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YOUTH POLICY IN ESTONIA

Report by the International Group of Experts

PREFACE

This evaluation report is a response to the Estonian Review of National Youth Policy (2000), presented by the Ministry of Education. Both publications are the sixth of their kind, preceded by Finland (1997), the Netherlands (1998), Spain and Sweden (1999), and Romania (2000). The review processes are carried out by the Council of Europe, and are presented all together there for discussion.

The Estonian review has been evaluated by an international group of experts, including:

Ms. Raymonda Verdyck, Belgium, Chair of the group, representative of the CDEJ
Mr. Petr Levitski, Russia, representative of Advisory Council
Ms. Siyka Kovacheva, Bulgaria, youth researcher
Mr. Herwig Reiter, Austria, youth researcher
Mr. Ion Dan Trestieni, programme advisor at Council of Europe, coordinator of the group
Mr. Ola Stafseng, Norway, youth researcher, rapporteur

The group had two study visits to Estonia, at the end of April and the beginning of July, more about these visits and working procedures in chapter 1.

The group will like to bring their warmest thanks to the large number of institutions and persons who received us and discussed our questions with us, for their hospitality and friendliness. A special and heartily thank goes to our main hosts for the two visits, Toivo Sikk and Tiina Häng at the Ministry of Education, for always being ready for questions and discussions, for nice meals and pleasant company.

SUMMARY

This report is the readers' evaluation of the Estonian National Report, supplied by the study visits and a long range of follow-up questions and discussions. The group finds the National Report to be a valuable and competent document about Estonian youth and youth policy, making the objectives, structures and measures transparent for an expert group of outsiders.

The tasks of the group are to identify the strong and weak sides of Estonian youth policies, and to put critical remarks on issues that should be elaborated or developed further. This is going on with a serious recognition of Estonia as a country in rapid transition and change, which are making all forms for evaluation difficult.

Estonia appears in general as well prepared for their own ambitions of becoming a European, modern country as quickly as possible, compared to most other transition countries. There are two important framing factors for their youth policy, the first is the heavy impact from education and educational values, and the second is the heritage of important but expensive in budget terms national institutions. This means

that the “free space” for new policies or initiatives are or have been limited in a time of reconsolidating. But just at the time of the review exercise, 1999-2000-2001, there seem to be released a set of new structures and measures for the renewal of youth policy.

Perhaps because of the strong educational traditions, this report finds that youth participation, influence or “education for democratic citizenship” have a weak standing so far in Estonian youth policy, and there is a lacking “youth voice” in the National Report. This report is also critical towards the ways Estonian youth policy is handling the existence of Estonian and “non-Estonian” youth, partly from a human rights point of view, partly because research data contradict most of the assumptions ruling these issues.

In the main conclusions and recommendations the report is very positive to the present “state of art” in Estonian youth policy, in the sense that important heritages from the past have been saved, and the tracks pointed out for the future seem quite rational. Estonia has also with remarkable rapid steps entered various types of European partnerships on equal feet. But in the present plans there are huge jobs waiting, especially in a reconstruction of the division of labour in the youth field between State, county and municipal levels.

Finally, the report emphasize that this is a European report, in the meaning that this exercise shall be a mutual learning process between Estonia and Europe, and lead to improved agendas for a European youth policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is important to be severely conscious of the fact that Estonia (parallel to Romania) introduces the first transition State for the evaluation exercise of Council of Europe. Until now the national reports and the discussion procedures have been based on States with a long standing within the Council’s democratic and youth policy agreements and cooperation. After 10 years of heavy enlargement of this cooperation, Estonia offers a unique opportunity for a mutual exchange of experiences and viewpoints on the prospects and limitations of what a transition state means in youth policy, not only for Estonia, but for the Council of Europe and other member States. The implications are, however, some needs of a sensitive awareness on how to approach the observations, interpretations and discussions, in order not to disturb the further and future learning of all parts.

1.1 Objectives

This report is not an evaluation in the strict sense of the concept. The main evaluation has been done by Estonian authorities through their national report. It is not possible to enter the same tracks and repeat the same work by the international team. But it is possible to come into a next level of a (meta-)context, considering how Estonian authorities understand or perceive the situation of their youth and their youth policy measures, and also their self-understanding as authorities or constructors of the youth policy executive bodies.

On these premises, this report shall first of all serve as a mirror for the Estonian authorities, and also all others in Estonia involved in youth matters. As a mirror it shall reflect how a group of experts from outside read and interpret their self-evaluation, and the questions and answers around the report and remaining issues. It is a task to develop these reflections into some sort of a critical framework, where the comments are able to identify strong and weak sides of Estonian youth policy. These sides of the report shall hopefully make it to an advisory document for Estonia.

A second purpose of the report is to contribute to an increasing standardisation and professionalisation of youth policy reviewing in Europe. This comes from the fact that the first numbers of report have been done, and new reports shall by now make it easier to read and discuss the reports in a more comparative way. This function of the report leads to two opposing demands, both being a report on the individual and distinguishing case of Estonia, and at the same time to serve these generalizing purposes.

The third function of the report is linked to the previous, but the emphasis is more clearly about policy development. This implies that the report shall clearly be on a single State review, but in ways that open for learning processes between individual States, and the mutual learning between European and State levels: What can Europe learn from Estonia, and what can Estonia learn from Europe?

1.2 Theoretical assumptions and working procedure

A Council of Europe report on youth policy in year 2000 is not starting from scratch, whether it concerns the youth policy concept or the youth concept(s). Several years and decades of experiences are accumulated into platforms of the self-evident or given, whether this be on the policy side or in the ways of conceiving youth. Such platforms can or shall always be challenged, but that is generally the nature of scientific reports. Since this is not a research report, there are some needs for clarifications of some basic considerations or theoretical assumptions on youth and youth matters.

Firstly, the relationship between young people and youth policy can be treated and conceived in a relevant and analytic fruitful way through the guiding themes from the International Youth Year in 1985 - Participation, Development and Peace (Stafseng 1998, 1999). The specific meanings and implications of these themes have undergone further elaborations and added experiences since then, making them into even stronger pillars at global and national levels. “Participation” has moved from a strategic idea to a more basic view on youth as agency and, as a human resource (“youth as a resource”). “Development” has been strengthened as a basic perspective on the mutual relationship between individual and society, that the society in developing the young individual is developing itself, and vice versa. “Peace” is not only a youth perspective on warfare and armament, but has come closer to everyday lives as critical youth policy statements related to human rights, xenophobia, prejudices, civil wars, etc.

Secondly, that youth can be conceived through theoretical universitalities, and observed through empirical particularities, where youth policy can be seen as a "mediator" between the restraining and/or enabling interests and forces of society. This is leading to the assumption of "youth as a construction", in the double meaning that young people are constructing themselves, and the particular society is constructing its youth. Young people can then at the same time become victims and agents in ongoing discourses of their society, and the actual youth policy agendas or frameworks can be perceived as one of, but not the only, of these discourses.

Within this evaluation procedure, this means that it is not possible with any fixed approach, but instead with some relativistic curiosity. It is possible to find in the first country a weak official discourse on youth, but strong sets of discourses in the society as a whole, and then quite the opposite in the next country.

A third point is that there is more than one concept of youth. In the most of post-war decades in Europe youth meant adolescents or in reality teenagers. During the last 15-20 years the youth concept has been enlarged to include older and older cohorts, sometimes specified as post-adolescence, prolonged youth ages or young adults. For some particular reasons, the transition States avoided these experiences until the changes after 1989/90, and these changes of youth realities (and concepts) have probably occurred too rapidly to become identified in relevant ways. But today the whole of Europe is confronted with two different youth phases, and the significant distinction lines between them are unclear in theory, and in their further implications.

Even if the theoretical contributions have to become elaborated, the youth policy field can independently assume some necessary distinctions between policy measures: Until some age limits policy measures for the rights to a good and adequate youth life are relevant, but at a diffuse next stage the youth policy measures also have to include strategies for "becoming adult".

