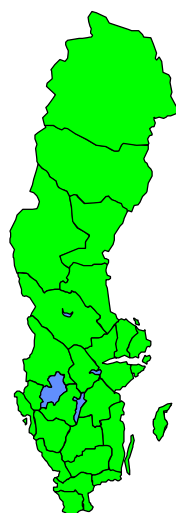**EUROPEAN STEERING COMMITTEE FOR YOUTH
(CDEJ)**

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Youth policy in Sweden

Report by the International Group of Experts

EVALUATION REPORT - SWEDISH YOUTH POLICY

Manuela du Bois-Reymond

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PREFACE

The present evaluation report is a reaction to the Swedish *Review of National Youth Policy* (1999), written by the *National Board for Youth Affairs* (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*). Both the review and the evaluation, are the fourth of their kind, preceded by reports on Finland (1997), the Netherlands (1998) and Spain (1999). Three more reports are planned, on Romania, Estonia and Luxembourg. The evaluations are carried out under the responsibility of the Council of Europe and are presented there for discussion.

The Swedish review was evaluated by an expert group, which was comprised of:

-Franz Charles Muller, Director, Service National de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg, representative of the CDEJ, President of the group
- Ralf G. Fröhlich, representative of the Advisory Council of the youth field of the Council of Europe
- Dr. Ion Dan Trestieni, Bucharest, youth researcher, rapporteur of the Spanish youth report
- Prof. Dr. Ola Stafseng, University of Oslo; youth researcher
- Peter Lauritzen, Principal Administrator, Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe; (secretary)
- Prof. dr. Manuela du Bois-Reymond, University of Leiden/NL, youth researcher; (rapporteur).

Our group paid two visits to Sweden, one in May, the other in June 1999. The first visit wasto the capital of Sweden, beautiful Stockholm. We were guests of the Swedish Government and treated with the greatest possible hospitality. We spoke to representatives of the National Board for Youth Affairs as well as government representatives, with Swedish youth researchers and with members of the National Council for Swedish Youth Organisations, LSU.

Our second visit, only a few days before midsummer, took us up to the North, to Umeå, and back South, to Jönköping, thus giving us an idea about the immensity of the country and travel distances. In both cities we were welcomed by municipal youth politicians, youth workers and young people themselves belonging to youth organisations and youth councils.

We truly thank all our interlocutors for their friendliness and also for their frankness, telling us about 'examples of good practice' as well as about problems of Swedish youth and youth policy. Our special thank goes to Staffan Eklund,"Ungdomsstyrelsen" and his colleague Tiina Ekman, who served us in all respects - having good meals, discussing our experiences and answering our (many) questions.

 Summary

In this report, an international expert group evaluates Swedish youth policy on the basis of a national review and two visits to the country, discussing Swedish youth policy with representatives of Swedish youth and youth policy.

It is stated by the expert group that the national review, prepared by the National Board for Youth Affairs, (Ungdomsstyrelsen), is, on the whole, a valuable document and an adequate representation of Swedish youth life and youth policy. Critical remarks are made concerning missing data on the situation of immigrant youth, gender and some other areas.

Swedish youth policy is cross-sectionally organised, with governmental policy at the top and the municipalities in charge of the execution. Ungdomsstyrelsen serves as an intermediary between these two main layers. Critical questions are directed to the weak role of the counties, the ambivalent role of the National Council for Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) and state subsidies, given the preference to organised youth. The practice of 'good examples' serves as a dissemination strategy for innovation.

Swedish youth policy is based on two main principles: that youth is a human resource, and that young people should be enabled to participate in societal affairs as much as possible.

The principle of youth as a human resource (and not as a problem category) is stressed and is given further shape in the new bill on youth policy which shall be enacted at the end of 1999. As to the opportunities of Swedish young people to exercise influence and participate in society, it was noticed that their influence in schools is restricted; 'good examples' in this field concern school councils. It is also noted that young people have little influence on the housing situation. There is a lack of possibilities for young people to live on their own which impedes the objective of participation and its full implementation. Some critical remarks were also made about the fact that organised youth has more opportunity for participation than unorganised youth. It seems that the needs of unorganised youth, especially in the field of leisure, are not always satisfied. Here, too, the new government bill contains promising intentions.

As to Swedish youth in a European context, much is done and much still has to be done in order to create a youth policy which prepares Swedish young people for a life not only at home but also in other European countries.

Finally the evaluation makes some suggestions for the further development of a European youth policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives

This evaluation report serves three main functions:

First of all, giving advice to the Swedish Authorities and representatives of youth policy: how does the international expert group evaluate Swedish youth policy? What, in their opinion, are the strong and weak points? The aim is to support the country in the further development of their political options and decisions. In the Swedish case, we have a very particular situation at the time of the production of this report; the government is preparing the vote on a new youth bill which will be put before the Swedish Parliament in November 1999. This creates a unique possibility to place our advice within the timing of a parliamentary procedure. (See Chapter 3-6).

The second function of this reporting procedure is, to collect elements of an empirical access to youth policy items, which might qualify as transnational parameters for a European system of youth policy reports. (See Chapter 7).

The third function - closely connected to the preceding ones - would be working on a model for national youth reporting for other member countries of the Council of Europe. (See Chapter 2).

1.2 Theoretical assumptions and working procedure

This evaluation is not a scientific research report in the strict sense of the word. Nevertheless it is based on certain theoretical assumptions, scientific literature and experiences of the members of the expert group, and on their actual working procedure.

Our theoretical assumptions, although we certainly do not agree in all respects, converge in five main ideas.

First: youth should be studied as a human and cultural resource of society. Such a view on youth departs from the notion of participation and citizenship and tries to determine the space young people are allowed and the limitations they are confronted with in a given society (Stafseng, 1999) Youth policy, then, should be measured by its aptitude to treat youth as such a resource.

Second: we all agree that modern youth is not a homogeneous category but consists, on the contrary, of many different subgroups. Youth differs according to gender, age, ethnicity, social, cultural and economic milieu. With that go different life styles and life perspectives - opportunities as well as risks (Beck, 1992; Furlong & Carmelt 1997).
Youth policy should be such that it serves all these different categories.

