies a rule or some kind of a guide, whereas a youth strategy is the methodology used to accomplish the target objectives as prescribed by the policy. Both policy and strategy are designed to achieve organisational objectives (both governmental and non-governmental). The process of the formulation of the two concepts is similar; however, the identification and analysis of the factors bearing on a problem are more difficult for strategic decisions than for policy decisions.

## What is a youth policy?

Lessons learnt from international youth policy reviews indicate that there are five components to youth policy, which can be labelled “the five (or seven) Cs”:

- ▶ coverage (geographical area and social groups that are covered, plus policy domains);
- ▶ capacity (the role and relationship of government and youth NGOs);
- ▶ competence (the question of training and qualifications);
- ▶ co-operation, co-ordination and coherence (hierarchically and horizontally);
- ▶ cost (the financial and human resources required).

### 1.1. A CLEARLY DEFINED GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY ON YOUTH

A governmental authority must be assigned responsibility for being the co-ordinating body for youth-related issues and for co-ordinating the development of a national youth policy. This authority is typically a ministry, a national agency or a public office. In cases where this governmental body is not a ministry, it is of great importance that it has strong direct links with a ministry or ministerial department, particularly for ensuring inter-ministerial co-operation and public funding.

Examples do exist of where a country developed a national youth strategy in which no government authority was assigned the responsibility for co-ordinating its implementation. In these cases, a lot of time and resources went into developing a strategy which involved comprehensive consultations with young people and civil society, but with a minimum of government ownership. The end result was that the strategy was never implemented. Instead, the process of developing the draft strategy became more of a training and capacity-building exercise for the persons and organisations involved, but it did not do much to improve the situation of young people in the country.

### 1.2. A CLEARLY DEFINED INTENDED BENEFICIARY GROUP

When is a person considered to be “young”? The concepts of adolescence and youth are socially constructed rather than biologically determined – as is the case in puberty, for example – meaning that they differ over time, socio-economic development of a society, and even according to whom you ask. The target group of a national youth policy differs from country to country and depends on the national context. There is no universally correct answer as to which age category defines “young people”. Some national youth policies have strict lower and upper age limits, while others have rather blurred boundaries between children and youth, operating instead with a “children and youth policy”, which may result in a drift towards a focus on children at the expense of young people. Many countries have youth policies that define their

target group as young people between the ages of 15 and 25. The youth age ranges used in what may be called Mediterranean partner countries<sup>3</sup> follow similar criteria, perhaps with a tendency to go up to 30 years of age. What is important, however, is that the policy operates with clearly defined lower and upper age limits, even if this may mean having different age limits for specific policy measures.

The concept of when a person is “young” and thus a target of a “youth policy” is indeed subjective. A society changes rapidly and continuously in a global world, and so do the social conditions for young people, as well as young people’s (and the general population’s) expectations of the role of government. Let us just take one example of how this plays into the area of youth policy – access to housing. Difficult socio-economic conditions combine with high levels of youth unemployment with the result that many young people finish their education (even after university) only to land a poorly paid job or figure in the unemployment statistics. Unable to support themselves or move into the housing market, they live in the parental home for longer than in the past and depend on financial and other support from their families. People remain unmarried for longer, and become financially self-sufficient and establish their own families at a later age than used to be the case less than a generation ago. At the same time, sexual maturation continues to occur. The issue of creating favourable conditions for affordable housing for the young generation is therefore an important youth policy challenge throughout the world.

With regards to the definition of the concept of “youth”, it is of paramount importance to highlight that besides the complexity and load of meaning the concept carries, it becomes even more difficult to pin down its meaning in the Southern Mediterranean and Arab regions. This difficulty stems from the different socio-political, economic, and ideological institutions involved in defining what it means to be young. For instance, while some Arab countries define youth in reference to the age group 12 to 30, such as Jordan and Algeria along with Palestine, the parliaments of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain consider only those between 12 and 19 to be young. Youth in Tunisia, Qatar and Yemen are bracketed between the ages of 15 and 25.

In Egypt, however, a person can be “young” up to the age of 35, due to the fact that large sectors of young people between 18 and 35 usually face the same problems and challenges, such as unemployment, poor education, poor health awareness and limited access to training, educational, volunteering and job opportunities. Conversely, both Morocco and Lebanon define youth in terms of their ideological affiliation, rather than their social status or a biological determinant. For instance, the Moroccan government follows the definition that: “Youth is a socio-historical construction that emerges as a social category in relation to an ideology, nationalism or a disposition thereof, education.”

A youth policy should address itself to all young people. In line with the argument that will be developed later in this chapter, the government should see young people as a resource and thus the focus of youth policy should facilitate young people’s opportunities to realise their full potential as citizens. A government has a

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3. See: SALTO at [www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/](http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/).

particular responsibility to ensure that especially vulnerable young people or/and young people with special needs enjoy the rights and opportunities they are entitled to. This includes, for instance, migrant and refugee youth, groups of young people suffering from poverty, those who are disabled, those who belong to religious, linguistic or sexual minorities, or are somehow associated with a previous regime, young sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorders arising as a result of armed conflict, occupation and recruitment into combat, youth who have become involved in criminal activities, including those who have been trafficked, or have developed problems related to the harmful use of alcohol or drugs. These young people are in need of closer follow-up, support and guidance and should therefore be of particular concern in a national youth strategy.

### **1.3. A CONCRETE AND TRANSPARENT STRATEGY**

A high-quality national youth policy is not about which country allocates the highest budget for youth organisations or young people. Rather, the best policy is the one articulated in a clear strategy, which, in the best way possible, analyses and addresses the real needs of its youth population, manages to develop concrete goals and objectives and applies measures which, to the greatest extent possible, achieve the goals that have been set.

While the strategy should include long-term goals, objectives and measures, as well as analyses which justify why these goals have been identified, a separate action plan should outline the short- and medium-term objectives (those up to four years, for example), measures, indicators or benchmarks and proposed actions. It should also, of course, include a budget put forward for approval by the government or parliament.

Including clear goals, objectives and measures which are closely linked to indicators or benchmarks is absolutely essential to a good strategy. Breaking down overall goals into objectives, measures and indicators and, finally, activities, is a process that requires training and special expertise. In some cases external expertise in strategy development methodology can be brought in, to apply a logical framework approach to the specific situation of the youth sector. Specialists in the use of strategy development methodologies, monitoring and evaluation can often be found within international organisations, since applying for larger project grants from, for example, the European Commission, or the United Nations funds and programmes, typically requires such skills.

Developing a concrete strategy with all its different elements is also important in order to design an effective framework for monitoring and evaluation. A plan for monitoring and evaluating the youth policy should be integrated into the plan itself, or at least made public.

The youth policy must be transparent. This means a number of things. It should be clearly stated which government authority – as well as which minister or high-ranking government official – has the overall co-ordinating responsibility for its implementation. It should also be clear which ministries are responsible for the different areas that are addressed in the policy. It also means that the

relationship between goals and objectives on the one side, and concrete activities on the other, is clear and self-evident. A transparent policy should preferably be laid out in publicly accessible documents. Finally, transparency also means being open about the political challenges a country faces and being willing to address them in a political strategy.

Ensuring that the national youth strategy is concrete and transparent has a lot to do with making government decision makers accountable to the young people who are subjects of the strategy, as well as to the citizenry at large. Maintaining transparency is also a strong confidence-building measure. This will be discussed further later in this manual.

#### **1.4. A KNOWLEDGE-BASED POLICY**

A youth policy must be based not on the needs of young people as perceived by one or more interest groups, but on real-life situations and trends that can be documented through research and projections. A knowledge-based policy comprises two dimensions of knowledge: research/scientific knowledge and practical/experiential knowledge. Both are equally important to the development of policy.

Any government planning to develop a national youth strategy would need to first collect relevant up-to-date research on young people, or initiate such research in cases where the existing material is insufficient.

An evidence-based approach is crucial for the implementation of the strategy. How else could we know with certainty which measures do and do not work, in terms of policy that aims to bring young people into the labour market? Or how to work with young offenders in order to help them become citizens who are fully integrated into society? It is not only about which measures to use, but also when to implement them, and how. Applying relevant research will help us figure out the correct answers to these questions.

Both knowledge and evidence-based approaches are vital for the efficacy and operationalisation of any policy related to youth. With regard to the Arab region, it should be clear to the actors involved in policy making that a policy is not an end in itself but rather an important issue among a coherent series of constituents that frame the vision, goals, as well as the time frame of the nation's strategy vis-à-vis youth. The development, formulation, implementation and monitoring of each and every policy have to focus on the specific national needs and aspirations of the youth in the region.

In this respect, and to break with the traditional approach to policy making, both governmental and non-governmental bodies of the Southern Mediterranean and Arab regions are invited to actively encourage the participation of youth in devising policies: there is a dire need for youth policy to be formulated *by* youth and not simply *for* youth. Consequently, youth NGOs and the private sector can be great assets should a government include them in policy-making negotiations from the outset and not use them simply as tools for policy implementation. This is so because, on the one hand, these agents are those who have direct contact

with young people, and thus know best their needs, hopes and aspirations, and the challenges they face at the local level. On the other hand, it is agents within civil society who most often implement micro-projects at the local level in the form of training courses and advocacy campaigns. Hence, if included in consultations about policy making, NGOs will not merely help to translate the needs of youth into operational measures, but they will also ensure, in an effective and motivational way, that the policies produce measurable results and have predictable impacts on the lives of Arab youth.

Finally, basing a youth policy on relevant evidence is essential for the monitoring and evaluation process. Without accurate baseline data, which only comprehensive field and narrative research can provide, it will not be possible to measure the real impact of the policy.

Maintaining regular contact with relevant research communities and encouraging and supporting research on young people is a responsibility of the government body in charge of youth. Such contacts can be maintained through regular public and private meetings for the dissemination of research, ministry staff briefings on recent developments and on-going research on young people, and/or through (annual) seminars or conferences bringing together the research community, government representatives, parliamentarians, religious and political leaders, the media and the non-governmental youth sector.

## **1.5. YOUNG PEOPLE AS A RESOURCE, NOT A PROBLEM**

A youth policy can have different perspectives, some of which mirror how the government perceives the role of young people in society. “Young people are a resource and not a problem” has become a well-known cliché, but perceiving young people as a “resource” or as a “problem” is in fact an important dichotomy in the perception of youth policy.

Traditionally, a problem-oriented perspective has dominated governments’ approach to youth policy. Through such a perspective, young people are either vulnerable and in danger and need to be protected through government policies, or they are troublemakers. They are conceived of as either potential victims of their upbringing and conditions, or as victims and potential perpetrators because of their personal traits and character.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, youth policy addresses specific segments of the youth population, with very limited or no co-ordination between different sectors.

Taking the perspective of seeing young people as a resource in society – as valuable citizens in their own right and their capacity as young people – the natural focus of a youth policy is to ensure the active participation of all young people in society and to explore and find ways that empower them to realise their full potential as citizens. It also supports young people in living life appropriate to

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4. Walthers, Andreas et al. (2002) pp. 28-29.  
Available at [www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/pdf/YoyoWP1StateofArt.pdf](http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/pdf/YoyoWP1StateofArt.pdf) (accessed October 2015).

their age group and encouraging their independence and critical thinking. Such a policy addresses all young people and aims at having an integrated cross-sectoral governmental approach towards them and their needs and challenges. Through this perspective, the role of government is to provide “packages of opportunity” for young people.

The two opposing perceptions are explained here as theoretical models so as to highlight their differences. What is important to stress, however, is the constant need to move the focus away from a problem-oriented approach towards seeing young people as a resource that can contribute actively to society. Just as Eastern and South-Eastern European countries have had a particular challenge in this regard, Arab countries have a historical-political heritage of strong governmental control of the youth population and a rather problem-oriented approach to youth policy.

## **1.6. PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

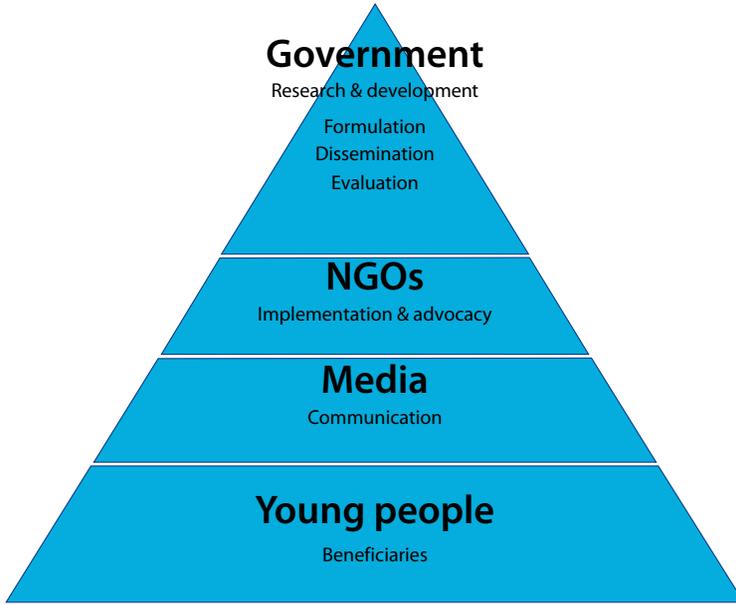
In line with the argument that a youth policy needs to perceive young people as a resource, it should include provisions for how young people, on a continuous basis, will be involved in both developing the youth policy and implementing it.

Non-governmental youth organisations should play an important role in any youth participation model or mechanism, and should have strong recognition and support from the government. As civil society organisations they involve a lot of young people and they therefore have a right to be heard on issues that are of concern to young people. While most countries in Europe have a national youth council, which is an umbrella organisation for the non-governmental youth organisations in the country, youth councils in Arab countries, like much of civil society in the wake of the “Arab Spring”, have not yet found a privileged place vis-à-vis government in the development of policy. Involving non-governmental youth organisations in youth policy development and implementation is nonetheless the global standard, and is expected to take place at any level of government.

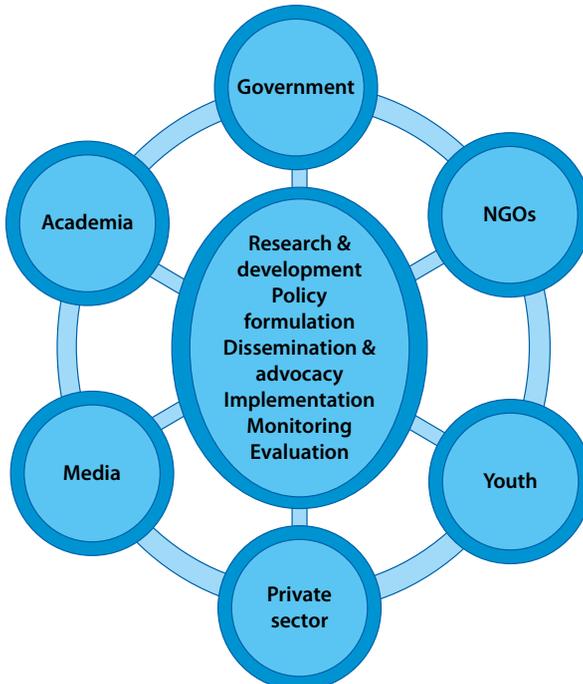
A youth policy should give clear recognition of the non-governmental youth sector, and include measures that encourage more young people to become involved in non-governmental youth organisations, as a way of fostering citizenship and taking active responsibility for shaping the society. Furthermore, young people should be given active participation. For decades, Arab youth has not only been considered a source of socio-economic problems and political passivity, but also an expensive burden on society. However, the recent Arab uprising has altered this image. Today, Arab leaders and policy makers are convinced more than ever that young people are not simply leaders of change but also the gateway to economic prosperity and socio-political stability. On this ground, a sustainable national youth policy can be fruitful only if it engages young people and perceives them as partners rather than handicaps. The diagrams below visualise both a hierarchical-unidirectional model as well as an inclusive-interactive model of national youth policy development and implementation.

## Two models of youth policy development

### A hierarchical-unidirectional model of youth policy making and implementation



### Inclusive-interactive model of youth policy making and implementation



Traditionally, policy making and implementation processes have been governed by a hierarchical structure wherein governments control the entire preparatory and formulation stages of policy development and needs determination, and they only include NGOs and media in the implementation phase, while young people are excluded from the entire process – they are perceived as mere clients. A participative, inclusive-interactive model of youth policy needs, on the one hand, to include a number of stakeholders, especially during the preparatory phase (youth, academia, private sector, NGOs and media, as well as government); on the other hand, it needs to be the outcome of a horizontal interaction between these stakeholders, whose visions and expertise are to be taken into account from the preparatory stage through to the evaluation phase. Of course, for logistical and practical reasons, not all young people are going to be involved in the policy making; however, their voices should be represented through youth NGOs and associations who are mainly managed and administered by young people and work for young people.

However, there are also many young people who are not members of youth organisations, and a government youth policy should also give them the opportunity to be consulted on issues that have an impact on their lives – in particular at important stages in the redirection of a country's approach to youth policy, such as when a government is developing a new national youth strategy. In such cases, the government should organise comprehensive open consultations with young people, typically at the local level, throughout the country. Such consultations can be organised with the assistance of local government, using the network of youth facilities if such exists, or through the school and university system, but in any case certainly together with non-governmental youth organisations.

## **1.7. A CROSS-SECTORAL, INTEGRATED APPROACH TO YOUTH POLICY**

Governments have a wide range of responsibilities that should be addressed in a national youth policy. In every European and Arab country, education is considered to be a major policy sector of relevance to young people, while health and employment are equally important youth policy areas for any government. What is particularly significant for youth policy is that it should include a coherent and integrated strategy for how a government will view these different policy sectors in relation to each other. There are many policy areas that are seen as belonging to different sectors, but will nevertheless have a strong impact on each other and should therefore be co-ordinated. For example, the level and quality of education (one sector) has a direct impact on whether or not young people will get a decent job after graduation (a different sector), and may also affect young people's awareness of health-related issues (a third sector).

There is a range of different areas that are important components of youth policy, which criss-cross traditional policy sectors. The relationship between education, employment and health is just one. Another example is the comprehensive issue of lifelong learning, which comprises formal education, non-formal learning and vocational skills; we do know that involvement in youth organisations or working as a volunteer tutor or youth

leader in a youth club provides a young person with valuable life skills that cannot be taught through the formal education system. Yet another example is that the extent of young people's opportunities to participate in sports and otherwise enjoy rich and quality free time – for example through participating in non-governmental youth organisations – is known to have an impact on the number of young people who turn to illegal drugs or alcohol, or who may even become offenders.

The cross-sectoral approach does not end at the public level but goes as far as including the private sector as well. The Arab region is among the very few regions where the concept and practice of social corporate responsibility of the private sector is new. Hence, national youth strategies could gain much expertise and logistical help from the private sector if governments as well as civil society open up to this possibility. In short, developing a holistic, goal-oriented, and knowledge-based national youth policy entails the inclusion of various national actors, including government, youth, NGOs, the private sector, academia, civil society and the media, all contributing from their position and perspective on a regular basis (not just occasionally), and throughout the life cycle of the policy.

Overall, governments in the Arab regions are well aware of the necessity to devise national youth policy based on a cross-sectoral approach. This is a political path that many Arab states have adopted for years now, and it has borne fruit. Those who have followed this path include Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, among others, whose governments understand the benefits of including inter-ministerial partnerships, including the ministries of youth and sports, education, employment, interior and health, when devising national policies on education and/or employment. What still needs to be done at this stage is the inclusion of non-governmental organisations and the private sector, because both experience-based and research-based findings have revealed that the state alone cannot and will not be able to face up to and solve all the demands and expectations of the young population in the region.