As a fourth point, after a differentiation of youth phases, there are sets of other important differentiation factors at each stage, by dimensions as richer/poorer, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural, etc. An emphasis on the heterogeneity of youth leads to two different perspectives and questions. Firstly, the question of advantaged and disadvantaged youth related to such differing factors, and also about the awareness in youth policy on these questions. Secondly, social differences also lead young people into subgroups and subcultures, that form patchworks telling about the liberality or illiberality of modern society, and also about life chances and risks (Furlong & Cartmel 1997).

Fifthly, the local/global dimensions of youth lives have been the emerging scenario of all scientific and policy discussions during the last years. What exactly global/European means, or where the distinctions go between local/national, are components of difficult discussions. But the basic assumption can anyhow be that youth belongs to more than one sphere or life world at the same time, and experience different, competing or opposing modernities simultaneously. And the practical outcomes for European youth policy are a statement justifying present youth policies to be national/local and European at the same time.

About the working procedures and methods:

The international team has been composed of different kinds of expertise, but has at the same time been working as a comprehensive unit. The starting and ending point has been the National Report, which was not finished at the time of the start of the team's mission(s), but it has been supplied piece by piece. The report has been sincerely and critically studied and discussed by the team at every step, for clarifying the interpretations and the relevant agendas and questions for the study visits.

The programme for the study visit(s) was also adjusted by the Estonian authorities, according to the wishes of the team. Two study visits have been done, the first at the end of April and the second at the beginning of July. The first visit was concentrated on the capital Tallinn and central/national institutions and agencies. The second visit was performed as a round-trip, covering the North-Eastern areas with a population of Russian origin in majority, the Eastern parts covering rural/peripheral areas, ending in Tartu and back to Tallinn. A large and varying number of institutions and persons were included in these meetings, with a never-ending hospitality and willingness to open the Estonian community for the questions of the team.

Within these procedures, the team was also breaking up the visits with internal meetings, and also new separate meetings with the main hosts (Ministry of Education), in order to clarify and specify central issues and uncovered matters. As an essential of the working methods, we should stress that the team always has/had to find back to its main instrument or source of perspectives on Estonian youth policy - the National Report.

This is important to emphasize for more than one reason. The study visits and meetings, a lot of additional materials, and current observations were bringing a lot of new informations and diversifying impressions to the table, and could also easily lead curious people into new (side-)tracks. Then it is important to underline at these crucial steps that the National Report is the main, official document to relate to for the team. This is also showing the difference between this work and a research visit, since the references of this report include a lot of additional sources, these are only meant to support and clarify the discussions, but never to move the focus away from the National Report, and to develop an alternative report. This is not excluding the team and this report from an increasing critical view on the National Report, whether this is about a better understanding of the backgrounds of what it is telling about, or on important lacking issues.

There is also an additional, "extracurricular" reason for this reminder on the limited or focussed aims and tasks of this mission. Because the Estonian hosts did not try to hide that they liked to show this group of foreign visitors very much of the best of Estonia. And they were successful, in the sense that the team, most of us for the first time, discovered a beautiful country with an extraordinary rich history and culture. At the same time, not at least among youth, at the edges of the most hypermodern Europe. Compared to all the team experienced and learnt, the return to the report appears quite dry and poor. But nevertheless, that is the task, and other wishes have to be left for a next opportunity.

1.3 Guiding questions

Given the previous comments, it is also easier to legitimate those few, main questions guiding the team into some of the more detailed agendas that will be further elaborated under separate headlines:

* To what extent is the National Report reflecting the youth situation and the youth policy of Estonia?

* What are the distinguishing features of Estonian youth policy, seen as a transition State with some certain past/present/future dimensions of the objectives and structures of youth policy?

* How are the balances in Estonian youth policies with heavy impacts on education, nation building and integration on one hand, and youth participation, human rights, European multiculturalism, etc. on the other hand?

2 YOUTH POLICY ON A EUROPEAN LEVEL

Even if the first function of the evaluation of the expert group relates to a specific country - here Estonia, it should not be forgotten that the national reports and evaluations are part of a bigger European project. It was the Council of Europe who, in 1997, initiated the project of systematically collecting information on youth policy in the member states of the Council. The CDEJ (Comité directeur européen pour la cooperation intergouvernementale dans la domaine de la jeunesse) serves as the (only) intergovernmental organ of the youth field of the Council of Europe. One of the main tasks of the CDEJ is to prepare the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth. The CDEJ is the principal authority in the youth field and prepares the decisions of the Committee of Ministers concerning the implementation of the objectives of this field.

It is obvious that the aforementioned project of national youth reports are and shall be even more so in the future, a highly valuable instrument for designing youth political measures on a European level. It is also obvious that, in as much as European integration continues, ever so many more political decisions transgress national levels; that holds also for youth issues.

Previously the CDEJ has invested a lot of effort into youth mobility: how could barriers be overcome, how could mobility be increased? The interest in the concept of youth mobility had to do with the insight that the labour market of the future would demand much more social and geographical mobility than for former generations of young people. Other central European youth policy issues are education and training, social exclusion and racism, minority youth, associative life, housing and participation (Vanandruel et al. 1996; Avramov 1998; Helve & Bynner 1996).

Clear as the relevance of each of these topics may be - bringing them together in one coherent European youth policy has failed up to now. A definition of what a European youth policy really is, has never been made and, given the diversity of the

member countries and the specificities of national youth policies and traditions - particularly since 1989, this should not be amazing. Where are the common denominators on youth between Denmark and Georgia, the United Kingdom and Russia, Sweden and Estonia? There are common elements, though, and it is determining this commonness in spite of all the differences which the national reports and evaluations are meant to get hold of. Youth researchers should play a decisive role in this process (Stafseng 1999; du Bois-Reymond & Hübner-Funk 1999).

Two main approaches are promising in moving towards a European youth policy. One is youth policy as human resource policy: consider young people as a resource, not (only) as a problem. Regarding youth as a problem still is the stance of many European youth programmes which focus almost exclusively on more and better education and qualification - implying that (too) many young people lack those qualifications. Concepts of the Learning society and lifelong learning, in combination with a broadening of definitions of qualification (informal qualifications; informal learning), should overcome such restricted views (Alheit et al. 1998; Walther & Stauber 1998). The other approach under discussion is European citizenship which would give the youth-political agenda a political education profile: fight against social exclusion, work on concepts of multiculturalism and intercultural learning. Here the stress lies less on qualification and labour market and more on the responsibility of society to guarantee basic human rights (Lauritzen, in CYRCE 1999).

It remains to be seen if these two approaches can eventually be reconciled and can become the main pillars for a European youth policy. The ministers, responsible for youth, have on five ministerial conferences and informal meetings in Strasbourg (1985), Oslo (1988), Lisbon (1990), Vienna (1993) and Luxembourg (1995) agreed upon the following priorities of a European youth policy, in particular:

- participation of the young in society , especially through youth organisations and an intensified co-operation with all partners in the youth field;
- equal opportunities of access for the young particularly regarding mobility and youth information;
- regular interest in the social situation of the young in Europe - promotion of a global and integrated youth policy.

At the occasion of the Bucharest conference (1998), the youth ministers have agreed on the following three main fields of action in youth policy

- participation and citizenship;
- fighting social exclusion;
- non-formal education

with the topic of access to the labour market running through all these fields.

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Coming back to the case of Estonia (and previous and future countries), not only Estonian authorities will learn from the European youth policy discussion, but European authorities will as well learn from the Estonian example. Those European countries who have gone through the procedure of reporting and being evaluated have a much stronger stand in the European discussion and assemblies than those who have not, because of their gained insight in the complex relationship between the national/local and the international/European dimension of youth policy. Already now this learning approach is seen by the participants as something very positive.

