



AGENCY FOR  
MOBILITY AND  
EU PROGRAMMES



# **“Shaping European youth policies in theory and in practice”**

## **First residential seminar**

**13- 15 NOVEMBER 2017, Zagreb, Croatia**

First residential seminar report

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## Background information on the project

Over the years, the EU-CoE youth partnership, in cooperation with SALTO Resource Centers and National Agencies for Erasmus+/youth, trainers and other actors, have developed the content and the methodology of this project on youth policy making. The renewed 2010 - 2018 youth strategy of the European Union and the Agenda 2020 youth strategy of the Council of Europe had provided the policy framework in which this initiative was developed. The initiative aims to inspire and empower actors in the youth field to shape European youth policies in theory and practice.

The project consists of two residential seminars of three working days each, bringing European youth policies from concepts and theories (first seminar) to practice and reality (time between both seminars) and reflection and critique (second seminar).

Throughout the project, participants:

- explore the experiences of those present at the seminar with youth policy development and youth policy implementation;
- consider key socio-political developments that frame youth policy from its development to its implementation, governance and evaluation;
- examine youth policy strategies, approaches and instruments including relevant aspects of their emergence, formation and development;
- explore dilemmas inherent in youth policies, such as problem-orientation, intergenerational justice or competing sets of indicators;
- constructively critique youth policy frameworks as well as the strategies and intervention plans developed throughout the seminar.

The project consists of two components: two residential seminars and an in-between phase allowing participants to reflect and possibly implement chosen approaches, ideas and/or activities in their context.

The residential seminars serve to provide participants with opportunities for personal interaction, mutual learning of respective realities and different contexts of youth policy.

- introduction, contextualisation and getting to know each other;
- connecting participants: experiences with youth policy development and implementation;
- European frameworks: introducing youth policy frameworks and their political intentions;
- youth policy motives, stakeholders and instruments;
- youth policy concepts, principles and strategies;
- exploring dilemmas inherent in youth policies, from local through to European level;
- developing and evaluating feasible intervention strategies;
- reflecting on the outcomes of the learning process and developing ideas for follow-up activities.

The practice phase in between the two residential events allows participants to try and verify chosen elements from intervention strategies they developed in their respective realities. This phase foresees:

- communication on the progress and discussion on the various steps envisaged;
- peer-learning and exchange within the country teams and among them;
- the creation of newsletters about the current developments in youth policy in each country represented and in Europe at large;
- the possibility to ask for constructive feedback from the steering team of the seminar.

This report offers a synthesis of the main contents of the seminar and presents the main messages formulated by participants.

## First residential seminar, Zagreb 2017

The first residential seminar of the third edition of the project 'Youth policies in theory and practice' was organised in Zagreb, from 13 to 15 November 2017 by the Erasmus + Croatian National Agency in cooperation with the EU-CoE youth partnership and the Erasmus + French National Agency.

The objectives were:

- To introduce European youth policy frameworks and relate those frameworks to the variety of realities from local and regional to national and European levels;
- To analyse youth policy concepts and interrogate its main principles (e.g. evidence-informed, participatory and cross-sectorial) and approaches (e.g. youth rights, youth needs and youth well-being);
- To facilitate the shaping of manageable strategies for intervention in the contexts of the actors present.

At the end of the project, participants were expected to:

- be familiar with European youth policy frameworks and their political cornerstones, such as main resolutions and
- be familiar with the stakeholders involved, their roles and their previous and current activities on youth policy;
- be familiar with the principles underpinning youth policies in Europe, including evidence-informed and participatory approaches;
- be familiar with instruments and approaches to youth policy across various policy domains;
- be familiar with available resources to support youth policy development and implementation across Europe;
- be confident in shaping manageable strategies for intervention.

The preparation team for this seminar was formed by three facilitators (Anahit Minassian, Tea Jarc, Andreas Karsten), representatives of two National Agencies of the Erasmus + programme of the European Commission, namely the Croatian one, Manda Pocrnić and Ana Koruga, and the French ones, Anne-Laure Barres and Anne Rolland, and one representative of the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, Davide Capecchi. Matina Magkou acted as rapporteur/ documentalist.

The seminar brought together representatives from youth policy, youth work and youth research from different countries and regions across Europe. It provided an environment of interaction and learning and gave the framework for the design of intervention strategies.

The main observation resulting from the seminar is that although the reality in each country/ region might be different, the challenges and the difficulties are similar. Participants were eager to learn from each other. Some of the delegations had already worked together in the past, but for others it was the first time they got together and this setting provided an opportunity to reflect on their own reality, become aware of the possibilities that exist from collaboration and conceptualise feasible and inclusive projects to improve conditions and opportunities for young people back home. The facilitators managed to provide the safe space and guide the participants throughout the process and ensure that they remain engaged along the way.

