Chapter 3

From holistic needs to cross-sectoral measures – An analysis of cross-sectoral youth policy based on relevant documentation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Feeling safe, sound and happy does not magically happen and is not irreversible. It takes certain conditions of existence and minimum levels of well-being, self-esteem and a sense of fulfilment. These conditions, necessary but not necessarily sufficient to achieve happiness or self-realisation, are spread throughout numerous spheres of life and, most of them at least, find relative correspondence with dimensions of youth policy or with administrative divisions such as education, employment, health, housing and culture, among others.

The holistic nature of life is thus supported by research but also by the common definition of health and a multilayered understanding of well-being. The 1948 definition of health from the World Health Organization is still current, arguing that a healthy person enjoys a "state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". It is closely related to definitions of well-being that combine both objective (aspects such as geographical/social location, household income, poverty rate, employment situation, living conditions, health status, risk behaviours and exposure) and subjective components (including satisfaction with income, neighbourhood, quality of school life, perception of individual relationships to parents, peers and other significant persons). Objective issues are more easily included in the dimensions of youth policy or in administrative divisions, whereas subjective issues are necessarily more private and more difficult to include in policy, since they are "outside the scope of the EU policymaking" (Sacareno, Olagnero and Torrioni 2005:5).

Young people themselves confirm this layered and holistic definition of well-being. They tend to provide holistic views of well-being that combine mental/philological, physical and, most of all, emotional and social well-being (Nico and Alves 2015: 15). But they also understand well-being as layered, thus distinguishing well-being from happiness. Well-being in this sense corresponds to the achievement of basic objective and subjective conditions of life, while happiness is at a higher level, and is usually merely momentary or gradual, or cumulative. Well-being would then be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for happiness (Nico and Alves 2015: 16).

So "success" is not, contrary to what Oscar Wilde argued, "a science". If you have "the conditions", you do not necessarily "get the results". But you have to start somewhere. Youth policy's mission would then be to ensure that this starting point is approximately the same for all young people. It seeks to provide the minimum basic conditions for young people to achieve happiness independently of their social origin or their social background over their life course. In this sense, it is important to examine whether this holistic and layered approach to life is supported by the usage, spread, reach and implementation of the concept of cross-sectoral youth policy.

This paper intends to contribute to this topic by providing an overview of existing information on cross-sectoral policy-making co-operation based on materials produced in the context of work with the EU, the Council of Europe and specific countries with practical experience in cross-sectoral co-operation. To achieve this purpose, a certain number and type of policy-related documents collected were subject to thematic content analysis. This provided the means to analyse, on one hand, the formal or official importance and political recognition given by some of the major European institutions to the cross-sectoral features of youth policy, and, on the other, the implementation of cross-sectoral youth policy at national level. The structure of this paper follows these two goals and summarises a previous publication on cross-sectoral youth policy (Nico 2014).

2. METHODOLOGY: POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS

To achieve the above-mentioned purpose, a certain number and type of documents were selected from a wide range of possibilities. These were then subjected to thematic content analysis using the software Maxqda°, which allowed for the following.

1. The analysis of the formal importance and political recognition given by some of the most important European institutions to the cross-sectoral aspects of youth policy. The goal was to infer the importance cross-sectoral youth policy (CSYP) has assumed politically at international and European levels. It thus focused on the increase, decrease or stability of the references to and the content of CSYP in key documents produced by the United Nations (mainly policy documents) and some relevant European political actors in the youth field such as the European Youth Forum, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, among

others. The documents selected and used for the analysis (or "order") of the "discourse" were necessarily produced by institutions (the main actors in the youth field).

2. The analysis of the functioning and implementation of CSYP at national level. It was not possible, due to access, language and time constraints, to analyse youth policy documents directly. The main set of documents used in this (indirect) analysis are the youth policy reviews published by the Council of Europe, more specifically the contents related to what are typically referred to as "cross-cutting" issues and the issues presented in the recommendations.

However, there are some limits and limitations to this methodology and selection of documents that have to be acknowledged.

- ▶ Time: the window of observation had to be limited, for both practical and efficacy reasons. Anything that was produced more than three decades ago was not considered in this analysis. The conclusions are, therefore, circumscribed to "recent" trends and evolutions.