The need to find ways of co-ordinating policies in different sectors leads us to speak of youth policy as a cross-sectoral policy. By an integrated policy, we mean that a government's actions and measures in these different areas must be co-ordinated into one comprehensive strategy addressing youth – although the responsibilities for implementing the different parts of the strategy will remain in the relevant ministries or government bodies.

## **1.8. INTER-MINISTERIAL CO-OPERATION**

Youth policy, being directed towards a specific population, differs from other public policies in that it touches upon many policy areas. It is therefore essential to find ways of involving different ministries and government agencies in a youth strategy development process that is relevant to “all of society”, especially in a post-revolutionary context. Ministries to be involved in such an inter-ministerial co-operation will depend on the national context, but will typically include at least the ministries responsible for health, employment, education and culture. There is a significant case to be made for also including the ministry of defence where compulsory military service exists.

Ensuring the success of “whole government” co-operation is difficult and has proved challenging in many countries. It can be hard to develop a strong sense of ownership for the same strategy across several different government institutions, as they will all want to be the lead agency in the process and often have different working cultures, competing interests and so on. However, many European countries have youth policies which include mechanisms for ensuring good inter-ministerial co-operation. This can be a committee of state secretaries, or a working group of senior government officials. Ensuring well-functioning inter-ministerial co-operation during the national youth strategy development process is as important as during the policy implementation stage.

## **1.9. A SEPARATE BUDGET**

A national youth policy will need to have identifiable budget lines in order to realise the measures and activities it proposes. It may consist of allocations within different governmental bodies and should thus be well co-ordinated.

If a government acknowledges the contribution of non-governmental youth organisations (youth NGOs) and associative life, funds should also be invested in the development of youth initiatives and a sustainable youth NGO sector. In line with what is already an established practice in many countries, governments should allocate part of their budget to youth organisations through so-called administrative grants, which enable the organisations to run a secretariat and otherwise carry out tasks that are not specifically project related (statutory meetings, communication with members, and so on). There should also be a state budget for project grants for the implementation of activities to be carried out by the youth NGO sector.

## **1.10. ESTABLISHED LINKS BETWEEN LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS**

A national youth policy should outline steps to be taken and measures to be implemented at the national level. At the same time, however, a national youth policy cannot become a reality without focusing on what needs to be done at the local (and regional) level, and with the active involvement of local government authorities. It should therefore recognise the competencies and responsibilities of local and regional authorities, and propose ways and means of implementing policy in co-operation, co-ordination and partnership with them.

The degree of local self-autonomy for municipalities differs from country to country. In any case, a youth policy should be designed in such a manner that it provides local authorities with stimulus, guidance, examples of best practice and financial as well as other incentives. Government authorities at the local level should get a boost of motivation to address youth issues and develop local youth action plans, as a result of the effort at the national level.

## **1.11. IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE**

The following chapter outlines what can be considered an “international” standard of youth policy, and refers to regional and international documents and practice. Any national youth policy should be developed and implemented in an open and transparent manner, actively involving young people and non-governmental youth organisations in the process, but national authorities should also consider the extent to which their own youth policy development might be aligned to these international standards.

## Chapter 2

# Youth policy internationally and regionally

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... and is there an “international” standard of youth policy?

“What is the global standard of youth policy and what do we need to do to reach this level?” This question is often asked by youth policy activists and government officials who have an ambition to increase the quality of their national youth policy and would like to see a blueprint of the necessary requirements for living up to some recognised standard of youth policy.

So, is there a blueprint or a formula, with clear goals and objectives, of what an international youth policy is, or should be? Inevitably, there is no short or simple answer to this question. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a national youth policy depends on the context and reality of each and every country. Priorities and challenges will obviously differ from country to country. Having said this, however, the intergovernmental institutions (of the United Nations system, the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States, the regional economic integration bodies such as the African Union and the European Union, and even the development banks) have become strong advocates of the development of national youth policies – in particular over the last decade – and a number of decisions have been taken and resolutions and documents adopted, which suggest that it does make sense to talk about an international standard of youth policy. And while these documents, decisions and practices do not lead to a blueprint for a national youth policy, they do suggest certain criteria, indicators and lists of areas to be covered within such a policy and their link to global development goals.

Let us take a closer look at examples of regional and international organisations, and see how they address youth policy issues through their decisions and practices. By doing so, we can learn a lot about global standards of youth policy, and how they can be guiding principles for national youth policy.

## 2.1. THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

Founded in 1945 with states joining progressively over time, the League of Arab States<sup>5</sup> (LAS, also known as the Arab League) is a voluntary association of 22 independent countries whose populations are mainly Arabic speaking. The main goal of the League is to strengthen ties among its member states through the co-ordination of policies, and to promote common political, economic, cultural and social interests of member states. LAS thus represents a shared platform for member states to co-ordinate their policy positions and deliberate on matters of common concern, namely settling disputes and limiting conflicts, shaping school curricula, preserving manuscripts as well as Arab cultural heritage, dealing with issues of intellectual property, promotion of information and communication technology, encouraging measures against crime and drug abuse, and dealing with labour issues. With regard to youth, the League of Arab States emphasises its support for the empowerment of Arab youth, and endorses the role of young people as principle actors in the development, growth and prosperity of the Arab region.

### 2.1.1. League of Arab States Youth Forum

The LAS Youth Forum is an annual meeting in which the member states discuss commonly faced challenges and exchange expertise on Arab youth development. The forum aims to be an initiative for Arab youth empowerment, and to engage Arab and European youth leaders and representatives in a constructive dialogue about a human development and human rights based approach to migration and its consequences on young people in Arab and European countries, and the role of young people and youth organisations. The LAS Youth Forum aims at achieving four main objectives:

- ▶ *knowledge exchange*, including suggestions concerned with the various dimensions of dialogue among social groups with different cultures;
- ▶ *crystallisation of mechanisms*, including suggestions for enhancing the role of Arab and European youth in fostering intercultural dialogue within the Arab region and activating Euro-Arab cultural dialogue;
- ▶ *identification of ideas from youth*, including suggestions to enhance the role of the League of Arab States in holding a continuous and creative intercultural and interreligious dialogue at the Arab, Mediterranean and international levels;
- ▶ *proposing youth joint initiatives*, aiming to foster intercultural dialogue, to ensure the sustainability of common interests and values for all nations, and to limit discrimination, prejudice and the false conflict among civilisations.

The LAS Youth Forum tackles various themes, some of which are region-specific, but most of which have international characteristics and concern youth worldwide. These themes encompass:

- ▶ human rights, development and intercultural dialogue;
- ▶ youth and migration;
- ▶ migration policies;

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5. The Arab League website: [www.lasportal.org](http://www.lasportal.org)

- ▶ Arab–Arab, Europe–Europe, Europe–Arab, Arab–Europe migration;
- ▶ role of youth organisations;
- ▶ youth mobility;
- ▶ integration and discrimination;
- ▶ gender issues.

For instance, in the framework of European and Arab standards and conventions, and a human rights based approach, the 2009 forum theme revolved around youth and migration and it aimed at developing common knowledge and raising awareness regarding youth and migration and migration policy both regionally and internationally.

## 2.2. YOUTH POLICY IN THE MENA REGION

Within the framework of the third phase of the Euro-Med Youth Programme, a five-month study on youth policies was launched in 10 partner Euro-Med countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority). It aimed at being a reference tool which would give all stakeholders in the field of youth, as well as youth project organisers, an overview of the situation of young people and of provisions available for them in the 10 partner countries. The objectives were to identify whether there was a youth policy, legislation or any other national strategy addressing the needs of youth and what kind of provision was made through non-formal education and youth work in the relevant partner countries. The studies focused on young people's rights and entitlements as active citizens, such as opportunities to vote, get elected and contribute to the decision-making process; the challenges faced by youth such as unemployment, immigration, housing, marriage, generational and cultural conflict, and the place of young women in society; young people's reactions in response to such challenges and a description of provision for leisure-time activities and non-formal education through governmental and/or non-governmental youth institutions and organisations.

The study revealed that a national youth policy is not yet fully implemented in any of the partner countries. However, each of them has a number of national directives, laws, policies and/or strategies to address youth issues, usually at cross-sector level, even if such issues are not, in some cases, recognised as a priority. The definition of youth varies from country to country, sometimes even within the same country depending on the responsible national authority. Non-formal education has no, or a limited, place in most of the countries studied, formal education being the main priority of national authorities.

### 2.2.1. National youth policy in Morocco<sup>6</sup>

Youth policy in Morocco is a priority jointly managed by various ministries. The ministry of youth and sports is the main authority responsible for this area and the

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6. Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Morocco, prepared by Sylvie Floris. Available at: [www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/](http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/).

application of related policies. It is assisted in this by four other ministries: those of family and solidarity, education and the interior. These ministries, in accordance with the instructions of the king, are under the authority of the prime minister. The prime minister is in charge of the global state vision that foresees the implementation of a national Moroccan youth policy.

The three major axes of the New National Youth Policy (NPNJ) are youth, childhood and female affairs. The NPNJ conforms to the general framework of the state's voluntary reform. It is part of the state's public service mission, and it aims to stimulate creativity and initiative, to increase participation, to establish a new form of dialogue, to assist in project completion, to encourage literary and artistic expression, to develop mobility and dialogue, and to promote individual accomplishments such as associative engagement among youth, in the framework of a global and coherent plan based on the values of openness, solidarity, democracy and tolerance. Through its social action division the ministry of the interior co-ordinates all human development initiatives aimed at fighting social insecurity and exclusion. A substantial budget is allocated for five years. The National Human Development Initiative's (INDH<sup>7</sup>) national observatory supplies analytical tools, such as a map of poverty with the help of the World Bank, for the establishment of policy aimed specifically at youth and the associative network – 360 rural communities and 250 urban suburbs have been selected. All the social equipment, such as social centres, mosques and youth centres, are responsible for INDH policy implementation.

Morocco devotes almost a third of its budget to education in order to reduce the illiteracy rate from close to 50% today to 5% in 2035. Education is the second national priority after territorial integrity. Today, 46.9% of the pupils attending school are in primary schools and 39.7% in secondary schools. This has been the case since the establishment of the National Education and Training Charter of 1999. Morocco currently devotes 0.64% of its overall budget to national youth policies. It tends to rationalise the management of these funds based on specific needs and concerns. The ministry of youth and sports has two main priorities. First, it aims to modernise establishments designed to help young people; these include summer camps, youth centres, and lodgings. The second priority is increasing the number of institutions that help young people in their search for a social and professional place in society. The Vacation for All programme has constituted the flagship project of Moroccan youth policy since 2003. It is a social, cultural and educational programme devoted to children and youth associations. The programme mobilises human, logistical and financial resources all year round and thus plays a catalysing role. It affects all sectors of the action plan of the state bureau in charge of youth (SECJ), most notably in the area of leadership training.

One of the challenges the country still has to face is the status of youth workers and youth work. More generally, the Moroccan state seeks to increase youth participation in society, starting with the involvement of young people in informal decision-making

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7. The National Human Development Initiative (INDH) was an initiative established as a result of a royal decree of July 2005. Based on social solidarity, the initiative aims at empowering youth, people with fewer opportunities, and rural area residents through inclusion, participation, social and financial solidarity and capacity building.

bodies. The status of youth involved in this sector remains problematic, as the concept of volunteer work does not truly exist in Morocco. Another challenge is facilitating access to information for young people. The Moroccan state has created 92 youth information booths in youth centres. The priority remains centred on rural zones, where information for youth is addressed collectively with literacy efforts. The Moroccan National Youth Documentation and Information Centre in Rabat offers powerful communication and research tools, but its main users are educated youth with considerable Internet experience, mainly from urban areas.

### **2.2.2. National youth policy in Algeria<sup>8</sup>**

Similar to the situation in Morocco, and since its creation in 1964, the ministry of youth and sports in Algeria has been the main authority for the conception and implementation of youth policy. It is the structure responsible for proposing and ensuring the implementation of elements of youth policy in accordance with the laws and regulations in force. Following a multisectoral approach to youth in the Algerian state, the ministry of youth and sports also collaborates with other institutional actors such as the ministries of employment, solidarity, national education, culture and justice, in addition to several other public bodies responsible, including the council of the nation (senate), commission on culture, information, youth and tourism, the parliament: people's national assembly, the commission on youth and sports and of associative activities, the higher council of youth, and the ministry of national education, among others.

Although the necessary participation of youth has been emphasised during recent years, there is currently no programme in Algeria allowing the creation and development of local or national participation of young people in city life. However, the principle of youth participation was raised during the conference on youth policy in October 2007. Citizenship and the development of youth participation, and the recognition of voluntary work and its development are not managed by support mechanisms in Algeria. The development of a system of specific information for youth is only in its very early stages. In 2008, the ministry of youth and sports set up a funding programme centred on development of the partnership between local associations and public structures of socio-cultural activity, such as youth centres, for example. These structures have relatively limited means, however. Furthermore, the professional status of youth workers is only just beginning to be recognised.

Today, if there is an emphasis on centralisation in the political and administrative organisation of Algerian institutions, there is also no transversality of public action. Indeed, a multisectoral approach is not adopted in the management of youth issues, even though issues affecting young people are, by their very nature, cross-cutting – housing for youth, employment, leisure and culture for youth, youth health, education and training, are just some examples of this. At the 2007 conference of the government and governors (Walis), one of the conclusions was to emphasise a new way of governing through a cross-sectoral approach. But so far no administrative instrument for the implementation of this new principle of governance has been created.

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8. Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Algeria, prepared by Kamal Rarrbo. Available at: [www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/](http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/).

### 2.2.3. National youth policy in Jordan<sup>9</sup>

Unlike Morocco and Algeria where youth policy is the main responsibility of the ministry of youth and sports, in Jordan, after the youth and sports ministry's failure in planning and co-ordinating sustainable youth-related projects and activities, the Jordanian Higher Council for Youth (HCY) was established in 2001, and since then it has been designated as the main body responsible for formulating and developing youth policy. It enjoys the status of a ministry and its president is directly answerable to the prime minister. The president is appointed on a contract basis, which makes his position stable and unaffected by shifts in the government. Additionally, a national youth and sports fund was established with the aim of providing funds for youth development, and for the sake of increasing the HCY's independence from the ministry of finance. The HCY is not only responsible for formulation and development of youth policy and for implementing it in co-ordination with other relevant ministries and institutions (such as the ministry of health, and the vocational training corporation, linked to the ministry of labour), it also collaborates with other non-governmental actors to ensure a multisectoral approach, besides licensing youth clubs and organisations, establishing youth centres and providing for both talented and disadvantaged youth.

Endorsed by the Jordanian Cabinet of Ministries and issued as a response to the directives of King Abdullah II, the Jordanian National Youth Strategy (NYS) was jointly prepared by the HCY, UNDP and UNICEF, and this key document provides a framework for developing a youth policy that fits the needs of young people and promotes their development. Hence, youth policy in Jordan is a cross-cutting issue, involving many actors aiming at increasing the opportunities of youth, and it became one of the nation's top priorities. Its vision is to "raise and develop Jordanian young men and women who are aware of themselves and their abilities, loyal to their country and proactively take part in its progress and development, able to deal with the variables and developments of this age in a confident, aware and steadfast manner, within a secure and supporting environment".

The nine priorities identified in the NYS are:

- 1) participation;
- 2) civil rights and citizenship;
- 3) recreational activity and leisure time;
- 4) culture and information;
- 5) information technology and globalisation;
- 6) education and training;
- 7) employment;
- 8) health;

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9. Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Jordan, prepared by Katarzyna Górac-Sosnowska. Available at: [www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/](http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/).

## 9) environment.

Each one comprises a set of operational and strategic objectives. The NYS is implemented by the HCY, which is in charge of the overall co-ordination as well as evaluation, monitoring and review of the policy. The HCY collaborates with other ministries, civil society and young people. Youth participation in designing the NYS was ensured by the Youth Voice Campaign, which included over 90 000 people of all backgrounds – pupils, parents, students, youth centre members, employed and unemployed young people, disadvantaged and gifted young people, as well as volunteers. The campaign aimed at spreading information about the youth policy – its meaning and implications – and grasping their opinions and suggestions through thematic discussions and focus groups. Young people became actively involved in the formulation stage as one of the stakeholders and not merely as an objective – which is a good indicator for an effective youth policy.

Thanks to its independence as well as the participative-inclusive approach in developing the country's national youth policy, HCY has ensured that the Jordanian model is one of the leading examples of best practice in the world as far as the youth participation component is concerned. Undeniably, the adoption and implementation stage of the NYS faced several challenges, as is the case in many other states, mostly related to ineffective co-ordination, and the inability to influence the strategy plans of other ministries. Yet, Jordan is one of the very few Arab states having managed to develop a comprehensive NYS with most of the crucial elements needed in order to be an effective tool for developing the capacities of young people. This was acknowledged by the national youth survey conducted by UNICEF in 2001, encompassing the voices of over 7 400 young people aged 10 to 24 and over 3 300 of their parents. The NYS indicates that young people are the most precious resource of the country; it clearly defines the youth age group and has a clear vision and goals. It was designed to be a coherent, cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial policy, involving also non-governmental actors, including young people themselves.

## 2.3. THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe was established in 1949 in Strasbourg, France, as an intergovernmental organisation promoting democracy, the rule of law and human rights. At that time, however, it became entangled in the realities of the Cold War, and until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Council of Europe only consisted of what were then considered to be western European countries. This all changed with the fall of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. During the decade following 1989, the organisation became the first pan-European intergovernmental organisation promoting democracy and human rights. At the time of editing (spring 2013) the Council of Europe has 47 member states.

The organisation was first among the international institutions to develop an agenda focusing on the interests of young people and youth participation. Partly as a response to the social unrest of 1968 across Europe, which engaged young people in particular, and the recognition that addressing young people's interests and concerns had to be achieved through cross-border co-operation, the Council of Europe established a

European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972. In the same year, the European Youth Foundation was also set up, as a means of fostering the voluntary sector in Europe by providing financial support for multinational activities, run by non-governmental national and international youth organisations.

While 1968 can be seen as having triggered the development of a focus on youth participation, there are two other years that carry particular significance for specific areas of the youth and human rights agenda of the Council of Europe. The year 1989, which symbolises the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe, led to an increased focus inside the organisation on intercultural learning as a common challenge for a united Europe.

Signalling its new pan-European focus and membership, the Council of Europe opened its second European Youth Centre in Budapest in 1995. During that same year, the organisation carried out the first European All Different – All Equal campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

The terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, on the other hand, led to an increased fear of radical Islam and suspicion towards people of Arabic descent throughout Europe. The Council of Europe responded to this by increasing its focus on mobility, intergenerational and intercultural co-operation and by focusing on faith within the context of human rights.

The 8th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth that took place in Kiev in October 2008, adopted a long-term strategy of the Council of Europe in promoting youth policy in Europe. The document, entitled “The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020”, outlined three areas to be prioritised by the organisation in the next decade: human rights and democracy, living together in diverse societies and social inclusion of young people.

### **2.3.1. The decision-making structure of the Council of Europe youth sector**

Recognising the importance of involving young people in making decisions on issues that concern them, the Council of Europe has applied a rather unique decision-making structure, labelled “co-management”.

On the one side, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) brings together representatives of all signatory countries to the European Cultural Convention (currently 50 states),<sup>10</sup> and is the intergovernmental body consisting of senior governmental representatives. It encourages closer co-operation between governments on youth issues and provides a forum for them to compare national youth policies and learn from each other’s experiences. The CDEJ also organises the European conferences of ministers responsible for youth.