3 OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE OF ESTONIAN YOUTH POLICY

As this report has to be written before the final version of the National Report is present, there are some difficulties and reservations in these procedures. These are especially important in the sections of this report where more formal sides (i.e. objectives) of Estonian youth policy has to be described.

The clearest lack of written information is about the general and formal youth policy statements, as for example given by the Parliament (Riigikogu), the Government, or as the mandate(s) for Ministry of Education (as coordinating ministry). The requests for such statements have been an important part of the study visits of the team, and several answers and informations have been delivered. The solutions for the reporting have to follow these lines:
* The issues have to be handled a bit on the surface as long as exact references can not be given/used, together with the uses of notes from oral information, and interpretations of scattered materials by the team, and the rapporteur at the end;
* The uses of scattered materials (see references under Estonian National Report, as supplementary materials), still through interpretations, but also anticipating that these will be sources for the final version of the National Report.

These reservations might leave a wrong impression of realities. The remarks shall not be interpreted as if the team could not find a youth policy, but rather a fluent and rapidly changing/reforming context where everybody had some difficulties with the construction of a comprehensive and stable policy framework. Different authorities, and not at least the Ministry of Education has at the present time to relate to various new initiatives, i.e. new Acts or foundations during 1999-2000, or a new Scheme running 2000(2001)-2004.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of Estonian youth policy are not easy to “decode” from massive impressions of general transformations of how a new State wants to perform and run its affairs. There seems roughly to be two phases, the first in the early nineties (since 1991) for a rapid establishment of the independent State without all details prepared, and a second phase vividly going on at the moment of the evaluation exercise (1999/2000 and forwards), where Estonia is establishing more long-term frameworks for public affairs and policies.

Youth policy seems first of all to be inflicted in these general transformations without any independent or autonomous status as a youth policy field, and at this general level with certain implications for form as well as substance:
* The Estonian State seems to use Acts or something like decrees as political steering mechanisms, in a way that is breaking down issues to elements like “register of youth associations recognized and supported by State”. Another steering mechanism seems to be a separation of executive State functions from ordinary administration, setting up (public) foundations - like for example the national “Centre for Youth Work” (which is quite new in 2000).

* At the substantial level Estonia is aiming at the reconstruction and building of their nation in all respects. This implicates that any matter like education, culture, language, social integration, etc. are defined within these general aims, and that youth policies in general have to be a part of these main directions, even if the consequences could be conflictual with the needs of a modernization of youth lives.

For the specific objectives of youth policy education and educational measures have the clear and highest priorities. This also means general education with high expectations and aspirations, while for example employment and/or vocational education/training have an exceptional weak position.

The leading role of education is also emphasized by the distinguishing fact that very much of what is called youth work are defined, presented or performed as extracurricular activities (hobby schools, etc.).

A second category of specific objectives are (artificially) constructed within this report, as particular illuminations of what it means to be in a transitional state, here interpreted as Estonia is going through a legislative modernization in the fields of (children and) youth. The examples are a.o. Child Protection Act (in accordance with UN's Convention on Child's Rights); Civil Code Act defining a.o. legal age limits of rights, as also by the Family Law Act; Employment Contracts Act regulating legal entrance age limits to paid work (protection against child labour); Criminal Code defining age limits (normally 15) for types of sanctions on criminal acts - supplied by a special Juvenile Sanctions Act; Military Service Act defines who is obliged to do military services. The Education Act is a voluminous legislation supplied with a number of sub-Acts, also including i.e. Hobby Schools Act.

Two remarks are relevant: These uses of Acts are expressing or reflecting wills and wishes by the society, but not necessarily the effects. However, their character and composition are elements of what we mean by objectives. Secondly, the legal measures demonstrate how Estonia is approaching the modernization of the State and civil society, also through legal statuses and rights of children and youth, as such measures were a distinguishing weak point in former times.

The Youth Work Act is then the more central instrument of youth policy, and quite new since 1999, and cover a wide range of activities or purposes. But the Act will contribute more to the coming chapters than to the objectives, even though this is the place where the comprehensive and cross-sectoral youth policy is described.

3.2 Structure

Within the Youth Work Act the mandate of the Ministry of Education is also described in ways that makes the terms a bit ambiguous. This means that "youth work" partly refers to "youth work" in a traditional sense, but partly also refers to what other countries call "youth policy".

Then the Ministry of Education is the Government's coordinating ministry for youth policy, while other ministries to be coordinated include:
* Ministry of Social Affairs (social assistance);

* Ministry of Interior Affairs (juvenile police, work with juvenile delinquents);
* Ministry of Culture (youth sports);
* Ministry of Defence (preparing youth for military services);
* Ministry of Justice (coordinating the legislation, criminal prevention);
* Ministry of Foreign Affairs (programme “Youth”).

At the political level youth policy initiatives or issues are formulated by the Parliament (Riigikogu) and its Cultural Affairs Committee. In order to enable the inter-ministerial coordination the Ministry of Education was running until 1998 a special (youth socialising) task force, replaced from 1999 by the Youth Work Council, where the actual ministries are represented together with youth associations and local authorities.

To a certain extent the tasks at this level are the funding of inherited State property, working as national or central institutions or centres for youth. On the other hand to develop a funding system for all aspects of a modern youth policy (from youth associations, to youth studies, and the training of youth workers), and at the same time to distribute responsibilities and budgets according to the Act between State, county and municipal levels. These reasonable ideas about a decentralised structure are formulated parallel to a general political discussion about rationalisation (reduction) of the existing 15 counties and 247 municipalities, where the authorities admit serious shortcomings of what can be achieved outside the more central areas.

There are centres, agencies or foundations outside the State administration, like a “Youth for Europe” agency or the recently founded Youth Work Centre, taking care of essential youth policy (development) tasks. While Estonia at the moment is missing a ordinary NGYO like a National Youth Council.

It is easy to see that most of these structural or institutional arrangements are quite new, that they are elements in a transformation process, and that neither each element or the relations between them are settled yet. The international team has been quite aware of the normality of this state of change, and the needs of time for this creative process before the whole framework can stabilize and be explained on a general youth policy level.

3.3 Concepts of youth

There is one main definition of youth in Estonia, as a social category within the age limits of seven and twenty-six years. The definition has an extensive and administrative character, not with a dynamic and political taste, reflecting most of all the age groups under some form of public services, mainly the educational offers.

Subordinated to this main definition we find several more specific definitions of who or when some forms of protection is needed, which is most of all reflecting that the age span also includes children in the definition.

On this background it is difficult to avoid a dominating paternalistic notion of youth, we could even say pessimistic. There is no “youth voice” in the National Report, neither political voices speaking independently from the administrative authorities.

Within the notion(s) of youth, there is almost no emphasis on the differentiation or heterogeneity of youth, by for example dimensions like gender, class, generation, or for example the differences between “young adults” at 25 years and “younger teenagers” at 14. There is one heavy emphasis on diversity, however, between “non-Estonian youth” and “Estonian youth”, referring to the composition of the population with 65% of ethnic Estonian origin, 28% ethnic Russian, and approx. 7% “others”. To some extent also the differences between urban and rural youth are emphasized.

4 ESTONIAN PRACTICE OF YOUTH POLICY

4.1 Estonian culture and transition state

Estonia has approximately 1.5 mill. inhabitants on an area of the same size as Denmark (with ca 5 mill. inhabitants). The country has a history as rich on agriculture and forestry, but appears today as heavily urbanized, with 30% of the population living in rural areas, compared to nearly 70% in 1940. Or nearly half of the population are living in the four biggest towns, while 92% of “non-Estonian” youth are living in urban areas. It is also a question about what living in “rural” areas means when the pressure on the housing market for example in Tallinn leads to preferences for houses at the countryside combined with work in the capital.

With this population structure it is not surprising that there is a political discussion about the administrative structure, dividing the country into 15 counties, 205 rural municipalities and 42 towns (municipalities).

