



Youth work and non-formal learning in Europe's education landscape

*A quarter of a century of EU cooperation
for youth policy and practice*



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European Commission

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Executive summary

This publication marks a quarter of a century of EU youth programmes accompanied by EU youth policy. It brings together a range of views and highlights best practices with the aim of stimulating debate about what youth work and non-formal learning can contribute, alongside other sectors, to European education. From diverse viewpoints, it reviews EU cooperation in the field, points to successes and sets out possible future scenarios, particularly in the context of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020).

The current status of education is outlined in Chapter 1, reflecting on how the formal education sector is becoming informalised, while non-formal learning is simultaneously becoming more formalised. Kiilakoski urges a 'rethink' of education to match the online era, where new media 'democratise education', empower young people and open pathways to tolerance for living and working in a multicultural Europe. The blurring of borders between formal, non-formal and informal will require new teaching skills and constant evolution of the profiles of youth workers or school teachers. A holistic approach to education, individualised methods, professional coaching and experience-based learning would also prompt individuals to take a step back from routine and promote change.

But combining the best of both worlds may also create tensions with the inherent diversity of youth work. A new balance will be needed between its principles, policy priorities and the evolving and complex needs and aspirations of young people. At the same time, the evidence arising from greater formalisation will offer insights into the strengths and merits of youth work that can help convince sceptical audiences even more.

Chapter 2 looks at the significance of Europe in young people's lives and at progress triggered by EU youth programmes and policies, which includes driving the quality of youth work in Europe, providing a platform for collaboration among stakeholders and promoting recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. For

Lejeune, EU youth policy has provided a conceptual framework and a link to other areas of concern for young people, while offering new opportunities for them to become active players in their societies and help to manage the transition from school to work. Cooperation at European level is seen as a source of innovation and an aid to critical revision of national practices. Siebel, Wicke and Wisser cite Germany's implementation of the EU youth strategy as a demonstration of European awareness enriching national policy and contributing to the common European framework. The topics selected included social integration and successful transition to work, encouraging participation, strengthening democracy and recognising non-formal and informal learning. These had national relevance and were considered to be worth exploring from the European perspective — although they were not new in German youth policy.

Chapter 3 explores the need for the professionalisation and Europeanisation of youth work. The range of skills required is widening, as youth workers are expected to deal with challenging patterns of behaviour or social issues such as special educational needs and cultural diversity. The trend towards professionalisation is reinforced through better recognition of youth work at European level, through further implementation of Youthpass and through the development of sets of competences for trainers and youth workers. Youth work practices have been 'Europeanised', argues Markovic, citing the European training strategy's provision of non-formal learning opportunities for hundreds of thousands of participants. It has helped youth workers, youth leaders and support staff to develop their capacities and implement high-quality activities for young people in line with EU objectives, and has also contributed to the EU's external policy by extending activities to partner regions.

Chapter 4 looks at how youth work and non-formal learning are preparing young people for the changing world of work, promoting entrepreneurial learning through a process of empowerment. With no longer the same perspective of one job for life, the aim is instead to provide knowledge, skills and attitudes for becoming what Arnkil terms 'an entrepreneur of your own life', actively shaping personal prospects through continuous updating of skills and 'hybrid know-how'. Arnkil insists however that unemployed young people should be perceived as a resource in co-creating solutions, and he rejects artificial divisions of the economy and the labour market into 'high value-added' and 'low value-added'. Trust is vital to proactively reach young people in vulnerable circumstances and to help them take responsibility for their own lives, while providing guidance in creating links between goal setting and learning.

Ratto-Nielsen urges what he calls ‘transformative learning’, enabling each individual to answer the question ‘what have I learnt?’. Youthpass, coaching and EU youth projects have proved valuable in prompting this reflex. Research demonstrates that participants in transnational projects acquire a wide range of skills — as confirmed by an ex-volunteer, Bere. Novosadova explores the assessment of competences that young people acquire through non-formal learning, and draws a link between young people’s recognition of their competences and their ability to gain control over their own lives and to become actors of change.

Chapter 5 reviews social inclusion and the need to redefine the mission of youth work. Youth work must respond to the current concerns of young people — faced by unemployment, increased migration, economic difficulties, family breakdown and issues confronting minorities. But it must do so while retaining the youth work mission of promoting individualism and diversity. Increased utilitarianism may dilute the capacity to offer challenges to the established structures of society that create inequalities — a reflection that youth work has traditionally encouraged. EU youth programme development, particularly in the inclusion strategy, reflects this aspect: close to 24 % of Youth in Action participants were young people with fewer opportunities.

The changed focus has required increased competences for youth workers dealing with issues of inclusion, especially in work with cultural minorities. Pantea argues that it has also been necessary to take into account political issues related to human rights violations that are linked to cultural background while promoting tolerance to ambiguity. And it has required defining the overlap with other sectors in relation to social inclusion.

Chapter 6 considers the specific nature of youth participation in the changing world and how the role of the structured dialogue could be maximised, with participation increasingly seen as central to democratic citizenship. Williamson concludes that the structured dialogue risks failing on representativity, particularly for marginalised youth, for whom greater autonomy for young people or greater policy coherence may not be universally relevant. Benedicto urges a shift away from seeing young people as ‘apprentices of a series of norms’; they are ‘citizens under construction’, and should be empowered to influence rather than merely being influenced. In his view, learning about participation should exploit multiple and mostly informal methods that are linked to young people’s experience and context. Institutions

at EU and national levels will be challenged by such an approach, but it is all the more necessary 'at the time in which the young feel little identification with the political institutions which represent them', he says.

The importance of the internet and social networking needs to be taken into account. Bonnici sees online social networks as connecting communities in a way that classic education systems no longer can, and offering democracy and inclusion to replace earlier monopolies of communication. He says media literacy should be a standard curriculum topic.

The chapters also include forward-looking views from all contributors, particularly in the context of Erasmus+ implementation. Siebel, Wicke and Wisser appreciate cross-sectoral cooperation but insist that youth welfare needs to become a greater political priority too. Williamson urges a more adventurous approach to debate among a wider range of parties in formal and non-formal education and beyond. Kiilakoski expects much from the integrated approach if regular evaluation is conducted of where real success is being achieved. Markovic sees possibilities in linking policy and practice more closely in forward thinking on European training, so that youth workers and young people could influence youth policies.

But for some authors, the stronger the emphasis is on individual learning mobility and developing personal competences under Erasmus+, the less attention will be paid to promoting change in society and the transformational or political impact which many see as being at the heart of youth work. Pantea perceives a related challenge in balancing social inclusion with the involvement of private and corporate actors, to avoid compromising NGOs or screening out young people seen as having problems. Social inclusion is all the more urgent, suggests Markovic, since young people with fewer opportunities may be less involved in EU youth programmes. Markovic sees Europeanisation as a potential aid to empowering youth workers in influencing policy development, while Arnkil relies on integrated approaches to prevent shifts in education from reinforcing disadvantage.

While many of the remedies and strategies suggested in this publication depend on action by policymakers, there is a clear and widely shared message that youth workers themselves can also help to shape the future. Not only can they bring new and wider resources to their work with young people, they can also help to create a louder common voice that can influence policy and change in education and society.

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Preface

Re-engaging anew with all young people in Europe

In his political guidelines, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker emphasised the importance of renewed attention to young people, and particularly of supporting projects ‘that can help get the younger generation back to work in decent jobs, further complementing the efforts already started with the Youth Guarantee scheme, the implementation of which must be accelerated and progressively broadened.’ He has warned against what he termed ‘a 29th state’ that is emerging within the borders of the European Union, ‘a state in which young people became unemployed; a state in which we see people excluded, set back and left by the wayside.’

The Directorate-General for Education and Culture, which offers a platform for cooperation and mutual learning among the Member States, is at the forefront of actions to respond to these challenges. Its policy and programmes prepare young people for the transition into becoming skilled working adults in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. They also help counter the growing risks of marginalisation and alienation among young people.

This book brings together some of the thinking that inspires — and is inspired by — the EU actions in favour of youth. The contributions come from a wide range of researchers and practitioners in daily contact with the evolving world of youth work. They offer perspectives on what has been done over the last 25 years, on what can be done and on how it can best be done.

There are no simple formulas for getting young people into work. The book reflects the concerns over the 13.7 million young people of 15–29 years who are not in education, employment or training. The authors offer thoughts on how these young people might be helped to access the constantly evolving labour market. They explore how young people can be empowered through the acquisition of skills in non-formal

and informal learning contexts, taking on a role as ‘entrepreneurs of their lives’. Like the EU policies and programmes themselves, the authors aspire to support the development of young people as individuals, and as active, critical and responsible citizens of Europe. The intimacy the authors have with these ambitions allows them to raise some questions. It permits reflection about the relationship between the legacy of youth work and the response now needed to young people’s current challenges, between good citizenship and active citizenship, and between promoting a sense of belonging and blunting a sense of individuality.

The importance of this publication in the face of some of the post-crisis socioeconomic, political and ethical questions is evident. These go beyond the growing class divide and rising inequalities, political instability and the consequences of an economy geared to profit maximisation. They also confront the increasing influence of extremist ideologies and religious fundamentalism and the radicalisation of young Europeans, as well as open conflicts that challenge Europe’s security in its own neighbourhood. These issues cut across some of the most sensitive themes in contemporary European society: empowerment, inclusion and migration.

Ultimately, the core of this publication is its exploration of how to reinvent Europe and rebuild democratic citizenship. It seeks to renew the legitimacy of public policymaking and to promote active and inclusive participation through co-creation. The aim is to reinforce a society that can cope with the strains and benefit from the diversity of Europe’s changing population — a society reflecting those fundamental European values of respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination.

The recent politically inspired attacks in Paris and Copenhagen reinforced this focus on the crucial task of promoting participation among all young people — including disadvantaged groups — so that they have a sense of engagement at the local and transnational level, in line with Juncker’s Commission security agenda and as stated in the Paris Declaration that EU education ministers signed on 17 March 2015. The underlying conviction of the authors of this book is that mobilising formal, non-formal and informal learning can contribute to civic education from an early age. It can help to prevent or overcome prejudices and stereotypes, and allow young people to confidently take on board questions of societal change at global and European level.

The Erasmus+ inclusion and diversity strategy already offers some novel responses, through its focus on young people with fewer opportunities and its attention to cultural diversity. EU youth exchanges, initiatives, democracy or volunteering projects have proved their value in engaging young people, from suburbs or not, and in allowing them to learn from each other. The Erasmus+ programme also provides opportunities for educators to acquire skills, methods and tools needed to deal with issues of inclusion and with groups that involve cultural minorities, so as to encourage positive interactions among them.

At the same time, the book dispels some myths about contemporary youth. It highlights their widespread attachment to idealism and their desire to make a difference. It records their real sensitivity to and engagement with the big issues of Europe and the world, which have become so visible through the internet and social networks. And it recognises that modern social media allow more of a level playing field than ever, as does the huge volume of direct involvement in EU youth programmes. It demonstrates how young people are becoming empowered in a new way, and how this challenges politics and the institutional mindset. Now it is for the authorities too to find a more authentic voice and develop an inclusive and holistic approach in the search for adequate responses to the issues of young people. The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018) has paved the way for such cross-sectoral thinking and peer learning. The book pursues this approach, examining the new demands that youth workers, youth services, education authorities and practitioners face as they seek to reach out to young people. Central to the shift in mindset, as many of this book's authors agree, is the need to view young people as part of the solution.

The Commission and its services are exploring new effective ways of shaping more inclusive, innovative and reflective European societies that empower and protect all citizens. This book is a contribution to the reflections that should take account of Europe's most vital component for future integration — its young people. I commend it to your attention.

MARTINE REICHERTS

Brussels, October 2015

Director-General for Education and Culture
European Commission

Introduction

What is youth work? Youth work is not a specific concept in the EU. It has been built on distinct national traditions and practices, and consequently varies widely. Nor is there one unified definition of youth work that applies across Europe. There are, however, enough common features to permit an understanding of its essential nature and to attempt an outline of its values and outcomes — all the more important at the time when this sector is evolving and redefining its mission and place in Europe's educational landscape and in society. For the purposes of this book, youth work is 'a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. Increasingly, youth work activities also include sports and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the domain of 'out-of school education', most commonly referred to as either non-formal or informal learning' (Lauritzen, 2008) ⁽¹⁾.

A recent study, *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union* (2014), identified a focus on young people, personal development and voluntary participation as key components. Quality youth work involves a combination of behaviours, attitudes and methods: 'The close relationship between the youth worker and the young person; active outreach to young people in need of help and support; flexibility, accessibility and adapting to the needs of young people; learning opportunities, goal setting and recognition of achievements; safe, supportive environments enabling young people to experience life, to make mistakes and to participate with their peers in an enjoyable and fun setting; autonomy with young people driving their own development; partnerships/collaboration with other actors (e.g. formal education, social work)' ⁽²⁾. The study's analysis of the current major trends in this dynamic sector is outlined below.

Mirroring the heterogeneous tradition and nature of youth work, a typical youth worker does not exist, and diversity of backgrounds predominates. But youth workers are increasingly understood as constituting a distinct profession supported by formal minimum competence standards, training, recognition and validation of learning. In all cases

the work is strongly mission-driven, with high motivation and job satisfaction and with a readiness both to empower young people and to learn from them.

Youth work helps young people to develop skills and competences in many areas; but it also helps them to strengthen their networks, to change their behaviour and to build positive relationships. In this sense, youth work contributes to society, offering the chance for contact, exchange and engagement among young people and across generations. At the same time it is of value in its own right. And in addition to the outcomes, the processes of youth work also have a positive effect, and accordingly merit recognition.

Youth work continues to evolve, currently strongly influenced by the economic crisis, which has put young people higher on the agenda for policymakers and has increased the demand for youth work activities. The emphasis is on improving young people's life chances, and on giving them better opportunities on the labour market and in education. The remit has widened to include assisting them as they face more complex transitions in a world of high youth unemployment and inactivity. As a result, the decline of some of the more traditional structures and activities has been matched by new objectives and innovative forms and approaches that reach out to young people where they are. Youth work is now seen as catering for their well-being and supporting those who are socially excluded — often through open youth work and street work. In this respect, youth work is increasingly seen as a way of filling the gap for services once traditionally provided by the mainstream.

New attention is also directed at achieving more with the funding available, and at obtaining a return on investments. This too has led to a major shift. Organisations are caught between competing priorities: the classic response to individuals' needs and interests, in line with the sense of the core mission of youth work, is now challenged by interventionist, target group-based approaches. Concerns have consequently emerged over loss of autonomy, compounded by the constraints of new obligations to compete for funding. As funding becomes linked more closely to measurable outcomes, the social nature of youth work may be in jeopardy and needs to be re-evaluated to ensure a complementarity with its educational role.

EU and national policies and funding provisions have the potential to frame and shape the practice of youth work. EU support has in places compensated for reduced funding from public or charitable sources. One area where policy has definitely shifted the focus is in recognising young people as a specific resource, rather than just as a prob-

lem to be dealt with. The narrative is now about empowering young people and about their inclusion and involvement in decision-making, so as to encourage participation and active citizenship. Attention is directed to developing transversal skills such as creativity, innovation and a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

For a long time, the limited comparable data available from robust evaluation have hindered the demonstration of the positive effects of youth work. But evidence is beginning to be amassed, driven by EU youth policy: studies launched by the European Commission or structures implementing the successive European programmes in the youth field as well as by the EU's partnership with the Council of Europe. This can contribute to better recognition of the work with young people provided by this sector. A strong political message with a firm commitment to strengthen youth work in Europe was delivered by organisations participating in the Second European Youth Work Convention, including the European Commission and the Council of Europe⁽³⁾.

This publication marks a quarter of a century of EU youth programmes, accompanied by EU youth policy. The overview it provides is designed to appeal to a wide public with an interest in education and in youth work and non-formal learning. It brings together a range of views and highlights best practices. Its aim is to stimulate debate about what youth work and non-formal learning can contribute, alongside other sectors, to European education.

The EU youth programmes have promoted cooperation in youth work and in youth policy development and have influenced some pioneering thinking in education — particularly important at a time when traditional methods are under question in the very different conditions facing youth today. In line with the underlying concept of bringing closer the formal and non-formal sectors, this book employs the 'engaged scholarship' approach that recognises the input of non-academics as well as of researchers. From diverse viewpoints, it reviews EU cooperation in the field, points to successes and sets out possible future scenarios, particularly in the context of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020).

The current status of education is outlined in Chapter 1, reflecting evolving challenges and opportunities, and the way the formal education sector is becoming informalised, while non-formal learning is simultaneously becoming more formalised. Kiilakoski urges a

'rethink' of education, so that it responds to online technologies and to the myriad opportunities for learning and for acquiring knowledge and skills. He depicts a world where new media are 'democratising education', empowering young people and opening new pathways to tolerance for living and working in a multicultural Europe.

He urges closer links between formal, non-formal and informal learning and cross-fertilisation so that institutions, social hierarchies and rigid structures can combine with youth work from diverse settings and sources and give new dynamism to defined curricula, with learning that springs from recreation, social fellowship and youth culture. This, he points out, will require new models that give official recognition to learning that takes place outside schools. The consequent blurring of the borders between formal, non-formal and informal will also impact on professionals, requiring new forms of teaching with new skills — and entailing constant evolution of the traditional profiles of youth workers or school teachers. The result would be a holistic approach to education, more focused on individualised approaches, professional coaching and experience-based learning. It would generate intensified reflection within individuals, taking a step back from routine and conducing to change.

This vision implies the combination of the best solution from both worlds and developing a new quality in education. This may create tensions with the inherent diversity of youth work as a new balance is sought between its principles, policy priorities and the evolving and complex needs and aspirations of young people. On the other hand, the development of evidence that will result from greater formalisation can offer some insight into the strengths and merits of youth work — and improve self-awareness. Without appropriate tools, such demonstration can prove difficult — particularly for more sceptical audiences.

Chapter 2 looks at the significance of Europe in young people's lives, at the connections between EU and national levels and at progress triggered by EU youth programmes and policies. Williamson notes the emergence of the concept of European citizenship alongside that progress. And at a time of austerity and budgetary constraints on education, a supportive EU youth policy has acquired new importance. EU youth programmes are depicted as drivers of the quality of youth work and non-formal learning in Europe, with the EU providing a platform for collaboration among youth workers and youth organisations and for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Lejeune remarks that EU youth policy emerged in parallel to the evolution of European support for youth work, providing a conceptual

framework and a link to other areas of concern for young people. The changing environment is seen as offering new opportunities for young people to become active players in their societies as well as new challenges that can be met by wider use of peer learning and cooperation. At the same time, youth work has been included in measures designed to help young people manage the transition from school to work.

European youth policy as a distinct field is a recent development. The 2001 White Paper identified evidence-based policymaking as one of the fields for European cooperation, alongside information, volunteering and participation. It created a coalition for a European approach to youth issues and this led to a framework for European cooperation in the youth field, adopted by the Council in June 2002. The 2005 European youth pact, which focused on employment, education and the reconciliation of working and family life, complemented this scope. The current renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) provides common ground for collaboration between the Member States in eight specific areas and has become a platform for the exchange of good practices and mutual learning. Cooperation at European level is described as a source of innovation and an aid to critical revision of national practices.

Siebel, Wicke and Wisser maintain that European awareness should inform national decisions, both to enrich national policy and to contribute to the common European framework. They cite Germany's implementation of the EU youth strategy in support of this argument — an interesting example because of the country's federal structure. Germany selected topics that had national relevance and were considered worth exploring from the European perspective — although they were not new in German youth policy. They included social integration and successful transition to work; encouraging participation and strengthening democracy; and recognising non-formal and informal learning. 'The EU youth strategy was certainly not a blueprint for the development of an independent youth policy in Germany, but it provided a wealth of ideas for a comprehensive, coherent youth policy concept in terms of, above all, content, structures or procedures' (Siebel, Wicke and Wisser).

Chapter 3 explores the need for the 'professionalisation' and 'Europeanisation' of youth work. Not only do young people face new demands from living and working in a complex multicultural environmental, but those working with young people in formal or non-formal learning settings also require new professional skills to cope with the changing circumstances.

The focus on skills development, training and qualifications has increased in line with the shift towards targeted youth work. The range of skills required is also widening, as youth work moves further towards an interventionist approach and youth workers are expected to deal with challenging patterns of behaviour or social issues such as special educational needs and cultural diversity.

The formal concept of the professionalisation of youth work involves standards and practices to take account of its complexity and variety across Member States, as well as initial education programmes. But it requires more than standards and qualifications — and it has to value the existing levels of professionalism in youth work across Europe that preceded the current trend for professionalisation. The sector itself has developed competence profiles and set up professional associations of youth workers. The EU has also begun to respond with — for instance — a Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁽⁴⁾ (2012). But there is still a lack of understanding of what youth workers do though, which tends to impede recognition of youth work as a real job or career — a situation aggravated by precarious working conditions in the sector and the lack of a clear voice when competing with professionals from other sectors.

Sercombe (2009) identifies a ‘professionalisation dilemma’⁽⁵⁾, pointing out that professionalisation can cut two ways. On the one hand it can provide a framework for programmes, job descriptions and good practice. It can legitimise work and add weight to the voice of youth workers in circumstances where they have no recognised professional status. But on the other hand it carries a risk of inhibiting creativity and autonomy and of excluding unorthodox approaches.

The trend towards professionalisation is reinforced through better recognition of youth work at European level, through further implementation of Youthpass and through the development of sets of competences for trainers and youth workers. Training has a role in generating practices with a greater European orientation and can help develop what Siebel, Wicke and Wisser call the ‘hitherto neglected European dimension in education and further training of multipliers at schools, universities and the youth work sector’. EU youth programmes have assisted in the ‘Europeanisation’ of youth work practices, particularly — argues Markovic — through the European training strategy, which has provided thousands of non-formal learning opportunities for hundreds of thousands of participants all over Europe. It has helped youth workers, youth leaders and support staff to develop their capacities and implement high-quality activities for young people in line with the programme’s evolving objectives. The

strategy has also contributed to EU external policy by extending activities to partner regions.

Chapter 4 looks at how youth work and non-formal learning are preparing young people for the changing world of work, promoting entrepreneurial learning and through a process of empowerment.

The attention now given to enterprise and empowerment among young people is a response to the changing requirements of the world of work and a more globalised context. With no longer the same perspective of one job for life, the aim is instead to provide knowledge, skills and attitudes for becoming what Arnkil terms 'an entrepreneur of your own life', actively shaping personal prospects through continuous updating of skills and 'hybrid know-how'. Entrepreneurship has been seen as a tool to stimulate innovative capabilities as well as combating unemployment and the social exclusion of young people in Europe.

Alongside this process, new groups have been identified as vulnerable, including young people who are 'NEET' (not in employment, education or training). But Arnkil warns that unemployed young people should not be perceived as a 'passive' target group; they are, he says, a resource, and can be active agents in co-creating solutions. Artificial divisions of the economy and the labour market into 'high value-added' and 'low value-added' are counterproductive, tending to increase the power of those who are already empowered and to neglect those in the most acute need. It is desirable to integrate traditional approaches that promote innovation and (social) entrepreneurship in the 'better end' with the work on social activation and inclusion that has been reserved for the 'worse end'. This 'resource' should be developed, through engagement in activities provided in settings that are safe and supportive and that foster meaningful relationships based on trust.

There is a new emphasis in youth work on proactively reaching young people in vulnerable circumstances — wherever they may be, even in shopping malls or on Facebook, particularly since many young people lack resources to actively look for adequate programmes. Accessibility and building trust-based relationships free of coercion or stigma are important to help them take responsibility for their own lives, while providing guidance in creating links between goal setting and learning. This also means involving young people in decision-making and in the design of youth activities, so that they learn how to collaborate with others to achieve results.

Ratto-Nielsen insists that non-formal learning is not of itself enough to change attitudes towards the acquisition of lifewide entrepreneurial

competences. He urges the need for what he calls ‘transformative learning’, enabling each individual to answer the question ‘What have I learnt?’ This process is conducted through ‘critical incidents’, in which errors serve as part of the learning process to help evaluate and adjust the strategy. Youthpass, coaching and EU youth initiative projects have proved valuable in prompting this reflex.