- ▶ Content: the access to the official documents is direct, but the analysis of the national functioning and implementation of CSYP could not, unfortunately, follow that path. It indirectly analyses youth policy through the youth policy reviews published on behalf of the Council of Europe. Only the *content* of these documents, and not their contexts of production, are analysed and taken into consideration. The analysis is not of the reviews themselves, but of the *use of CSYP concepts* in the reviews. The Council of Europe policy reviews are thus used as the available proxy for the national youth policies.

- ▶ Comparability: comparisons between different countries are made carefully because these documents are not completely comparable (different year, authorship, political context). Diachronical analysis is also not possible in a strict sense. Both the analysis of the evolution of youth policy reviews and the background and backstage "history" behind that evolution are not intended to be included in this paper.

3. THE OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON CSYP

3.1. The United Nations

Since the 1990s, the United Nations has recognised the importance of "national youth policies and programmes of a intersectoral nature", tried to encourage the development of these policies on a national basis and also requested more research, monitoring and identification of good practices in CSYP at the national level. The United Nations has been promoting national youth "policies that are cross-sectoral and integrated" since the International Youth Year (1985) (UN 1999: 3) and it has been recognised as one of the "priority youth issues for the twenty-first century" at least since 1999. However, the attention given by the UN to the cross-sectoral

topic, here measured by the number of times CSYP is referred to (even if not using this specific terminology), has decreased significantly over the years. This decrease is compensated by the increase, in approximately the same period, of the attention given to the topic in European political discourse.

As to the content, it is possible to verify that the references to CSYP in the documents on youth produced by the United Nations are quite diverse. First, the understanding of CSYP used in the implementation reports is quite different from that used in the resolution documents.

In the resolution documents the idea of CSYP oscillates between two meanings. One is based on the communication and collaboration between the sector of youth organisations (and the voice of young people) and that of policy making (visible in the statement "cross-sectoral youth policies should take into consideration the empowerment and full and effective participation of young people, and their role as a resource and as independent decision makers in all sectors of society") (UN 2002: 2). The second one stresses the participation of actors such as "Member States, United Nations bodies, specialised agencies, regional commissions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, in particular youth organisations, to make every possible effort to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), aiming at cross-sectoral youth policies, by integrating a youth perspective into all planning and decision-making processes relevant to youth" (UN 2004: 2). One refers to a vertical – bottom-up – structure of communication between governmental and non-governmental fields; while the other refers to a horizontal structure of communication between governmental or administrative divisions, bodies or agencies.

This dichotomy is at the very core of the conceptual confusion around what CSYP exactly is – and subsequently should be. The second meaning is the one used in this paper. But in this definition there is still a conceptual ambiguity, as different systems of implementation are often presented as mutually equivalent (such as collaboration, co-ordination, co-operation, etc.).

In the implementation reports, especially in the 1997 and 1999 ones, there is a great effort to advocate for and to promote the idea that youth policy design must have a cross-sectoral approach. However, this departs from a very ambitious idea that includes the two distinct views mentioned above (horizontal and vertical communication). Basically it promotes the idea that youth policy should be built on a "multi-level and cross-sectoral basis" (UN 1997: 6), and therefore includes "participation of youth-related departments and ministries, national non-governmental youth organisations and the private sector". The subsequent implementation reports approached this issue in a more contained manner, mainly stating the importance "of addressing the concerns of young people from a multidisciplinary perspective that allows for integrated and cross-sectoral policy interventions" (UN 2001: 5) and the insufficiency of sectoral approaches to the multidimensional challenges that young people face and to "to improve the well-being of young people in a holistic manner" (UN 2010: 13).

