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Background paper

*Role of information and counselling in fostering young people's social
inclusion and access to their rights*

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**NB: This paper does not necessarily reflect the opinion of partner institutions
or the EU-CoE youth partnership**

Contents

Table of Contents

1	Introduction: youth information and counselling.....	4
1.1	Why youth information and counselling is important?	4
1.2	Milestones in the history of youth information. A brief overview.....	5
1.3	Defining youth information and counselling. Links to social inclusion, employment and entrepreneurship, and social mobility.	7
1.4	Official documents defining the frameworks of youth information and counselling in Europe	9
1.4.1	EU Youth Strategy.....	9
1.4.2	European Youth Information Charter	9
1.4.3	White Paper on Youth (“A new impetus for European Youth”).....	10
1.4.4	Youth Information Starter’s Kit	10
1.4.5	Indicators for a National Youth Information Policy.....	11
1.4.6	Principles for online youth information	11
1.4.7	Other documents.....	13
2	Youth information and counselling as a youth policy tool on the three topics of the Symposium	13
2.1	Social inclusion.....	14
2.2	Employment/entrepreneurship.....	14
2.3	Mobility.....	15
3	Youth information and counselling in South East Europe	17
3.1	Albania	17
3.2	Bosnia and Herzegovina	18
3.3	Croatia.....	19
3.4	“The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	19
3.5	Kosovo ¹	20
3.6	Montenegro	21

¹ This designation is used throughout this paper without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

3.7	Serbia	21
4	Good practices in information and counselling	22
4.1	Good practices from South East Europe	22
4.1.1	General youth information campaigns	22
4.1.2	Social Inclusion	24
4.1.3	Employment and Entrepreneurship	24
4.1.4	Mobility.....	25
4.2	Good practices from the EU Member States.....	26
4.2.1	General systems of information and counselling.....	26
4.2.2	General youth information campaigns	27
4.2.3	Social Inclusion	27
4.2.4	Employment and Entrepreneurship	29
4.2.5	Mobility.....	29
5	Conclusion: towards information and counselling as instruments of enhancing young people's social inclusion and access to rights in South East Europe.....	30
6	Annex	31

1 Introduction: youth information and counselling

1.1 Why youth information and counselling is important?

Knowledge is power and possessing information is certainly one of the most important liberating forces. People who hold information can exercise their rights of citizenship, they can actively take part in politics and in civil society, and last but not least if they have an understanding of their situation and alternatives they also have more freedom of choice.

Inevitably young people have a special need for information and counselling. Being adolescent is probably the most important period when those decisions have to be made that could have lifelong effects. Finding the right direction in education, entering the labour market and starting a career, finding a partner, leaving parents' home and beginning an independent life, dealing with money and with other responsibilities – just to name a few – all require well-informed and well-grounded decisions. In an ideal world these decisions would be made on complete and comprehensive information supported by adequate counselling from family members and various institutions (e.g. schools). Of course, this does not happen in many cases, so young people clearly need those services that let them *“have access to comprehensive, accurate and balanced information that responds to their needs and questions and is designed for them, thus being customised and easily understood.”*²

As far as the three main topics of the symposium (1. social inclusion, 2. employment and entrepreneurship, 3. learning and geographical mobility) are concerned in South East Europe, it is evident that meaningful youth information and counselling should be fundamental elements of youth policy and youth work in the region. Of course, information and counselling are necessary but not sufficient conditions for combatting against social inclusion, improving labour market positions of young people, and broadening their possibilities for mobility.

In this background paper prepared for the “Youth Policy Cooperation in South East Europe: Symposium on the role of information and counselling in fostering young people's social inclusion and access to their rights” we

- provide a short history and summary of the main policy documents on youth information and counselling with special focus on the topics of the event,
- give a brief overview of the situation in South East Europe
- provide evidence on the value of youth information and counselling as a youth policy tool on the three topics of the Symposium, and

² Youth information Starters Kit (http://eryica.org/files/2010_Youth_Information_Starter_Kit_en.pdf)

- demonstrate good practices from Europe and SEE.

1.2 Milestones in the history of youth information. A brief overview

The history of professional youth information and counselling goes back to the mid-20th century in case of some pioneering countries (i.e. Finland, United Kingdom, Belgium and Netherlands). However more systematic and (Western)-European level initiatives were born only from the 1980s. In 1985 in Strasbourg the First European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth included youth information and counselling among its priorities for future action and co-operation at the European level for the first time.³ This political commitment has shortly led to the creation of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency, ERYICA in 1986.

Today the ERYICA network consists of members and other organisations from 28 countries. According to a survey conducted in 2009 they offer services in more than 7.500 youth information centres, where 13.000 workers provide young people with generalist information.⁴

The first major document that defined an official framework and agenda for youth information and counselling (YIC) activities was born in 1990.⁵ The Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers raised attention to the creation of information and counselling services with the following principles:

- versatile services
- varied sources and comprehensive replies to enquiries, reliable information
- young people's right to anonymity
- accessible to all services without discrimination
- non-commercial (free) service
- promotion of young people's independence

The recommendation followed a "generalist" approach which meant that it set the focus of youth information and counselling to "*all sectors, without exception*". Promoting young people's autonomy and having complete freedom of choice, without any discrimination or ideological or other influence were the basic pillars of this recommendation. The comprehensive nature of the documents could also be seen in its target group: it addressed not only politicians and decision makers, but youth work and youth workers in general.

Inevitably the genesis of youth information as a service has its roots in supporting social inclusion and labour market integration of young people. The Recommendation from 1990

³ <http://eryica.org/page/history-youth-information> (retrieved on 03.06.2013)

⁴ <http://eryica.org/page/eryica-numbers>

⁵ Recommendation No. R (90) 7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States Concerning Information and Counselling for Young People in Europe

was also highlighting the need to achieve greater unity between members of the Council of Europe, to foster understanding and peace between peoples. Therefore the mobility of young people was set to be one of the primary aims that could be facilitated by youth information and counselling. In this sense mobility was understood more as a geographical, inter-country objective.

Since 1997 the Council of Europe has maintained a Partnership Agreement with ERYICA based on the above mentioned 1990 Recommendation. The aim of the partnership has been to promote and develop European cooperation in youth information and counselling, in particular by organising training activities for professionals involved in Youth Information and Counselling.

It is worth to mention that at the early period of the development of European level YIC activities countries of the former Eastern Bloc were not members of the Council of Europe and the European Union. These countries had their specific national traditions “spiced” with the ideology of one-party systems in youth information and counselling services. Although the political systems of these countries varied in terms of their repressive and authoritarian nature, the role of information in the development of the conscious citizen was clearly different from the Western European model. In other words, the basic premises (i.e. freedom of choice, personal autonomy, active citizenship supporting the democratic development) on which youth information relied were missing from the official ideology. But the belief that youth is a special and potentially vulnerable social group, and that their social inclusion and labour market integration should be supported by information and counselling was more or less accepted even in these countries.

This situation slowly began to change from 1989, but it happened only in the mid-1990s when early systematic cooperation started with countries of the former Eastern bloc. This process was even more delayed in case of the countries of South East Europe since their integration began later.

1993 marks an important year in the history of youth information and counselling: this year the first version of the European Youth Information Charter was adopted by ERYICA. The aim of the charter was to provide a unified framework for the existing policies and practices for youth work in the field of youth information. Ever since, this document has served as a starting point for all relevant actors by defining the basic principles and guidelines.

The “right to information” as the basic principle is of course not without antecedents. It is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950). So the solid pillars of youth information and counselling services are provided by the general principles of human rights.

During the late 1980s and the 1990s several networks were established to provide information to young people: the European Youth Card Association (EYCA), Eurodesk and

Salto were the three most significant. In 2004, it was EYCA, Eurodesk and ERYICA that signed a declaration for cooperation, which was followed by several jointly organized events connected to the development of youth information and counselling.⁶

Similarly, the “Information Right Now” campaign implemented by the ERYICA in partnership with the Council of Europe in 2012 aimed to raise awareness among young people, decision makers and media on the special role of youth information with regard to young people’s access to rights.

1.3 Defining youth information and counselling. Links to social inclusion, employment and entrepreneurship, and social mobility.

The Youth Information Starter’s Kit highlights three major components as the objectives of youth information. (1) “becoming independent”, (2) “becoming part of society”, and (3) “becoming information literates”.