The role of EU youth programmes in providing comprehensive learning has been confirmed by research. Young participants benefit from a wide range of skills, including the ability to operate effectively in a multicultural environment, with complexity of languages, perceptions, approaches and ways of doing things. This strong formative experience gained in transnational projects permits personal discovery, as confirmed by Bere in a testimony from the European Voluntary Service. By helping young people gain control over their own lives, while contributing to communities and societies, youth work and non-formal learning activities help them become actors of change.

Non-formal learning, through its experimental nature, is considered well suited to develop entrepreneurial skills and attitudes among young people. But this requires youth work to define its place and role in the entrepreneurship education continuum, as the focus has been shifting towards social inclusion and employability, with the emphasis on equipping young people with skills that will allow them to cope successfully with the new demands of a changed labour market. New partnerships are required for youth workers, with educators, career professionals, employers and policymakers, to create a more holistic approach to education. And there is a need to translate the learning outcomes gained through youth work activities.

Novosadova explores how to assess the competences that young people acquire from non-formal learning, how this empowers them, what approaches can serve and how they can be adopted in other schemes. She draws a link with the need for young people to recognise their own competences, to communicate them and to take responsibility for their own learning and development — and further on for their own lives. This requires a balance between providing support and promoting autonomy.

In the same vein, Järvensivu⁽⁶⁾ (2010) offers a reminder that the focus on skills development and employability should not disregard an individual’s life course. Professional life should be combined with a sense of ownership, meaning and passion, he argues. Dickson et al.⁽⁷⁾ (2013) have written of an empowerment model that focuses on young people developing an understanding of power and control in their lives, socially, politically and economically, and being able to

engage consciously and critically in different activities, supported by youth workers to become full, autonomous and responsible subjects.

Chapter 5 reviews social inclusion and the need to redefine the mission of youth work, building on the legacy of youth work and responding to the current needs of young people.

Alarming high youth unemployment rates in recent years, with new challenges presented by increased levels of migration, economic difficulties, dropping out of education, family breakdown and issues confronting minorities — ethnic and sexual identity-related — have generated dilemmas and tensions around the topic of social inclusion, and challenge the mission of youth work.

The question becomes ever more acute about how youth work can respond to the current concerns of young people while retaining what is often regarded as the youth work mission. The contradictions emerge most clearly when considering work with at-risk groups, where the pressure is all the greater to demonstrate success by measurable outcomes. This increased utilitarianism of youth work may imply a shift away from promotion of individualism and diversity in the sector, and it may dilute the related capacity to offer the challenges to established structures of society that youth work has traditionally encouraged.

EU youth programme development reflects a similar trend, particularly in the inclusion strategy, which builds on a legacy dating back to 2000. The strong focus on young people with fewer opportunities — overall, close to 24 % of Youth in Action participants were young people with fewer opportunities⁽⁶⁾ — has been reinforced, in combination with the theme of cultural diversity.

The change in focus also required increased competences for youth workers dealing with issues of inclusion, including in work with cultural minorities. The strategy has encouraged positive interaction with all groups, regardless of ethnicity, (dis)ability, religion, sexuality, skin colour, socioeconomic background, appearance, educational level or language spoken. Pantea argues that it has also been necessary to take into account political issues related to human rights violations that are linked to cultural background. And it has required defining the overlap with other sectors in relation to social inclusion.

The demand for youth work is growing, and youth work is increasingly reaching out — a response to the evident needs among many who do not enjoy easy access. Groups meriting attention in these new circumstances include young people aged 18 and over, those living in rural areas, those from a migrant background and members of minority groups. The need is all the greater since young people

who are disadvantaged are often those who could potentially benefit most from youth work activities.

Chapter 6 considers the specific nature of youth participation in the changing world, and how the role of the structured dialogue between young people and decision makers could be maximised.

With participation increasingly seen as central to democratic citizenship, it was logical for attention to focus on ensuring that young people are active in building their societies and involved in decision-making. A comprehensive view of youth issues has been urged that would make the concerns of young people a joint responsibility with the many sectors that influence their lives.

Williamson analyses how far the structured dialogue has contributed to the concept of European citizenship, and concludes that since its membership is composed principally of organisations of young people, it risks failing on representativity. It tends to exclude the concerns of those not engaged in organisations, such as marginalised youth, young offenders or young people with disabilities, who are least likely to be 'active citizens'. As a result, the classic concerns of the structured dialogue — improved labour market prospects, greater autonomy for young people, greater policy coherence — may not be universally relevant. In addition, he points out that new forms of technology-based participation may also merit exploration for the format of the structured dialogue, being more in tune with how young people want to communicate.

Benedicto says the structured dialogue should reflect the evolving reconfiguration of the relationship between youth and politics, and move away from seeing young people merely as 'apprentices of a series of norms' linked to the concept of a good citizen. Instead it should consider young people as 'citizens under construction' in a process where youth is a crucial phase in transition when individuals' life projects are being defined. He stresses the importance of treating young people as subjects rather than objects, empowered people who influence things rather than merely being influenced by institutions. In his view, learning about participation should exploit multiple and mostly informal methods that are linked to young people's experience and context. Institutions at EU and national levels will be challenged by such an approach, but it is all the more necessary 'at the time in which the young feel little identification with the political institutions which represent them', he says.

The importance of the internet and social networking needs to be taken account of in youth work, since these online tools are often the

first stop for young people. As youth work adapts to new contexts, greater diversity of formats will be required to reach wider audiences of young people — particularly those who usually do not take part in youth activities.

Bonnici maintains that online social networks fulfil the need to connect and build up communities based on mutual support and solidarity — something that classic education systems, conceived for different purposes in a different age, can no longer do. He sees the internet as an opportunity for more democracy — and more inclusion, replacing the earlier monopolies of communication with open access to a level playing field. Youth workers can seize these opportunities, but only if they reach out to where young people already are rather than trying to impose platforms and agenda on them. And rather than trying to restrict access, youth workers should guide them on how to navigate the internet with a critical mind. According to Bonnici, media literacy should be a standard curriculum topic.

The chapters include forward-looking views from all contributors on cross-sectoral cooperation, particularly in the context of Erasmus+ implementation.

The contributors to this publication all believe that the complex context for young people demands a comprehensive and cross-sectoral response to make education a joint responsibility.

Williamson urges European bodies and national governments to be more adventurous, and to broker debate among the parties that should be involved: formal and non-formal education, health, vocational training, employment, criminal justice, the labour market, employers and housing providers, the media and private providers of public services.

Many of the authors of this publication see real possibilities in the integrated approach of Erasmus+, although often with accompanying cautions. Siebel, Wicke and Wisser are appreciative of the way that Erasmus+ extends the cross-sectoral nature of EU youth strategy, but nonetheless insist that youth welfare needs to become a greater political priority too. Kiilakoski, with his concept of informalisation of formal education and formalisation of non-formal learning, is also optimistic about the potential of the integrated approach of Erasmus+, but contends that regular evaluation will be needed of where real success is being achieved in combining the formal and the non-formal. Markovic, convinced of the need for a response to the changing priorities at European level and the changing nature of youth work, sees possibilities in linking policy and practice more

closely under Erasmus+ in forward thinking on European training. This, he says, could empower youth workers, and young people they work with, to influence youth policies, as well as providing recognition and professionalisation of youth work. Another challenge that some authors pose for the Erasmus+ programme is young Europeans' increased awareness and capacity to react in innovative ways to matters of global concern, such as climate change, growing inequality, political instability or profit maximisation.

The widely discussed need for youth workers to adjust and even to redefine their mission provokes questions among many authors about the essence of youth work. Competition between conflicting goals is seen as a potential threat. Notably, the stronger the emphasis is on individual learning mobility and developing personal competences under Erasmus+, the less attention will be paid to promoting change in society and the transformational or political impact which many see as being at the heart of youth work.

Pantea perceives a related challenge in balancing social inclusion with the involvement of private and corporate actors in providing training, volunteering opportunities, internships or youth camps. With the parallel trend towards the 'marketisation of the non-profit sector' (Eikenberry and Drupal Kluver, 2004; Salamon, 1993)⁽⁹⁾, the ability of NGOs to create and maintain a strong civil society can be compromised. The social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities could also suffer, as commercial actors may be unwilling to pay for social added value or may lack the professional competence to secure social inclusion. In a competitive and outcome-oriented environment, there is a risk of screening out clients who are too loaded with problems. Several authors argue for a coherent framework to preserve the principle of social inclusion. The issue is all the more urgent, suggests Markovic, since there is a risk that young people with fewer opportunities will be less and less involved in EU youth programmes — often because of the lack of infrastructure and opportunities for marginalised groups. He stresses that the renewed inclusion and diversity strategy could contribute to such a framework.

Markovic also sees some solutions in the Europeanisation of youth work, which, he says, can help youth workers translate their policy objectives into project activities as well as empower them to influence the process of policy development at local, national and European levels and establish closer links between them. Arnkil relies on an integrated approach to ensure that policy does not reinforce disadvantage, with a real shift in education. He urges employers to encourage the development of skills, to prepare themselves for more diversity in the workforce and to intensify collaboration with educa-

tion. Educators and career support professionals should collaborate with young people and employers in transforming education. And policymakers should promote engagement and commitment among all stakeholders, empowering them to promote the changes needed.

Cross-agency work is a rising trend over recent years, accompanied by new challenges and opportunities; in this context it is important to understand what youth work can offer compared to other sectors, in terms of the purpose, value or way of doing things. This is all the more important at a time when the borders are blurring between youth work and other sectors, and when youth work is coming out of its niche to respond to issues facing young people, while reaching out to them in places where they can be found. Formal education and schools also increasingly adapt methods of non-formal learning, and frequently open up for extracurricular activities provided by youth work organisations.

While many of the remedies and strategies suggested in this publication depend on action by policymakers, there is also a clear and widely shared message that youth workers themselves can help to shape the future. Not only can they bring new and wider resources to their work with young people, they can also help to create a louder common voice that can influence policy and change in education and society.

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1

1 Youth work and non-formal learning in Europe's education landscape and the call for a shift in education

26

TOMI KIILAKOSKI

Youth work and non-formal learning in Europe's education landscape and the call for a shift in education

TOMI KIILAKOSKI

'What's the name for the word of things not always being the same? You know, I'm sure there is one. Isn't there?' asks Delirium, a cartoon character created by writer Neil Gaiman. She continues: 'There must be a word for it ... the thing that lets you know time is happening. Is there a word?' Her brother Dream, also a cartoon character, replies 'Change'.

Change is one of the most important concepts related to education. Growth is essentially the idea about 'things not being the same always'. The educational theorist and philosopher John Dewey described the process of education as the constant ability to grow and to break away from the mere routines. For him, 'educational process is one of continual reorganising, reconstructing, transforming' (Dewey, 1997, p. 50). When this perspective on education is adopted, concepts such as evolution, development, progress or transformation are seen as constitutive features of any education, either in formal institutions or in lived practices in daily surroundings of children and the young.

Individuals change in an educational process, as do groups and cultures. Education aims at contributing to a change. The social context of education also changes. This means that education has to be rethought when youth cultures, the technological level of society or modes of production change. And they tend to change constantly.

One of the most difficult problems in the current education condition is that there is no stable state to guide or set principles for how the supposedly immature members of society are brought to maturity. There is no shared understanding of how the young should acquire necessary skills, information, attitudes, ways of relating to other people or the knowledge to understand the present and engage with the future. It can be said that 'education is continually in search of meaning' (Furedi, 2009, p. 68). Education is debated, called into question, reformulated and investigated critically. There is no comprehensive agreement about what education is or how formal educational institutions (such as kindergartens, schools,

vocational institutes, universities) fit into it, and the varying interpretations extend to learning and learning institutions. We learn in myriad situations and gain information intentionally and unintentionally — there are learning environments everywhere.

It would be easy to over-emphasise changes taking place, especially in the worlds of the young. Plenty of things stay much the same. Youth studies repeatedly show the importance of peer relations for the young, and while the arena for meeting peers might change from physical environments to seemingly unbounded virtual sites, peer relations are still one of the key factors in promoting welfare. The family is one of the most important growth environments for the young and is likely to remain so. On the pedagogical level, the importance of formal learning and the formal qualifications provided by educational institutions has not diminished. On the social level, nationalism gains influence and the utopia of raising a generation of citizens of the world remains remote. While some societies become increasingly secularised, the importance of organised religions is not declining. The dominance of the market economy and the consequent emphasis on market ideology, which might be termed neo-liberalism, also affects the context of education (Mayo, 2012). But while some factors remain stable, some things do change.

Social, cultural and technological changes affect education, and the role of youth work may also have to change, as will formal and non-formal education.



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Things not being the same

Schools or formal institutions are largely products of industrialising societies. The school curriculum and the structure of the school day have been criticised for relying on social hierarchies and a rigid structure of knowledge, instead of being learning communities that develop investigating minds. Schools are now being obliged to rethink their methods — although they remain highly valued and continue to be seen as a key area of investment for any nation seeking to compete in the global economy. Five trends are of particular importance to the current educational landscape.

Technology and digitalisation

Nowadays, young people in Europe are born into a digital world. They are accustomed to being surrounded by technology and they use it increasingly in their lives. This affects not only how things are learnt, but also the context of learning. The use of the internet, for example, affects how we relate to each other, fall in love, shop, acquire knowledge, play identity games and interact (Kiilakoski, 2012). The full scale of this change is not yet visible, and formal education has yet to find adequate answers to it.

Media

The traditional educators (peer group, parents and relatives, educational institutions) are facing a new rival: media. Media shapes much of knowledge, attitudes or social norms. It can also create generational gaps, and because new media are not controlled by gatekeepers, the young are more able to get their message heard by different audiences. The sheer volume of information and scale of influence requires an open perspective, which is a considerable challenge to existing educational institutions.

The environmental crisis

There is increasing knowledge about the impact of humans on the environment. This can be seen as a significant educational mission demanding a global perspective that is not limited to nation states. 'Developing the ethical foundations of the coming era of a single world community' (Singer, 2004, p. 198) cannot be achieved within traditional subjects. The environmental crisis is an example of urgent issues that require a holistic perspective as well as combinations and comparisons among different fields of study.

Economic inequality

The world is divided into the richer global north and the poorer global south, and at the same time inequality inside European societies is on the increase. Reacting in an open, tolerant, non-racist and non-violent manner exerts pressures on society. It seems unlikely that these questions can be answered by the formal education alone.

Uncertainty and identity

The instability of labour markets, rapid changes in the environment and growth in information all mean that the stability that former generations enjoyed no longer applies. The building blocks of personal identity may be more unstable for young people, too. 'The reflexivity that is so characteristic of late modernity, where it is always the individual's relationship to him- or herself that is the focal point of learning' (Illeris, 2011, p. 405) means that the most crucial current requirement for education (the ability to be both reflexive and critical) transforms learning as knowledge acquisition.

Some theories urge a reconceptualisation of conventional educational themes — classrooms, textbooks or school buildings — so that they are seen not as separate, isolated entities, but as nodes in a web combining material and social entities. Educational categories such as learning, teaching, reflecting or the theory/practice dichotomy come under scrutiny. Crucial educational phenomena, such as becoming and knowing, are seen as themes which combine social and material, the institutional and the everyday, institutionally recognised and unnoticed learning and being and becoming (Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuck, 2012). The theoretical point about the connectedness of educational institutions to the world outside the institutional settings resonates with the interview with a headmaster in my research project on studying the cooperation of schools and youth work.

'Sometimes a school is like a closed box. When you go outside the school, different things start happening. I hope that adults could show an example how to work together so that there would not be isolated buildings, different goals and different rules, that there would be cooperation and that we would care about the young together.'

This call for a shift in education might find some response in a culture where many features are changing. Education has become more complicated. There are more players than before. The field has widened from local to global. The rules are in a state of flux.



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On youth work

Learning is a dynamic process. The institutions are stable. In an earlier era, with fewer contexts for education, the stability of the institutions was not a problem. But the increasing number of learning environments, both virtual and IRL (in real life), poses challenges to institutions. If they are to function within a network of learning environments, they need to modify their practices and architecture. For schools this is difficult: they were created to serve a defined pedagogical mission and support traditional learning practices. From the critical perspective, schools are equipped to control docile bodies (Foucault, 1995), not to offer flexible learning environments. The structures create path dependencies: the way things are organised today will also affect the future. As long as schools are built in a traditional manner, the school day tends to follow traditional patterns and pedagogical practices are likely to remain stable.

But youth work can be carried out in many settings. It can take place in urban settings — streets, parks and parking lots — or in the countryside; or in schools, youth clubs, prisons, cafes or shopping malls (Sapin, 2009). It is not tied to a single context. Its flexible nature differ-

entiates it from other public services such as schooling and healthcare, which require facilities where professionals can function. The flexibility of youth work allows youth workers to engage with young people in everyday situations where young people are learning.

Public indoor arenas designed for youth work

The most common is the youth club, an age-specific public space created, decorated and designed for the purpose. Others include youth information centres, or youth work rooms in schools or in civic centres.

Public indoor arenas not designed for youth work

Here youth work has to adapt to an existing organisational culture. For example, youth workers have to negotiate their professional identity in a school culture which usually differs from the ideals of youth work (Sapin, 2009).

Public outdoor arenas

Targeted youth work in streets can connect to young people who are not usually reachable through other forms of youth work or public services. Here youth workers enter places where young people have ownership of the surroundings. Other outdoor arenas include adventure education settings in the countryside and in urban areas, where participants are required to cooperate to achieve success in demanding tasks, or summer camps organised on a regular basis in some countries.

Virtual spaces

Virtual interaction has acquired more importance in the world of the young. Youth work is trying to develop ways to connect with young people on the net. Besides the rather obvious fact that youth work has to reach young people in the settings where they like to be, developing online youth work is a way to connect with young people through youth information and counselling services.

Youth work can also be done by many actors. NGOs, parishes, municipal and state actors offer youth work services. Working methods also vary. But certain common features are discernible. Firstly, youth work is an age-specific activity. The significance of adolescence as a

distinctive period in human development is recognised and the requirements of this phase are met by providing opportunities to engage in peer groups, to have fun and be active and to mature as a person and as a citizen. Secondly, youth work is a voluntary activity. Young people come freely to youth work activities and they assent to join the activities. This important feature of youth work helps to create contact with young people through cooperation rather than through disciplinary power. Thirdly, youth work tries to create communal spaces where young people can cooperate and have fun with their peer group. Fourthly, as classic youth work theorist Josephine Brew has noted, it combines recreation, social fellowship and education (in Müller, 2006, p. 21). The educative aspect is one of the core elements of youth work. The idea is to help young people to become independent — for example by providing them with opportunities to negotiate their relationship with multiculturalism, sexuality, intoxication or violence. And fifthly, youth work recognises the impact of youth cultures on young people as an important aspect of contemporary society; it develops methods through which young people can engage in cultural activities and question youth cultural norms and expectations.

According to Juha Nieminen, the four functions of youth work are socialisation, personalisation, compensation and allocation. By socialisation Nieminen means the process by which young people become citizens in adult society and become able to function as a societal agent, learning the skills, practices and knowledge to be a member of society. Personalisation points to the process where young people develop a self-image and personality that can lead to a happy life. Compensation articulates the manner in which youth work helps to fight young people's problems with marginalisation and social exclusion, by providing targeted services. Allocation means distributing the resources of society to organisations or informal groups of young people (Nieminen, 2007). These functions emphasise the educative nature of youth work, and highlight that youth work can be targeted to specific groups or individuals.

Youth work also solves some of the problems for society. It can have a role in the evolution of youth cultures and ideas about professional careers. Recent focus on young people's transition to another ladder of the educational system or from education to the labour market has been accompanied by increasing interest in cooperation with the formal sector.

Formal and non-formal education

Seeing formal and non-formal learning as separate entities dates back many years. As John Dewey wrote, 'One of the weightiest problems with which the philosophy of education has to cope is the method of keeping a proper balance between the informal and the formal, the incidental and the intentional, modes of education' (Dewey, 1997, p. 9). Although learning is sometimes equated with educational institutions and evaluated in terms of aims described by curricula, actually learning cannot and should not be understood in only a narrow sense.

Two different senses of learning can be identified. One is an institutional sense of learning, i.e. learning that is organised and structured and is intentional from a learner's perspective. The other is the human sense of learning, something inseparable from human existence, simply because learning is a human capability. This human learning in the wider sense can be divided into formal (or institutional) learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. Informal learning is everyday learning, which is often unintentional, and happens in workplaces or during leisure time. Non-formal learning takes place in activities which are designed but not necessarily for the purposes of learning. The young learn social skills when doing sports, they learn foreign languages when communicating on the internet and they may develop their identity when taking part in youth activities. The line between informal and non-formal learning is not easy to define. In my view, non-formal learning, in which activities are thought out in advance and have an educative component, captures the relevant features of learning better.

Researcher Lasse Siurala has distinguished three perspectives on how the formal and the non-formal can be related. Firstly, non-formal learning can be seen as independent from formal learning. This would mean that there is no need for cooperation since the two learning environments are independent of each other. Secondly, non-formal learning can be seen as an alternative to formal learning, perhaps concentrating more on the social skills, focusing on learner-centred activities which the formal system has difficulty in dealing with. Thirdly, non-formal learning can be said to be complementary to formal learning, producing different outcomes and using learned-centred and practice-based methods. While the complementary perspective certainly enriches the scope of learning and makes visible different learning environments (media, the street, hobbies, etc.) the young are engaging in, commodification of youth work or the formalisation of the non-formal learning might endanger its voluntary nature, as has been suggested (Siurala, 2012, pp. 107-108).

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Cooperation between formal and non-formal learning institutions affects both parties. When education offers learning situations where the learners are able to activate their preconceptions, experiences and knowledge, the learning processes are a link between people's background experiences and the demands set by the curricula. From the viewpoint of formal education, this means informalisation. Pedagogical methods are changing. New ideas such as work-based learning, place-based education or the use of social media all contribute to reorganising pedagogical practices inside formal institutions. Emphasis on the recognition of prior learning and portfolios also means that the content of formal learning takes into account both informal and non-formal learning. From the viewpoint of non-formal learning this means, however, formalisation. Recognising prior learning may require non-formal institutions to give diplomas, explicate learning situations and prepare learners for skill demonstrations. Together the simultaneous processes of formalisation and informalisation mean that the landscape of education becomes more blurred, convergent and connected. Finnish researchers Heikkinen, Jokinen and Tynjälä (2013, p. 6) conclude that 'as a joint consequence of these interconnected and parallel processes, formal, informal and non-formal types of learning are verging on each other'.

As an example of this process, cooperation is deepening between youth work and schools. This means that one of the key constituents of youth work — leisure time — needs to be rethought. If youth workers spend more time in school, the professional boundaries become less clear. The professionals learn from each other. They need to think how the integration of non-formal and formal contributes to their professional ideology (Bradford and Byrne, 2010). A Finnish youth worker states in an interview:

‘One of the benefits a youth worker brings to school is increasing voluntarism inside schools. It means that action involves more possibilities for participating, different ways of doing things. And the teacher brings about a pedagogical thinking, a content of learning. A youth worker could offer more pleasurable choices for the young to actually carry out the whole thing’.

This is a prime example of the dialectics of formalisation and informalisation: a youth worker is more consciously using her methods to produce learning outcomes and the teacher is willing to try different ways of engaging with the young. The crucial question is: does this improve conditions for the young? Do the twin processes of formalisation and informalisation contribute to making society better and more humane for the young people?

Conclusions: the shift in education

‘When you look at the future, it seems to be the case that schools can no longer be isolated islands. And in that phase, one of the most natural partners is the youth work’ (from an interview with a teacher).

The cooperation of formal and non-formal can be seen as dependent on at least four perspectives.