In most cases the projects proposed for the in-between phase are building on something existing and the proposals include improvement in the approach, the mobilisation of resources, the outreach or the legislative framework. In other cases, projects proposed might seem too ambitious for the short period following the first part of the seminar until the second residential seminar. But even in this case, the seed for improving the situation of young people in each reality and making a clear step from theory to practice is there.

## Programme contents

### Questions about youth policy

Participants identified at the beginning of the seminar their key questions related to youth policy, as follows:

How can we change the “system” and call for youth mainstream?  
 What is the best way/ methodology to convince the decision makers to invest on youth policy?  
 How can we achieve cross sectorial cooperation between young people that develop policies for young people since ministries have their own agenda?  
 How does law recognizes youth umbrella organisations?  
 What works? Horizontal or vertical youth policy?  
 How to decrease youth unemployment (Spanish question)?  
 Where to focus on resources? On strategy development or on the field?  
 Concept “youth policy” and concept “youth work” – commonalities and differences?  
 Efficient tools, mechanisms and ways of implementation of youth policies between central public administration and local public administration?  
 How can young people participate the local level? Youth councils? What else?  
 How do you make sure youth policy works?  
 How to bring the national strategy into a law more effectively?  
 How to efficiently break the barriers amongst decision- making bodies on youth policy?  
 How we can increase participation among youngsters? How can we promote youth involvement in the development of strategies and policies? What is the best way to approach them?  
 How to get youth to participate in the conversations about youth policy? How to get decision- makers to involve youth in the process?  
 What is more important in youth policy when resources are scare: strategy or practice?  
 How to do monitoring and evaluation? What indicators of efficiency need to be used for the analysis of quality of youth policy?  
 How can we involve more countries?  
 What is the link between this working group and the European Commission?  
 What will be the practical output of all the projects apart from sharing back practices?  
 And what about young people?

### Milestones of youth policy on the local/ regional/ national/ European and global level

Participants identified milestones of youth policies across Europe (and beyond) and at their country level.

<b>Spain</b>	<p><b>80s and 90s</b> Transfer of competencies to the regions in the fyouth field (17 regions and Ceuta and Melilla)  <b>1983</b> Spanish Youth Council  <b>2005</b> Spanish Institute for Youth  <b>2010</b> European Youth Conference in Spain (Spanish European Presidency)  <b>2010+</b> youth law in some regions (transversal not only leisure but also work, health, housing...)  <b>2012</b> 56% of young people unemployed in Spain- the highest level of unemployment</p>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<p><b>1990</b> Establishment of MSS (Slovenian National Youth Council)  <b>1991</b> Establishment of URSM (Office of the Republic of Slovenia for youth)  <b>2000</b> Youth Council’s Act  <b>2010</b> Act on the public interest in the youth sector adopted and Youth 2010 research report  <b>2013</b> National programme on youth 2013- 2020  <b>2017</b> Evaluation year (programmes, Erasmus+, YiA, Court of Audit)</p>
<b>Ukraine</b>	<p><b>1985</b> UN Youth Year in Ukraine (USSR)  <b>1992-1993</b> the youth law and youth declaration (independence)  <b>2013</b> Youth Partnership seminar “Be(come) YP maker” 4 people in the Ukrainian cross-sectoral national team  <b>2014</b> the Ukrainian Youth Road map (introducing main elements a new law for youth, 2016-2020 programme and a programme on youth work / three levels of work national, regional and local</p>

