

Youth Partnership

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



EU-CoE youth partnership policy sheet

Youth information

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Executive summary: Youth information is a form of youth work and provides young people with services of quality information, counselling and guidance. Youth information proves to be universal and an important channel in several different policy areas. It has been one of the priorities in youth policy for the past three decades. This document gives an overview of the concept and development of the field and its challenges, and presents policies on a European level.

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1. Definition and current situation.

Young people who are in transition from childhood to adulthood are at a special and very important point in their lives. They have to make certain decisions that will have a significant impact on their future. The choices they make about their education, career paths and other parts of their personal lifestyle will define their lives. These autonomous first-time decisions need to be based on unbiased, complete and comprehensive information. Often faced with dilemmas, young people turn to various sources of information, one of these being specialised or generalist youth information and counselling services. The essential aim of youth information and counselling is to help guide young people in all aspects of their lives and in their autonomous decision making. It builds on the fact that it is not possible to make a sound decision without knowing one's options and alternatives. However, as well as being aware of the different possibilities, young people also need to evaluate the different options and relate them to their own abilities and aspirations.¹

The right to information has been recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms² and other documents (see 3., 'Policies at the European level').

2. Background information

¹ Marek Ivanovskis and Evaldas Rupkus, *Compendium on National Youth Information and Counselling Structures*, Luxembourg: ERYICA, 2013.

² Report of the campaign "Information right now!" www.informationrightnow.eu

The European Youth Information Charter³ (adopted in 1993, updated in 2004) and the Principles for Online Youth Information⁴ (2009) issued by the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) are the main documents which clearly define the main principles for quality information services for young people. Briefly, their main aspects are: openness; equality of access; user-centred approach; based on needs of young people; services offered should be free, complete, up-to-date, accurate, practical, user-friendly etc.

Since youth information is mostly considered to be a form of youth work, the most important part of the work is to identify the needs of young people. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the added value that these services for young people create. In 2013 ERYICA conducted a users' survey in 14 European countries that showed the added value of services and still-existing challenges.⁵ About 63% of young people who responded to the survey 'agree definitely' or 'rather agree' that using such services has changed their life for the better. Rural areas appear as an important area where a stronger impact can be expected from youth information and counselling services. A face-to-face approach was the preferred method of receiving advice or information by the respondents of the survey. The Internet is not perceived as a reliable source of information: therefore young people are in need of support for increasing their competences in media and information literacy.

Generalist youth information is based on a holistic approach which is unique and necessary for young users who are being overloaded with information and live in a very complex society. Young people have different informational needs depending on their life situation and age group: "While the most desired type of information, no matter [which] group, remains information on education and training, the youngest group of respondents, aged 13-18, mentioned additionally as the most needed ... information on leisure and volunteering. The group aged 19-25 is in need of information on education and training, health and wellbeing and housing. The oldest group needs, besides the common priority of education and training, more information on housing, employment and leisure."⁶

The interdisciplinarity and horizontality of youth information has been supported during the EU youth conferences, which are the peaks of the consultations taking place in all 28 EU member states through the Structured Dialogue scheme. Youth and governmental representatives have recently put the emphasis on the specific role of youth information, counselling and guidance services (also called "one-stop shops") for social inclusion, especially for those in transition or not in education, employment

³ <http://eryica.org/page/european-youth-information-charter-0>

⁴ <http://eryica.org/page/principles-online-youth-information>

⁵ Ewa Krzaklewska and Dunja Potočnik, Survey on Impact of Youth information and counselling, November 2013, Compendium on National Youth Information and Counselling Structures, Luxembourg: ERYICA, 51-77.