The transition from childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood is a relatively short but highly challenging period of life when such important decisions have to be made that may determine the whole future of a young person. Under stable social and economic conditions at the macro level and with the help of supportive, prepared and informed family, teachers and peers at the personal level this stage of life could be without major problems and traumas. The societies of South East Europe and the other former socialist countries could not at all be characterized by stable biographies and life patterns in the last few decades, so young people had and have to grow up in less calculable and more uncertain environments. The current economic difficulties and the subsequent social processes in almost whole Europe have unequivocally led to the situation where uncertainty became a general feeling of millions of young people in Europe. In South East Europe it also meant growing social inequalities and narrowing channels of social mobility. In this situation the generalist youth information could be treated as an important – but on its own certainly not sufficient – tool for combatting social exclusion and helping young people to find their place in the labour market.

Youth information could also strengthen social cohesion and integration by helping young people integrate into society. Spending free time in a meaningful way, knowing about various options for keeping themselves busy with enjoyable activities are basic conditions for satisfaction with life in general. Furthermore, integration means participation in its broadest sense. Being informed about what is happening in politics (especially in the areas that directly affect young people’s life), being aware of rights (and duties) and being able to stand

⁶ Youth on the Move – InfoMobility. Background Paper. ERYICA(<http://eryica.org/sites/default/files/Background%20Paper%20YoMIM.pdf>)

up for them are prerequisites for democratic societies at the macro level, and active citizenship at the micro level. In countries where previously non-democratic, one-party political systems were in power, young people’s effective “sensitization” is particularly important for the future democratic development of these societies. In the countries where the political and economic transitions that took place during the 1990s fundamentally changed the basic social and economic rules of how these societies work, the classic ways of family socialisation and the “transfer of knowledge” on how to thrive in life were seriously challenged. This also calls for effective youth information and counselling services.

And finally, as information goes more and more online it became increasingly important that young people have equal access to online sources, they have the knowledge of searching for it and the ability to evaluate and process it. Therefore, the possibility to connect the skills and competences of gathering and filtering relevant information became highly important and therefore moved to the core of youth information services. In other words: *“Youth information centres and services shall help young people both to access information provided via modern information and communication technologies, and to develop their skills in using them.”*⁷ The rise of social media and social networking created a new ground for the change of information and ideas among young people. Effective youth information cannot ignore this fundamental shift in the paradigm of information flow and learning. On the other hand, statistics show that the level of internet access and the use of digital technologies in general are below the European average among disadvantaged social groups of young people in countries of South East Europe. It means that contrary to the stereotypical notion of the universal “digital native”, in terms of access to digital culture (i.e. information, opportunities, etc.), online and offline worlds are still living next to each other.

The generalist youth information covers all relevant subjects for young people in the following areas:

education	money issues
jobs and career	health issues
leisure time, sports and cultural activities	facilities and services for young people in the local area
legislation relating to young people	holiday and travel
housing	volunteering and European and international opportunities

It is not an exaggeration to say that almost all of these subjects are directly linked to the issue of social inclusion, employment/entrepreneurship and social mobility. Providing support for these three objectives requires complex information and counselling.

Related to this approach, the Council of Europe resolution on youth policy (Agenda 2020) placed youth policy under the aim of providing young people with equality of opportunities

⁷ http://eryica.org/sites/default/files/European%20Youth%20Information%20Charter_English%20Version.pdf

and experience enabling them to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society. It further acknowledged the role of youth information and counselling in supporting human rights and democracy and it considered “facilitating the access of all young people to information and counselling services” as a matter of human rights.⁸

1.4 Official documents defining the frameworks of youth information and counselling in Europe

In this chapter we will briefly overview essential policy and other documents that define the framework of youth information and counselling at European, national and local levels.

1.4.1 EU Youth Strategy

The fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy⁹ are directly and/or indirectly linked to youth information and counselling. The employment and entrepreneurship, and the social inclusion as independent fields of action of the strategy, and fostering mobility not as separate but rather holistic objective (that could be linked to several other fields of action) cannot be achieved without well-functioning accessible and complex information services for young people.¹⁰

The EU Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) called for “*improving access to quality youth information and disseminating information through all possible channels at local, regional, national level, as well as through Europe-wide organisations such as Eurodesk, ERYICA and EYCA and other European networks*”.¹¹

1.4.2 European Youth Information Charter

The first version of the European Youth Information Charter (adopted in 1993) was followed by its revised version in 2004 as a reaction to the changing environment of young people.¹² The principles of the charter “*constitute a basis for minimum standards and quality*

⁸ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Forum21/Issue_No12/N12_Agenda_2020_en.pdf

⁹ The legal basis of the EU's youth activities are defined in Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0047:0199:en:PDF>)

¹⁰ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0200:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1648_en.pdf

¹² European Youth Information Charter Adopted in Bratislava (Slovak Republic) on 19 November 2004 by the 15th General Assembly of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)
http://eryica.org/sites/default/files/European%20Youth%20Information%20Charter_English%20Version.pdf

measures which should be established in each country as elements of a comprehensive, coherent and co-ordinated approach to youth information work, which is a part of youth policy.” The charter lists 16 basic principles that could be grouped into the following broader categories:

- **Access** to information and services should be open to all, free of charge, easily accessible and be able to provide equality of access for all young people
- **Personalised**, on-demand service: information should be based on request and on perceived information needs of young people.
- The **content** and the service itself should be complete, up-to-date, accurate, objective, unbiased and independent of any (otherwise not allowed) religious, political, ideological and commercial influence.
- Use of **up-to-date technology** that is “compatible” with the habits and need of young people
- **Embeddedness** and **co-operation** with other youth services and structures.

1.4.3 White Paper on Youth (“A new impetus for European Youth”)

In 2001 the European Commission’s White Paper on Youth defined youth information as one of its priorities.¹³ The document stated that *“the aim of European action is not to increase the structures, channels and quantity of information already available but to improve the quality of information available to young people.”* Therefore at national, regional and local levels it encouraged the development of youth information networks and the improvement of labour market related information and counselling for young people in order to enhance their prospects for employment.

1.4.4 Youth Information Starter’s Kit

As a “real life” toolkit for decision makers and NGOs interested in the field of Youth, Information Starter’s Kit was published by the Council of Europe in cooperation with ERYICA in 2009. The document provides practical information on how to set up youth information centres and services on a local level.

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/publications/whitepaper_en.pdf

1.4.5 Indicators for a National Youth Information Policy

As assistance on how to develop quality youth information services, ERYICA member organisations formulated a set of 12 indicators for the assessment of national youth information policies in 2005.

1. Table
Summary of the Indicators for National Youth Information Policy

Indicator No.	Dimension	Main questions to consider
1	Governmental role	Government should consider youth as an important and inherent task of overall youth policy, for which it needs to develop a national policy (or strategy) that seeks to develop a comprehensive, coherent and co-ordinated approach.
2	Youth information legislation	The provision of youth information services should have a legal basis in the relevant youth legislation.
3	Stable funding and staffing	Youth information services should be adequately funded and staffed, on the basis of an annual (or multi-annual) work-plan and budget.
4	Equal access for all	Youth Information service should be accessible to all young people.
5	Regional and local dimension	The national youth information policy (or strategy) should have a regional and local dimension in order for youth information services to reach a maximum number of young people. Regional and local authorities should be actively involved in supporting the provision of youth information.
6	Scientific research and expertise	Youth information policy (or strategy) should be based on a sound knowledge of the information needs and expectations of young people.
7	Innovation	Youth information policy and services should promote innovation, and should encourage reflection by youth information workers and by young people on how to develop creative ways of meeting both already recognised and new needs and challenges.
8	Participation of young people	Promoting the active participation of young people in youth information work should be an important element of a youth information policy (or strategy).
9	Cross-sectorial co-operation	A comprehensive and coherent youth information policy will require consultations and cooperation between a wide range of actors, including governmental departments, official youth services, voluntary youth organisations and young people in general.
10	Quality of services	A youth information policy (or strategy) should include measures to maintain and develop the quality of the youth information and counselling services provided to young people.
11	Training	A basic and continued training of youth information workers should be a priority component of a national youth information policy.
12	Diversity in the delivery of information	Diversity in the Delivery of Information – synergy of traditional and new media and technologies in bringing relevant information to young people should be met.

1.4.6 Principles for online youth information

As it was already mentioned, major “tectonic” changes have taken place since the late 1990s with the spread of the internet and related technologies and services (mobile phones, social

media and social networks, etc.) that fundamentally changed both the demand and supply side of youth information and counselling.