Developing new methods of engaging within the changing educational landscape

The methods used in the non-formal sector may be more appropriate to tackle questions that lie outside school subjects. Many important matters today — such as media education, environmental education, peace education or entrepreneurial learning — require a holistic approach. The traditional subjects of the school curriculum are not capable of meeting the requirements of these fields of education. But developing new ways of promoting learning can be created by cooperation.

Taking into account the full scope of learning

Much learning takes place outside school. The use of technology and technological literacy are learnt mainly from everyday activities. The matter is twofold: on the one hand there is a question of recognising the knowledge the young already have; on the other hand it is a question of being able to critically evaluate if the knowledge is epistemologically or ethically sound.

Developing meta-skills

In the changing educational landscape, second-order skills become all the more relevant. These skills include, for example, being able to access information, evaluate the reliability of sources, evaluate one's own convictions and be critical. These are not automatic capacities. The perspective of learning as acquisition should be coupled with learning as participation (Wenger, 1998) — of taking part in a communal process. The perspective of meta-skills requires engaging with the life world, and communities are part of this. It is an argument in favour of combining school and leisure time, education and entertainment and formal and non-formal ways of promoting learning.

Developing formal modes of recognising prior learning that takes place outside schools

The current educational landscape cannot be understood only by looking at the classrooms. A dynamic flow of the everyday brings about many learning experiences. The entire scope of knowledge and experience held by an individual should be made visible in the educational system. This requires understanding of how the formal system works and also how learning takes place outside formal institutions.

Philosopher Herbert Spencer asked a crucial question when he was thinking about education. What knowledge is of most worth? - he demanded to know. While his answers may be outdated, the question itself is certainly a valid one. The answer to this crucial question probably begins with noting that today the most needed knowledge is not knowledge on school subjects. The answer will likely contain elements of meta-skills such as being able to assess both external information and personal processes, of being able to raise ethical questions and reflect on them, of being able to read both the word and the world and of being able to respond to chance proactively. One example of this kind of answer is offered by educational psychologist Knud Illeris who also emphasises existential capabilities.

'The most important thing for young people to learn today is to be able to orient themselves, to be able to make choices that can be answered for, to keep up with everything, not to waste their lives on the wrong things, and to be able to decline in many situations where a choice has to be made ... The best security for the future seems not to be learning a subject on what are perceived as traditional premises, but to be ready to change and take hold of what is relevant in many different situations. Uncertainty cannot be countered by stability, but only by being open, flexible and constantly oriented to learning' (Illeris, 2011, p. 45).

Being constantly oriented to learning — not only in schools and universities, but in every situation one faces: this ethos expresses commitment to combining different learning environments, and taking into account the full scope of human possibilities. For these reasons programmes such as Erasmus+ in which formal and non-formal is combined seem to offer promising prospects. As has been indicated in this paper, this probably will lead to increasing formalisation and informalisation, which is not in itself bad or good. Therefore a systematic evaluation on how well the programme actually succeeds in combining the best of both worlds, the formal and the non-formal, is needed.



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European Union support for youth work and non-formal learning

PASCAL LEJEUNE

Introduction

Providing youth work has a long history in Europe, with different traditions, but identifiable phases in its development: from value-based delivery by adults on a voluntary basis, often through the church or ideological youth movements during the 19th and 20th centuries, to government-funded youth organisations, and more recently to new forms such as street work. Youth work is emerging as a distinct profession, linked to both social welfare and education systems. Specific legislation regulates youth work in 13 EU countries, and legislation in other areas covers some aspects in 11 others.

Policy frameworks have increasingly permitted dialogue between youth work and policymakers, and funding has been linked to measurable outcomes for specific target groups, and a trend towards evidence-based youth work. The emphasis has progressively switched from leisure-time activities and personal development towards education and preparation for the labour market, targeting specific groups. It now deals to a large extent with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion, compensating for gaps in the formal education systems. At the same time, innovative and creative approaches have been adopted, to respond to changing demographics and evolving interests and concerns among young people. Youth work has also become more professionalised, and more closely linked to other sectors. The narrative has shifted as well from viewing young people as problematic to recognising their value as a resource, and to promoting inclusion, empowerment and participation, although there is a concern that the voice of young people is still not adequately represented in policy- and decision-making. The ruling presumption remains that youth work results in personal and societal benefits that outweigh the costs. Policies and programmes can help frame and support youth work so that it provides meaningful activities for young people that lead to successful outcomes.

In line with the principle of subsidiarity, the provision of youth work and non-formal learning remains largely a matter dealt with at national and/or local level. Nevertheless, over the last decades, the support for youth work provided at European level has become part of the history of youth work in Europe. Successive programmes have stretched from Youth for Europe (entered into force in 1989) to Erasmus+ (started in 2014). Over the last 25 years, more than 2.5 million young people and youth workers have taken part in various kinds of mostly transnational non-formal learning activities funded by these schemes.

The thematic focus of these programmes has evolved as a function of the sociopolitical context and the situation of young people in Europe, but there have been common features too. The programmes have consistently addressed all young people, while making special provisions for young people with fewer opportunities. They have offered experiences — through alternative learning and teaching methods — that both boost skills and develop active citizenship. And they have strengthened civil society and contributed to professionalism in youth work.

The EU programmes have also supported the development of EU youth policy, and in that way have influenced national youth policy and legislation. This has helped to define youth work, and has contributed to better recognition of this specific and diverse sector across Europe.

That leads to a situation where the EU contribution to youth work nowadays can be schematically considered under two angles: a policy vision, the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018); and the concrete opportunities offered by a spending programme Erasmus+ (2014-2020), to support this youth policy.

How cooperation in the youth field became part of the European project

Education and youth, which fall within the Member States' remit, were not obvious subjects for the European Economic Community. From the mid 1980s onwards, however, various steps were taken to revitalise European integration. The Spinelli draft EU Treaty adopted by the European Parliament (1984) foresaw a chapter on 'policy for society', including education. The Adonnino report on a citizens' Europe, endorsed by the Milan European Council (1985), pleaded for

mobility between universities, voluntary work for youth and exchanges between schools. In 1989 the Commission set out medium-term priority strategies for education in the context of the implementation of the Single European Act (which came into force in 1987) and its main objectives, namely the completion of the internal market by the end of 1992 and the economic and social cohesion of the Community: free movement of persons and recognition of qualifications for vocational and academic purposes; initial and continuing vocational training; development of higher education; adapting to technological change; improving the quality of education systems; language teaching; and youth exchanges.

These and other initiatives paved the way for the inclusion in the Maastricht Treaty (1993) of an article on education and youth: while respecting the diversity of national situations and the principle of subsidiarity, Community action should be aimed at promoting cooperation in education and at 'encouraging the development of youth exchanges'. The Lisbon Treaty (2009) later added 'encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe'.

In the meantime, following the example of Community programmes such as Esprit, to promote research and technological development, the first spending programmes were adopted in the field of education, training and youth, notably Comett (1986), Erasmus (1987) and Youth for Europe (1988): 'In a similar fashion to the major RDT programmes, [they] provide practical demonstrations to the public of the meaning of the Community dimensions and the value of joint efforts. They also have an important multiplier effect on the free movement of ideas and people and in increasing a sense of partnership in shared endeavours. Through the opportunities they offer for young people to meet and to learn from each other, they serve to enhance mutual understanding of cultural differences and also to counteract xenophobia by giving young people a window on the wider world' ⁽¹⁾. The purpose of these programmes was clearly twofold: economic — providing the necessary human resources to ensure that the potential of the internal market was exploited to the full; and socio-cultural — bringing Europe closer to its citizens and giving the Community the human face it lacked: 'With the adoption of the Single European Act, the priority objectives became the completion of the internal market and the free movement of persons, goods, capital and services. The question of the mobility of students and teachers became more important, particularly in a context in which discussions within

the Community had brought to the fore the question of developing a citizens' Europe'⁽²⁾. The Youth for Europe programme, proposed by the Commission in 1986, aimed at allowing young people to meet, and to develop joint transnational, cultural, social or other projects, and develop in that way a sense of European awareness and solidarity.

Policy developments from the 2001 White Paper to the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field

In 2001 the Commission published a White Paper entitled 'A new impetus for European youth'⁽³⁾. This document, the fruit of an extensive consultation process, broke new ground with its proposal to take the youth dimension into account in all policymaking, at a time when not all Member States had developed a specific youth policy. It notably recommended encouraging young people's participation; enhancing information for young people; promoting voluntary activities among young people; and encouraging greater understanding and knowledge of youth. An open method of coordination⁽⁴⁾ for the youth sector was established, targeting these objectives referred to in the Council Resolution of June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field⁽⁵⁾.

This was complemented by the European Youth Pact⁽⁶⁾, endorsed by the European Council in 2005, to improve education, training, mobility, employment and social inclusion of young people, while helping to achieve work-life balance. It signalled Member States' conviction that young people should gain political attention within the Lisbon goals of growth and jobs. This was in turn integrated into a youth cooperation framework in a 2005 Council resolution⁽⁷⁾. A Commission communication on promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society⁽⁸⁾ stressed in 2007 the need for a cross-cutting approach, and proposed reinforced partnership between EU institutions and youth representatives.

At the same time a structured dialogue with young people was initiated and cooperation was developed with the Council of Europe. And a Council recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union (2008)⁽⁹⁾ helped strengthen European cooperation in the youth field, as well as other Council resolutions targeting specific issues.

The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)

An impact assessment in 2009⁽¹⁰⁾ recommended broadening the fields of actions covered by the cooperation framework and urged wider opportunities in education and employment; better access to social services and civic opportunities; and promotion of solidarity, in particular through volunteering; as well as mobilising youth organisations and young people. The Commission consequently tabled a proposal that led to the Council's adoption that same year of a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)⁽¹¹⁾. This aimed at a transversal strategy for young people, built on cooperation between policymakers. It coincided with the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty with its encouragement of youth participation in democratic life.

The objectives for 2010-2018 are to improve young people's opportunities in education and in the labour market and to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. This new strategy highlights eight fields of action: education and training; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; participation; voluntary activities; social inclusion; creativity and culture; youth and the world. And it envisages targeted policies and actions in non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information, as well as mainstreaming, so that account is taken of youth issues in other policy fields.

This EU youth strategy advocates a cross-sectoral approach, and the Council emphasised the need to link it to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs (2009), notably through the flagship initiative Youth on the Move⁽¹²⁾, to improve education and training of young people and to equip them for the job market. The Council conclusions on Youth on the Move highlight the role of youth work in dealing with unemployment, school failure and the social exclusion of young people, as well as in improving their skills⁽¹³⁾.

The successive European Council presidency trio priorities have targeted pressing issues related to the situation of young people and have led to the adoption of Council resolutions and conclusions. They have included: youth employment (2010-mid 2011); youth participation in democratic life (mid 2011-2012); social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities (2013-mid 2014); and youth empowerment (mid 2014-2015). Furthermore, the Council adopted in 2012 a recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁽¹⁴⁾.

The eight fields of action in the strategy

- 1 Education and training**

aims at equal access to high-quality education and training at all levels, opportunities for lifelong learning, recognition of non-formal learning and better links with formal education. Transition to the labour market should be supported, and early school leaving reduced.
- 2 Employment and entrepreneurship**

the target of which is transition and integration into the labour market, either as employees or entrepreneurs, including from unemployment or inactivity ⁽¹⁵⁾.
- 3 Health and well-being**

focuses on the promotion of mental and sexual health, sport, physical activity and healthy lifestyles, as well as the prevention and treatment of injury, eating disorders, addictions and substance abuse.
- 4 Participation**

encourages active involvement in representative democracy and civil society at all levels. Structures have been developed for involving young people in decision-making and in review of participatory mechanisms ⁽¹⁶⁾.
- 5 Voluntary activities**

aims to support the recognition of volunteering for its value as an important form of non-formal learning and urge the removal of obstacles and the promotion of cross-border mobility, including through the European Voluntary Service.
- 6 Social inclusion**

aims to prevent social exclusion and poverty, also across generations, and to strengthen solidarity between society and young people, as well as equal opportunities ⁽¹⁷⁾.
- 7 Creativity and culture**

addresses capacity for innovation through early participation in culture and cultural expressions and promotes personal development, enhanced learning capabilities, intercultural skills, understanding of and respect for cultural diversity and the development of new skills for future job opportunities ⁽¹⁸⁾.
- 8 Youth and the world**

targets young people's participation in and contribution to global processes of policymaking, implementation and follow-up, and young people's cooperation with regions outside Europe.

Instruments envisaged to implement the strategy

Monitoring of the process and reporting

The Member States and the European Commission work closely together in steering and evaluating the implementation process and its outcomes. A dashboard of 41 indicators was developed in 2011 ⁽¹⁹⁾. Other tools include the joint triennial EU youth report, which aims to evaluate progress based on national youth reports ⁽²⁰⁾; monitoring work in the expert groups; the Council Youth Working Party; and regular meetings of the directors-general for youth and opinion polls.

Knowledge building and evidence-based policymaking

Annexes to the EU youth report contain data and statistics on the situation of young people in the EU ⁽²¹⁾. Eurostat has been developing a specific dataset on youth ⁽²²⁾. Furthermore the European Commission has commissioned public opinion surveys and studies, notably on Youth participation in democratic life (2013) ⁽²³⁾ and on Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union (2014) ⁽²⁴⁾, and Eurobarometer surveys on European youth (2011, 2013 and 2015) ⁽²⁵⁾.

Research projects targeting youth have been funded under the seventh research framework programme, giving rise to a policy review ⁽²⁶⁾. In addition, the European Commission supports research and the collection of good practices and country-specific information under its partnership with the Council of Europe in the field of youth, including the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP) ⁽²⁷⁾ and a Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR).

Mutual learning

This aims to identify and learn from good practices through conferences and seminars, high-level fora and expert groups, mainly organised by the European Commission and the Member States. Recent expert groups have been working on: mobility of young volunteers across the EU; indicators in the youth field; the contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment; youth work quality systems in EU Member States; and the creative and innovative potential of young people ⁽²⁸⁾.

Consultations and the structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations

The structured dialogue involves consultations with young people and youth organisations at all levels in Member States, at EU youth conferences organised by the European Council presidency countries and at the European Youth Week. More than 50 000 youth leaders and young people are directly involved in the process. The consultations conducted on a thematic priority set for each work cycle (18 months) feed into joint recommendations addressed to the European institutions and national authorities. The thematic priority for July 2014-December 2015 is 'empowering young people for political participation'. National working groups organise this participatory process at national level. They are nominated by the national authorities and involve youth organisations, youth ministries, youth councils and other stakeholders.



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Mobilisation of EU programmes and funds

The Erasmus+ programme (like its predecessor Youth in Action) supports the EU youth strategy by providing funding opportunities for non-formal learning activities targeting young people, youth workers

and youth organisations. The EU youth strategy also encourages the use of the Structural Funds, Creative Europe and other EU schemes.

In 2011, the European Commission proposed the youth opportunities initiative for Member State action on youth unemployment, and the European Council agreed in 2013 to set up a youth employment initiative⁽²⁹⁾ of around EUR 6 billion to support the Youth Guarantee in particular.

Dissemination of results

Enhancing visibility and the impact of activities and results includes publications and the use of the internet. The European Youth Portal⁽³⁰⁾ aims at being the platform providing information and opportunities to young people across Europe, aged 13-30, on a wide range of issues based around the themes of the EU youth strategy. It also includes the voluntary opportunities database, as well as the Structured Dialogue Online Participation Platform. The EU's Youth website⁽³¹⁾ targets policymakers, youth representatives, researchers, youth workers and other stakeholders.

Conclusion

The 2012 EU youth report confirmed the relevance of the EU youth strategy and urged continued focus for young people on employment and entrepreneurship, access to work and development of innovative and creative capacities, as well as social inclusion, health and well-being. The recent study on youth work, 'Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union', also confirmed the impact of youth work in all the eight fields of action identified by this strategy.

In May 2014, the Council adopted the EU work plan for youth⁽³²⁾ (2014-2015), prioritising youth work and non-formal and informal learning to tackle the effects of the crisis on young people; more cross-sectoral cooperation; and empowerment in relation to rights, autonomy, participation and active citizenship.

From Youth for Europe to Erasmus+

The higher education student exchange programme Erasmus, adopted in 1987, prompted reflection on how a similar scheme might also benefit young people's learning through non-formal experience, and through cross-border exchanges between youth organisations and other bodies active in the youth field and between youth workers.

Outcomes of good quality youth work

1

Education and training

- Non-cognitive skills
- Better academic outcomes
- Alternative pathways for dropouts
- Educational/career guidance
- Opportunities for further development

3

Health and well-being

- Access to information and trusted advice
- Changes in attitudes and behaviours
- Raises self-awareness
- Improved well-being

5

Voluntary activities

- Frequently volunteer-led
- Fosters solidarity
- Voluntary engagement later on in life

7

Creativity and culture

- Cultural participation
- Space for expression and creativity
- Intercultural understanding, health, well-being
- Broad personal development impact

2

Employment and entrepreneurship

- Transversal skills demanded on labour market
- Opportunity to practice skills in real settings
- Orientation of young people
- Matching young people and jobs

4

Participation

- Participation and involvement in democratic processes
- Raises awareness
- Develops critical thinking
- Empowers young people
- Opportunity for self-expression

6

Social inclusion

- Socialisation and safe environment
- Prevents exclusion
- Targets specific groups
- Combats negative perception of specific groups among general public

8

Youth and the world

- Develops a skill set and attitudes
- Raises awareness of human rights, development, global themes
- Provides education for sustainable development

The result was the first exchange programme, Youth for Europe ⁽³³⁾, initially covering the 3 years from 1989 to 1991. Youth for Europe II ⁽³⁴⁾ was adopted for the period 1992-1994 and the third phase, Youth for Europe III ⁽³⁵⁾, covered 1995-1999.

While some support for experimental activities of transnational voluntary service was possible under Youth for Europe, the real take-off of this new form of European cooperation in the youth field started with the launching of a specific programme, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) ⁽³⁶⁾, covering 1998-1999 after a pilot phase in 1996 and 1997. The Youth programme (2000-2006) ⁽³⁷⁾ followed, merging the activities covered by the two programmes coming to an end in 1999.

Over the 7 years from 2007 to 2013, EU support for youth work and non-formal learning for young people was funded by the Youth in Action ⁽³⁸⁾ programme, which comprised five strands: Youth for Europe (support for youth exchanges, youth initiatives and youth democracy projects), the EVS, Youth in the World (cooperation with the countries neighbouring the EU and Russia — through youth exchanges or training and networking activities for youth workers

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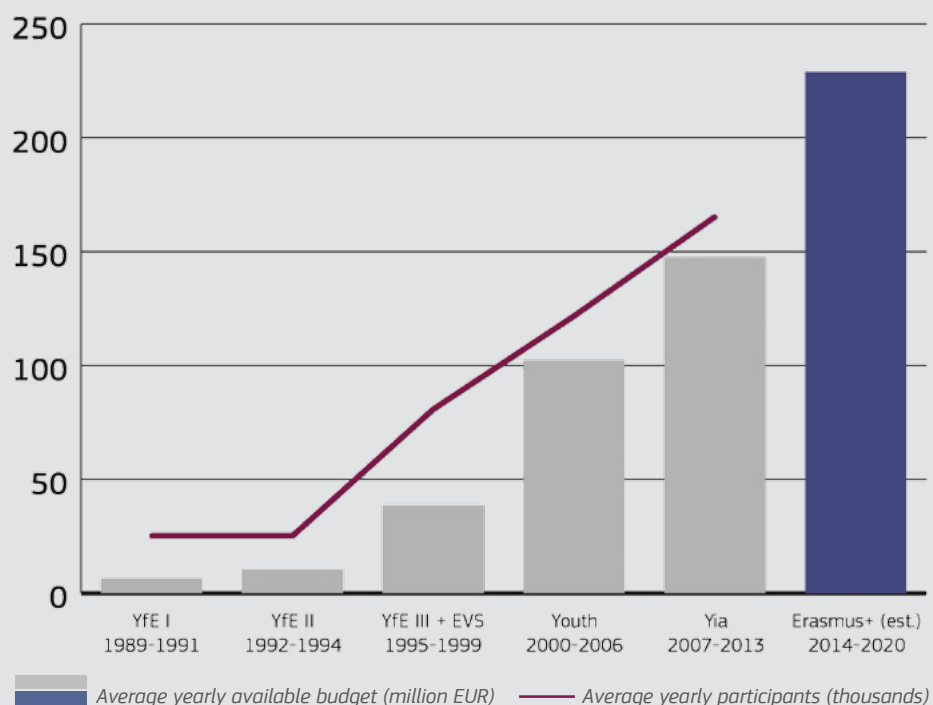
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The European programmes in support of youth 1989-2013

Programme		Budget available (million EUR)	Participants (thousands)
Youth for Europe I (YfE I)	1989-1991	19.5	75
Youth for Europe II (YfE II)	1992-1994	31.6	75
Youth for Europe III (YfE III)	1995-1999	145.1	399
European Voluntary Service (EVS)	1998-1999	48.4	5
Youth	2000-2006	715.7	852
Youth In Action	2007-2013	1 032.9	1 157
Total 25 years	1989-2013	1 993.2	2 563

Non-formal learning for youth in European programmes



— and other partner countries), youth support systems (operating grants for youth organisations⁽³⁹⁾, including to the European Youth Forum⁽⁴⁰⁾; training and networking activities for youth workers; support for quality and innovation in youth work; information; and partnerships with regional and local bodies) and support for European cooperation (meetings of young people with decision-makers; better understanding and knowledge of youth; and cooperation with international organisations). During the same period (2007-2013), the Lifelong Learning programme supported the cooperation in the field of education and training initiated with Erasmus in 1987 and expanded since then beyond higher education.

Since 2014 a new integrated EU programme, Erasmus+ (2014-2020)⁽⁴¹⁾, has encompassed all EU-funded activities related to formal as well as non-formal and informal learning. It aims to boost skills and employability and to modernise education, training and youth work. With a budget of EUR 14.7 billion, of which 10 % is allocated to non-formal learning for young people, Erasmus+ brings together seven earlier programmes — notably Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action — and complements the opportunities offered by these former separate programmes with new opportunities for cross-sectoral cooperation, for instance between schools, training centres and youth organisations. The activities provided for include: learning mobility of individuals (like youth exchanges, the EVS, and training and networking activities for youth workers); cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices (like transnational youth initiatives and capacity-building opportunities); and support for policy reform (which also includes support for the structured dialogue with young people and support for youth organisations). The youth chapter emphasises non-formal learning in youth work and the objective of improving the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, and of promoting participation in democratic life in Europe, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and solidarity.

Like its predecessors, the programme is managed with the support of a network of national agencies and the SALTO-Youth resource centres, and by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels.

Rationale and outcomes

Non-formal learning in youth work includes individual-based teaching, with the emphasis on talents and strengths. It makes use of attractive methods (workshops, interviews, simulations, etc.), in which young people participate and learn from their peers in an environment where they discover their potential and abilities and exercise new levels of independence and decision-making. The experience helps them make choices about their future personal and professional life, and they acquire competences that are valuable in society and in the labour market. The learning is recognised through the Youthpass⁽⁴²⁾.

It develops transversal skills, such as social confidence, self-esteem, relationships with peers and adults, teamworking and motivation, as well as autonomy and the capacity for decision-making, planning and project management. And the non-formal context gives young people more confidence to speak another language, while active use of languages in interaction with peers across boundaries enhances intercultural competence⁽⁴³⁾ and can strengthen the sense of European citizenship⁽⁴⁴⁾. The flexibility and informality help youth workers reach out more effectively to young people to whom formal learning is not adapted, notably those who are disadvantaged. Non-formal learning can also act as a bridge for those experiencing social or educational exclusion, providing alternative routes to training, qualifications and employment, as well as opening up opportunities in mainstream education⁽⁴⁵⁾.