3.2. The European institutions' discourse

The following analysis took into account the key documents produced in the last two decades by the major actors in the field: the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European Youth Forum (among others). In a comparative analysis of the meanings and importance attributed to CSYP, we can observe that although it is agreed in the youth field that the design of youth policy must be broad, multidimensional, "holistic", "integrated" and "cross-sectoral", the fact is that practical meanings associated to these terms vary considerably (Figure 1). Throughout the analysis it becomes clear that youth policy is much more than youth policy per se; it must collaborate on, communicate, encompass, integrate and/or lead a set of coherent plans, activities, programmes and policies. Often these can be the formal or legal responsibility of other policy sectors. But it also becomes clear that collaboration, communication and integration, etc. are treated as mutually equivalent, thus taking the very concept of CSYP for granted, and limiting the mention of cross-sectoral youth policy to the level of intention, ambition or target. It would be more useful to use it as a method, a plan or a process.
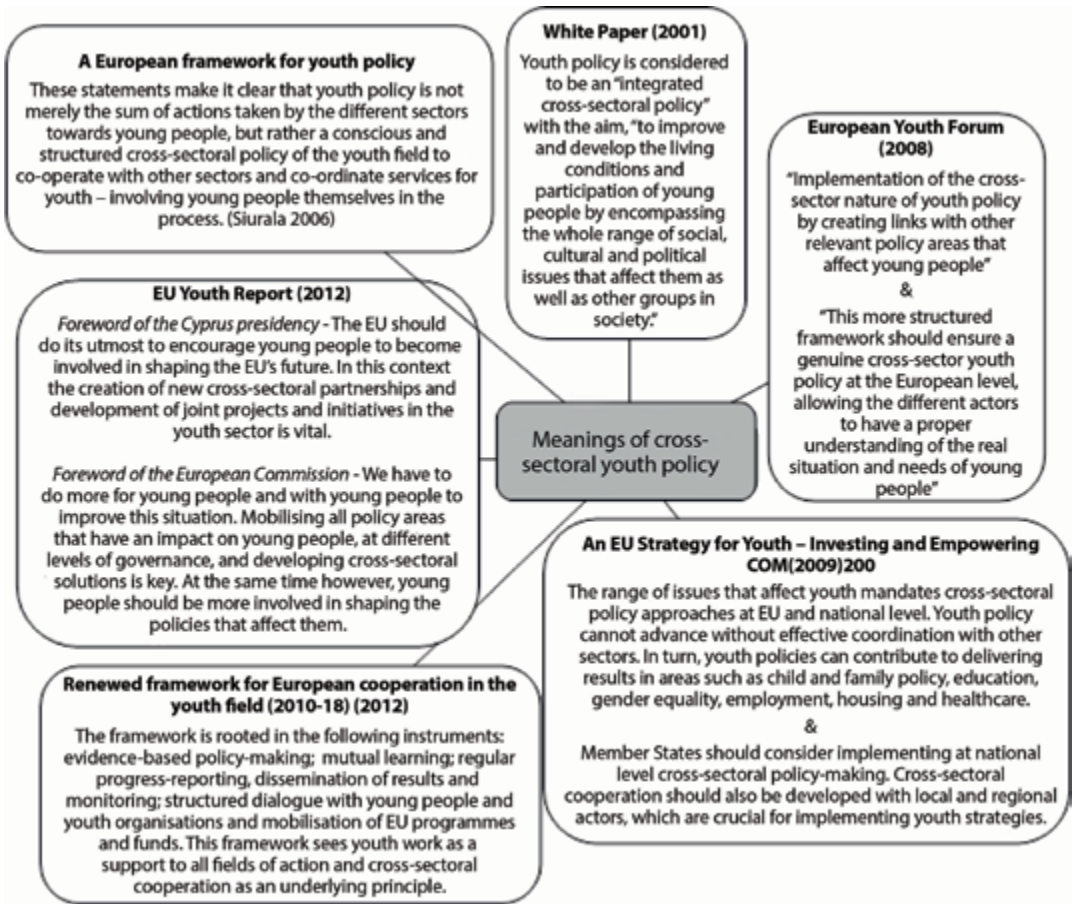
CSYP as "important" and "natural": the consensus

In all documents and statements about CSYP its importance is underlined. However, there are some documents where this idea exhausts the definition of CSYP. The 2012 EU Youth Report is one such case. Characteristics such as "vital" or "key" are used to describe the "creation of new cross-sectoral partnerships and development of joint projects and initiatives in the youth sector" (by the Cyprus presidency) and the development of "cross-sectoral solutions" (by the European Commission). Others documents, for instance, use the cross-sectoral concept as an inherent characteristic of youth policy, a "principle", or something that is part of the very nature of youth policy. This is the case, for instance, in the definition of youth policy shown in the White Paper 2001, where it is stated that youth policy is considered to be an "integrated cross-sectoral policy" aiming "to improve and develop the living conditions and participation of young people by encompassing the whole range of social, cultural and political issues that affect them as well as other groups in society" (European Commission 2001:73); and is also the case in the renewed framework for European co-operation in the youth field that, a decade later, stated that the "framework sees youth work as a support to all fields of action and cross-sectoral cooperation as an underlying principle" (Council of the European Union and European Commission 2012: 6).