The Principles for Online Youth Information was approved by ERYICA in 2009. They define online youth information and counselling as a new task, which is complementary to existing youth information work.¹⁴

Since the online principles are integral part of Youth Information work, most of the principles of the European Youth Information Charter also apply. The charter lists 16 principles in the following four main topics:

- Similar to the “general” Charter **access** to online information should be accurate, up to date, verified, and free of charge.
- The information provided online should **address the need** of young people in a **personalized** way attractive and with easy to understand content a services, supported by simple feedback mechanisms.
- Some important characteristic of online information is also addressed: the author and purpose of the information and similarly the motivations of the content provider shall be clear and visible; the principles for **safe internet environment** shall be kept (i.e. protecting privacy of users, and respecting copyright of all parties involved)
- And finally, it is also emphasized that the methods and guidance provided to young people shall contribute to the increase of their information literacy and online competences. Similarly, youth information workers shall keep themselves up to date in the use of online tools and have adequate level of information literacy skills.

Neil Selwyn assembled a separate study in 2007 with the title “Young people and their information needs in the context of the information society”¹⁵ This report gives an in-depth summary of the main arguments that should be taken into consideration when providing youth information and counselling. In the age of rapid development of technology this study could seem rather old; however most of its main recommendations are still valid today

“As such there are a number of issues which should be prioritised within current debates concerning youth, information and contemporary society. Young people’s engagement with digital information should be equitable and empowering. Digital information should be engaging - both in terms of capturing the initial interest of young people and in terms of being relevant to the information needs of young people. [...] Governments, providers and other bodies also need to take a ‘glocal’ approach to the digital information needs of young people - contextualising digital information within local and community identities, practices, modes and contexts of young people’s lives, whilst not losing sight of the potential for more expansive, global applications.” (page 18)

¹⁴ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Partners/ERYICA_2009_Principles_online_youth_info_en.pdf

¹⁵ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Partners/Eryica_Selwyn_en.pdf

1.4.7 Other documents

The following documents have also shaped the framework of youth information and counselling:

- The Recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on Youth Mobility from 1995 called for the creation and development of appropriate information and counselling services to support mobility projects of young people.¹⁶
- The EU Council Resolution for the participation and information of young people (COM(2003)) proposed “guiding principles in order to enable youth information structures to develop quality assessment” and called “to promote and develop cooperation, networking and the exchange of good practice between national youth information sites and portals across Europe” and encouraged “the exchange of experience among youth information experts at various levels”.¹⁷
- The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted its Recommendation on youth information in 2010 which was primarily an “update” of the 1990 Recommendation.¹⁸ The document reflected on the changes that occurred in young people’s life because of the information technologies. It is worth a mention that – among others – it was recommended that young people should actively participate in developing youth information content, tools for delivery and policy development.
- The Council of Europe’s Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life overviews a wide set of instruments for youth participation. The document emphasizes that “*local and regional authorities should therefore support and improve existing information and counselling centres for young people, in order to ensure that they provide services of quality that meet the needs expressed by young people.*”¹⁹

2 Youth information and counselling as a youth policy tool on the three topics of the Symposium

In this chapter we briefly summarise some empirical findings in research on social inclusion, employment/entrepreneurship and mobility by focusing on their links to youth information and counselling as a youth policy tool.

¹⁶http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Education_Training_Learning_Policy/Recx95x18E_12_October_1995.pdf

¹⁷ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/youth/c11075_en.htm

¹⁸ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1637765&Site=CM>

¹⁹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Coe_youth/Participation/COE_charter_participation_en.pdf

2.1 Social inclusion

Publicly available reports and surveys reveal there is a significant interest for the access to information by the European youth. According to *the EU Youth Report 2012*²⁰ (p. 49), at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rates over time in the EU indicate that the situation improved for children and young people between 2005 and 2009, when a sharp decline has started. The proportion of children and young people who were at the risk of poverty or social exclusion increased substantially between 2009 and 2010 - more than within the general population. On the other hand, Eurobarometer on Poverty and Social Exclusion²¹ shows (p. 47) that financially vulnerable Europeans report the feeling of being left out of society far more often than others. While 15% of Europeans feel excluded overall (and 14% of those aged 15-24), around a third of 'poor' Europeans feel the same. Economically deprived status seeks for new employment solutions, often in a form of entrepreneurship.

It is not difficult to accept the fact that young people with disadvantaged social backgrounds are the ones whose transitions to independent living could be the most problematic. Fewer opportunities mean limited access and more fragile solidarity in their relationships with wider society.²² Education is the main tool for combatting social exclusion; however deprived situation is usually associated with low self-esteem and the undervaluation of the importance of education in young people's lives. Therefore careful institutional support, formal and non-formal encouragement from professionals in the form of guidance, mentoring, counselling and supervision are essential.

2.2 Employment/entrepreneurship

A special form of youth information and counselling services is the career guidance provided for young people. According to the Eurobarometer "Employment and Social Policy" survey conducted in 2011, in Europe 27-28% of 15-24 and 25-34 years young people did not receive any career guidance at school. Another 25% claimed that although there was some kind of guidance, however it did not help them to acquire the skills needed for the type of job they wanted.²³ These figures are generally well above average in Southern and Eastern European countries.²⁴ (See Annex for detailed results.)

These numbers suggest that there is much more "space" and demand for effective career guidance for young people. This service is primarily linked to the topic of the Symposium since it is based on counselling young people and providing relevant information for them.

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/national_youth_reports_2012/eu_youth_report_swd_situation_of_young_people.pdf

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_321_en.pdf

²² European Commission (2012) Social inclusion of youth on the margins of society. Policy review of research results. http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/social-inclusion-of-youth_en.pdf

²³ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_377_en.pdf (page 144)

²⁴ Unfortunately several countries covered by the Symposium are missing from Eurobarometer surveys, so the reader can only give a rough estimation for much of the South East European countries.

As far as entrepreneurship is concerned another Eurobarometer survey (“Entrepreneurship in the EU and beyond”, conducted in 2012) suggests that around half of young people think about being self-employed in some way instead of being an employee. Countries of South East Europe (at least those which were part of the survey) show above average figures again. However these are only intentions that will never come true. One obstacle is clearly the lack of available information. The results of the survey show that in Europe around half of young people agreed that it is difficult to obtain information on how to start a business. For example in Croatia 59% of young people between 25 and 34 wanted to be self-employed, however 68% of them think that getting the relevant information on how to do it is problematic. These two figures highlight the contradictory nature of the situation in many countries of Europe, especially on its Eastern and Southern regions. Young people would try their luck, but the environment in which they should operate is not supportive.

2.3 Mobility

The Eurobarometer survey Youth on the Move²⁵ (2011, p. 25) inquired about mobility of young Europeans aged 15-29. The results suggest that while only 13.5 % of young people studied in another country, the vast majority of respondents never reported to have stayed abroad for learning or training purposes. Similarly, this survey has showed that undertaking a traineeship abroad, either within higher or vocational education was used by 26 % and 21 % of respondents respectively. In relation to working abroad, roughly equal shares of young people would like to work abroad for a limited amount of time (28%) and for a longer period (25%) – p 55. These data and insights suggest that the European area, especially South East Europe as one of the economically most deprived areas, need to change their policies and practices in youth social inclusion, employment and migration, as well as in the area of youth information on these fields.

Insights from *Reviews on Youth Policies and Youth Work in the countries of South East Europe, Eastern Europe & Caucasus* (2011)²⁶ suggest that “mobility is a curious case for the countries that are reviewed. While clear majorities of young people express willingness to be mobilized for tourism, educational and socio-cultural motives, the rates of mobility are very low, except for national travels, and in some instances such as Montenegrin youth within the ex-Yugoslav space. The main obstacles for the low mobility of young people are the economic difficulties and the strict visa regimes of the countries that young people declare interest in. The absence of special state mobility programs for young people is also affecting the situation” (p. 25).

²⁵http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_319b_en.pdf

²⁶http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/SEE_Summary_Report_Final.pdf

Youth from all analysed countries have access to four main instruments for obtaining information and fostering youth mobility:

1. Youth in Action Programme²⁷
2. Eurodesk²⁸ – the main provider of information on European policies and opportunities for young people and those who work with them, with a service „European Youth Portal“²⁹ that has been developed as a direct result of the 2001 *White Paper*
3. The European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)³⁰, as an independent European organisation, based on the national youth information and guided by the principles of *the European Youth Information Charter*³¹
4. The European Youth Card Association (EYCA)³² - besides providing youth information in various youth-related fields, it also provides *the European Youth Card*, an instrument for obtaining discounts on culture, accommodation, travel, shopping and more.