Non-formal learning in youth work activities aims to help young people tackle unemployment and labour market challenges, and to obtain 'decent' employment. It also helps young people respond to social challenges in an increasingly multiethnic and multicultural Europe, promoting a culture of solidarity, care and understanding, and countering social exclusion. It fosters participation in society and democratic life, building trust in the mechanisms of representative democracy. Empirical research indicates that the active involvement of young people as citizens enhances their social capital and mobilises their capacities in all fields⁽⁴⁶⁾. And for the strategic age group, it can offer a sense of belonging to the EU and help create cohesive and dynamic national communities, as well as a European sense of political cohesion⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Youth groups and community centres are, alongside the family, school and workplace, contributors to social cohesion. Their openness and their sense of commitment can help in involving people from a

minority background, offering opportunities for intercultural dialogue in a non-formal context⁽⁴⁸⁾.

A role for the EU

The relevance of the cooperation demonstrated by 25 years of European youth programmes is evident. The added value of EU intervention stems from the transnational and innovative character of the activities supported, promoting a European-minded, flexible and mobile workforce⁽⁴⁹⁾. EU youth programmes ensure greater equality across Member States by complementing existing initiatives or compensating for uneven national provision of opportunities. Transnational activities are more effectively organised at EU level, generating economies of scale.

EU intervention stimulates recognition and quality development in the youth field, for example through accreditation of EVS structures, the development of Youthpass or the 'carrier' role of the EU youth programmes⁽⁵⁰⁾ and their influence on lifelong learning policies⁽⁵¹⁾. The existence of programmes in favour of youth adds credibility to policy processes and has triggered the development of a framework for European cooperation in the youth field. And youth programmes have widened opportunities, bringing a European dimension to the work of Member States.

There is a systemic impact too, with EU support for youth activities acting as a laboratory to test new approaches that can inspire national or regional schemes or help them develop a transnational dimension. And it enriches EU external relations by supporting people-to-people contacts and civil society development.

The EU youth programmes also bring Europe closer together. The EU can be a catalyst to partnerships between Member States and other players, 'to raise awareness of those concerned most directly — young boys and girls themselves and their parents — about what the EU can do for youth'⁽⁵²⁾. Young people's direct experience of Europe also brings it closer to their daily lives and can offer a positive image of the EU.

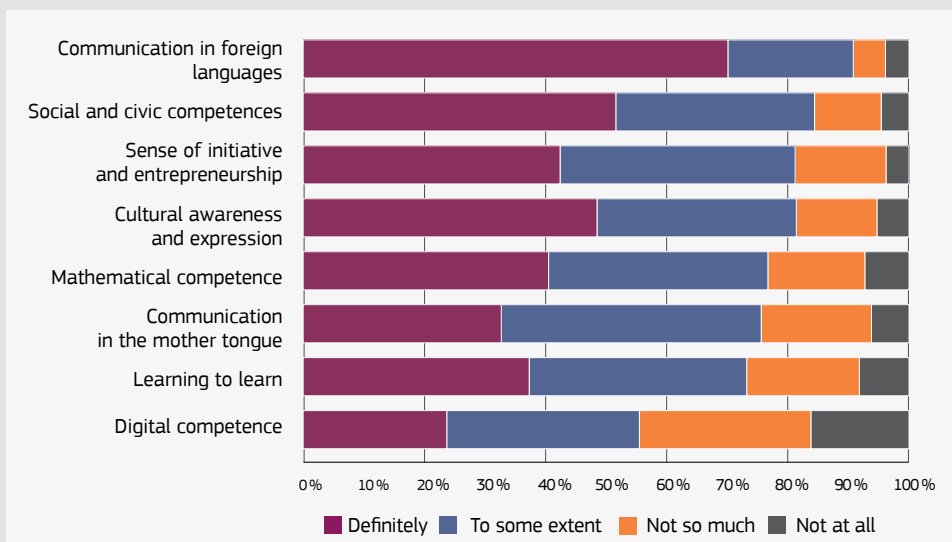
The landscape of youth work is changing, with greater recognition and visibility of youth work today. But there is still much to be done. More data is needed in order to build a comprehensive picture of its engagement, reach and actors and to allow closer evaluation of youth work practice.

Impact of Youth in Action

A 2011 survey among a representative sample of 5 300 Youth in Action participants (young people, youth workers, youth organisations) provides a picture of the impact of the programme.

- 78 %** of young people declared that they felt better prepared to participate actively in social or political issues after having participated in a Youth in Action project
- 73 %** declared they felt more European
- 92 %** considered that their participation in the project had contributed to their personal development
- 88 %** believed that their job changes have increased
- 88 %** of youth workers considered they gained skills and knowledge which they would not have developed through the participation in similar projects organised at national level
- 72 %** declared being better equipped to assure the quality of a youth project they are organising
- 73 %** of youth organisations stated the number of international projects of their structure had increased
- 80 %** considered that participating in a Youth in Action project had given them increased opportunities for development and growth as an organisation, compared to other similar projects carried out at national level

The following graph displays the average appreciation by young participants, for each of the key competences (as defined by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning), of the extent to which they have increased their competences thanks to their participation in a project supported by Youth in Action:



Demand is growing, with innovative approaches that foster both social and human capital, and with closer attention to at-risk young people and to producing evidence of successful outcomes. Recent events in Paris and Copenhagen have shed light on the need to reconnect with young people and the role youth work can play in reaching out to marginalised groups. But a balance must be maintained between responding to policy requirements and meeting the needs of young people: the value of youth work is not limited to measurable outcomes.

The level of participation in youth programmes and activities still needs attention, to avoid the risk that they fail to attract some groups — often those who might benefit most. The identity of Europe's youth worker population also merits attention, since it remains imprecise in terms of numbers, status and training. The training and guidance of youth workers will have to adapt to the changing needs of young people and to new ways of reaching out to them.

Recognition of non-formal learning has increasingly gained importance at European level, with the youth field contributing to this development. Increased cooperation at European level can definitely support youth work practice and help further realise its potential.



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joined the European Commission in 1986 after graduating from Ecole supérieure de commerce de Paris (ESCP-Europe) and working at the headquarters of Total. He moved in 1993 from the Directorate-General for the Budget to the current Directorate-General for Education and Culture, where he managed units in charge of coordination and budgetary matters. From 2006 to 2012, he was the head of unit in charge of the Youth in Action programme. From January 2013 to March 2015 he was Head of Unit for Youth; Erasmus+, in charge of EU policy and programme in the youth field.

Notes

1. Communication from the Commission to the Council: Education and training in the European Community, guidelines for the medium term: 1989-1992 (COM(89) 236 final), p. 4.
2. *The history of European cooperation in education and training — Europe in the making — an example*, European Commission, 2006.
3. COM(2001) 681, November 2001 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52001DC0681&from=EN>).
4. The open method of coordination takes place in areas which fall within the competence of the Member States, such as employment, social protection, social inclusion, education, youth and training. It is based principally on: jointly identifying and defining objectives to be achieved (adopted by the Council); jointly established measuring instruments (statistics, indicators, guidelines); and benchmarking, i.e. comparison of the Member States' performance and exchange of best practices (monitored by the Commission). Depending on the areas concerned, the open method of coordination involves so-called soft law measures which are binding on the Member States in varying degrees. However, youth policy does not entail the setting of targets, and it is up to the Member States to decide on objectives without the need for any European-level coordination of national action plans.
5. OJ C 168, 13.7.2002, pp. 2-5 ([http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32002G0713\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32002G0713(01)&from=EN)).
6. SEC(2005) 693 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52005DC0206&from=EN>).
7. OJ C 292, 24.11.2005, pp. 5-6 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2005.292.01.0005.01.ENG).
8. COM(2007) 498 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0498&from=EN>).
9. OJ C 319, 20.11.2008, pp. 8-10 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2008.319.01.0008.01.ENG).
10. SEC(2009) 545 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009SC0545&from=EN>).
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Tools

Eurodesk

<http://eurodesk.eu>

Eurodesk is an international non-profit association providing the most comprehensive and most accessible source of free information for young people about learning-mobility opportunities and the Erasmus+ programme. Today, with its backing, 1 200 youth professionals provide quality information to young people in Europe in 34 countries. It uses a variety of means: deadline reminders, a monthly bulletin, newsletters and the Eurodesk intranet. National Eurodesk centres offer support to Eurodesk multipliers online, through visits to multipliers' offices and through national meetings. Starting in 2015, Eurodesk has introduced a renewed training programme to support Eurodesk multipliers with basic knowledge, skills and values that are relevant to inform, guide and empower young people to take part in international mobility opportunities.

European Youth Portal

<http://europa.eu/youth/en>

The European Youth Portal provides information and opportunities related to the EU youth strategy, including volunteering, working, learning, participating, culture and creativity, health, social inclusion, thinking globally and travelling. A database of international volunteering opportunities gives European Voluntary Service-accredited organisations the chance to post recruitment adverts for projects. And the structured dialogue online participation platform enables young people to submit their ideas.



European good practice

Combating racism and discrimination

Sergey (24 years old), a researcher with the Jewish Foundation of Ukraine, spent a year (2008/2009) as a volunteer with the Anne Frank Stichting (Anne Frank House — AFH) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. His host is a museum which houses the secret annex where Anne Frank and her family and four friends hid for more than 2 years during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. The museum has a well-developed educational programme and disseminates teaching materials promoting a critical reflection on World War II and on what anti-Semitism and discrimination can lead to. One of the AFH's activities is the worldwide travelling exhibition Anne Frank — A History for Today, and one of its copies was on tour along the Dutch–German frontier, stimulating a cross-border dialogue between young people.

Sergey spent most of his time working at the AFH's headquarters in Amsterdam and helping to organise the exhibition in four different schools and the city hall. His role was to make logistical arrangements for the tour and train the exhibition guides, many of whom were of Moroccan-Dutch descent. Halfway through his stay he was obliged to return home to renew his visa, and whilst back in Ukraine for 1 month he helped to establish the AFH educational programme. He completed his year in Amsterdam helping with the day-to-day activities of the international department, guiding museum visitors and organising events. Because of his experience with the AFH he has found employment as a freelance historian and educator for different NGOs in Ukraine and elsewhere on racism and anti-Semitism.

Working on a daily basis in a Dutch NGO introduced Sergey to the different way in which some administrative procedures are conducted in the Netherlands. The intercultural activities of the AFH in which he was involved taught him how to combat current forms of racism and intolerance in his own country. His confidence increased, as well as his knowledge of Dutch, and he was able to assume a higher profile in the seminars organised around the exhibition. The guides trained by Sergey learned a lot from him, and the work of the AFH in general benefited from the information he gave on the wartime history of his own country, which was also faced with the horrors of anti-Semitism and intolerance under the Nazi regime.





'Working for the Anne Frank House was a great way of getting familiar with the activities of a leading European NGO and its outstanding approaches in teaching about tolerance and human rights. I am now convinced that countries like Ukraine need a stronger development of NGOs that strive for a civil society and that young people can play a significant role', he says.

A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in the Netherlands.

Project carried out by the Anne Frank Stichting (the Netherlands), in partnership with the Jewish Foundation of Ukraine.

Europe's influence on youth policy and youth work in Germany: how EU cooperation in the field of youth is Europeanising civil society

CLAUDIUS SIEBEL, HANS-GEORG WICKE, ULRIKE WISSER

Introduction

The European dimension is an essential part of any political assessment of youth work and youth policy in the 21st century in Germany. Europe plays an increasing role in defining the living environment of young people, and responsibility for promoting youth policy is borne jointly by the EU and the Member States. Our concern must be to secure the participation of children and young people in Europe. To this end, they must be in a position to deal with the impact of and future challenges posed by social change, use the opportunities offered by European integration and actively contribute to the development of their societies.

In this context, a purely national basis for youth policy or individual sectors would, in itself, not provide a satisfactory solution in an increasingly European, and indeed global, environment. Any national youth policy should, in the structuring of the environment for young people, take into account young people in other European countries. The same applies the other way round, however: a European youth strategy which does not also take into account the situation of young people and the reality of youth work, welfare and policy in the Member States cannot have a lasting impact.

The relationship between youth policy in Germany and Europe is therefore a two-way street. Europe has more influence today on national youth policy. At the same time, there is a framework in which German stakeholders influence European strategy development and use input from Europe for the purposes of greater political profiling and for the further development of their own work.

New forms of youth policy cooperation

In 2009, the Federal Ministry for the Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the responsible ministry in Germany, formulated new principles for international youth policy at federal level⁽¹⁾. These confirm that European youth policy is an important component of national youth policy; it contributes to further developing national policies for and with young people. They clearly endorse the importance of bilateral and multilateral youth policy cooperation within the EU.

The goals of this national youth policy with a European outlook include:

- (i) making better use of international experiences and input for the further development of national youth policy;
- (ii) organising cross-border reciprocal learning as a mutual process.

A youth policy for Germany

The debate in Germany has received a boost since 2011 with the development of and discussions about a modern youth policy. An attempt has been made to create a new basis for this, known as an independent youth policy⁽²⁾. The existence of the EU youth strategy has helped to support this process. Right from the start, the benefit of enriching the national discourse with experiences from abroad and critically examining national considerations and approaches by comparing them with international findings has been recognised. International cooperation and peer learning form an integral part of the discussions about youth policy in Germany. The goal should be not only to learn from the experiences of other countries but, together with them, also to advance the debate about modern youth policy and take it forward at European level.



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EU youth strategy

The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (EU youth strategy) has had an impact on the youth policy debate in Germany, too. This impact has not been confined to the development of an independent youth policy but has led to an active process of implementing the EU youth strategy in Germany, which has been under way since 2010. The implementation of this European political strategy has enriched the national debate about the structuring of a youth policy for Germany and enhanced synergies.

The EU youth programmes

The contribution of the Youth in Action programme to the transfer of policy and expert goals from the EU youth strategy to national action was exploited energetically right from the start of the implementation process. In cooperation with the main youth welfare stakeholders, the national agency in Germany created the interfaces between politics and the programme, with the aim of using European input for the further development of national youth policy, whether through exchanges of experts, peer learning or the application of European know-how to national discussion processes.

Implementation of the EU youth strategy in Germany

The relevance of an EU youth strategy for national policy becomes clear when European objectives can be successfully integrated at national, regional and local level. At the core of this integration work is the issue of how European youth policy and youth welfare goals and content can, at the various levels, add value, motivate, stimulate further development and be relevant in practice.

Germany wished to take up this challenge and is using youth policy cooperation over the period 2010-2018 to implement the EU youth strategy in its own way.

The federal government and the *Länder*, inspired by the concept of the open method of coordination as an instrument of EU policy government, have developed a model of cooperation between the central and regional levels in Germany.

The federal government and the *Länder* take the view that the added value of the EU youth strategy lies in the use of European input for further development of quality practice and policy in the youth field.

They agreed on two implementation phases in which their cooperation should bear fruit. Initially, the German implementation concept does not provide for activities in all eight fields of action but concentrates on those subjects where the youth welfare service can act and make a difference in its own right.

The federal government and the *Länder* agreed on three fields where European influences, proposals and strategies can benefit the praxis-based and policy development of youth welfare services:

- (i) social integration and successful transitions into work;
- (ii) encouraging participation and strengthening democracy;
- (iii) upgrading and recognising informal and non-formal education and training (with a particular focus on youth work).

These subjects were not new to German youth policy but reflected contemporary social needs. The aim was to take a joint look at issues and potential solutions using input from the EU. This was to be encouraged by stepping up the European element in the various fields of action, for example by:

- (i) opening up Europe as a field of learning for young people (in particular for new target groups such as disadvantaged young people);
- (ii) encouraging the European mobility of youth workers and their training in Europe-related work;
- (iii) constructing and developing European cooperation and networking activities;
- (iv) initiating and promoting European peer-learning processes;
- (v) bringing experiences and know-how gleaned from European debates into practice in Germany (and vice versa);
- (vi) striving for a cross-sectoral approach, reflecting the EU youth strategy.

For example, in the area of 'Social inclusion of disadvantaged young people', Europe offers new learning environments and the opportunity to learn valuable skills through international mobility for young people and youth workers. International mobility should be used to try new ways of motivating young people who are socially or otherwise disadvantaged and making them more proactive, with the aim of facilitating their reintegration into education, training or employment.

An important element of the EU youth strategy's 'Participation' strand was considered to be making Europe a reality for young people and people working in the youth field. This includes international youth

policy projects facilitating a European exchange on the subjects of participation and democratisation, and further developing structured dialogue in Germany and Europe as a core instrument for the involvement of young people and youth organisations in EU youth strategy.

The central government and the *Länder* are pursuing, as an important objective of the third field, the aim of recognition and, where relevant, use of skills and/or educational experience obtained outside school in the context of non-formal and informal places of learning. This means, on the one hand, that young people learn to recognise and acknowledge what they have and can learn in the context of the opportunities offered by youth welfare. On the other hand, if educational experiences are to be useful, this also implies that they must be recognised by third parties. Greater recognition of youth work should therefore be sought, and the results and contribution to education and training made by youth work should become more visible, in the context of implementing the EU youth strategy in Germany.

The cooperation between the central government and the *Länder* mainly concerns requirements that are to be transferred and developed in the agreed fields. It was also agreed to exchange experiences on the basic questions and tackle challenges facing both central government and the *Länder* (e.g. assistance programmes, legal and administrative obstacles, integration of the municipal level, etc.).

Joint peer-learning projects and activities to publicise outcomes and the evaluation of the joint implementation process and feedback of outcomes on the shaping of EU youth strategy in the future are also subjects for cooperation between central government and the *Länder*.

Parties involved in the implementation in Germany

The central government, represented by the BMFSFJ, has contributed its own programmes and initiatives ('Jugend Stärken', 'Partizipation fördern', 'Dialog Internet'). It has also initiated and implemented multilateral cooperation projects (peer learning). The inclusion of civil society in the form of a national dialogue was particularly significant.

The federal government sustains the process through the Service and Transfer Agency EU Youth Strategy at Jugend für Europa, the coordination point for the structured dialogue at the German Federal Youth Council, the academic support at the German Youth Institute (DJI) and the evaluation of the structured dialogue at the Centre for Applied Policy Research (CAP).



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Cooperation with partner countries in Europe and the wider world was sought in five multilateral cooperation projects on Germany's priority themes. Ministries, experts and other actors worked together in these peer-learning processes. They exchanged appropriate national strategies and programmes from the priority fields and examined whether approaches, methods and experiences of others could be used for their own practice.

The Federal Government Advisory Board on the Implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany, created in 2010, plays a central role in providing advice and expert support for implementing the EU youth strategy at federal level. It comprises representatives of public and private youth welfare organisations, municipal associations, charities and youth research institutions.

The *Bundesländer*, represented by the senior regional youth authorities, ensure that their offers correspond to a joint framework of action for their fundamental youth policy tasks. These include providing information to municipalities and other agencies on the subjects of and opportunities for action in the EU youth strategy and on German and European practice models. The *Länder* advise stakeholders on all questions relating to the Europeanisation of youth welfare practice, offer further training for youth workers and enhance mobility opportunities.

Structured dialogue

The EU youth strategy is intended to be realised in an ongoing structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations. The structured dialogue has been implemented in exemplary fashion in Germany for several years and is now also associated with implementation of the EU youth strategy. To ensure this, the structured dialogue in Germany is supported by a national coordination point and a national working group. The national coordination point, under the auspices of the German Federal Youth Council, provides information about the structured dialogue and advises stakeholders in the development and implementation of structured dialogue projects. It carries out the consultations and disseminates the outcomes throughout Germany and in the European strategic debates within the EU institutions.

The national working group advises the coordination point on the implementation of the structured dialogue in Germany.

Decentralised projects and activities conducted by stakeholders at local and regional level are important elements of the structured dialogue's implementation in Germany. These were financed almost exclusively by the EU's Youth in Action programme. The ongoing financial support for these participatory projects from the European youth programme since 2007 has been also essential for the debate on sustainable youth involvement overall. Without these funds and the ongoing assistance in the context of Erasmus+: Youth in Action, it would not be possible to run those participatory projects of the structured dialogue in Germany.

Interaction between European and German youth policy

We have demonstrated above the clear impact of European cooperation in the youth field on youth policy developments in Germany. However, youth policy cooperation in Europe is not a top-down political strategy but, rather, a two-way street, which must also be inspired from the bottom up.

Youth policy cooperation in Europe has always been characterised by the efforts of the various stakeholders to maintain the impetus of working together. The European Commission initiates policy and the Member States make the related decisions at European level.

The following section illustrates the youth policy interactions between the EU and Germany on the basis of EU youth strategy implementation and the debate on youth policy development in Germany (independent youth policy)⁽³⁾.

As outlined above, the BMFSFJ has, since 2010, been actively implementing the EU youth strategy for Germany. In 2011, it presented a concept called the independent youth policy, the aim of which was to change existing policy in this field.

The EU youth strategy was certainly not a blueprint for the development of an independent youth policy in Germany, but it provided a wealth of ideas for a comprehensive, coherent youth policy concept in terms of, above all, content, structures or procedures.

The EU youth strategy is both a traditional subject-related and a cross-sectoral policy. An independent youth policy for Germany as a coherent concept will have to be both subject related and cross sectoral too. In the independent youth policy, the three main themes are reflected — within a wider context: social integration and the transition to work; participation; and recognition of non-formal education and training.

The fact that both processes concern themselves with the same themes is no coincidence, but makes it clear that the same issues and needs come up in youth policy at both national and European levels. It was and is important to the main stakeholders of both strategies to determine interfaces, actively use the opportunities to inspire each other and generate outcomes by way of the interaction between them. The influence of the European agenda on German youth policy is particularly clear in the area of 'Educational experiences for young people through international mobility'. The subject of mobility has been significantly upgraded over recent years as a result of the European debate. Educational experience through mobility is a subject that attracts increasing attention in child and youth welfare structures and institutions. Existing programmes such as the German programme 'Aktiv in der Region' have been opened up to measures to promote mobility. Many *Länder* and municipalities take part in youth policy initiatives such as JIVE (Jugendarbeit international — Vielfalt erleben [international youth work — experience diversity]) or generate their own concepts. These have a strong impact on parts of youth welfare which, in the past, have not taken this approach. The subject has thus moved from the fringes towards the centre of youth welfare policy. This political shift in awareness was acted on in the development of the independent youth policy. The BMFSFJ has set up a model project entitled 'Facilitating educational experiences through

international mobility for young people'. This has highlighted a fundamental concern of EU youth strategy (promoting the mobility of young people and multipliers) in German youth policy.

The process of developing an independent youth policy should, right from the start, be accompanied by a European peer-learning process so that, together with other countries, experiences on the theory and practice of youth policy can be exchanged, youth policy approaches further developed and recommendations drawn up for youth policy in the Member States and in Europe. Against this backdrop, the Federal Ministry of Youth created a multilateral cooperation project, the European peer learning on youth policy⁽⁴⁾, in late 2011 and brought a total of six further Member States or regions on board (the Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden and the Belgian Flemish Community).

The list of the interactions between European and German youth policy could be continued. It should be emphasised that interactions exist, are desirable and should definitely be part of successful policy design in the youth field.

The Europeanisation of civil society

Civil society in the youth field in Germany consists mainly of organisations, associations, clubs, youth initiatives and public bodies. These are private and local public youth welfare agencies which, together, provide facilities and services for children and young people and are active in the youth policy field.

The input generated at European and national level from the EU youth strategy and the EU youth programmes consists of the promotion of international mobility, the exchange of best practice, the further development of child and youth welfare facilities and structures through peer-learning and the pushing forward of European collaboration in the youth field.

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Strengthening the European dimension of youth welfare offers twofold added value (Friesenhahn, Kniephoff and Knebel, 2011). Firstly, practical value: meetings, exchanges and comparisons with other countries can reveal alternative approaches, which can be used to improve one's own practices. Secondly, these meetings take a critical look at a country's own theory and practice, thereby providing the opportunity to consider the situation in one's own country from a European perspective, or at least from a certain distance. This has analytical value.

European cooperation in the youth field can, in analytical and practical terms, enrich and provide support for national youth policy and welfare and help to make locally, regionally and nationally oriented practice in this field more European. This European input relates in particular to the use of European debates for expert practice in Germany and the Europeanisation of youth welfare structures and institutions and their ways of working.