	<b>2020</b> A new youth strategy is to be launched
<b>Cyprus</b>	<p><b>2013</b> Inclusion of youth policy in the Youth Initiatives funding scheme</p> <p><b>2014</b> Development of Action Plan regarding Youth Guarantee</p> <p><b>2015- 16</b> Youth Has Voice- first youth conference on national level for the youth strategy/ consultations on local level and involvement of national youth council in the Steering Committee</p> <p><b>2017</b> Youth Strategy adopted by the Council of Ministers</p> <p><b>2017 +</b> Development of the implementation process of the Youth Strategy</p>
<b>Estonia</b>	<p><b>Before 1991</b> Independence/ Youth camps/ school youth work that gave the basis for the good implementation of the first Youth Work Act</p> <p><b>1992</b> Youth Department in Ministry of Education</p> <p><b>1993</b> Estonia became a member of the Council of Europe</p> <p><b>1997</b> Participant country in European programmes (20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017)</p> <p><b>1999</b> First Youth Work Act</p> <p><b>2001</b> Youth Field Development Plan – review of national youth policy (by Council of Europe)</p> <p><b>2002</b> National Youth Council created</p> <p><b>2016</b> change of constitution to vote at 16 years old</p> <p><b>2017</b> EU Presidency and innovation in digital youth work</p>
<b>Croatia</b>	<p><b>2002</b> Creation of Croatian youth network (National Youth Council)</p> <p>2003 First national youth strategy</p> <p><b>2011</b> First Ministry with “youth” in its name</p> <p><b>2013</b> EU membership</p> <p><b>2020</b> Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU</p>
<b>Republic of Moldova</b>	<p><b>1991</b> Independence/ First concept paper on youth issues/ problems (government decision)</p> <p><b>1999</b> First law on Youth and establishment of National Youth Council</p> <p><b>2003</b> First national youth strategy (government decision)</p> <p><b>2009- 2010</b> Establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports / Adoption of the Law on Volunteering</p> <p><b>2016- 2010</b> New law introducing a new framework introducing European standards</p> <p><b>2018</b> Looking forward to the establishment of a national agency for programmes development and youth work</p>
<b>Portugal</b>	<p><b>Late 70s</b> Portugal transitioned from dictatorship to democracy- a national fund that supported youth associations ‘80s transitioned to the Portuguese Youth Institute</p> <p><b>1986</b> EEC</p> <p><b>1998</b> Lisbon Conference of Youth Policy Makers</p> <p><b>2004</b> Euro massive European volunteer plan towards a sporting event with Portuguese management</p> <p><b>2010</b> Fusion of sport department and national youth institute ☺</p> <p><b>2017</b> National Youth Strategy Plan towards <b>2020</b> Nothing for the youth without the youth years old</p> <p><b>2017</b> EU Presidency and innovation in digital youth work</p>
<b>Italy</b>	<p><b>1990</b> Birth of first regional laws and municipal ones</p> <p><b>2008</b> Establishment of the Department of Youth by a decree of the President of Councils of Ministers</p> <p><b>2012</b> Birth of National Youth Department and national civil service (ex-Youth Department)</p> <p><b>2014</b> The mandate for youth policy was attributed to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</p>
<b>France</b>	<p><b>1996</b> Creation of youth, non-formal education and sports ministry</p> <p><b>1983</b> Youth march against racism and for equality</p> <p><b>1997</b> Creation of the youth national council</p> <p><b>2005</b> Youth French riots in suburbs years old</p> <p><b>2010</b> Law for civic service</p> <p><b>2018</b> Youth rights compass/ indicators</p>
<b>Latvia</b>	<p><b>1992</b> Establishment of the National Youth Council of Latvia</p> <p><b>1999</b> National Agency established</p> <p><b>2002- 2009</b> Ministry of Children and Family Affairs</p> <p><b>2009</b> Youth Law</p> <p><b>2016- 2020</b> Youth Policy Implementation Plan</p>
<b>Montenegro</b>	<p><b>2015</b> First national strategy for youth and directorate for youth</p> <p><b>2016</b> Youth law adopted in June and second strategy for youth/ Ministry of Sport and a Directorate on Youth</p> <p><b>2017</b> Opening of the first Youth center</p> <p>Establishment of the youth regional cooperation office</p>

	Open consultation for the action points for the next years
<b>“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”</b>	<p><b>2005</b> National Youth Strategy established but stopped by the financial crisis in the country</p> <p><b>2011</b> Youth law expected to be enforced in 2012 was stopped by youth organisations which were not consulted in the process and withdrawn by the government</p> <p><b>2013</b> Establishment of the National Youth Council of FYROM was formed as a representative body of youth NGOs as a reaction to the unsuccessful implementation of the youth law (not recognized by government)</p> <p><b>2016</b> The new National Youth Strategy (2016- 2025) was developed</p> <p><b>2017</b> – open process (currently ongoing) about Youth Guarantee on a national level</p>

## Main challenges for youth policy in Croatia and across Europe

*Input by Marko Kovačić*

Marko Kovačić, a youth researcher from the Croatian Center for Youth and Gender Studies, made a presentation in relation to youth policy in Europe, and especially in Croatia. He started by showing a map of the world indicating which countries have/ are in the development or lack a youth policy. He explained that adopting and implementing a youth policy is challenging and explained it by making reference to a World Bank’s World Development Report (2007) where it is explained that the reasons are that it requires cooperation among sectors, because often young people are not involved in the decision-making process and because there are very few good practice examples- something he suggested might be worth advocating for. He underlined though that most of the times the reason is that there is a lack of political will and courage.