Moreover, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Serbia are eligible for the Erasmus – Western Balkans programme³³, and Croatia is a full member of Erasmus Mundus Programme³⁴. Furthermore, apart from these instruments, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro, via their national youth web portals, offer information on additional schemes providing information on youth mobility. The most valuable tool for fostering youth mobility in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Youth Mobility Portal³⁵ and its project “Travel to Europe in 2013” (started in 2008), which offers an opportunity to 25 university students from Bosnia and Herzegovina to travel throughout Europe for 22 days with all costs covered.

Croatian National Youth Report 2012³⁶ states that the awareness on the opportunities for young volunteers - apart from the well-recognised European instruments - had also been raised by the implementation of *the Memorandum of Understanding between the Croatian Government and the Government of Canada on Youth Mobility*³⁷. However, it has been emphasized that young people from marginalized groups, such as Roma, young people who are beneficiaries of different welfare services and generally young people of lower social

²⁷http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.php

²⁸<http://www.eurodesk.org/edesk/>

²⁹<http://www.eurodesk.org/edesk/YouthInEurope.do?go=1>

³⁰<http://www.eryica.eu/>

³¹<http://eryica.org/page/european-youth-information-charter>

³²<http://www.eyca.org/>

³³<http://erasmus-westernbalkans.eu/>

³⁴http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/

³⁵<http://www.hajmo.ba/index.php?a=kl>

³⁶http://ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/national_youth_reports_2012/croatia.pdf

³⁷<http://ca.mfa.hr/?mh=370&mv=4054>

status are rarely included in these granting schemes, while these schemes have mostly been utilised by the university students.

Montenegrin National Youth Report 2012³⁸ indicates that the Directorate for Youth and Sports (DYS) is providing information on the opportunities for mobility of young volunteers and finances projects of NGOs working with volunteers. Montenegro is also participating country in Mediterranean Office for Youth project³⁹, and Montenegrin Agency for International Cooperation – ZAMTES, which implements a wide range of mobility agreements and activities⁴⁰.

3 Youth information and counselling in South East Europe

In this section we present national frameworks (in the alphabetical order) for youth information and counselling, and identify major stakeholders and actions in this field.

3.1 Albania

Major Albanian stakeholders in the field of youth information and counselling comprise of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports⁴¹, EU info centre Albania⁴², the Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania⁴³, the Albanian participation as a Neighbouring Partner Country in the *Youth in Action Programme*⁴⁴, international organisations (such as UNHCR, UNDP and UNESCO), Salto Youth contact point in Albania – Association "Beyond Barriers"⁴⁵, Albanian Youth Council⁴⁶ and youth NGOs. Also, we should mention Kosovar Youth Council⁴⁷, a youth non-governmental organisation established to activate young Kosovars to respond to their problems brought on by massive expulsion from their homes to Albania in 1999.

As presented in the report *Youth policy in Albania: Conclusions of the Council of Europe international review team*⁴⁸, *National Youth Strategy* (brought by Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports in 2006) covers eight areas, among which there is no youth information and counselling. In this respect, it is recommended (p. 97) that more structured systems for information-sharing between those working in the youth field are required.

³⁸http://ec.europa.eu/youth/documents/national_youth_reports_2012/montenegro.pdf

³⁹<http://www.officemediterraneendela jeunesse.org/en>

⁴⁰<http://www.zamtes.gov.me/en/>

⁴¹<http://www.zshda.gov.al/>

⁴²<http://euinfocentre.al/>

⁴³<https://www.facebook.com/crca.al/info>

⁴⁴http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.php

⁴⁵www.beyondbarriers.org

⁴⁶<http://albanianleader.wix.com/academy>

⁴⁷<http://www.kyc-ks.org/projects.php>

⁴⁸http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/IG_Coop/YP_Albania_en.pdf

Since it was recognised that the public authorities are unlikely to support information for campaigns directed at their own deficiencies, more thought ought to be given to the strategic alliances that should be beneficial to young people. Moreover, there is an issue related to a relatively limited access to the Internet of many young Albanians (although most schools are connected to the Internet, the international review team was told by some young people that points and moments for access can be heavily restricted and regulated).

3.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Youth Act⁴⁹ regulates policy and practice in the field of youth in eight areas, where youth information and counselling is not a separate area, but rather a cross-sectional area mentioned in several fields. Besides governmental bodies – Federal Ministry for Culture and Sport⁵⁰, Federal Ministry of Education and Science⁵¹ and Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport of the Republic of Srpska⁵², international organisations and foundations are major institutions in charge of youth policy design and implementation. The most prominent stakeholder in the field of youth information and counselling at the youth NGO scene is the Youth Information Agency (OIA)⁵³, run by young people themselves. OIA aims at empowering young people through peer education. Its major accomplishments are related to setting up several youth information centres, dealing with media (TV and radio) production, and administering the largest non-commercial website for young people in BiH⁵⁴. In the area of youth information and counselling it also provides “info desks for youth” (IDeMo!)⁵⁵, web portal for youth⁵⁶ and youth mobility portal⁵⁷. These activities are supported by the SEE Salto Youth contact point in Bosnia and Herzegovina (IPAK – Youth Builds Future)⁵⁸ and *the Youth in Action Programme* (in a status of Neighbouring Partner Country). In context of youth information and counselling in Bosnia and Herzegovina, PRONI Brčko⁵⁹ and Centre for information, counselling and training Banja Luka⁶⁰ should also be mentioned.

⁴⁹<http://www.asubih.ba/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/zakon-o-mladima-sl-novine-fbih-36-10.pdf>

⁵⁰<http://www.fmks.gov.ba/>

⁵¹<http://www.fmon.gov.ba/>

⁵²<http://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mpos/Pages/Default.aspx>

⁵³<http://www.oiabih.info/>

⁵⁴www.mladi.info

⁵⁵http://oia.mladi.info/index.php?type=1&a=subpages_content&id=2&sid=21

⁵⁶<http://mladi.info/>

⁵⁷<http://www.hajmo.ba/>

⁵⁸www.mladiuakciji.ba

⁵⁹<http://www.pronibrcko.ba/youth-zone.html>

⁶⁰<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Centar-za-Informisanje-Savjetovanje-i-Obuku-Banja-Luka/226995234014440?id=226995234014440&sk=info>

3.3 Croatia

The Ministry of Social Politics and Youth and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports are two main ministries in charge of youth in Croatia, while youth field has been regulated by *the National Plan for Youth 2009-2013*⁶¹. The focal point of youth information and counselling is the Community of seven youth info centres in Croatia⁶² (Bjelovar, Osijek, Rijeka, Sisak, Vukovar, Zagreb and Split), members of ERYICA since 2011, serving young people in all relevant areas of youth information and counselling (education, employment, health, leisure time and culture, mobility, policy and politics). The Community of Info Centres is a partner on ERYICA's project "Youth on the Move – Infomobility project" and has been actively implementing main actions and programmes conceived by ERYICA, such as Yintro training⁶³, and seminars on youth information and counselling⁶⁴. Also, when it comes to the youth NGO scene, the Youth Croatian Network⁶⁵, in a form of an umbrella association, gathers 54 member associations, advocating youth rights and fostering their recognition and participation. It should be added that during accession period, EURO Youth Info Corner⁶⁶, founded by PRONI association, has been⁶⁷ one of the most important info points in Croatia, followed by Euraxess Croatia⁶⁸, which is specifically targeting young people in the academic and research sectors, and Youth in Action Programme, with a full membership since 2011.

3.4 "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

Policy Review on "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"⁶⁹ states (2011, p. 16) that in "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" there are 85 municipalities and only few of them have serious focus on youth, and support youth activities mainly by supporting youth information centres. In "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" the National Steering Committee for implementation of *the National Youth Strategy*⁷⁰, that included representatives from both the government and the youth NGOs, was established in 2005. *The National Youth Strategy of "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"* aims to improve the general position, including youth information. Further important points for youth information and counselling are "National youth information centre – SEGA"⁷¹ –

⁶¹http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2009_07_82_1988.html

⁶²<http://zajednica-icm.hr/>

⁶³http://zajednica-icm.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=135:yintro-trening-u-regionalnom-informativnom-centru-za-mlade-zagreb&catid=35:clanci

⁶⁴http://zajednica-icm.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=134:odrzan-seminar-zasto-informirati-mlade-ukljucci-se-i-ti&catid=35:clanci

⁶⁵<http://www.mmh.hr>

⁶⁶<http://www.eukutak.info/>

⁶⁷<http://www.proni.hr>

⁶⁸<http://www.euraxess.hr/sitegenius/topic.php?id=375>

⁶⁹http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_FYROM_2011.pdf

⁷⁰http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Youth/The%20former%20Yugoslav%20Republic%20of%20Macedonia/The_Former_Yugoslav_Republic-of_Macedonia_National%20Youth%20Strategy.pdf

⁷¹<http://www.sega.org.mk>

affiliated member of ERYICA, *the Youth in Action Programme* ("The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as a Neighbouring Partner Country) and *Euraxess FYRo Macedonia*⁷².