The multilateral character means that, at European level, many expert debates experience fewer political and structural constraints and allow a glimpse of other strategies and solutions, and are therefore often much more innovative. Therein lies the value of the EU youth strategy and the additional cooperation in the field of youth for youth policy in Germany. A European dimension can therefore also mean more strongly and more visibly integrating European political strategies and perspectives in the youth policy discourse and in programmes and measures in Germany, and enriching the national practice with European input.

Ideas and proposals of this kind lead to a new approach to youth welfare, in terms of its target groups, stakeholders and their organisations but also its content, opportunities and expertise. This leads also to a change in youth policy perceptions and concepts.

Overall, we can say that European/international work always generates a 'Productivity of difference' (Walther and Treptow, 2010). It creates the opportunity to reflect anew and in a different way about oneself, take a step back from one's own convictions and reality and create the conditions for change. Other opportunities and normalities can be discovered and possibly considered as alternatives.

Professional training for those who — in whatever capacity — work with young people is the key to a more Europe-oriented youth (welfare) policy and will have to be at the heart of any Europeanisation strategy. Europe's particular role is to develop the hitherto neglected

European dimension in the education and (further) training of multipliers in schools, universities and the youth welfare sector.

The youth welfare sector must therefore open itself to Europe and let this become the new reality. Its role is to support the Europeanisation of its structures and institutions, ways of working and offers.

The main tools in this process of Europeanising civil society are the European assistance programmes. The new Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme ensures that Europe will continue to be brought closer to young people as a learning environment; mobility will continue to provide learning experiences for both young people and youth workers; and networks and European partnerships will be created. The importance of the EU's youth policy action programmes for international youth work and child and youth welfare in Germany has grown continuously over recent years. The effect on young people, practice and policy is now undeniable, and is demonstrated in many different ways (inter alia Feldmann-Wojtachnia, Otten and Tham, 2011; Chehata, 2010). The interim evaluation of Youth in Action in Germany has already shown that the programme is contributing to disseminating and communicating specialist content and goals from the EU youth strategy to civil society in the youth field. It has proven to be particularly important to conceive and implement activities and events in cooperation with key actors in child and youth welfare. This has led to greater transparency, synchronisation, the active involvement of independent organisations and a sustainable increase in awareness of the relevance the EU's youth strategies have for national youth policy.

However, the programme has also been found to have an important support and motivation function for specific, expert work within the EU's youth priority areas (e.g. participation, non-formal and informal education, mobility, voluntary commitment, social integration). This applies not only to projects and individual initiatives but also to organisation-related, programme-based and systemic further development in the youth field.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, youth policy cooperation in Europe has taken a quantum leap forward and ushered in a paradigm shift. The EU youth strategy is seen as a fundamentally positive element to support a forward-looking youth policy at EU level and in the Member States.

However, those responsible for youth policy in the Member States must further embrace cooperation in this field and pursue its substantive and, above all, practical development. This will happen if the EU's youth policy agenda and its further development are geared more than in the

past to the needs of national youth policies. Yet, at the same time, the following is also clear: European youth policy is somewhat different from national youth policy and requires focused political action, a specific approach and its own tools and structures.

Europe must also appreciate the need to make support for youth welfare a greater political priority. Europe is far from a situation where all Member States provide youth welfare with appropriate institutions and agencies to implement policy and offer genuine opportunities for young people. Even where such a situation does exist, it may not be sustainable in the long term, of sufficient extent or of the desired quality with the expected outcomes. It is therefore an important element of any European strategy to support the Member States in the (further) development of a policy for children and young people and the development of the appropriate structures and offers. Providing professional training for those who work with young people is a key part of this.

The EU assistance programmes have a key role to play in policy development and in the dissemination of youth policy measures in practice. The EU action programmes for young people have contributed to an understanding of youth policy in the EU. They offer a way of motivating the Member States to reflect on youth policy and to question and, if necessary, adjust their own policies and ideas. The new, integrated Erasmus+ programme offers an opportunity to draw youth policy out of its niche and showcase it in a wider, cross-sectoral policy environment. The youth strand of Erasmus+ will still have to demonstrate its effectiveness and generate specific areas of action and visibility.

The conditions for the joint shaping of European youth policy will have to be created in national youth policy, too. National youth policies must seize the opportunities for cooperation in Europe and help to develop a European space where the conditions for young people's successful growth into adulthood are created. In this sense, national youth policies must not be inward-looking but must always consider European dimensions. If the implementation of the EU youth strategy were watered down and insufficient value placed on the further development of European youth policy, European input would be absent and national youth policy would suffer. Germany too needs a European youth strategy for Europe-based policy action.

To make youth welfare in European society sustainable in the future, European youth policy needs to be showcased, a modern national youth policy must consider European trends and expert input and the practice among youth policy stakeholders must be open to Europe.

The Erasmus+ programme, with its autonomous youth strand, is an essential instrument for enhancing non-formal education and training and for further developing youth welfare in Europe.



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Notes

1. *Eckpunkte — Internationale Jugendpolitik des BMFSFJ: Begegnung fördern, Erfahrungen nutzen, gemeinsam gestalten*, September 2009.
2. *An alliance for youth — Concept paper: development of and prospects for an independent youth policy*, BMFSFJ, Berlin, May 2011.
3. The debate about the development of a youth policy for Germany is not yet concluded.
4. The project was concluded on 25 November 2013 with a youth policy evening at the Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU. The outcomes of the project can be consulted in detail in the brochure *A new youth policy for Europe — Towards the empowerment and inclusion for all young people — European peer learning on youth policy (2011-2013)* (https://www.jugendpolitikineuropa.de/downloads/4-20-3492/131128_JfE_MKP_NewYouthPolicy_Screen.pdf).

Further reading

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Tools

EU youth strategy

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219(01)&from=EN)

The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field for 2010-2018 aims to boost opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market and to encourage them to participate actively in society. It covers eight fields of action: education and training; employment and entrepreneurship; health and well-being; participation; voluntary activities; social inclusion; youth and the world; and creativity and culture. And it operates in line with evidence-based policymaking; mutual and peer learning; regular progress reporting; dissemination of results and monitoring; structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations; and mobilisation of EU programmes and funds. The youth strategy framework sees youth work as a support for all these fields, and it promotes cross-sectoral cooperation as an underlying principle.

The work is carried out primarily through the Erasmus+ programme, a framework for political cooperation among countries and for increasing the visibility of young people and their organisations.

An EU youth report every 3 years evaluates progress with the strategy and helps set priorities for the next work cycle.



European good practice

We see no borders

The project aimed to give young people with disabilities the chance to live an international and educational experience of solidarity and get to know new languages, cultures and social realities. It was also designed to raise awareness about equality and accessibility among young people and to normalise disability by involving young visually impaired people in youth activities. And it attracted the interest of local visually impaired youngsters in the EVS and the Youth in Action programme, and the activities organised at the Youth House of Granada (Spain).

Four young visually impaired Europeans from Germany, Poland, Romania and Russia worked together as volunteers at the cultural association Las Niñas del Tul in Granada for 3 months in 2010. In schools and youth centres across the province, they organised cultural, sport and awareness-raising activities and EVS information sessions. The activities included blindfold sports such as using a football with bells inside, exercises such as preparing a coffee and finding a table in a room in total darkness or identifying tastes and smells blindfolded, chess with a Braille board, a special showing of an accessible film with audio description and use of computers and mobile phones with screen reader software, Braille reading and writing material. Information sessions allowed volunteers to explain their own EVS experience, their fears before arrival and how they managed to overcome these fears.

The benefits for the volunteers included positive pre-professional experience, reinforcement of autonomy and ability to adapt to environments, personal development through an experience of solidarity, cultural enrichment and acquisition of new skills.

The specific competences that the volunteers acquired included improved oral and written communication skills in their own languages, from writing reports or giving interviews, and — since most children and young people they met had no knowledge of any foreign language — in Spanish; they even gave a press conference at a national conference in Madrid. They managed a budget and administration and their digital competence was upgraded by having to design posters publicising their activities. And they learnt to learn by setting their own learning objectives at the beginning of the project and becoming aware of their





achievements and continuing learning needs. The reflection and shared learning experience among the participants was supported by a mentor and the Youthpass. The experience of living in a foreign country, far from their familiar social environment, reinforced their self-sufficiency and self-esteem. Adapting to a new country, with different traditions, habits, rules and ways of working, boosted their cultural awareness.

The project also had an impact on the local community. It helped to break social barriers and prejudices against people with disability by making other youngsters aware of the importance of focusing on people's abilities instead of their disabilities and promoting tolerance and respect for diversity among children, youngsters and adults involved directly or indirectly in the project. Local young visually impaired people had never before heard of this chance of living an international experience through the Youth in Action programme. The opportunity of learning about the programme directly from these four European volunteers awoke interest in many of them and encouraged them to get involved in similar projects.

A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Spain.

Project carried out by Las Niñas del Tul (Spain), in partnership with Asociatia Pontes (Romania), Polski Związek Niewidomych (Poland), Paralympic Sport Centre (Russia) and Deutsche Blinden- und Sehbehinderter Verband e.V. (Germany).



Legitimacy, confidence and authority? A quarter of a century of EU youth engagement and the structured dialogue for youth policy and practice

HOWARD WILLIAMSON

Introduction

For most young people a generation and more ago, Europe was an elusive concept — both physically and emotionally. Few had been ‘elsewhere’ and identities were bound up principally with local and national affiliation, rarely anything beyond. Certainly, there was little awareness of wider social and political issues in a European context. I was no different, at least not until I was accidentally engaged in an informal ‘exchange’ with a 16-year-old young man who spoke only French, and whose family lived in Senegal. His father had had an exchange with a man down the road from where I lived, some 20 years before. What an experience that must have been! I was the 15-year-old boy in the street closest in age to Dominique and so was asked to make him welcome. We played table tennis, smoked Gitanes and did our best to communicate in whatever ways we could. It was a process of shared discovery, and he was keen to reciprocate my hospitality. As a result, the following year, when I was 16, I spent my summer holiday in a large house in the south of France, learning fluent teenage street French (which was completely unacceptable for my subsequent formal examinations back in England!) and starting to understand something of French culture and cuisine, and the relationship of France to its former colonies in north Africa. I rode *mobylettes*, listened to Françoise Hardy and Johnny Hallyday, played cards (*coeurs*, *trèfles*, *carreaux*, *piques* remain etched in my mind) and generally ‘hung around’ with the other kids in the village. It was my first time in another country.

Some of my contemporaries went on skiing trips abroad, but they were the privileged ones. Two did Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), one in Fiji and the other in Kenya, but we never saw them again and got no sense of their experience. Most of my friends at school remained positively insular and isolated from anything beyond the United Kingdom.

Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même. For many British young people today, while physical contact with continental Europe may be more frequent, emotional connection and identification may remain tenuous. Unsubstantiated and vague hostilities towards Europe persist, premised upon ill-informed stereotypes and myths about bureaucracy and regulation coming from Brussels. British young people's exposure to 'Europe' is often as accidental as mine had been all those years ago, and when it does occur, there is always a risk that it confirms prejudice and defensiveness rather than opens minds and cultivates curiosity.

That risk also exists within the formal programmes that have been established by the European Commission, since 1988, to promote exchange, experience and understanding amongst young people throughout Europe. But it is a risk that is usually minimised through careful preparation, planning and support. As a result, young people — some 2.5 million — have engaged in positive and purposeful exchanges, youth initiatives and voluntary service over the past 25 years. The European project in relation to young people has, arguably,

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come of age. At the same time, as opportunity-focused youth policy is shrinking in some Member States, the European youth agenda around investing and empowering becomes all the more pivotal in helping ensure that young people are necessary and valued partners in shaping the Europe of the future (see Williamson, 2013a). And this requires positive action around youth participation in the present.

Evolution

The contemporary framework for the debate on youth policy and development at the European level has been a quarter of a century in the making. The emergence of the Youth for Europe programme, shortly after the establishment of the first Erasmus programme for student mobility, was the first tentative step. And despite criticism about the slow pace of progress, the journey has been relatively speedy. Less than two decades ago, it was not permissible to refer to a concept such as 'European citizenship'; indeed, research conducted in 1997 that had explored the extent to which young people identified with Europe through experience of EU youth programmes was required to refer to 'citizenship with a European dimension', though on publication the term 'active citizenship in the European Union' was adopted (see European Commission, 1998).

The first real statement on European youth policy was attempted around the same time, at the youth ministers' conference organised by the Council of Europe in Bucharest in 1996. Even the landmark European Commission White Paper on youth launched in 2001 did not seek to claim a policy position, despite its commitment to promoting youth information, youth participation, youth voluntary activities and a greater understanding of youth (see European Commission, 2001). It was only 10 years ago that the European Commission finally proclaimed something that might be considered as its European youth policy — in 2005, during the production of the European Youth Pact, with its focus on employment, education and family life⁽¹⁾ (not dissimilar to priorities within the current EU youth strategy).

Three years earlier, the Council of Europe had published a synthesis of its first seven international reviews of national youth policy⁽²⁾. This proposed a framework for youth policy (see Williamson, 2002), recognising the diversity of youth policies within Member States, but urging attention to what was being done for young people. It recommended a focus on concepts of youth and youth policy; legislation and budgets; structures for delivery; domains of youth policy; cross-cutting issues (including the EU White Paper themes of youth participation and youth

information); facilitators such as youth research and professional training, and mechanisms for review, monitoring and evaluation. Only a few years later, however, the Council of Europe muddied its own waters by publishing a very different document entitled *A European framework of youth policy* (Siurala, 2006), which contained quite different reflections, arguments and orientation.

Strains and tensions emerge in any discussion of youth policy in Europe because — mirroring the many manifestations and interpretations of Europe — there are many perspectives on and understandings of youth policy in general and of European youth policy in particular. The confusion was compounded towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century when both the Council of Europe and the European Commission revised their youth strategies for the next decade. The Council of Europe's Agenda 2020, launched in 2008 (Council of Europe, 2008), prioritised human rights and democracy, living together in diverse societies and the social inclusion of young people⁽³⁾. The European Union's 'An EU strategy for youth — Investing and empowering: A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities', published a year later (European Commission, 2009), focused on opportunities in education and employment, access to participation and solidarity between the generations⁽⁴⁾.

These strategies are not in conflict with one another. But they need to be taken into account to ensure that policy, provision and practice are guided by a coherent and equitable value base and by a commitment to action. Both have at their heart the promotion of rights and of participation, the combating of discrimination and of exclusion and the enhancement of skills and of competence for effective engagement with the labour market and civil society. Underpinning all of these is a commitment to mobility, exchange and dialogue. The shared experience of the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the youth field — now partly enshrined in a partnership between the two institutions — holds out some promise that such commitment can be fulfilled.

The rich legacy of training courses, study sessions, exchange programmes, expert meetings, research symposia, political debate, policy development and active youth participation can now be attached to the strategic frameworks. Nowhere is this more apparent, for good or ill, than in the approach adopted by the European Union within the trios of presidencies and the process of the structured dialogue on thematic issues across those trios.

European Council presidency trios and the structured dialogue

Each presidency has a youth conference, incorporating both a youth event and a meeting of the directors-general for youth in the Member States. Before the inception of the trios of EU presidencies, the final solo event was held by Finland in 2006, in Hyvinkää. It prompted some independent and critical academic research. This distinguished between the adult-young (young adults already well-versed in the European youth agenda, usually from youth organisations) and the young-young (young people involved for the first time and often quite bemused by the experience), and reported manifest tensions between them (see Laine and Gretschel, 2009). The analysis highlighted a dilemma for such events and raised some serious questions about their purpose. If they were to be a 6-monthly step towards the development of a European (Union) youth policy agenda, the adult-young were needed. But if they were to be an exercise in promoting awareness of what Europe (namely the European Commission) was doing and might do for young people, then a broader constituency of young people needed to be engaged, who would often be the young-young, venturing onto the terrain of European youth policy for the first time. Clearly, different approaches to the organisation of — and aspirations for — the presidency events are needed, depending on its purpose.

Since 2006, presidencies have operated in trios. And since 2010, following the launch of the current EU youth strategy, each trio has hosted a thematically focused structured dialogue, with each of the three presidencies giving priority to a substantive youth policy issue within the trio's broader overarching theme. For Spain, Belgium and Hungary during 2010-2011, the predictable and pressing theme was

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youth employment. During 2011-2012, the theme for Cyprus, Denmark and Poland was the participation of young people in democratic life. And the focus of the trio (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece) has been on social inclusion⁽⁵⁾.

The structured dialogue has had a long gestation since 2001, but it has become a mechanism for the voice of young people to make a contribution to policy and decision-making at the European level. The major driver behind it has been the European Youth Forum (Youth Forum Jeunesse, or YFJ), the representative and democratic voice of youth throughout the European Union and beyond. The central and occasionally dominant role of the YFJ has been criticised, with accusations of consolidating control by the adult-young, of indulging in ill-informed unstructured monologue on issues the adult-young understand little about (such as the plight of NEETs — young people not in education, employment or training) or in which the adult-young have a vested interest (such as participation in democratic life). It has also been suggested that the tight process of the structured dialogue is a paradoxical development when youth participation and the exercise of youth 'voice' should be rendered more open, accessible, fluid and flexible by technology and by social media (see Siurala and Turkia, 2012).

To its credit, however, the YFJ has worked hard to engineer a process that seeks to reflect the perspectives of young people, including many young-young. In 2013, the European Commission, along with the European Youth Forum, reviewed the process and ratified the inclusion of international non-governmental youth organisations in the process. This recommendation was not, however, enshrined in the Council resolution produced during the Greek Presidency of the European Council, much to the chagrin of the European Youth Forum⁽⁶⁾. Yet it is always wise to recall and celebrate progress, as well as to express concern about the lack of it. And the establishment and execution of the structured dialogue, with some caveats, has to date been a considerable achievement.

The process of the structured dialogue

The technical procedures of the structured dialogue are convoluted, a protracted cycle of activity starting at the centre and the top, fanning out to all Member States in order to reach the ground, and then returning to the centre for incorporation into the policy debate through formal declarations and resolutions. But the structured dialogue has in this way 'become an established process for participatory policymaking in the youth field among the 27 [sic] EU Member States' (youthpolicy.org).

The overarching theme for each trio of European Council presidencies is agreed by EU youth ministers. Putting it into operation (along with the inner cycle during each individual presidency) is then the responsibility of the presidency trio countries, the European Commission and the European Youth Forum. This group frames the questions which guide national consultations that are coordinated by national working groups chaired, typically, by national youth councils.

The national working groups have representatives from across youth policy, youth research and youth practice — the so-called magic triangle (see Chisholm, 2006): state officials from the youth sector, researchers in the youth field, youth workers, youth organisations and local/regional youth councils. The results of the consultations are submitted to the European steering committee of the structured dialogue and collated as input into the documents for each presidency youth conference. Youth representatives and policymakers at these events deliberate further and produce recommendations, in the form of a declaration, that inform subsequent resolutions of the Council of the European Union or conclusions adopted by EU ministers responsible for youth.

This systematic process conveys a powerful symbolism about the place of young people in platforms for decision-making in the youth field. It also provides a real opportunity for young people to shape the agenda for youth policy at the European level. But it also carries risks. Young people's ideas may be innovative and regenerative; they can also become bland and repetitive. Recurrent calls for improved labour market prospects, greater autonomy for young people and greater policy coherence — all absolutely legitimate aspirations of the young, especially in the current climate of austerity — can start to lose their bite if they are articulated too often. However, if these are the central issues of concern to young people in Europe, the structured dialogue has no alternative but to reiterate them vociferously. The repetition can certainly also be seen as reinforcement of core demands and aspirations.

Of more concern is the legitimacy of the process, the confidence that can be attached to the priorities identified by the young people concerned and the authority of the evidence presented to back these demands. Of course, at one level, these questions are not disputed: the process has been agreed democratically and involves the democratic structures of youth representation in Europe. But youth organisations are not the only platform for youth voice, even if they claim a strong mandate. The inclusion of international youth NGOs in the structured dialogue process is an acknowledgement of the possible merit of other forms of youth voice. Such different perspectives have, conventionally, not been entertained by the European Youth Forum, which fiercely defends its privileged role in the process (and executes

its responsibilities with impressive professional diligence). Nevertheless, the distinction between adult-young and young-young should not be overlooked: in Hyvinkää, the newcomers to the youth participation exercise were alienated not by the adults present but by the perceived-as-smug adult-young who, too often, treated their naïve and inexperienced younger counterparts with arrogance and disdain.

Democratic representation, which the European Youth Forum discharges par excellence, does not have to be the only game in town; other forms of youth participation are conceivably capable of bringing alternative perspectives and competing voices to the table. Consideration might be given to participation by those from particular subcategories of youth in order to elicit views from groups of young people with specific experiences or in specific circumstances (such as young offenders or young people with disabilities). New forms of online youth participation might also merit exploration⁽⁷⁾.

This leads to a second question concerning the confidence that should be accorded to recommendations of the kind produced through the structured dialogue. They may reflect the position and perspective of significant populations of young people whose views were canvassed, but that may not be enough. While internships have become a staple of transition routes to the labour market for educated professional young adults, even the expression is largely unknown to the vast majority of young people. So a focus on the quality, duration, remuneration and destination of internships within the structured dialogue conclusions on youth employment can appear disproportionately out of balance, and even a sign of distorted self-interest. These



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matters are naturally high on the agenda of organised youth. But conspicuously absent from the agenda are many rudimentary concerns and anxieties expressed by different groups of young people — the stigma of criminal records in the quest by young offenders for any form of employment, the built design of the local environment and local transport services for young people with disabilities, the financial and human support that is so often missing for young people leaving public care. These are young people at the extreme edges of social exclusion and least likely to be active citizens: yet their voices are rarely heard.

The authority of the items that appear in the structured dialogue's joint conclusions and declarations can also be questioned. The relative importance of input from academic youth researchers and from young people themselves, based on their own experience, is hotly debated, and the divisions are neatly exemplified in the frequent discussions within the structured dialogue on autonomy. Youth organisations invariably seek mechanisms that promote and allow for greater youth autonomy and self-determination; youth research points to young people's need for more support, guidance and structured pathways to adulthood. Both positions have some validity — for different groups of young people. They are not mutually exclusive, and both can be positioned on a progressive continuum. But the views of democratically mandated youth organisations (notably, in this discussion, the European Youth Forum) occasionally run counter to the evidence available to unrepresentative youth researchers with no democratic mandate — whose knowledge is often subordinated to the authority of the youth organisations. This may be good democracy, but it does not make for good policy and, in some instances, may undermine confidence in other broader issues on which all parties agree. The view that youth organisations should receive sustainable, long-term financial support on the grounds, that they are the major providers of non-formal education (Belgian Presidency 2010 joint recommendations) is one case in point: they are certainly major providers but almost certainly not the largest providers. The European Youth Forum's aims are understandable, but the contention is false — even allowing for varying definitions of non-formal education and for the legitimacy of arguing for more sustainable funding for youth organisations. The point is that false claims risk undermining the persuasiveness and plausibility of other recommendations that are more strongly grounded both in youth aspiration and in evidence from youth research.

Celebrating the structured dialogue

Notwithstanding the concerns expressed above, the structured dialogue — which has now moved into its fourth trio of deliberations, under the Presidencies of Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg, on the theme of youth empowerment — has been an important step for youth participation and the youth policy agenda. There are strong justifications for youth participation, although the term is ill-used and too often casually invoked, even if it is a key element of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC Article 12 on the rights of children and young people to have their voice heard on matters that affect their lives). And, more pragmatically, it is an engine for combating the democratic deficit, it provides the opportunity to practice active citizenship, it helps to anchor democracy, respect and mutuality between the generations and — possibly the most critical point in the context of this article — it guarantees better youth policy and practice. Young people inject experiences, perspectives and aspirations that may often not have been considered by the political establishment — and without which policy may face unexpected pitfalls or fail to realise its objectives.