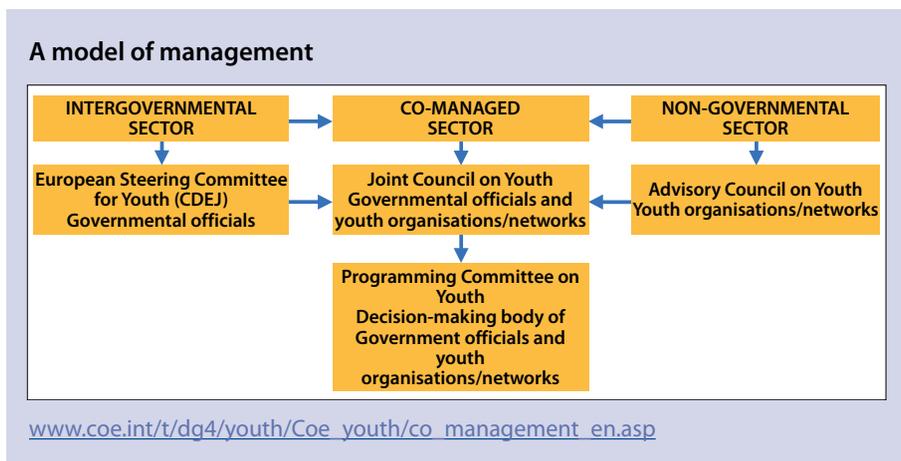
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10. Belarus has not been admitted into the Council of Europe because of issues related to democracy and human rights, but it is represented in the CDEJ, since the country ratified the European Cultural Convention. As the Holy See and Kazakhstan also signed the Convention, the countries represented within the CDEJ are 50, while there are 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

A second body is the Advisory Council on Youth, made up of 30 representatives from non-governmental youth organisations in Europe. The Advisory Council gives its input and opinions on a range of different issues and ensures that young people are involved in all matters relating to the Council of Europe youth sector.

When the two meet together they make up the Joint Council and a Programming Committee to decide on the work programme and budget of the Council of Europe youth sector, the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation. The Joint Council is especially significant because it involves sharing decision-making powers equally between representatives of governments and non-governmental youth organisations. This is what is called co-management.

This co-management model carries wider significance because of its strong recognition of the right of young people to take equal part in decision making on issues that affect them. The fact that an international intergovernmental organisation can go so far in formally involving young people in deciding on activities and budgetary issues has made many young activists (and some government officials, too!) question why the same model cannot be applied at a national level as well. This co-management system, therefore, as well as its potential applicability at the national or local levels, continues to be a model or standard.



### 2.3.2. Conferences of European Ministers responsible for Youth

For a number of years, the work of the Council of Europe in the youth field focused primarily on giving recognition to the non-governmental youth sector, youth participation and the promotion of civil society through training and education of youth leaders in non-governmental youth organisations throughout Europe. With time, the Council of Europe has also come to focus on strategic policy development with regard to young people. The first Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth was held in 1985, and since then consecutive conferences have been held every two to four years. These conferences and their final declarations have played a role in identifying youth issues as a policy dimension with transnational and cross-border significance, and have been instructive in developing common

principles of youth policy, covering equality of opportunity, training and skills, non-formal and informal education, volunteer work, access to the labour market, mobility, violence prevention, citizenship and participation in the development of youth policies.

### **2.3.3. European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life**

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress), which is one of the pillars of the Council of Europe, stepped into the youth policy arena in 1992 when it adopted the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (usually referred to as the European Youth Charter) that was revised in 2003, accompanied by a recommendation from the Committee of Ministers, the highest decision-making body of the Council of Europe, to the effect that youth participation in policy development and decision making is a European standard that all member states should adhere to. The charter stresses that young people and non-governmental youth organisations have the right to be consulted and take active part in decision making on issues that affect young people at the municipal and regional level. The Youth Department of the Council of Europe Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation has developed a manual on the European Youth Charter called *Have Your Say!*, which explains in more detail what youth participation is and gives good ideas and examples of how the charter can be used to promote youth participation.<sup>11</sup>

### **2.3.4. National youth policy reviews**

In 1997, the Council of Europe developed a mechanism or system for reviewing and evaluating national youth policies, initiated following an official request from a particular member state. The international review team of each country being assessed usually consists of recognised youth researchers and an official from the Council of Europe, as well as representative(s) of the statutory organs of the Council of Europe youth sector. As of July 2013, 20 member states have been the subject of reviews.

#### **Gathering the evidence base for youth policy**

A number of key domains and issues need to be addressed within a youth policy framework. The policy domains are:

- ▶ education (schooling and non-formal learning/youth work);
- ▶ post-compulsory education and training;
- ▶ employment and the labour market;
- ▶ health;

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11. The publication *Have Your Say!* can be accessed at: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/Have\\_your\\_say\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/Have_your_say_en.pdf).

- ▶ housing;
- ▶ social protection and income support;
- ▶ welfare and family;
- ▶ criminal justice;
- ▶ leisure (including sports and arts);
- ▶ national defence and military service;
- ▶ values and religion (the religious institutions).

Policy issues include:

- ▶ opportunities for participation and citizenship;
- ▶ safety and protection;
- ▶ combating social exclusion and promoting inclusion;
- ▶ the provision and use of information (including new information technologies);
- ▶ mobility and internationalism;
- ▶ multiculturalism;
- ▶ equalities;
- ▶ radicalisation/reaction of segments of the youth population versus conformity;
- ▶ local versus global pressures;
- ▶ centre–periphery;
- ▶ urban–rural polarisation;
- ▶ elites and outsiders;
- ▶ environmental issues;
- ▶ the role of diaspora.

A youth policy should have the following objectives:

a) to invest purposefully in young people in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way, wherever possible, through an opportunity-focused rather than a problem-oriented approach;

b) to involve young people both in the strategic formulation of youth policies and in eliciting their views about the operational effectiveness of policy implementation;

c) to create the conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure and enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part both in the labour market and in civil society;

d) to establish systems for collection of robust data, both to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth policies and to reveal the extent to which “policy gaps” exist in relation to effective service delivery to young people from certain social groups, in certain areas or in certain conditions;

e) to display a commitment to reducing such policy gaps where they demonstrably exist.

Youth policy development should be seen as a process of creating “packages” of possibilities, experience and opportunities for young people to achieve their full potential, seeing young people as a resource. The following different areas are important components of such a youth policy:

- 1) learning (lifelong, formal and non-formal) education and training, recognition of informally acquired skills and competencies;
- 2) access to new technologies;
- 3) specialist personal advice and support, career guidance;
- 4) information;
- 5) access to health services and social protection;
- 6) access to housing;
- 7) access to paid work;
- 8) mobility;
- 9) justice and youth rights (to assistance, for example);
- 10) opportunities for participation and active citizenship;
- 11) recreation: cultural and social;
- 12) sports and outdoor activities;
- 13) away from home, youth exchanges and international opportunities;
- 14) safe and secure environment.

There are three cross-cutting themes:

- ▶ information;
- ▶ participation and active citizenship;
- ▶ power (both in relation to age limits governing rights and responsibilities of young people, and in relation to budgets available for certain youth policy issues).

(See: Williamson H. (2008), *Supporting young people in Europe. Volume 2*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, pp. 25-37)

## 2.4. THE EUROPEAN UNION

The day-to-day involvement of the European Union in issues relating to youth policy is handled by the European Commission, more specifically the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC). Work within DG EAC covers the Youth in Action programme, its successor programme Erasmus+, and takes care of youth policy

issues. In addition to the responsibilities of the Commission, the youth policy of the European Union is shaped by decisions and resolutions made by the European Council and the Council of Youth Ministers as well as the European Parliament. The EU is widely involved in advancing youth policy in the member states. There are different components to this involvement:

- ▶ promoting young people's citizenship and active participation in society;
- ▶ promoting social inclusion, in the transition from education to employment;
- ▶ advocating for the inclusion of a youth dimension in other sectoral policies.

### **2.4.1. The dynamic between the EU institutions and the member states**

Youth policy is promoted and developed in the European Union through the "open method of co-ordination" between the European Commission and the Council of Youth Ministers with the member states. The European Parliament does not play a strong formal role in the process, but can comment on the reports of the Commission, produce its own reports and adopt resolutions in the youth field.

### **2.4.2. Youth policy processes of the European Union**

The White Paper "A new impetus for European youth" was launched in November 2001 by the European Commission, preceded by a consultation process which was by far the most comprehensive of any White Paper published by the European Commission. This commitment to consult young people and involve them in decision-making processes on issues that have an impact on them sent powerful signals to the then candidate central European countries. The policy document identified four key areas: participation, information, volunteering/voluntary activities and greater understanding of youth.

The revised youth policy framework called "An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering", covers 2010 to 2018. In addition to involving non-governmental youth organisations, youth researchers, government officials and other experts in the youth field, the Commission organised an online consultation with young people. This consultation brought in more than 5 000 responses from young people from across Europe, and in this way identified the major challenges for young people in Europe and what response is expected of their own countries and the European Union. This nine-year strategy is cross-sectoral and transversal. It proposes three long-term goals and suggests "fields of action" to be reviewed every three years as follows:

- ▶ creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment within the fields of action: education, employment plus creativity and entrepreneurship;
- ▶ improving access and full participation of all young people in society within the fields of action: health and sport plus participation;
- ▶ fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people within the fields of action: social inclusion, volunteering plus youth and the world.

Under the new framework, the Commission has at its disposal primarily the same tools as before: the open method of co-ordination, the Youth in Action programme and “structured dialogue” (see below).

It is important to mention that even though there has been no formal minimum requirement for what each member state has to achieve within the different priority areas, the member states’ obligation to report back to the Commission on their achievements certainly implies a degree of responsibility and commitment to consult young people before they submit their national reports to the Commission.

### **2.4.3. Translating EU policy into practice**

The European Commission translates EU youth policy into practice by promoting opportunities for mobility, exchange and co-operation among young people, using a range of programmes and tools.

Youth in Action, the European Commission’s youth mobility programme 2007 to 2013 aimed at inspiring a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among 13-30 year olds in EU member states, plus several non-EU countries. The programme supported five “actions” implemented through national agencies in all programme countries, one of which offered concrete support to youth policy development.

The programme was preceded by the YOUTH for Europe programmes and a European Voluntary Service (1988-1999). As of 2014 Youth in Action was succeeded by the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport, replacing seven existing programmes with one. Planned to run between 2014 and 2020, Erasmus+ will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad.

The Commission and the member states use structured dialogue with young people and their organisations, researchers in the youth field and policy makers to discuss chosen themes and obtain results that are useful for policy making. The debate is structured in terms of themes and timing, with events taking place on a regular basis where young people can discuss the agreed themes among themselves and also with local, national and EU politicians.

Youth organisations play a particularly important role in the structured dialogue, as they speak on behalf of a great number of young people. The main partner of the EU institutions is therefore the European Youth Forum. However, the structured dialogue also aims at reaching young people who are not formally organised and those with fewer opportunities.

The Renewed Social Agenda (2008) puts children and youth among seven priorities addressing the social challenges of solidarity.

The Youth on the Move flagship initiative was a comprehensive package of policy initiatives on education and employment for young people in Europe. Launched in

2010, it was part of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Youth on the Move aimed to improve young people's education and employability, to reduce high youth unemployment and to increase the youth-employment rate. The programme ended in December 2014.

In December 2012, the Commission proposed measures to help member states specifically tackle youth unemployment and social exclusion. The measures (the Youth Employment Package) included the recommendation to launch a Youth Guarantee in every country, according to which member states should ensure that all young people up to age 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

The European Council agreed in February 2013 to create a dedicated Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) targeting individual young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). On 27-28 June 2013, it adopted a conclusion on youth employment based on the communication "Working together for Europe's young people – A call to action on youth unemployment", which was proposed by the Commission on 19 June 2013.

## **2.5. THE YOUTH PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

The European Commission and the Council of Europe first entered into a formal partnership in the youth field in 1998, in the area of European youth worker training; this co-operation has since then expanded to further areas, such as youth research and Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, and today covers two main priority fields: promoting quality and recognition of youth work, and non-formal learning and knowledge-based youth policy.

Additionally, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership is focusing on youth policy development and co-operation in and with the countries of Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus (EECA), South-Eastern Europe (SEE), the Southern Mediterranean and, between 2011 and 2012, Africa. Training and capacity building of youth leaders, youth workers, trainers and activists is also high on the agenda for the youth partnership.

A virtual Internet-based European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy summarises the policy positions of the European institutions and their member states concerning key topics of youth policy, such as participation, information, employment, education, social inclusion, intercultural dialogue and young people's health. It also includes a comprehensive database with information about youth policy status, best practice and themes in most of the countries in Europe. Youth researchers or civil servants in the respective countries are nominated as national correspondents by the governments.

### Does a “European standard” of youth policy exist?

From around the year 2000, a whole new dynamic was created in Europe on the theme of youth policy. The United Nations held its first ever World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon in 1998. A specific reference to youth had been made in the declaration of the European Council in Laeken in 2001,<sup>12</sup> and the European Commission launched its White Paper on youth policy in November that same year so that youth found itself ever higher on the agenda.

Within this context, a discussion of what should be considered a “European standard” of youth policy became ever more relevant. The Council of Europe therefore decided to invite a group of experts with a research profile to come together and make policy recommendations to be addressed to the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector. This resulted in a report which has since been cited by many as providing the best model so far for what should be considered a more universal standard of youth policy, at least for Europe.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.6. THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

The main bodies of the United Nations consist of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Committee and the International Court of Justice. The UN family is much larger, however, consisting of more than 15 agencies and a number of funds, programmes, missions and projects.

In this short brief, which outlines how the United Nations has contributed to the development of what can be called an “international standard” of youth policy, however, it is natural to focus only on the most significant documents that have been adopted by the General Assembly and the on-going efforts of the UN Secretariat and different UN bodies.

Promoting youth participation in government decision making and in society in general, has arguably been the main pillar of the UN's effort to influence national youth policy in the different member states. As articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 12, all children (up to the age of 18) shall be provided with the means to participate in society and be consulted on issues that concern them.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.6.1. World Programme of Action for Youth, Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 agenda

The UN General Assembly observed 1985 as International Youth Year, bringing the issues of youth participation, development, and peace to the fore in achieving the

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12. The European Council (not to be confused with the Council of Europe) is the highest political body of the EU. It comprises the heads of state or government of the Union's member states, along with the President of the European Commission). The “Laeken Declaration” is significant because it outlined the future of the EU and necessary reform of its institutions.

13. Council of Europe (2003b).

14. See Chapter 3 on youth participation, which has more comprehensive coverage of this issue.

aims of the United Nations Charter. Meanwhile, several resolutions and activities were initiated, marking an increased awareness of the need for mobilisation at the international as well as the national level regarding youth development and participation. That year also marked the beginning of a formal international commitment towards young people and their development. The General Assembly agreed on the Guidelines for Further Planning and Suitable Follow-up in the Field of Youth to prepare the ground for further work, including the dissemination of information to youth groups and the establishment of a network among them.

Some 10 years later, in 1995, the organisation further strengthened its commitment to young people and the promotion of national youth policy by adopting the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY). WPAY as an international strategy is still operative, and the UN Secretariat is responsible for the review and monitoring of its implementation. Through the WPAY, UN member states committed themselves to following up on 10 identified areas for priority action to improve the situation of young people:

- 1) education;
- 2) employment;
- 3) hunger and poverty;
- 4) health;
- 5) environment;
- 6) drug abuse;
- 7) juvenile delinquency;
- 8) leisure-time activities;
- 9) girls and young women;
- 10) the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision making.

The WPAY was followed in 1998 by a World Youth Forum, (Braga, Portugal) and the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, Portugal). The conference re-emphasised the importance of the WPAY priorities and specifically emphasised the formulation of comprehensive national youth policies and action plans through the adoption of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes.

The commitment to the WPAY strategy was again confirmed at the UN General Assembly in 2005, and five additional areas were added to the list:

- 11) globalisation;
- 12) information and communication technologies;
- 13) HIV/Aids;
- 14) armed conflict;
- 15) intergenerational relations.

A broad set of verifiable indicators can be used to monitor the progress achieved in these priority areas (see the UN web portal address below).

At the Millennium Summit in 2000 the UN member states agreed to achieve eight goals (the Millennium Development Goals) by 2015, as follows:

- ▶ eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- ▶ achieve universal primary education;
- ▶ promote gender equality and empower women;
- ▶ reduce child mortality;
- ▶ improve maternal health;
- ▶ combat HIV/Aids, malaria, and other diseases;
- ▶ ensure environmental sustainability;
- ▶ develop a global partnership for development.

Recognising that youth policy is a transversal and cross-sectoral policy, which should be an important component of all the Millennium Development Goals, an independent group of youth experts – young people from across the world – took upon themselves the task of developing a manual on how youth policy can be promoted nationally through applying the Millennium Development Goals. The manual, entitled *Youth and the Millennium Development Goals*, was released in spring 2005 and can be downloaded from the Internet (see list of references). The Arab world was not slow in attempting to relate youth policies to the MDGs; indeed the report of a regional seminar provided a forward-looking warning of a deficit in youth empowerment.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the asymmetrical economic powers within Arab states, the region on the whole has made discernible progress at various levels, as declared in the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region, especially in the fields of education, health and political transition. Yet, alongside those significant developments, unemployment remains the single and most important challenge facing young persons in the region (youth unemployment rates are as high as 44%). The most recent figures show that one out of three young persons is unemployed in the Arab world, with unemployment for females being almost 10% higher than for males. Gulf countries have the lowest youth unemployment rates in the Arab world, mostly due to the recent economic boom following rising oil revenues. The gap between employment rates for young males and females is also very evident in countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Egypt, where unemployment rates for young females are almost double those of males. For example, poor women in rural Yemen find it harder to access public schools and have higher illiteracy rates than richer young women. There has been a globally rising trend in unemployment rates of Arab youth over the last 10 years, with the exception of a few Gulf countries.

This shows that Arab youth face challenges similar to those faced by young persons in other areas of the world; challenges associated with major transitions to adulthood – education, employment and family formation – related to the wish to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. What policy makers in the Arab region still need to consider

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15. [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/arabyouthmdgs.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/arabyouthmdgs.pdf).

is how poverty and equity affect young people's access to education, health care and employment. Some scattered evidence from Arab countries shows that poorer young people have less chance of accessing good quality educational and health care services, highlighting the necessity for more public provision of such services. In 2015 a new framework for global development priorities will be introduced. Young people will be those who see the impact of this new framework and the ones who will be held accountable for its implementation.

### **2.6.2. The UN Secretariat, UN specialised agencies**

The focal point of the UN Secretariat on youth issues is the Programme on Youth (previously called the UN Youth Unit). The Programme on Youth is located in the Division for Social Policy and Development within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Its website provides valuable information on different opportunities for youth participation at UN level, as well as for the development of youth policy. Due to its very limited staff and resources, however, the UN Programme on Youth is not sufficiently able to interact with youth organisations around the world.

In January 2013, in the context of his Five-Year Action Agenda priority "Working with and for Women and Young People", the UN Secretary-General appointed Ahmad Alhendawi from Jordan as his Envoy on Youth. This was widely welcomed in the Arab world. Although no institutional and financial support for the position has been identified, the appointment of the Envoy on Youth, according to UN information on the matter, addresses the needs of the largest generation of youth the world has ever known.