Third, youth is not a distinct phase in the human life-course. Perhaps it never was, but certainly it is

not in contemporary societies. We cannot, we feel, understand and study youth, except within a life-course approach, which also means that the life-course itself changes from an unequivocal to a much more complex concept and reality in (post-) modern societies. Especially the transition from youth to adulthood has become problematic (Walther et al. 1999).

Accordingly, youth policy should see to it that it takes measures, which account for a differentiated life course and transition of young people.

Fourth, youth must be understood and studied not only from an outside perspective but also from a inside-perspective: what do young people themselves feel, want and think? (du Bois-Reymond, 1998).

Youth policy should take the subjective view of young people into account, even if that view may differ from the adult view of politicians.

Fifth, our estimation of youth and youth policy is based on the development of European integration and globalisation. Youth is not only national youth but European/international youth as well; youth is part of globalisation, be it as actor or as target. The tension between globalisation and local realities of life also mean young people live in different modernities, so to speak.

That means for youth policy that it should have a double stance: a national and an international/European one and that it should take into account the tension between the local and the global (European Yearbook on Youth Policy and Research, Vol. 1/1995; Vol. 2/1999).

As to our working procedure and methods:

Our first and main source was obviously the "Review of National Youth Policy in Sweden". We studied this book intensely and made for each of the two visits an extensive list of questions arising from this. Preparing the meetings with our interlocutors, we first discussed the questions among ourselves, trying to use each other's expertise for pre-clarification. We then put questions to our interlocutors and discussed problems with them. That gave rise to new questions, which we took up again at the end of the visits. In other words: one main method to gain knowledge was systematised interaction. In addition, we used (other) written texts, reports and statistics.

Perhaps one should not underestimate the method of casual participant observation and taking in local atmosphere: coming to a foreign country inevitably triggers off comparisons: what food do 'they' eat - how do they handle provocative questions - what does a city, a landscape look like - what kind of memories from fine art, literature (as children we all flew with S. Lagerlöf's goose,

dreaming in her feathers) and films (Ingmar Bergman imagery) come to our mind? Such pre-scientific impressions also run through your mind while studying and discussing Swedish youth and youth policy.

Having said that, we, and especially Ms. du Bois-Reymond, the rapporteur, cannot deny that all our information and estimations remain superficial; you simply cannot learn enough about a country in such a short time. On the other hand, a view from outside may recognise traits and problems so natural to the 'insiders' that they are no longer aware of them.

In sum: albeit far from exhaustive, we do think that we are prepared to make a valuable evaluation of Swedish youth policy. In what follows, we shall do so in two ways: by making statements and by asking questions.

1.3 Guiding questions

Out of our experiences and discussions aroused the following questions which guided us in making the evaluation of Swedish youth policy:

- How far is the National Report an adequate reflection of youth life and youth policy in Sweden?
- To what extent does Swedish youth policy succeed in realising its objectives, especially concerning influence and participation of young people?
- How does youth policy deal with the relation centralisation/state - decentralisation/municipal autonomy and with the relation Sweden - Europe?

In chapter 5 we will strike a balance as to the answers of these questions.

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 Sweden -, 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 (European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation on Youth) serves as the (only) intergovernmental body 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 is, and shall be even more so in the future, a highly valuable instrument for designing youth policy measures at 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 astonishing.

Where are the common denominators on youth between Denmark and Georgia, the United Kingdom and Russia, Sweden and Spain? 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 still as a problem 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 1999).

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

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

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

Coming back to the case of Sweden, not only Swedish Authorities will learn from the European youth policy discussion, but European authorities will also learn from the Swedish 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, this learning approach is seen by the participants as something very positive.

3 OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE OF SWEDISH YOUTH POLICY

3.1 Objectives

In 1994 the Swedish Parliament put forward for the first time a bill on youth policy with the ambition to formulate a comprehensive policy, based on the conviction that the growing complexity of youth life needed an integrated policy approach.

The 1994 bill specified a number of objectives for a future youth policy:
- public efforts should support young people in all respects;
- there should be trust in their commitment;
- the need for security and personal development of young people should be safeguarded;
- favourable conditions for becoming adults should be created;
- young people must be allowed to make their own decisions;
- development of personal responsibility should be encouraged;
- participation should be guaranteed.

In 1999, a new bill on youth policy with the programmatic title *"On their terms"*, is on its way. It discerns three sets of objectives:
- (main) objectives
- sub-objectives
- good examples

The bill formulates the following three main objectives for the youth policy for the 21st century, departing from the Government's view that an overall strategy is needed:
- objective 1: young people shall be given good opportunities for living independent lives;
- objective 2: young people shall be given genuine opportunities for participation and influence;
- objective 3: young people's capacity for commitment, creativity and critical thinking is a resource for society and should be made good use of (On their terms, 1999).

The Government states that 'many young people feel as if the point in time when they become adults has been postponed'. It is the Government's view that young people should be able to influence 'both the general development of society and decisions concerning young people's own lives and activities'. Gender equality 'has to be given special attention'. Finally, as to the objective of youth as a resource, it is stated that 'young people's representation on different public boards and other decision-making bodies is low today'. (Preliminary English translation new bill, p. 6/7).

The 1999 bill groups sub-objectives to each of the main objectives, which are meant to specify these, thus facilitating implementation and evaluation. The application of 'good examples' in practice is, so to say, the proof of the pudding.

Comparing the 1994 and 1999 bills, we find the 1999 objectives more encompassing, especially the last one defining youth as a resource for society. The objectives are a good basis for a youth policy which takes into account the changes and uncertainties in the life situation of young people during the last decades.

3.2 Structure

Swedish youth policy is conceived on a national as well as a local level. The Parliament decides on the overall goals and scope of youth policy. The Government carries out Parliament's decisions within various ministries. Youth affairs are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture. Independent commissions are set up to ensure impartiality when important decisions are taken. The practical administration of (youth) policy is carried out by central authorities (education, health, crime etc.). They are independent bodies but follow the instructions of the Government.

