Council of Europe & European Commission
Youth Research Partnership

Social inclusion and young people

Report of a research seminar

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Foreword

This research seminar brought together researchers from across Europe, with NGOs and policy representatives, in order to develop a better understanding of social exclusion for young people, and to help provide evidence about the progress of strategies to promote social inclusion.

During the very days that the seminar was taking place, youth protests were exploding first on the streets of Paris, and then across France. In tragic scenes, young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods protested violently night after night against their exclusion from decent education and training, decent housing, decent jobs. Only a few months earlier, similar protests had also taken place in the English Midlands, and evidence presented in our seminar – especially on the problems facing minority ethnic youth – suggests that conditions in many other communities across Europe might lead to further such cases.

In the seminar itself, concerns were raised that policies to combat social exclusion for young people have too often 'hit the target, but missed the point', as Professor Howard Williamson put it in his keynote address. In 1995, the EC's White Paper *Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society* emphasised that 'social exclusion has reached such intolerable proportions that the rift between those who have knowledge and those who do not has to be narrowed'. But the recent protests in France and England – as well as considerable research evidence – indicate that there is much still to do. We hope that the research reported in summary here, and available in detail in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (with selected papers also in a forthcoming edited collection from the Council of Europe and the European Commission), will help to inform both policy and practice in making more rapid progress towards ending the social inequalities still faced by many young Europeans.

This seminar had a rather unusual focus on vocational education and training (VET) and employment, in response to the European Youth Pact and the revised Lisbon Strategy's greater emphasis on growth and jobs as crucial to tackling social exclusion. We therefore report the findings of the large panel on VET in rather more detail here. The related keynote address by Dr Beatrix Niemeyer highlighted the potential application of the most recent, cutting-edge learning theories for developing new pedagogies and more inclusive forms of VET for disadvantaged young people. Viewed in the light of a previous Youth Research Partnership seminar on non-formal learning, we believe that this presents exciting new opportunities for the youth sector. It suggests that those committed to informal and non-formal learning approaches could make a major contribution to improving VET in ways that support less advantaged young people's engagement with it, and we particularly commend such approaches as a priority for further research and development.

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Research seminar report

Contents

Executive Summary

1. Both the Council of Europe and the European Commission regard social inclusion as a central policy goal, essential to social cohesion. Increasingly, employment and economic growth are seen as crucial to achieving this goal. Participation in civil society is also regarded as an important element, especially for the youth sector.

2. Despite more than a decade of policy attention to the problem of social exclusion, polarisation between the life-chances of different groups of young people is increasing. It is spatially concentrated in some regions and neighbourhoods, linked to social class. It is also racialised, gendered and related to other inequalities such as disability. Some young people in Europe feel unable to influence mainstream political processes, and withdraw from conventional political participation.

3. A generic, top-down definition of 'social exclusion' is not adequate to represent the whole picture. Researchers are concerned that the vagueness of the term can obscure the many different ways in which exclusion is manifested. Its meanings should acknowledge the multiple dimensions, cumulative combinations, and effects over time and generations of specific forms of disadvantage. Adequate resources are necessary to combat exclusion across this spectrum, to avoid setting marginalized groups in competition with each other, with the risk that some become more deeply excluded and alienated.

4. Economic poverty is a prime cause of social exclusion, although it invariably combines with other social and cultural factors. It is more widespread and more severe among young people than is generally acknowledged. It is also a recurrent experience for many. In contrast with the mid-twentieth century, when they were less at risk than other groups, young people are now among those most vulnerable to poverty in Europe. Welfare systems designed in that earlier period are inadequate to meet young people's needs today. Moreover, in many countries, young people's eligibility for welfare payments is more restricted than for previous generations, exacerbating their deprivation.

5. Many young Europeans affected by poverty are in some form of education, training and employment. While a lack of job opportunities causes social exclusion for young people, so too do jobs with poor conditions and low wages, low-quality training opportunities, and stereotyping and discrimination on the basis of race, gender, class and disability. It can be difficult, even with financial incentives, to engage employers in breaking the cycle of exclusion for young people from disadvantaged communities. Activation policies directed solely at young people cannot address these problems, and should be combined with adequate funding for education and training, and active labour market policies directed at employers.

6. European lifelong learning policies have emphasised the need for new pedagogies to create more effective and inclusive forms of learning, but little progress has as yet been made in this regard. Recent advances in the theory of learning as a

process of situated, social participation offer significant potential for creating more inclusive vocational education and training for young people, if resourced for further research and development. The attention to informal aspects of learning in this approach also indicates new opportunities for the youth sector to contribute to this sphere of young people's learning.

7. Policies directed at supporting young people's transitions (to adulthood and from school to work) are less effective if based on outdated assumptions that these transitions are linear. 'Yo-yo' transitions in and out of independence or formal systems of education, training and employment are increasingly common. Young people encounter barriers due to systems that are insufficiently flexible to provide multiple points of re-entry. Policy measures for disadvantaged youth have a greater effect when they form part of a co-ordinated and integrated youth strategy that can address the de-standardisation of youth transitions and varied constellations of disadvantage across countries.

8. Despite the growing breadth of opportunities for young people, these are not equally available to all. In some countries, there is a trend towards restricting individual autonomy in youth transitions. Participatory approaches, which focus on the strengths of young people rather than their deficits, and which offer a real choice of transition options and the possibility of step-by-step engagement, are more likely to mediate successfully between systemic and subjective interests.

9. Racism, xenophobia, and gender-related discrimination and violence are major contributing factors to social exclusion. Evidence suggests that they are endemic in the education system, and that attempts to challenge them on an individual basis are ineffective without broader efforts to eradicate institutional discrimination. Attention also needs to be paid to the barriers they present to equitable labour market access.

10. Some policies intended to promote social inclusion have had unintended, counterproductive consequences, reinforcing rather than reducing social exclusion, and imposing negatively stereotyped identities on some young people. Common factors appear to be: a failure to involve disadvantaged youth in devising and revising policies for inclusion; insufficient attention to empowering excluded youth; and individualised responses inappropriate for tackling forms of exclusion that are systematised and/or structural. Social exclusion is the consequence of a political economy in which some groups secure privilege and exert power at the expense of others, however unwittingly, and policy attention needs to be directed to mitigating such practices (e.g. institutional racism).

11. Longer-term, holistic initiatives, which account for the complex and lengthy transitions required by the most vulnerable young people, are more helpful than expectations of rapid results. Critical to such interventions are the quality of young people's relationships with practitioners, and the credibility and relevance of what is on offer to them through systems of personal support, social provision, and education, training and employment. Respecting young people's confidentiality, and avoiding stigmatisation, are also crucial to establishing this trust.

12. Multi-agency strategies for social inclusion may be more effective than single-agency initiatives. Early evidence from such approaches suggest that they offer a more holistic response to young people's needs, and maximise the effective use of local resources and the sharing of good practice. However, they require substantial time and funding, and champions at senior management level, to overcome inter-professional boundaries and ethical conflicts; 'initiative fatigue'; the uncertainty of short-term funding; and user-dependency. While they often have a positive focus on developing local social capital, this should not be treated as a substitute for state funding to support disadvantaged young people.

13. Some effective transformations for socially excluded young people have been produced by the self-organisation of marginalised groups to empower themselves, protest publicly against discrimination and exclusion, and take more direct forms of political action. In some cases, such movements have been highly successful in engaging with policy-makers to promote positive change.