During the last 20 years, agencies of the United Nations have developed mechanisms for involving young people and youth organisations in their work and policy priorities. They typically take the form of special working units or youth advisory boards. For example, the Youth Co-ordination Unit of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) addresses issues and organises actions for youth within the scope of the organisation, and hosts a Youth Forum every two years. Similarly, the following UN agencies and organisations have special co-ordinating bodies on youth:<sup>16</sup> UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), UN Population Fund (UNFPA, focusing on youth policy), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as through agencies for children, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Other organisations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) do not have such youth advisory boards, but are still active in addressing youth issues as part of their policy agenda. More than 2.6 million young people aged 10 to 24 die each year, mostly due to preventable causes. In 2002, the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children recognised the need for the "development and implementation of national health policies and programmes for adolescents, including goals and indicators, to promote their physical and mental health". The World Health

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16. Ashton, Melanie, et al. (2005), p. 32.

Organization (WHO) carries out a range of functions to improve the health of young people, including supporting countries with the formulation of related policies.

The International Labour Organization (ILO), also part of the UN system, has also been active in youth development programmes during the last decade. Among its highlighted achievements, in co-ordination with the UN, is the Youth Employment Network. Building on failures of previous employment strategies, this Youth Employment Network suggests a youth-driven approach to employment.

The World Bank has also increased its commitment to the questions of youth development and needs. One of the Bank's programmes dedicated to youth development is the Small Grants Program (SGP) that supports activities related to civic engagement by providing small administered grants. Among the Bank's youth-related activities were the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region Small Grant Workshop for Youth Organizations, which aims at strengthening the relationship between the World Bank and youth organisations across MENA countries as one mechanism that can respond to their priorities based on the programmes' criteria. The Bank's first Global Youth Conference, Youth Development and Peace, took place in September 2003, followed by a second conference in Sarajevo in 2004.

Many of these organisations have a national office or representative in different countries, and these can play a supportive role in the promotion, development and implementation of youth strategies at the national level.

## Chapter 3

# Why youth participation – and how?

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**E**ven though the concept of youth participation in government decision making has become recognised as one of the basic and important features of a youth policy, there is still a long way to go before this principle is followed and adhered to around the world. Sometimes the reason for a lack of participation is rooted in the mentality of the established decision makers. They may feel that young people – many of whom have not even reached the “legal age” or voting age – cannot possibly contribute to making responsible decisions. Or politicians and government officials may be convinced that they alone have the mandate to take political decisions and develop and implement policy, and that it would be wrong to let “special interest groups” be allowed to influence these decisions.

However, the reason for not inviting young people to the decision-making table is often that these politicians and officials do not know *how* to let young people participate. Even where young people have been in the forefront of political change, the politicians that emerge from revolutionary change may have no prior experience in involving youth, and there may be a lack of examples of good practice for how it can be done beyond the fervour of popular uprising. After all – we must recognise that involving young people in decision making in a systematic way can be challenging, and it means using different methods than when one involves adults. As for any population group, one cannot just pick up a few adolescents from the streets and put them in the assembly hall, expect them to act like experienced politicians and then clap our hands and say: “Yes, now we have involved young people!” Let us therefore explore a bit more *why* youth participation in decision making is important, and *how* it can be done.

### **Migration: the ultimate non-participation**

Do Arab youth want to leave their region due to rising unemployment in Arab states? According to Khalid Al Wahishi, Director of Population Policy and Immigration at the Arab League: "Due to their poor participation in society and politics and to rising joblessness, 70 per cent of the Arab youth want to migrate out of the region." Empower youth was his message to heads of national population councils and committees. "We at the Arab League have been warning member states at all our meetings to empower the youth. Unemployment, alarmingly high at 26 per cent, poor participation of youth and illiteracy are major hindrances to population policy development and implementation."

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/arab-league-seeks-solutions-as-70-per-cent-of-arab-youth-want-to-emigrate-1.931043>

## **3.1. WHY YOUTH PARTICIPATION?**

The idea of youth participation in government decision making and the special role of non-governmental youth organisations in being institutional partners in youth policy development and implementation has become a mantra in international youth policy discourse. There are several good reasons why this is important and advocated by European and international organisations as a recommended practice, and these are rooted in the perception of young people as a resource. Young people are full citizens making important contributions to their everyday society, not least in triggering political reform. Beyond uprisings they involve themselves in organisations protecting the environment and fighting poverty, they help their peers, take part in initiatives to improve their own society, start up new businesses and contribute to the family. This contribution by young people to society today is often overlooked, instead of seeing young people as *future* citizens. When we see young people as assets to their local communities and active agents of change who can contribute their energy, idealism and insights to improving society, it certainly should be natural to involve them in every possible way in policy decision making on issues that affect them.

Second, no one is more expert at being young than young people themselves. In order to ensure that we understand the needs, issues and challenges facing young people and that together we select the measures that will address these issues in the best possible way, we should involve those who know the youth reality at first hand – namely young people themselves.

Third, by involving young people, one also creates a wider ownership of the decisions that are taken. Passing on the ownership of important decisions that relate to youth ensures that a policy will be easier to implement and will also be advocated and supported by young people themselves. This will ensure a higher level of success in implementation.

Fourth, young people cannot be considered to be simply another "interest group" as an argument for keeping them out of the decision-making process. Young

people are a heterogeneous group, with diverse interests and concerns. But they make up a large percentage of the population, and in some countries they are in fact a dominant part of the population. In Norway, for example, with its relatively “old” population, young people between 10 and 24 years of age still make up more than 17% of the population. On the other hand, Turkey, with one of the “youngest” populations in Europe, has approximately 23% of the population in the same age cohort, a percentage which is comparable to that of the Southern Mediterranean countries, where the lowest percentage of population is in the same age cohort.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, there are formalistic and legal reasons why young people should be natural partners of government in decision making: promises made as parties to international agreements and commitments that concern young people in decision making. Let us just briefly look at two of these commitments.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) was adopted in 1989. The 196 states parties to it have to report to the UN every five years on their adherence to the legally binding provisions of the convention. It addresses the rights of children, adolescents and youth up to the age of 18. Article 12 specifically addresses the issue of their participation in government decisions that affect them.

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (adopted as a recommendation by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2006) gives strong encouragement to all member states to comply with the principles that:

- ▶ participation of young people in local and regional life must constitute part of a global policy of citizens’ participation in public life;
- ▶ all sectoral policies should have a youth dimension;
- ▶ various forms of participation must be implemented, which follow in consultation and co-operation with young people and their representatives;
- ▶ the participation by young people from disadvantaged sectors of society must be promoted.<sup>18</sup>

The European Commission White Paper “A new impetus for European youth” stresses the issue of youth participation. Furthermore, the European Council of Youth Ministers passed the Resolution on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities (April 2008).

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17. See the Population Reference Bureau chart “Percentage youth percentage” [www.prb.org/DataFinder/Topic/Rankings.aspx?ind=19](http://www.prb.org/DataFinder/Topic/Rankings.aspx?ind=19) and to the UN Population Division: <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/>

18. See: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Coe\\_youth/Participation/COE\\_charter\\_participation\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Coe_youth/Participation/COE_charter_participation_en.pdf).

The Council of Europe has been at the forefront of promoting youth participation in decision making at successive conferences of European ministers responsible for youth, as a complement to the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. The final declarations of the ministers can be found on the Council of Europe's web page (see the address and link in the reference section of this manual).

The United Nations also has a number of documents, resolutions and programmes relating specifically to the importance of youth participation in government decision making. Not least among them is the very practical "Brief Guide to Youth Delegates to the United Nations General Assembly" which provides government representatives with information regarding national youth delegates to the General Assembly and other relevant meetings of the United Nations (see the UN web portal address also in the reference section of this manual).

### **3.2. WHY YOUTH ORGANISATIONS?**

Non-governmental youth organisations (NGYOs) have been given an important and, in the eyes of some, privileged role when it comes to being promoted as government partners on issues relating to young people. Taking into account that many young people are not involved in youth organisations, why are they seen as so important?

Everyone recognises that at the level of central government, it is not feasible, or indeed possible, to include all young people in making government decisions. Non-governmental youth organisations are therefore consulted and included on young people's behalf, as they are seen as representatives of young people. Of course, they can only claim to represent the people in the organisations they come from. Nevertheless, involving representatives of independent non-governmental youth organisations in political decision making is beneficial for government officials and policy makers, since in this way they reach out to many more young people, considering that the NGYO representatives represent larger groups of young people. Youth NGOs also often have the resources and expertise to address youth issues at different levels of policy.

The legitimacy of youth NGOs to be involved in government decision making rests on two basic premises that must be fulfilled.

- ▶ The youth organisations must have a fully functional internal consultation and representation process, with their leaders being elected by the membership.<sup>19</sup>
- ▶ The organisations should be controlled and governed by young people themselves, so that they are in fact youth organisations and not adult organisations with young people as a "client" group.

Non-governmental youth organisations should be considered as government partners in decision making, based on their capacity as representatives of larger groups of young people. In other words, the youth NGOs provide a means for reaching out to young

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19. In this regard, it is acceptable that the organisation operates with a lower age limit for being granted the right to vote.

people, and not a goal in itself. Other ways of reaching out to many young people simultaneously should also be explored, and youth NGOs should not have a monopoly position as representatives of young people. They can also be supplemented by other groups (for example youth clubs and wings of political and religious communities, peer education structures), depending on the national reality and context.

While the existence of non-governmental youth organisations is a great benefit to society, and it is only natural that they have a right to be consulted and involved in decisions that affect young people, they are not uniformly present. In some countries, they may be associated with power structures of the past, or may be considered to unduly reflect only one class of society. This means that national youth councils – which are umbrella associations of non-governmental youth organisations in a country – need to be supported, or even established where they do not exist, in order to have a unified and strong voice in the promotion of the interests of young people on the one hand, and seen through the perspective of youth organisations on the other, to ensure that the government visibly has a partner rooted in the youth sector.

Almost all national youth councils in Europe receive financial support from their governments for maintaining their role as young people's voice at the national level. Indeed, the European Youth Forum (YFJ), based in Brussels, Belgium, is the non-governmental umbrella association of national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations at the European level. The YFJ is an important partner for the institutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations system, and is actively consulted on issues that relate to young people. In other words, respecting the role of non-governmental youth organisations as representatives of young people has become an important and recognised practice by these organisations.

The recognition of the important role that non-governmental organisations can play as representatives of groups of young people in government decision making is one of several reasons why any government or regional integration body should promote the development of such organisations. Other, and equally important, reasons why a government or an intergovernmental body should actively support – financially and by other means – the development of youth NGOs are that such organisations:

- ▶ enable young people to gain a variety of different practical skills, knowledge and experience that they do not learn through the formal educational system but will nevertheless be important for their future;
- ▶ provide young people with opportunities to use their free time actively;
- ▶ teach young people to take care of each other, take responsibility for their local community and take action, instead of just having opinions on an issue, if that;
- ▶ enable young people to learn in practical terms about the concepts of representation and responsibility, about standing for election and casting a vote;
- ▶ ensure that the demands for political participation, dignity, freedom and employment opportunities expressed by the young people during the Arab revolution are realised in an approach based on the respect of universal values and shared interests;
- ▶ promote citizenship among young people, which is important for the long-term sustainability of ideas, values, exercise of responsibility and practices of citizenship.

## 3.2.1. Youth organisations in the Arab world

### The case of Tunisia

Since 1998,<sup>20</sup> there has been a large increase in the number and diversity of associations that work with youth owing to the revision of the law on associations, which no longer requires an obligatory authorisation procedure, but instead only a simple declaration. The distinction between a government and non-governmental organisation is small or unnoticeable. The vast majority of these associations offer cultural and artistic opportunities, followed by those offering athletic activities (these being mainly frequented by boys), associations involved in mutual engagement, and those engaged in sustainable development, or social activities. Very few associations are dedicated specifically to women. Most, if not all, of these associations lack the necessary qualified staff and trainers – all of them work with volunteers but there is a lack of young people willing to volunteer and that is why almost all such associations are run by adults, and they are challenged by the difficulty of working with only a few young people who are willing to regularly get involved in specific projects. Youth centres and rural clubs are the places most frequented by young people, although there is not always a clear distinction between the formal and non-formal activities offered in these centres. Tunisian official youth associations are represented at national level by federations, such as the Tunisian Union of Youth Organizations (UTOJ), which represents the Tunisian associative network and has a seat on the Tunisian Higher Youth Council. This council is the state partner and plays the role of a national youth council for consultative purposes only. Through its headquarters in Tunisia, the Union of Students and Young North Africans (UEM) represents other young North Africans outside their respective countries, besides Tunisian youth.

### The case of Lebanon<sup>21</sup>

In Lebanon, despite the unstable political situation, complex social structure and funding constraints, there are still many associations working actively in the youth field. Furthermore, although there is no national youth council, the Lebanese state has recognised the “Youth Shadow Government”, which has developed partnerships with other associations in order to promote youth citizenship, which is also of interest to other Middle Eastern states. The Youth Shadow Government along with the “Nahar Ashabab” association represent examples of good practice with regards to youth involvement in public life. In contrast to many Arab states, in Lebanon an association’s actions are not subject to authorisation from the authorities. Nevertheless, the religious community from which the association originates can help it to develop its activities. Associations which have a mixed or non-religious background find it very difficult to develop activities (due to problems such as financing, location and

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20. Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Tunisia, prepared by Sylvie Floris. Available at: [www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/](http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/).

21. Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries: Lebanon, prepared by Kamal Rarrbo. Available at: [www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/](http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/euromed/EMlibrary/emeducpub/EMyouthpolicies/).

recognition by public and religious authorities). NGOs deal with a variety of topics and many of them are based on a multireligious background projects:

- ▶ active citizenship;
- ▶ democracy and human rights education;
- ▶ training of youth leaders;
- ▶ citizenship education;
- ▶ prevention in open spaces (street work);
- ▶ organisation of summer camps;
- ▶ environment and sustainable development;
- ▶ humanitarian action, Palestinian camps;
- ▶ public health: prevention of addictions and Aids.

Another major problem that youth NGOs in Lebanon face in the completion of multi-cultural projects lies in their fragility during a resurgence of violence that can destroy months of work between youth groups from different communities. Not to mention funding constraints – activities often depend on foreign solidarity loans, notably from Europe (European Commission, world organisations, embassies, private foundations, etc.).

### 3.3. HOW TO INVOLVE YOUTH IN DECISION MAKING

A lack of knowledge of how to involve young people in decision making can be as damaging as the lack of political will to give young people maximum influence on decisions. This manual seeks to be a handbook and guide for national youth policy and the development of a national youth strategy, and will therefore present some ideas and examples of how non-governmental youth organisations can be involved in decision making at the central government level.

The main difference between youth participation at the national level and at the lower levels of government (in particular the municipal level) is that, in most instances, youth participation at the central level has to take place via young people's representatives rather than involving young people directly. The non-governmental youth organisations, often organised through a national youth council, should play a central role in this regard.

#### 3.3.1. The ladder of participation

Before going on to present different examples of how young people can be involved in decision making at the central government level, let us discuss for a moment a central concept of youth participation. What actually constitutes youth participation? Roger Hart, an American psychologist, wrote a book for UNICEF in 1997 called *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*, in which his "ladder of youth participation" appeared.<sup>22</sup> It quickly became a valuable tool in measuring various degrees and different stages of participation by children and young people.

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22. Hart's model is actually an adapted version of "the ladder of citizen participation" developed by Sherry Arnstein, appearing in an article in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (1968).

Hart deals with eight different stages of children’s participation, arguing however that the three bottom steps of the ladder do not actually represent real participation. While originally developed for reflecting on children, the ladder is just as applicable for the participation of young people. Hart’s reference to child-initiated activities has therefore been replaced with youth-initiated activities in the following text. The ladder should not be interpreted as meaning that we always have to make sure that we are at the highest stage on the ladder, but rather that we should aim at avoiding the lower rungs of non-participation and think of ways to genuinely involve young people in decision making. The different rungs of the ladder can be explained as follows:<sup>23</sup>

### Ladder of youth voice



*Adapted by Adam Fletcher (2011) from work by Roger Hart, et al. (1994)*

The relevant categories or degrees of participation are:

**8. Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults** – This happens when projects or programmes are initiated by young people and decision making is shared between young people and adults. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

**7. Youth-initiated and directed** – This step is when young people initiate and direct a project or programme. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.

23. Illustration and the short description of the rungs from [www.freechild.org/ladder.htm](http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm).

6. **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people** – Occurs when projects or programmes are initiated by adults but the decision making is shared with young people.

5. **Consulted and informed** – This happens when young people give advice on projects or programmes designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.

4. **Assigned but informed** – This is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.

Non-participation categories are:

3. **Tokenism** – When young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

2. **Decoration** – This is when young people are used to help or “bolster” a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.

1. **Manipulation** – This is where adults use young people to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people.

Applying this model to youth participation in political decision making at the central governmental level, it is not too difficult to perceive how “tokenism” or even “decoration” can be, and has been, used by adults with little interest in or knowledge of how real participation is exercised. An example is when a group of young people, with no prior training or preparation, are invited to a high-level conference for adults in order to serve as a “youth alibi”. Another example is occasions where young people are asked to give their opinions, but where it is never intended to take their ideas into account or consider them.

At the level of national government, youth participation, where it exists at all, very rarely reaches the highest rungs of the ladder. This should not be all that surprising, since it is very often the government that takes the initiative to consult young people or youth organisations on issues for which the government will be responsible and will want to have the final word (for example when the government is developing a new action plan on youth employment and invites the national youth council to contribute their ideas and proposals in writing before a specific deadline). And since any national government is responsible for its political decisions, it can hardly be blamed for not giving away its final decision-making authority to young people or their representative organisations. Therefore, youth participation at this level usually fluctuates between rungs four and five and, on rare occasions, may even reach level six.

In fact, while government at the municipal level may want to experiment with youth participation at the highest rungs of the ladder, the reality is that what we should strive for at the national level is that young people (which, at the central level of government, means the non-governmental youth organisations or the national youth council, if it exists) should always be consulted on issues that involve them, and receive guarantees that their opinions will weigh heavily when decisions are taken. It can hardly be demanded from a government that it will let young people be allowed to make political decisions by themselves, as there will be budgetary

consequences, with the government being obligated to implement them. But let us go through some examples of how a government can exercise youth participation at the national level when developing a national youth strategy or implementing a national youth policy.

### **3.3.2. Examples of youth participation at the national level**

Chapter 5 outlines how youth participation should be a central element in the development of a national youth strategy (NYS). We will therefore not spend much time and space covering these steps here, beyond summarising some bullet points:

- ▶ youth NGOs should take part in seminars/conferences outlining the priorities and objectives of the NYS;
- ▶ youth NGOs should be involved in the steering group, different working groups and other parts of the structure to develop the NYS;
- ▶ young people should be consulted directly through round table discussions or other activities organised especially for young people, carried out at the local level.

When it comes to ensuring long-term youth participation during the implementation of the national youth strategy, meaning the regular day-to-day activities and responsibilities of the youth ministry, there are different ways in which this can be ensured.

One very concrete way of involving non-governmental youth organisations in the implementation of the strategy is to earmark project funds or grants specifically for the realisation of some measures in the strategy or action plan of the youth organisations. This can be the organisation of training courses on specific subjects, such as, “How can youth organisations take measures towards inclusion, participation and human rights?” (Several activities in the framework of the European All Different – All Equal campaign carried out in 2007 and 2008 in countries throughout Europe are a good example in this regard. Another is the No Hate Speech movement and its call for young online activists to develop their competence for combating racism and discrimination.) The Young Arab Voices Week<sup>24</sup> is an example of practical encouragement of debate and dialogue, which are of particular relevance in cases where fundamental freedoms of expression and association are not commonly experienced.