Marko also made reference to the different approaches to youth policy and underlined that the main idea should be to create an enabling environment for youth and that it should be flexible and adapted to the needs of the communities it affects. However, often, different dualities in relation to youth policy can be observed, such as seeing youth policy as rights – based or duties- based or seeing young people either as a problem or as a resource. He also made reference to the eight standards for a quality youth policy proposed by the European Youth Forum and underlined that youth policy should always be based on evidence.

He also presented the spectrum of youth policy in Croatia, challenging whether it is in line with the EU approaches, questioning whether the EU youth policy systems is appropriate for Croatia and whether the problems Croatia is facing are relevant for Europe and vice versa.

At the end of his presentation, Marko made a few suggestions that could bring potential improvements in youth policy. He identified the following:

- Going local (“Young people should focus on solving problems on their local communities, but is this emphasized enough”)
- Keeping youth work alive (“Investing money into the system of youth work which is more flexible and can respond faster than, for example, educational systems.”)
- Benchmarking (“You can’t have a youth policy without evidence and without a monitoring and evaluation system”)
- Youth power (“Always placing youth at the heart of youth policy”).

## Mapping major youth policy failures

Participants identified factors leading to youth policy failures in each country.

- Lack of political will
- Lack of understanding of youth issues by policy-makers
- European processes announced (ex. Youth Guarantee), but little guidance for implementation
- Isolation of actors and lack of networking and partnership

- Youth workers and youth policy professionals not understanding why standards are important
- Not enough resources (qualified professionals, few youth workers, etc.)
- Lack of local youth policies
- Youth policy and youth work not valued as a profession and even a field
- Lack of recognition by young people and youth workers for youth umbrella organisations
- Youth is not a priority
- No global vision (short-term programmes, no sustainability...)
- No implementation (theory vs practice)
- No coordination among various levels/ stakeholders (local/ national, formal/ non formal)
- Lack of evidence based policy and mechanisms on how to measure and monitor
- Following money- not the real needs
- No visibility – no access to information for young people – no youth friendly about sharing information – also no youth policy in media
- Implementation (collaboration among institutions, communication channels, representation of youth)
- Bureaucratic obstacles (too much paper work, long procedures)
- Lack of cross- sectoral approaches and national/ local level and with NGOs etc
- Lack of sustainability
- Issues with timeline
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Lack of evidence-based approach
- Financial crisis
- Lack of coordination
- No contact between local and national (and European) policies

All these factors can be grouped in the following clusters:

- **Lack of political will**, which entails a lack of recognition on youth as a priority and is also reflected in lack of coordination among policy makers;
- **Implementation challenges**, which might entail bureaucratic procedures, project management issues, lack of skills and resources, visibility issues;
- **Lack of evidence based policy and mechanisms on how to monitor and evaluate**;
- **Financial challenges**, both internally in the allocation of enough resources to implement youth policy but also related to the external environment (e.g. financial crisis);
- **Lack of coherence between local, national and European policies and reality**

The above can be better understood if we consider a few of the failures shared within the working groups. For example:

In the case of **Cyprus**, it was mentioned that the implementation of the Youth Guarantee has been a major failure due to lack of inter-governmental cooperation. Furthermore, the development of the (recently adopted in spring 2017) national youth strategy has been a failure into the action fields and prioritization because it was based on EU fields and themes and not structurally based on the real needs of youngsters. Finally, the validation of non-formal education and youth work is also a failure in the field, since they are still waiting for a European suggestion, which is still in progress and not achieved. For the Cypriot delegation, the main reasons why this has occurred is due to waiting for directions from the EU level, adopting a non-realistic working timeline and guaranteeing sustainability after the budget finishes.

In the case of **Spain**, when the issue of unemployment was underlined as a major social issue, the lack of involvement of the employment department in youth policy and in general the lack of coordination between ministries is the major reason for failure. It was also noted that a lot of money spent but there is no result. It was also shared with the rest of the participants that the Spanish youth council next month will close in a few weeks, a decision deriving from a law adopted a few years ago due to



the economic crisis and underlined this as a major failure of youth policy since its function was not fully understood.

The country team from **Ukraine** mentioned as a major failure the fact that three different national youth councils were fighting in the same time for status in the European Youth Forum. They explained that for them this is the result of lack of political will and evidence-based approach in youth policy, lack of national standards and indicators of youth policy and the predominance of youth political organisations.

The **French** delegation mentioned as a failure the fact that there is no integration of local specificities into national youth policy because in France there is a centralized system. They also identified as a failure the fact that there is no integration of a pedagogic component in leisure activities for young people.