Estonia has a long history as nation, while political independence had a short history 1918-40, which is perceived as regained since 1991. But even under occupation by other States, Estonia has a distinguishing cultural history, with emphasis on arts, literature and (general and higher) education. The search and fight for the autonomous nation have in long periods been moved from (non-existing) political arenas to literature and language, whether the authors were published legally or illegally, or living in Estonia, in exile abroad or in concentration camps in Russia. The author Jaan Kross has often been discussed as candidate for the Noble Prize, and one of the first priorities of the new Estonian State was to build a great, monumental National Library.

Estonia has close relationships with Finland, and they are normally able to read and understand Finnish language. In September 2000 the Estonian Prime Minister has also declared Estonia to be a part of Scandinavia, which has caused some critical comments from the Baltic neighbour States. One of the highest priorities in Estonian politics at the moment, is their application and preparations for membership in the European Union.

Estonia has a lot of specific problems inherited from decades as a Soviet Republic, after only 9 years of (re-)constructing their independent State, and still being in transition. But compared to any other of the Eastern-Central European transition countries, Estonia is together with Czech Republic one of the exceptional countries

with relatively “small” problems, looking at figures for GNP, unemployment, etc. Estonia is also facing transition and change with a relatively well educated population (by long tradition), and a relatively well qualified workforce.

But after these comparative considerations, there are doubtless sets of serious problems to be solved in the country. Branches of the economy are closed down, and those losing their jobs are not the same who get jobs in emerging branches, and this is a generation problem. The differences between the general unemployment rate and the youth employment rate are smaller than in most other European countries. There are serious demographic problems, in the sense that young adults are not contributing to the birth rates, and there will become future lacks of balances between the numbers of those who work and earn the money, and the number of those (elderly) who need to be paid for. These figures show uncertainties about personal and collective futures, but also discrepancies between income levels and prices for daily living, not at least housing, which are crucial factors for entering parenthood.

The changes from a closed community to an open society also have some costs and benefits at the same time. The Baltic countries have become important transit areas for various forms of international crime traffic, also with some local implications. And a relatively high proportion of Estonian young people seems to reflect seriously on emigration for shorter or longer time (Helve 2000).

The general impression, however, is that the average young people of Estonia have a shorter way to modern, European youth lives than most of their contemporaries in other transition countries. In this respect there is not either any significant differences between Estonian and “non-Estonian” youth living in Estonia.

4.2 Leading principles and practice of youth policy

Estonian youth policy seems to be at a crossroad where at least three (levels of) aims can be identified, and they are not easily in harmony with each other:
* After some years of consideration, calculation and consolidation, there are still left a certain amount of public property to be taken care of and paid for in the State budgets, as highly valuable (national) institutions, centres or activities inherited from former times (hobby centres, summer camps, etc.).[1] As they are located on the youth policy budgets, they represent a solid burden before the next preferences can be financed.
* As Estonia is ambitious on international cooperation and European integration, it is also necessary to adapt the main youth policy measures to a Western standard, for example as State support to youth associations, to international youth work or the training of youth workers, even if there are no hard demands from the grass-roots levels.

[1] It seems to be so that Estonia in Soviet time had a popular coastline and nature, leading to a concentration of institutions for culture, sports and youth activities in the area, which all were inherited by the State at the independence. These properties included a large proportion of “youth property” of various quality, and in quantity much more than needed for Estonia alone.

* As the first two levels are matters of pragmatic necessities, the “free” choices and obvious challenges cannot appear before the third level. For example as the needs for modernization of youth work, the development and financing of (new forms of) youth work at a decentralised, local level, according to the Youth Work Act. But these new priorities seem so far to be lacking the follow-up by financial resources, even though serious problems will at first occur from 2000/2001 if this becomes the problem.

When the aims are described this way, they can partly be seen as conflictual, but partly also as a practical and pragmatic agenda with narrow limits for new principles or practices. This is probably so usual in public administration that it is trivial, so the serious problems of the youth policy agenda come out of the main character of the activities belonging to these first priorities. They are heavily pedagogical, and they are built on the assumptions that young people spend the afternoons, evenings and some of the (Summer) holidays on extracurricular activities. It is important not to perceive these preferences as old-fashioned, because they represent a preservation and continuation of certain kinds of highly professional activities, training and education. For Europeans it is probably necessary to compare with the Japanese principle of ‘juku’ to understand the full meaning (Neary), where ambitious school education has to be continued with ambitious leisure activities that partly train other talents, partly are seen as complementary to school activities.

This emphasis on an educational ideology of youth work, appearing more or less like an extended school day, will need some critical comments (later on). But it is important to underline from a general point of view that the Estonian priorities are admirable, and at the same time not surprising that this happens in Estonia. “To throw out the child with the bathing water” has been the most normal habit of transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Obviously, Estonia has taken care of its best professionality and competence on these types of extended or extracurricular education. This is linked to an extraordinary perspective in European comparison, perhaps with a winning idea, on what good education really means. From a general point of view there are many reasons to perceive Estonia as extremely elaborated and clever in these ways of thinking, but on the other hand in difficulties when these fields of activity are brought to or defined as youth work, instead of being defined as extended education activities.

The new Youth Work Act defines youth work as:
“(1) Youth work is the creation of conditions for young people for activities which facilitate their development and enable them to be active outside their families, curricula and work on the basis of their free will.
(2) The content of youth work is the social, cultural and health education of young people which promotes the mental and physical development of young people.” (Ministry of Education 2000).

Even if this Act is opening for an unpredictable future, there are at least two directions of risks in this way of conceiving youth work. Firstly, the statement might not be strong enough to develop beyond a heavy pedagogical and instructional tradition. Partly also the wide age definition of youth (7-26) will lead to easier access for children to the practices coming out of these concepts of youth work. Secondly,

as computerization of education takes place in wider spheres of youth lives than in schools, there are risks that relevant activities will not be defined within youth work, because nobody could guarantee that computers “promote the mental and physical development of young people” (see later on “Tiger Leap Foundation”).

4.2.1 Leisure and youth associations

There are traditions, also from previous times, of organized or arranged leisure activities, such as hobby schools or centres, summer camps, etc. As previously mentioned, some of these are continued as State hobby schools with wishes to transform them more into youth centres, and they represent a quite high proportion of the budget of the Ministry.

The traditions in Soviet time were the Pioneers for children and the younger (10-15), and the Young Communist League for those older than fifteen. Almost “everybody” used to be a member, at least during school time. All these associations were abolished in the beginning of the nineties, and the floor was opened for ordinary (Western) youth associations. But no adequate State support system existed before year 2000.

Sports and cultural associations are not included, but so far 5% of young Estonians are members of these new associations, most of them with relatively few members, and several associations have problems to fulfill the needs of 500+ members in order to get State support (see National Report p. 50). This is to some degree discussed as a matter of (lacking) money, especially in rural areas.

But this is, however, quite typical for transition societies (Vanandruel & al. 1996). The usual explanation is that membership in associations is perceived as something similar to the old regime, as something forced on the individual. The new freedom and emerging individualism are not compatible with associations for young people. This is probably also valid for Estonia. But the more difficult questions concern the realism of building up an associative sector from Western models if the society does not share the same long history of how these associations developed. There are no such reflections or discussions in the National Report.

But the Report tells about the missing umbrella organisation for these associations, which means that there is no National Youth Council at the moment. There have been several initiatives during the nineties, but they have so far failed. At the moment there is a Youth Forum that has not the legal or legitimate basis to have this function.

It is remarkable that there are two para-military youth associations, “Young Eagles” for men and “Home Daughters” for women, under the Defence Union and with a certain emphasis, priority and support by the State. They are among the few bigger associations, and they are perceived as educational and training units for the military services, in quite traditional gendered perspectives. It is also mentioned in the National Report that there are plans to make the “state defence subject matter” to be a compulsory matter in all education establishments. On the other hand, the Report

also tells that more than half of the conscripts (80% in Tallinn) do not show up for the services they are obliged to.