14. Given the limitations of a single seminar, there are important issues relating to social inclusion and young people that are not addressed here. Vocational education and guidance is one of the most significant, and its absence reflects a need to support more research in this area. However, a wealth of evidence about the importance of career guidance, especially in relation to the re-launched Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, is provided by the recent international policy reviews published by the OECD and by CEDEFOP.

15. Open and productive dialogue between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners is vital in this important area of concern. Policy-makers and practitioners need to take account of the full range of evidence in planning and implementing initiatives, while research training should include building the capacity to engage effectively with policy and practice.

16. Further research is needed at all levels from local to European to determine more fully the extent, variety, causes and consequences of social exclusion for young people, and to develop effective measures and flexible pathways with multiple entry points to help young people out of social exclusion. Investigation of subjective, local and particular experiences of social exclusion is essential alongside large-scale investigation of trends.

1. Social inclusion: the current political context

Social inclusion is one of the central goals of European policies, especially in relation to employment, lifelong learning and vocational guidance.

Council of Europe

In the Council of Europe, debates around social inclusion are framed by a concern to promote social cohesion. A strategy was developed by the European Committee for Social Cohesion in 2000, and was revised and adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2004. This defined social cohesion as:

> "the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means."

This strategy draws on the Convention of Human Rights and the revised Social Charter, and focuses on the need for social policy to ensure access to rights. Combating social exclusion and poverty are seen as key tasks. The strategy acknowledges that this requires building a sense of solidarity and cooperation within society; and that certain groups – such as young people – are particularly vulnerable, and therefore need greater support. The responsibility for social cohesion is placed jointly on cooperation between the state, business, civil society, family and the individual. Within the youth sector, the Council of Europe has organised training courses to promote learning about human rights and the empowerment of vulnerable groups.

European Commission

The European Commission also embraces these goals, and places them increasingly in the economic context of global competitiveness. The European Council which took place in Lisbon in 2000 set a 10-year agenda to create a Europe that is:

> "the most dynamic competitive, sustainable knowledge based economy in the world capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion."

In 2005 the Lisbon Strategy was revised, with a greater emphasis placed on growth and jobs. With high employment and economic difficulties in many of the countries in Europe, employment is considered the crucial element to tackling social exclusion. Common Objectives already adopted in pursuit of these goals at the European Council in Nice in December 2000 focused on:

- employment
- access to resources, rights, goods and services
- preventing risk of exclusion
- helping the most vulnerable
- the mobilisation of relevant bodies

These were later revised in December 2002, at the Employment, Social Policy, Heath and Consumer Affairs Council, to emphasise the need to reduce the risk of poverty, and to ensure that women and immigrants were targeted by inclusion policies.

In response to National Action Plans to implement these Common Objectives, the European Commission produced a Draft Joint Report on Social Inclusion in 2004. This formulated six key policy priorities:

- Promoting investment in and tailoring of active labour market measures to meet the needs of those who have the greatest difficulties in accessing employment
- Ensuring that social protection schemes are adequate and accessible for all and that they provide effective work incentives for those who can work
- Increasing the access of the most vulnerable and those most at risk of social exclusion to decent housing, quality health and lifelong learning opportunities
- Implementing a concerted effort to prevent early school leaving and to promote smooth transitions from school to work
- Developing a focus on eliminating poverty and social exclusion among children
- Making a drive to reduce poverty and social exclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

The National Action Plans were reviewed during 2005.

The European Commission's White Paper *A New Impetus for European Youth* (2001) has many references to combating social exclusion in different forms, ranging from employment, education and training, quality services, racism and xenophobia to inaccessibility of new technology.

Employment, young people and social inclusion

For the Council of Europe, employment is a key issue for the social inclusion of young people, since they face particular difficulties in entering the labour market and accessing sustainable employment and social protection. These are considered important aspects of creating a socially cohesive society, so the social cohesion strategy emphasises decent employment opportunities, rather than short term contracts or poor quality training that lead to further social exclusion. It also highlights the need to invest in human resources, and create participatory forms of social protection that lead towards employment.

On the part of the European Commission, adoption of the European Youth Pact by the European Council in March 2005 made young people a key part of the renewed Lisbon partnership for growth and jobs and proposed taking action for young people in the fields of employment, integration and social advancement, education and training, mobility, and reconciling family and work life. As a follow-up to the Pact the European Commission Communication on 'European Policies concerning youth' proposes concrete action, in particular with regard to employment and social inclusion: Commission and Member States should improve the situation of the most vulnerable young people by using the Social Inclusion Strategy.

Amongst other factors, strategies in the youth field link social inclusion to young people's needs for a flexible guidance and counselling system to support on-going access to lifelong and life-wide learning, including 'second-chance' opportunities. For young people in particular, guidance is supposed to help reduce non-completion rates in education and training, promote closer matches between individual and labour

market needs, and expand individuals' awareness of civic and leisure opportunities as well as learning and work.

Young people, participation and social inclusion

Participation in civil society is another important factor for social cohesion. Both the Council of Europe and the European Commission youth sectors focus towards active participation in civil society. This aspect of the Council of Europe's strategy focuses on participation in NGOs, voluntary work and other aspects of civil society that help bind society together and create a collective sense of belonging. The Youth Unit of the European Commission prioritises inclusion of young people, in particular through trying to assist young people with fewer opportunities to participate in the European Voluntary Services and other actions in the Youth Programme.

2. Key issues for policy on social inclusion and youth

The seminar was opened by keynote speaker Howard Williamson, who offered an overview of the key policy issues concerning social inclusion and young people. His starting point, in the context of reciprocal hostility between excluded young people and 'the comfortable majority', was the need for open debate about the polarisation of life-chances, and the extent to which public policy may address different manifestations of 'poverty' and 'social exclusion'.

The problems young people face, especially in their transitions to adulthood and employment, have intensified in the last two decades. Most young people, he stated, have very ordinary ambitions to get a basic job, with a regular average income and a family which they can support. These relatively simple ambitions, however, are not within the reach of many, who end up living precarious lives on the edge of society due to a mixture of exclusionary processes. But it is unhelpful to depict troubled – and sometimes troublesome – youth as a group with singular characteristics. Some are temporarily sidetracked, others essentially confused, and only a small minority are deeply alienated from mainstream society. It is therefore more helpful to see 'social exclusion' as a fluid state, with permeable boundaries, and to focus on 'bridges' that can reintegrate young people.

Drawing on the work of MacDonald and Marsh (2005), Williamson outlined six points of consensus around the concept of social exclusion:

1. Social exclusion includes political and cultural dimensions as well as economic poverty.
2. It combines linked problems which typically accumulate.
3. It is not randomly distributed, but concentrated spatially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
4. It is a consequence of a political economy, by which some groups secure power and privilege at the expense of others.
5. It is a dynamic process that occurs over time.
6. It carries the risk of intergenerational effects as cumulative disadvantage is handed down from one generation to the next.

Beyond these points of consensus, the debate is highly contested. On the one hand, radical social analyses pose solutions based on the redistribution of wealth and opportunity; on the other, more authoritarian responses propose individualised and punitive interventions, such as imprisonment, to protect mainstream society. As

Williamson's own longitudinal research has shown, these are far from abstract discussions. While some young people had the resilience to get themselves 'back on track', some of his respondents had met violent or drug-related deaths, and others were just 'surviving' with difficulty, in and out of stability. What we do about social exclusion can be a matter of life and death for young people in precarious situations.