Finally, **Estonia** mentioned that a major failure was the First Estonian Youth Act that proved that when you try to please everyone, it's difficult to match everyone's needs. Moreover, they made reference to the fact that there is no professional standard of youth work, which makes youth work not valued.

## Reasons for success in youth policy

Participants identified reasons for success in youth policy in each country, as follows:

- Political will
- Collaboration and communication
- Specific competences for implementation of programmes
- Win-win approach
- Right time, right people, right place
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Needs-based approach
- Knowledge management and transfer
- Priorities defined before doing youth policy
- Political will
- Recognition by relevant actors
- Financial resources
- Empowerment
- Youth participation
- Implementation phase
- Leadership
- Inclusive policies
- Enabling youth-friendly environments with proper tools and resources
- Win-win approaches
- Recognition
- Collaboration & Communication
- Motivation of the actors despite obstacles and lack of resources
- Ability to adapt
- Youth policy- priority
- Strategic vision
- Legal framework
- Decentralisation with coordination/ Capillarity (octopus effect – to manage to reach different parts)
- Outside pressure

From participants' discussions, it became evident that:

- **Political will and leadership** were recognised as a primary reason for success. Participants even mentioned that there are “heroes and heroines of youth policy”, people that constitute

a strong component of youth policies that can be “a champion of an idea or project, a leader, a forceful advisor” As it was said: “Every success story has a name and surname behind it. We know them by name”

- Linked to the above is the need to have “very concrete ideas for what should be done- step by step” and that it should be a “common priority and joint effort of entire sector” and for example, “priorities [should be] co-developed with NGOs”. The **vision on youth policy** should be also based on “well done, extensive documentation”.
- Moreover, the **legal framework** was recognised a necessity for a successful youth policy. “Law provides a framework that actors can draw upon”, said one of the participants and another one added that the right application of law “requires budget for implementation”.
- Finally, they also agreed that sometimes things work because there is **pressure from above** (especially from the side of the European Union, but also when it comes to national policies that need to be taken on board on the local/ municipal level). It was however underlined that it is necessary to “empower regions and or municipalities to implement youth policy”.

The above can be understood better if we consider a few examples of “success stories” referenced during the working sessions.

For example, in the case of “**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**”, the country delegation made reference to three important and successful moments of youth policy in their country. Firstly, in 2017 the formation of a youth club (committee) within the members of the Parliament (mostly consisting of young people) resulted in creating a quality youth policy together with the youth sector and to advocate for youth within Parliament. Earlier, in 2013 the establishment of the National Youth Council as a representative body for the youth was a good moment, especially after the failure of youth law. Finally, a positive environment was created in 2015 with the formation of a governmental institution, the Agency of Youth and Sports, which has the mission to support and serve the youth voice, financially support youth initiatives and provide support to youth organisations and actions.

The delegation from **UKRAINE** made reference to a major element which has given a boost to youth – related issues in their country and this is the youth worker trainings that were launched by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the State Institute of Family and youth policy and UN Development programme since 2014. Moreover, a national policy, Youth Ukraine (2016- 2020), has been adopted, while a Youth centers association has been created only a few days ago before the dates of the seminar in Zagreb.

The delegation from **ESTONIA** recognized as a major success the decision allowing young people to vote at the age of 16 years old. Moreover, they pointed on the successful implementation of the Youth Guarantee, in contradiction to other European countries explaining that the success was due to the adaptation of a tailor- made approach. They underlined that the main reason for success for all of the above is the fact that youth work is recognized as a profession.

In the case of **PORTUGAL**, the functioning of the Erasmus youth agency was considered a major success and a influencing aspect on youth policy in the country. The delegation also made reference to a good coordination moment between the Health Ministry that reached out to the youth in cooperation with the Education Ministry and the Youth and Sport ministry. They also underlined that there has been new fresh air on youth organizations with inclusion of young people and now for example 16 years old young people are leading their organizations.

The delegation from **MONTENEGRO** made reference to the first national strategy for youth as a success moment, because it set the national framework for youth policy implementation and defined the cooperation between institutions and organisations, as well as the needs, resources and financial means. It also recognized and involved all relevant actors for the implementation of youth policy. Also they made reference to the opening of a first youth center in Montenegro, which was the initiative of the Directorate for Youth, where youth and organisations can have access to free of charge, as a way of empowering young people.

In the case of **SLOVENIA** it was mentioned that the Youth law gave better visibility of youth issues, allowed the better participation of youth in decision- making and provided the legislative framework for the implementation of youth policy, including the financial means. It was also mentioned that the Youth Capital programme (2010)

In the case of **ITALY**, it was mentioned that the job youth centers are a good practice in the field of you policy. Running since 1982, they are well identified by young people and are an example of trans- cross sectorial approach and have a local/ national coverage. It as also mentioned that the Youth Capital title (that was hosted in Turin in 2010) brought significant advancements in the field.