The *National Board for Youth Affairs* (Ungdomsstyrelsen) co-ordinates youth-related matters of the central authorities, thus realising a *cross-sectional youth policy*. It grew out of the *State Youth Council*. In 1976 it became a ministry-level body and six years later earned the formal status of agency. The *National Board for Youth Affairs,* an independent body, is led by a Director General who is appointed by the Government. It consists of five divisions (research, youth organisations and local development, international issues, information and administration). It distributes state aid to youth organisations, administers EU exchange programmes and distributes grants for various other projects to compensate for disadvantageous life situations of young people. It is also in charge of youth information and administers the Internet project *Youth Channel.*

The *National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations* (LSU) is the umbrella-NGO organisation for all youth associations.

On a local level, youth policy is the responsibility of *municipalities*. On account of decentralisation, many formerly state-administered tasks of youth policy are now done by the municipalities. This means that municipal authorities have great freedom in formulating their youth policy, based on local conditions, needs and priorities.

The 1999 bill will continue the cross-sectoral youth policy but wants at the same time more control of the quality of society's programmes for young people: 'It is the Government's view that the system for follow-up and analysis of youth policy needs more development. The guidelines of youth policy adopted by the Parliament should be replaced by a system for management, follow-up and analysis that consists of three parts: objectives, sub-objectives and good examples.' (Preliminary English translation new bill, p. 4).

Ungdomsstyrelsen, in co-operation with the authorities concerned and in consultation with local authorities, will have to develop a method for identifying, presenting and disseminating good examples. Ungdomsstyrelsen should, according to the Government, function as an information resource for youth policy issues vis-à-vis other authorities, municipalities, youth workers etc., thus guaranteeing that a youth perspective is incorporated in all youth-related matters. The Government asks Ungdomsstyrelsen for regular submission of a report to the Government containing an in-depth account of the conditions of young people's lives and living circumstances, making proposals for measures. It is also stipulated that Ungdomsstyrelsen develops a system for the annual reporting of relevant statistics and other youth-related information, supplementing such information with particular studies of their own.

In the moves from the 1994 youth bill to the 1999 bill and so in the National Report, we might read a shift (or a widening) of youth concepts and target of youth policies: from a limited scope of adolescence to considerations on how to enlarge post-adolescence or the 'prolonged youth age'.

Thus, from the intentions of the new bill, it becomes clear that Swedish youth policy is characterised more by continuity than discontinuity:
- dialogue between central authorities and municipalities;
- cross-sectoral youth policy;
- division of responsibilities in such a way that the general line of youth policy is set out by state authorities and the concrete application lies in the hands of the local authorities. Ungdomsstyrelsen is the mediating body between state and municipality, responsible for development of new methods aiming to increase the influence, involvement and creativity of young people at local level and for collecting and producing material for evaluation purposes.

3.3 Concepts of youth

Reviewing of national youth policy 'in the form of a report on the living conditions of young people in Sweden' (National report, p. 20) makes correspondence between the two a necessity. Such correspondence needs political as well as theoretical clarification of the category of youth. Somewhat strange, such notions are not developed at the beginning of the National review but only at the end[1]. There, youth is defined as (p. 275ff):

- a social category;

- a phase of life;

- a generation.

For a long time, it was said, youth policy was largely confined to the organised leisure fields of youth life, defining youth primarily as a *social category*. When the economic crisis of the 90's struck Sweden, the transition period of young people became problematic and youth policy shifted to youth as a *phase of life* and the responsibility of the older towards the younger generation.

Understandably, Swedish youth policy does not want to make a definite choice between the two competing notions of youth as a social category and youth as a phase in life. That has some unfavourable consequences: no clear distinctions are made between *children, middle and late adolescence*, and *post-adolescence*. Life-course and youth-sociological research shows that individualisation in high-modern society leads to highly differentiated life-phases, each of them with their own desires and needs. Modern children advance earlier into the youth phase than former generations and have other needs than 'old-fashioned' children, especially concerning leisure time activities. The same holds for middle and late adolescents. Post-adolescent youth have again other needs and life-styles, they have to balance economic dependency with social and emotional autonomy.

The youth organisations which responded to the report rightly state - much more clearly than the report itself - that *youth is not a homogeneous group* (p. 294) and that Swedish youth policy does not take into account this diversity adequately.

Little is said about *gender* as a category and near to nothing is said in a systematic way about *minority youth*.

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1. In their reaction to the report, LSU gives a more comprehensive view on youth when trying to comprehend why so many youth organisations refrain from (youth)politics (see appendix report, p. 306ff).

Swedish youth researchers who reacted to the report also pointed out that youth is defined too flatly in terms of age-groups, that gender and ethnic-cultural questions are not focused upon seriously enough.

4 SWEDISH PRACTICE OF YOUTH POLICY

4.1 Swedish culture and welfare economy

Much understanding of Swedish life depends on the experience of the vast geographical distances and the uneven dispersion of the population. Sweden is, in proportion to its surface, scarcely populated. More than 85 per cent of a population of 8.8 million inhabitants live in the southern part of the country. That means that vast parts of the country are nature, many people live in small villages, far away from other communities and bigger cities, the capital or urban centres. The neighbour-countries Norway and Finland are sparsely populated as well. Compared to many other European countries, certainly such densely populated countries as the Netherlands or Germany, Swedish people experience more space and nature, they are used to cover long distances and to rely on each other for help and solidarity. Many customs give evidence of longstanding religious traditions and feasts which relate to climate, nature and water, the extreme seasons in the North as against the South, to food connected with fishing and gardening and self-making, to dancing in the open air and going by boat for entertainment and family-related events (Liman 1990).

In contrast to other countries, the autonomy of the municipalities vis-à-vis the state is high. The geographical-administrative distance between urban centres (e.g. Stockholm, Malmö and Göteborg) and peripheral communities is great. Although Sweden is divided in 21 counties, this administrative layer does not play as important a role in national (youth) politics as in most other European countries.

Taking these national-cultural specificities into account, it makes a very big difference if one is young in Stockholm or lives in isolation high up North with hardly any middle-sized town nearby. Although Swedish young people like to travel, they are at the same time more isolated from other European countries, simply because of great distances.

Sweden has a longstanding democratic tradition. It conducts a successful policy of neutrality the maintenance of which was one of the conditions of joining the European Union in 1995. When talking about the 'Swedish model', most people think about nearly half a century of social democratic power and the Swedish middle way between capitalism and socialism.