The Ministry has some clear ideas about what kinds of new or alternative forms of youth work they want to see developed during the coming 3-4 years, as an implementation of the Youth Work Act: Special projects for unemployed youth, youth information centres, open youth work, street work, projects on young drug users, etc. There seems also to be a discussion on how to develop the associative sector, perhaps with wider concepts of “associative life”, youth movements, etc.

4.2.2 Education, qualification, non-formal education

The Estonian school system is relatively modern and easy to compare with most of other European countries. The pre-school institutions are common, and cover ca 60% of children between one and six years, or more than 70% of the 5-6 years old. Compulsory education lasts from seven to sixteen years, and 3-4% of these age groups are not attending school. There are some approximate indications that the reasons could be lacking arrangements for special education, or other ways to integrate disabled children and youth.

The most common post-compulsory educational track is the upper secondary, general education (gümnaasium). Some 70-80% of the actual cohorts are following this track, with a higher proportion of women than men. Also higher education seems to be preferred by women, in a rapid increase for both genders during the nineties.

The uncertainties of the educational statistics seem to be the following:
* A relatively high proportion of the cohorts becomes drop-outs from basic education, this could be 20-25% at the age of 15.
* Vocational education and training (VET) has some weaknesses of diffuse character. The system of apprenticeship seems to be lacking or missing, or is at least not a part of the public education system. A decreasing proportion of the 16+ continue their education in VET institutions, down to 26% in the late nineties.
* The direct transfer from compulsory education to VET has even a much lower and decreasing status and attractivity than the figures tell about the proportion who actually attend this track, according to survey material. The same material could be interpreted as if the most attractive vocational tracks are becoming occupied by those who at first took their upper secondary general education. And that the general picture of educational aspirations shows that up to 70% of youth plan for university or other higher education (Helve 2000, p. 211).

Two comments are actual. Firstly, that the general levels of education among a vast majority are impressingly high, while the distances between the many “winners” and a large enough minority of “losers” must be rapidly emerging. Secondly, there are no discussions to find about eventual discrepancies between qualification demands in the labour market in comparison with the qualification structure of the educational system.

Such discussions could lead to more general considerations about social differences and new social class formations, like for example the contributions from the educational system to a more meritocratic society. On these premises we could also get a better understanding of how the extracurricular activities and non-formal education are working, if all public inputs are working in the same elitistic directions, or if there are some concern about social equality or compensation in the uses of measures and resources.

There is one ongoing discussion about social differences, concerning Estonian and non-Estonian youth. It is remarkable, however, that some tendencies toward differences at the beginning of the nineties, have during the time of independence changed to striking and significant similarities between the two groups in their conduct and aspirations within education.

One of the most remarkable fields of Estonian education is the investment programme for information technology, organized through the Tiger Leap Foundation. This is rather offensive and impressive in its character, financial levels and ideas. From a formal point of view the Foundation is external to the Ministry, but there are clear policy connections and a location in the same building as the Ministry. But their activities and measures are not mentioned in the National Report. This gives the impression that the IT (or ICT) development in education is perceived as a purely technical field, or that this is an example on what is normally meant by sectorisation in youth policy. What is lacking here are those comprehensive perspectives connecting formal and non-formal education in the strategies for the information society, where also youth policy and youth work will/should play new roles within education - or in relationship to education (Council of Europe 1997).

These remarks are also relevant in a wider perspective. There are many viewpoints on non-formal education in Estonian youth (work &) policy, but there are no discussions in the material if the main cultural orientations are basically traditional and classical. If so, the normal situation in most other countries is that educationalists take critical or antagonistic positions toward IT generally, and in formal and non-formal education particularly. These challenges belong to a youth policy agenda, since the practical and communicative “media literacy” of this field develop in an interaction between private life, leisure and peer life, and (formal) education (Siurala & Stafseng 1997).

This discussion could also be relevant, and easier to motivate, under the next headline.

4.2.3 Youth participation and influence

The written and oral reporting of Estonian authorities are leaving a quite ambiguous impression about the views on youth participation. Participation and influence of young people are clearly not in the first rank, but this could be perceived as incidental in a period of transformation and emergence of new guidelines for youth policy. From this perspective it is possible to observe that the Ministry of Education is aware that they are missing a “youth voice” as counterpart and counselling body, and in the meantime there is a Youth Forum in this function, and also a Youth Work

Council for wider coordination tasks. It is also easy to see that the Youth Work Act is an explicit contribution to the autonomy and influence of youth, and that the Ministry of Education in the construction of the Youth Work Centre also has equipped this Centre with a representative council of (young) users. It is also interesting to observe that Tallinn as a municipality is setting up a local youth council, and that similar arrangements are reported at other local levels, as the tendency.

Even if it is possible this way to find embryos or hybrids for a future of stronger participative ideas in youth work and policy, the reporting leaves a main impression of adult policies from above. The situation reminds in a broad perspective about something typical for post-colonial communities: The generation(s) who were suffering in the past and who were fighting for liberation and autonomy, have in the post-colonial era a new fight to bring young people into this collective memory and consciousness. No society would or could do this otherwise. But it is not necessary to see youth participation and influence as an obstacle for these aims, even if the issue could be difficult to analyse and discuss further.

A more narrow and instrumental alternative would be to go into the heavy impact of educational ideology in Estonian youth policy. The background of participation and influence as important measures in youth policy has been historical steps of experience and progress in other countries, starting in leisure activities, youth associations, youth work in general, and at the moment knocking on the door of education. While educational institutions have in general very weak traditions of philosophies of participation or influence by students, or more generally youth. But nevertheless, one of the most crucial agendas of educational policies in Europe at the moment, is about “education for democratic citizenship”, with clear implications for participation and influence.
The challenges and demands from this agenda are absent in the National Report, showing that Estonia seems to have some missing links to this European agenda. This could be an interesting field of development at a first level, within the limited scope of education. At a second level, these issues concern Estonian youth policy with a more obvious relevance: It might be easier to develop the (critical) perspectives on “education for democratic citizenship” in countries where youth policy appears more independent from education, more like a critical actor “from outside”, creating “checks and balances” in public policies.

The context of these discussion are not limited to participation and influence, the matters of citizenship and education belong to the threshold of “the information society” and “knowledge economy”. When Estonia appears in a convincing way as very ambitious in their policies for information and communication technologies in education, then are these youth policy issues the important “software” of these policies. And then it is not easy or possible to be “very modern” and “very traditional” at the same time.

4.2.4 Human rights

Citizenship, participation and influence are interrelated as youth policy concepts, with citizenship as a leading policy concept in the present European agenda, whether this is about youth or education. There are various reasons behind this agenda, political

as well as sociological reasons. But the main background context is a general concern on the present and future emergence of globalized, multi-cultural and mobile societies at macro-levels, and the growing individualisation and individuation at micro-levels.

Citizenship has different meanings, dependent on various connotations and traditions of thoughts. It is possible to make a simplified distinction between two traditions. Within one set of meanings citizenship is related to the rules and rights to have a passport, and seen more or less as synonymous to nationality (in German "Staatsanhörigkeit"). Traditionally this is a "German" position, where also the citizenship rights were defined by "ius sanguinis" (law of blood descent) or in consequences by ethnicity. The other tradition could be seen more as a "French-British" position, where citizenship is related to universal human rights, and more as a political, educational and dynamic concept for a society of cosmopolitans. This position will also lead to criticism towards any form of discrimination of individuals belonging to the same legal territory (nation-state). To some extent this distinction could be seen as the differences between minimum and maximum requirements for the ideas of citizenship, but it is rather so that we are describing oppositions, or contradicting notions.