Williamson went on to propose an empirical strategy for determining effective action to combat social exclusion at local, regional, or national levels. He used the striking image of a 'box' in which many young are caught as a metaphor for social exclusion. The 'box' has permeable boundaries that young people may cross back and forth, into and out of exclusion, depending on circumstances and opportunities. Understanding the 'box' and what to do about it does not require an *a priori* definition of 'social exclusion', but demands that those involved work to create their own definition, and explore the social condition of particular groups of young people facing disadvantage. This can be done by addressing six key questions, the answers to which indicate the nature of the solutions required:

1. How big is the 'box' and the scale of the problem?
2. What are the *different* experiences and needs of young people within the 'box'? How can solutions be calibrated to these different needs?
3. What combination of causes drove young people to enter the 'box'? How can these be prioritised for policy intervention?
4. What are the consequences of being in the 'box', and how long-term are they? How do some young people find their own way?
5. What barriers could prevent young people entering the 'box'? Are different preventative measures needed for different young people at different times?
6. How can we ensure that there are bridges to help young people get out of the 'box'?

Williamson discussed some of the factors that we already know keep young people 'in the box':

- 'Just another training course' – If there are no jobs available or the training courses they have previously experienced have not given them a possibility to find work, then what motivation is there to attend or to work hard on another course. Many youth training courses for employment have extremely limited success rates and the consequences of a person's continued failure to obtain work is not only social exclusion but is very damaging to their self-esteem.

- 'Location' – Where young people live can affect their chances for inclusion. If they live in the ghettos of large cities with high crime rates, a wide drug culture and where the rest of the population of the city are afraid to go, then the possibilities for involvement in a positive way in their communities and employment are much reduced. There are similar problems for rural youth who are isolated from employment, education and training opportunities because they are separated by distance and a lack of affordable transport.

- 'Invisibility' – Williamson also mentioned the excluded who are not visible in the box of social exclusion. These include young people, often girls, who are 'in school but outside of learning'. This was also the case for some school dropouts who gradually fall through all the systems of training and support until they are no longer have any status in the system.

Williamson described the way out of the box as through bridges that were opened at significant moments in people's lives - giving young people the support or the training when they are motivated and ready to take an opportunity. He argued that punitive responses to anti-social behaviour by some young people are costly, both in social and in economic terms. The alternative is an opportunity-focused youth policy across Europe, which is not only economically, but also morally and socially more appropriate. This will require political courage and the strategic investment of financial and human resources. Reducing the problem to a lack of skills and competencies in the individual does not take into account the problems caused by society itself: the lack of decent sustainable employment, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination that prevent a person having equal opportunities to education, work, housing and cultural respect. Effective strategies must consider both sides of social exclusion.

3. Social exclusion of young people: empirical evidence

The opening panel presented six papers reporting empirical evidence of social exclusion for young people. They direct attention to specific experiences such as poverty, digital illiteracy, racism, disability discrimination, and family relations. These papers support Howard Williamson's comment that the concept 'social exclusion' is too vague, and tends to obscure the range of inequalities and injustices faced by young people. If the term 'social exclusion' is to be used, therefore, it needs to be viewed as multi-dimensional, and as cumulative – both across multiple factors, and across time. We begin by summarising evidence from large-scale, European research about levels of poverty among young people. We then review diverse experiences of social exclusion.

High risk of poverty and exclusion for young people

Eldin Fahmy presented research analysing large-scale survey data from the European Communities' Household Panel (ECHP) from 1996-2001, with particular reference to 11 Western European countries (Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Finland and Denmark). This reveals that poverty is both more widespread and more severe among young people than is generally recognised in current policies on youth and social inclusion. Today, there is an accumulated body of evidence that young people are now among the most vulnerable to income poverty in Europe. It is a mistake to assume that poverty is a problem only for a small minority of youth who are unemployed or disaffected. Poverty afflicts much larger numbers of young Europeans throughout their transition to adulthood. The majority of young people in poverty are in education, training and employment.

The scale of poverty young people face is often underestimated, for four reasons relating to the way that most research is conducted:

1. Indicators based on *income* poverty alone do not reveal the compound effects of material and social deprivation for young people, caused by much higher *expenditure* – especially on the 'start-up costs' of independent living – than was the case for previous generations.
2. Research based on cross-sectional estimates ('snapshots') fail to account for *recurrent* spells of poverty – young people often 'yo-yo' in and out of poverty repeatedly.

3. Cross-sectional approaches are not dynamic enough to represent how prolonged and/or repeated exposure to poverty affects the process of transition to adulthood in the longer term.
4. Eastern European countries are not included in most existing datasets.

Key risk factors predicting entry to poverty are related to domestic and labour market transitions:

- leaving home
- becoming unemployed
- entering full-time post-compulsory education

The latter is of particular concern given the current policy emphasis on continuing in post-compulsory participation in education, in preparation for labour market entry. Student debt is likely to be an issue here, but more research is needed to understand fully why becoming a student makes young people more vulnerable.

The effects and relative influence of these risk factors differ significantly between countries, especially between Northern Europe/Scandinavia and Mediterranean Europe, related to different models of welfare regime and national policy contexts. Current findings from his research contradict some common assumptions. For example, although absolute measures of poverty show that it is concentrated in Southern Europe, *relative* poverty (e.g. the difference in standard of living between deprived young people and adults) is significantly worse in some of the northern countries. However, more detailed research is needed to understand these differences and inform National Action Plans. This should most usefully investigate:

- the relationship between lifestyle/living standard and poverty
- the reciprocal impact of youth transitions (to adulthood and into the labour market) and transitions into and out of poverty.

Fahmy pointed out that policies on youth and on social inclusion are less than effective, because they tend to assume that 'normal' youth transitions are straightforwardly linear and focused on labour market entry. Research shows that they are in fact increasingly protracted, risky and *non-linear* (see also Kovacheva, Walther). Moreover, as Yael Ohana noted in the discussion, youth labour markets have collapsed, and many European countries have high unemployment, so that young people cannot get jobs.

A further problem is that national welfare systems were designed long ago, when young people were not so disadvantaged. Today, when youth are among the *most disadvantaged*, these welfare systems are inadequate to meet their needs. Moreover, in many countries, young people's eligibility for social welfare payments is *more restricted* than it was for previous generations, exacerbating their deprivation.

Family-related aspects of social exclusion

Daniel Blanch's paper discussed family-related aspects of social exclusion for young people at the regional level, in Galicia. His findings about their subjective experiences provide a very different perspective on the 'North-South' divide in Europe to that of Fahmy. Galicia's social inclusion policies have paid little attention to youth, and are narrowly aimed at reducing unemployment exclusion through increasing language skills to facilitate mobility. However, young Galicians remain

exceptionally long in the family home, which reinforces the influence of traditional, localist culture. This undermines their autonomy and mobility; imposes conformity with older generations' values that they do not share; and limits their social networks. Many young people feel that there are no means for them to influence mainstream politics or policies, and that their voices are not heard. So there is low conventional political participation, although the data also show that some youth do participate in more active forms of political struggle and protest.

The digital divide

Bence Sagvari discussed the development of the 'digital divide' in Hungary. Statistics from the Digital Divide Index for Hungary show that young people have better access than older age groups to information and communication technology (ICT), mainly due to government policies of providing computers for schools. However, the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in ICT access is deepening, and lack of access is likely to have a cumulative effect with other aspects of social exclusion.