⁶ Ibid.

or training (NEET),⁷ fostering youth entrepreneurship⁸ and access to their rights (health and social care, housing, education, training etc.).⁹

Moreover, youth information is seen as a prerequisite for youth participation (Council Resolution of November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and information for young people¹⁰ and Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18¹¹). This has also been observed by practitioners in, for example, the Gezi protests (Turkey, 2013), where digital literacy of youngsters has played a crucial role for their active involvement in the movement.¹²

Beside that, a rights-based approach is also observed in the field of youth information. The Council of Europe campaign “No hate speech” focuses on human rights online, to reduce the levels of acceptance of hate speech and to develop online youth participation and citizenship, including in Internet governance processes.¹³ The campaign “Information right now!” by the ERYICA and the Council of Europe have raised attention of youth and policy makers to the issues of access to information.¹⁴

Even though the first youth information centres were established in early the 1960s,¹⁵ there are still challenges for service provision in Europe. Nowadays the field of youth information and counselling is developing in almost all European countries, although there are some white-spot areas, mainly in the Eastern part of the continent. The economic crisis has, however, also hit systems of youth information and counselling services in countries like Spain and Italy, where financial cuts have been made. In south-east Europe services are being developed, but face a lack of stable financing and cross-sectoral co-operation.¹⁶ The low visibility of youth work in general might be the main reason for the latter situation, so systematic research and more credible data for proving the impact of youth information work is needed.¹⁷

⁷ Joint recommendations of the EU Youth conference of the Lithuanian Presidency, 9-13 September 2013, Vilnius: http://europa.eu/youth/sites/eac-eyp/files/SD3-2%20-%20Joint%20Conclusions%20of%20the%20EU%20Youth%20Conference%20in%20Lithuania_FINAL.pdf

⁸ Joint recommendations of the EU Youth Conference of the Hellenic Presidency, 10-12 March 2014, Thessaloniki: <http://gr2014.eu/sites/default/files/Final%20recommendations%20Greek%20Presidency.pdf>

⁹ EU Youth Conference of Italian Presidency Joint Conclusions “Young People’s access to rights”, 13-16 October 2014, Rome: <http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2014/10/EUYC2014-access-to-rights-final-outcome-.pdf>

¹⁰ http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1380082/Council_res2003_participation_information.pdf/4451b32b-2a04-40de-9a7c-19a2a69ad4f5

¹¹ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1927229>

¹² Gülesin Nemetlu Unal, #definitiveinfo#kesinbilgi: Young people informing young people, *Coyote*, Issue 21, Brussels: Partnership of the EU and the CoE in the field of youth policy, August 2014, pp. 40-45.

¹³ <http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org>

¹⁴ <http://www.informationrightnow.eu>

¹⁵ Willy Faché, The early years of innovative approaches to youth information and counselling, *The history of youth work in Europe: Relevance for today’s youth work policy*, Volume 3, Council of Europe and the European Commission, November 2012, 201-209.

¹⁶ Dunja Potočnik and Bence Ságvári, Background paper on Role of information and counselling in fostering young people’s social inclusion and access to their rights, Symposium on Youth Policy in South East Europe: the role of information and counselling in young people’s social inclusion and access to rights, 19-20 June, Zagreb (Croatia), Partnership of the EU and the CoE in the field of youth policy, 2013.

¹⁷ Matina Magkou, A golden triangle on white chairs, *Coyote*, Issue 21, Brussels: Partnership of the EU and the CoE in the field of youth policy, August 2014, pp. 16-23.

Meanwhile not only offline but also online information services have gained importance. For example, the European Youth Portal,¹⁸ initiated by the European Commission after the publication of the White Paper “A New Impetus for European Youth”¹⁹ was revamped in 2012. The main stakeholders of professional youth information work are reorienting their services towards guidance of young people in addition to the existing information provision and counselling.