In the second half of the eighties, the 'Swedish model' came under pressure through a severe

economic crisis. During the first half of the nineties, Sweden experienced a deep recession, unemployment and cuts in state expenditure. Meanwhile the economy has recovered, but there is no return to the earlier situation of state subsidies and almost total security and state care for everybody.

Swedish youth policy is founded on Swedish welfare policy. That is to say, youth policy is part of all general measures and transfer systems, which apply to the whole population, such as health insurance, unemployment insurances etc. It is against special measures, which would give young people a special treatment on account of age.

Until the economic crisis of the nineties this system worked well. Since then it has become evident that a youth policy based on general measures implies a higher vulnerability for young people by excluding them from insurance and other general systems which are tailored for self-sufficient (adult) learners and earners. These Swedish considerations about a breakdown of a recently introduced welfare system for young people raised some questions in our group with regard to our own capacity. That is to have a realistic assessment of this question – what is going on in the Swedish welfare economy - will there be a delayed reaction to a "normal" European situation or will this be working fine for the foreseeable future?

4.2 Leading principles and practice of youth policy

4.2.1 Leisure and youth associations

Swedish youth policy is based on the principle of 'helping young people to be young' (National report, p. 275). At the same time Swedish economy must adjust to the constraints and new opportunities of globalisation which means that the former stress on leisure as the main field of youth policy is not adequate anymore. As in other European countries, youth unemployment focused the attention on the transition from school to work - and on problems in coping with that transition. This engendered a break with traditional Swedish youth policy, which was almost exclusively focused on the field of leisure. But leisure policy still plays a decisive role in Swedish youth policy, probably more so than in any other European country.

Organised activities have a longstanding tradition in Sweden, going along with the conviction that participating in voluntary organisations is valuable for the individual and for society. Leisure in the definition of policy makers is largely *organised leisure activities* within an association. Associations have always played a crucial role both as channels for democratic participation of the (young) people and as support systems. Eighty per cent of all young people between 13 and 25 years old are member of an association, mostly in a sports association.

Leisure is not so much perceived as free time of individual children and young people, independent of adults, but as free time, which is filled by adult-designed and guided activities. In that context one might speak of *educationalised leisure*.

One might speculate if the Swedish youth biography diverges in some respects from other (western) European countries. Processes and outcomes of individualisation seem to have a different connotation in Sweden: young people are also used to relying on organised support systems in their spare time, and Swedish youth policy subsidises almost exclusively organised youth. Seen through the eyes of the various actors we met during our visits and trying to understand their attitudes we could not help register that young Swedes may still be considered some kind of 'State Youth'.

At the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties the formerly dominant organisations entered a severe crisis of legitimacy when membership drops heavily reduced the number of organised young people. Youth organisations reacted to that development with centralisation: the number of youth organisations acting on the national scene increased. At the same time decentralised smaller life-style organisations appeared as well as associations of religious, groups, ethnic minorities and anti-racist organisations. The bigger organisations began to serve as umbrella for all kinds of one-off projects and initiatives. Thus, while the total membership of youth organisations dropped the number of associations increased. In as much as these new and smaller organisations have gained stability, they become eligible again to state support. The bigger organisations (like YMCA) found that they should and could become more market-oriented, thus serving the individualised needs of their clientele. Since the mid-nineties, membership has stabilised.

Most youth associations are organised in the *National Youth Council* (LSU) whose work is subsidised by the state. LSU itself has tuned in with the new development by allowing all types and sizes of organisations to join. At the same time LSU has taken on national responsibility whereas before it concentrated almost exclusively on channelling the international work of its member organisations. Yet the role of LSU as a political actor to influence youth policy is weak: it cannot and does not want to speak up on issues that are not agreeable to all member organisations. It chooses a facilitating role and to stay backstage, serving as the voice of its members, rather than being a political advocate. In consequence, there is no single national interlocutor or representative Council to speak up for young people's interests, not only on leisure but also, and more pressingly, on socio-economic issues.

It is indicative that LSU did not participate in writing the National Youth Review and was not consulted by Ungdomsstyrelsen. LSU officials only made their standpoint clear through an appendix where they put many relevant questions and points of critiques - but deliberately at a later time when

the report was already finished[2]. However, *LSU was consulted in December 1997 on this project. An agreement was made then between LSU and Ungdomsstyrelsen that LSU would participate in the project actively, give basic data and draft writings concerning organisational activities to Ungdomsstyrelsen, arrange a seminar for its members in spring 1998, and get opportunities to follow the project closely. Unfortunately they did not take up the offer. Instead, the Government financed a separate study by LSU, on their request in October 1998, which is part of the national report, placed in the appendix to keep it separate from the Government's point of views.* They complain that state aid has been focused too much on identifiable leisure activities and the number of members instead of long-term plans. This policy puts youth organisations under pressure and impedes continuity of work (appendix, p. 302). They complain further that bureaucratic rules for applying for money are getting ever more complicated and time consuming so that only big organisations can afford applications via professional personnel.

The Government seems to begin to realise the double-bind of the situation: on the one hand it is their explicit aim to foster (youth-political) participation; on the other hand LSU does not play its role as partner for the Government in this respect. According to a proposal in the new bill, the Government will establish a Youth Committee to promote young people's influence on and participation in politics at national level. The Youth Committee will serve as an advisory body to the Government.

On account of a highly decentralised structure, municipalities are free to make their own youth policy in the field of leisure. That is in many respects advantageous because it guarantees a lot of flexibility and measures can be geared to the specific situation of a local community. On the other hand imbalances between communities in their expenditures for leisure activities for their youth can occur. It shows, for example, that municipal aid is allocated more to boys than girls and that not all municipalities respond to the desire of young people to have more *room for unorganised leisure activities.* Swedish society seems to be confronted with a youth generation, which begins to break away from the old tradition of a guided and associated youth life. All the more promising, then, is the new bill, which explicitly states that more local scope has to be given to young people's creativity. The Government has decided a three-year programme to provide funding for that aim.

Despite the greatest possible efforts of government and society, participation via associations is not equally applicable to all Swedish young people:
- more middle class youth is organised than lower class youth and in as much as participation and influence is bound to being organised, those youth are excluded from making their voice heard;
- the majority of young people who hold formal positions in organisations are white middle class
  However, studies that show that different types of organisations attract youth with different

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2. It should be mentioned in that context that of the 93 member organisations of LSU, only 18 chose to convey their views on the report to LSU (appendix, p. 289).

socio-economical background, including immigrant youth.
- it seems that immigrant youths are under-represented in organised youth life.

