

Youth Partnership

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



EUROPEAN UNION



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Symposium on Well-being of Young People in Eastern Europe and Caucasus

Report

Tbilisi, Georgia, 11-12 June 2012

A report by the EU-CoE youth partnership – it does not necessarily reflect the opinion of either of the partner institutions (the European Union and the Council of Europe)

Report

Background Information

The *partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth* has included among its priority areas of activity the countries of the Eastern Partnership programme and the Russian Federation. The aim of the *EU-CoE youth partnership* in this region is to support evidence-based youth policy and stimulate exchanges of best practices between these countries and the rest of Europe.

Following the workshops on youth policy development in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Budapest, Hungary 2008 and Konstancin-Jeziorna, Poland 2009) a symposium on youth policy cooperation (Odessa July) 2011 served as a platform for re-launching discussion on the state of youth policies in the region. A summary report commissioned by the EU-CoE youth partnership on the state of youth policies in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region was presented at the symposium and provided regional stakeholders with a valuable opportunity to identify burning issues and propose further actions. The stakeholders particularly voiced a need for investing more in the development of the knowledge-base principle to youth policy making for the promotion of youth work in the region. They considered of particular importance better dialogue between researchers and policy-makers, greater social and political recognition of youth work and the exchange of best practices in and among the countries of the region and with the rest of Europe.

Acting on this demand, the EU-CoE youth partnership organized this follow-up symposium in Georgia dedicated to knowledge-based approaches in youth policy-making and focusing in particular on the topic of well-being of young people.

Purpose of the Symposium

The main aim of the symposium is to initiate exchanges of views and experience as well as to explore possible co-operations. There is a focus on building knowledge in the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region and facilitating dialogue between the main stakeholder groups.

In many countries youth organizations are involved in policy-making in one way or another, for example through national youth councils, youth parliaments or at least through institutionalized consultation procedures. Despite the existence and visibility of links between such actors in the youth field, mechanisms for sustainable knowledge transfer cannot be taken for granted. Conversely, the absence of easily visible structures destined to connect stakeholders does not exclude an efficient exchange of ideas and knowledge, especially within and between countries that have a shared recent social and political history in which youth work evolved in a particular way.

Welcome and Introduction

Irakli SAMKURASHVILI, Head of Cabinet of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia stated in his opening remarks the need for cooperation for the development of youth. He announced the launch of a policy paper for national use, which had been developed in cooperation with UNICEF. He was also happy to mention that Georgia organizes youth patriotism camps, to achieve healthy lifestyles through sports. There is a database of services available to young people. At the same time, there are new challenges ahead for Georgian youth policy.

The Georgian Healthy Lifestyle Initiative was presented by its coordinator, **Eka LALIASHVILI**, under the motto "Don't worry, be healthy!". Books written and dedicated by Georgia's First Lady Sandra Elisabeth Roelofs were distributed to participants.

Philip DIMITROV, Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to Georgia, in his statement referred to the conclusions of the Polish presidency of the European Union concerning youth matters:

- responsibility of Member States for employment and mobility of young people
- Lisbon Treaty article #165 promoting young people's participation in the life of Europe (*)
- social solidarity and active citizenship of young people
- active participation in the labour market by young people

(*) *Europe here is understood to mean the wider Europe beyond the 27 Member States of the Union*

Mr. Dimitrov wished to see the symposium lead to developments that will contribute to health and well-being, citing the "Youth in Action" programme as a good example of a mechanism to achieve that. He remarked that €800 million are available from European Union sources for the implementation of youth programmes. Commenting on the situation in Georgia, Mr. Dimitrov commended the openness towards the European way of education as well as the development of a "Capacity Centre".

Caterina BOLOGNESE, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia, shared various examples of youth policy being on the agenda in the Caucasus region and beyond:

- Baku Summer University
- framework for Russian cooperation with the Council of Europe including with Ukraine
- youth peace dialogues between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Russian Federation and Georgia
- Armenia youth policy review

Bridges are also being built through the *Pool of European Youth Researchers* and through the *European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy*. Mrs. Bolognese expressed satisfaction to see non-governmental national youth councils being strengthened. She commended Georgian youth programmes for being evidence-based and targeted, with special emphasis on the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Panel: Continuing from Odessa – news on youth policy development

Panel moderator **Marta MEDLINSKA**, Coordinator of the *partnership* between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, welcomed the institutional partners and gave an overview of youth policy work in Eastern European and Caucasus countries so far. The first stage was for sharing ideas on the issues youth policies must address. The second was completing the gaps. This was followed by a higher level process of introducing the fundamental documents and basic strategies of both the European Union and the Council of Europe. This process encompassed lifestyles and economies, family and employment, equality and discrimination.