3.5 Kosovo⁷³

Policy Review – Kosovo⁷⁴ (2011) recognizes the Department of Youth (DoY) at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport⁷⁵ as responsible for six youth policy areas, while there is no distinctive area covering youth information and counselling. Instead, youth information and counselling are mentioned under six policy subareas (providing information support and services on youth issues). *Strategy and Action Plan*⁷⁶ (2010) regulates youth field, and the Kosovo Youth Network (KYN)⁷⁷ is an independent body representing 127 youth organizations and youth centres throughout Kosovo. International organisations still present one of the major stakeholders in the youth field in Kosovo, including OSCE Kosovo⁷⁸ that helps KYN to develop strategy for participation in decision-making⁷⁹. *The Youth in Action Programme* is also present in Kosovo, which has a status of the Neighbouring Partner Country. Moreover, Forum Syd⁸⁰, which coordinated *Mapping of youth organizations in Kosovo*⁸¹, has been directly involved in the processes of development and implementation of the youth law, Kosovo Youth Action Plan and consolidation of Councils for Action throughout Kosovo.

⁷²<http://www.euraxess.mk/contact>

⁷³ This designation is used throughout this paper without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

⁷⁴http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/SEE/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_Kosovo_2011.pdf

⁷⁵<http://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=2,1>

⁷⁶<http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/Kosovo%20Youth%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%202010-2012%20ENG.pdf>

⁷⁷<http://kosovoinnovations.org/kosovoyouthmap/reports/view/126>

⁷⁸<http://www.osce.org/kosovo>

⁷⁹<http://www.osce.org/kosovo/100724>

⁸⁰https://www.forumsyd.org/default_forumsyd.aspx?id=29609

⁸¹https://www.forumsyd.org/upload/regional_webpages/kosovo/Researches/Mapping%20of%20Albanian%20Youth%20NGO%27s%20in%20Kosovo.pdf

3.6 Montenegro

Montenegrin Directorate for Youth and Sports⁸² is a central body in charge of implementing *the National Youth Action Plan*⁸³ supported by the Youth Office⁸⁴, which has, among other functions, a role of the central youth info point in Montenegro since 2009. Montenegro is a member of the North South Centre of the Council of Europe⁸⁵, and a Neighbouring Partner Country in *the Youth in Action Programme*, taking part in cooperation in the field of youth and international exchange. Montenegrin member of ERYICA – Forum MNE⁸⁶ - is another crucial partner in providing youth information and counselling. Forum MNE was an associated partner of ERYICA 2009-2012, and in 2012 it became a full member, implementing ERYICA's programmes across Montenegro. Association for Democratic Prosperity – Zid⁸⁷ also supports Montenegrin undertakings in youth social inclusion, information and counselling, via its role of the Salto Youth national contact point.

3.7 Serbia

Regarding youth policy, through the cooperation with the Council of Europe, Serbia accessed to the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card⁸⁸ and the North-South Centre of Council of Europe⁸⁹. The Ministry of Youth and Sport is the main governmental body in the field of youth, implementing *the National Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia*⁹⁰. The Strategy has also been implemented by the Youth Office in Belgrade⁹¹, which offers, via interactive web platform, information in all domains of youth life, including summer schools, science related activities, project on youth information and motivation workshops. It also provides free legal aid to youth, and all content is also presented and updated in real time in social media. These efforts are supported by *the Youth in Action Programme* (with Serbia in a status of Neighbouring Partner Country), the Salto Youth contact point in Serbia (Group "Let's...")⁹² and by Euraxess Serbia⁹³.

⁸²<http://www.upravazamladeisport.me/>

⁸³<http://www.infomladi.me/index.php?IDSP=67&jezik=eng>

⁸⁴<http://www.infomladi.me/>

⁸⁵<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/>

⁸⁶<http://www.forum-mne.com/>

⁸⁷<http://www.zid.org.me/en/>

⁸⁸<http://www.eyca.org/>

⁸⁹<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/>

⁹⁰http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Youth/Serbia/Serbia_National_Youth_Strategy.pdf

⁹¹<http://www.kancelarijazamlade.rs/o-nama/o-kancelariji/>

⁹²www.mladiuakciji.rs

⁹³<http://www.euraxess.rs/sitegenius/topic.php?id=251>

4 Good practices in information and counselling

The following section will present good practice examples that could spark some new ideas on how to ease youth success in contemporary turbulent world.

Insights into the information needs of young people can be obtained through the results of a European survey and focus groups carried out by ERYICA throughout its European network of Youth Information Centres in 2010 and 2011 (ERYICA Annual Report 2011)⁹⁴. This survey revealed that both younger age cohorts (13-16 and 16-19) expressed a need for information and counselling concerning their future and finding/realising their goals. Also, regardless of their age, most respondents were interested in social and cultural life, but 16-19-year-olds ranked this topic with a higher priority. According to the results, Internet was the most “natural” source of information for young people aged 13-25, although young people rely on Internet more to collect information and data, while still seeking personal and professional contact for in-depth inquiries and individualised treatment in the area of education and career orientation or health.

“Indicators for a national youth information policy”⁹⁵ adopted by ERYICA in 2005 will be used when possible (depending on data availability):

The good practice examples selected on the basis of ERYICA’s twelve criteria discussed earlier were divided into four categories, depending on their focus: general youth information and counselling, social inclusion, employment and entrepreneurship and mobility. Here we bring short description of the projects (listed alphabetically by countries), with web sites that offer additional information on the projects.

4.1 Good practices from South East Europe

4.1.1 General youth information campaigns

“Youth Rights at Work information campaign”⁹⁶ (Albania) reached at least 3.500 young people by informing them on their rights at work. The Albanian Youth Council⁹⁷ organised dissemination targeted via electronic media and social network sites⁹⁸, coupled by eight

⁹⁴ http://eryica.org/sites/default/files/Annual%20Report%202011_1.pdf

⁹⁵ http://eryica.org/files/Indicators_National_Policy_2005_EN.pdf

⁹⁶ http://www.ilo.org/budapest/information-resources/press-releases/WCMS_188793/lang--en/index.htm

⁹⁷ <http://albanianleader.wix.com/academy>

⁹⁸ <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/punesimirinor/>

training of trainers in Tirana, Kukes and Shkodra for 212 teachers, social workers, trade union members, young leaders and youth activists.

*“Youth info point”*⁹⁹ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) offers a list of all information services and data sources available via interactive online map to youth in Bosnian municipalities. Data sources and services are easily accessible and categorised in clearly defined groups.

*Informed – Included (Croatia)*¹⁰⁰ was designed to connect young people from Malta and Croatia (16 participants) who are beneficiaries of Youth Information Centres in the two countries, with the purpose of exchanging their experiences, thoughts and expectations on youth information and social inclusion.

Youth event *“Knowledge and Sports among Young People”*¹⁰¹ (“The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”), coordinated by Youth Information and Counselling Centre INFO, the Youth Council Prilep and Youth Multicultural Community happened under the motto “Knowledge and sports among youth”. It gathered 3.000 people, covering two main actions: leisure activities for youth and dissemination of information on the INFO SEGA youth information centre and services for the young people.

*“Passport to Europe”*¹⁰² (Kosovo) was implemented by the Kosovar Youth Council¹⁰³, giving young people, aged 14-19, the conditions and the opportunities to acquire knowledge on the main European institutions and raise awareness of European Integration Process.

A book *«You are right! A guide through law and all the rest»*¹⁰⁴ (Montenegro) – NGO Association for Democratic Prosperity – Zid¹⁰⁵ has published and distributed two editions of the book, designed as a reliable and interesting guide in what young people (and media, NGOs, public institutions, schools, etc.) can find interesting in areas of education, employment, family life, housing, finances, health, safety, state and politics, judiciary, minority, mobility and leisure time.

TV show *„I want you to know”*¹⁰⁶ (Serbia), coordinated by the Youth Office¹⁰⁷ and aired at the "Studio B" TV started in 2010. The TV show's aim is to inform and educate young people through entertaining content, covering wide area of topics relevant to youth – from mobility, ecology, education, training, employment and volunteering to promoting of young talented experts, artists and scientists.