Some youth NGOs may have developed special expertise in non-formal learning, environmental issues, working with minorities or less privileged young people. These organisations may be able to organise training activities, or other measures, for the implementation of the youth strategy in a much cheaper and more efficient way than the government. So why not “outsource” these activities to the youth NGOs, thereby strengthening and empowering the organisations at the same time?

There are also many ways in which a government can institutionalise youth participation in youth policy – in the concrete implementation of a strategy, and in the continuous work by the government to improve the situation for young people.

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24. [www.euromedalex.org/news/region-wide-young-arab-voices-week-launched](http://www.euromedalex.org/news/region-wide-young-arab-voices-week-launched).

There is, however, a great difference depending on whether or not a national youth council exists in the country concerned.

1. The existence of an independent national youth council (which is the legitimate umbrella association for most of the national youth organisations in a country) greatly simplifies the possibility of having a close and on-going dialogue between youth organisations and the government. There are many ways in which the government can ensure youth participation through closer co-operation with a national youth council. The following are some good examples and practices.

- ▶ Providing the national youth council with an administrative grant to cover expenses for office rent, phone and IT equipment, staff salaries and other running expenses, which makes it possible to maintain a satisfactory level of administration. This will in turn enable the organisation to become more stable and state its opinions more effectively and on a continuous basis, thus becoming a more reliable partner for the government.
- ▶ Inviting each other (ministry and national youth council) to exchange information on current matters of interest to the other party and maintaining good working relations between the two parties. Such meetings should be held – for example every six months – in an informal atmosphere, and include different ministry staff addressing youth issues and the board and staff of the youth council.
- ▶ Through the national youth council expressing its opinions on an ad hoc basis on all major issues affecting young people, and proposing new measures to existing challenges.
- ▶ Strongly encouraging other ministries to be in contact with the national youth council when they are addressing issues with a youth dimension.
- ▶ Involving the national youth council in a selection committee, which selects projects by youth NGOs that will receive financial grants from the government.
- ▶ Establishing a youth delegate programme within the ministry of foreign affairs. Upon the nomination of the national youth council, youth delegates should be appointed as official members of the country's delegation to the annual General Assembly of the United Nations.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, youth delegates should be appointed to other sessions or important meetings of different UN organisations, as well as to other international organisations, where it is deemed relevant or where such a practice exists.

2. If a national youth council does not exist, the government should support youth organisations' own efforts to develop such a body. It is essential, however, that the youth organisations themselves are the initiators of a national youth council and that it is not established as a consequence of government influence or pressure.

3. One way for the government to consult young people and to get input from youth organisations – regardless of whether a national youth council exists in the country or not – is to organise an annual youth conference, which brings together representatives

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25. A total of 23 youth delegates from 16 countries participated in the United National General Assembly in 2007.

of youth organisations, youth researchers and the ministry responsible for youth issues, but also different government agencies and ministries. The objectives for such a conference (which might be residential over two or more days) should be to promote dialogue among youth NGOs and between youth NGOs and government representatives, and give young people the opportunity to provide input into different government processes. An important confidence-building measure that will benefit future relations between the youth NGO sector and the government could be for the conference to provide space and time for direct dialogue between the political leadership responsible for youth issues and the youth NGO representatives. If a national youth council does not exist, organising such an annual conference becomes even more important as a means of consulting young people.

3. Another way to ensure youth participation, irrespective of whether a national youth council exists, is to appoint young people as members of independent commissions or expert groups in order to explore a specific issue or advise the government on a certain policy area. Typically, young people are highly under-represented in such commissions. But remember that young people are also experts and make up a large segment of a society, and should be included in such commissions and expert groups, even if they do not specifically address youth issues.

4. A number of governments have established commissions which advise the government on how state grants to the non-governmental youth organisations (administrative grants as well as project grants) should be distributed. These commissions have a strong representation from the national youth council, or a representative sample of national youth organisations. The idea behind this practice is that representatives of the youth organisations should have a say in how the government allocates funds to the organisations themselves. The representatives may also exercise some influence in ensuring that the state grants and budget allocations to the youth sector are not unfairly reduced.

These are just some examples, based on existing practices, of how a government can ensure institutional youth participation in decision making at the national level. However, there are also other practices of youth participation in government decision making, so do not let this list limit your imagination! For inspiration, find out more about how different countries involve young people and youth organisations in decision making by visiting relevant web pages.

## Chapter 4

# Some important issues to address when developing and implementing a national youth strategy

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**B**ased on first-hand observation of national youth strategies, this chapter discusses certain issues that will have to be addressed when developing and implementing a national youth strategy. Some of these challenges are general and will apply to any country, while others are more specific to countries with a lack of tradition in having a cross-sectoral national youth policy developed within the context of a strong civil society and perceiving young people as a resource.

If the government is taking the initiative to develop a national youth strategy, it is essential that there is, from the start, honesty and a clear commitment to make a realistic plan, including a budget that makes it possible to implement the strategy. Developing a plan with long-term goals must not become an excuse for not doing anything now!

When it comes to implementing the strategy, there are unfortunately too many examples of excellent plans and strategies in different policy areas that never go beyond the drafting stage. Ensuring that the plan is realistic involves the right partners and sufficient levels of local ownership, which are essential qualities of a successful strategy.

## 4.1. YOUTH POLICY AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODELS

The international development approach to youth is influenced by various prevailing paradigms, including: a) the human capital model; b) the demographic transition model; c) the rights-based development model; and d) the youth exclusion model. Most of the MENA countries follow the rights-based approach to youth development because it is the underlying conceptual framework of the UN development policies. It focuses on the realisation of the rights of excluded and marginalised young people so as to fulfil their development needs based on international human rights standards and it seeks to analyse development problems and builds on the premise that a country cannot achieve sustained progress without recognising human rights principles. While this developmental model of youth policy might still be fruitful for some Asian and Latin American countries where educational levels, especially among the young, are lower than in many Arab countries, some recent research-based findings indicate the necessity for South Mediterranean countries to move towards the youth exclusion model.<sup>26</sup> The premise of this model is that it reveals how youth are being overlooked and excluded from effective participation in various aspects of economic, social and political life, as well as the lack of access to financial and physical assets as a major barrier to successfully transitioning to economic independence for young persons.

## 4.2. WHY DO WE NEED A NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY?

Let us first clarify why we believe that a national youth strategy is important and can make a difference to the realisation of youth policy.

Developing a coherent strategy along the lines advocated in this manual is important for a number of reasons. First of all, and most evident, it ensures that there is a medium- or long-term plan for improving the situation of young people, with a set of defined objectives and corresponding measures for each of the objectives. Carrying out a youth policy on an ad hoc basis, on the other hand, makes it more difficult for it to reach its objectives (if they are in fact clearly defined).

Second, a youth strategy ensures youth participation. A well-developed strategy will ensure that young people and non-governmental youth organisations are involved in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation in different policy sectors, in line with established international practice laid down in treaties and conventions.

Third, it makes youth policy more flexible. A national strategy makes it possible to prioritise between different objectives and measures for implementing a national youth policy. It makes it possible to adapt the policy to changing political realities and to deal strategically with possible budget increases or cuts.

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26. Implemented by the Wolfensohn Centre at the Brookings Institution as stated by Jad Chaaban, 2009. "Youth and Development in the Arab Countries: The Need for a Different Approach" in *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 45, Issue 1. Available at: [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00263200802547644](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00263200802547644). (by subscription)

Fourth, developing a strategy creates wide ownership of youth policy. It is natural to involve different ministries and government bodies that address policy areas that affect young people in developing the strategy, as well as different stakeholder groups that can also play an important role in the implementation phase. Local government should also be involved.

Fifth, ensuring a cross-sectoral dimension to youth policy is much easier with a strategy. An ad hoc approach to policy does not make it possible to co-ordinate action in many different areas in a variety of policy sectors simultaneously, such as health, education, employment and leisure-time activities. A strategy makes it possible to develop an integrated youth policy.

Sixth, a youth strategy increases the quality of the measures applied to achieve the goals of youth policy. A strategy makes it possible to plan ahead and make arrangements for future activities, to involve the best possible experts and to carry out necessary research. There are also plenty of examples of how the active participation of young people in all stages of policy creates better solutions for young people themselves.

Finally, youth policy should not be considered as an end itself but one pivotal constituent in the national long-term youth strategy, motivated by the determination to achieve a certain level of improvement in the lives of youth: moving the situation of young people from point A to an improved point B. This entails that a policy should include a moderate level of flexibility for adjustment, maintainability, and target a preset time frame, because youth as a concept and as a segment of population is a very dynamic and an evolving construct; thus, national policy has to be tailored accordingly.

### **4.3. OWNERSHIP**

The most essential challenge in developing a national youth strategy is, arguably, to ensure a wide local ownership. Ensuring a wide ownership of the strategy – both within government and among the non-governmental youth organisations – is absolutely crucial for guaranteeing its implementation. One can always hire a small group of international experts to come in and finish the whole strategy in a matter of weeks and assign different responsibilities for its implementation to various government ministries. But when, as a result of this “quick fix”, these ministries do not have a sense of responsibility or natural interest in the strategy and nothing is at stake for them, they will not care whether the strategy succeeds or fails. They will have little interest in its implementation. Likewise, if non-governmental youth organisations do not have ownership of a governmental strategy or action plan for youth, they will be much less likely to contribute to its success. So how can a strong local ownership be guaranteed?

In a discussion on ownership, there are two words that carry particular significance: responsibility and interest. If a ministry or government agency is responsible for a certain action, but has no interest whatsoever in implementing it, there is no guarantee that the task will in fact be carried out. On the other hand, if the same agency has an interest in carrying out the action because it is seen as important or urgent,

but does not have the responsibility or authority for carrying it out, there is also a possibility that the outcome will be the same. However, when these two components work together and there is both a responsibility for, as well as an interest in, carrying out the action, it is much more likely that the action will be implemented. The reason for this is that the ministry or agency has developed an institutional ownership, or commitment, to carry out the action. This kind of ownership is also necessary for guaranteeing the implementation of a national youth strategy.

### **4.3.1. Government ownership**

In terms of ensuring government ownership, the first essential thing is that there is a government body identified as being responsible for both the development and implementation of the national youth strategy. This may sound self-evident, but the fact is that there are examples of national youth strategies being developed in countries where the government made a vague commitment to take part in the process, but where no government authority was identified as being responsible for the implementation. The message here is: do not start the process of developing a national youth strategy if there is no government authority assigned the responsibility for the process and with the motivation to lead it. In this context, “government body” means the ministry primarily responsible for youth. Even if youth issues are handled by a directorate or a secretariat on a day-to-day basis, it is important that the ministry takes the lead in such a matter as developing a government strategy.

Second, the primary task of the ministry responsible for the development of the national youth strategy should be to assign a team of experts headed by a national co-ordinator to the process (see section 5.4). If possible, the national co-ordinator should be at the level of senior official, deputy minister or state secretary – someone who has the leverage and capacity to take important decisions and who can contact other ministries if and when it is necessary. Having a group of experts assigned the responsibility to develop the strategy, managed by someone who has the capacity to lead the process, will be absolutely crucial for positive group dynamics and a feeling of ownership of the process.

Third, keep in mind that youth policy is cross-sectoral in nature. It will therefore require budgetary resources for its implementation that fall under the responsibilities of different governmental bodies. This makes it necessary to involve all ministries which address issues relating to young people. Ensuring that the ownership extends to all those governmental authorities is a real challenge. Developing an inter-ministerial working group or committee (consisting of senior officials other than politicians) will be necessary. As far as possible, try to insist that a small working group is set up in each ministry involved in the national youth strategy development process, rather than leaving all responsibility to the person assigned to the inter-ministerial working group. It will be very difficult to develop ownership of the process in the different ministries if they only have one person involved in it. Furthermore, while governments readily claim that co-operation with youth organisations is difficult, because of the rapid “turnover” of youth leaders, they fail to make sure that it is the same individual officials who attend all the meetings of the inter-ministerial working group. This is important, even though a government may be in a state of transition,

since the members will then develop personal bonds and a group dynamic, which will again be favourable for the development of ownership of the national youth strategy process within the different ministries represented in the group.

Fourth, building the capacity of the government to address youth issues generates ownership. This goes for different government institutions and the different ministries in the government. Involving them with the various thematic working groups that address specific policy areas should therefore be a priority.

Fifth, getting positive media attention for the strategy can promote ownership. If politicians and senior policy decision makers see that the process attracts attention from radio, TV and/or the printed and online media, the process will be seen as more important. They can then commit time and attention to it more easily. This is good, but it does not in itself indicate strong ownership. However, media attention gives everyone involved in the process a feeling that what they are working on is important and interesting for others. It adds a level of urgency to the work. Someone cares about the strategy we are developing! This creates ownership.

Finally, it is important to involve the highest political levels in order to extend governmental ownership of the process as far as possible. One way to do this is to establish some kind of reporting mechanism to the minister responsible for youth issues or to the cabinet (depending on the political structure of a country). This will increase the status of the national youth strategy process. Furthermore, involve the minister responsible for youth and any other relevant government ministers in specific events, such as seminars and conferences, related to the strategy development. Not only will it spark a feeling of responsibility, interest and ownership among the ministers themselves for the continued work of the strategy, but it will also create a feeling of importance and boost the motivation of everyone involved in the process.

### **4.3.2. Ownership by non-governmental youth organisations**

Extending ownership to non-governmental youth organisations is important for obvious reasons. Any government will want to have strong endorsement for a national strategy from the main category of stakeholders that will be affected. If the youth organisations do not have any ownership of a national youth strategy at all, they will easily feel indifferent to it and believe that it is not important. They will most likely not want to contribute to the implementation process, and will not speak favourably about the plan to the constituency they represent and whose interests they protect: young people. Still more significantly, if young people and youth organisations do not have any ownership of the national youth strategy at all, they may even undermine any prospect of positive development.

So how does one ensure strong ownership of the national youth strategy process among non-governmental youth organisations? The short and obvious answer is: youth participation. By inviting youth organisations to become involved in the process of developing a national youth strategy right from the planning stage, they will develop both a sense of responsibility as well as an interest in contributing. Do not wait until the main objectives of the plan have been defined to involve youth organisations – involve them from the very beginning!

If the country has an independent national youth council, which is recognised as the umbrella association of non-governmental youth organisations in the country, it should be rather uncomplicated to involve it from the early planning stages. If there is no national youth council, or if it appears discredited in the eyes of a new government or of society in general, the government should reach out to the youth organisations through the national media, social media and other methods that will engage the youth NGO sector. Even with a national youth council, the government should have a broad approach to inviting youth NGOs to seminars and conferences, as well as working groups and committees or open consultations that are part of the national youth strategy development process.

There is one note of caution to a government when it comes to the extent of participation from the non-governmental youth sector, however. Do not “give away” the whole strategy development process to youth organisations, so that they come to dominate all aspects of the planning process, leaving limited space for government representatives and other stakeholder groups to be equally involved. Such a comment may sound misplaced, since more often it is the opposite which is true – that youth NGOs are not sufficiently involved. However, there have been situations where the non-governmental youth sector has come to feel such strong ownership for the youth strategy development process that it has alienated government officials – making them lose their sense of ownership of the process because it has become completely NGO dominated. In other words: encouraging maximum involvement and partnership from a range of different actors in a process to develop a national youth strategy can sometimes be a fine balancing act between governmental and NGO ownership.

### **4.3.3. Involvement of international organisations**

International organisations, individual UN agencies, funds and programmes or inter-agency task forces, international umbrella bodies of youth organisations or other external actors can sometimes exert a strong influence on a national government to develop a national youth strategy, coupled with provision of privileged financial resources for its development. Sometimes, however, following government agreement to develop such a strategy, the external actor takes on such a dominant or important role in the development process that the government cannot develop sufficient ownership to actually implement the strategy. In that case, one is stuck with a nice and glossy strategy document, which never really does much to improve the lives of young people. It is a sad fact that there are many such national strategies, which have been developed as a result of international pressure or influence, but with minimal governmental ownership. In such cases, the plans remain neatly piled on government desks or in closed drawers.

One reason why this happens is that an international organisation, which often contributes both financial resources and expert staff, has its own agenda or single issue to promote, and its own funders or headquarters to report back to. As a result, the temptation to influence the content and the speed of developing a national youth strategy can be just too great.

### Some simple advice for international organisations

The following are some simple rules that should be observed by any international organisation or external sponsor involved in the process of developing a national youth strategy, in order to ensure strong local ownership by a government:

- ▶ keep in mind that the more direct role you play in the process, the more you will challenge the government's ownership of the plan and commitment to implementing it;
- ▶ sign a contract with the responsible government body, outlining what the responsibilities are for the different actors involved, and what the government's own contribution to the process will be (both in terms of finance and human resources);
- ▶ avoid taking a direct part in a steering committee or similar steering body, where you will be seen as one of the responsible actors;
- ▶ take a systemic approach to support the whole of national youth policy and strategy development, no matter how important your own issue(s) or mandate appears to be to you;
- ▶ if you are bringing in external experts as part of the national youth strategy development process, ensure that they will be in direct contact with the government body instead of you as much as possible, preferably with office space on government premises;
- ▶ respect government proposals and decisions that may run contrary to your own wishes, as long as they do not conflict with the overall goals of the national youth strategy;
- ▶ accept that the government body may want to include external experts or organisations, other than your own, in the national youth strategy process;
- ▶ remember that the national youth strategy development process is a capacity-building exercise, and that the process itself may be just as important as the final product. Accept, therefore, that the process may take longer than first scheduled.

## 4.4. PROCESS FOCUS VERSUS GOAL FOCUS

In an article about endurance training in a sports magazine, a very successful coach stressed that the reason why he managed to be so successful with his triathlon students was that he managed to change their focus from being result-oriented to being process-oriented. His philosophy was: if you enjoy the training process, the results will take care of themselves.<sup>27</sup>

We have something to learn from this perspective in relation to policy development, especially when it involves the inclusion of young people in the decision-making

27. [www.trifuel.com/training/triathlon-training/being-process-focused-vs-results-focused](http://www.trifuel.com/training/triathlon-training/being-process-focused-vs-results-focused).

process. We have to remind ourselves that in the development of a national youth strategy, the process is important in itself. The process is a capacity-building exercise for both the governmental and non-governmental sectors, and it is also about creating trust and good working relations between these two sectors.

Of course, the final product – the strategy document – is very important. But the process of reaching out to stakeholders and involving them in developing the strategy can have far-reaching positive consequences. And, just as the triathlon coach stressed, if you pay sufficient attention to the process, you will also get the best results. Therefore, ensure that young people, as well as other stakeholder groups, are sufficiently consulted and involved, and that all issues that need to be included in the strategy are sufficiently addressed. If proper involvement of stakeholders requires you to extend some deadlines and postpone completion of the strategy document, keep an open mind and a flexible approach. Just remember that if you maintain a process-oriented focus, you are on your way to achieving your goals.

#### **4.5. CONFIDENCE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

A good process will improve mutual confidence and relations between the different stakeholder groups and government ministries that are involved – something that all parties should understand will be in their self-interest. In order to build such confidence and trust among actors in the non-governmental sector, it is important for both government officials and politicians involved in developing the youth strategy to maintain sufficient opportunities for young people and non-governmental youth organisations to be involved. Sincerity and full openness and transparency by politicians and officials are equally important confidence-building measures, as are politicians who show through their actions and not only through their words that they are accountable to their constituents for promises they make.