There followed a special presentation on youth policy development in Georgia by **Manana KAVTARADZE**, Head of the International Relations Division in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia. Mrs Kavtaradze stated that Georgia had set up a national youth policy because young people transitioning from childhood to adulthood are considered a most precious resource. The Georgian youth policy will conform to international standards, thus allowing Georgia to meet its obligations towards international bodies. The process of creating the youth policy involved all kinds of groups, in particular it also included youth from rural mountain regions. Mrs Kavtaradze particularly thanked UNICEF for its cooperation in developing the policy.

Answering questions from the participants, Mrs Kavtaradze explained that the policy contains a five-year-vision in a three-year-plan, with emphasis on participation, employment, health and well-being, as well as special protection. A difficult part is the involvement of other government structures, as working with a cross-sectoral approach is new to Georgia. After parliamentary

adoption, challenges will remain in implementing the policy. But Mrs Kavtaradze expressed her optimism on this as well as her hope of continued support from institutional partners like UNICEF.

David GVINERIA from the UNICEF office in Georgia added that 1500 young people from all backgrounds were involved in the consultation process creating the policy, a process which profited from using European Union youth policy indicators. UNICEF will now observe the implementation. However, further capacity building will be needed both of young people and of state actors.

Ulrich BUNJES, Head of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, thanked the Georgian government for inviting the Council to conduct an international review of youth policy, the report on which will be published in 2014. Similar reports were made for Romania in 2001, Armenia in 2009, Moldova in 2010; another one for Ukraine will be published during 2012. Mr Bunjes observed that the region's great potential is partially blocked by problems and unresolved conflicts. Youth policies and attention to the well-being of young people can contribute decisively to solve these problems. Giving attention to youth beyond ensuring access to rights can help develop society and bring along progress of democracy, human rights and the rule of the law.

He observed that since the time of the Odessa 2011 meeting, the problem of youth unemployment has grown further due to the global economic crisis. Countries of this part of Europe now have among the highest youth unemployment rates worldwide.

On the other hand, a positive development is the increasing recognition of the importance of civil society and the importance of political awareness. The Arab Spring would not have been possible without civil society and youth participation.

The Council's parliamentary assembly recently recommended attention to youth rights and youth employment. An upcoming report will address effects of the recent crisis has on youth. The Conference of Ministers for Youth, to take place in St. Petersburg, September 2012, will formulate coherent European standards for determining future government commitment to young people's rights. However, no specific legal instrument such as a youth rights convention is planned.

Mr. Bunjes elaborated on the Council's Youth Department activities, which give emphasis to the following issues:

- special groups of young people who have difficulty accessing their rights
- protection of human rights on the Internet
- youth peace ambassadors projects and peace camps for youth in conflict zones

Sergej KOPERDAK, Head of the Youth Policy Unit in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, focused on well-being as one of the eight fields of action of the youth strategy of the European Union. The current presidency theme includes the topics "youth in the world", "creativity and innovation" and "social inclusion". Social inclusion will be the next presidency theme, with "youth work and well being" and "social inclusion of youth at risk" as possible sub-themes. Mr. Koperdak then listed EU activities since Odessa 2011:

- report on the strategy
- study on participation in democratic life
- structured dialogue
- European youth portal redevelopment
- "Youth on the move" card and package

Mr. Koperdak also pointed out that youth indicators, including health and well-being, are never imposed on Member States, nor on partners, but that all are free to adopt them. He added that concerning health, the process of social inclusion also has mental health benefits.

In the discussion which followed, it was pointed out that the European Union offers technical assistance to neighbouring countries. In the frame of its Eastern partnership, countries benefit from

the services of a capacity centre developing indicators adapted to national situations. The Council of Europe offers help as well. It was advised that for a good analysis of youth policy dynamics and impact in any country, sensitive disaggregation of data by individual year of age has to be undertaken by national statistical offices.

David Gvineria, UNICEF made an intervention listing four particular challenges for Eastern Europe:

- structural problems regarding youth policy, above all local mechanisms of youth responsibility are lacking
- the international language (jargon) of youth policy is often not clearly understood
- top to bottom approaches, talking down to young people, patronising attitudes
- exclusion based on disability, ethnicity, religion, single-motherhood or other vulnerabilities

Working Groups on Well-being of young people: roles of youth policy and youth work

Each working group received three inputs, one each from a researcher, a youth worker (activist) and a policy maker. This approach providing three different perspectives was used to address the theme of the working group clearly from unique perspectives, to gain a broader vision beyond just one subtopic or country, to identify main challenges and provoke discussions, and to provide insight from personal experiences.

Working Group I. Healthy lifestyles (promoting sport and balanced nutrition; fighting obesity and substance abuse, sexual education)

Facilitator: Christina DEMENSHINA

Input: Juozas MELDZIUKAS (policy maker), Paolo Emilio ADAMI (youth worker/activist), Andriy MISHYN (researcher): Healthy Lifestyle in Ukraine

The working-group stated as a main challenge the wide-spread lack of understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle among young people as well as within their families. In particular, the negative effects of lack of physical activity, unhealthy diet and substance abuse are underestimated or not realized at all. There are sometimes difficulties with the definition of what exactly is a healthy lifestyle, with the possibility that how it is defined in a particular context can depend on ideology rather than scientific evidence.