⁹⁹ http://mladi.info/index.php?type=1&a=info_tacke_mapa

¹⁰⁰ http://eryica.org/sites/default/files/Good%20Practice%20in%20Youth%20Information_spreads_0.pdf

¹⁰¹ www.informationrightnow.eu/activity/

¹⁰² <http://www.kyc-ks.org/projects.php>

¹⁰³ <http://www.kyc-ks.org/index.php>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.zid.org.me/en/programs.php>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.vap.org.uk/ngo/adp-zid-montenegro.html>

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.kancelarijazamlade.rs/vest/hocu-da-znas>

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.kancelarijazamlade.rs/o-nama/o-kancelariji/>

4.1.2 Social Inclusion

*Action Plan for the implementation of National Youth Policy*¹⁰⁸ (“The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”), implemented by Coalition of youth organisations SEGA¹⁰⁹, aimed at contributing to the implementation of youth policy in “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” by fostering an open and transparent consultative process in partnership with all relevant civil society organizations and government institutions. Such process provided the functional mechanisms for the creation of an Action Plan that integrates gender perspective in the youth policy implementation.

*“Inside-Out”*¹¹⁰ (Kosovo) in a form of a street art performances and exhibitions invited people to share thoughts about their differences, similarities and personal experiences and identities. The project’s motto was: “make the invisible majority (youth) visible”.

*Youth Information Training for Roma Youth*¹¹¹ (Montenegro) took place in the north of Montenegro, in the town of Kolasin, with the participation of 15 Roma girls and boys who were informed on importance of quality youth information in the age of adolescence, in order to reach the best opportunities of life. The training was adapted to the specific needs of Roma youth who were limited in terms of vocabulary and participation in group activities.

4.1.3 Employment and Entrepreneurship

*Youth Business Albania*¹¹² resulted from partnership between the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, Youth Business International and the Mjaft Foundation, which is responsible for implementing the programme in Albania. It aims to provide financial support and technical assistance to young people who aspire to start-up their own business.

*Generation Next at Work*¹¹³ (Croatia) project aimed at *reducing unemployment of highly educated young people without work experience and retention of personnel in the local economy* by establishing an effective model of cooperation between the private and public in Medimurje County. Apart from organising workshops and seminars targeted at policy makers, employers and young people, a survey on the highly educated unemployed youth was conducted. The survey gathered information on their life and work experiences, values,

¹⁰⁸ http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/goodpractices/areas/youth_policy_strategies/goodpractice_2.html

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.sega.org.mk/web/>

¹¹⁰ <http://www.unmikonline.org/Pages/02102012insideout.aspx>

¹¹¹ <http://sheryica.org/story/youthinformation-training-roma-youth>

¹¹² <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/39872944.pdf>

¹¹³ <http://gen-next.eu/>

attitudes and professional aspirations, followed by recommendations for future actions in the field of youth employment and entrepreneurship.

*The Youth Education Centre project*¹¹⁴ (Serbia) has a broad focus, from encouraging young people to become actively engaged in seeking jobs, to encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship among young people. This project involved 300 young people, aged 17-28, offering seminars focused on motivational training, meeting legal regulations and business planning.

4.1.4 Mobility

“Travel to Europe in 2013”¹¹⁵ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) by the Youth Mobility Portal¹¹⁶ is a project that has started in 2008. It annually offers an opportunity to 25 university students to travel throughout Europe for 22 days with all costs covered.

"Mobility, information and counselling of youth"¹¹⁷ (Croatia) in a coordination of the Community of youth info centres in Croatia¹¹⁸ that aims to improve youth information and mobility, through awareness raising campaigns and a survey of 1.200 youth. The survey resulted with clear insights on youth experiences, values and needs, followed by public consultations that gathered 40 participants (30 young people 10 youth workers) per region (total number of 160).

Croatian participation in ERYICA project¹¹⁹ “Youth on the Move – InfoMobility” has started in 2013. The project aims at establishing coordination of the youth information and counselling in cross-border mobility in Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

¹¹⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/39872944.pdf>

¹¹⁵ <http://www.hajmo.ba/index.php?a=kl>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.hajmo.ba/index.php?a=kl>

¹¹⁷ http://zajednica-icm.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=138:mobilnost-informiranje-i-savjetovanje-mladih&catid=35:clanci

¹¹⁸ <http://zajednica-icm.hr/>

¹¹⁹ http://zajednica-icm.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=137:youth-on-the-moveinfomobility&catid=35:clanci

4.2 Good practices from the EU Member States

4.2.1 General systems of information and counselling

4.2.1.1 Youth information and counselling in Finland¹²⁰

The Youth Act reinforces youth information as one of the basic elements of municipal youth work services in Finland, with year 2006 as a starting point for establishing the nation-wide youth information and counselling centres. The main goal was to create equal opportunities locally and regionally for young people to find and use information services through employing info centres, info points, web services, phone services and face-to-face work, and in accordance with European Youth Information Charter. These instruments were implemented successfully and in 2008 already 80% (629.934) of young people aged 13-24 had possibility to use youth information services in their own municipality.

4.2.1.2 Youth information and counselling in Slovenia^{121,122,123}

MISSS (Mladinsko Informativno Svetovalno Sredisce Slovenije – Slovenian Youth Information and Counselling Centre)¹²⁴ is a focal point for youth information and counselling, including work of experts, as well as peer-to-peer youth information and counselling.

Existing mechanisms to involve young people in information making are related to involvement of young people in information media production (publications, web pages), involvement of marginal groups in publications production and involvement of young people in different interest activities (e.g. arts, culture) connected with information editing and dissemination. Youth information in Slovenia has been made easily accessible via mobile info points, mainly in primary and secondary schools, at fairs and other exhibitions. Currently there are projects of constant mobile informative activities in municipalities: Maribor, Brezice, Koper, Ptuj, Krsko, Sezana, Ruse, and Ljubljana.

Slovenia has developed very profound monitoring systems ensuring the quality of information dissemination that comprises of:

- youth surveys in questionnaire form
- supervisions of working groups and regular team meetings
- evaluations of informants

¹²⁰ http://www.mediakasvatus.fi/files/u4/information_and_counselling_work_in_Finland.pdf

¹²¹ http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Information/2005_Slovenia.PDF

¹²² http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Information/2006_Slovenia.PDF

¹²³ http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/Information_2008

¹²⁴ <http://www.misss.org/>

- examination of information from different sources
- control over new informants
- feedback from young people.

4.2.2 General youth information campaigns

*Video Series*¹²⁵ (France) performed by CIDJ - Centre d'information et de documentation jeunesse increased the visibility of youth Information services across the country by obtaining wide media coverage and promotion at regional and local level. As of November 2012, the videos with content aimed at youth information and inclusion were watched by 731 people.

*Postcard Campaign*¹²⁶ (Luxembourg) – Youth Information Centre CIJ (Centre Information Jeunes) produced specially designed postcards in order to distribute them to young people in the streets of Luxembourg City and in Esch-sur-Alzette (with the support of PIJ Esch). The purpose of this action, which targeted 1.000 young people, was to communicate about the right of young people to receive information and to enable young people to write down their questions about topics that interest them by sending the postcards, free of charge, back to the Youth Information Centre.

4.2.3 Social Inclusion

*Dialogue in youth policy*¹²⁷ (Finland) by which the Government of Finland is seeking to develop a tripartite model of dialogue in youth policy between decision-makers, youth work (including youth workers, young people and youth organisations) and youth researchers.

*Meeting of Generations – Project for the Development of Computer Training*¹²⁸ (Finland, and the countries of the project partners: Poland, Italy, Northern Ireland and Germany), coordinated by Institut für neue Medien Rostock gGmbH aims at intergenerational exchange of media and social competences. A model of adult /senior education is interesting because of reversed roles, with young people as the ones who are passing on their experience of new media to the elderly (via computers and the Internet mainly).

Intergenerational web portal «J't'explique!» and *Student/ Senior citizens housemating*¹²⁹ (France) was led by the Solidarity association "Le PariSolidaire". Project had two aims:

¹²⁵ www.informationrightnow.eu/activity/video-series

¹²⁶ www.informationrightnow.eu/activity/postcard-campaign

¹²⁷ <http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/?lang=en>

¹²⁸ http://www.meetgen.org/start_en.html

¹²⁹ <http://www.leparisolidaire.fr/>

providing housing for students and improving security of the elderly. It combated loneliness among elderly or isolated people, while providing a small additional income for pensioners who want to participate.

*Young Ideas for Europe*¹³⁰ (Germany, with partners from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden). Robert Bosch Stiftung, together with IFOK Company decided to inspire young people between the ages of 15 and 18 years to actively shape Europe's political, economic and social future. In 2008, over 600 young people in 6 countries participated in a dialogue over the course of 26 weeks. In 2009 and 2010, more than 1.000 young people coming from schools from 17 countries across Europe were formulating a common "Action Plan: New Energy for Europe". Additionally, the online community enabled some 40.000 young people from all over Europe to become involved with the project.