Key issues are that:

- length of time in education and higher levels of qualification greatly increase the odds of having access to ICT
- there is little evidence of gender inequalities in access to ICT
- those living in rural areas have least access to ICT and to facilities such as broadband internet connection
- access to ICT is *necessary but not sufficient* for high-quality use and for genuine literacy in digital media.

Insufficient attention is paid in both policy and research to the *quality of use* of ICT, rather than simply access to the infrastructure. Using ICT is a *social* practice, and its meaning and value are dependent on also having access to skills, knowledge, and social support.

Disabled access legislation

Rachel Gorman presented a case study from her research on the experiences of young disabled people in post-compulsory education in Canada, in the context of new national legislation to provide better disabled access to institutions such as schools and colleges. However, the results of this policy – designed to promote social inclusion – were largely counterproductive:

- disabled students found it *more difficult* to enter buildings and attend classes than before, because access was tightly regulated, increasingly complex, and dependent on a much smaller number of people
- the attitudes of staff and other students worsened, and disabled students encountered greater prejudice
- spontaneous help previously offered by others was forbidden or withdrawn, and disabled students were denied some of the means to help themselves (e.g. keys to lifts)
- they found themselves stigmatised by the creation of '"icon" wheelchair identities', and demeaned by the signage of public spaces, such as lifts designated for 'baggage and disabled persons only'.

Such experiences suggest important lessons for the future:

- those who suffer from particular forms of exclusion, like disability oppression, should be centrally involved in devising and revising policies for inclusion
- inclusion policies should empower those who are excluded
- individualised approaches to inclusion, such as 'sensitivity' or attitude training, are unlikely to be very effective in contexts where exclusion is systematised.

Living with HIV/Aids

Fidelie Kalambayi presented very similar findings in her report of a participatory action research project with young people living with HIV/Aids in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Russia and Romania. They too experience discrimination and prejudice from others who perceive their health condition as shameful and threatening, and this has a negative impact on their social participation. Such prejudice is fuelled both by ignorance about HIV and Aids among their own families and communities, and by the sensationalist reporting of the mass media, which demonises infected young people. As for disabled people, public spaces and practices (e.g. in clinics and hospitals) stigmatise HIV-positive people unnecessarily. A major problem for these young people is the failure to respect their confidentiality, which is frequently breached by professionals in health, social care and education, and by family members. Families can also be over-protective, and as for Galician youth, this restricts young people's social participation and educational opportunities. There are few legal provisions to protect the rights of young people with HIV/Aids against abuse, discrimination, breach of confidentiality, and limitations on their access to services.

Racialised identities

Discrimination and prejudice, and their powerful negative effects upon individuals, are also central to the experience of many minority ethnic student teachers in the UK, in research presented by Lorna Roberts. The government has responded to concerns about the low achievement of minority ethnic pupils in British schools by trying to increase the numbers of minority ethnic teachers. In this way, it is hoped that school communities will become more multicultural and inclusive, and that minority ethnic pupils will have more positive role models. This strategy is also supposed to promote race equality and social cohesion in the wider community. However, while appearing to promote a structural solution to a structural problem, the responsibility for change is placed entirely onto some of the least powerful individuals: minority ethnic student teachers themselves.

Several studies have shown that these students encounter race-related problems, especially during their school-based work placements. These include:

- less favourable treatment than white peers
- negative attitudes on the part of white peers, staff, pupils and parents
- lack of respect by schools for cultural difference or religious diversity
- racist stereotyping and feelings of isolation
- higher drop-out rates from teaching courses, and greater difficulty in entering the labour market after qualification than white peers.

Racialized identities were imposed on student teachers (like the 'wheelchair' and shameful HIV-positive identities discussed above by Gorman and Kalambayi); and

here too, such identities appear to be strongly disempowering for individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups.

The discussion on this panel, together with evidence presented in later panels, raised further examples of social exclusion: gender inequalities and gender-based violence such as 'honour' killings (Kakabaveh, Jarl-Aberg); discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people (Gorman, Schwarzmeyer); the criminalisation of young people, and moralistic prejudice against them (Batsleer, Philip); and being a refugee (Kakabaveh, Power). All of these represent personal tragedies for many young people, as well as problems for society as a whole. These multiple forms of social exclusion present a danger: that policies targeting specific groups can force them into competition with each other for limited resources, and leave some still further excluded (Colley, Blanch, Kakabaveh).

4. Social inclusion through training and employment

A social pedagogy for vocational education & training

Keynote speaker Beatrix Niemeyer presented a paper that critically reflects on policies and practices of school-to-work transitions in Europe. She questioned the emphasis on interventions that seek to adapt young people to existing labour market structures, and asked: should not these structures adapt more to young people and their needs, in ways that are more inclusive? Drawing on a recent European research project, and using the latest developments in learning theory, Niemeyer advanced the idea of 'situated learning' for social and professional integration of young people. This approach, which focuses on learning as a process of social participation rather than cognitive acquisition, brings together social pedagogy and vocational education and training in a highly innovative way.

School-to-work transitions have a crucial role to play for the social inclusion and participation of young people. The majority of EU member states have launched support programmes for young people at risk of social exclusion. These programmes differ greatly in terms of pedagogical approaches, objectives, types of funding and duration. Among them four different types of programmes can be distinguished:

- Measures to broaden the mainstream school path and to achieve occupational choice through general education
- Programmes aiming to compensate deficits of the apprenticeship market
- Workfare programmes that improve employability by building on the idea of early economic independence
- Extension of schooling and emphasis on work placement with the aim to address labour shortages and lack of training

Niemeyer critically examined these models and advocated an integrated approach between vocational training and social pedagogy. Building on E.Wenger's concept of "Communities of Practice", she developed the idea of situated learning in learning communities centered on practice. The basis for this new approach is the understanding that learning is an interactive social process which, when going beyond technical qualifications, helps to increase the motivation of young people for education and training. Thus situated learning, as proposed here, is not only about specialized training of particular skills, but about the support of the workplace

community in developing both young people's experience and their sense of belonging.

This new model of learning communities centered on practice (LCCP) has several objectives:

- To promote a holistic view on learning that integrates social and vocational learning
- To consider the individual biography of the young person as a significant factor in his/her engagement in the learning community
- To offer a social space where participation is perceived as competence
- To allow for mutual development of expertise by sharing professional competences

Niemeyer's paper underlines the way that the concept of learning communities centered on practice represents a positive challenge to the various VET and welfare systems in Europe. With its emphasis on practice, community, meaning and identity, this new approach could be used as an analytical framework for a critical examination of European policies of social inclusion, and for the development of more inclusive forms of VET.

The second panel presented four papers that discuss initiatives promoting social inclusion and employability of young people. The specific focus of the presentations and the seminar discussion was on support for young people's transition to work, activation measures and models of vocational education and training that provide for integration of vulnerable populations into the labour market.

Constellations of disadvantage in school-to-work transitions

Siyka Kovacheva presented a joint paper with Axel Pohl on policy measures addressing disadvantage in youth transitions. The paper is based on a comparative analysis of risks in youth transitions and of policy interventions for social inclusion in 13 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Denmark, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK). It makes use of three main sources: national reports based on standardized questionnaires, Eurostat data from the 2004 Labour Force Survey, and reports of good practices.