The lack of cooperation and coordination between different government bodies and non-government organizations working in the health sector, as well as deficiencies in the means used to communicate with young people, impede health information flow. An important step would be to understand how health itself is understood by young people and on this basis to enable young people to assess their everyday behaviour (for example concerning leisure time activities or the use of drugs and alcohol) and its consequences. Besides young people themselves, measures establishing a healthy lifestyle during all stages of childhood, adolescence and youth should address educational facilities, parents and families, to enable them to act on their responsibility.

A further task is to raise the awareness of the business sector on its social responsibilities, in order to mitigate contrasting business sector and public health interests. Last but not least, it is important to understand the connections and influence between unhealthy lifestyle and particularly substance use (principally tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs) and unemployment, and vice versa.

To tackle healthy lifestyle problems, it is necessary to improve use of research results including making available examples of evidence-based good practices and strategies.

The working group stressed that work on healthy lifestyle formation needed to be based on scientific approaches. There have to be interrelations between government, families and young people. Peer-based methods, including peer education may be considered an important element, especially when linked with intensive work at grassroots level to educate young people on

responsibilities and outcomes of their lifestyle. This should also include raising the awareness of youth leaders on the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Successes have been achieved by establishing the profession of “youth worker” and by creating centres for young people based on their interests.

For successful work it is crucial to use a cross-sectoral approach and to strengthen communication and networking between youth NGOs, municipalities, government organizations and other institutions like media or the religious bodies. Linkages between national and international programmes are also helpful in sharing good practices as well as learning from the strengths and weaknesses of other programmes.

Advocacy is required for more state funding for healthy lifestyle promotion, establishing respective services for young people and making access easier to health infrastructure.

Working Group II. Young people’s access to social rights (enhancing quality of education and training; employment; housing; youth information)

Facilitator: Motamed AFSHARI BEHROOZ

Input: Alexandru COICA (policy-maker), Ievgen VLASUIK (youth worker/activist), Siyka KOVACHEVA (researcher)

The working group focussed on four issues of social rights – education and training, employment, housing and youth information.

A trend among governments and political groups was identified, towards minimalistic support to young people and a move away from universal rights-based approaches. Families more and more take the burden of caring for the young and the elderly. There also is a tendency to grant social rights to citizens only, excluding migrants, minorities and others. In order to ensure an adequate approach, it must be recognized that young people are not a homogenous group. Different groups need different kinds of support, therefore an approach based on rights and knowledge is needed.

Professionalized youth workers may tend to prescribe what is to be done, rather than cooperate with those that are in need of support. Better cooperation is needed between all stakeholders (young people, youth work organizations, educational institutions, government).

Finally, the working group considered it to be time for a specific convention on the rights of young people, just as exist for children and women.

Concerning the four main issues discussed, the following specific challenges were identified:

Education and training: The Bologna system is not used to its full potential, in many areas old Soviet systems persist, including the use of outdated material and methods. A lack of information about possibilities in education and training is pervasive, while many programmes offered are concentrated in the capitals and other big cities. Also, training content offered to the young unemployed should focus more strongly on marketable skills. A further problem is that governments often do not recognize the value non-formal education and fail to provide mechanisms for validating and certifying it.

Employment: The economic crisis has particularly severe effects on youth employment. Corruption is another big issue. Inefficient government policies and lacking encouragement for young people’s entrepreneurship lead to a “brain drain” in many countries.

Housing: The housing situation for young people and young families is difficult, not least because home loans are unaffordable. There is often no state support for student housing, as well as lack of social housing.

Youth information: Governments have to recognize the importance of youth work, by creating youth friendly infrastructure and taking measures against the lack of youth workers. There is need for youth friendly information on health issues, with an approach based on evidence and rights.

Working Group III. Mental health (preventing violence and self-violence; challenges and opportunities for young people's health in relation to new technologies and societal change; perception of one's image, anxieties and depression, dealing with pressure)

Facilitator: Robert THOMSON

Input: Michael FITZGERALD (researcher), Tomus IOANA (youth worker/activist), Marcela VALKOVA (policy-maker)

The participants considered the current economic crisis (affecting financing of the mental health field), the globalization of communication means (e.g. through new social media) and the lack of coordination between policy and service level as main influences on policy and practice of mental health among young people.

The challenges for young people with mental health issues include the associated stigma, lack of access to mental health support services and health services not adapted to the real psychological problems and expectations of young people. Conflict resolution across the age/generation gap may be all the more difficult with the development of new technologies.