*Young Scot*¹³¹ *Rewards*¹³² (Scotland, United Kingdom) is an online platform that encourages young people to participate in activities that benefit themselves and their communities. Through Young Scot Rewards, young people are able to earn points by taking part in a variety of activities offered by a range of cross sector partners. These include volunteering, writing for the Young Scot website, using local library and information facilities, taking part in a focus group or participating in opportunities around sport, health, arts and the environment. Since the launch in November 2011, over 12.000 young people have registered and started to collect Reward points, while the total number of cardholders was 460,000.

*"Truth about Youth"*¹³³ (Scotland, UK) by Young Scot is an intergenerational project that aims to enhance a positive image of young people among older generations in their communities. "The Truth About Youth" Grant Fund provides young people and groups with funding to help them make a positive difference in their community, offering young people and groups up to £1.000, available for young people aged 11-26 living in/based in Scotland.

*My Town, My Europe*¹³⁴ (Spain) provided an opportunity for sharing personal experiences and values among young people through creation of videos. 20 active participants and a lot of other young people could check the importance of being European and the possibilities they have thanks to the European diversity and richness. All participants had the opportunity to challenge their attitudes towards people from different cultures and religions, and to broaden their perspectives.

¹³⁰ <http://www.youngideasforeurope.eu/>

¹³¹ <http://www.youngscot.org/>

¹³² <https://rewards.youngscot.org>

¹³³ <http://www.youngscot.org/local/east-dunbartonshire/2348-truth-about-youth>

¹³⁴ <http://sheryica.org/story/my-town-myeurope-video-project-about-influenceeurope-our-small-town>

4.2.4 *Employment and Entrepreneurship*¹³⁵

All inclusive: A path to new possibilities (project coordinator: Estonia, project partners: Finland and Slovenia) was designed for young people with few vocational qualifications, limited opportunities and experience of unemployment. Each participant carried out a four-week assignment in the field of youth work as a volunteer in another country. Besides the encouragement to improve their skills and competences, the project also widened volunteers' understanding of possibilities open to them at the European level. *Jobs for youth in the suburbs* (Norway) provided possibility for finding a job for youth in the suburbs from different cultures and with different native languages. The project offered free job application courses and a drop-in service where young people could get feedback and learn about their rights, duties and responsibilities as an employee. It also offered counselling in entrepreneurship and project development training.

Learning how to help young people find their place in society (Romania) trained 22 youth leaders for from eight countries (Azerbaijan, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine) for ten days in working with young people facing unemployment, marginalisation and social exclusion. It guided them in techniques to stimulate entrepreneurial skills among youth, and to interest unemployed youngsters in seeking qualifications, employment and involvement in society.

4.2.5 *Mobility*

Improving Intercultural Training for AFS Exchange Program Participants and European Pathways: a study curriculum in the frame of the bachelor in Social Work¹³⁶ (Germany). AFS Germany, based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity¹³⁷ evaluated the training provided to the participants of AFS Exchange program (5.000 participants from 2005 to 2010), improving the training strategy and tools accordingly.

Xplore programme¹³⁸ (The Netherlands) joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Netherlands Youth Institute – Nederlands Jeugdinstituut in involving young people in developing cooperation projects using exchanges and voluntary work as a tool. It put an emphasis in involving young people with lower or little education, and in a 2005-2009 period it reached 7.000 participants (5.200 were targeted), while 1.3 million people were reached through dissemination activities (700.000 were targeted). Thanks to these results, the programme will continue until 2014, despite budget reductions.

¹³⁵ source: Focus on Youth Employment: European Good Practice Projects, which listed 36 good practice examples in the area of fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship (<http://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2610/FocusOnYouthEmployment.pdf>)

¹³⁶ http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/goodpractices/areas/mobility/goodpractice_6.html

¹³⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bennett_scale

¹³⁸ http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/goodpractices/areas/mobility/goodpractice_1.html

5 Conclusion: towards information and counselling as instruments of enhancing young people's social inclusion and access to rights in the South-East Europe

The aim of this paper was to provide background information to the participants of the Symposium by

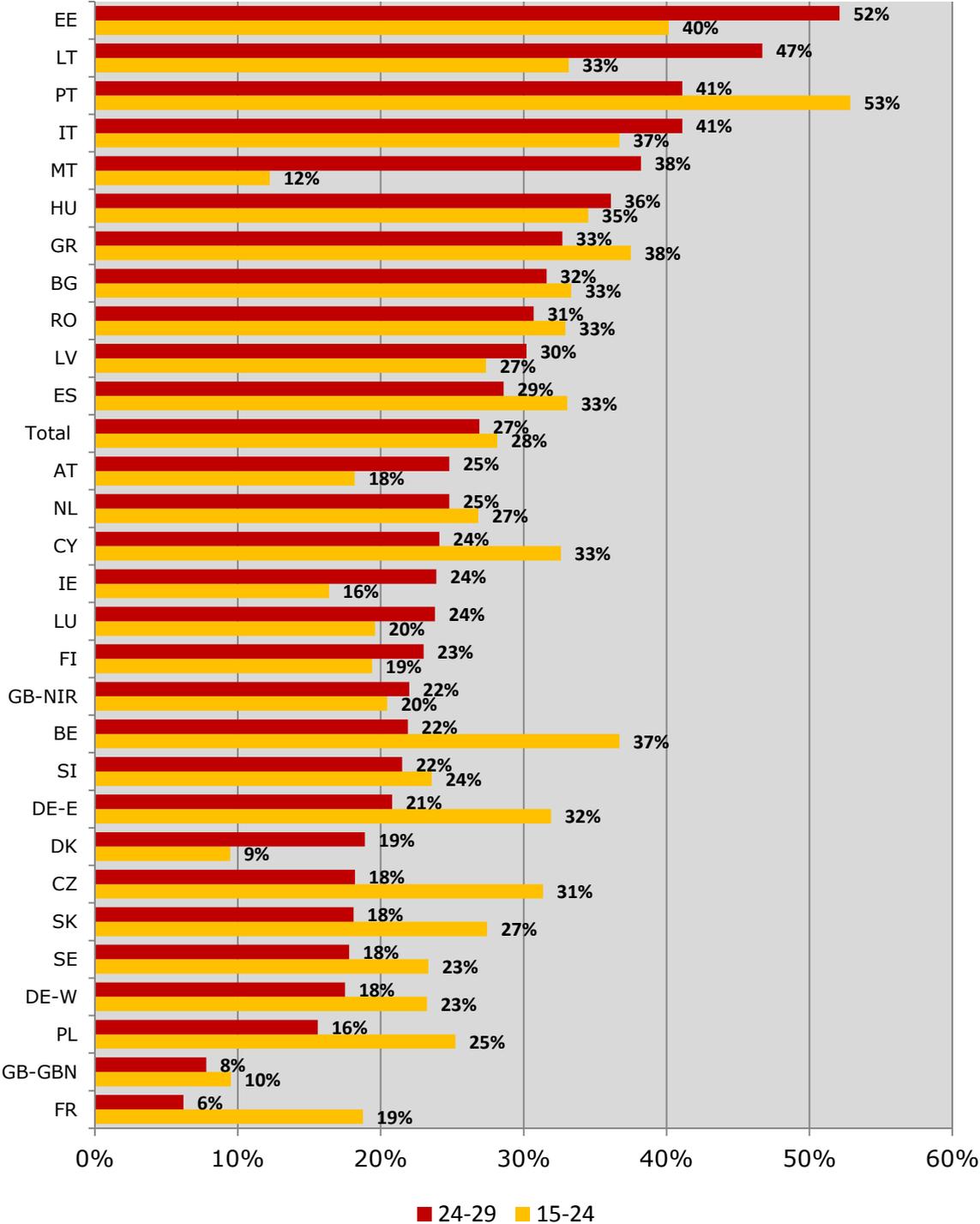
- brief overview of the history and the fundamental policy documents of youth information and counselling and its links to the main topics of the event,
- providing an overview of the situation of youth information and counselling in South East Europe,
- and finally showcase some good practices from Europe and specifically from its South East region.

Without doubt youth information and counselling have solid background in terms of legitimation in youth policy at the macro, and available methods and good practices at the micro level in Europe. This was clearly demonstrated by our selection of good practices. Although at the European level overall strategies and frameworks define a unified policy environment for these services, the differences among countries (or more precisely among groups of countries) are obvious. Of course there are no universal tools that are able to support social inclusion, employment/entrepreneurship and mobility in Europe as a whole. When thinking about the right methods, policy maker and practitioners in the field always have to consider the social and economic reality of the given country together with its history that affects people's basic values, norms and attitudes.