The study identified key problem constellations across countries. It found out that depending on the national context there are different constellations of disadvantage with regard to early school leaving, unemployment and precarious employment. For instance early school leaving is low in the Nordic countries and in Central Europe. It has a medium rate in UK and Greece and a high rate in South and South East Europe. However, when comparing data on youth unemployment, the grouping of countries changes. New Member States, accession countries, and Italy and Greece have high rates of long-term youth unemployment. Portugal, Spain and Austria exhibit medium rates, which become low for the UK and the Nordic countries.

Social disadvantage is not limited to early school leavers and the unemployed. The study confirms the high level of precariousness of youth employment, as in the case of temporary contracts in Spain, Poland, Finland and Slovenia, part-time work in Denmark, and undeclared work in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania. This underlines the points in Fahmy's paper, about the problematic assumption that

employment *per se* is the main route to social inclusion. Another group that is at particular risk of social exclusion in Europe and for which there is still no sufficient data is the so-called "status zero" group, i.e. young people who are neither in education, training or employment, nor are registered as unemployed.

Looking at existing policy measures for tackling youth disadvantage in Europe, the study identifies two main policy dilemmas:

- Individualized versus structure-related approaches, i.e. adapting individuals to the demands of education, training and labour market, or rather making structural opportunities more accessible and relevant to young people
- Preventive versus compensatory measures, i.e. addressing risk factors that create disadvantage, or attempting to alleviate accumulated problems

Although most countries apply different combinations of both approaches, a common trend towards activation policies can be discerned. A key mechanism in this strategy of engaging young people in their social and labour market integration is the individual action plan (IAP). Once again, national approaches to IAP vary between:

- Limited activation towards labour market integration based on restricted choices, negative incentives and extrinsic motivation
- Broader activation towards social inclusion offering wider educational and training choices, individual counseling, positive incentives and intrinsic motivation.

The first approach is most often applied in the new Member States, Austria, Portugal and Spain and in the two accession countries, whereas the second approach is favoured in Denmark, Finland and Slovenia. The analysis of national policies shows that limiting activation measures to job placement and measuring their success only by the increase in labour market participation and ignoring variables like income, duration of contract and personal satisfaction would not lead to lasting positive effects on social inclusion.

The study of good practices confirms that policy measures for disadvantaged youth have a greater effect when part of a coordinated and integrated youth strategy. There is evidence that activation policies are more successful where they are accompanied by adequate funding for education and training and by active labour market policies.
A coordinated approach is best suited to address the de-standardisation of youth transitions and the various constellations of disadvantage across countries. Other factors for success of policy interventions include:

- Definition of policy objectives starting from the individual perspective and needs (see also Niemeyer)
- Ability of the institutions to reflect on their activities and to shape and reshape policies in a flexible way

Legislation to integrate youth into the labour market

Gabriela Matei presented a case study on Romanian legislative initiatives to promote young people's integration in the labour market. Recent statistics from the Romanian Public Employment Service show that approximately 20 per cent (or 100, 350 people) of all registered unemployed are below the age of 25. Among these more than 70 per cent are young people who have not completed secondary education. Measures that encourage youth employment in Romania concentrate both on the employers and the

employees. Employers who hire young people are granted subsidies from the unemployment insurance fund. These subsidies increase in proportion to the educational level of the new recruit, but there are also financial incentives to hire people with disabilities and to organize vocational training courses.

Initiatives that target young employees include:

- Counseling, assistance and loans for starting up an activity as self-employed
- Bonuses to young people who renounce unemployment benefits in favour of a full-time job
- Specific programmes for reducing school dropout rates based on individual counseling plans and annual job fairs for students and graduates

Monthly around 10,000 young people find a job through the Public Employment Service. The most effective tool is job-matching, followed by job-subsidizing and to a much lesser extent vocational education and counseling service. However, in the discussion, it was noted that some employers are reluctant, in spite of subsidies, to employ disadvantaged young people; and that better-educated young people sometimes manipulate the system to their own benefit.

Participatory projects for transitions to work

Andreas Walter's contribution concentrated on the potential of participatory projects to re-motivate young people in their transition to work. The paper is based on the findings of a comparative study on "Youth Policy and Participation" (YOYO) in nine European countries (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the UK). Through biographical interviews and case studies the YOYO project follows the motivational careers of young people and gains understanding of career aspirations, attitudes towards formal and informal learning, experience with informal networks and youth cultures in a situation that sees the shift from linear towards so-called "yo-yo" transitions that are increasingly reversible.

Walter considered the concept of participation and its multiple meanings across policy sectors (youth policy, education and training, lifelong learning, welfare policies and labour market policies). He distinguished between notions of active and passive participation and participation as an objective of policies and as an integral principle of policies and argued that while individualisation and de-standardisation of youth transitions are all-European phenomena, national transition regimes have a significant impact on transition trajectories and participatory levels. (see also Niemeyer, Kovacheva).

Based on the analysis of five case studies from different European transitional regimes Walter identified a trend towards restricting individual autonomy in youth transitions. Nevertheless, some elements of a participatory approach can also be discerned, i.e. in the cases where young people are given the possibilities of choice of transition options and of engaging step-by-step which leads to a better mediation between systemic and subjective interests. Because participation evolves in relation to other individuals and social contexts, it depends on the trust and confidence between project workers and young people. Other prerequisites for participation are the access to flexible and individually based support, the focus on the strengths and not on the deficits of participants and the existence of social spaces that are open for individual shaping and experimentation. Most importantly, participation can be considered a potential solution to the problem of young people's social inclusion, only if it is not

reduced to a pedagogical approach, but extends to the structural and socio-political level.

Research in, not 'on', VET

The last speaker in this session, Fernando Marhuenda, reviewed trends in European research on vocational education and training (VET) and reflected on the responsibility of researchers in a changing research agenda. He argued that several aspects of current research need to be reinforced in the future:

- Interdisciplinary studies combining pedagogical, sociological, economic and other research as they are best suited to explore the complex relations between education, training and work
- Longitudinal studies that trace the long-term effect of VET upon vulnerable populations
- Focus on the evidence of the benefits of VET for social integration and reconstruction of identities
- Exploration of the potential of pilot projects to serve as data sources for research on VET
- Consideration of local, company and regional distinctions in VET mechanisms and outcomes
- Looking at possibilities for experimental research on VET
- Dissemination of VET research among stakeholders (policy makers, employers, trade unions, practitioners) and in this way increasing the impact of research results on policy design

Key issues raised by the presenters were later developed in the discussion. Batsleer and Philip emphasized the importance of choice and the need to engage the individuals in order to enable ownership of transition projects. Walther and Kovacheva pointed out that choice has to be informed, and provision must be of high quality, in order to address the perceived unattractiveness of VET.

Another issue is the relationship between researchers, policymakers and practitioners and the quality of communication between them. Marhuenda and Jarl-Aberg argued for direct contacts between researchers and practitioners for exchange of research findings and practical results.

The discussion that followed focused on the quality of data on youth unemployment (gender variations, impact of immigration), the links between lower qualifications and unemployment risks, and short-term funding for training programmes as an obstacle for creating a sense of belonging to a community.

5. Social inclusion through formal education

The speakers of Panel 3 presented challenges and difficulties faced by the formal education system when confronted with social exclusion, particularly if the later is linked to cultural differences person concerned.

Language issues in schooling for young migrants

Christiane Weis presented the case of Luxembourg, where the formal education system has to cope with a complex linguistic situation around the use of three different languages. This tends to have particularly adverse effects for young people from migrant families. Three official languages coexist in Luxembourg and are taught in schools: Luxembourgish, French and German. Whereas the first is the language spoken by most of the Luxembourg's population in the non-public sphere, French and German dominate in the workplace. Although it plays a role only in pre-schooling and the primary school, Luxembourgish is seen as a prerequisite for a successful school career because it facilitates the learning of German, the second language in Luxembourg's education system.