The confrontation with mental health issues in the context of youth work is somewhat of a shock for those who work with young people. Often no prior information about specific behaviours and characteristics associated with mental health problems is available to youth workers or volunteers, yet at the same time there are possibly more and more young people with mental health issues who are integrated into society.

A number of measures necessary to tackle these challenges were presented: Existing mental health services should be mapped to make access easier, and synergies between professional intervention and involvement should be created. Youth workers should play a crucial part. There should also be better information and more involvement of families of young people with mental health issues, as well as better information (and opportunities for volunteer work) for the general public. Finally, the economic impact of mental health services should be evaluated.

In summary, the three central pillars for the issue are research, practice and policy. Professionals need to take the role of a link between these three in order to ensure the promotion and protection of mental health of young people.

Working Group IV. Social Inclusion and Anti-discrimination (addressing situations of multiple discrimination; promoting freedom from discrimination and inclusion of vulnerable groups and their participation)

Facilitator: Tomasz BRATEK

Input: Ewa KRZAKLEWSKA (researcher), Jolanta SAKALUSKIENE (policy-maker), Vera SERDYUKOVA (youth worker/activist)

The working group considers social inclusion as a crucial challenge for the well-being of young people. The main problems of youth unemployment, lack of proper education and youth poverty are rooted in lack of support in the early years from the family of origin (due itself to poverty and low social capital). Problems get compounded when solutions are not backed up by the support from the state.

Discrimination against young people can occur in various forms, such as age discrimination (making it very difficult for young people to find a job because of lacking experience), discrimination because of a person's sex (both males and females suffer discrimination in different ways), discrimination against young women based on the assumptions surrounding pregnancy, discrimination because of a person's appearance or because of the place of living (rural versus urban areas, a postcode in a deprived city area). Discrimination can occur on the system level (if certain groups are treated worse

by the socioeconomic or legal system), institutional level (where certain groups of people are treated worse by the groups or institutions) or on the individual level (in the person to person interactions). Young people also face cross or multiple discrimination as 'being young' is only one of their characteristics. They have also gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic situation, or might have a minority ethnic background, criminal past, disability, or be poor – these and other characteristics interact and might affect persons causing multiple disadvantages and exclusion. This is why is important to think about 'youth' as a very heterogeneous group with very heterogeneous challenges and possible reasons for exclusion.

Enterprises are often reluctant to have student interns, for example, or don't give them appropriate challenges, making it difficult for students to gain working experience already during their studies. Also, enterprises are slow to recognize non-formal education or value volunteerism in their working force, seeing it only as a cause of absences rather than an enrichment of social skill capital.

Systemic discrimination is now widely understood in the health sector, where not having adequate health policies for young people leads to direct mortality and morbidity consequences. Often health promotion policies for young people are associated with sport events, not considering other measures to bring preventive health programmes to a wider audience. Sexual and reproductive health, psychological health and provision for chronically sick and disabled adolescents are often inadequately understood and integrated into health sector budgets, to the detriment of young people.

Evidence-based policy is needed. It is not enough to simply copy the strategy of other countries without actually using their knowledge, or generating knowledge locally through research. One has to consider the areas in which social exclusion takes place, which groups of people are affected, as well as look at individual histories and social practices to find the reasons for social exclusion. Sociologists and other researchers can help with this. The second need is the monitoring of the effects of strategies or action plans – in the time of financial constraints governments should assure the effective spending of their limited resources. The expenditure on youth should be seen as an investment not as a cost.

Exclusion can be fought through the education system, by changing people's mindset, and not only some people but whole society needs to stand up to equal treatment of different groups. Working bottom-up, in direct contact with young individuals, defining their background and helping them to use their competences is a good strategy. Still, the state needs also to provide very serious back up in case an individual has not enough potential to manage by themselves and to provide prevention programmes as well as targeted intervention to those young people you miss resources, mostly from their families of origin. Youth organizations can play an important part in this, but there must be a legal basis and financial support from the government as well as from companies for this work.

Youth groups visiting the Symposium

Ketevan CHACHAVA, Executive Director, presented the youth group "New Generation – New Initiative", which through various projects pursues the aims of establishing democratic values, promoting a healthy lifestyle and active engagement as well as raising awareness to these issues within civil society. The group's main focus groups are young people attending school or university and minorities such as disabled and internally displaced people, refugees and women. It collaborates with international and local organizations.

Mrs Chachava named a number of recent projects and presented in detail one of them, the "Georgia HIV Prevention Project – Choice is up to you". RTI International and USAID were donors of the project, and there was collaboration with government structures as well as civil society organizations. The target group were students from 9th to 12th grade, and the project sought to encourage a healthy lifestyle among them and raise their awareness about HIV/AIDS but also other health risks. To achieve this, more than 1000 role models meetings and more than 600 information

sharing meetings were held in schools all over Georgia. A big event was held on the occasion of World Aids Day, with more than 500 students attending.