4.2.2 Education and qualification

Organised leisure being the main pillar of Swedish youth policy, it is not the only one. Education is gaining importance as a life area, whenever more young people (have to) spend ever more time in school.

In the beginning of the nineties, the upper secondary school was drastically reformed. It became obvious that the labour market needed more generally educated people. Vocational education was readjusted to meet that need. Pupils, who earlier left compulsory school with 16 years classes, in order to enter the labour market, now have to stay in the educational system much longer. The traditional youth transition from school to work came under severe pressure. Nowadays over 90 percent follow upper secondary school programmes, but it is estimated that one third would prefer to work instead (Jonsson 1998, citing B.E. Andersson 1995). Roughly 20 per cent leave school with no valid diploma[3] and close to 10% drop out of school without any diploma (Sahlin 1998; Beckne & Murray 1994; Murray 1994; Beckne 1995). One in five *upper secondary school* students lack a gymnasium programme education at the age of 21 (Beckne & Murray 1994).

We do not feel it our task here to evaluate the Swedish educational system as such, which is, by the way, much more open and flexible than most European systems. What interests us here is how much participation it allows to the students. It becomes clear from all documents and oral sources of information that Swedish young people do not think highly about their schools in terms of participation and influence. They feel that they do not have the power and knowledge, neither are they motivated, to adjust school life to their needs (see also 4.2.3).

Obviously lack of participation in the schools does not hold for *all* schools; it does though for very many of them. One of our interlocutors with whom we debated the issue thought that the Swedish Youth Review is too optimistic in that respect and told us that 'a vivid school debate in this country is going on' (see also Jonsson 1995). The National Review itself lists as weak points:
- limited influence of students ;
- too much standardisation;
- uneven representation of students from different social backgrounds;

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3. Oral information of one of the youth researchers we spoke to.

- low motivation when students are forced to choose for a general core curriculum but the wish, in
  fact, for more practice is mentioned (p. 262/3).

The Swedish educational system has made great efforts to modernise its *vocational system* and
develop special programmes for unemployed or difficult employable young people, but it has begun
rather late with recognising the effects of globalisation and adapting the educational and
qualification system to it. Only now does Sweden begin to develop a modern apprenticeship system
to be integrated in the comprehensive high school. As in other European countries, the Swedish
school system becomes a parking lot for young people with low qualification profiles.

Although Sweden has made great efforts to combat youth unemployment - and has succeeded to a
certain extent -, the problems with *programmes for unemployed and/or too lowly qualified young
people* are comparable to those in other European countries: unattractive jobs and too low pay
levels. In that context it is all the more problematic that LSU is not capable or willing to take up
socio-economic issues more urgently, even if the political youth organisations and trade union youth
are active in this field – this is not enough.

There are two categories of young people who suffer most from the above mentioned educational
and qualification problems:
- immigrant youngsters;
- youngsters with low educational capital.
It is, in our view, a shortcoming of the National Review that it does not pay more attention to these
groups and provide exact figures.

We missed evidence of the incorporation of new developments in the school curriculum, especially
concerning *non-formal education and learning and European exchange programmes* (see below
4.2.4). *On the other hand a very fast development concerning ICT in schools has taken place in
Sweden during the 1990s. In 1999 89 % of the 15 -24 year olds have access to computer at school
or at work, and 79 % have even access to Internet at school or at work.* It was not clear to the
group, how this development has influenced the curriculum.

Many youth-related leisure activities are organised within the schools and the Government
advocates that in its new bill. It even wants to make the co-operation between schools, youth
associations and the young stronger still. It regrets that municipal support to the educational
associations is generally declining. The *Association of Local Authorities* seeks the reason for that
reduction in the fact that the educational associations do not pursue a sufficiently wide range of
activities for young people (preliminary translation, p. 17).

4.2.3 Youth participation and influence, and 'good examples'

There is a very special Swedish tradition, and that is the strategy of *good examples.* Concerned are all kinds of practices and experiences in the field of youth work, youth participation, pop and high culture, starting off young enterprises etc. Such 'good examples' are collected by the Ungdomsstyrelsen and serve as a 'data-bank' for further dissemination. Ungdomsstyrelsen has a wide variety of published activities of a very high standard, serving these purposes.

One set of examples are the *Local Youth Councils* of which there are about one hundred in the country. Different models for membership and a variety of working methods and concepts of participation have been tried out. Our impression after talking to representatives of two local youth councils is ambivalent though. We got the impression that the participatory rights of young people are rather limited when it comes to final decision making and that they face the same sort of problems as other youth organisations when it comes to recruitment of active participants. Young people themselves admit that they feel unable to deal with the complexity and bureaucratic procedures involved in decision-making in some municipalities and on local political issues.

Another example - still a pilot project - are local *Schoolboards.* The composition of these boards is such that the students of upper secondary education are in the majority! Impressing and daring as this 'good example' may be, we did get the impression that this model only works if the main parties do not dissent. Apart from that the real hard issues (i.e. employment of teachers; core curriculum) belong - obviously - not to the scope of influence. And here, as everywhere, the big problem is the alienation between the student-representatives on the board and the rest of the student population.

The Government feels strongly that it has to counteract the imbalance of the lack of influence of young people and shall demand more evidence that young people are included in all representative organs of political and cultural life. The question is how far Government wants to and can go in allowing young people more *economic influence and independence*. This concerns especially totally inadequate *housing facilities* and thus forced prolongation of dependency on parents, and exclusion from *insurance* systems. A youth researcher to whom we talked coined the expression 'boomerang kids' for young people moving in and out the parental house, depending on their economic situation.

Young people themselves seem to be quite realistic about their influence on political issues: only ten percent find they have (some) influence (see table National Review, p. 298).

It seems that the notion of participation pertains more to the 'soft' than to the 'hard' sectors of society. In the hard sectors - education, vocational qualification, economic sector, insurance and housing -, participation tends to be fictitious rather than real. This does not mean, though, that the wide variety of activities, experiments and objectives set in this field has not surprised the group and that it recognised that Swedish youth policy plays a vanguard role at the moment.