However, over one third of children are from migrant backgrounds, and more than two thirds of these speak Romanic languages as their mother tongue. This means that they are disadvantaged compared to their native Luxembourgish speaking counterparts, since access to the language of literacy (German) is more difficult for them. In order to prevent social exclusion for these children, the Ministry for National Education and occupational training (MENFP) has developed the following measures:

- Creation of classes with French as the only teaching language
- Creation of "integration" classes, where German and French are taught using intensive methods
- Setting up induction classes (for pupils who have not been through Luxembourg's educational system) followed by a language immersion class to subsequently enable them to join the mainstream system.

It is, however, not only the educational system which is involved. The individual's social background, i.e. the social conditions of parents, have an impact on the academic success of all children. Adverse living conditions (unemployment, accommodation, health) often prevent parents from supporting their children's education satisfactorily.

'Integration' of minority ethnic pupils

Balint Beremenyi presented his empirical research on 'Teacher's discourses about Roma pupils' low performance', based on two years' fieldwork at San Antoni, a small neighbourhood in the suburbs of Barcelona with a high proportion of Gipsy population. In San Antoni, the learning performance of Gipsy pupils is below the average; absenteeism and early school leaving manifest this. As a result, the lower level of instruction is a major cause of the high unemployment among Gipsy population.

However, on the level of educational politics, little attention is paid to the academic failure of this group of population. Apart from positive actions undertaken in some cases, a coordinated long term plan to remedy this situation does not exist for the moment. On the level of schools, the elaboration of special policies for those pupils would be seen as politically incorrect. In Beremenyi's case study, the special context of Gipsy pupils' location in a marginalized district was not mentioned in the school's official documents (Educational Projects, Curriculum Project etc.). According to the official discourse of the school, the performance of all pupils should be assessed only on personalised evaluation, teachers include the perceived personal effort of their

pupils ("willingness to work") in their assessment, and their subjective judgements of Gipsy pupils can be negatively biased. Additionally, the relatively low expectations that they tend to have of the Gipsy pupils ("swift preparation for the labour market") act as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and can shape pupils' performance in a negative way.

For the group of teachers interviewed, the reasons for school failure of Gipsy children are located outside the secondary school context (fault of the pupil's family, lack of individual effort, failure of the educational system as a whole, etc.). Their own role, as an agent of school, which in turn is an institution of the majority, is not scrutinised.
For Gipsy pupils and their families, schooling (as a source of instrumental knowledge) is today considered more and more important. Even if an overall negative perception of school, very often viewed as an "unsafe but necessary place", remains, important steps have been made towards a more integrated participation in school.
Neither the schools nor the preparation of teachers has undergone parallel progress in the direction of a better mutual understanding.

Segregation of minority ethnic pupils

In the Hungarian education system, it is not the absence of specific programmes for Roma children, but rather their intended segregation that reinforces the exclusion of Roma children. The study presented by Anna Kende attempted to identify the factors of success for Roma students in a context of widespread discrimination. For this purpose, 20 higher education students belonging to Romaveritas, a programme for Roma Youth, were interviewed on their identity formation.

The family background and the role of education were decisive factors in shaping the identity of all interviewed students. Besides differences concerning ethnic background (more or less traditional), financial situation and parents' level of education, those interviewed could be mainly categorised in three groups:

- Group 1, characterised by family support against a prejudiced society: students belonging to this group were strongly supported by their families. They tended to live in areas with no other Roma children around and felt victim to prejudiced attitudes.
- Group 2, characterised by an enormous discrepancy between family background and the wish to pursue education on a higher level. Students belonging to this group tended to live in socially deprived areas inhabited mainly by Roma. They visited segregated schools with no prospect of further education.
- Group 3 consisted of second-generation intellectuals, meaning students that followed the example of their parents concerning identity formation and field of interest.

Whereas for the first group school created obstacles, and success required assimilation into Hungarian majority society, school (i.e. individual teachers or institutions) encouraged students in the second group to pursuit their learning careers. However it was the talent and persistence of these students which laid the foundations of their academic success and allowed them to overcome the social exclusion faced by Roma students in these schools.

In the discussion, points were made that teachers are often expected to shoulder excessive individual responsibility for eradicating racism that is often embedded in educational institutions and systems. There are also deficiencies in initial teacher education (see Roberts), which does not adequately prepare teachers for their role of supporting minority ethnic pupils. There was also considerable discussion on the pros and contras of special measures targeted at minority ethnic groups in the education system: do they help to challenge exclusion, or can they contribute to further exclusion?

6. Social inclusion through non-formal learning

Exclusion is not a simple binary between those included and those excluded. There are different power relationships between different identities that may cause more or less exclusion, for example, the identities of young people, minorities, women, disabilities and class. This panel explored multiple dimensions of social exclusion and the circumstances in which non-formal and informal learning can provide support to reduce social exclusion.

Impact of social policy on youth work

Janet Batsleer discussed a number of examples where identities constructed by the UK government and media had caused multiple exclusion by demonising young people. The first example was of 'yobs who wear hooded tops', thus creating an image of young and usually working class men as dangerous. The second image was of 'Asian youth', this time introducing youth and minorities with a link to terrorist activities. The third was of 'pregnant teenagers', creating an image of young sexually active women as deviant to traditional moral standards.

She focused on the UK government's introduction and use of anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), a form of curfew for behaviour that is defined as 'anti-social' at a local level, but which taps into fears generated by negative official representations of young people. Although not a criminal sentence in itself, breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence. As a result, the high use of ASBOs in some areas is criminalizing young people who would not otherwise find themselves within the youth justice system. In one large metropolitan city (Manchester), which has the highest level of ASBOs in the UK, they are much used against homeless people sleeping rough and against prostitutes, and frequently lead to imprisonment due to breaches. So, although youth workers are involved in local decisions about ASBOs, while government keeps control over the labelling process and setting the agenda, there is little that youth work can do to challenge the way that ASBOs drive young people into the criminal justice system.

NGO activities against gender violence and racism

Amineh Kakabaveh and Cecilia Jarl-Aberg both described the difficulties incurred by minority ethnic women in Sweden and in France. Young women of Asian, Middle Eastern and African heritage have suffered from violence, rape and killings by their family or community as a result of resisting traditional expectations of their role and/or adopting a 'more westernized' lifestyle. In the context of the contemporaneous rebellions in France, Jarl-Aberg spoke about the mental as well as geographical ghettos in which young people from minority ethnic groups are condemned to live,

emphasising their social, cultural and economic exclusion from the rest of France. The situation is a complex one. Both Jarl-Aberg and Kakabaveh argued that, even when the issues of violence against women were taken up as issues for policy or in the media, this was usually done in a way that reinforced negative and racist perceptions of those communities. In order to deal with the problem effectively, it is necessary to address both sexism and racism, and to acknowledge that these are not problems solely for the minorities affected, but are problems at the heart of 'mainstream' society.