## Approaches to youth policy

*Input by Andreas Karsten*

Following the session on successes of youth policy, Andreas Karsten made a presentation focusing on is the definition of youth policy and why it is important and he gave insights on global indices as policy drivers and frameworks for youth policy.

He started by explaining that every country has a youth policy, either consciously or unconsciously (as he said, “the absence of policies has also effect on young people”). Often, he explained, governments take the easy way and have a short political document, some nice rhetoric without commitment and no budget indications about youth policy. But he explained that the essence of youth policy is to reflect on all public policies affecting people, meaning both those dedicated youth policies on specific youth issues and general public policies that affect young people. He also made reference to the example of Sweden that has one of the best youth policy frameworks, “with a budget, with commitment, with sincerity” but, as he underlined, it is limited to typical youth issues, such as education and training and employment). Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the Swedish society exploded a few years ago when young migrants started riots at the suburbs of Sweden and there was a negative response on youth in the media. On the other side, he also presented the example of UK’s youth policy, which he argued that is a highly regulated system of youth provisions, almost exclusively problem- oriented and that does not see young people as resource, which it includes a number of inconsistencies (for example voting age, drinking age and age of candidacy is set to 18 years old, while the age of criminal responsibility is set at 10, when UNICEF recommends 18 and the average is 14 years old). Finally he explained that youth policy should take into consideration the needs of young people, the rights of young people and the wellbeing of young people but also the control of young people, their constraints and their limitations.

The next part of Andreas’s presentation focused on clarifying the main principles and concepts of youth policy and he presented how these concepts are approached in policy documents on the global level, and more precisely on the UN Global, the European Youth Forum and the Youth Partnership level.

This presentation culminated in identifying 10 common principles of youth policy that were shared and explained to participants and fed into the next session:

1. Cross-sectoral
2. Evidence based
3. Participatory
4. Resourced
5. Strategic
6. Accountable
7. Multi-level
8. Rights-based
9. Gender responsible
10. An identified government authority.

Finally, he presented two indices on youth, the [Global Youth Wellbeing Index](#) and the [Youth Development](#) one. He explained that such indexes provide an internationally recognized domains that set a global policy agenda for action and that these domains for assessment are turning into

international benchmarks on which governments and parliament are critically and independently assessed.

## Ten youth policy principles in participants' contexts

The 10 common principles were used as the canvas on which country delegations were invited to reflect upon the situation in their own context. Participants were given a “country grid” in which they had to assess their own context at the moment by using the “does not work at all” to “works very well” spectrum.

Some of the reflections coming out from this exercise are summarised below.

The delegation from **CROATIA** mentioned that all three of them had similar education and background, therefore a similar vision on the assessment of priorities. They observed two – three differences in opinion but managed to get reconciliation.

The delegation from **FRANCE** mentioned that they observed differences from the national to the local level. For example they mentioned that the cross-sectoral approach on the national level does not have any impact on the local level, or that participation of young people is rather good on the local level but bad on the national one. They approached these differences by making “an average” on their answers. They also mentioned that regarding Strategy, France is at the crossroad right now because of the Presidential change and that there is no more a dedicated ministry for youth issues.

In the case of **ITALY**, two different points of view were observed since the participants came from a different region and municipality. For those coming from the same region it was quite easy to analyse and find a compromise, but the national point of view is completely another one. They underlined that the region has the power to decide on youth policy and not the central government.

The delegation from **CYPRUS** said that in their reflection that they managed to cover local/ regional and the national perspective and create a common realization of what is going well and what is not going well. The exercise gave them hints on where the priorities should lie and they were able to observe different set of problems at different levels.

The delegation from **MOLDOVA** mentioned that they brought into their discussion the perspective of public authorities and the NGOs involved. For four of the standards they claimed that they perform quite well, while other four are a failure and for two there is nothing. They added one more standard related to cross-Ministerial and co-management cooperation but admitted that it is not working as well as they would like.

The participants from **SPAIN** compared the regional and national level and they decided to focus on the national level. They recognized that almost everything is not working very well or fairly well, while three things are in between. The most important element that they realised is the multi-level standard: there is a lot of regional work and among the national level it is pretty well coordinated. They identified that what is not working at all is accountability. As they said, there is no evaluation of anything, people who decide on youth policies they never report back. Sometimes there are some indicators and sometimes not so many. Finally they identified a lack of a rights-based approach and what exists mainly comes from the general policies, which also affect youth (e.g. education, freedom of speech, etc.).