CSYP content, role and levels: the confusion

The importance and nature of CSYP are somewhat straightforward, but this is not the case for the (i) content of CSYP, (ii) the role of youth policy together with other sectors (visible for instance, in the statement "a structured cross-sectoral policy of the youth field to co-operate with other sectors and co-ordinate services for youth – involving young people themselves in the process" (Siurala 2006), or (iii) the levels

of governance involved (visible in statements such as "Cross-sectoral cooperation should also be developed with local and regional actors" (European Youth Forum 2008) or in "Mobilising all policy areas that have an impact on young people, at different levels of governance, and developing cross-sectoral solutions is key" by the European Commission in the *EU Youth Report 2012*).

Figure 1: Meanings of CSYP in key documents

A European framework for youth policy

These statements make it clear that youth policy is not merely the sum of actions taken by the different sectors towards young people, but rather a conscious and structured cross-sectoral policy of the youth field to co-operate with other sectors and co-ordinate services for youth – involving young people themselves in the process. (Siurala 2006)

White Paper (2001)

Youth policy is considered to be an "integrated cross-sectoral policy" with the aim, "to improve and develop the living conditions and participation of young people by encompassing the whole range of social, cultural and political issues that affect them as well as other groups in society."

European Youth Forum (2008)

"Implementation of the cross-sector nature of youth policy by creating links with other relevant policy areas that affect young people"

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"This more structured framework should ensure a genuine cross-sector youth policy at the European level, allowing the different actors to have a proper understanding of the real situation and needs of young people"

EU Youth Report (2012)

Foreword of the Cyprus presidency - The EU should do its utmost to encourage young people to become involved in shaping the EU's future. In this context the creation of new cross-sectoral partnerships and development of joint projects and initiatives in the youth sector is vital.

Foreword of the European Commission - We have to do more for young people and with young people to improve this situation. Mobilising all policy areas that have an impact on young people, at different levels of governance, and developing cross-sectoral solutions is key. At the same time however, young people should be more involved in shaping the policies that affect them.

Meanings of cross-sectoral youth policy

An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering COM(2009)200

The range of issues that affect youth mandates cross-sectoral policy approaches at EU and national level. Youth policy cannot advance without effective coordination with other sectors. In turn, youth policies can contribute to delivering results in areas such as child and family policy, education, gender equality, employment, housing and healthcare.

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Member States should consider implementing at national level cross-sectoral policy-making. Cross-sectoral cooperation should also be developed with local and regional actors, which are crucial for implementing youth strategies.

Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18) (2012)

The framework is rooted in the following instruments: evidence-based policy-making; mutual learning; regular progress-reporting, dissemination of results and monitoring; structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations and mobilisation of EU programmes and funds. This framework sees youth work as a support to all fields of action and cross-sectoral cooperation as an underlying principle.

Organisation of the kaleidoscopic definition of "cross-sectoral" youth policy: a proposal

Taking the heterogeneity of the meanings of CSYP in key documents by key actors in the field of youth into account, the following table is a proposal to summarise, organise and separate the different paradigms and definitions involved. This is a tentative framework of classification of the specificities of different kinds of CSYP. Identifying the different paradigms that are behind this heterogeneity is the first step in determining what might work and in what circumstances.