Answering to questions, Mrs Chachava added that the organization measures its impact mostly by the number of visits on its website, and that the messages given in classrooms have to be approved by the ministry of education.

Giga SORDIA a student at the Georgian State Medical University made a powerpoint presentation of the mechanisms for students self-government.

Panel: Knowledge based approach to youth policy on well-being of young people

Facilitation and input by **Robert THOMSON**

Michael FITZGERALD, Henry Marsh Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland noted the stigma of young people with mental health problems and stated that all youth workers are also mental health workers in some way. 10-20% of young people have mental health problems, and they are most in need of the support of youth work. Dr Fitzgerald explained that when dealing with young people with problems, youth workers should think of mental health issues like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder as a possible source of their behavioural difficulties. An experience of success can be vitally important for mentally ill young people and this can be had through volunteer work, which potentially gives them a sense of belonging and of making a valued contribution. In an effort to share more widely these innovative suggestions, Dr Fitzgerald kindly provided participants with free online access to a number of his books.

Ante MARTIC, Head of Youth Cooperation Service at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth of Croatia, emphasized the importance of research in youth policy work. He criticized Eurostat, asking that statistical data include not just numbers but qualitative information as well. He noted the pervasive way that data is now used to set targets which in turn determine the way in which social programmes are selected, established, monitored and evaluated.

He stated that instruments for innovative strategies have been around for fifteen years, but governments are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with them. Mr Martic pleaded for youth policies based on rights and knowledge, and stated the importance of communication between the different stakeholders. Once attitudes towards youth policy in a government have hardened because of lack of communication, they are very difficult to change.

Knowledge has only recently become a fundamental part of youth policy development, not least because its availability is increased through websites like www.youthpolicy.org and the partnership's own sites and databases. Mr Martic criticized top down mechanisms that manipulate the agenda and output of national youth councils established by governments.

Matthias CHRISTENSEN, Policy Officer for Youth Work Development at the European Youth Forum, talked about effective ways to engage with young people. Youth organizations, even though not necessarily representative of the entire youth demographic, are nonetheless a good basis for active democratic participation. Young people should have the lead in development, implementation and evaluation of youth policies. Co-management is needed, where youth specialists and government agree on topics and funding. Strong independent youth organizations are needed to steer the development processes of youth policies.

Tamar KHOMASURIDZE, Head of the UNFPA office in Georgia, stated that youth has been at the centre of the organization's work in Georgia since the opening of the representation, because investments in youth are investments in the future. UNFPA has multisectoral, regional and subregional partnerships. Collaboration with European Union programmes is also important. Young people should be included in the monitoring and evaluation of all programmes, not just youth programmes, as they give good advice and innovative solutions. UNFPA Georgia has trained 250

peer facilitators, who in turn reach 45000 young people with information about gender, rights, sexuality and reproductive health (these being the main issues of UNFPA relevant to youth policy).

In answer to a question asked in the following discussion, an example was given concerning young people with autism or Asperger, who can attend normal schools but who need to receive additional support while there. This mixture of integration and protection can be seen as a “best strategy” example. In general, the diagnosis of a mental health problem is the first step on a road map which can lead to good results.

An exchange of statements from participants from Armenia and Azerbaijan showed that political conflicts continue to form big obstacles to youth policy work and cooperation.

Panel: *youth information online*

Facilitation: **Marcela VALKOVA**, Policy Officer, DG EAC, European Commission and **Srd KISEVIC**, Research and Youth Policy Officer, EU-CoE youth partnership

Ana ASCENÇÃO E SILVA presented the network Eurodesk, which is active in 33 countries. Its targets are to support youth workers and to give high-quality information about European opportunities to young people. Eurodesk works with national partners who coordinate more than 1800 regional and local multipliers. It presents information on the European Youth Portal, on its own website and those of partners, as well as by way of social media and newsletters.

Davide CAPECCHI, ERYICA, spoke of online youth information as an important tool for the development of services of information and counseling to young people. The vast majority of the 7700 centres that belong to the ERYICA network have included online services in the range of what is offered by them. Online youth information and counseling abide with all the principles of quality indicated in the European Youth Information Charter and even more importantly with the Principles for Online Youth Information. In order to substantiate the aforementioned statement, some examples of websites have been shown.

Youth information and counseling is a practice that has a very important stake in young people's lives and cannot therefore be improvised or left to be served by search engines or impersonal, mechanical online tools. A policy that aims to provide quality information to young people must be aware of the need of and prepared to provide long term support to the development of off-line services along with online professional tools.

Anna SABAKHTARISHVILI, Deputy Director of Children and Youth National Centre in charge of E-services presented the LEPL “Children and Youth National Center” (www.cync.ge) project in Georgia. The aim of the project is to combine and offer in a comprehensive and easily accessible way all youth services in Georgia in one online space. Besides services, information on programs, such as youth and art clubs, informal learning and competitions is also offered.