Keeping the process transparent means several things. First, it involves spreading information about the process as widely as possible while it is on-going. What is the strategy about? Who can be involved? What is happening when? Why? Use the different communication channels available: set up a web page, send e-mails, tweets and posts, publicise through newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, send regular briefings and press releases to the media.

Second, transparency is about developing, publicising and then sticking to clear guidelines, with set criteria for the recruitment of non-governmental youth organisations, staff and members of different committees and working groups in the national youth strategy process, or clear selection criteria for projects to be funded by limited government grants, and so on. Vacancy announcements and calls for proposals must be announced and publicised widely, with sufficient deadlines for the interested groups to respond to the calls. Results of selection processes must also be made public.

But transparency is also about being open about the political challenges that a country faces and the willingness to address them in a political strategy. Difficult

issues to address often include ethnic and linguistic minority rights, conditions in orphanages or institutions for the mentally ill, intellectually or physically challenged young people, issues related to sexual orientation, and other areas where there may be practices which violate human rights. There may be disillusionment and impatience concerning the pace of change, especially with election promises and job creation. There may be confusion about the emergence of powerful conservative forces and the search for a meaningful understanding of the place of religion or tradition in political life. The more openly these issues are addressed, the more politicians and senior officials will be seen to be making an honest effort to change policies and practices for the better.

Transparency breeds accountability. Accountability is about standing firm and sticking to the political promises one has made towards a constituency. Unfortunately, the political culture in some countries is that politicians very easily make promises (during an election year or in the aftermath of uprisings in particular) that they know they cannot keep. This has created a lot of mistrust and apathy, even anger, in particular among young people, towards politicians. The best way politicians can regain not just young people's trust and confidence is by maintaining an open and transparent approach. In our context, accountability is about sticking to one's promises when it comes to youth participation in both the developmental and implementation stages of the national youth strategy.

## 4.6. LEGISLATION

A legislative base may well be needed in order to successfully address youth policy. Countries with relatively long traditions in addressing youth policy have chosen different paths; Finland, for example, has a separate youth law while Norway does not have any such legislation.

Non-governmental youth activists in most of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and South-Eastern Europe are often strong advocates for adopting a youth law in their countries. "If there is a law on youth", the argument goes, "the government will have to give priority to youth policy." This argument, while it may hold true for a certain country under very specific circumstances, does not apply as a general answer or as a magical formula for focusing sufficient attention on and providing resources to youth policy. Undermining the argument is the fact that there are indeed countries with a long-standing youth policy that do not have a specific youth law.<sup>28</sup> There are also countries that have adopted youth laws or strong policy resolutions at a national level, which have not secured the anticipated and desired progress in youth policy.

In fact, the concept of "youth policy" can be rather abstract and difficult to solidify through concrete legislation. One should therefore be wary of focusing too much on the need for legislation on youth in order to ensure high-quality implementation of youth policy.

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28. For example, Norway and the Republic of Slovakia.

## 4.7. CROSS-SECTORAL CO-OPERATION AT THE GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL

When the national youth strategy is adopted, it will be the responsibility of the proper government authority responsible for youth to co-ordinate the implementation of the plan. This is most often a ministry or a national youth agency. While youth issues typically do not command an entire ministry of their own, they are in most countries dealt with by a department within a ministry that also has responsibilities for other issues, such as education, sports, culture or social affairs.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, we have tried to be consistent in referring to the “ministry responsible for youth” or “youth ministry” in this manual, while the highest political authority responsible for youth is called a “youth minister”.

Most European countries (and international organisations concerned with young people) favour a model where there is a national agency for youth issues and youth policy.<sup>30</sup> In some countries, such an agency is mandated to take on the role and responsibility of the government on youth issues (in terms of both developing and implementing policy), while in other countries there is both an active ministry responsible for youth and a national youth agency. In cases where a ministry and an agency co-exist, the role of the ministry is usually overall policy formulation and oversight, while the youth agency is allocated specific tasks of youth policy implementation. This is not unlike the system whereby a ministry of health sets and supervises norms and standards, while a national health service delivers health care.

However, it is important to anchor the responsibility for youth policy at the ministerial level and have a special unit within the ministry given the concrete task of overseeing and monitoring implementation of the strategy. This unit should be responsible for submitting monitoring reports to the youth minister on a regular basis (for example every six or nine months).

A successful implementation will depend on a comprehensive horizontal cross-sectoral co-ordination and co-operation between different governmental bodies and ministries that in some way address issues that have an impact on young people. It is absolutely essential to find appropriate ways of ensuring successful inter-ministerial co-operation on a theme such as youth policy, which is so cross-cutting by nature. This task can therefore not be taken seriously enough. Here are a couple of examples of how this can be done.

One way to ensure proper horizontal co-operation at the governmental level is for the youth ministry to initiate the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group of state secretaries from the different ministries that have specific responsibilities within the national youth strategy. An additional move can be to organise regular meetings at the level of senior civil servants. It may also be possible to revise the mandate of the inter-ministerial working group from the national youth strategy development process, which already consists of experts in different ministries who are familiar with the youth policy development process. What is important is that there is regular and constructive dialogue between the different ministries and the political will and ability to implement the strategy.

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29. World Bank (2007), p. 215.

30. Williamson, Howard (2008), p. 21.

Another example of how to promote inter-ministerial co-operation can be found in Norway, where the “Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion” is responsible for the inter-ministerial co-ordination of youth policy. Every January (after the approval of the state budget), the ministry releases a comprehensive publication, developed in close co-operation with almost all ministries in the government, providing an exhaustive overview of how much, and in what concrete areas, each and every ministry spends on issues relating to children and youth in the new budget year. The publication, called *Investing in Children and Youth*,<sup>31</sup> is sent out every year to all municipalities across the country, as well as to non-governmental organisations, and is a widely popular tool in providing an overview for how the government works with children and youth. While the final product has indeed become very popular, the process of developing the publication is useful and important for establishing inter-ministerial networks of civil servants addressing youth issues. It also gives recognition to the ministry responsible for youth policy co-ordination, since the publication shows in a very concrete way that some sort of co-ordination in the youth sector is indeed necessary.

#### **4.8. VERTICAL CO-OPERATION AT THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL**

Implementation of the national youth strategy will also very much depend on a close co-operation between the youth ministry and local government: so-called vertical co-operation. In many ways, youth policy is local. It is the local communities that will feel the consequences of a successful or failed youth policy most immediately, and it is also very often at the local level that urgent and immediate action can be taken to improve the situation for young people. Therefore, maintaining a strong link between these levels is immensely important.

However, in many countries, the administrative subdivisions (municipalities, governorates, *moughataas*, prefectures, provinces, *qadaas*, regions, *wilayas*) enjoy some local self-determination, and central governments avoid forcing these subdivisions to implement policy. In such cases, the central government has to “govern by incentive” by convincing the municipalities that they have much to gain from implementing central government policy. In any case, this way of exerting policy implementation can be the most effective in countries that have a strong central government and limited self-determination at the local level, since the aim is to foster self-interest and thereby local ownership to develop a policy aimed at improving the situation for young people. There are a number of ways in which the central government can use the carrot rather than the stick to get the local authorities on board in implementing the national youth strategy, thereby ensuring a strong vertical governmental co-operation.

First, the national strategy could include some financial incentives for the development of a local youth strategy or for the implementation of the national youth strategy at the local level. Such incentives can be that the central government will

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31. Freely translated from Norwegian, the publication is only available in the Norwegian language, at the Norwegian government’s website: [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

pay a percentage of the cost for setting up a youth centre or specific youth services, or will pay half the cost of a youth expert's salary.

Second, the ministry should take on the responsibility for training staff that are responsible for youth issues in the municipalities at regional and/or national training sessions. Among the topics to be covered are youth participation, improved cross-sectoral co-ordination among different youth services, the value of civil society and the importance of supporting non-governmental youth initiatives.

Third, a national conference, which brings together municipal civil servants responsible for youth issues, could be held every year with the purpose of networking, exchanging experiences and in this way developing and expanding the motivation to implement the national youth strategy.

Fourth, concrete guidelines and information about examples of best practice are always in great demand and very necessary. Therefore, a manual, a guide, or official documents with national guidelines, could be developed and distributed to all municipalities, informing them of the national youth strategy and of ways in which it should be implemented at the local level. It should be formulated in a way which attracts interest and excitement, giving examples of best practice and ideas for involving young people in government decision making.

Study visits between municipalities that express a significant interest in investing in young people and youth policy should be encouraged and sponsored by the ministry responsible for youth.

## **4.9. EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED**

As was seen with perestroika and the collapse of communism, intifada, 9/11 and the "war on terror", the Arab revolutions, tsunamis, earthquakes, Fukushima or financial crises, any country can experience sudden changes that very quickly have a strong impact on the implementation of government policies and strategies of different kinds. This is particularly the case for countries which are or have recently been undergoing transition. Such countries may experience a less stable political system, where incoming governments have no interest in pursuing action plans or national strategies which were developed by the previous government. In addition to changes in the political climate, a ministry can also find that the resources available to maintain the youth strategy after it has been implemented will be considerably reduced. A strategy will have a lifespan of several years, while a state budget is for one year only.

For these reasons, one should make a risk assessment part of the strategy development. Discuss possible scenarios and how to deal with them: is it possible that the government will fall after the next election or an unexpected uprising? If so, how can we ensure that the national youth strategy will survive under a new government? What shall we do if we experience a 50% budget drop for the implementation of the strategy?

There are several ways in which such a risk assessment can have a concrete impact on the youth strategy development process. First, try to get as much bipartisan political support for the youth strategy as possible, by involving the political opposition in the consultation process (for example, the youth branches of all political parties). Second, focus on objectives and outcomes that are more likely to have a lasting impact, or which will be irreversible once they have been implemented. Third, rank the objectives, outcomes and measures of the youth strategy in order of priority, knowing which ones you will have to cut if there is a sudden and/or huge drop in the budgetary or human resources needed to implement the plan.



## Chapter 5

# Setting the stage: planning the strategy development process

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**T**here is a long list of issues that should be addressed in advance of starting the national youth strategy development process. Issues related to ownership, accountability and transparency have already been mentioned. This chapter reviews more thoroughly the concrete preparatory steps that need to be considered and decisions that need to be taken before that development process starts. It also suggests a number of different working bodies appropriate for such a comprehensive process. Furthermore, it presents the different levels of a strategy, how the overall goals can be “broken down” into their smallest components in order to ensure that the activities which will be implemented in the strategy actually correspond to the overall goals and objectives. However, as is emphasised below, this is but one example of developing a national youth strategy.

### **5.1. A BUDGET FOR THE PROCESS**

In order to carry out a process to develop a national youth strategy, it is essential to allocate budgetary resources. The more resources are allocated to the process, the more participatory it has the potential to be. The budget will cover expenses related to setting up and supporting the structure outlined in this chapter, as well as for organising workshops, conferences and training activities that will be necessary in order to carry out the whole process.

However, the issue of local ownership also comes into play here. An external sponsor/ international organisation may offer additional funds for the process to develop a national youth strategy that goes beyond what the national government is interested in. Knowing how difficult it often is to refuse external funding, the risk is that the government may accept this, even if it is in fact opposed to the idea of expanding the process. This may lead to a dramatic loss of governmental ownership of the process, and a reduced government interest in implementing the youth strategy once it is finalised.

The way to solve this issue, if it should arise, is through close dialogue, open examination and management of potential conflicts of interest and through an awareness and understanding on the part of the external sponsor of the need to maintain strong government ownership of the process, if it is going to succeed.

## **5.2. THE NEED FOR RESEARCH**

The first important step is to map the situation of young people in the country. The ministry responsible for youth should collect research and analyses that have been carried out in recent years, including surveys and statistical data. The different sets of indicators or areas of youth policy can serve as a guide about which areas it is important to gather information on.

If no recent research on the situation of young people has been carried out, or is available, it is of crucial importance that such research is carried out. It is a government responsibility to commission such research as the first step in developing a national youth strategy.

Even if recent research does exist, it can be difficult for government decision makers, stakeholder groups and other interested parties to gather this information. The government should therefore take on the task of developing an overview of existing research, so that it can be brought to the attention of the different thematic working groups on areas that will be covered by the strategy.

As part of mapping the situation of young people in the country, a focus should be on determining which groups of youth live in vulnerable situations created by either current circumstances, political conditions or long histories of social exclusion and discrimination.

## **5.3. IDENTIFY THE STAKEHOLDERS**

Stakeholders are both those who are influenced by and those who exert an influence on the policies and actions that will be part of the national youth strategy, either directly or indirectly. It is important to take a broad approach when defining who the stakeholders are, since they will all have different expertise and competence to contribute to the process.

As should be self-evident from what you have read so far, young people are the primary group to which the policy addresses itself and thus the key stakeholder group in developing a national youth strategy. Depending on the resources available when developing the strategy, it may or may not be possible to involve young people on a large scale. Recognising the practical difficulties of involving young people directly in the process, however, we have previously discussed the important role of non-governmental youth organisations and existing international practice of consulting with youth NGOs and national youth councils on policy issues that relate to young people.

Other stakeholder groups that are more directly impacted by the youth strategy are parents, schoolteachers, university lecturers and other educational professionals.

One should therefore consider involving interest organisations for these groups in the process. Depending on the issues, it may also be relevant to involve a range of different professional groups who have expert knowledge and experience from working with young people. This includes business organisations and trade unions, organisations and authorities involved in areas such as housing and public health, youth workers, social workers, police, military and justice authorities, counsellors, religious and community leaders.

The category of stakeholders that exert an influence on the policies and actions of the national youth strategy are, of course, the different government ministries responsible for policies that have a youth dimension to them. This also applies to government agencies and directorates that do not have the status of a ministry. Youth researchers and academics addressing young people's issues may also fall into this category, although they have a much more indirect impact on young people than the government decision makers do.

A stakeholder group which will most likely be affected by the national youth strategy but which may also be able to influence the policies and the actions to be included in it is the international organisations and multilateral and bilateral structures (especially agencies delivering official development assistance) in the country. Different UN agencies also fall into this category.

## **5.4. DEVELOP A PROJECT DESIGN FOR THE PROCESS**

In order to develop an effective strategy, it is necessary to have a predefined plan of how to involve various stakeholder groups and ministries, while at the same time keeping the process to a tight time schedule. This is what we call the project design for the process.

How comprehensive a project design should be will depend on resources available. A limited budget and scarce resources allow for a less comprehensive process with fewer working groups, fewer people involved and with limited consultation. Although a larger budget and more resources for strategy development will make it possible to include a larger number of stakeholders, organise more activities which will involve more young people and so on, there is no formula that says "bigger is always better". It is much better to develop a national youth strategy with limited resources than not to do the job at all, and a less ambitious project design which is cost-efficient may achieve impressive results if it is done right. Therefore, much effort should be put into recruiting the best people, with a good understanding of how to carry out such a process, involving the active participation of young people and other stakeholders.

When developing a project design, it is important to keep in mind what it is you want to achieve. You want to develop as high quality a strategy as possible with the resources you have available, right? What you need to reflect on is identifying the main elements of the strategy development process. No matter if you decide to go for a lighter version, or a comprehensive project design, you need to ensure that the following bullet points are fulfilled. The project design should facilitate and enable:

- ▶ a clear formulation of goals, objectives, outcomes, indicators and proposed activities;

- ▶ a continuous and strong focus on research into the situation of young people;
- ▶ a comprehensive analysis of the situation of young people and what can be done in the different policy sectors to provide young people with opportunities;
- ▶ an inter-ministerial co-operation and partnership, which in turn will lead to a cross-sectoral and integrated youth strategy;
- ▶ as comprehensive a consultation process with young people as possible with the resources available;
- ▶ the involvement of all different stakeholder groups influencing the situation of young people in society;
- ▶ the involvement of municipalities, local government officials and other agencies which, in the end, will play an important part in the implementation of the strategy;
- ▶ a clear plan for monitoring and evaluating the strategy once it is being implemented.

### **5.4.1. An example of a comprehensive project design**

As mentioned above, a strong budget for a project design will allow for a wide consultation process with young people. This should increase the legitimacy of the process and eventually also increase the quality of the strategy and its potential for success. It is therefore important not to underestimate the importance of developing a strong and structured project design. What follows is an example of a comprehensive structure with a countrywide consultation process with young people and relevant stakeholders. As has been stressed earlier in this chapter, it is also possible to develop a national youth strategy on a smaller scale, with more limited consultation with youth and fewer people involved in the process. The reason why so much space has been given to present one example of a comprehensive project design in this manual is that this model has proved successful when implemented in real life. This does not mean, however, that it is not possible to do it in other ways. So let the example presented here be a source of inspiration and information, rather than a blueprint for how it should be done!

Regardless of whether the project design is as comprehensive as suggested in this manual or more limited, it will consist of different elements, which together form a structure. Two issues need to be clarified for each and every element of the structure. First, a mandate, outlining the detailed responsibilities and tasks, describing how this specific element of the structure fits in with the rest of the project design; the reporting chain must also be clear: where or to whom does it report and where does it receive instructions and/or feedback from? Second, a list of selection criteria for members of the different working bodies must be established.<sup>32</sup> Documents should

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32. This does not include the position of national co-ordinator, appointed by the government. For the inter-ministerial committee, a mandate plus personal requirements for the position must be developed, while the representatives (and their substitutes) will be selected/appointed by their respective ministries.

be developed outlining the manner in which the different bodies of the structure will work together and what the selection criteria will be. This text must of course be open and transparent, accessible for anyone who wants to see and examine it.

If a national youth council exists, it is advisable to invite it to take part in discussions on what the project design should be and how the different bodies can function together in the best way possible. Whether or not a national youth council exists, it will be especially important to open the project design to a wide range of tendencies, for example voices and groups involved in the various stages of a revolutionary process, the unemployed and marginalised, secularists, religious movements, religious, linguistic, sexual, political, ethnic and other minorities, diaspora youth, and urban and rural poor. Special attention needs to be given to ensure that young women are represented in an equitable manner.

### **National co-ordinator**

A comprehensive project design will need a clear and strong management. In the model described here, this role is given to a national co-ordinator, who will manage the overall development of the strategy and the secretariat, and prepare and chair the meetings of the steering committee and the inter-ministerial working group (see below). The co-ordinator will also be in contact with institutional partners, donors and relevant bodies and maintain contact with other governmental ministries and agencies.

The national co-ordinator should preferably be the deputy minister or state secretary in the ministry responsible for youth, or a senior government official within the ministry with direct links to the political leadership. Alternatively, such a role can be carried out by a task force or a small group of managers working together in partnership.

A reporting mechanism should exist in which the national co-ordinator reports regularly to the youth minister or to the government/cabinet, depending on the practice in the respective country. This will keep the minister directly informed about the process.

### **Secretariat**

A separate secretariat under the management of the national co-ordinator should be set up within the ministry responsible for youth. The secretariat will have a range of tasks, including:

- ▶ being responsible for the collection and synthesis of information, data and research that give an overview of the situation of young people in the country, and for making this available to the co-ordinators of the thematic working groups;
- ▶ ensuring good communication links with the different parts of the structure;
- ▶ monitoring the different parts of the structure and ensuring that they perform the tasks allocated to them;
- ▶ following up tasks assigned to it by the steering group, through the national co-ordinator;

- ▶ managing the budget;
- ▶ managing a publicity campaign (including the design, production and distribution of promotion material) and maintaining close contact with the media;
- ▶ managing the consultation process with young people and different stakeholder groups;
- ▶ maintaining contact with governmental bodies and international organisations;
- ▶ administering the process to have the strategy adopted by the government.