Kakabaveh noted that, although the Swedish welfare system is one of the most favourable for refugees, women refugees often suffer particular isolation and oppression that remains hidden. In particular, they can experience domestic violence as a result of their men's sense of disempowerment as refugees. Domestic violence is also a problem for some native Swedish women, but is not as openly addressed as it should be either. She discussed a project she has led, where Kurdish women in Sweden have organised themselves towards empowerment through creating a voluntary-funded radio station that promotes women's rights and civic participation, and gives information on women's issues such as sexual health. This has faced considerable opposition from men within the refugee community, and Kakabaveh pointed out that we should not have over-expectations that women can transform their situation rapidly.

Jarl-Aberg talked about the movement Ni Putes, Ni Soumises (Neither Whores, Nor Submissive) that began as a protest march by young women from the suburbs of Paris against so-called 'honour' killings, and now has tens of thousands of members across France, Europe and North America. Like the Kurdish women's radio station, it provides much needed information and support towards empowerment for minority women in Europe. It also challenges racism, and calls for measures to create 'mixity' between black and white, women and men. It has had significant success in convincing the French government to take initiatives such as the founding of safe refuges for women fleeing violence, and the production of a 'Guide to Respect', an informal education initiative about sexual and racial equality, which has been distributed to secondary schools.

Although the projects discussed in this panel had obvious positive developments towards education, there are limits to what education alone can change. Young people regardless of their ethnicity or gender need to be able to access labour markets and decent housing, and structural changes are needed to support this.

7. Social inclusion, young people and citizenship

The difference between this seminar on social inclusion and previous youth research partnership seminars and Council of Europe and European Commission youth events is the focus on employment, and the understanding that employment is central to social inclusion – both because of the necessity of income to participate in society, and the necessity of employment that contributes to a positive identity and to feeling a part of the community. For young people today, finding employment or regular work with decent contracts and an average wage is one of their greatest difficulties. However, until now the youth sector has focused on political participation and youth as actors of social change, for example, their involvement in associative life, NGOs

and development of democracy. The change of emphasis in this seminar and the change of emphasis within the European Commission as a whole within the Lisbon strategy towards 'Growth and Jobs' is welcomed, however, the importance of civil society should not be forgotten or ignored. This panel focused on bringing back into balance the importance of civil society and the need for active citizens in order to facilitate the continuation of democracy, uphold human rights, equality and safeguard the environment. The panel emphasized the need for a concerted effort by all levels: local, national and European and by all stakeholders: NGOs, practitioners, researchers and policymakers to work together to make this possible.

Civic engagement for environmental change

The examples given from the local level presented by Serdar M. Degirmencioglu was a project called Public Achievement. This was an NGO that worked in cooperation with researchers to develop civic engagement of young people. The NGO train coaches, usually college students, to work with young people in a school to support the young people themselves to achieve changes to their local environment. This project was supported by psychologists who could deliver an understanding of child development to the coaches. The concept of the project was to support young people in their learning about democracy and decision making processes at the grass routes level. If young people can learn to change things in their local community - the possibilities to change things beyond the local level then become tangible. The pedagogical approach was learning by doing. The possibilities for this style of learning on the subject of democracy were seen as particularly important in countries where there are few possibilities for young people to be involved in civil society, their local communities and where democracies need to be strengthened.

The concrete example given by Serdar M. Degirmencioglu, was in Turkey, where a coach helped to support a group of girls to improve the environment around the school grounds. The girls negotiated with the teachers and with a local garden centre for the delivery of trees and plants to the school. The change to the environment was a substantial result that the young girls had achieved. Thus the girls not only learnt skills for participation in their local community but developed greater self belief. This NGO also works in USA, N. Ireland, Palestine and now in Eastern and Central Europe.

European indicators for active citizenship

The European level was presented by Bryony Hoskins. Her speech discussed future opportunities for collaboration between researchers and policy makers to create indicators across Europe that will demonstrate the trends of levels of active citizenship across Europe. The purpose for creating indicators is to be able to highlight good practice across Europe and to support countries where low levels of active citizenship occur.

The context for her speech was the development of a new research centre within the European Commission. The new research centre called the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL) has been created to evaluate progress towards the Lisbon 2010 goals in education. One of the education objectives refers to supporting active citizenship and social inclusion. In 2005 active citizenship was described by the European Council as a basic skill along with other skills such as learning to learn and foreign languages. Thus the European Council asked the European Commission to create indicators that will measure the levels of basic skills across Europe and to

develop the relevant surveys for the data collection. This request forms the mandate for her work in the CRELL centre.

The importance of indicators on citizenship were described by Bryony Hoskins as due to the fact that to achieve social cohesion all individuals should have equal opportunities and human rights to succeed and play an active role in civil society regardless of gender, ethnicity or citizenship and that indicators provide the evidence to know what extent this is happening where. There is a concern that many citizens are no longer interested to play a role in democracy as traditional forms of active citizenship such as voting and membership of political parties are decreasing thus questioning the legitimacy of governments at all levels of decision making: European, national or local. There was also a concern of the rise in non democratic political engagement such as riots and terrorism. At the European level there is an anxiety about the lack of European citizenship as a result of the no votes to the constitution and the increasing lack of enthusiasm for enlargement.

The research project that Bryony Hoskins presented explored the development of two forms of indicators on active and democratic citizenship, as well as the inter-relationship between them:

1) The development through learning opportunities (formal/non-formal and informal) of the skills and competencies, attitudes, values and beliefs that make active citizenship possible (input/output indicators);

2) The development of indicators to determine the actual levels of active and democratic citizenship.

The first steps for her project will be to agree a common definition of active and democratic citizenship that takes into account the role of education, followed by establishing the exact skills, competencies, attitudes, values and beliefs that are necessary to be an active citizen.

The discussion from the panel presentations focused on where did the learning for active citizenship take place. For example, where were the active citizenship skills learnt by those working in the NGO Ni Putes Ni Soumises? In particular the first few activists who began the movement in the march across France? Were they learning in the process of doing, or did they have prior experience, or did they learn from their peers? The discussion described how it was not just skills and competencies required for active citizenship but motivation such as in the example here the injustice and violence faced by women in the suburbs of France.

The discussion also focused on the power of defining categories, for example, what is active citizenship? And what is extremist behaviour? The audience noted a need to involve citizens in the role of defining these categories. This would help to reduce the lack of trust between policymakers and civil society and reduce the feeling that there is a hidden agenda to policymakers work in the active citizenship field.

8. Multi-agency strategies for social inclusion

In our planning for the seminar, policy-makers indicated their interest in the development of multi-agency strategies as a means of tackling the multiple aspects of social exclusion. This panel focused on such strategies. It contained evaluation reports from practitioners in two community-based projects in Germany, for young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and in Ireland, for asylum seekers, refugees

and migrant workers. A third paper presented longitudinal evidence from independent researchers evaluating a four-year cross-departmental education project in Scotland, on teenage sexual health. Here we summarise key elements of multi-agency strategies, the benefits identified, and obstacles to successful partnership approaches.

Examples of multi-agency strategies

Antje Klemm's paper on the 'E&C' programme ('Development and opportunities for young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods', funded by the German Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth) presented a comprehensive account of its ideal model of multi-agency partnerships, underpinned by a philosophy of 'social work as co-production'. This programme operates in 363 neighbourhoods, involving almost 4000 public and private bodies responsible for youth welfare and education. Key characteristics of the model are:

- Co-operation between existing services rather than additional structures
- Community-based projects, with genuine ownership by residents
- Pooled resources around joint objectives, driven by funding requirements
- Cross-departmental, public-private partnership with wide variety of activities
- A full range of stakeholders from the public service, voluntary and business sectors
- Combined top-down and bottom-up initiatives
- National programme support for local partnerships.