Table 1: Organisation of the definitions of "cross-sectoral" youth policy

The field of CSYP	
CSYP as a principle	
Transversal	***Youth concerns all other sectors***
	Therefore "The Ministers responsible for youth policy should also ensure that youth-related concerns are taken into account in these other policies" (European Commission 2001).
	This would imply a kind of "supervision" role by the ministries responsible for youth, which is inconsistent with the position they usually occupy within the formal hierarchy.
	This principle would provide information on which sectors to select for specific policies, and on which occasions, and with what urgency this transversal approach would take place.
Integrated	***Youth is part of the interdependency system***
	Therefore both youth policy and other policies have to ensure their effective and coherent coexistence.
	This would imply mutual and regular consultation to avoid overlapping or disconnected goals.
	These consultations require every sector or office to be prepared to collect and organise, on a regular basis, relevant information.
	Policy based on this principle is extremely dependant on national organisational structures.
CSYP as a process with fixed roles	
Collaboration/ co-operation	***Youth as peer and equal partner***
	In this version of CSYP the relations are bilateral. The youth sector shares "information and competences, objectives and goals, and also results" with each of the other relevant sectors (Motamed-Afshari 2014).
	This would mean that the collaboration is fragmented into pairs, and the potential for joint solutions could be wasted. A possible solution to avoid this would be the creation of an "inter-ministerial working group as a part of the structure to develop a national youth policy" (Denstad 2009).
Co-ordination	***Youth leading the way of youth policy***
	The main difference between this vision of CSYP and the previous one has to do with the role that the youth ministry is able and willing to perform. With the right amount of means and resources, bilateral relations would be transformed into multilateral ones.
Cross-cutting issues, a process with flexible roles	
	The rule is that there is no rule
	The sectoral category of each of the youth issues is difficult to establish. For that reason, some issues might fall within different sectors at the same time, and some might be unfairly left to the youth sector to deal with alone. This also varies across different countries.
	This is one of the reasons why, although all youth issues are "cross-cutting" by nature, each of them has different attributes:
	▶ presence or relevance in each country;
	▶ urgency in each country or region;

	▶ dependency on power relations with other governmental sectors; ▶ dependency on the work with and by NGOs; ▶ association with prevention, intervention or sustainability needs; ▶ partnership possibilities and constraints. This would imply a destandardisation of the youth policies at the national level, which might be seen from a European perspective, as a negative. However, this ensures that the following are taken into account: ▶ the organisational structure of each country; ▶ priorities of each country; ▶ the complexity of each cross-cutting issue; ▶ the respect for the main principle mentioned above, that youth policy is by nature (but must be in practice) cross-sectoral.

4. LOOKING FOR THE "CROSS-SECTORAL" IN "YOUTH POLICY"

To more fully grasp how the formal or official importance of CSYP has been taken into account in the design, review, evaluation, and monitoring of youth policy it is necessary to analyse other sources of data. There are two ways of looking for this in the youth policy reviews. One is the appearance of the topic of cross-sectoral research in documents, how frequently the topic is mentioned and how transversal to the review or report it is. For this purpose the tables of contents of the Council of Europe youth policy review reports were consulted and analysed, and a lexical search and analysis were also developed for the documents. The second way is by examining the content itself, that is, the way CSYP is operationalised, considered and classified and the recurrency of the gaps identified.

4.1. The use of the "cross-sectoral youth policy" concept

Looking at the youth policy reviews as a whole (and overlooking for now the fact that they refer to different countries, are authored by different teams and were developed in different years) we can see that the topics are usually referred to as dimensions that can be divided between "domains" and "issues". The ways in which these issues are combined are quite variable, in some cases with no sub-organisation (as is the case of the Lithuania Review Report (Breen et al. 2003)) where the topics are presented solely within the umbrella of "general issues", in others where the different kinds of "issues" are much more detailed (as in the Moldova Review Report (Vanhee et al. 2010) where the youth issues are categorised into "key, "other", "transversal" and "cross-cutting" ones).

This variability in the combinations of terms used reveals not only the natural and expected differences between the issues analysed in each policy review, but also a certain lack of consensus about the terms themselves (as a consequence of the national specificities and understanding). This lack of conceptual and analytical standardisation might be counterproductive for the exchange of good practices between countries (horizontal comparisons), for the analysis of the recurrence of certain issues across time (diachronic comparisons), and ultimately for the development

and implementation of CSYP itself. A certain level of conceptual comparability would be beneficial to the field.

There are three types of issues considered: (i) single topics, (ii) conjoint topics, (iii) cross-cutting or transversal topics. "Single", or autonomously presented, youth topics represent the minority among the three types mentioned. The few issues mentioned as single are issues on which policy emphasis and attention was unequivocally concentrated. This is justified by the importance of such topics, as in the case of education and also employment, or by the link to the heart and identity of "youth policy" and also "youth work" arenas, as in the case of "non-formal learning" (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Word cloud of the terms used to refer to single youth topics

The issues identified or grouped as "cross-cutting" or "transversal" are also in the minority. There appears to be no clear consensus about what a "cross-cutting" topic is. This reiterates the previous conclusion about the lack of terminological, conceptual and analytical consensus among the different countries. Nonetheless, the use of the term "cross-cutting issues" (topics, themes or fields) has been increasing in recent years.