4.2.4 CONCLUSIONS

The youth biography of the present generation of young Swedish people and consequently youth policy is under pressure in more than one respect:

- In the field of leisure, associated forms compete with individual lifestyles and needs; subsidised forms compete with commercialised forms. Will there be a 'Swedish reconciliation' between these two tendencies? For example, it is doubtful if the idea to have more organised leisure activities connected to schools meets the needs of all young people. It could very well be that they rather want to have their *own* localities, which they can use on their own terms.

- In the field of participation, there are constraints due to economic necessities and it seems no easy task for the Government to realise its objectives nevertheless.

- In the field of personal autonomy, Swedish youth is involuntarily bound to their parents homes on account of the severe housing shortage, and they have inadequate financial resources. That might not be so pressing for well-to-do families but certainly it is for the less fortunate.

- In the field of education, young people are bound to structures which they can hardly influence and which keep them from work well until their mid-twenties. Many young people are hesitant to take up studies because they are afraid not to be able to pay back the loan[4]. New concepts, which are crucial for young people in a globalised world, like computer-aided and informal learning curricula, are only now being developed.

- In making experiences with Europe and other countries, Swedish youth were always active, many of them going abroad for a year or so after finishing school. It remains to be seen how the Swedish Government and the educational system will succeed to incorporate a European dimension into the school and leisure field.

- Swedish society defines itself as tolerant and multicultural oriented. Yet, it seems that immigrant young people are underrepresented in (white middle-class) youth organisations and have fewer chances on the labour market and in other societal sites[5]. The life-situation of immigrant youths as such is not thematised in the National Review. Yet, about one forth of young people have some

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4. Oral information; no exact figures available.
5. Oral information: 'racism is indeed present in our country'; no systematic information available.

'immigrant background'! It strikes one as somewhat strange that a paragraph on 'Young people in Sweden from a foreign background' is hidden away in a chapter on 'International contacts'.

- Figures on *risk behaviour* show quite moderate trends and Swedish society seems to be able to cope well with youth deviancy. Slight doubt aroused concerning the figures on alcohol and drugs though. Could it be that young Swedish make up for a very strict policy in their country on their many trips abroad? Also we did not learn enough about the actual work of youth workers and programmes for disadvantaged youth and delinquent youth.

4.2.5. Swedish youth and Europe

Up to now, international contacts among young people do not constitute a special policy or administrative area. Young people usually receive information through their school or employment centre. (Ungdomsstyrelsen has the general responsibility) Swedish youth is very 'out-going', many wanting or planning a time abroad for study or work.

European exchange programmes are not part of the regular school curriculum (neither are they in other European countries). As one of our interlocutors told us, teachers give access to exchange programmes as reward for good school achievements. This seems problematic because it would eliminate pupils who need those programmes most - among them immigrant children. - For young people who work, exchange programmes are difficult to follow because their employers do not want to let them go.

It is highly significant that the Government pays great attention to the question of Swedish youth and Europe in the 1999 bill under the heading 'International Co-operation'. In 1995 a working group was established to draw up a strategy for work on young people's issues in the EU. The Government's assessments concern the following topics:

- programmes to reduce youth unemployment;
- young people's influence and participation in the EU;
- youth exchanges;
- young people who are currently not making use of the benefits of EU co-operation.

The Swedish Government considers the interesting idea that 'co-ordinated programmes for several countries bring advantages, compared with exclusively national programmes.(...) The Government is of the opinion that Sweden should strive for a cross-sectoral perspective on youth issues in the EU' (preliminary translation, p. 23).

Unlike many other European countries, Sweden has chosen not to enter into bilateral agreements on youth exchanges. Instead the Government has given a general grant to national youth organisations, which means that these organisations can decide how they wish to make use of the resources.

The Government finds it very important to 'prepare dedicated young people for both observer status and the opportunity to represent young people in the EU and UN and various international conferences' (preliminary translation, p. 26)

A special task, which Swedish Government feels it should and could fulfil, is building a bridge to the Baltic States.

As a general comment we want to say some uncertainties have appeared regarding these issues. We find, on the one hand, ambitious and advanced thinking and measures concerning the internationalisation of youth and youth policies, and on the other hand, too little recognition of youth policy fields of action and existing youth knowledge.

5. **REMAINING QUESTIONS; CRITICAL COMMENTS**

At the beginning we put guiding questions (see section 1.3). We will now take stock.

5.1 Youth life and youth policy in the documents

The *first question* concerned the representation of youth life and youth policy as laid down in the National Review. Connected to this question is the relationship between the National Review and the documentation of the new 1999 bill.

We are of the opinion that the National Review is a very fine document, which conveys a rather encompassing picture of Swedish youth policy. It is an adequate reflection on the life situation of young people and the role of policy-making organs. Remaining questions and critical comments concern the following points:

Sweden seems to be a society of dialogue and compromise rather than antagonism and conflict. The advantages (and also the cultural, historical and geographical roots) of such attitude are obvious. There are some problematic aspects to it as well though. We ran into some contradictions: We did not get a clear picture of the place of *immigrant youth* in Sweden. On the one hand the Review conveys the impression that there are, by and large, no problems and certainly no discrimination. On the other hand we got many uneasy or ambivalent answers to our pressing questions about the situation of ethnic minorities (cf. Goldstein-Kyaga 1995). We are all used to (European) societies who struggle with the problems of multicultural societies and could not believe that Sweden would be an exception. Could it be that there is a *taboo sphere* around 'the foreigner' in Sweden just *because* the image of Sweden is that of an exceptionally tolerant country? Sweden still lacks studies

and figures on this subject. The National Review takes up increased segregation in the summary as one of the negative factors for young people's living conditions. (p. 266).

Similar ambiguities concern *gender (in-) equalities*: there are some hints in the Review about inequalities, but a straightforward discussion on this issue is missing. In informal talks we got the impression that there is a discrepancy between 'official rhetoric' - Sweden as a country of much equality - and the reality of less advantageous chances for women. Why not say so - Sweden would still belong to the most advanced countries in this matter!