Lien VANBRABANT, In Petto

In Petto specializes in youth information and youth participation concerning themes that are mostly considered as taboo in society, most recently: identity and trust, grieving and suicide, sexual identity and sexual health, substance use. When working on a specific theme the organization encourages young people to participate within the process by creating an information product (which might be a brochure, online game or board game) . In Petto has a positive approach towards young people and towards the theme being worked on.

Since 2011, online peer to peer support has been developed in cooperation with the Netherlands and the UK. Plans for 2012-2013 include an online platform where young volunteers can chat about social and emotional problems, building on a current action called Youth Advisors.

Open Space Sessions: Stakeholders Meeting Point

(An Open Space is a discussion in groups related to the topics of panels and working groups of the event or can be related to a topic of special interest to one or more participants. Policy discussions and exchanges of ideas for activities or future programmes can arise. All topics are chosen and proposed by participants)

The Open Sessions addressed the following topics:

- Belarus: *Youth suicide prevention through research*
- *Contact building and networking between the European Union and Eastern European countries*: that there is great interest for cooperation between both NGOs and young people in general from EU and the Eastern Europe and Caucasus region. A number of institutions and sources were named that could facilitate such cooperation at financial, human resource and other levels, including the Youth in Action Programme, partnerships with ministries, use of social and other (students' etc.) networks, use of the EU funds, CoE support, student festivals like Inter-national Students Week, Network of National Councils and Universities, VLEVA (flemish grant), UNDP, IREX, USAD, UNICEF, Model of United Nations, Open Society Youth Initiative, Cross-border projects, peer-education and volunteering projects, and so on.
- *Looking through the youth window of the Eastern partnerships*
- *Reaching out to vulnerable populations*
- *How to follow up on recommendations and resolutions*: Civil society and especially youth workers and activists should help local youngsters and self-advocates in gaining information about ongoing recommendations, as well as spread this information by way of the media, who can have a big impact in implementation of recommendations. They should also use electoral campaigns as an ideal period to get decision makers to take responsibility for implementing recommendations. Finally, networking is also a major element of better implementation of recommendations.
- *How to create and sustain inter-ministerial government commitment to youth policy development at all levels*

Panel: Concluding remarks and the future of youth policy cooperation in the region

Moderator: **Marta MEDLINSKA**, Coordinator of the EU-CoE youth partnership

Sergej Koperdak (European Commission) welcomed the many useful ideas and commitments to cooperation made at the symposium. Caterina Bolognese (Council of Europe, Georgia) announced the intention of the Council to close the gaps in youth policy development. Giorgi Gigiashvili (Deputy Minister Georgia) stated that thanks to his ministry's new youth policy, Georgian youth is now much better prepared for the future. Manana Kavtaradze (Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Georgia) considered the way from Odessa to Tbilisi to have been a useful journey for her country, helping to create the Georgian youth policy, with the Tbilisi symposium helping in the development of the implementation.

Some participants remarked that the health and well-being of young people was dealt with in the symposium in a very holistic way, perhaps at the expense of some more technical exchanges on e.g. specificities of adolescent health issues. However, the scope and purpose of youth interventions that have a preventive effect in terms of both mental and physical well-being came to the fore. It was also clear that anti-discrimination and access to social rights aspects were important parts of the

answer to dealing with the health and well-being of young people at a policy level. Several questions still remain about ensuring the right to the highest possible levels of access to health services in countries where the economy is struggling and where the linkages across sectors that can ensure success in health promotion are still weak.

The overall conclusion of the symposium was that despite the enduring limitations (financial, technical and in human resources) lessons have been learned in the exchange process of youth policy and programme development with Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus countries. These lessons go beyond the technical ones mentioned above, and concern enhancing the development of young people:

- Strengthen dialogue between youth activists and youth workers, researchers and policy-makers
- Obtain greater social and political recognition of youth work
- Stimulate exchange of best (or at least, good) practices among the countries of the wider European region and beyond
- Hold further annual symposia dedicated to knowledge-based approaches in youth policy-making and programming in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus
- Focus on particular topics of concern to young people, as well as to topics identified by research

The symposium has shown that steps in the right direction taken in the last couple of years are bearing fruit as words on policy papers are translated into action for, with and by young people. While it was not the place of the symposium participants, presenters, organisers or facilitators to make any commitments on behalf of the institutional partners, it was clearly considered that there are signs that the so far annual gatherings to structure the dialogue between the various actors from diverse parts of the wider Europe are making a qualitative difference to the way in which youth policy is conceived and implemented throughout the region. This in turn seems to have increased quantitatively the numbers of young people able to take part in programmes offered by government and non-government agencies.