It is important that the persons working in the secretariat are physically located together, allowing them to form close working relations. They should be located within the premises of the ministry. If they are not already ministry employees, they should be encouraged to develop an identity as ministry employees, establishing a strong ownership of the process of developing the national youth strategy.

## Steering committee

The steering committee is the highest decision-making authority in the development of the national youth strategy, within the mandate given by the minister responsible for youth. The steering committee should be chaired by the national co-ordinator, but consist of an equal number of non-governmental representatives and government representatives – at the most 10 persons. These people must be experienced and highly dedicated, having been appointed as individuals<sup>33</sup> in order to ensure consistency and personal ownership of the process.

A specific mandate outlining the responsibilities of the steering committee, working methods, frequency of meetings, decision-making mechanisms, and so on should be made public at an early stage, together with a list of the selection criteria for being considered as a member of the group.<sup>34</sup> The members are then formally appointed by the ministry of youth.

The non-governmental representatives of the steering committee can be nominated by the national youth council, if it exists, as a way of giving the youth council legitimacy as a representative body for the youth NGOs.<sup>35</sup> Alternatively, the selection can be done directly by the ministry based on the list of selection criteria.

Among the government representatives, different alternatives should be discussed. One possibility is that two steering committee members should come from the youth ministry (including the national co-ordinator) while the other three are recruited from other ministries.

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33. A mechanism should be in place so that a person automatically resigns his or her seat on the committee if he or she is absent from a certain number of meetings.

34. If a national youth council exists, it should be consulted while developing selection criteria for the steering committee members.

35. Examples of such requirements could be that there should be at least two people of each gender, that they should all come from different (categories of) organisations and all be between 15 and 25 years old. (This age group could be problematic for certain Arab states such as Egypt and Jordan, where the youth age group goes as high as 35.).

The steering committee should aim to reach consensus in all its decisions. If a vote has to take place, the co-ordinator votes only in the event of a tied vote.

## Inter-ministerial working group

The inter-ministerial working group should consist of representatives from all ministries that have an impact on young people through their policies. This will at least include the ministries of education (and higher education), health, sport, culture, police, defence, justice, housing, local government, social work and labour, and a number of other ministries, depending on domestic circumstances and the local context.

The members of the working group should be personally appointed (together with a deputy) by each ministry, in order to avoid a situation where different ministry representatives attend different meetings. Each ministry should also establish a group or unit responsible for following up on the commitments that the respective ministries are taking on, to ensure a wider ownership of and responsibility for the process.

The inter-ministerial working group will have several tasks. First, it should ensure that the national youth strategy is harmonised with legislation and policy strategies in the respective ministries. Second, the members of the group should be responsible for analysing strategies, action plans, research and legislation relevant to their respective ministries, and should pass the results on to the thematic working groups. The working group will also need to make an assessment of priorities and seek to incorporate them in an orderly fashion into the drafts of the strategy. Finally, members of the inter-ministerial working group should ensure that drafts of the national youth strategy are shared with senior officials and the political leadership of the different ministries, provide feedback on the drafts to the group, and work to ensure that the final youth strategy document is adopted by consensus in the government or cabinet of ministers.

## Thematic working groups

The most important participation of the different stakeholder groups in the process of developing a national youth strategy will take place in the different thematic working groups. There should be several working groups, if possible corresponding to the number of policy areas that are identified as main objectives of the strategy.

The thematic working groups will play an important role in the process, as they should have the following tasks:

- ▶ receiving background information and research on the situation of young people in the country from the youth ministry/secretariat of the national youth strategy process, which can be supplemented by additional investigation from the working groups;
- ▶ producing a report outlining existing needs, challenges and opportunities in every priority area of the strategy;
- ▶ formulating clear goals, objectives and outcomes, in accordance with results from the objective development seminar (see below);
- ▶ formulating result-oriented indicators for each and every outcome;

- ▶ proposing activities that are in line with the result-oriented indicators;
- ▶ establishing baseline indicators for each and every result-oriented indicator.

Much attention should be given to recruiting members for these working groups, as well as co-ordinators. The defining criteria for membership should be competence, experience and knowledge, as well as recruiting people from diverse backgrounds; a simple rule is to respect a balance between three types of background, that of policy making, that of youth work or programme delivery, and that of the youth research community. Different stakeholder groups and different geographical parts of the country will need to be represented. One should consider how many people it will be practical to have in each and every group, since there will be challenges as well as benefits arising from having smaller or larger groups.

Recruitment of the working group co-ordinators deserves special mention. The co-ordinators will be responsible for drawing on the competence of working group members, bringing together all the information and data on the different priorities and writing the reports. They will also be responsible for developing a consensus with group members on the formulation of everything from goals and objectives to baseline indicators. This will require the co-ordinators to work full-time for a limited period of time.

A budget should be set aside to cover travel costs of the members of the different working groups, as well as for honorariums for the working group co-ordinators. Providing financial compensation for working group co-ordinators usually helps to obtain the best possible results, keeping in mind the substantial amount of work that these co-ordinators typically carry out. Depending on the length of time the working groups will be active, other kinds of recognition and reward could also be considered, such as participating in a study visit or getting one's name on a publication. These considerations must conform to what is allowed under the terms of government service.

## Strategy formulation expert team

This team should consist of two experts with experience in drafting policy documents and legislation. It can possibly be one of the responsibilities of the secretariat, but can also be established as a separate team. The purpose of this team is to develop one final document, which is the national youth strategy. Before getting there, the expert team will bring together all results and documentation from the thematic working groups, and develop a draft national youth strategy, which will be the basis for a consultation process. The expert team will then incorporate comments and input from the consultation process into a revised draft. This draft will then again be discussed among the different parts of the structure, including the thematic working groups and the inter-ministerial working group, before a final version of the strategy is developed.

## Local consultation partners

In order to ensure that young people across the country who are not involved in non-governmental youth organisations get an opportunity to take part in the strategy development process, as well as stakeholders at the local level, there should be a mechanism for bringing the consultation process down to local level.

The example presented here suggests establishing a network of local partners. The local partners, or “local consultation partners” (LCPs), will have two important roles. First, they will be responsible for organising consultation activities in a predefined number of municipalities. Such activities may be round table talks with different stakeholder groups, focus groups with young people, in-depth interviews with disadvantaged young people and activities within the confines of the school system. Second, the local consultation partners should also carry out awareness-raising and publicity events, where the focus should be on the strong participative nature of the process, and the right of young people and stakeholders to be involved in the policy-making process.

Appointing local consultation partners is a way to empower and provide training and recognition to local non-governmental youth and community organisations, as well as a way to increase their capacities and skills. They should be selected through an open competition. The youth NGOs should receive training and close follow-up on how to conduct the consultations in a proper manner and how to report back to the secretariat. Each consultation partner should receive a small budget for organising activities related to their responsibilities, on which they will report back to the ministry.

The number of local consultation partners that should be established will vary. If there is an intention to organise a comprehensive consultation process with young people at the local level throughout the country, it will be necessary to have a larger number of LCPs. The size of the consultation process is in turn partly determined by available time and financial and human resources. Each LCP can be responsible for organising round table discussions, consultations and activities in five or six different towns or places. This means that 30 LCPs may be able to reach out to a total of 150 to 180 locations. That is impressive!

Depending on the number of LCPs that are planned in order to involve the local level, one should consider setting up some regional support units, which will be responsible for providing support, expertise and any other assistance required by the LCPs. Each such monitoring and support unit should be able to provide support for a number of consultation partners.

## Stakeholder advisory committees

The different parts of the structure that have been mentioned up to now are judged to be important in order to develop a national youth strategy with the participation of young people.

Depending on financial and personnel resources, establishing a number of so-called stakeholder advisory committees is also recommended. The role of these committees can be flexible, but should include giving input on goals, objectives and outcomes as participants in the objective development seminar (see section 5.4.), as well as providing feedback on the different drafts of the youth strategy document.

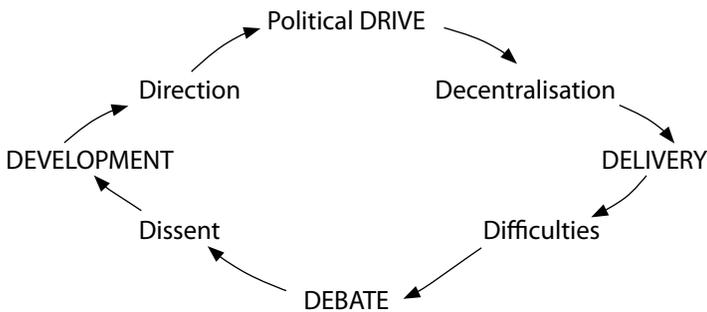
Stakeholder advisory committees will allow for a more comprehensive consultation of different categories of stakeholders, some of which may otherwise

show a very limited involvement in the process. It will also encourage closer co-operation among stakeholders within the different categories. Examples of possible stakeholder groups include:

- ▶ non-governmental youth organisations;
- ▶ youth branches of political parties;
- ▶ local government authorities;
- ▶ entrepreneurs and the business community;
- ▶ international organisations.

## 5.5. DRAWING THE TIMELINE

Some experts present the process of developing a youth strategy as a horizontal timeline which goes from start to finish; you may start by reflecting on the need for a national youth strategy, then go through all the development stages and end up with a finished plan. There is nothing wrong with such an approach – in fact, it is the one that is being taken in this manual. For the sake of reflecting on the process, however, it is also useful to perceive it as a continuous cycle of youth policy development.<sup>36</sup> It is possible to enter into the cycle at any given point or place, and it will lead ultimately to a youth policy strategy. It runs clockwise in the following model:



In this cycle, youth policy is developed through elaboration, debate and dissent. The finished youth policy strategy then points out a direction for action, which leads to a political drive for implementing the strategy. The next step is to clarify which actors will implement which parts of the policy strategy (decentralisation), followed by the actual implementation, or delivery. As the implementation of the strategy will eventually experience difficulties (since policy is never developed in a static environment, there will always need to be changes), this will generate a new debate, which will eventually lead to a revision of policy or the development of a new strategy.

But let us return to the practical planning stage and the issue of time. As part of the early planning process, it is necessary to develop a timeline or a schedule, as well as determine some specific dates for when certain stages will be achieved or passed. This will both increase transparency and help build confidence in the process, and it will be a valuable planning tool.

<sup>36</sup> Howard Williamson (2002), p. 123.

How long does it take to develop a national youth strategy? That is hard to tell for sure. But considering that the process should be participatory and comprehensive, and include both a strategy document and a supplementary action plan, one should plan for a process that lasts at least one year.

When setting the timeline for developing the youth strategy, it is important to consider possible obstacles, which may cause the process to take longer than expected. For example, take into account the school and university holiday periods, religious periods such as Ramadan and feasts, as well as election periods. Policy processes have a tendency to slow down during the harvest, hot, sandstorm or rainy seasons. Trying to be over-ambitious may backfire! Furthermore, if you live in a country with a challenging topography, with some regions being hard to reach, avoid organising the consultations at times when mobility is reduced.

## 5.6. DIFFERENT LEVELS OF A STRATEGY

As part of the preparation process, it is important to become familiar with the different elements of the national youth strategy that should be in place. Yes, the youth strategy can also include a comprehensive overview of the needs, challenges and opportunities for young people, but this is basically background information. The real strategy is the part of the document that outlines the goals and objectives, which, through an interactive and participatory process together with stakeholders, are “broken down” into the smallest concrete and measurable components possible. These are the different levels of the strategy.

The components of a strategy formulated below are taken from a strategy development methodology called the logical framework approach (LFA). This methodology is much used in development work and by international organisations, and we find it to be a logical way of developing a strategy in which the goals are closely connected to the specific activities that are proposed. However, there are also other approaches to strategic development that can be very useful and which use similar methods of breaking down goals and objectives into their smallest measurable components.

It is essential that everyone who is involved in the strategy development process is familiar with these different levels, in particular the strategy formulation expert group, the inter-ministerial working group and the co-ordinators and members of the thematic working groups. A workshop with skilled trainers in LFA methodology should therefore take place at an early stage in the process.

### **Vision**

The vision is the highest abstract perception of what you want to achieve, where your strategy will only be a small but important piece of the puzzle. As opposed to the goals, the vision does not have to be concrete and easily measurable, and can be more of a political statement. The vision should be formulated as a final state/condition.

### **Goal**

This is a crystallisation of the vision, which outlines what you want to achieve with this specific strategy. The goal is the overall long-term objective that the national

youth strategy will help to achieve. The full achievement of the goal, however, will depend on factors other than just the strategy.

There should be one goal for the whole strategy, formulated as one comprehensive statement. It is important that the goal be concrete and achievable.

## Objectives

The objectives are the concrete purposes for which the strategy is needed. This is where you outline the concrete prioritised policy areas where the youth strategy will work to achieve the goals you have set. Limit yourself to only one (or possibly two) objective(s) for each priority policy area (or strategic pillar) included in the strategy. This will make the strategy more realistic and achievable. Ensure that each objective:

- ▶ includes its intended beneficiaries in the formulation;
- ▶ is directly related to the goal;
- ▶ is achievable within the strategy;
- ▶ is realistic – meaning that it is likely to occur once the strategy outcomes have been achieved;
- ▶ is formulated as a desired end, and not as a process;
- ▶ is measurable during the evaluation phase.

### Example of an objective:

A system is in place which ensures that non-governmental youth organisations are consulted by the government on a regular basis, on issues that affect the youth organisations themselves as well as young people.

## Outcomes/expected results

What do you want to achieve with this strategy? Outcomes are concrete results which refer specifically to one objective. The outcomes are the underlying causes of the objective, and there are usually several outcomes for each objective. In other words: achieving the outcomes that relate specifically to an objective greatly increases the possibility of success in achieving the objective.

Ensure that each formulated outcome:

- ▶ is fully achievable within the strategy;
- ▶ is directly linked to one of the objectives;
- ▶ is formulated in the past tense (as if it has been achieved);
- ▶ can be seen as a necessary means to achieving the objective.

### Examples of outcomes:

- ▶ a selection committee with the task of assessing and selecting project applications by non-governmental youth organisations to be funded by the youth ministry has been established, where the non-governmental youth organisations are also represented;

- ▶ the youth ministry has, on a regular basis, invited representatives of the national youth council to discuss relevant policy issues and taken the youth council's opinions into account;
- ▶ the youth ministry has organised annual conferences which have brought together representatives from the whole youth NGO sector, and put important policy issues on the agenda;
- ▶ a youth delegate programme has been established within the ministry of foreign affairs, which has recruited two youth delegates every year as full members of the national delegation which attended the UN General Assembly.

## Outputs

### Indicators

The indicators are tools to measure your success in achieving the outcomes (and thereby also your objectives and goal). It is therefore better to develop the indicators first, before going on to the level of developing activities. Once you have well-developed indicators, it is easier to decide on activities necessary for strategy implementation.

The indicators must be SMART, meaning that they should be:

- Specific;
- Measurable;
- Achievable;
- Relevant and realistic;
- Time-specific.

The fact that an indicator should be measurable does not necessarily mean countable. There are two kinds of indicators: direct indicators (easily measurable) and proxy indicators (or best approximation indicators). Political participation is an example of something that is difficult to measure. Examples of proxy indicators to measure political participation are participation in elections, attendance at public demonstrations and participation in non-governmental organisations.

There are three dimensions of measurements – quality, quantity and time – and a set of indicators should include all three dimensions. Get the most accurate indicators for the lowest level outcomes, since these will then apply to objectives and goals as well. Furthermore, all indicators must:

- ▶ reflect a fact rather than a subjective opinion;
- ▶ be based on obtainable data;
- ▶ be objectively verifiable (meaning that different persons using the same measuring process independently of one another should achieve the same results);
- ▶ be realistically achievable (indicators which, after consideration of costs and usefulness, are found to be too expensive, must be replaced by simpler and cheaper indicators).

### Examples of indicators:

- ▶ every August, the youth ministry has organised a preparatory meeting for the annual youth NGO conference with representatives of the national youth council, where the overall theme of the conference and the topics for discussion have been agreed jointly by the ministry and the national youth council representatives;
- ▶ the youth minister, as well as more than 100 representatives of diverse non-governmental youth organisations, have attended the youth ministry's youth NGO conference, organised every November since the year 20XX, where important youth policy issues have been discussed;
- ▶ more than 75% of evaluations by participants attending the annual youth NGO conference state that they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the conference.

## Activities

Activities are the specific actions that will be carried out to achieve each indicator. There should be at least one activity per indicator.

The activities included in the strategy should be target-oriented, in that they focus on achieving a specific strategy output. Routine administrative tasks should therefore not be listed.

Note that the strategy should provide an overview of activities needed. The activities themselves should not be outlined in the strategy; this should be a separate exercise carried out by the ministry or other responsible party.

## Baseline data

For a number of the indicators, baseline data will need to be identified in order to be able to measure progress. What is the reality, on the ground, at the moment the strategy starts to be implemented? In many instances, baseline data will be provided in the form of statistics and research on young people. However, on some occasions, it may be necessary to carry out additional research or conduct a survey among different stakeholder groups during the process to develop the strategy, in order to establish necessary baseline data.

It is important that baseline data exists for each and every indicator in the strategy. Indicators for which there are no such data will indeed have very limited usefulness, and should be avoided.

## 5.7. DEVELOPING A PUBLICITY AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Having access to the media can make a great difference to the development of the national youth strategy. Sufficient press coverage will send a message to young

people that the government does prioritise youth policy, and it will increase public awareness of issues relating to young people in general. As we have seen from the previous discussions in this chapter about ownership, confidence building and accountability, getting positive media attention for the youth strategy can make a big difference.

So how should one proceed when developing the youth strategy in order to get much wanted and needed media attention? There is, of course, no simple answer, but one thing is certain: careful planning and continuous effort greatly improve the chances of getting publicity. What is needed is a separate communications plan.

Developing a communications plan should be the subject of a separate workshop organised before or at the very early stages of the national youth strategy development process. It should include the different stakeholder groups in order to draw on past experiences and particular expertise of individuals. Representatives from the press and professionals on media publicity should be invited to give their input. The workshop should also identify the specific training needs (how to appear before a camera, how to write a press release in all the necessary languages, and so on).

What a communications plan should consist of will depend on the national context, but should at least address the following issues.

- ▶ What is the message you want to communicate? Develop a slogan and be clear on what makes the national youth strategy process different from other policy processes.
- ▶ Who are the intended audiences for the information you want to communicate, and which media reaches out to them best? Which media should be involved?
- ▶ How to communicate with the media on their terms – reporters and journalists should be approached directly and ahead of time.
- ▶ Each event should have a “press package” attached to it (sending out press releases and information well ahead of time, and so on).
- ▶ In addition to the minister responsible for youth, identify politicians and “celebrities” who can support and publicly endorse the youth strategy, for example at a press conference, or at the launch of the finished strategy document.
- ▶ Timing is key. Contact media sufficiently ahead of time. Organise your activities so that they do not clash with other important events. Never hold press conferences on a Friday afternoon!
- ▶ Identify a spokesperson who will be responsible for contact with the media.

A budget should be set aside for producing publicity material related to the national youth strategy development process.<sup>37</sup> Such material will create a level of professionalism, status and recognition, and can be a valuable way to reach out to people with information about the process of developing a national youth strategy.

The secretariat should also be responsible for producing a newsletter on a regular basis, which should be distributed to all different working bodies that are part of

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37. Such material includes posters, pens, pencils, stationery, folders, posters, t-shirts and bags.

the structure, as well as to government authorities, non-governmental youth organisations, representatives of the press and the young people who sign up for a free copy through the Internet website.