Moreover, providing information and counselling to young people could only be successful, if they are in sync with other fields of policy (i.e. education, labour market, etc.). In other words, information could be passed on only by opportunities that exist and function adequately.

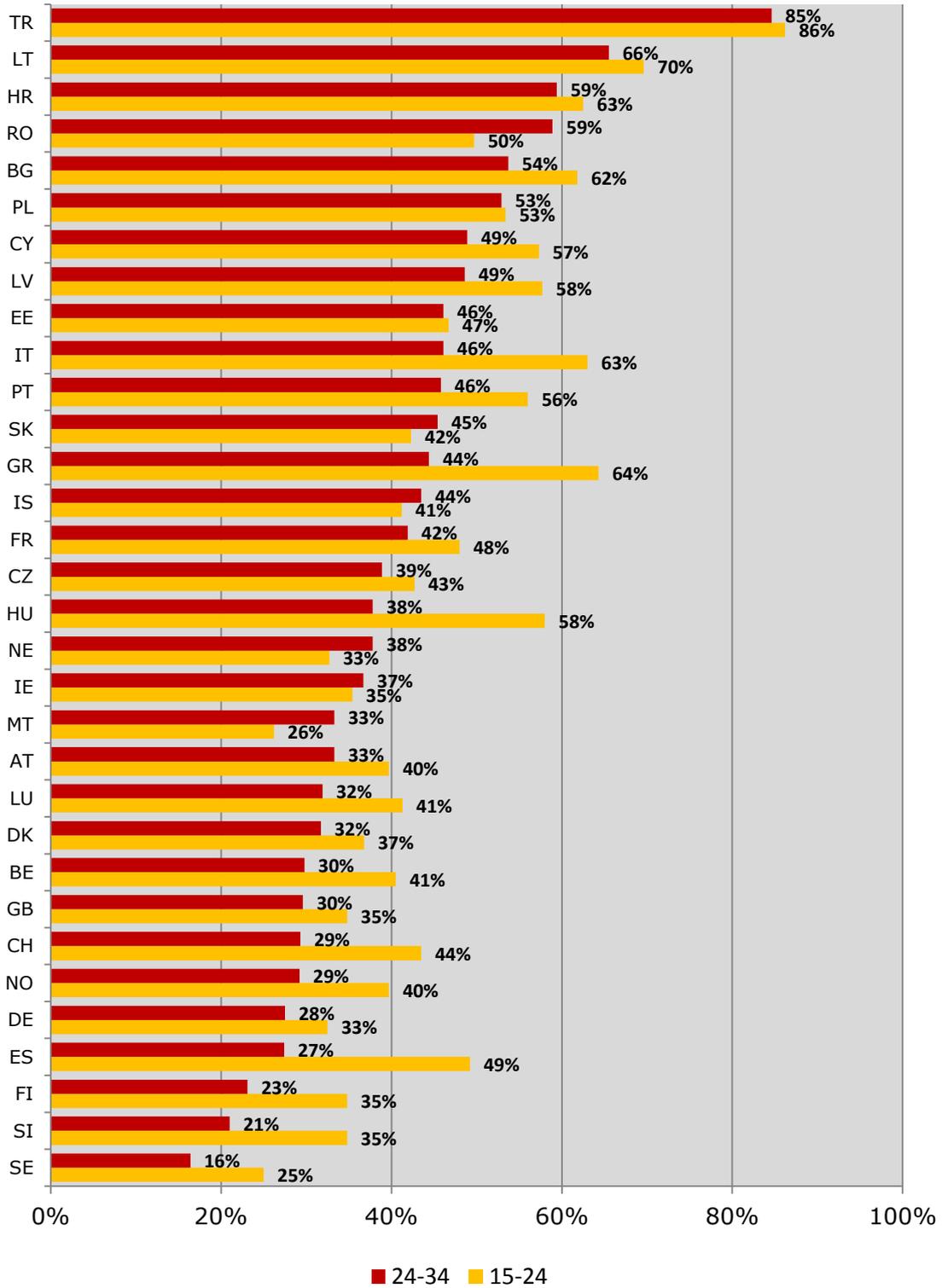
6 Annex

1. Figure
 Percentage of those young people who did not receive any career guidance at school by country



Source of data: Eurobarometer 377

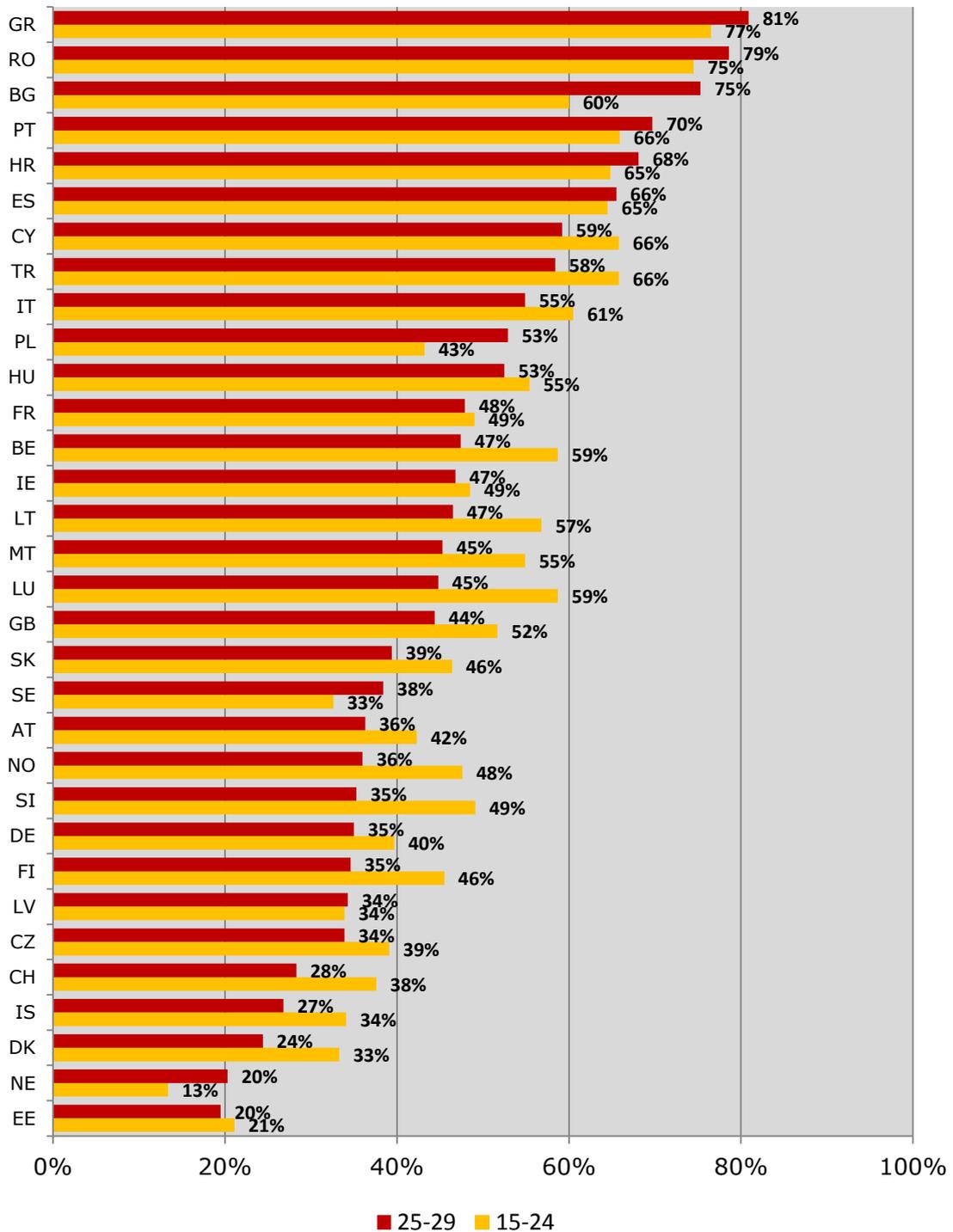
2. Figure
Percentage of those young people who would prefer to be self-employed by country



Source of data: Flash Eurobarometer 354

3. Figure

Percentage of those young people who “totally” or “tend to” agree that it is difficult to obtain sufficient information on how to start a business



Source of data: Flash Eurobarometer 354