The participants from **PORTUGAL** mentioned that the biggest problem was trying to separate the theory from the practice. As they said, in theory you have all the instruments that you should apply, the gender equality, the accountability, the strategy, the resources. But then, when you try to put it in practice no one will measure, verify or will get concerned whether the target was met. So what we did was to be based on theory but keeping into consideration the practice and they realized that they might have the instruments, but they are not applied. So in theory it is very well but in practice is fairly well. They recognized that the standard that works the least in their case is the multi-level standard because, as they said, “it is like a Ping-Pong”. They explained that they tried through this

exercise to find a middle point because they represented three different realities (educational system, big municipality, youth organisations).

The delegation from “**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**” mentioned that they feel they are performing fairly well at several points, taking into consideration that there is no ministry of youth but only agency where even the budget focuses on sport and there is zero budget for the youth sector. They did, however, say that they consider that they are good in gender-responsive as women participation in youth organisations and NGOs is rather high. They were also critical when it comes to evaluation of youth policy and mentioned that even if there are evaluations, the messages coming out from them are not used since they observe the same mistakes again and again.

In the case of **ESTONIA**, they mentioned as well that the multi-level aspect of youth policy does works well, but what words very well is the gender-sensitive standard.

In the case of **MONTENEGRO**, participants claimed that most of the items work terribly, except from evidence based policy- making and allocated resources. They noted that the local level is where improvement is needed.

## Participants’ plans

### **CROATIA**

The Croatian delegation expressed the wish to focus on how they can improve some of the things already happening and those not happening, where they can put more pressure. The National Strategy for youth has been delayed (it was supposed to be concluded in January 2017) and now they want to advocate on the involvement of youth in all phases. They foresee that youth organisations will be involved (especially regarding the creation of the programme) but they want to put pressure on a longer public consultation including people from different parts of Croatia and giving the opportunity to a larger number of people to ask questions. This way they foresee that the document will be more legitimate. They consider that the national programme for youth will be an important strategic document that has to be well written and implemented. The previous one was only a fairy tale on the paper while the new one should have legitimacy, be feasible, have participatory elements and be closer to young people. They also want to reinforce the role of the Advisory council for youth, a governmental body not so active in the previous mandate because of political changes.

### **CYPRUS**

They are currently developing specific plans for implementing their new youth strategy adopted in 2017. For this purpose they are planning to have a working group consisting of the Advisory committee of the national youth strategy (national youth council and governmental officers). They are planning a number of consultations with young people in close collaboration with the youth council. In parallel they are in a process of developing quality standards and indicators. They also underlined that they wish to advance collaboration with the local authorities so that the strategy becomes more a multi-level one. The rationale behind these interventions is related to the aim of improving cross-sectoral cooperation, enhancing e-participation in the whole process (from the development to monitoring phase), using different channels to enhance youth participation (face to face and online), formulating quality standards and indicators, including a rights-based and gender perspective on all measures, creating WGs between governmental bodies and youth) and enhancing cooperation with local authorities. They underlined that the final assessment should come from youth people and together with the research department of the ORGANISMOS NEOLAIAS KYPROU they will have to identify the gaps and do more consultations in order to submit more concrete proposals to the government.

### **ESTONIA**

The Estonian delegation will focus on participatory and cross-sectorial standards. They want to offer and support the structured dialogue in schools where youngsters would have the opportunity to express their needs on the curricula. They also wish to achieve a consistent cooperation after the project. This would be a pilot project on the regional level. They would also like to involve

entrepreneurs. The rationale behind this idea is that leisure activities provided from NGOs or youth organizations could be supported by entrepreneurs. They also want to involve youth centers and make sure that whenever there are round tables on topics related to youth there is adequate representation from youth themselves. In parallel they wish to work on the youth field development plan by providing an evidence-based picture on local and multilevel decision makers. They plan to do this together with youth organisations and capturing the impact that the field interventions have on youth. They will do this by mapping and analysing the impact of youth work, the resources available and youth needs and will provide data and documentation on the national level to feed into the new development plan.

#### **FRANCE**

The delegation chose to intervene with a project at the regional level in Corsica. One of the participants is working with a regional youth collective questioning how youth policy is executed the regional level. They underlined that there could be something in common with Italy on the regional level and proposed to even have a representation of regional youth groups on the European level. Their intervention consists of a combination processes such as Europe goes local, structural dialogue and Erasmus. They are already working on this so for them step two will happen next year with work on the regional level and the further step they envisage is working on this topic on the European level.