Programme

10 June

Arrival at accommodation and conference venue: **Holiday Inn**, Tbilisi, Georgia

11 June

09h15

Registration

10h00

Welcome and Introduction

Opening remarks by Irakli Samkurashvili, Head of Cabinet, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Georgia)

Welcome addresses by representatives of partner institutions:

Philip Dimitrov, Ambassador, Head of EU Delegation to Georgia
Caterina Bolognese, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia

10h30

Coffee break

11h00

Continuing from Odessa – news on youth policy development

Moderator: Marta Medlinska, Coordinator of EU-CoE youth *partnership*

Youth policy development in Georgia:

Manana Kavtaradze (Head, Internal Relations Division, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Georgia)

Panel:

Ulrich Bunjes, Head of Youth Department, Council of Europe
Sergej Koperdak, Head of the Youth Policy Unit, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission

Discussion and interventions from other participants

12h30

Lunch

14h00

Well-being of young people: roles of youth policy and youth work

Working group I. Healthy lifestyles (promoting sport and balanced nutrition; fighting obesity and substance abuse, sexual education)

Facilitator: Christina Demenshina

Input: Juozas Meldziukas (policy maker), Paolo Emilio Adami (youth worker/activist), Andriy Mishyn (researcher)

Working group II. Young people's access to social rights (enhancing quality of education and training; employment; housing; youth information)

Facilitator: Motamed Afshari Behrooz

Input: Alexandru Coica (policy-maker), Ievgen Vlasuik (youth worker/activist), Siyka Kovacheva (researcher)

Working group III. Mental health (preventing violence and self-violence; challenges and opportunities for young people's health in relation to new technologies and societal change; perception of one's image, anxieties and depression, dealing with pressure)

Facilitator: Robert Thomson

Input: Michael Fitzgerald (researcher), Tomus Ioana (youth worker/activist), Marcela Valkova (policy-maker)

Working group IV. Social Inclusion and Anti-discrimination (addressing situations of multiple discrimination; promoting freedom from discrimination and inclusion of vulnerable groups and their participation)

Facilitator: Tomasz Bratek

Input: Ewa Krzaklewska (researcher), Jolanta Sakaluskiene (policy-maker), Vera Serdyukova (youth worker/activist)

17h30 Reports from Working Groups and Discussion facilitated by Robert Thomson

20h00 Dinner

12 June

09h00 **Youth work projects in Georgia**

New Generation – New Initiative
Tbilisi University Student Self-government

11h30 **Knowledge based approach to youth policy on well-being of young people**

Effective and innovative strategies to engage and work with young people, promote cross-sectorally within governments; how to create partnership approaches between various stakeholders) – input from regional and wider European stakeholders.

Facilitation and input by Robert Thomson

Panel:

Michael Fitzgerald, Henry Marsh Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Trinity College, Dublin

Ante Martić, Head of Youth Cooperation Service, Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth, Croatia

Matthias Christensen, Policy Officer for Youth Work Development, European Youth Forum
Tamar Khomasuridze, Assistant Representative, UNFPA Georgia

13h00 Lunch

14h30 **Youth information online**

Facilitation: Marcela Valkova, Policy Officer, European Commission and Srd Kisevic, Research and Youth Policy Officer, European Commission and the Council of Europe youth **partnership**

Panel:

Ana Ascensão e Silva, EURODESK

Davide Capecchi, ERYICA

Anna Sabakhtarishvili, Deputy Director in charge of E-services, National Centre for Children and Youth, Georgia

Lien Vanbrabant, In Petto, Belgium

15h30 **Stakeholders Meeting Point** (open space discussion groups related to topics of panels and working groups, policy discussions and ideas for future activities – topics chosen and proposed by participants)

17h30 **Concluding remarks and the future of youth policy cooperation in the region**
Moderator: Marta Medlinska, Coordinator of EU-CoE youth *partnership*

Panel:

Sergej Koperdak, Head of the Youth Policy Unit, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission

Caterina Bolognese, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia

Giorgi Avaliani, Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia

18h15 End

20:00 Dinner

13 June

Departures

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Caucasus and Eastern Europe

ARMENIA

Lilit KHACHIKYAN, The National Union of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts of Armenia "Astghik"

Arman UDUMYAN, National Youth Policy Council under the PM of Armenia

Grigor YERITSYAN, Armenian Progressive Youth

Hayk KONJORYAN, "Union of Young Scientists and Postgraduates" NGO

Anna MARTIROSYAN, Academy of Public Administration RA

AZERBAIJAN

Suleyman HUSEYNZADE, "Young Leaders" Education, Training and Development Public Union

Aynur SALMANOVA, Towards the Unity, PU

Rasim ZEYNALOV, Aran Humanitarian Regional Development Organization

Gunel ISMIKHANOVA, Baku State University

Aygun HACJIYEVA, Women's Association for Rational Development, WARD

BELARUS

Anastasiya KOMBIKOVA, National Council of Youth and Children's Organisations of Civil Society of Belarus «RADA»