It may be possible to identify a popular “ambassador” to speak up for (or sing about!) the national youth strategy and its financing. “Structured investment in youth through a national strategy” could be the name of the next big hit! Whether or not the Arabic music scene can be considered an important aspect of politics, the wish of some artists to play a bigger role in national life is gaining momentum.<sup>38</sup>

## 5.8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

It is a sad reality that monitoring and evaluation of the national youth strategy is something that is often neglected, or at least not given the attention that it deserves. Many governments spend significant resources in order to develop the national youth strategy and get it adopted by the government, only to put it back on the shelf or in the drawer once the mechanisms for implementing the strategy are in place.

Developing a strategy with the different levels outlined above, however, is a strategy tailor-made for monitoring and evaluation. The national youth strategy should include a text on monitoring and evaluation, where it is outlined how the strategy will be monitored and when and how a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation will take place.

Monitoring is the continuous or periodic surveillance of the implementation of the strategy. It should take the format of regular progress reports produced by the youth ministry, where not only the physical progress of the strategy, but also the impact of the project and any changes in the external environment are monitored. In addition to being important for the evaluation, such regular progress reports are especially useful whenever there is a change of staff, management or decision makers who are involved in implementing the strategy.

At a certain predefined point, a mid-term evaluation should be carried out. The mid-term evaluation should preferably be carried out by an external team of experts, who assess the physical progress and achievements, as well as the goals and the different elements of the strategy. Another objective of the mid-term evaluation is to recommend any adjustments in the project design, or revise the ambitions of the strategy based on experience gained, or due to factors in the external environment or other conditions.

A final evaluation is an independent assessment of the strategy, which should be carried out by an external team of experts. Its purpose is to assess the quality of the work that has been done, the extent to which the goals and objectives of the strategy have been achieved, and to document the process, so that others can learn from the experience.

The national youth strategy should express clearly that the different stakeholder groups, including young people taking part in those groups, will have a central role

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38. <http://hotarabicmusic.blogspot.fr/2013/03/deja-vu-egyptian-revolution-and-music.html>.

in both the mid-term and final evaluations of the strategy. One way to ensure this is to outline the criteria for the establishment of an evaluation reference group, to be set up when it is time for the mid-term evaluation. The reference group should consist of representatives of the main stakeholder categories. The establishment of an “evaluation culture” within the context of the national youth strategy is not only a realisation of commitment to participation, it is an evident way in which the youth sector can contribute a good example to the overall accountability of government.

## **5.9. A STRATEGY DOCUMENT AND AN ACTION PLAN**

An issue that also comes up in the planning phase when carrying out preparations for developing a strategy is what the final product should look like. Should there be one comprehensive strategy document that includes “everything”, or should the process lead to the development of both an overall strategic document and an action plan for the shorter term?

There are strong arguments for supporting the second option, namely to develop one long-term strategy and one action plan. The reasons for doing so are logical as well as practical.

First, a national youth strategy should have a longer time span than the action plan. While the action plan may be developed for a three-year period, the overall strategy should outlast two or even three action plans, meaning that the strategy should preferably last for 8 to 10 years.

Second, if the strategy and the action plan are merged into one document, the whole strategy will have to be approved by government every time a new action plan is developed. It is more logical to get the approval of the overall strategy by the government. The approval of the consecutive action plans can then be taken at ministry level.

The overall strategy document should, of course, be the main focus of the national youth strategy development process and be subject to wide consultation with young people and different stakeholder groups. This document should include a comprehensive situation analysis of the different policy areas that are covered by the strategy, and outline the overall goals, objectives and outcomes. The strategy should emphasise how disadvantaged/less privileged young people in particular are to benefit explicitly within the strategy. There should also be a separate chapter outlining how the strategy will be monitored and evaluated.

The action plan should, in addition to outlining goals, objectives and outcomes, include indicators and activities for all outcomes. It should also include baseline data and an overall (two- or three-year) budget. The different thematic working groups, the inter-ministerial working group and any stakeholder advisory committees should be involved in the process of developing indicators and activities. Specific workshops should be organised for the different thematic policy areas in order to work on this technical task. A more detailed annual budget, to be approved as part of the state budget, should also be included in the action plan.



## Chapter 6

# Developing a youth strategy in seven stages: an example

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**S**o far, the present manual has focused on background information or issues that need to be taken into consideration for a government to successfully launch the process of developing a national youth strategy. This chapter is more concrete: it goes through the different stages of developing the strategy, from the first concrete preparations until the strategy is finished and submitted for approval by the relevant government body.

The example of a project design outlined in this chapter includes a comprehensive participatory process with different government agencies, civil society and with young people across the country, in order to develop a government policy strategy. It is this significance of the process which gives it its legitimacy and the strong sense of ownership which, once again, is necessary in order to ensure successful implementation of the strategy. This is not the usual manner in which a government strategy is developed. However, we have argued that the development of a policy for young people requires extraordinary measures because of its cross-sectoral nature, and that it is necessary to bring young people and youth organisations into the process.

It has already been mentioned, but we repeat it again here: the project design outlined in this chapter is indeed comprehensive. Some readers may even be alarmed and feel that they cannot develop a national youth strategy because they do not have the resources available to establish the structure suggested in this guide. The example below proved successful, and we therefore find it useful to share it in this manual. It should also be mentioned that although the structure seems very formalistic and complicated, with all its working groups and committees, there is a clear logic in the project design. Therefore, rather than focusing on the complexity of the example, let it be a source for ideas, inspiration and guidance for further enhancing youth policy.

## STAGE 1: EARLY PREPARATIONS

Get an overview of existing research on young people (about their living conditions, challenges, needs, and so on) including publications and surveys on young people and statistical data that have been carried out in the last few years. If there is very limited research available, the government should consider commissioning research to be carried out well before the national youth strategy process is due to begin.

Furthermore, find out about the state of development of youth policy in neighbouring countries and obtain information about their national youth strategies, if they have one. Also, become familiar with European and international documents outlined in this publication. Finally, get an overview of previous action plans that have recently been developed in your own country, in particular if they have had a participatory process linked to them. See if it is possible to learn something from them.

The national co-ordinator should be appointed as early as possible, and a specific secretariat for the national youth strategy process should be set up. The national co-ordinator should then invite the national youth council (if it exists) to participate in elaborations on project design (“how do we do this, and by when?”) and the selection criteria for members of the steering committee. The national youth council should also be consulted on the different working bodies that should be established within the process, as well as the selection criteria for their recruitment. Consider also the timeline for the process, and avoid collisions between the national youth strategy process and other important dates or periods of the year. If there is no existing national youth council, the ministry should invite the major stakeholders – in particular non-governmental youth organisations – to an open meeting where they can give their input on the above issues. Other preparations that need to be initiated at this stage are to:

- ▶ adopt a budget; arguably this is the most significant step in preparing for a comprehensive and participatory process to develop a national youth strategy;
- ▶ carry out the recruitment process for members of the steering committee;
- ▶ determine how to reach out to different stakeholder groups that should be able to join;
- ▶ clarify training needs to the extent possible (both within the secretariat and within other working bodies that will be part of the structure);
- ▶ identify accomplished trainers in strategy development and stakeholder participation processes; invite them to become involved;
- ▶ develop a media plan/press strategy;
- ▶ start concrete preparations for an objective development seminar;
- ▶ contact international organisations present in your country and ask if they can provide financial support and/or expertise;
- ▶ start reflecting on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

## STAGE 2: GETTING STARTED AND THE FIRST CONSULTATION

This is the stage where the different working bodies in the NYS process are actually established. The first concrete step is to define the areas that will be included in the youth strategy, as well as the goals and objectives. The way this should be done is to organise an “objective development seminar” in which the different stakeholders take part. This will constitute the first consultation. It is important that attention is given to inviting both youth organisations and other categories of stakeholders to the objective development seminar, since their opportunity to be involved at this stage will determine their feeling of ownership for the rest of the process.

Such an activity should take two full working days (or take place over the course of a weekend), and introduce participants to the NYS process, making them feel a part of “something bigger”. Workshop methodology should include both working groups and plenary discussions. A valuable tool in order to help identify goals and objectives is to involve the participants in developing a “problem tree” on the first day, which is then converted into an “objective tree”.<sup>39</sup>

This seminar should be seen as the “launch event” of the NYS process, and should be given significant attention from the government side. It is also a good opportunity to invite the press.

Beyond the objective development seminar, other significant steps that should be taken at Stage 2 are to:

- ▶ establish the steering committee;
- ▶ establish the inter-ministerial working group;
- ▶ once the main objectives of the strategy are agreed, send out a call for applications for co-ordinators of the thematic working groups and finalise their recruitment;
- ▶ carry out the recruitment process of members of the thematic working groups, making sure to include representatives from both government and non-governmental youth organisations;
- ▶ carry out the recruitment process for local consultation partners;
- ▶ carry out the recruitment process for the stakeholder advisory committees.

## STAGE 3: THE SECOND CONSULTATION

While the consultation in the previous stage reached out to the different stakeholder groups and civil society organisations, the purpose of the second consultation is to reach out further – to young people and different stakeholder groups at the local level. Their feedback will in turn contribute to the drafting of the first youth strategy document. At this stage, the non-governmental youth organisations, which

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39. Facilitators familiar with the logical framework approach (LFA) should carry out such a training session. For more guidance on how to organise a workshop which focuses on developing a “problem tree”, which is then turned into an “objective tree”, download SIDA’s very user-friendly LFA manual at <http://www.alnap.org/>.

were previously selected to play the role of local consultation partners (LCPs), will play a central role. Efforts should be taken to get national media attention for the NYS process at this time, and it will be important that the youth minister fronts the process publicly.

When the process has been started up and agreement has been reached on goals, objectives and the different areas that the youth strategy should cover, a two-day (weekend) workshop should be organised, with all the LCPs.<sup>40</sup> The purpose of this workshop is twofold: first, it should familiarise the LCPs with the process of developing the national youth strategy, inform them about what has been done so far and the important role that they play in the process; second, the LCPs should receive draft guidelines on how they should organise the consultation process at the local level. The guidelines should be discussed among the participants and then finalised and agreed to by all at the end of the workshop.<sup>41</sup>

The reports from the consultation partners, with concrete input from the consultations they have conducted, will be an important contribution to the draft strategy. In order for the reports to be as useful as possible, they must be carefully developed before the consultation phase starts. The format of these reporting forms should therefore be discussed and decided upon with the LCPs at the workshop.

It is important that the government (youth ministry) gives sufficient attention and publicity to the workshop with the LCPs. This is when the partners will develop their sense of ownership for the process, and a successful consultation process will depend on their strong feeling of ownership. As part of this effort, and as a move to increase recognition and support for the non-governmental youth organisations, the youth ministry should consider producing letters of endorsement to the LCPs, which they can use when approaching local authorities and different stakeholder groups. Another move that should be considered by the ministry is to send out a letter to the mayors of all the municipalities in the country and ask for their support for the process.

The LCPs should be instructed to organise (at least) two different events in each of the different areas/municipalities which they are responsible for. One event should be especially for local stakeholder groups, such as the municipal government administration, local police and health officials, parents, teachers and non-governmental youth organisations. It could take the form of an open meeting or a round table discussion. The other event should be a consultation process with young people only, as the main group that the youth strategy is intended to benefit. It should also be easier to communicate with young people in a setting where they are not “surrounded” by adults or local officials. Consider organising consultations separately for youth aged 15-19 and for youth aged 20-24. Alternatively, organise one for those under the age of legal majority in the country and one for those over that age. The consultation for the younger group would therefore be more focused on childhood and that for the older group on youth issues. In some countries there

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40. The number of LCPs will depend on how comprehensive a consultation process the government is interested in and for which there are financial resources.

41. It is important that the guidelines for the LCPs are finally approved by them; this will give them a higher level of ownership for the guidelines and for the process.

is no age of legal majority, so it may be advised to separate groups at 18 years of age. Finally, suggest organising consultations and groups that are single sex if that would facilitate discussion.

It would be beneficial to have a publicity and awareness-raising campaign going on at a national as well as a local level during this consultation phase. This should attract attention to the strategy through the central media as well as TV stations and newspapers at the state and regional levels and in the municipalities. Visibility in the media will enhance the status of the strategy work and create an atmosphere of recognition and importance. As part of the campaign, public relations and publicity material should be produced and distributed through the LCPs, as well as through the thematic working groups (TWGs), the stakeholder advisory committees, non-governmental youth organisations and at press conferences.

The local consultation partners will have played their most important role in the NYS process when they have submitted their reports with feedback about the strategy process to the secretariat. However, it is important to be aware of the important resource the LCPs constitute, and the fact that they can be a great benefit to the future of the strategy. A huge momentum will have been created within the non-governmental youth organisations and within their local communities, and they will (hopefully and most likely) have received more recognition for their work and increased interest in joining from other young people. Make sure therefore that the LCPs continue to receive information about progress of the strategy, and consider using them more actively in advertising for the strategy. Also, try to find ways of supporting them after the NYS development process is over.

## **STAGE 4: DEVELOPING THE FIRST DRAFT**

After the goals and objectives of the national strategy have been defined, and input has been channelled back from the LCPs to the secretariat, it is time for the comprehensive task of developing a first draft document.<sup>42</sup> The TWGs will play the most central role here, guided by their co-ordinators.

Each of the working groups should be assigned one theme and a strategic objective, and be chaired by a co-ordinator who is particularly knowledgeable about the assigned theme. The working groups' first task will be to get a comprehensive overview of their respective themes (for example on youth employment, or on education) and develop a situation analysis. Research, surveys and statistics should be the basis for such an analysis, together with all the feedback from the comprehensive consultation phase. The government representatives in the inter-ministerial working group should contribute by submitting relevant material from their respective ministries to the working group co-ordinators. In addition to the situation analysis, each working

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42. The steering committee should be open to reconsidering the objectives after the comprehensive consultation process, opening up the possibility for revising the number of TWGs and the themes they address.

group should submit a shorter summary, which can be included in the national youth strategy. It is the co-ordinators who will be responsible for writing these reports.<sup>43</sup>

The working groups should work independently from each other in developing outcomes and indicators that correspond and relate to their objective (see section 5.4.). This can be a challenging task, and requires training and skill. A workshop should therefore be held specifically on indicator development, which all working group co-ordinators and some of the members should take part in. Members of the inter-ministerial working group should also be invited. This should be organised as a one-day workshop with around 20-25 participants, with trainers who are skilled in strategy development processes being responsible for the input.

One should consider ways in which the stakeholder advisory committees can provide input on the work conducted by the thematic working groups. One possibility is that they get an opportunity (for example a two- to three-week window) to look through and comment on the work of the different working groups, before it is sent off to the strategy formulation expert team to be harmonised into one strategic document.

In order to produce the quality product necessary, it should be expected that the co-ordinators of the TWGs work full-time, or at least invest a substantial amount of time into the national youth strategy process at this stage. In order to make this possible, it is advisable that they receive a salary/compensation/honorarium for their work. Furthermore, a budget should be set aside for covering travel costs and related expenses (lunches, for example, when there are all-day meetings) for the working group members.

When the TWGs have finished with their situation analyses and suggested outcomes and indicators, and the stakeholder advisory committees have had an opportunity to provide their comments, everything should be handed over to the so-called drafting team, who will have the concrete task of putting together the initial draft of the national youth strategy.

Once the initial draft has been prepared, the different working bodies of the national youth strategy structure should review the document and give their immediate feedback. It is of particular importance that the members of the inter-ministerial working group share the document with officials in their respective ministries, to ensure that the strategy corresponds with objectives and budgets in their respective policy areas.

Comments and contributions should then be collected by the drafting team, who will integrate them into what will become the first draft of the national youth strategy.

## **STAGE 5: THE THIRD CONSULTATION**

Once the first draft of the national youth strategy has been prepared, it should be made public and a new consultation phase initiated.

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43. The situation analyses from the different working groups will most likely be too comprehensive for the draft youth strategy. However, they will still be important for gaining an insight into the situation of young people. The government should therefore consider compiling the analyses together in a publication, or support someone to carry out this task.

The objective of this consultation phase is to get as much constructive feedback as possible on the draft, so as to enhance its quality even further. This can be done in different ways, depending on time, as well as human and financial resources.

The first draft of the national youth strategy should be publicised on the NYS process web page, or on the website of the youth ministry. Invitations to provide feedback should then be sent out to non-governmental youth organisations and different stakeholder groups that have an interest.

A national youth conference should be organised by the youth ministry, bringing together non-governmental youth organisations from across the country. The main purpose should be to go through the draft strategy, discuss the content and give concrete feedback on how it can be improved further.

In addition, the youth ministry/NYS secretariat should consider organising one or more open meetings with different stakeholder groups, in order to give them the opportunity to provide their feedback too, both at the national and regional levels. This will provide stakeholder groups with concrete possibilities to give their input.

The local consultation partners also provide a valuable opportunity to get feedback on the first draft strategy. They should easily be mobilised to contribute further to the process to the extent of their availability, and assist in getting input from the grass-roots level.

## **STAGE 6: FINAL DRAFT FOR ADOPTION**

The drafting team will be responsible for collecting all data, comments and input as to how the first draft can be improved. The resulting document will be the final draft of the NYS, which should be submitted, via the official procedure, for approval by the government.

The formal procedure for adopting a government policy strategy differs from country to country. In some countries it is sufficient to have approval at the ministry level, while in other countries the strategy will need the formal stamp of approval from the government or cabinet of ministers. In some countries it will be natural to consult the parliamentary committee responsible for youth. It may also prove necessary to have the approval of the head of state or government or the sovereign. Typically, however, the strategy should be submitted by formal procedure to all ministries that will be affected, which will have to endorse the content of the document. As long as the inter-ministerial working group has been functioning properly and the relevant ministries have done their job, this should not pose any difficulties for the national youth strategy.

At the time of the completion of the NYS, a press conference should be held – again stressing the active participation of young people in the policy process.

## **STAGE 7: DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLAN**

Developing the action plan will be more of a technical task. The TWGs will have the concrete responsibility for providing input to the plan, but they should maintain close communication with the different ministries in the government through the inter-ministerial working group.

A workshop should be held, bringing together the co-ordinators of the TWGs, the members of the inter-ministerial working group and the members of the strategy formulation expert team (which will be responsible for harmonising all input into one coherent document). Clarify what will be the concrete time span of the action plan. Then, clarify the tasks of the process, and go carefully through all elements that the plan should include:

- ▶ goals;
- ▶ objectives;
- ▶ outcomes and outputs;
- ▶ indicators (measure to what extent the objectives have been fulfilled);
- ▶ baseline data (clarifies the starting point from which to measure progress and achievement of objectives);
- ▶ activities (which must all be time-specific and concrete);
- ▶ clarification of which institution(s) will be responsible for implementing the activity;
- ▶ budget (including which institution will provide the budget for each activity).

Ensure that all activities and budget items in the action plan are actually clarified with, and approved by, the agency or institution which is to carry them out. The action plan should be a document with clear commitments and responsibilities, and not a political statement or a mere wish list.

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What is youth policy, and what major elements should a national youth policy strategy include? How can young people be consulted and otherwise involved in developing youth policy? How do institutions such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations address youth policy, and how can this work be concretely linked to the efforts of a national government to develop a youth policy agenda? How is youth policy organised in specific countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region?

These are some of the essential questions addressed in this publication. The *Youth policy manual* should be considered a source work, a tool and a helpful guide both for policy makers in the youth field and for non-governmental organisations and other stakeholder groups who advocate improved youth policy at the national level.

This manual proposes one possible model for how a national youth policy strategy can be developed. It is a revised version of the *Youth policy manual* (2009) and takes into account relevant specificities of the MENA region.

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