The most common type of issue referred to in the youth policy review reports is the conjoint or combined one (that is, issues organised in the tables of contents in pairs or trios). This is the group where the variety of topics is wider and the consensus about some of them is clearer. They may not be "cross-cutting topics" by definition but they are by nature. These are issues – often the responsibility of separate administrative agencies, such as ministries – that interact meaningfully with another or others, in such a way that the measures, programmes and policies involving these issues, must be necessarily planned, designed and implemented by more than one sector, agency or organisation. They end up being cross-cutting issues because they represent conjoint, combined or overlapping processes of inclusion or transition to adulthood.

There are some issues that are at the centre of these interactions (education, employment, health, leisure, justice and crime, and also participation, non-formal learning and citizenship), and others that function more as "satellite issues". The centre and periphery identified in the terms used to refer to conjoint youth topics or subjects in the youth policy reviews (Council of Europe) reflect to a great extent the centre and periphery of sociology of youth and youth studies and the sociology of the transitions to adulthood (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Word cloud of the terms used to refer to conjoint youth topics

4.2. The problems identified

CSYP is an unavoidable subject in national youth policy reviews. In itself, it works as an indicator of the establishment and development of youth policy. But what are the internal and external problems identified? The national youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe provide some very direct answers.

1. CSYP that does not go beyond rhetorical exercises, mere intentions or the use of politically correct (youth) vocabulary, including:

 ▶ a lack of legal framework;
 ▶ intentions with no action;
 ▶ principles with no specific programmes;
 ▶ unclear relationships between departments, ministries or agencies.

2. A lack of efficiency in existing structures, including:

- ▶ no communication;
- ▶ no collaboration or co-ordination between departments, ministries or agencies;
- ▶ overlapping of responsibilities and disregard for what is being done outside or beyond the ministry of youth or equivalent.

3. Problems associated with the structure itself.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This document advocates clear, transparent, classifiable and flexible but sustainable CSYP. But in doing that, it develops a critical approach to and analysis of the documents and practices produced at international, European and national levels. There are two main conclusions to make.

Craving a formal definition

From the resolutions and implementation documents of the UN to the main official documents produced in the European institutions, it is clear that CSYP means different things depending on the context, document and organisation.

1. In some cases it means vertical communication (between the youth ministry or the equivalent and young people – namely through NGOs), while in others it means horizontal communication (between the youth ministry or equivalent and other ministries).

2. Even for the second approach (the one which analysis advocated here) the use of the idea of "cross-sectoral" youth policy varies from "CSYP as a principle" to "youth policy as a system". As a principle, it is well established, but this is not enough. It has to "work". And as a system, there is also much confusion surrounding the concept. CSYP can mean collaboration or co-ordination or it can simply be approaching successfully the many cross-cutting issues implied in youth policy. The use of an approach based on this last concept – which is approximately what is done in the youth policy reviews – would imply a destandardisation of the youth policies at the national level, but it would ensure that the organisational structure of each country, the priorities of each country, the complexity of each cross-cutting issue and the variety of combinations of barriers to social inclusion experienced individually are taken into account.

No such thing as a "grounded" policy

In the social sciences, "grounded theory" is the result of an inductive process from a corpus of data. It is the direct use of empirical data, without (many) theoretical preconceptions or knowledge. Youth policy cannot follow that path despite the fact that, in many cases, it seems to. The analysis of key documents demonstrated that the lack of consensus about concepts and definitions in cross-sectoral working systems is, in practice, translated by a lack of organisation in the development of

youth policy when following this holistic approach. In fact, beyond the problem of mere definitions, there are also problems of comparability, sustainability, knowledge and research.

The balance between two counterproductive temptations is needed: bureaucratisation and destandardisation. When taken to the extreme, the former will lead to interministerial groups to deal with each specific problem, multiplying and outsourcing the youth problems to "satellite" groups that usually do not have the power, resources or autonomy to completely tackle the issue. On the other hand, the latter would eliminate any chances of comparability, evaluation and sustainability.

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