The same with *youth unemployment* and *housing*: Is youth unemployment a problem of the past or one of the most urgent problems of the present, even if figures went down in comparison to some years ago? Housing is indeed assessed in the Review as a big problem - but the effects on youth lives are less clearly put into perspective. What does the housing shortage mean for various groups of young people (girls vs. boys; immigrants; low-income families; for the emotional-sexual development and independence of young people, to name a few)?

We felt that we did not get a clear picture about *youth at risk* and concepts of youth work related to the involved problems (drugs, alcohol, criminality and racism).

Perhaps these kinds of omissions and ambiguities have to do with underlying theory on youth and society: the Review does not depart from a clear notion of (post-) modern youth in (post-) modern (Swedish) society although it contains many valuable elements of such theory, especially the notion of youth as a societal resource.

Concerning the *roles of Ungdomsstyrelsen, LSU, independent youth researchers and the new Government bill* in writing and/or commenting the Review: We learned that the role and function of Ungdomsstyrelsen in Swedish youth policy is extremely important. It is not, thus, astonishing that the task of writing the Review was assigned to Ungdomsstyrelsen. We learnt, however, to our surprise that neither LSU nor independent youth researchers participated in the report design from the outset.

In fact Ungdomsstyrelsen gives form to a *cross-sectional youth policy approach*. Its seems that this approach is quite successful. Still, we felt that we did not learn enough about the problems of such an approach: in particular the fragmentation of involved problems. Also we did not get a clear picture about problems of youth and youth policy concerning the different *geographical areas* of Sweden: how do young people who live up in the north compare to densely populated areas? In how much does youth policy recognise these contrasts?

The *perspective of young people* themselves on their life situation and on youth policy is not adequately mirrored in the Review. One of the reasons is that the research on which the analyses are based, are exclusively quantitative; no qualitative material is used. Concerning *influence* of young people, we came (in the appendix, not the Review itself) across the table showing that young people themselves do not think they have much influence (p. 298) - a somewhat puzzling fact in view of the

participation notion as worked out in the Review.

Finally: We got somewhat confused about the *relationship between the National Review and the new bill*. It seems to us that in some respects the new bill goes further than the Review, especially concerning problems of participation (how to deal with unorganised young people) and internationalisation (pressing item for the nearby future). Profitable as it is that our evaluation can perhaps play a role in the enacting procedure of the bill, we regret that the clarifications and additions of the bill are not incorporated in the Review. We know, of course, the National Review has formally nothing to do with the Bill and that it serves as a basis for an international evaluation. A Commission on Youth Policies presented its work to the Government in two reports in 1997. These reports serve as a basis for the Bill. The Bill is a governmental proposal to the Parliament.

5.2 Success of Swedish youth policy

The *second question* is about to what extent does Swedish youth policy succeed in realising its objectives, especially concerning influence and participation of young people?

Participation and influence of the young are the cornerstones of Swedish youth policy. Sweden certainly is one of the European countries with the most advanced notion of youth participation. It is perhaps just that extremely high ambition which arouses questions as to the possibilities and impediments of implementing that goal. According to Swedish tradition and political definition, participation and influence is foremost a question of organisation. Youth associations are therefore essential. At times when in many European countries the dividing lines between organised and unorganised youth become fluent through a sharp increase of informal communication and organisation between young people as individuals, we found in Sweden much of the old discrepancy between *organised and unorganised youth*. Organised youth obviously have much more opportunity to take influence and one could say that is the precondition of participation. On the other hand, unorganised young people have needs and ideas as well, which should be fulfilled and taken into account. It may even be the case that those youth are in some respects 'trend-setters' for new and important developments, if we think for example about informal learning outside of school and the use of Internet. It is therefore necessary that new forms of participation be tried out - within existing organisations as well as through new forms of state support for unorganised or more loosely organised youth. In the new bill there are some promising plans for 'subsidies'.

We are not sure if *Youth Councils and School Boards* solve the problems of participation. Partly they may, but partly they have the same difficulties as all official organs: alienation between representatives and their 'electorate'; bureaucratic and clumsy rules; preponderance of adults. It seems to us that Swedish youth should get *more room for themselves* where they can experiment, be on their own, not being 'responsible' all the time. Sometimes we got the impression that the representative bodies offer to the young so much opportunity of participating that the young get tired before even beginning with participating or simply conforming to 'official definitions'. For example, we asked young people what they thought was the most important issue in and demand

for Swedish youth policy. We expected answers about insufficient housing, unemployment, more money for own projects and the like. Instead we heard: 'Involve more young people in associations, more commitment!' In that context it stands for discussion if the incorporation of youth leisure activities and cultural projects into the school is a good idea.

We think it is an indicative development that bigger youth organisations get more market-oriented thus serving the (commercialised) needs of the young. It is quite obvious that the whole question of how to make *immigrant families and young people better participants in society* is unsolved. There is the opportunity for participation via ethnic organisations. But there the immigrant young are dependent on the policy of adult members. In the meantime a lot of work has been done in the immigrant organisations to make the youth organisations independent from the adult organisation. That is also one of the main rules for getting government subsidies. As a consequence there are now many active, independent youth organisations for immigrant youth.

The *relationship between organised and unorganised young people, Swedish youth and immigrant youth,* as well as *the relationship between traditional state supported and market oriented youth associations* has to be reconsidered within a framework of new youth policy whose main aim is to prevent *social exclusion.* The youth policy as laid down in the National Review as well as the new bill is a sound basis to deal with those problems.

We wonder if the *policy of LSU,* which refrains from taking active standpoints on pressing youth issues (housing; unemployment; insufficient insurance) is adequate. Don't they miss a lot of influence that way? Especially in the 'hard sectors' of society young people have little to say. We also wonder about the policy of LSU concerning the national and the local level: at the national level they do not want to engage in politics, but at local level neither (for example in matters of Youth Councils).

 S*chools* lack opportunity for student participation. We are not convinced that Schoolboards are the only and best solution for this problem. Like in other European countries, a thorough reform of curriculum content and organisation is needed - a task much too big for single boards.
Concerning *labour market and youth unemployment*, we wonder if enough is done in the field of supporting young entrepreneurs. The question is pressing for all European countries.
Little is done all over Europe to face the situation of housing for young people appropriately. In Sweden, however, we found a high sensitivity to this subject and during one of the meetings a high government official even pointed to the housing situation becoming the dominant youth problem of the next decade. In this context it becomes difficult to accept that a rich society like the Swedish one, waving the flag of participation, involvement and direct influence of the young does comparatively so little in easing the problem of housing.