But what does this discussion have to do with being young in Estonia and with Estonian youth policy? First of all and most important it implies that all young people are growing up in an atmosphere that is characterised by ethnic differentiation, the consequences of which will probably be seen within the following years. On the other hand for many young people in Estonia being young also means being non-Estonian (30-35%) and, as the National Report does not try to hide, that means being excluded from some forms of official political participation. On the other hand also the consequences for Estonian youth policy are to some degree obvious. The intended disadvantage of non-Estonians does not leave many doors open. One is the door leading to the attempts to make non-Estonian young people as Estonian as possible by providing Estonian language-courses, by organizing integration camps and stays in Estonian families etc..[2] By basing Estonian citizenship on the principle of ius sanguinis (law of blood descent), according to which a child by birth acquires the citizenship of its parents, children with parents without Estonian nationality holding temporary or permanent residence permits are disadvantaged by birth because full access to civic rights remains denied.[3]

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[2] At least as far as the training in Estonian language that is necessary for naturalisation is concerned some reports criticise the quality and the availability of these courses and that they were not free. Besides they are accompanied by a general lack of qualified teachers, financial resources and training material (see Barrington 2000, p. 276-277; Karatnycky 1998, p. 248).

[3] Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Estonia in 1991 says:

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction **without discrimination of any kind**, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

As far as the National Report on youth policy is concerned it is striking that especially in some of the articles of the sociological part[4] ethnic differences seem to serve as explanations although the assumptions related to such explanations are more than doubtful. For example, in the chapter on youth election activity and political preferences groups with completely different rights to vote were compared referring to their ethnical differences. The very weak explanations for the findings are related back to ethnicity as explanatory variable and result in very tendentious statements that raise the question in what context the study was carried out.

4.2.5 Conclusions on principles and practice

Some important issues in the Report are not commented further here, for instance about health and welfare among young people. There are obviously some serious problems in these fields, and clear needs of modernization of basic views and services. But these issues do not seem to be well recognized within the main youth policy agenda, which should be changed in the future. The same could be said about employment and labour market, and especially about housing and demographic problems.

However, Estonia appears within some traditional fields of youth policies to be in a phase of eager, impatient and creative change and (re-)construction of their public sector and institutions. They are probably helped more by the aspirations and initiatives of young people themselves than really recognized in the documents or ongoing research.

This means that when each sector of youth policy are reviewed isolated from each other, they seem to be ruled by relevant and good ideas about past, present and future. There are directions or elements to discuss or criticize, but the main comment shall be that each sector seem to have good insights in their own transition and transformation processes.

Given that background, it is also easier to observe the lacking or weak existence of a general youth policy framework, connecting the isolated sectors and institutions into a comprehensive patchwork. This is mainly a question about the relationships between policy and politics, or practice and general objectives. It is not easy for outsiders to judge about the reasons, if for example the administrations have reached so far in spite of political backing, or if the political system itself has constructed their own obstacles for comprehensive policies. An example on the last alternative is the fragmentation of elements of youth policies into various Acts, or administrations into various foundations and agencies separate from governmental administration, but not really becoming “NGOs”.

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2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

[4] The official part of the national report is in these matters much more differentiated, more informative and even more critical than the rather descriptive sociological part.

One example on the relevance of this comment can be found in education. According to the Report and all available statistics and with an isolated view on education, the Estonian educational system is exceptionally well-functioning compared to any other transition country, and will also survive well in comparisons with most of Western countries. But the measures of success will then be on academic achievements and "a culture for winners", and a system that is relatively one-sided rewarding the academic tracks from early youth ages. The critical point here is that this is clearly not a problem seen from the inside of the education system. Not even the fact that perhaps 20-25% are not passing the basic compulsory education, or the lacking vocational tracks, are necessarily failures of education, but could easily be explained as the faults of the individuals. If these figures should be perceived as problematic, as they clearly should, the serious problems have to be formulated from outside, from the public and private sectors of society who are receiving and taking over the cohorts passing the system and ages of education - and then especially those lacking relevant certificates or competences. This is one of the tasks of a cross-sectoral and comprehensive youth policy, overcoming fragmentation and isolated perfection - and the export of problem factors to other sectors.

An other example can be found within the core field of youth work and policy. At the State level we can find several authorities and agencies, like the Youth Department in the Ministry of Education, a next link to the double number of staff in the Youth Work Centre, a third link to the Youth for Europe agency, and a fourth link to State hobby centres - and their heavy presence in the annual budgets. Through the reading of the National Report and the study visits there are no problems to see that they all have a job to do, but what is meant by a comprehensive youth policy is a.o. to find a more general developmental and coordination idea or plan for the connections between these agencies, a discussion about resources (budgets and staff) spent at State levels in times of decentralization, and a developmental idea of which of these tasks could in the future become a part of today's lacking NGYO field(s).

These examples serve as hints on what can be gained administratively by a stronger comprehensive, integrated and coordinated youth policy framework. But this is also a political level, in the sense that youth policy also has to be based on ideology or ideologies that are comprehensive and consistent. Such explicit ideologies are missing in the Report, and this can open the youth policy field for implicit or invading ideas or ideologies that are not valid or irrelevant. One example could be the heavy impact from education on youth policy. These educational aspects could more incidently be filled of military training, patriotism, nation-building, folkloristic activities, etc., and could without any discussions become quite traditional. While an open and explicit discussion about central ideas in youth policy could lead to modernity as the basic educational aspect, by discovering the "Tiger Leap Foundation" as the locomotive to future youth lives. The second example on what is meant by "invasion" of ideas into the open ideological agenda concerns the serious problems of educational inequalities. Nothing seems at the moment to be so heavily investigated as the differences between Estonian and "non-Estonian" (Russian origin) youth in the educational system, with the clear conclusions that non-existing differences are more striking than the differences (Kenkmann & Saarniit in Helve

2000). This shows that a stronger ideological platform of youth policy is also a protection against wrong or misleading ideas that could have some relevance quite other places.

4.3 Estonian youth and Europe

Estonia has during the transition years been very active in international cooperation. Some advantages from previous times made it possible also to be better prepared than many other countries. During the former independence Estonian youth and the more general cultural field were well connected to important movements in Europe, and during the Soviet time Estonians were active on the official and less official tracks for international contacts. In fields like sports, culture or youth research it was possible to continue and elaborate already established acquaintances since 1991. The immediate familiarity with the Finnish people and a very strong emigrant colony in Sweden have also been helpful in the transition process.

In the process of (re-)construction of a modern youth policy, Estonia has used previous advantages together with a conscious European orientation. At State and all local levels various bilateral and multilateral channels have been used for study visits and exchange of staff and youth groups, with clear purposes of gaining experiences and making opinions on wise solutions for youth work and policies.

Besides some early and stable bilateral agreements on cooperation by the Ministry of Education, the Nordic channel has been important through the formal enlargement of the intergovernmental Nordic Council of Ministers to include the Baltic countries and partly the Baltic Sea countries in these structures of cooperation, with a particular emphasis also on youth policy. Estonia has also from the very first moment taken their responsibilities in all aspects of the Council of Europe's youth policy cooperation, and it is no surprise that the country is among the first 5-6 member countries to go through this National Review exercise. Young people in Estonia can also profit from a well organized participation in the Youth for Europe programme since 1997, where some impressive statistics can show very serious engagements.

In general, at the level of authorities and at the level of young people, it seems to be a climate of mutual understanding and trust between Estonia and Europe, without any observable frictions.

5 REMAINING QUESTIONS; CRITICAL COMMENTS

There are already questions and critical comments raised in the previous chapters, and they are elements of the final discussions, but they will not be repeated here unless they also belong to more general discourses.