The European Commission likes to highlight the routine involvement of up to 15 000 young people in the national consultations on the structured dialogue. It is an incontestable achievement in youth participation — a coming of age in just over 21 years, first through programmes and then through policy, of a process that has produced real partnership and engagement with young people. No one can argue with that. The Council resolution that confirmed the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) formally recognised young people as key actors in society who should be considered as an important resource. It asserted the importance of defending the right of young people to be involved and to participate in the drafting of policies that affect them through a permanent structured dialogue between decision-makers, young people and youth organisations.

The structured dialogue that commenced formally in 2010⁽⁶⁾ is vital in helping to ensure that the voice of young people is an integral feature of the youth policymaking process. After three trios, across nine presidencies, key themes have emerged, and Table 1 lists those that have been repeated within trios and those that span trios, suggesting they are central to the preoccupations and concerns of young people in modern Europe.

The most repeated concerns and demands expressed by young people through the structured dialogue

- (i) Promotion of human rights and the combating of discrimination
- (ii) Flexibility and security to allow for combining employment with education, training, voluntary activities and private life
- (iii) Strengthening political, social and cultural youth participation
- (iv) Strengthening support for youth organisations
- (v) Support, information, advice and guidance in transitions from education to the labour market
- (vi) Recognition of competences gained through non-formal learning, youth work and mobility experiences
- (vii) Support for engagement in voluntary activities
- (viii) Improved and fairer terms and conditions in the labour market
- (ix) Support for entrepreneurship

This is a powerful checklist, all the more so given the dearth of pathways towards these ends. In the current climate, many of these demands and resolutions are unsurprising. But they constitute measured warnings about the personal, cultural, social and political fallout from the increasing social exclusion of young people from meaningful participation in civil society and economic life (see Williamson, 2013b). Responding, where possible, to the reasonable aspirations of young people has to be a legitimate feature of any modern political project. Regulating the labour market in the interests of young people is a challenging ambition in the rapidly shifting nature of global business, but it should be possible to meet aspirations for improved information, advice and guidance.

The landscape beyond

Yet, in the final analysis, there is something perverse about the youth sector seeking to shape the external terrain that affects young people's lives when there is no representation of that external terrain present. Other sectors — often with very different motivations, priorities and agendas — also deserve a voice: formal education, health, vocational training, employment, housing, criminal justice and the private sector labour market are obvious candidates. A real structured dialogue would be secured if public institutions (the European bodies and national governments) could broker platforms for debate between a broad constituency of young people and the private institutions that exercise so much control over young

lives — employers and housing providers, the media, social media, new information technologies and, increasingly in some countries, private providers of public services. The prospects, destinies and futures of Europe's young people lie firmly in those hands, and the voice, aspirations and criticisms of young people also need to be heard on that terrain. Dialogue inside the relatively safe circle of public policy processes can only go so far.

Conclusion

Progress over a quarter of a century in the youth field in the European Union has to be celebrated. What started out as a modest set of proposals for a youth programme in the late 1980s has, by the first quarter of the 21st century, become a strongly participative process guided by a broad and aspirational European Commission youth policy. This has now been connected to the wider learning and mobility framework for education and training, to 2020, through Erasmus+⁽⁹⁾. Within this context, the structured dialogue will continue to inform and support a clear framework of priorities for the youth agenda throughout Europe. It has established commitment and credibility with young people, has shaped possibilities for professional practice and enjoys legitimacy on the political and policymaking front. But it remains a relatively narrow — if hitherto untrodden — track, and it needs to consider further evolution and enlargement both to accommodate a more disparate constituency of young people and to engage with the many other sectors that significantly shape their prospects and their lives. Those who have, to their credit, pioneered the pathway of the structured dialogue now need to consider how it can be turned into a broader highway.



HOWARD WILLIAMSON

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Notes

1. Annex 1 to the presidency conclusions of the European Council, Brussels, 22-23.3.2005 (7619/05) — the three key youth policy themes were designated as: employment, integration and social advancement; education, training and mobility; and reconciliation of working life and family life.
2. These reviews covered youth policy in Estonia, Spain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and Finland.
3. Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 November 2008 at the 1042nd meeting of the ministers' deputies).
4. See the Council resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) ([http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219(01)&from=EN)).
5. By the time this paper was finalised, a further presidency trio theme was underway. 'Youth empowerment', to the end of 2015, is the theme for Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg.
6. A Council resolution on the overview of the structured dialogue was adopted on 20 May 2014 during the Greek Presidency of the European Council, but it was not considered to be as robust in strengthening youth participation and youth rights as it might have been. In particular the YFJ was scathing about the omission of a value-added contribution that might be made by international youth NGOs to the structured dialogue: 'Despite the resolution's rhetoric of involving youth organisations in policy-making at local, regional, national and European level, international non-governmental youth organisations (INGYOs) are still not properly included in the structured dialogue with young people. The forum is concerned that even though 17 different INGYOs have organised consultations with young people throughout the last 18 months and contributed with their results and expertise to the three EU youth conferences, all their efforts have been disregarded as no reference is made to their participation, consultations or contributions' (European Youth Forum 2014, p. 2).
7. See, for example, the work of the Citizens Foundation in Iceland (<http://citizens.is>).
8. Though it was anticipated by a Council resolution in 2006: see Resolution of the Council on implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship, OJ C 297, 7.12.2006, pp. 6-10 (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2006.297.01.0006.01.ENG).
9. The Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernise education, training and youth work. It brings together seven existing EU programmes in the fields of education, training and youth, and it will also provide support for sport.

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Tools

Structured dialogue

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/dialogue_en.htm

Structured dialogue with young people serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field, to make sure the opinions of young people are taken into account in defining the EU's youth policies. It involves regular consultations of young people and youth organisations at all levels in EU countries, as well as dialogue between youth representatives and policymakers at EU youth conferences organised by the Member States holding the European Council presidency, and during European Youth Week. The thematic priority for July 2014-December 2015 is empowering young people for political participation. In the Member States, the participatory process is organised and ensured by national working groups that include youth ministries, youth councils, youth organisations and other stakeholders.



European good practice

Participation cafes

The objective of the project was to bring together decision-makers and young people to discuss issues and problems confronting society, and to get them working together in search of solutions. It also helped make the young people's voices heard and get their opinions recognised by those in power. On 1 December 2011, the Estonian National Youth Council organised 15 participation cafes across the country, where young participants could meet and discuss with decision-makers about lowering the voting age to 16, youth participation at a local level, youth health, non-formal learning in formal education, volunteering and youth employment.

The participation cafes, which followed the 'world cafe' method, were set up in cooperation with regional youth councils, and brought people together in a non-formal atmosphere in cafes and culture centres to share ideas and opinions. Some 375 decision-makers — politicians on a local, regional and national level, school headmasters and other key players — participated in the discussions. Almost 1 500 young people from diverse backgrounds were involved. Each cafe had a volunteer coordinator from the regional youth council, who was responsible for organisational arrangements. The coordinators were given prior training about the method for running this type of event and they had preparatory discussions about the topics to be covered, including the preparation of short introductory guides. They could, for instance, choose topics relevant to their lives and community — and the most popular were youth and media, transport and the future of their home village or town. At the cafes themselves discussions took place in small groups, and each developed its own focus from the synergy and exchange between the young people and decision-makers.

The Estonian National Youth Council has gathered the ideas and suggestions made and used them as input in its daily activities, as well as disseminating the results to partners across the country. The cafes were so successful that they are now a yearly event, and politicians who had taken part have become more aware of young people's concerns. Youth organisations have also received inspiration from the cafes and ideas about what issues should be addressed. And young people themselves learnt how they can take part in society.





The project increased participants' social and civic competences. For many, it was a first opportunity to share their ideas with those who are making important decisions about their lives; for some it was a first time to exercise their civil rights and speak up. As the format encouraged discussion between people of different ages, it also helped to increase participants' self-confidence and communication skills. The participants involved in organising the project developed their entrepreneurial and negotiation skills.

A meeting between young people and decision-makers funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Estonia.

Project carried out by 15 youth councils and 13 county governments in Estonia.

the Council resolution on the EU work plan for youth for 2014–2015 invites the Commission to seek coherence between the work plans of the EU and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

Training courses organised under that first 1998 agreement were seen by the two institutions as constituting a pilot phase exploring the potential of cooperation. They were closely monitored, and positive evaluations of them led to successor agreements with an accent on European citizenship, training for trainers and visibility actions.

Then the 2003–2005 partnership on Euro-Med youth cooperation focused on intercultural learning and cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries and the Member States of the EU and the Council of Europe. And a partnership on better knowledge and understanding of youth over the same period aimed at a common knowledge basis in youth and enhanced cooperation between youth researchers, policymakers and youth workers and leaders at European level. Out of this sprang the online European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, the European Network of Youth Researchers and a number of thematic seminars and conferences.

A management consultancy report in 2004 endorsed the relevance, impact and effectiveness of the partnership, but recommended the full integration of activities into the EU's and the Council of Europe's structures and strategies. This triggered the decision by the European Commission and the Council of Europe to replace the three areas of youth worker training, youth research and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation with a single framework partnership agreement. A further external evaluation in 2013 of the outcome concluded that the recast partnership met its objectives and provided a valuable framework for strategic cooperation between the EU and Council of Europe.

Based on those results and a wide-ranging needs assessment, the partnership was renewed for 2014–2016, with a focus on youth participation and citizenship, social inclusion and youth work. The decision reflected a desire to address youth participation more systematically. Attention has also been directed towards researching intercultural dialogue and human rights, largely based on experience from the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, which fostered joint work between youth policy stakeholders and partners across the region — and which also generated in 2012–2013 a Euro-African dimension to the youth partnership programme. Diversity and anti-discrimination have been highlighted since 2005, and quality, recognition and visibility in youth work and training are also fully integrated into the partnership.



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The need for updating the strategy for a better recognition of non-formal learning and of youth work has been explicitly recognised since 2004, and the concept has been progressively clarified since then. A first European Commission–Council of Europe joint working paper, ‘Pathways towards validation and recognition of education, training and learning in the youth field’ emphasised in 2004 the role of youth activities as part of voluntary and civil society activities. Its insistence on validation and recognition of these activities laid much of the groundwork for subsequent strategies and instruments such as Youthpass and the European portfolio for youth workers and youth leaders. The strategy was updated in 2011 by publishing the Pathways 2.0 paper on ‘Recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education in the youth field’.

The relevance of the mobility of young people has received increasing attention in recent years, leading to the creation of a European Platform on Learning Mobility in the youth field to facilitate an exchange between policymakers, researchers, practitioners, institutions and organisations.

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy has promoted understanding and knowledge of youth and youth policy development since 2005, and an earlier researchers’ network has been replaced since 2011 by the Pool of European Youth Researchers.

Thematic research and policy seminars have responded to evolving priorities, and the current focus is on the social inclusion of young people, including barriers encountered by young people from vulnerable groups in accessing their rights and engaging with society, as well as citizenship and participation of all young people. Expert workshops on the ‘History of youth work’ have also discussed the relevance of history for today’s policymaking. And within regional co-

operation activities in the southern Mediterranean, eastern Europe and Caucasus, and south-east Europe, seminars and symposia on youth policy development and cooperation have enhanced dialogue between policy, research and practice, and exchanging good practices. Specific activities on youth policy cooperation and development were also implemented with and in Russia.

An information strategy now deliberately publicises the results of the partnership, with material translated into 15 languages: Czech, Estonian, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovene and Turkish. This includes publications and training kits, the *Coyote* magazine, the youth knowledge books and the new *Perspectives on youth*.

A partnership team manages the implementation, monitoring and visibility of the actions, and a partnership management board meets annually to help coordinate thematic areas and steer activities. This is supported by a partnership consultation meeting that brings together representatives of European youth stakeholders.

The European Commission and the Council of Europe continue to consider the partnership a useful tool to build on the strengths of each institution and to enhance cooperation in the field of youth. Current and future activities are focusing on participation, citizenship and social inclusion (notably through outreach, access to social rights, fighting new forms of xenophobia and discrimination for vulnerable groups), as well as recognition and quality of youth work, promoting in this way the political priorities of the youth sector in the European Union and the Council of Europe.



HANJO SCHILD

has been working since 2005 for the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, focusing on the promotion of knowledge-based youth policies and youth work practice. He previously worked in other parts of the youth sector, including the Youth Policy Unit at the European Commission (2001-2005), and as a project manager and consultant for an NGO in Germany in the field of the labour market, vocational education and training, and the social inclusion of young people, as well as an out-of-school trainer and social pedagogue.



Tools

European Union–Council of Europe youth partnership

<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/home/>

The European Union–Council of Europe youth partnership aims at creating synergies in youth-oriented activities, and cooperation focuses on improving knowledge about young people so as to ensure that youth policy and practice are evidence-based, and on promoting youth work. Geographical coverage encompasses the European Union and Council of Europe members and reaches out to neighbouring countries.

The themes selected for 2014-2016 are new concepts and tools in participation and citizenship, social inclusion (notably through outreach, access to social rights and fighting new forms of xenophobia and discrimination) and recognition and quality of youth work.



European good practice

Living bridges

This project aimed at replacing ‘enemy images’ with positive, personal encounters between young people from within and across regions where there are strong prejudices. Twenty-five young women from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Finland and Sweden met on the Åland Islands in August 2009 and had a non-formal learning experience on feminism, intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution. Young women from Armenia and Azerbaijan live in a region torn apart by an unresolved conflict with closed borders and thus no opportunity to meet in their home countries. For the participants from Finland, the project brought closer young people from the largely bilingual region of Turku/Åbo and from Swedish-speaking Åland, where there is still little exchange. The objective was to encourage all participants to reflect about their own cultures and identities, gender stereotypes and their role as women in their societies.

Every participant had space to develop and articulate their thoughts and ideas, and the timetable was adjusted according to their needs after daily evaluation. External experts led interactive sessions, and the young women, often divided into smaller groups, then had the opportunity to discuss questions related to their own experiences and present them in a plenary session for reflection with everyone. The activity also included an open lecture on Norway’s experiences with peace mediation and an excursion to Kastelholm Castle and Bomarsund fortress, with a guided tour focusing on the role played by women in historic Åland. The evenings were given over to cultural events, including visits to the sauna and swimming in the Baltic as well as south Caucasian food and dances.

The learning experience has shown lasting effects: the partner organisations from south Caucasus have continued their cooperation with each other and now belong to a network of organisations working with the Åland Islands Peace Institute in developing structures for youth work with gender perspective in their home countries. The Young Women’s Network South Caucasus is a platform for young women from the region to meet on their own terms, share ideas and get inspired by each other to engage in social activism. Many of the project participants from Armenia and Azerbaijan have since become active members of the network. All participants are active in their own societies and context and work to promote gender equality. And





the partners have also set up training and exchange opportunities with organisations from Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia.

A European Voluntary Service volunteer from Azerbaijan who assisted in the implementation and reporting of the training course said, 'Bringing together people from different cultures helps us respect and understand differences and maybe create bridges between them. The 'Living bridges' conference gathered young girls for one aim: to discuss gender stereotypes and empower women, promote active citizenship and an active role of women in conflict resolution. The main asset of "Living bridges" was its non-formal approach, through workshops and interactive games. In this way all participants could actively contribute to the whole seminar. I also liked the discussion about conflict management. Although it was a sensitive topic for both Azerbaijani and Armenian participants, both sides were open-minded and respected each other's point of view. And most importantly, they could work in a team in order to come to the negotiation.'

A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Finland. Project carried out by the Åland Islands Peace Institute (Finland), in partnership with Mälardalens Women's Lobby (Sweden), Yuva Humanitarian Centre (Azerbaijan) and Women's Resource Centre Armenia.

3

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Borders can be frontiers: the quality and impact of the EU youth programmes in Europe and beyond

DARKO MARKOVIC

European training strategy: the road to quality

The merging of the former Youth for Europe and the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programmes into a larger Youth programme (2000-2006) (with a significant budgetary increase) has opened new horizons for youth work in Europe, and beyond, and has created more opportunities for non-formal education projects for youth. At the same time, this has also created a need for better support of youth workers and capacity building of youth organisations. In a way, enhanced quantity has prompted enhanced care for the quality of non-formal learning activities for young people.

Within this context the role of youth worker training has become increasingly important. It has required a more strategic approach (Marx, 2001), involving all relevant players and activities within the framework of the Youth programme. This was the moment when the first European training strategy (ETS) was created, with its overall objective to help youth workers, youth leaders and support staff to develop and implement high-quality youth activities that help meet the objectives of the Youth programme. The ETS has been further developed and implemented within the subsequent Youth in Action programme (2007-2013), continually providing mobility possibilities for youth workers to gain competences, and thus raising the quality of youth work projects offered for young people.

ETS activities have been implemented within the five pillars of the strategy:

- (i) training and networking projects, including the wide range of training opportunities for youth workers implemented by youth organisations themselves (under sub-actions 4.3. and 3.1.);
- (ii) training courses and events implemented under training and co-operation plans (TCPs) by each national agency of the Youth in Action programme;

- (iii) training implemented by the SALTO-Youth resource centres for the benefit of national agencies, youth organisations and youth workers;
- (iv) knowledge management and staff training organised by the network of national agencies, the European Commission and SALTOs to promote competence development among national agency staff;
- (v) training supported under the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

Ten years after its implementation, the ETS has been revised to respond better to policy objectives under the renewed framework for European Cooperation in the field of youth⁽¹⁾ (2010-2018), as well as to the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training⁽²⁾ (ET 2020).

As laid down in the proposal for the renewed European training strategy of the Youth in Action programme (European Commission, 2010), during its first 10 years the ETS had achieved positive impacts, as detailed below.

On individuals, by:

- (i) improving the competence development of youth workers in Europe;
- (ii) promoting constructive debates, content-oriented thinking and creative initiatives;
- (iii) developing tools for the recognition of youth workers' qualifications.

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On youth projects, by:

- (i) stressing the importance and raising the quality of Youth/Youth in Action projects;
- (ii) emphasising the need for training of youth workers and other project participants;
- (iii) developing and disseminating concepts and methodologies in non-formal learning;
- (iv) ensuring familiarisation with key features and priorities of the Youth/Youth in Action programme;
- (v) strengthening the European dimension of projects.

On youth support systems, by:

- (i) raising awareness about the Youth/Youth in Action programme and facilitating access to it;
- (ii) guaranteeing the interplay of different institutional and key non-governmental stakeholders;
- (iii) promoting the capacity building of organisations active in the youth field across Europe and beyond;
- (iv) bringing youth issues onto institutional agendas at national, regional and local levels;
- (v) inspiring and stimulating the development of a European dimension in youth work at Member State level;
- (vi) training European trainers and trainers for trainers — as a result, several pools of experienced and qualified trainers have been created in Europe;
- (vii) supporting the competence building of institutional staff, such as staff of national agencies and SALTOs implementing the programme at European and national level.

Since its implementation the ETS has created thousands of non-formal learning opportunities (training courses, seminars, conferences, partnership-building activities, etc.) for several hundred thousand participants active in youth work all over Europe. Overall, EUR 152 million was invested between 2007 and 2013 for youth worker training offers, which were taken advantage of by 300 000 participants in 16 000 projects carried out by NGOs, national agencies and SALTO-Youth resource centres. This is an average of EUR 520 per participant or EUR 9 500 per project, including travel costs for participants⁽³⁾.

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Training and cooperation plans of NAS	Funds used (million EUR)	5 630	7 475	7 335	7 948	8 545	11 071	11 714	59 718
	Projects granted	714	1 115	1 395	1 405	1 801	2 061	2 034	10 525
	Participants*	15 548	24 320	19 611	20 906	23 287	25 821	29 972	159 465
Sub-action 4.3	Funds used (million EUR)	6 863	6 721	6 502	7 506	8 822	10 327	12 579	59 320
	Projects granted	506	470	430	481	544	647	730	3 808
	Participants	10 121	9 255	9 458	10 611	13 840	17 235	20 653	91 173
Sub-action 3.1	Funds used (million EUR)	3 104	3 483	3 610	3 193	4 525	6 626	8 377	32 918
	Projects granted	174	178	189	172	241	330	390	1 674
	Participants	3 408	3 672	4 087	3 615	6 520	9 285	11 815	42 402

* Including large-scale national TCP events involving a large number of participants for a shorter duration. This format was not eligible in sub-actions 4.3 and 3.1, Training and Networking.

Support offers for youth workers in the Youth in Action programme

To support the visibility and accessibility of the various training projects for youth workers, funded by the Youth in Action and the current Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme (2014-2020), the website of the SALTO-Youth resource centre provides a European training calendar. It is developed and managed by the SALTO Training and Cooperation resource centre. The aim is to offer a space where youth workers/ youth leaders who want to develop their competences to work with and for young people can find European training courses, share experiences and make contacts for future common projects.

It was launched in 2004, and nearly 2 300 training offers had been published in the European training calendar by March 2014, with 36 000 out of the 130 000 registered users of the SALTO website subscribing to the information service for new calls. More than 4 million searches were carried out in the calendar between 2007 and 2013.

Organisers of training courses that are advertised in the calendar can take advantage of an online application form generator, which has proved popular among applicants: 79 000 applicants have so far submitted a total of 88 000 online applications⁽⁴⁾.

A strategic jump: SALTO-Youth resource centres

Together we believe in ... the importance of the values of non-formal education and learning, giving young people opportunities and investing in their future. We espouse the strength of international cooperation both within the network and without, to strengthen solidarity and partnership between all players. We consider the principles of lifelong learning in different fields and using varied approaches to be important, and aim to ensure the quality of our products to underpin the programme values and priorities. We promote and advocate respect of social, personal and cultural differences, as well as catering for all levels of need. We aspire to mutual understanding and a united Europe.

SALTO-Youth mission statement

Within the framework of the European training strategy (ETS), the four SALTO-Youth resource centres were established in 2000. The network has been expanded and reached its current composition of eight SALTO-Youth resource centres providing strategic support for youth workers either in terms of programme priority areas (such as inclusion, cultural diversity, youth participation or recognition of non-formal learning) or in relation to targeted cooperation with south-east Europe (SEE), eastern Europe and Caucasus (EECA) and the Mediterranean region. Since the beginning, SALTO-Youth resource centres have been operating as part of a flexible network with national agencies for the Youth/Youth in Action programme and the partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of youth. The initial focus of the SALTO-Youth resource centres was provision of training activities, and the acronym SALTO was coined to express this role: support for advanced learning and training opportunities. However, there has been a clear shift in their role, from training provider to comprehensive support for quality development in the field of youth work and non-formal learning. In other words, SALTOs have established themselves as true resource centres and reference points in the European youth field, often taking the lead in processes related to quality development and recognition (e.g. development of Youthpass, quality and professionalisation of youth work, regional youth policy development, providing resources through the joint SALTO website).

In 10 years, the network has conducted nearly 500 activities for 12 500 youth workers, youth leaders, trainers, national agencies' officers and policymakers. The network has produced and disseminated inspiring resources and publications. In terms of quality, the accumulation of knowledge and expertise is visible in the impact the network has had on European youth and non-formal education.

The story of SALTOs

The Youth programme (2000–2006) was designed for all young people, regardless of their abilities and cultural, religious, geographical or socioeconomic backgrounds. There was a need for further support for and training of organisations working with disadvantaged young people, and SALTO in Flanders became responsible for inclusion. Later, the importance of inclusion was reinforced, as the topic became one of the new Youth in Action programme's permanent priorities in 2007–2013. SALTO in France took over the responsibility for supporting national agencies in cooperation with the EuroMed region under the Youth programme and the EuroMed youth programme — an operational solution for bringing the Barcelona process into cooperation with the youth field. At the time the region was highly influenced by ongoing internal conflicts, as well as wider political tension caused by unrest in the Middle East. This made the task more challenging but also increasingly important. The day of 11 September 2001 and changing world events led to an urgent need to strengthen the intercultural dialogue aspect in the youth field. SALTO in the United Kingdom became responsible for anti-racism and tolerance — or, as it was in due course renamed, cultural diversity, as something positive to encourage and appreciate, rather than to fight against. The increasing need to foster the respect for cultural diversity in Europe made it a permanent priority in the next programme. SALTO in Germany became responsible for supporting the coordination, development and visibility of the so-called training and cooperation plans of the national agencies, as well as of the overall support for the Commission's training strategy. Later, in 2005, it also took over the coordination and development of Youthpass, the European instrument for recognition of non-formal learning.