Denis KOLGA, NGO «Youth Initiative»

BULGARIA

Siyka KOVACHEVA, Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

Gabriela RUSEVA, Ministry of Education, Youth and Science

GEORGIA

Giga SORDIA, Georgian State Medical University

Giorgi POCHKHUA, EMCA Georgia

Tato OKRUASHVILI, European Student Forum

Lasha MAZANASHVILI, European Student Forum

Sulkhan CHARGEISHVILI, Georgian School Alliance of Students

Giorgi SOSELIA, Hera XXI

Keti CHACHAVA, New initiative

Medea KHMELIDZE, Real Life

Giorgi MAKHATADZE, Georgian Parliament, Sport and Youth Committee

Giorgi GIGIASHVILI, Georgian Parliament, Sport and Youth Committee

Zurab BARATASHVILI, Young Medicine Association

MINISTRY OF SPORT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA

Irakli SAMKURASHVILI

Manana KAVTARADZE

Anatoli KOREPANOV

Irma OKROPIRIDZE

Aleko SILAGADZE

Dato METREVELI

Rati CHEISHVILI

MOLDOVA

Alexandru COICA, Advisory Council on Youth of the CoE (on behalf of World Organization of Scout Movement)

Viorica ANTONOV, Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul"

Victoria IVANCIOGLO, NGO Perspectiva

Maxim PIJEVSKII, Youth Forum "New Moldova"

Elena VESELOVSKAIA, National Center of Assistance and Information for Moldovan NGO

Mariana BURUIANA, Government Of The Republic Of Moldova

ROMANIA

Sergiu, BALTATESCU, University of Oradea

Ioana TOMUS, Romanian Harm Reduction Network

Tasica LUMINITA CATALINA, Institute of Education Sciences

Roxana RADU, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

RUSSIA

Christina DEMENSHINA, TV UrGU (television and radio broadcasting company)

Vera SERDYUKOVA, Model United Nations of the Russian Far East (MUNRFE)

UKRAINE

Andriy CHUBYK, Centre for Global Studies "Strategy XXI"

Vadym GEORGIENKO, NGO Our Children

Iryna MAIDANIK, Institute for Demography and Social Studies of National Academy of Science of Ukraine

Sergiy MAKOVSKYY, Institute of International Relations Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University

Andriy MISHYN, State Institute for Family and Youth Policy

Maksym MYKHAYLENKO, Youth researcher

Anatolii POLOVYNETS, Ukrainian Youth Forum

Daryna STEPANCHENKO, State Institute for Family and Youth Policy

Olga USACHOVA, Ministry for education and science, youth and sports of Ukraine

Ievgen VLASUIK, Union of youth organization of Vinnytsia region

Central and Western Europe

AUSTRIA

Behrooz MOTAMED-AFSHARI, Interkulturelles Zentrum Vienna

Friederike ROCHOWANSKI, uni4you, Vienna Adult Education Centres

BELGIUM

Ana SILVA, Eurodesk

Lien VANBRABANT, In Petto

Matthias CHRISTENSEN, Policy Officer Youth Work Development, European Youth Forum

CROATIA

Mario BAJKUSA, Forum For Freedom In Education

Ante MARTIC, Ministry of Social Policy and Youth

GERMANY

Davide CAPECCHI, ERYICA - European Youth Information and Counselling Agency,

ITALY

Paolo Emilio ADAMI, ENGSO Youth

LITHUANIA

Jolanta SAKALAIUSKIENE, Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Juozas MELDZIUKAS, Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Irute CHLIUPOVIENE, Girl Guide Assosiation

LUXEMBOURG

Anna ROGANOVA, TOGETHER network

Viktoria KARPATSKA, Project Assistant to Geographical Priorities

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Ewa KRZAKLEWSKA, Pool of European Youth Researchers / Jagiellonian University

UNICEF

David Gvineria

PORTUGAL

Sofia RIBEIRO, European Medical Students' Association | Alcohol Policy Youth Network

UNFPA

Tamar Khomasuridze

SALTO EECA

Andrij PAVLOVYCH, SALTO EECA

FACILITATOR – GENERAL RAPPORTEUR

Tomasz BRATEK, Director of the National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme, Poland

Robert THOMSON, Pool of European Youth Researchers

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate General for Education and Culture

Sergej KOPERDAK, Head of Youth Policy Unit

Marcela VALKOVA, Assistant Policy Officer, Youth Policy Unit

Delegation of the European Union to Georgia

Philipp Dimitrov, Ambassador

Oliver REISNER, Attaché / Project Manager

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Ulrich BUNJES, Head of Youth Department DG II, Council of Europe

Caterina BOLOGNESE, Head of Council of Europe Office in Georgia

SECRETARIAT OF THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

Marta MEDLINSKA, Coordinator

Srd KISEVIC, Research Officer