There is a general, sociological difficulty in this final summarizing discussion of the "state of art" in Estonian youth policy. Within the very insufficient scientific literature on countries in transition, it is possible to find some interesting viewpoints on the needs of building up a middle class of some size and rationality if these societies shall succeed in their further development. Besides the fact that such issues would

be totally “political incorrect” within a framework of a Council of Europe’s youth policy exercise, there are no available experiences to build on for an analysis or discussion of this kind. But nevertheless, the only fair and interesting discussion on Estonian youth policy could be to evaluate measures and results as if the aims are the making of a (new) middle class. These aims might be relevant, fair for future and successful if we look to practices, but still impossible as premises for this review. But this “political incorrect” position could be defended by Estonian authorities in this process.

5.1 Youth life and youth policy in the documents

As the National Report has been in development and growth during the working period of the international team, some final statements had also to be left to the concluding phase of these comments. In the final version the National Report appears as an impressive documentation, showing that Estonia has a capacity and competence distributed among many agencies and persons to be proud of. There are some dangers, however, that after this vigorous pull follows only more work, not a rest.

The documentation shows most of all a competent awareness, consciousness and knowledge of the working conditions for youth policy authorities and agencies in Estonia. The Report is strong on the adult perspectives, and they are quite necessary, but it is still unclear what kind of youth life young Estonians are living. According to the Report this life should be a hard, competitive, meritocratic everyday life, with a rather tough treatment for those who fails (delinquency, orphans). The average material standards of living appear through some data as rather decent (Helve 2000), while other informations about income levels are leaving more ambiguous impressions. But as Estonia as a whole seems to in a move towards increasing prosperity, there are indications telling that the younger also earn their parts when they are employed.

These impressions might be wrong about realities, but this unclear picture means that there are too little concern on economic and social inequality. This implies firstly the already mentioned production of inequalities within the younger cohorts when they are passing the school ages and systems. They belong to the main target groups of existing youth policy. The youth concepts and target groups are weaker or non-existing for the second focus on inequalities produced within and between generations when the younger should become adults, and are meeting the entrance problems to the labour market, their own household and family life, housing, etc. One of the clearest impressions from the National Report is that the demographic prospects of Estonia should become one of the more essential issues for future youth policy.

Even though Estonia in general and also the National Report have vivid discussions and an explicit awareness of the transition state and problems, there are a remarkable absence of topics related to civic society. This is in general the questions concerning the relationships between the State, a market economy and the “third sector” or civic society. These matters are also particularly a core dimension of youth policy, but it is difficult to find serious attention to these issues in

Estonian youth policy, whether it is about the associative sector, some development ideas for NGYOs, citizenship, or youth participation. Estonia appears in these matters as a prolongation of the traditions of "the strong State" instead of fostering dialogue and participative principles in their youth policy.

This could also be the understandable background of an other serious problem of Estonian youth policy, the status and treatment of "non-Estonian" young people. It might be a more general and structural problem here, when this side of youth policy is executed by another ministry, the Minister (without Portfolio) of Ethnic Affairs, who does not belong to the list of Ministers to coordinate by the Minister of Education in the youth field. It is also remarkable that these youth activities are the only attracting foreign sponsorship, from the UNDP and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The National Report and other material (Helve 2000) show that there are weak or no evidence behind the official concern on the differences between these two categories of youth. Even in one of the more sensitive questions, about attitudes toward doing military services, which showed in 1992 strong differences, had until 1996/98 developed to full similarities between Estonians and youth of Russian origin (Helve 2000, p.216).

The actual criticism will be sorted out in two steps. The first step is a reminder on concepts like participation, development, peace and their actual elaborations (see chapter 1.2) as backbones of youth policy. If there are some serious problems concerning Estonian and "non-Estonian" youth, it is not understandable that the issue is left over to a ministry based on prejudices and fixed opinions, instead of being handled within a youth policy dialogue, through hearings, or by setting up a special "Russian youth council", or other ways to develop the issues as part of a civic society approach. But as already mentioned, this could reflect a more general, missing dimension of Estonian youth policy.

The second step concerns the more formal question of human rights. When the difficult prehistory is taken seriously, we could for example ask why the adult generations have not constructed something similar to the "truth commission" in South Africa, in order to elaborate the past into a survival mode for the future. But one thing is what are valid and necessary for the generations who were in the middle of this prehistory, quite another thing is to formulate an independent and valid position of youth policy. And if some of the main objectives of youth policy are to contribute to democracy, citizenship, civic society, etc., and to fight prejudices, xenophobia, intolerance, etc., then Estonia has a serious problem if approximately one third of their youth population are second rank citizens. Human rights are simply not something you train or educate for, you have them or not.

5.2 Success of Estonian youth policy

After some few and turbulent years Estonia has consolidated their own platform for being part of a modern, European youth policy.

The perhaps most important has been the saving of valuable property (buildings, camps, facilities) from privatisation or abolition, by being more concerned on continuity and change than on starting from scratch or zero. A part of the success is

also the abilities to reconstruct and construct administrative and professional structures in the governmental and State systems, with a relatively good standing in public policies.

At the moment the Youth Work Act is probably the most valuable instrument for further development of a coordinated and comprehensive youth policy, for the development of NGOs and new forms of youth work, and for decentralisation and the building of local youth work and policy.

An important element of the success is also the good investments in international channels, contacts and cooperation, where civil servants, youth workers and other professionals have good and mutual access to relevant peers. Also for young people the access to international exchange has been well developed.

Estonia also has, as shown through the National Report, good resources for knowledge-based policies through a well established youth research, who have a good standing among relevant colleagues and institutions in the rest of Europe.

5.3 Centralisation - decentralisation – Europeanisation

There are some shortcomings mentioned in the cross-sectoral and comprehensive youth policy at the national or State level. But the greatest challenges for the coming years will become the realization of the ideas of county and municipal youth work, and the accompanying models for the comprehensive and cross-sectoral work at local levels. This means how to bring together schools, traditional and modern youth work, child welfare, health institutions and professionals a.o. in a cooperation that break down the borders between them, and open these fields for young people's active participation and influence on their own conditions.

Given the size of Estonian youth population, these ideas have to be followed by a general reform in the structure of the units of public administration, and also a financial regime that does not exist today, if any implementations shall take place. Also the success of a decentralisation of the public sector will depend on how Estonia solve their citizenship problem, since the segregation of the population means that there are large municipalities where a majority of the population does not have the rights to vote today. This is a general problem, but also a particular youth policy problem - as an obstacle for the contributions from youth policy to democracy building (at local levels).

What follows from these comments, are some remarks on the centralised character of present youth policy and youth policy (financial) resources. However, there are at least two reasons to hesitate on simple or easy answers to these questions. Firstly, during the working time of the international team we have observed a political decision to move (decentralise) the Ministry of Education from Tallinn to Tartu. One of the main criticisms of this report is about the needs of a stronger power and coordination effort of the Ministry of Education within the governmental structures, in the youth policy matters. This is probably not easier without a physical presence in the capital, even if this should not be a crucial factor. Secondly, the eager ambitions in Estonia for integration tracks towards Europe and European institutions, are

arguments for strong national or central institutions and agencies in the bridging strategies for Europe. There are no immediate objections against such notions or strategic ideas.

But there are reasons to warn against assumptions of an automatic correlation between centralisation and Europeanisation, when these strategies or measures become more elaborated. When Estonia continues to learn from their close colleagues in Finland, they will discover that more and more of the practical "Europeanisation" are going on at regional and local levels of the youth field - as the really interesting trends. This is once more an argument for a better integration of the international dimensions and measures of Estonian youth policy within a comprehensive ideology and strategy, and not only leaving these matters to an executive or technical agency.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations to Estonian youth policy

On the background of these comments and discussions, we will like to give Estonian policy makers the following recommendations:

6.1.1 In spite of previous recommendations in other national reviews, Estonia is also a follow-up of the internal national self-evaluation without comparative reflections. We will recommend that Estonia in their further follow-ups evaluate their youth policy measures in a European perspective, with a certain emphasis on participation, youth as a human and developmental resource, and citizenship.

6.1.2 There are needs for some strategic and technical considerations, in order to sort out the differences and independence between educational aims and activities, and a youth policy for a modern future of Estonian youth.