The network expanded in 2002 with two more resource centres: SALTO South East Europe was set up in Slovenia, in response to the need to increase cooperation with the western Balkans and establish a stable structure to promote it. In 2003, the Thessaloniki Summit opened the possibility of EU accession to the countries of the region still facing difficulties in the aftermath of conflicts of the 1990s. The Youth programme, and later the Youth in Action programme, became increasingly important for supporting the development of these countries and their accession potential, by helping consolidate civil society. SALTO Information was created in Sweden and Hungary with the aim of facilitating internal communication among the national agencies and the Commission, mainly through Youthnet, an intranet designed to encourage daily communication. Basing the centre in two countries was also considered a good example of virtual cooperation. SALTO Youth Initiatives was created in 2003 in the French-speaking community of Belgium to support local youth initiatives and develop their European dimension. In 2007 the Youth in Action programme focused on participation as one of the four programme priorities; at the request of the European Commission, to promote the new sub-action 1.3 youth democracy projects, the resource centre became SALTO Participation. The network reached its full number of eight resource centres in 2004 upon the creation of SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus in Poland. A new eastern dimension was brought into the European Union's foreign policy along with the biggest enlargement of the Union in 2004. Further cooperation with the new neighbours, also in the field of youth, became increasingly important (*Ten years of support, advanced learning and training opportunities*, 2020).

The impact of European youth programmes on youth work beyond the European Union

In today's globalised world, increased international cooperation is essential to meet common challenges. As an active global player, the EU attaches great importance to establishing good relations with non-member countries in all fields with a view to promoting peace, stability, security, human rights, democracy and the rule of law beyond its borders. In this global perspective, young people have a key role to play in shaping the EU's future and its relations with the neighbours and the rest of the world.

Pascal Lejeune,
European Commission

Cooperation with neighbouring partner regions in the bigger political picture

Since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, relations with neighbouring regions have been one of its external relations priorities. Both the stabilisation and association process⁽⁵⁾ (aiming at preparing the countries of the western Balkans for the EU membership) and the European neighbourhood policy⁽⁶⁾ (addressing the neighbouring countries of eastern Europe⁽⁷⁾ and of the Mediterranean region) are responses to the challenges and opportunities created by the changed political context in the neighbouring regions. Within this larger framework, cooperation in the field of youth with the neighbouring partner regions (south-east Europe, eastern Europe and Caucasus, and the Mediterranean region) aims at promoting cooperation between young people and youth organisations beyond the borders of the European Union, to foster intercultural dialogue, mutual tolerance and solidarity, to break down prejudices and stereotypes and to build societies based on common understanding and respect⁽⁸⁾.

Cooperation with south-east Europe

The Youth in Action programme in my opinion provided visibility to youth needs in our country as well as some of the solutions. It attracted young people to become more involved in the work of local youth organisations, introduced more methods of non-formal learning and pointed out volunteering as an important learning tool.

The impact of the cooperation with south-east Europe within the Youth in Action programme

Since 2000, organisations and young people from the western Balkans have had the opportunity to participate as partners in the European Union's youth programmes. In 2005 the European Commission enhanced the cooperation by allowing organisations from the region to apply for funding as 'coordinating organisations' in several pilots. This has been strengthened by the adoption of the western Balkans window, providing additional funding for the participation of the western Balkans countries in the Youth in Action programme. The aim of the western Balkans window was to 'strengthen democracy, civil society and social inclusion in the western Balkans by facilitating the integration and active participation of young people in society through the development of youth organisations and the voluntary sector'⁽⁹⁾.

The impact of Youth in Action in cooperation with south-east Europe

The evaluation study *The impact of the cooperation with south-east Europe within the Youth in Action programme* (Slana, 2012) shows the programme's significant impact on young people's competences and attitudes, in the area of intercultural learning, self-esteem, communication in foreign languages and ability to plan and organise actions, as well as awareness of learning processes. The results of the study particularly stress the deconstructing of prejudices among young people from the programme countries towards young people from south east Europe (SEE) and vice versa. For young people from the EU this cooperation was an important platform to see the political aspect of intercultural learning and better understand the situation in this neighbouring region. The projects undertaken under the Youth in Action programme have also allowed competence development of youth workers and youth organisations (in terms of, for example, teamworking, international cooperation, facilitation of non-formal learning). Youth workers from SEE report a stronger impact on acquiring innovative approaches to youth work, awareness of own learning and working with young people with fewer opportunities. In SEE, 76 % of respondents believe that the Youth in Action programme has contributed to positive changes in the development of youth work in their countries.

Some 91 % of respondents say that the programme has provided more training opportunities for youth workers, which has led to a higher quality of youth work. More young people now take part in youth organisations and a number of new organisations have been developed under the influence of the programme. According to 77 % of respondents, the Youth in Action programme has introduced methodologies that support non-formal learning. More organisations are involving young people with fewer opportunities in their work. Over 50 % also report that the programme has led to increased social recognition of youth work.

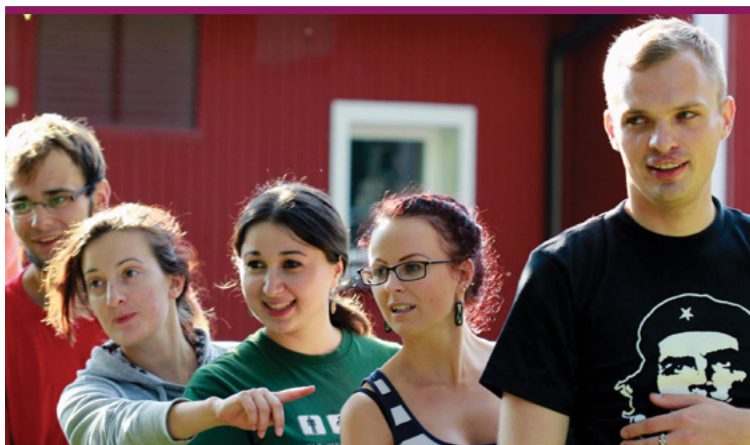
Over 70 % of respondents believe that their projects left a discernible impact. Local communities followed Youth in Action projects with interest and some even provided support for similar projects in the future. Some initiatives that started as one-time projects made a lasting impression. In particular, certain topics seem to have been successful in reaching local communities: sustainability, environmental protection, conflict resolution and ethnic minorities.

The intercultural dimension was appreciated by local communities. This is indicated by 85 % of respondents from SEE and by 95 % of those from programme countries. Respondents from programme countries often mention that their local communities do not know much about SEE countries and prejudices towards them might be present. They report that Youth in Action projects have challenged these perceptions and sometimes facilitated changes in attitudes and views.

Some 75 % of respondents from SEE and 60 % of respondents from programme countries mention that Youth in Action projects in SEE sparked community-wide discussion of topics such as European citizenship, European identity and the European Union.

In addition, the activities of SALTO SEE have supported youth policy development in the region, as a platform for dialogue between policymakers, youth workers, young people and other stakeholders (youth policy seminars in 2007, 2008, 2009; symposium in Tirana in 2012). These activities had an impact on processes related to youth policy development, as well on the recognition of youth work and non-formal learning in the SEE countries.

In some cases, the Youth in Action programme influenced national policies in a specific way, especially through EVS: several respondents mentioned the development of laws on volunteering and simplified visa procedures for foreign volunteers. These laws and visa procedures apply to volunteers from different backgrounds and are funded through various programmes and schemes. Respondents suggested



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that the Youth in Action programme, and specifically experiences with EVS, provided an impetus for governments to speed up the adoption of these decisions.

National agency staff responding to the survey pointed out that some of the most important outcomes of Youth in Action projects involving organisations from programme and SEE countries are improved intercultural awareness ('reducing fear, ignorance and arrogance and increasing knowledge and understanding on both sides'), empowerment of youth work and stronger cooperation of the EU with the region.

Staff members from several national agencies state that Youth in Action projects with SEE can be used to address issues of migration from the region. Furthermore, they take the view that projects can help raise intercultural awareness of young people and local communities towards young immigrants from SEE, overcome prejudice, facilitate young immigrants' integration in the host countries and give second-generation immigrants the opportunity to learn about their cultural heritage.

The general conclusion is that the Youth in Action programme was successful in promoting cooperation with neighbouring partner countries. It simultaneously developed mutual understanding, boosted quality support for young people's activities and promoted networking and capacity building among NGOs in the youth field.

Cooperation with eastern Europe and Caucasus

Yes, it has a very positive influence on our organisation. Thanks to the implementation of international projects, our visibility increased, and we are known at the national but also at the international level.

Influence of the Youth in Action programme on the youth sector in EECA and programme countries

Cooperation with the countries of eastern Europe and the Caucasus (EECA) began with the Youth programme and was further promoted within the subsequent Youth in Action programme. Following the model of the enhanced cooperation with the western Balkans countries, as well as experiences with the EuroMed youth programme, an enhanced funding facility called the Eastern Partnership youth window⁽¹⁰⁾ was created for six countries⁽¹¹⁾ in the region for 2012-2013. The window was designed to reflect the national and regional priorities, as well as priorities in the youth policy sphere within the European Union. Four areas have been recognised as joint priorities for all national governments from the Eastern Partnership countries:

- (i) employability of young people, skills development, lifelong learning;
- (ii) social inclusion of youth, access to services, opportunities;
- (iii) young people's health — addressing key health concerns, promoting healthy lifestyle;
- (iv) participation and active citizenship of young people.

The Eastern Partnership window also aimed at building capacities of youth policymakers in the region, supporting greater involvement of civil society in youth policy development, setting up a more comprehensive system of youth work and increased regional cooperation in the field of youth.

The impact of Youth in Action in cooperation with eastern Europe and the Caucasus

The survey of the Youth in Action programme in cooperation with EECA countries (Biskup and Pavlovyh, 2012) presented in the forum 'Youth Cooperation beyond Borders' (28-30 October 2012, Baku) showed that participation had a significant impact on youth organisations both from programme and EECA countries. Out of 480 responding organisations, 78 % said that Youth in Action had a positive impact on their image and status in the local community. Some 71 % believe that their participation in Youth in Action projects had helped them enhance the skills of their staff. Almost all respondents said that their organisation had grown; for some it meant newly employed staff, and for others more engaged volunteers. For most of them, the main benefits were new international contacts, the development of their competences in non-formal education and the broadening of the scope of their activities. The programme also helped youth organisations experience European diversity.

The majority (more than 90 %) said the programme had had a positive influence on the target group of their organisation. On the acquisition of key competences for lifelong learning by young people in the project, the results show that the major impact was in communication in foreign language, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression. The organisations in the survey said that the programme had had a major impact on young people's mobility (including learning and working mobility), as well as enhancing young people's employment chances (90 % of respondents agreed).

As illustration of the claim, one of the organisations shared the following story: 'A man, aged 27, came to our organisation after a street action organised within the Youth in Action programme; he wanted to learn more about it. He had never worked and did not know any foreign languages. He became involved as a volunteer in our organisation, then wanted to go on an EVS project. He went to Latvia and worked with disabled children, and when he returned to Georgia he found a job with the disabled here. EVS showed him his hidden skills he probably wouldn't have discovered otherwise.'

In relation to contact and cooperation with other stakeholders (e.g. local or national authorities) while developing Youth in Action projects, 75 % said that they had had this kind of cooperation, but the major obstacles they describe are of a bureaucratic, economic and communications nature. Suggestions made included: 'National institutions and local governments should be more open and supportive. National agencies should work more on promotion of Youth in Action at government level and on removing bureaucracy and communication barriers between NGOs and government. On the national level, in each country the local, regional and national authorities should be informed about the programme.'

Cooperation with countries from the Mediterranean region

'It is often stated that the history of Europe has been shaped by exchanges and interaction between people and cultures across the Mediterranean Sea. It is nowadays less obvious how far and how constructively such exchanges will happen in the future. Young people often face obstacles to mobility stemming from typical forms of xenophobia, prejudice and ignorance about each other. Yet young people are crucial to the future of South Mediterranean cooperation'⁽¹²⁾.

Within the larger Barcelona process, dealing with the complex Euro-Mediterranean political and social situation, the role of youth and youth work has been emphasised: 'Youth exchanges should be the means to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean partners.' Following the commitments from the Barcelona declaration⁽¹³⁾, the European Commission launched the EuroMed youth programme in 1999. The programme had four phases, interlinked with European Union's Youth and Youth in Action programmes. The fourth phase of the EuroMed youth programme has involved all EU Member States and eight Mediterranean partner countries⁽¹⁴⁾. The main objectives of the EuroMed IV are:

- (i) stimulating and encouraging mutual understanding between young people within the Euro-Mediterranean region and fighting against stereotypes and prejudices;
- (ii) promoting active citizenship among young people and enhancing their sense of solidarity;
- (iii) contributing to the development of youth policies in the partner countries.

The programme also aimed to promote regional thematic priority issues:

- (i) the fight against racism and xenophobia;
- (ii) environmental protection;
- (iii) gender equality;
- (iv) human rights;
- (v) the participation of young people in development of civil society and democracy.

The EuroMed youth programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture in close cooperation with the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development — EuropeAid. A training strategy and additional support in the implementation of the programme for Euro-Mediterranean partners has been provided by the SALTO-Youth EuroMed resource centre.



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Impact of the Youth in Action in the EuroMed cooperation

Taking part in the Youth in Action project has changed the way I look at the world.

*Local impact of the Youth in Action programme
Action 3 in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation*

The impact study of the Youth in Action's Action 3 in EuroMed cooperation (Brakel, 2012) focused on:

- (i) the development of youth policies;
- (ii) the development of organisations and their practice of youth work;
- (iii) the development of local communities.

The overlapping and often synergistic effect of Youth in Action and the EuroMed youth programme makes it hard to distinguish their individual impacts.

The main benefit that Youth in Action has provided to the MEDA countries was the offer of moral, structural and political support for the development of youth work, youth policy and youth organisation, which otherwise would not receive attention and funding.

It is hard to evaluate if Youth in Action influenced youth policy development, but it might have helped to raise the general awareness of such policies through project activities. It certainly raised the awareness of young people about these issues — an evaluation study found that 42 % of all participants questioned reported being more aware of such topics after they took part in a project (interim evaluation, p. 92). Some 53 % of the young respondents said that Youth in Action contributed to improving young people's rights and 52 % reported that these projects helped their societies as such (ibid.), while 80 % believe that they are now better equipped to engage in political activities.

The study shows that Youth in Action had an important role in the development of youth work and youth organisations (e.g. project management and administration skills), and motivated many young people to set up their own organisations. At the same time it increased awareness of youth participation as a guiding principle in project development, as well as putting non-formal education on the political agenda and improving its perception.

Most respondents reported multiplying effects on subsequent engagement with the local community. They also highlighted intercultural

learning possibilities in the programme — of particular value in smaller communities. For some countries, Youth in Action offered possibilities to meet youth from parts of the region normally not accessible in bilateral programmes.

Youth in Action gave young people a chance to broaden their horizons and skills, and even increased their eligibility for employment. But linking local engagement and change with international activities will remain a challenge.

Future challenges

There is evidence of impact, frequently visible and operating at several levels. The European training strategy and the SALTO-Youth resource centres have played an important role in quality development across the programme in general and specifically in the partner regions. One of the key assets of these tools is their strategic approach and readiness to adjust to the changing needs in the diverse contexts they operate in. Although the scope of the future European training strategy and the SALTO-Youth resource centres is wide, some common challenges and elements for forward thinking can be identified.

The changing policy priorities at European level and the changing nature of youth work

It is clear that over the years the priorities of the EU youth programmes were changing in their emphasis (from peace building and reconciliation in their early days, then to intercultural mobility, participation, inclusion and, lately, to employability), which challenges youth workers to readjust and redefine their work. Are they really ready to work on employability issues today? Or an even more general dilemma: how can working on employability lower youth unemployment rates when there are no jobs? And can we imagine what will happen when the financial crisis is over? What would be the priorities? What would be the nature of youth work then?

The challenge of individualisation of the programme

Stronger emphasis on individual learning mobility within the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), providing opportunities to develop personal competences, may lead to neglecting the societal change and transformational/political impact of youth work. This might be particularly relevant when considering not only programme countries, but also recent developments in the neighbouring regions.

Empowerment of young people to affect youth policies

The new Erasmus+ programme links policy and practice more closely, raising questions about how to train youth workers in translating the policy objectives into their project activities and how to empower them (and the young people they work with) to influence the processes of policy development at local, national and European levels. In the framework of regional cooperation, this question is also linked with the sustainability of effects and closer links between international youth activities and youth work at local/national level.

Recognition and professionalisation of youth work

The trend within the European training strategy is towards better recognition and more professionalisation of youth work at European level, through the further implementation of Youthpass and the development of sets of competences for trainers and youth workers. At the same time it is important to see how these processes could impact developments at national and regional level.

Rethinking inclusion in Erasmus+: Youth in Action

Young people with fewer opportunities are taking part in the programme less and less. In some of the countries in the neighbouring regions this might be even more of importance because of the lack of infrastructure and opportunities for marginalised young people. There are high expectations from the renewed inclusion and diversity strategy for the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, recently drafted by the SALTO Inclusion and SALTO Cultural Diversity resource centres.



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Notes

1. Council resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European co-operation in the youth field (2010-2018), OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32009G1219%2801%29>) http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/youth/ef0022_en.htm
2. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN) See also footnote 1.
3. SALTO-Youth Training and Cooperation, *Developing quality of youth work in Europe — The European training strategy of the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013)* (<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3029/ETS-2007-13-Journal.pdf>).
4. See footnote 3.
5. Stabilisation and association process (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/sap_en.htm).
6. European neighbourhood policy (http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/index_en.htm).
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Tools

European training strategy

<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/training-strategy>

The increase in training opportunities for youth workers in the strategy is a response to the need for better support. It aims to ensure greater quantity is matched by enhanced care for quality of non-formal learning activities for young people. Training takes place within the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme and beyond. Training activities are European (or international) and not-for-profit, and relate to calls for youth workers who want to develop their competences to work with and for young people, to share experiences or to make contacts for future projects.

Training is carried out by the SALTO-Youth resource centres, the national agencies of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, youth NGOs and institutional partners in youth work in Europe, such as the Council of Europe.

Since its implementation, the strategy has created thousands of non-formal learning opportunities in the shape of training courses, seminars, conferences and partnership-building activities for several hundred thousand participants active in youth work all over Europe. The training opportunities are offered via the European training calendar (<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar>).

SALTO-Youth Network

<https://www.salto-youth.net>

SALTO-Youth stands for support, advanced learning and training opportunities within the European youth programmes. It is a network of eight resource centres which focus on a specific priority (inclusion, cultural diversity, participation, training and cooperation, information) or region (eastern Europe and Caucasus, EuroMed, south-east Europe). The network supports quality youth work and non-formal learning in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme and beyond. It complements existing initiatives with multilateral training courses, publications and cooperation with organisations such as the European Youth Forum.



European good practice

Environmental balance

Raising awareness of sustainable development among young people with little interest in social issues was the objective of a seminar in Slovenia in 2009. It brought together 27 youth workers from 12 countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, Romania, Turkey and the United Kingdom) in Slovenia for 6 days in 2009. All of them come from NGOs active in the field of youth participation, sustainable development and environmental protection. The participants had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge about balancing considerations based on civil society, the environment and economics.

The seminar benefited from experts' presentations, and also made use of peer-to-peer and intergenerational learning, skills workshops and project development, as well as promoting personal growth, critical opinion and social awareness.

The critical faculties of the participants were developed, and each was trained on how to prepare a successful project on sustainable issues directed towards disengaged young people using new methods. Structured dialogue was encouraged on sustainable development, global warming, youth participation and the role of Europe. Workshops were run in local schools, taking advantage of young people's readiness to listen in relaxed situations, and demonstrated that when workshops are led by foreigners, pupils and students are even more attentive. Subsequently, a guide entitled *WTF is sustainable development?* was published.

Other outcomes were regular local, national and international activities that challenge apathy among young people and promote active and responsible citizenship, and the building of an international network of partner organisations with common goals in sustainable development. Several Youth in Action projects arose from this initial seminar, presenting climate change as a problem, active citizenship as a method of solving it and sustainable development as a goal of and final solution to a problem.

A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Slovenia. Project carried out by No Excuse Slovenia, in partnership with Tippetue IOGT (Norway), the town council of Ancona (Italy), Young Voices (Germany), Finnish Swedish 4H (Finland), Peace Child International (United Kingdom), TVS International Youth Community (Turkey), United Games of Nations (Austria), APEGA GRUPE (Lithuania), United Games of Nations (Czech Republic), the Romanian National Youth Council (Romania) and United Games Hungarian Association (Hungary).



Rapping to new understanding

Raplab MENA-DK brought together 35 young people from Denmark, Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine for a 9-day course in Copenhagen in September 2013. The project originated from activities with rap artists in the Middle East eager to use their skills in work with young people, and connected them to youth workers in Denmark with similar goals. The training consisted of reflection, discussion, dialogue exercises and other tools to take back and use in their own work with young people. It included workshops based on the method of appreciative enquiry, jam sessions, courses in pocket film and social media, hip hop sightseeing, creative labs, a writing camp and a final event. The participants also ran workshops in schools and met young people, youth organisations and associations in Denmark. Using the creative outlet in order to get young people involved in their future building is an important aspect of hip hop music and a tool for self-expression and empowerment. But the activities were designed to create not only self-awareness but also awareness of the other.

Competences acquired by the participants during the training included skills to run inclusive, dynamic, engaging and creative workshops and sessions for children and youth, and social skills such as communicating in different environments, understanding different viewpoints, and cultural expression and awareness. They gained civic competences such as constructive participation in society, civic life and viewing the world as a whole. They learnt to turn ideas into action, and became familiar with the digital world. The sessions had a built-in reflection period so that the participants could assess their learning curve and new skills. The project issued Youthpasses, and through this recognition and all the lessons learned the participants were motivated to carry on as main multipliers by implementing initiatives and workshops in their home countries. Communication between the promoters and partnerships between the participants were maintained, for example, in terms of common musical projects, or cooperation in conducting workshops across countries.

The project met the Youth in Action objective of fostering mutual understanding between young people in different countries, as well as the thematic priority of cultural diversity: youth from countries in a politically unstable region — Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine — and from Denmark came closer together, and the project had an impact in both regions. The participation of young people and creativity and innovation were at the core of the project, since its long-term goal was the engagement of youth of all backgrounds in society through the art of rap and hip hop music.





A training course funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Denmark. Project carried out by Rapolitics (Denmark), in partnership with Rap Coaches (Lebanon), Talha Al-Ali (Palestine) and Ahmed Ibrahim Mohamed Mabrok and Revolution Records (Egypt).



Eco-education across Europe and Asia

The 'Environmentally friendly' project was implemented in collaboration across China, Germany, Lithuania, Spain and Vietnam. It aimed to increase the capacity of youth workers on raising environmental awareness, while taking advantage of longer-term international cooperation. Over a year in 2012/2013, the participants held preparatory meetings in their home countries, during which they improved their knowledge of learning mobility, national policies on environmental issues and local community needs. They then took part in an introductory seminar in Lithuania on the quality of international learning mobility, which was followed by further preparation with youth groups and local communities. Subsequently, they participated in a training course in Vietnam on designing and implementation of group learning mobility and environmental campaigns, which was followed up with dissemination in all the partner countries. And the project culminated in a final evaluation meeting held in Germany.

In the preparatory phase, participants had to research and present existing schemes for learning mobility of young people, as well as provide updates on hot environmental topics in their countries and how far young people are typically engaged in such issues. They also played an active role in the introductory seminar, initiating their own ideas and running workshops and simulations — and providing lessons on t'ai chi and holding discussions on issues such as the roles of men and women. Subsequently they implemented local activities such as eco-education workshops for children. The training session was also developed and conducted with significant input from the participants.