#### **“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**

The delegation expressed the will to work on two fields of focus: government authority and multi-level governance. Currently there is no recognition of the national youth council as a representative body of youth organisations, there is no support for a youth law, no process for the youth guarantee, etc. They aim to work on advocating for rebalancing the youth budget and for the recognition of youth worker as a profession. They will approach the multi-level governance challenge by working on the implementation of youth policy on the local level. They want to reform local youth councils to become professional advisory youth local committees and to be recognised by youth NGOs, youth representatives, officials etc., are representative of the voice of young people.

#### **ITALY**

Two representatives of the Italian delegation work for a municipality in the same region. They met a few months ago at a meeting regarding youth work at municipal level. They have engaged in working on structural dialogue. They have applied together with three other organisations to do some work on youth groups and the creation of youth council and they wish to continue working on this topic. They are currently working for developing actions on the municipal level. They have, however, a constraint in mind, which is related to the upcoming elections in the municipality where autonomy is a primary topic. Their aim is to empower these youth groups to formulate their opinions and intervene on youth politics – including administrative and fiscal autonomy. They also want to investigate on what such a change would mean for youth policy. They welcomed working together with other regions in this direction and sharing the results of their work on the regional level.

#### **LATVIA**

One of the suggestions from the Council of Europe youth policy review was to simplify youth policy on the municipality level and that will be the focusing of their project: how to monitor youth policy on the local level. One of the ideas was to establish a committee on the regional level to improve the collaboration and to have a youth worker’s association.

#### **REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Their national strategy is currently undergoing a mid-term evaluation. They plan to correlate this review with the SDG framework in relation to public policy design and evaluation. The ultimate reason of this intervention is to shape and tailor existing policy in Moldova. The evaluation is most probable to finish in spring 2018. They welcome suggestions from the group on methodologies - quantitative and qualitative- that would help them set up a draft of the methodology.

## **MONTENEGRO**

Priority will be based on the local level. There are currently no legal means to request from people on local level to run the policies proposed from the national level. The focus of the intervention will be on legislation and capacity building. The delegation argues that the change of youth law is a current process and they will have the opportunity to seize this momentum and most probably will manage to change the law in the following six months. They would need support on how to enforce policies on the local level.

## **PORTUGAL**

Given that in the following months there will be elections in the municipality of Lisbon, they want to concentrate their efforts during the following months in organising focus groups with youngsters to give their opinion on simple decisions and in this way encourage them to pitch in for decisions on other levels. They consider that by focus on small things (for example participation in decision-making about paint their school building by picking the colour) would allow them to understand and experience youth participation as something real- by starting to take part and deciding on small things. They want to enhance an understanding that youth is part of society and that they should always be given the possibility to express their opinion. They foresee that by this way they will limit and attitude of "I have no voice and they don't even try" to actually accepting that we cannot think bigger if we cannot influence the local level. They will invite our neighboring municipalities to do the same and even prepare a youth exchange with young people from other municipalities that would contribute into building the project in a participatory way. The training team suggested reviewing material from work undertaken from previous Youth Capitals on the topic.

## **SLOVENIA**

The delegation will work on a strategy on the development in the youth sector, which will happen early next year and they we will try to tie up their efforts with a vision on how the sector should look like. They have identified that on the horizontal level the biggest weakness in Slovenia is cross-sectoral cooperation. They will tackle it in view of the upcoming elections in May 2018 and they want to see how the government will deal with this. In parallel they are planning into developing an educational process for public officials on what youth policy is and they count on the support of the Advisory body of the government on youth issues to help in facilitating the discussion. Finally they also want to focus on youth research.

## **SPAIN**

The delegation from Spain will focus on special subject. They expressed their concern regarding the relation between young people and health- especially mental health. They have argued that although prevention policies exist in Spain, mental problems have increased- there are more suicides, eating disorders, etc. They consider that mainly due to the financial crisis, young people don't see a future or they have to leave Spain, or stop their studies because they cannot pay the fees. The delegation also wishes to develop a project to empower women regarding gender violence. They made reference to a recent report that demonstrated that 29% of young people think that gender violence is normal in a couple and 7% even think that we can't prevent the situation because it is integrated in the society. They underlined that they need to intervene firstly on young kids by using education as a primary resource. They welcomed material and reports of similar interventions from participants from other countries.

## **UKRAINE**

They wish to further develop the youth worker training on the regional level in order to make a stronger cooperation with people who work with youth, officials, other young people and youth students. Until the next residential meeting they are planning to involve more than 100 participants. In parallel they are planning capturing the history of youth work in Ukraine and a review of the youth centres, as main spaces for youth work.