6.1.3 Estonia and their Ministry of Education should consider to invite OECD for an evaluation of their educational policies, as a parallel to this National Review, and a logical follow-up. Because the data and expertise on education are limited in this exercise, we can only stimulate the curiosity on how Estonia could protect some outstanding advantages of their educational system, but at the same time enter some obviously necessary reforms - seen from a youth policy perspective, and with an emphasis on non-formal education and vocational education.

6.1.4 There are two branches of Estonian youth policy with urgent needs of improvements, for internal reasons and in order to protect Estonian credibility in Europe: These are the serious measures for developing a NGYO partnership and dialogue with clear civic society aspirations, and some clear youth citizenship strategies in order to solve the present human rights problems in the youth population of Estonia.

6.1.5 Considering the tremendous tasks emerging from the aims of decentralisation of youth policy, these challenges could also be a starting point for some techniques in the development of a NGO partnership and the participative dimensions of future youth policy: For example an annual "Action Scheme" for a comprehensive youth policy, and an annual "youth policy account" as the

evaluative follow-up, as a kind of essential, corporate activity between State authorities and representatives of young people. There are various models to find and discuss in other countries, not only for copying them, but making better policies out of some experiences. These techniques could possibly also be used in wider political processes, in order to bring more politics and ideology into the present administrative and professional youth policy.

6.1.6 As Estonia (together with Romania) will be the first transition country to run this National Review exercise, the national authorities should use this opportunity to invite the other transitional member states of Council of Europe for a special conference in Estonia, as an additional "evaluation" by those countries sharing similar experiences (see also recommendation 6.2.1).

6.1.7 Youth research supported by youth policy authorities should in the coming years give priority to studies on social inequality and exclusion, the social division of welfare and (new) formations of social classes in Estonia, within reasonable comparative perspectives. The comparative dimension is also crucial because most of European countries are developing superficial myths about how the new, globalized and diversified societies are equivalent with the unequal society, but this is much more complex. These youth studies should also be so detailed that they illuminate who are the winners and losers from Estonian youth policy measures.

6.1.8 The youth policy concept of Estonia should for the immediate coming years become extended to include the age groups and particular life phases who strive for "becoming adult", and perceive these phases of youth as something more than education. There are sufficient examples already mentioned in this report.

6.1.9 The composition of issues to be represented in the map of coordinated and comprehensive youth policy by the Ministry of Education should be reconsidered. It could be a good idea to move the military training in the background, but to include the development policies for information and communication technologies in education, and the international youth exchange.

6.2 Recommendations to a European youth policy

On the basis of our experiences from Estonian youth policy, some recommendations can also be addressed to European bodies concerned with youth policy or research:

6.2.1 As the Council of Europe gets with the Review of Estonia (and Romania) the first report from one of the transition, new(er) member states, it will be important to use this reporting for a particular attention and added values, especially concerning youth policy in transition countries. Various kinds of follow-ups should be considered, also about the methodology for an eventual next country review.

6.2.2 European youth workers and youth policy makers should pay attention to the Estonian hobby schools and their pedagogy. After many years of cultivation of open youth work there could also be some added values in methods for young people who want to learn something specialized in their leisure activities. Variety of methods is better than fashion.

6.2.3 The Youth Directorate should pay attention to the case of Estonia and their limitations in the construction of associative life and youth associations. This is probably typical for transition countries, and opens for more fundamental discussions and future strategies about the implications for the cooperation between non-equal member states in the youth policy field.

7 BUILDING BLOCS FOR A EUROPEAN YOUTH POLICY

The international report on the review of Sweden introduced a chapter on "Building blocs for a European youth policy", which invited following reports for reflections and added experiences. The complete chapter is included here as an Appendix. And we agree with these statements after our experiences with the case of Estonia.

Within the basic theoretical assumptions there is a relevant addition to make after the Estonian experiences, partly related to the §§ 7.1.2 and 7.1.5: This is about the formal-normative notions of human rights in relation to more dynamic, educative or political notions of citizenship in the general understanding of youth and civic society. These are rather complex sets of concepts, and given the experiences from Estonia they should be discussed and tried towards various realities, and become empirically elaborated for this "European youth policy". There are some clear normative statements on these issues in this report, and if they are still valid after this exercise they must also lead to some consequences for the European youth policy agenda.

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APPENDIX, FROM THE INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON SWEDEN:

“7 BUILDING BLOCS FOR A EUROPEAN YOUTH POLICY

7.1 Basic theoretical assumptions

We do not want, and cannot, work out a wholesome 'theory of youth and Europe'; that is much too ambitious and is a project in itself where many youth politicians and youth researchers are involved. What we want to do here, at the end of our evaluation on Swedish youth policy and in view of the whole project of national reports and evaluations by international expert commissions, that is to assemble some 'building blocs' for such a theory of youth and Europe.

7.1.1 We will have to enlarge the theoretical framework of European societies in transition. That means: to connotate the relationships which exist between the different European countries and states as well as the relationships between different national societies and developments of globalisation. For example, Sweden has a very special position vis-a-vis the Baltic states which other continental

countries don't have. What is that relationship like and what does it mean for Swedish as well as European youth policy? It is also evident that each European country relates differently to trends of globalisation, but that all European countries have some problems and some opportunities in that respect in common.
7.1.2 All European countries are confronted with multicultural compositions of their (young) population. We should systematise the different approaches of the member states to deal with this fact, and we can learn about productive strategies to overcome problems and divides. One much discussed and tried-out strategy is the notion of intercultural learning. We would like to add the notion of informal learning. Both forms of learning pertain to school as well as non-educational youth sites
7.1.3 A theory on modernisation of European education is all the more necessary because all European countries have similar problems in their formal educational systems (motivation problems; irrelevant and/or outmoded curricula; problems with the preparation of the young for flexibilised and unforeseeable labour markets, etc.). Notions of intercultural and informal learning, in combination with ICT and lifelong learning, must be incorporated in such a theory.
7.1.4 As youth researchers have pointed out, youth is not a holistic category, and it is not an unambivalent one either. Youth is determined by local-national roots and traditions as well as by transnational trends. Youth is gendered, and youth is an integral part of an intergenerational relationship. Youth must always be put into a life-course perspective, and it must be noted that formerly clearly distinguishable life phases tend to merge or be (made) reversible in late modern societies (i.e. the post-adolescent phase tends to extend well into the third or even fourth decade of age; the phase of studying can lie after a phase of work etc.).
7.1.5 Youth in European context should always be thought together with the concept of civil society. It is this notion which must guide (youth-)political measures to combat social exclusion.

7.2 Basic methodological assumptions

We would also like to make some suggestions concerning methodological aspects in preparing evaluation reports of national youth policy reviews. In doing so, we have to admit that we ourselves complied only partly to those principles; partly because of lacking time and resources, partly because we got insight in the relevance of such principles while doing this evaluation.
7.2.1 A basic principle is that of a comparative approach; national youth and youth policy cannot be evaluated in abstracto but every evaluation departs from some situation against which the youth and youth policy of another country is measured, with which it is compared. For example, while discussing Swedish associated youth life, the experts commented on that feature of Swedish life quite differently, according to their different backgrounds and experiences with youth and youth policy. In that respect, no totally objective evaluation is possible. But in as much as more national youth policies are evaluated, better explication of criteria becomes possible; the Spanish evaluation makes some valuable suggestions (see preliminary version, p. 9). The Swedish National Review has worked with 'strong' and 'weak' points in their self evaluation which is also a good methodological principle.
7.2.2 It should be seen to it that the national reviews take into account explicitly the different perspectives on youth and youth policy of politicians, youth researchers and young people themselves. Such explication helps the international expert team with their evaluation.

7.2.3 Eventually broadly agreed-upon criteria should and could be developed for evaluation of national youth policies and for constructing a European youth policy."