Kate Philip reviewed a body of UK-based research which points to similar aspirations for multi-agency working. As well as synergising efforts, providing central support for local initiatives, and involving young people in the development of services, multi-agency strategies should also contribute to greater professional understanding, expertise and teamwork in supporting youth; to bridging between formal and informal services; and to more user-friendly settings for provision.

Both the sexual health project and the asylum-seekers' support project in Ireland (Michael Power) emphasised the importance of approaches which combine both universal and targeted provision, within established institutions such as schools and through community-based drop-in centres. Such an approach enables engagement with young people from more vulnerable groups, while avoiding stigmatisation. It recognises that communities – not just young people as individuals – need to change and be more inclusive, and develops advocacy work within them as well.

Benefits of multi-agency strategies

Three central themes emerged around the positive impact of multi-agency strategies. First, there are real benefits to young people, especially where youth work, welfare and education services co-operate to respond in a holistic way to young people's needs. Such partnerships can help to break down barriers which prevent young people accessing help, for example, the off-putting image of traditional contraception services to young men, or the unwitting racism of health service staff unused to a multicultural clientele (Philip, Power). Long-term joint training of professionals involved is vital to this (Klemm).

Second, the support of an overarching programme or partnership can maximise the effectiveness of local organisations and initiatives. For example, E&C supports neighbourhood projects through national and European events focused on policy priority topics (e.g. the role of local economies, gender mainstreaming, involving migrants' organisations); exchange forums for research results, good practice, and networking; an Internet portal to support local networking and funding bids; and wider promotion of exemplary pilot projects (Klemm). Partnerships can thus develop local social capital. They can also raise broader awareness of hidden issues and groups, such as homophobic bullying in schools (Philip), or young people in deprived neighbourhoods (Klemm).

Third, there is a need to recognise that establishing genuine multi-agency partnerships is complex and difficult. It requires substantial time and funding. Support from champions at senior management level in partner organisations is also crucial to success. (Klemm, Philip)

Obstacles to successful multi-agency strategies

The presentations and discussion pointed to a number of obstacles that can hamper multi-agency working, and need to be avoided or overcome:

- Traditional professional, departmental and institutional boundaries, leading to clashes of cultures and values (Klemm, Philip)
- Moralistic approaches, focused on controlling young people, that do not involve them seriously or respect their confidentiality (Philip)
- Unequal power relations between large institutions and smaller local organisations, which can undermine the direct engagement of the latter with young people (Philip)
- Using a focus on developing local social capital as an excuse for reducing state funding
- Partnerships which become self-perpetuating and create user-dependency (Power)
- Difficulties in engaging employers in social inclusion strategies, even when they are offered subsidies (Klemm, Kovacheva)
- 'Initiative fatigue', and uncertainty due to short-term funding (Power, Philip)
- Adverse and sensationalist reporting by the media, sometimes provoked by fundamentalist religious campaigns (Philip, see also Kalambayi).

Finally, in the discussion Fernando Marhuenda pointed to the paradox that, as policy-makers seek more active engagement and participation by young people, this becomes mediated by ever more agencies, but in a context where the commodification of services makes them increasingly inaccessible. Andreas Walther and Rachel Gorman also pointed to the contradictions of privatised services and public-private 'partnerships' for initiatives promoting social equity.

Implications for policy on youth and social inclusion

The following thirteen points were elaborated on the basis of a concluding debate between the participants of the seminar, in particular researchers and policy-makers, on the policy implications of the discussions held during the seminar:

1. Further research should be funded at local, regional, national and European levels to determine more fully:
   - the extent of social exclusion for young people
   - the variety of its manifestations (including those which are less visible, or recurrent)
   - the range of causes of social exclusion, and their compound effects
   - longer-term consequences of social exclusion for young people
   - effective measures to prevent young people becoming socially excluded
   - flexible pathways with multiple entry points to help young people out of social exclusion

2. More comprehensive research data and analyses are needed to inform better-calibrated policies that can address varied forms of social exclusion and new factors or causes. Research methods should be developed to reveal the compound effects of different contributing factors, long-term exclusion, relative poverty, and recurrent episodes of poverty and exclusion. There is a need for both large-scale quantitative survey evidence of trends, and smaller-scale qualitative evidence of young people's subjective experiences of social exclusion.

3. Authoritarian strategies towards socially excluded young people are economically costly, and may be counterproductive. Social inclusion policies should pursue opportunity-focused strategies, not only in terms of learning and employment, but also by providing constructive leisure and volunteer activities, and opportunities for civic and political participation at local, national and European levels. These have to be open to all, not just the most advantaged and most educated, and indicators of participation should include measures of progress in this regard.

4. Prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination and violence on the basis of ethnicity, gender, social class, disability, and sexual orientation are major causes of social exclusion. Policy initiatives should challenge these barriers within 'mainstream' society, in order to foster social inclusion.

5. Vocational education and training (VET) policies should support research and development of new pedagogical approaches, drawing on theories of situated learning and social participation in communities of practice, in order to create better quality and more inclusive forms of VET. Collaboration between VET pedagogues and the youth sector should be encouraged, so that youth-work expertise in informal and non-formal learning can contribute to these developments.

6. Policies to improve VET provision will not engage young people or ensure their social inclusion unless there are sufficient, decent, adequately-paid jobs for them. This may require regulation of the labour market.

7. Social inclusion policies should address the fact that many young Europeans in poverty are not 'non-participants', but are already in some form of education, training or employment. Measures should be taken to ensure that young people engaged in learning and work are not socially excluded through poverty or other factors.

8. Policies for social inclusion should include specific attention to the needs of young people, since they are one of the groups most vulnerable to poverty and exclusion. This should form part of a co-ordinated and integrated youth strategy that responds to the de-standardisation and non-linearity of youth transitions.

9. Policies for social inclusion must also address the systemic and structural causes of social exclusion. In respect of the crucial issue of ensuring greater and more equitable access to the labour market, attention should be paid to activation measures directed at the demand side (employers) as well as to the supply side (young people). More effective measures are needed to ensure the co-operation of employers in reducing social exclusion.

10. Welfare systems should be reformed to provide adequate social protection for young people, recognising their particular vulnerability to poverty.

11. Policy initiation and development should involve the democratic participation of young people affected by social exclusion, and should aim to empower these groups. Policy-makers should engage in dialogue with independent movements of young people campaigning against aspects of social exclusion as a means to develop policy, and provide funding for constructive measures they initiate.

12. Policy-makers should consider longer-term, holistic initiatives rather than simplistic 'quick fixes' of limited benefit. They should avoid piecemeal or short-term funding that results in the loss of successful initiatives and good practice. Multi-agency strategies should be funded adequately to resource the inter-professional learning and networking necessary to their effective and ethical functioning. While attention to 'soft' outcomes from these strategies, such as increased social capital, is to be welcomed, policies should not treat this as a reason to reduce state funding in support of disadvantaged groups or communities.

13. There is a need for more open and productive dialogue between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. Policy-makers and practitioners need to take account of the full range of evidence in planning and implementing initiatives. Research training for PhD students should include developing the knowledge of policy-making institutions and processes and the skills of engaging effectively with policy. Researchers should also develop parallel skills and knowledge to engage with practitioner communities. Policies in higher education, especially quality reviews of research, should ensure that recognition is given to academics' engagement with policy and practice development on a par with the publication of academic papers.