In conclusion: it seems that Sweden needs to find a new balance between the 'old' Swedish model of democracy and participation. Being a caring society in all respects, and new forms of life and influence which are more individualised, less 'safe' and guarded, more fluent and not or semi/organised and organisable.

5.3 Centralisation - decentralisation - Europeanisation

The *third question* deals with the problem of centralisation - decentralisation and Sweden - Europe in youth policy matters.

The geographic size of the country and the unevenly spread population has implications for youth policy: it is quite evident that youth activities in sparsely populated areas need more planning and organising to use facilities economically and to deal with isolation and distances. That arouses the question if Sweden needs *different youth policies* and also different types of youth work. For example, we learned that one of the big problems of the North is that young women migrate to bigger cities in search of better educational opportunities and living conditions while young men are less mobile. They are left with the problem of how to build relationships and families. What does the Swedish Government do to foster a favourable family policy?

We wondered about the significant lack of an administrative *'inbetween layer' - the counties -* for youth policy matters: is not the distance between the state/government/Ungdomsstyrelsen and the local communities/municipalities which are too big to effectuate youth policy measures and initiate new developments?

All Swedish partners agreed on the fact that present *Swedish youth policy* is not yet sufficiently oriented *towards Europe*. The new bill is very promising in this respect though. More and more young people go abroad for a limited period of time in order to study or work. In essence that means that other European countries add value to the young Swedish human resource. This idea opens interesting perspectives for European co-operation. In view of the fact that the concept of *civil society* is crucial in the European debate, we notice that the concept of NGO's in Sweden is much more encompassing than in other countries. Whereas the common notion of NGO's is that they are independent of the state and non-profit organisations, in Sweden the differences between NGO and other associations are not so clear. We wonder if that is a desirable situation in the light of ongoing discussions elsewhere on communitarianism, risk society and increased individualism, i.e. all developments strengthening a sharper separation between the civil society and the public sector.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations to Swedish youth policy

On the basis of what we have stated and suggested, we would like to submit to Swedish youth policy makers the following recommendations for consideration:

6.1.1 In view of *growing interdependency between national and European youth life and youth policy*, we recommend that Sweden evaluates their youth policy measures not only nationally but also in an European perspective. Two notions are crucial in that: participation and youth as a human resource.

6.1.2 See to it that *participation* is defined and given form in such a way that the *influence of young people* is *real* and not fictitious. Develop, among other devices, evaluation procedures whereby associated as well as disassociated young people can voice possible complaints about lacking influence. Use the results of youth research.

6.1.3 In view of irreversible developments toward *multicultural societies*, we recommend that Sweden develops explicit notions of what multiculturalism means for Swedish society and Swedish youth policy now, and so for the nearby future.

6.1.4 Go on with measures which further *gender equality*, especially in the field of work and career; optimal flexible child care institutions which serve the individual needs of young families are a necessary prerequisite.

6.1.5 Create *sufficient housing* for independent young people as well as young families; the role of the state may be more active in this field. In view of limited resources, a new definition of priorities needs to take place.

6.1.6 Combat *learning* demotivation by opening the core curricula as much as possible to relevant fields of practice and (new) work and economic developments. This is especially crucial for youth that are now forced to attend upper secondary education whereas they would prefer entering the labour market earlier. Introduction of ICT in the schools is an absolute necessity. Pay more attention to the problems of transition periods of different categories of young people (cf. CEDEFOP INFO 1/1999, which reports on a pilot project about new forms of post-secondary training).

6.1.7 Take note of the evidence of cultural needs and life styles of the young and seriously continue supporting this sector next to organised forms of leisure activities.

6.1.8 LSU needs to consider a more active role to in order to influence local and national youth policy.

6.1.9 Government might consider measures to make sparsely populated areas (more) attractive for youth (i.e. more opportunities for exhibiting youth cultural forms of living; more opportunity to learn about new work fields; more exchange with youth from other countries, especially the Baltic States). This may be a youth policy reflection alone, but be a link to alternative ideas of making best use of immaterial values such as nature, a sane environment and a better balance of population concentrations in the south.

6.1.10 European exchange programmes should be given high priority in Swedish schools and in the field of leisure. Especially disadvantaged young people should profit from such programmes. It should be considered that youth workers working with disadvantaged youngsters get special training in how to make European exchange programmes and experiences accessible for their clientele.

6.2 Recommendations to a European youth policy

On the basis of our experiences with Swedish youth policy, we would also like to make some recommendations to European bodies concerned with youth research and youth policy to learn from the Swedish example:

6.2.1 Apply the principle of *youth as a resource* to all measures and programmes on a European level. We must learn to overcome the divide between the 'youth as problem'-approach and the 'youth as resource'-approach. In as much as labour market becomes more influential, national and European youth politicians are called to counterbalance an *'economisation' of youth policy* through stressing youth cultural values and activities.

6.2.2 The *practice of 'good examples'* should be applied more explicitly in European contexts by, among other strategies, working out procedures to disseminate and exchange 'good examples' between member states. One such 'good example' is *'scholarschips'* allowing long-term unemployed youth to spend at least six months of practice in another country.

6.2.3 Think about how to use the huge *resource of Swedish nature* for young people from other, less fortunate countries; the geographical dimension of a European youth policy could and should be taken more explicitly and imaginatively into account in designing European youth policy.

6.2.4 The Swedish *educational system* belongs to the most open in the whole of Europe. This feature should be kept in mind in the ongoing discussion about making educational credits transferable between member states. European bodies should think about possibilities of introducing *combination studies* whereby students study half of their time in another European country and finishing their study with two degrees.

7 BUILDING BLOCKS 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, is to assemble some 'building blocks' 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 connote the existing relationships 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-à-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 common in that respect.

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* and *informal education*. 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 a flexible and unforeseeable labour market, etc.). Notions of intercultural and informal learning, in combination with ICT and lifelong learning, need to 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 unwavering 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 come after a phase of work etc.).

7.1.5 Youth in a European context should be thought together with the concept of *civil society*. It is this notion which will 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 gained 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, completely 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 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 the evaluation of national youth policies and for constructing a European youth policy.

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