The key youth information providers at the European level who are facing these challenges and developing their services for improvement of young people’s lives are:

- the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) - a network of generalist youth information co-ordinators and centres, established in 1986 (after the 1st Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth in 1985). ERYICA works to intensify European co-operation in the field of youth information work and services. It aims to develop, support and promote quality generalist youth information policy and practice at all levels in order to meet the information needs of young people in Europe and to apply the principles of the European Youth Information Charter.²⁰ ERYICA signed a Partnership Agreement with the Council of Europe in 1997;²¹
- Eurodesk - the support structure of the EU programme ERASMUS+: Youth in Action. The network is based in programme countries. Since 1990 Eurodesk has been the central provider of information on European policies and opportunities for young people and those who work with them.²² Eurodesk manages the content of the European Youth Portal;
- the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) - this gives young people access to discounts and promotes mobility in Europe.²³ In 1991 the EYCA signed a Partial Agreement with the Council of Europe, which was renewed in 2003.²⁴

3. Policies at the European level

In the past three decades youth information has become one of the priorities in the field of youth policy. Besides the aforementioned developments there are some other crucial documents which have contributed to the prioritisation of youth information at the European level.

The very first legislative instrument regarding youth information in Europe was

¹⁸ <http://europa.eu/youth>

¹⁹ http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1374843/EC_whitepaper_en.pdf/2321fea8-ae3f-4adb-bbe5-4d7cb7b883

²⁰ <http://eryica.org/page/vision-mission>

²¹ <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1380082/PARTNERSHIP-ERYICA-Eng.pdf/f7785fe9-460d-4f10-a789-20cfc9087c45>

²² <http://www.eurodesk.eu/edesk/About.do>

²³ <http://www.eyca.org>

²⁴ <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1405020/COUNCIL-OF-EUROPE-Committee-of-Ministers-Resolution-ResAPx2003x1.pdf/0226d5f1-c82a-4bee-9ee3-1bacc94f1350>

adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 1990.²⁵ It recommends promoting co-ordination of a policy of information and counselling at the European level, supporting the creation of appropriate information services, promoting research on the subject and supporting the development of a European network of youth information services.

Second, soon after that, in 1991, the European Economic Community also issued its first document on youth information - Communication of the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament “Keep young Europeans informed”.²⁶

Third, in 1995 the Council of the European Union published a resolution on co-operation in the field of youth information and studies concerning youth²⁷ and in 1998 the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers issued a resolution which set as an objective to foster young people’s access to information and new information technologies.²⁸

The White Paper “A New Impetus for European Youth”²⁹ (adopted by the EU in 2001) also gave a new impetus to youth information, which has been indicated as one of four key areas of youth policy development.

Another important legal framework are the EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering,³⁰ which refers to youth information, and Council Resolution “on a Renewed Framework for European Co-operation in the Youth Field (2010-2018)”³¹ that foresees an important role for youth information within youth policy, which should be based on the open method of co-ordination.

Finally, the most recent was the launch of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)8 on Youth Information by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. This document takes into account the new information needs of young people, who require more guidance than previously for coping with the increasing amount of information and the urge to be able to assess it and evaluate its quality.³²

References

Coyote, Issue 21, Brussels: Partnership of the EU and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, August 2014.

²⁵ Recommendation concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe Rec(90)7 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 21 February 1990, http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/2354312/Recommendation_R90.pdf/f7a9cc67-8ed4-4982-97d6-9f917cdb6b35

²⁶ <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1380082/Communication-of-the-Commission-to-the-Council-and-the-Parliament---keep-young-european-informed---1991.pdf/e86ed290-06bb-44ae-88b6-2899111eec78>

²⁷ <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1380082/COUNCIL-RESOLUTION-31-March-1995.pdf/a268a090-dd2b-4752-9914-df857298f303>

²⁸ http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/2354312/COE_res_98_6_en.pdf/4645a704-bf69-4fb3-a6e5-3ba2e514a264

²⁹ http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017993/1374843/EC_whitepaper_en.pdf/2321fea8-ae3f-4adb-bbe5-4d7cb7b883

³⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0200:FIN:EN:PDF>

³¹ [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219(01)&from=EN)

³² <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1637765&Site=CM>

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