The outcomes included increased capacity of youth workers to develop environmentally friendly projects, stronger partnerships across countries and new skills in dissemination. They had an improved sense of ownership and initiative, new competences in intercultural and social relations, developed their organisational skills and learned about non-formal learning methods.

A training course funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in Brussels.

Project carried out by the International Youth Cooperation Development Centre (Vietnam), the Evergreen Centre for Sustainable Development (China), LKJ Exchange (Germany), Nexes Interculturals de joves per Europa (Spain) and the Centre for Creative Expression (Lithuania).

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From non-formal to transformative learning in the EU youth programmes: unleashing the potential of entrepreneurial learning in youth work

JUAN RATTO-NIELSEN

Introduction: experience and reflection

This article draws on personal experience and a review of learning approaches to enquire into the transformative potential of entrepreneurial learning (EL) within youth work. Critical experiences or incidents that challenge our perception of reality and lead to a shift in our system of beliefs are crucial to understand the developmental process behind EL.

Taking a personal example, some years ago during a training course on youth initiatives within the Youth in Action programme, we invited a group of young people to present their project experience. They delivered a flawless presentation of the project life cycle and in the end introduced the final outcome of the project: a book.

Afterwards, we had a short debriefing session with questions and answers. The \$64 000 question to the presenters came from me: 'What have you learnt?' Their learning outcomes and process were not addressed during the presentation and remained unclear. According to the Youth in Action programme, participation in a youth initiative is an important non-formal learning (NFL) experience, and principles and practice are reflected throughout the project⁽¹⁾.

We cannot deny that learning happened, although the entire project was result-oriented towards one main goal: the book. There was change; perhaps they acquired new skills (copy-editing, word processing, etc.), knowledge (grammar, translation, intercultural communication, etc.) and even new attitudes (intercultural awareness, flexibility, etc.), but transformation did not happen because there was no

evidence of critical reflection throughout the process and hence no awareness of the learning process and its outcomes. They kept the same world view, but equipped with new skills and knowledge.

How is it then possible to bring EL into youth work and especially into those activities that are meant to foster the sense of entrepreneurship and initiative?

The main intention of this article is to shed some light on the linkage between EL and the NFL paradigm in youth work. It is argued that EL in a broader sense is already a tacit element in NFL that can be subject to further development. The article shows that EL can be integrated and developed in NFL activities and youth work practices not only as a cross-cutting content but also as a major transformative driving idea in young mindsets towards employability and entrepreneurship with the adequate tools and practices.

Defining entrepreneurial learning in youth work: competence-based learning

Entrepreneurship is often regarded as both the learning and the resources (human and material) necessary to start up a business or social venture (Björk and Arolin, 2013). While entrepreneurship is clearly linked to a functional approach aimed at creating, running and expanding a venture, the concept of EL remains rather fuzzy and context-related (Kaufmann and Stuart, 2007; Rae, 2005). The EL literature refers to a number of aspects tackling entrepreneurship from both a business perspective and a broader perspective of autonomous venture-oriented learning, regardless of the job/venture creation dimension (Politis, 2005; Krueger, 2007; Wilson, 2008). For this article, entrepreneurship is defined as a practice,



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and EL as a mindset or approach leading to a behavioural transformation towards personal and professional development (Krueger, 2007).

Youth work that happens mostly in non-academic environments helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement; it is a developmental process for individuals and groups with a societal outreach⁽²⁾. Youth work and EL resort to methods that are eminently practical and life-related⁽³⁾. Youth work and EL capitalise on experience, social relations and interactions to help young people develop both professionally and personally (du Bois-Reymond, 2003). The roles of learners and educators are also similar in EL and youth work. Learners are regarded as proactive, participative and responsible for managing their learning according to their personal and professional needs. NFL models in youth work looking into holistic approaches have replaced cognitive approaches based merely on the acquisition of knowledge and skills transmitted from teachers to students. Experiential learning assists in learning for the construction of meaning through experience (Kolb, 1984; Löbler, 2006).

What is a competence?

Human resource development (HRD) practitioners and educators use the word competence in different ways. In general terms, competences are 'written descriptions of measurable work habits and personal skills used to achieve a work objective' (Green, 1999; Burke, 1989). Some scholars see competence as a combination of knowledge, skills and behaviour used to improve performance; or as the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified, having the ability to perform a specific role (Tuxworth, 1989; Boyatzis, 1982). For the lifelong learning concept in the EU, a competence is a complex array of knowledge, skills and attitudes that is verified during an activity to attain a certain goal⁽⁴⁾.

Out of the eight key competences identified by the European Commission⁽⁵⁾, there is one that stands out: sense of entrepreneurship and initiative. This competence refers to the ability to put ideas into action, particularly relevant in the field of employability. It is characterised by a sense of initiative, creativity, independence and innovation in personal and social life and work. It requires motivation and determination in achieving goals. It can be broken down into its components: knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Formal and non-formal interventions can transmit the necessary knowledge and skills to become an entrepreneur. However, the sense of entrepreneurship and initiative lacks consistency without the entrepreneurial attitude. There is no debate on whether knowledge and skills can be taught and learnt. Attitudes, on the other hand, are root-



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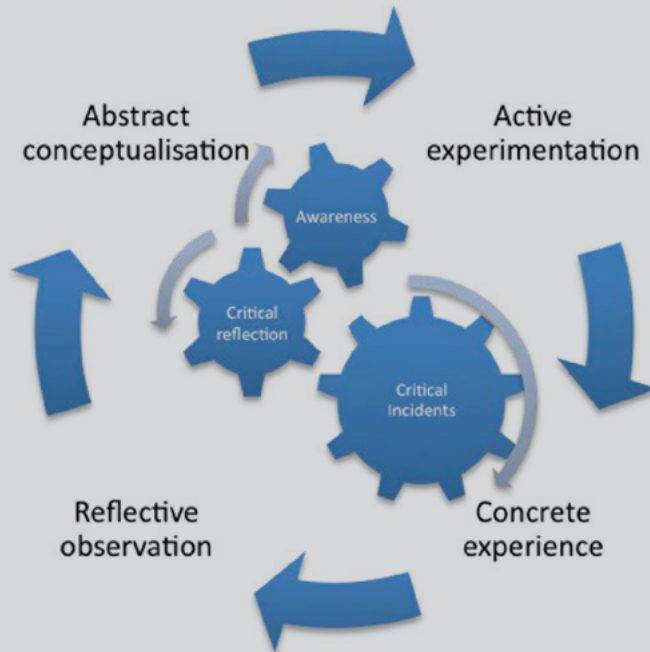
ed in deeper cognitive structures that people acquire during primary and secondary socialisation, called frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997; Taylor, 2008). Furthermore, they are intimately related to their life experiences (positive and negative) and their systems of beliefs.

Entrepreneurial learning in youth work as transformative learning

The literature on the EL process posits that learning is a construct derived from experience based on trial and error, with occasional professional support (Bratnicki et al., 2012; Cope and Watts, 2000; Löbler, 2006). The approach is very similar to the cyclical learning model devised by Kolb and widely used in NFL. Learning occurs in a cycle based on planning, experience, reflection and evaluation (Kolb, 1984). NFL and EL processes are also similar in the sense that the learning process is socially mediated.

This article maintains that EL is not linear or cyclical, but built up by developmental steps shaped around so-called developmental experiences or critical incidents (Cope and Watts, 2000). Critical incidents are the turning points in the EL path that make learners stop and look back to adapt and adjust their learning compasses. The cycle in Figure 1 is similar, but in EL we observe a dialectical dynamic throughout the different stages or phases (Bratnicki et al., 2012).

Figure 1: Kolb's cycle of experiential learning with transformative endogenous processes



Sources: Developed by author after Gibson, D. G. et al. (2009), Cope, J. and Watts, G. (2000) and Kolb, D. A. (1984).

A taxonomy of learning approaches to EL (see Table 1) intends to summarise and organise EL according to different ideal types of learning in terms of methods, dynamics, relationships, models, etc., as listed in the first column.

The second column shows EL within formal learning environments, such as those in traditional education with hierarchical teacher–student models. Knowledge and skills are mainly transmitted by experts taking into account the general objectives of a course or educational programme. Education is centred on the contents, which were designed to fit the standard curricula of the learning organisation. As a consequence, evaluation takes place at the end of the course or programme to test the learning in a summative manner.

The third column considers those learning instances within NFL. The methodology is experiential but not necessarily hands-on. The model is clearly constructivist, as shown in the building of learning through experiential cycles. It is based on a horizontal role model. The rapport with the other learners and educators is transactional because it is established by the exchange of knowledge and skills on a peer-to-peer basis. Learning happens within a context that is intentionally related to the learners and their individual objectives and needs. It tackles a broader competence-based scope (knowledge, skills and attitude).

Table 1: Taxonomy of learning approaches to entrepreneurial learning

Entrepreneurial learning features	Formal learning	Non-formal learning	Transformative learning
<i>Entrepreneurial scope</i>	<i>Entrepreneurship (skills and knowledge)</i>	<i>Sense of entrepreneurship and initiative (competence)</i>	<i>Entrepreneurial attitude</i>
Method	Academic/Expert	Experiential	Learning by doing
Dynamics	Linear	Cyclical	Dialectical
Learning rapport	Transmissional	Transactional	Transformational ⁽⁶⁾
Model	Cognitive	Constructivist	Transformative
Aim	Objective-minded	Needs and objective-minded	Idea-minded
Role model	Hierarchical	Horizontal	Multidimensional
Focus	Content-centred	Learner-centred	Learner and process-centred
Contents	Universal (one size fits all)	Context-related	Frame of reference
Evaluation	Summative	Summative — formative	Formative (lifelong)
Range	Skill/knowledge-specific	Lifelong	Lifelong and lifewide

Sources: Developed by author after Mezirow, J. (1997), Gibson, D. G. et al. (2009), Löbler, H. (2006) and Bratnicki, M., Fraczkiewicz, A. and Kozłowski, R. (2012, January).

The fourth column considers transformative learning with regard to EL and the entrepreneurial attitude. If we consider EL in youth work, we will definitely address change in young mindsets to inspire a new set of values inclined towards risk taking, venture creation and self-development. Transformative learning (Taylor, 1998) addresses change, not only in competence development, but also more specifically in the values and attitudinal elements within a competence.

With the above in mind, we can have a look at Figure 1 again. During the learning process the learner goes through different stages similar to the ones in Kolb's cycle. However, the EL process works in a dialectical manner where the outer cycle is permeated by reflection along the way and at each stage (Bratnicki et al., 2012). EL occurs in transitional stages within the main learning cycle. The learner stands back and learns to adjust and adapt the strategy during the learning process. It is suggested that in the experiential learning cycle the learner sticks to the objectives to reach them, while for the entrepreneurial-minded learner the driving idea is more relevant (Cope and Watts, 2000). This idea shows a broader scope that encompasses a number of embedded learning cycles with its own objectives and outcomes.

A true transformation goes deeper into our attitudes and systems of beliefs leading to major systemic change in the way we perceive reality and look at situations (Meyer et al., 2010). New perspectives, new possibilities and in general new opportunities show up even under the same circumstances. This shift in the way we structure knowledge and skills describes the true potential of EL.

What is the purpose of discussing the different approaches to EL? Basically, to show that transformative learning in practice can increase the potential of EL in youth work by setting off a transformative process in attitudes, with an effect on knowledge and skills. It is agreed that skills and knowledge can be learnt at schools, for example vocational education and training or through NFL activities. So far, it was unclear whether the so-called entrepreneurial attitude could be learnt. This attitude depends basically on the self-identity of each individual (Löbner, 2006, Krueger, 2007). 'Am I an entrepreneur?' is a question of identity that depends heavily on early socialisation patterns, education, upbringing and social background. Transformative learning provides an alternative answer by questioning the frame of reference and the self-identity within a given framework (Meyer et al., 2010). A full array of possibilities may emerge with the appropriate methods and techniques. The next section will query and elaborate on the various methods that youth work can contribute.

Can I become an entrepreneur? Creating EL opportunities through learning interventions in youth work

Entrepreneurial learning in youth work represents a recent priority closely related to the needs of the market and the high rates of youth unemployment in the EU (European Commission, 2012; Wilson, 2008; Heinonen and Akola, 2007). Youth work and the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme, as a whole, provide a fertile ground towards employability and EL.

A sense of initiative and entrepreneurship is transferable into many fields where creativity and entrepreneurial culture are priorities, such as social ventures, a new career, a learning mobility experience, an internship, etc. This priority in the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme is intended to promote projects aimed at stimulating the spirit of initiative among young people, their ability to think with imagination and originality, their willingness to take risks and their creativity to achieve economic, political, social and environmental goals. Thus EL is not only directed at employment and business. EL is lifelong and lifewide learning. It is also learning by doing and process-centred.

How can youth work take a quality leap from transactional NFL to a transformative practice? A youth worker, educator or practitioner can resort to a number of techniques that are already in almost every youth worker's toolbox. The practice must be contextual and individualised with regard to the learner's needs and ideas for development (Burke, 1989; Castling, 1996).



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Figure 2: Continuum of EL in youth work interventions: method and learning relationship

Expert	Experiential		Learning by doing
Mentorship	Training courses	Coaching	Youth initiatives
Youthpass process			
Transmissional	Transactional		Transformational

Sources: Developed by author after Mezirow, J. (1997) and Gibson, D. et al. (2009).

Following the above continuum, we can draft a list of inspiring practices to unleash the potential of EL in youth work, stemming from the experience in the EU youth programmes and other local and national youth schemes.

Mentorship

By mentorship, we refer to the often-hierarchical relationship where one more-experienced person (mentor) offers guidance to the learner or apprentice (mentee). The person in a higher position gives advice and training so that the mentee can acquire certain competences. Mentorship in youth work takes place in many ways, such as counselling at a youth centre or during EVS. Mentorship consists of a series of sessions or meetings, preferably individualised, according to the needs and learning objectives of the mentee and the organisation. It is inherently transmissional by nature, as knowledge and skills are passed from mentor to mentee. With regard to EL, mentors give support in overcoming critical incidents by restoring stability and bringing the learning process back on track.

Training courses

Training interventions based on NFL methods are designed to meet the needs and objectives of the learners. Learning involves mostly transactional sharing of experiences, knowledge and skills by interacting with the other learners and trainers on a peer-to-peer level. During training courses, NFL methods are applied in a vast array of techniques, such as role playing, simulations and gaming. Those are used to mimic real-life situations so as to provide experiential instances. Training courses focus on competence acquisition, fostering a participatory learning environment to exchange knowledge and

skills and to promote critical thinking. Such techniques accompanied by adequate professional facilitation may lead to critical reflection and a shift of the learner's frame of reference. The transformative potential is limited by the scope and collective nature of the training.

Coaching

Coaching in youth work is based on the premise that the coachee is the person with the largest and best information to solve the situations he or she faces. Instead of teaching, the coach helps the coachee to learn about him- or herself. A coach performs his or her role as a facilitator of learning without interfering in the learner's ideas and purposes. A coach may help the learner in many different ways to find the path to EL development. Through positioning new points of view and observation of the paradigms, beliefs and behaviours, the coachees can choose between alternatives that support them to meet the ideas or objectives they are looking for. Ultimately, the coach accompanies the EL process supporting the coachee to identify critical incidents. Again, this allows awareness and alternate thinking. Corrective action in coaching differs from that in mentorship. The mentor supports the mentee to overcome critical incidents and get back on the right track for the achievement of the mentee's goals. By contrast, a coach exploits and assists the coachee in embracing critical incidents (positive or negative) to find the best route to the realisation of the coachee's dream (Krueger, 2007).

Youth initiatives

Youth initiatives are the quintessential learning-by-doing EL activity within the framework of the Youth in Action programme and the new Erasmus+ programme. The official definition of this action offers a combination of EL elements:

'A youth initiative is a project initiated, set up and carried out by young people themselves. It gives young people the chance to try out ideas through initiatives, which give them an opportunity to be directly and actively involved in planning and carrying out projects. Participation in a youth initiative is an important non-formal learning experience. While implementing a youth initiative, young people have the opportunity to discuss and reflect their chosen topic in a European context, to feel that they can contribute to the construction of Europe and therefore to consider themselves as European citizens'⁽⁷⁾.

From the competence-based learning approach in lifelong learning, youth initiatives address the three constituent elements of the entrepreneurial key competence. It is not only experiential as in a simulated life-like activity, but also a learning-by-doing activity. This action

offers young people the possibility to design a social venture and run it themselves with the help of a coach or support person. This particular blend of coaching with learning-by-doing activity bridges the gap between the hands-on venture experience and the EL aim. The group of young people will require a receptive, venture-minded, risk-taking attitude with the necessary creativity and motivation to resolve critical incidents along the way and capitalise on them to attain the full extent of transformative learning in EL.

A synthesis: Youthpass as a transformative learning tool

Youthpass represents the backbone of learning within Erasmus+: Youth in Action. Youthpass is relevant to youth work because it is the only certificate on the EU level that validates NFL in the youth sector.

It is part of the European Commission's strategy to foster the recognition of NFL, and provides a tool for those involved in most activities of the Youth in Action programme (and now Erasmus+: Youth in Action) to certify participation, validate learning outcomes and identify competences from the learning process according to the eight key competences⁽⁸⁾. It aims at supporting reflection on the personal NFL process, fostering active European citizenship, strengthening the social recognition of youth work and supporting the employability of young people and youth workers.

It also has a significant impact on the employability and EL of young people⁽⁹⁾. The so-called Youthpass process⁽¹⁰⁾ helps to structure and organise learning. It defines learning objectives, covers implementation and continuous evaluation and extends to the documentation and follow-up of each project.

The formative evaluation embedded within the Youthpass process helps develop EL by shifting the frame of reference and habits of life of the young people involved. Effective coaching with Youthpass, covering both the learner and the learning process, facilitates such a shift of mindset. This process embraces trial and error practices as EL opportunities, and prioritises long-term ideas and dreams over short-term objectives, when goals have to be modified through critical incidents. Process-centred activities look for EL elements during the life cycle of the project and beyond. Formative evaluation must complement the critical reflection (Knight and Yorke, 2004). Transformative learning with Youthpass can take NFL experiential learning to the next level of learning. Adequate coaching by means of Youthpass will make the difference between competence-based change and

transformation in creating and fostering a long-lasting entrepreneurial culture through attitudinal transformation. To sum it up, with the proper coaching support provided by the deployment of a tool such as Youthpass, a simple question such as ‘what have you learnt?’ can turn a mere cognitive activity into a profound transformative process.

A forward-looking approach to EL within EU youth programmes

We have discussed the transformative process behind EL with regard to the practice of youth work. It has been argued that in order to ‘learn’ entrepreneurship, it is necessary to go through a developmental process. This process, which goes beyond the acquisition of skills and knowledge, is founded on an entrepreneurial attitude in a competence-wide sense. The new Erasmus+ programme provides significant means by recognising the priority of entrepreneurship and EL within the formal and non-formal learning sectors. Moreover, Erasmus+ offers a wide array of actions such as strategic partnerships to improve it. We may list a series of recommendations clustered in three main policy areas, as shown below.

Human resources and education

- (i) Increase the number of learning-by-doing activities in formal and non-formal education and learning, to shift the focus from academic learning to hands-on entrepreneurial practices, such as youth initiatives.
- (ii) Emphasise the attitudinal component of EL across sectors (business, education, social, etc.) by developing a youth entrepreneurial culture with the support of the Erasmus+ programme.
- (iii) Equip educators and youth workers with training in competence-based EL to help them implement, develop and multiply the effect of EL.
- (iv) Create entrepreneur-friendly learning environments in compulsory education that can be followed up and complemented by youth work practice as a cross-sectoral approach offered by the Erasmus+ programme.
- (v) Promote work-based training and in-service learning that has a focus on EL to develop critical thinking skills and the learning-to-learn competence within learning organisations.
- (vi) Back wide-ranging youth work practices like youth initiatives with local and regional resources and structures to support young people in their implementation process.

Social and formal recognition

- (i) Focus on changing mindsets for a generation of entrepreneurial-minded young people.
- (ii) Recognise divergent and critical thinking as an asset in creating value in business and civil society.
- (iii) Promote social entrepreneurship as an alternative for active youth participation as proposed within the new Erasmus+ programme.
- (iv) Encourage social recognition and recognition of EL at the EU level through formal and non-formal education.
- (v) Incorporate and endorse recognition and validation certification for youth EL activities, such as Youthpass, beyond the framework of EU youth programmes.

Networking

- (i) Offer more opportunities and programmes for young people to interconnect entrepreneurial-minded youth and generate synergies among them.
- (ii) Foster the alliance of entrepreneurs and EL-oriented organisations across regions and countries to diversify experiences, and promote job shadowing and exchange of best practices.
- (iii) Encourage partnerships to link youth work activities and EL so as to build learning partnerships across sectors.

Summary and conclusions

The starting point of this article is the premise that youth work offers a journey towards personal and professional transformation that reinforces and sustains EL in the long run.

We have presented the operational definitions and theoretical framework of competence-based EL in relation to youth work and NFL. The main stress falls on the competence-based approach to EL with special emphasis on the entrepreneurial attitude.

The dialectical dynamics of EL around developmental or critical incidents were integrated into the experiential learning cycle. It was argued that when youth work practice incorporates transformative learning it evolves into a transformative process of attitudes and beliefs. Hence, the self-perception of entrepreneurial identity in young people can be learnt, provided there are adequate learning interventions on the entrepreneurial attitude.

Relevant youth work interventions were analysed in the light of a continuum from transmissional to transformative practices, along

with the degree of experiential learning with the support of Youthpass, as a tool for formative evaluation with an effective impact.

These conclusions support the thesis that youth work can deliver EL. Briefly stated, EL in youth work can make up for formal education and NFL needs in learning-by-doing and experiential-learning activities by blending different kinds of practices and learning approaches along a continuum, with the help of Youthpass. The multidimensionality of EL requires a holistic, lifelong and lifewide approach in order to shape an entrepreneurial-minded young person. It follows from this that a broader life-encompassing approach to EL in youth work requires a transformative learning practice to make young people aware and action-prone towards EL. Recommendations are in line with the conclusions based on three main areas: training of young people and youth workers (European training strategy); social and formal recognition (Youthpass); and networking in pursuit of EL excellence through synergies in the EU.

Going back to the story at the beginning of this article, to my surprise, transformation did happen ... to me. That critical incident transformed my perspective and understanding of the recognition and potential of NFL and youth work. Coming from an academic frame of reference, I was impervious to the difficulties encountered in self-assessment, identification and recognition of learning in self-directed environments. I used to take for granted that anyone could spot learning, until I realised that a simple question could make the penny drop ... even for me. This critical incident brought awareness about formative evaluation and Youthpass to my practice, as I started to question assumptions and search for alternative perspectives of understanding. May the same happen to other practitioners after reading this article.



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PhD, is a trainer, facilitator and consultant specialised in lifelong learning, learning mobility and human resource development with large experience in the Youth in Action programme. He designs and implements strength-based learning processes across Europe in both the public and business sectors. His experience within the framework of Youth in Action/ Erasmus+, includes co-operation with SALTO-Youth EECA, EuroMed, Participation, and Training and Cooperation resource centres. Juan has also authored numerous publications on non-formal learning and competence development, such as Youthpass Unfolded, Youthpass and Human Resource Development, Co-creating a learning society, and Trainers' Competences within EuroMediterranean Youth Work, among others.

Notes

1. European Commission (2013), *Youth in Action programme guide*.
2. *The NYA guide to youth work and youth services*, National Youth Agency, Leicester, UK.
3. SALTO-Youth (2009), Training and Cooperation resource centre, *Youthpass guide*.
4. European Commission (2007), *Key competences for lifelong learning — European reference framework*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.
5. According to the European Commission, key competences for lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. They are particularly necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. Key competences are essential in a knowledge society and guarantee more flexibility in the labour force, allowing it to adapt more quickly to constant changes in an increasingly interconnected world. Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning, OJ L 394 of 30.12.2006 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TX-T/?qid=1438335229993&uri=CELEX:32006H0962>).
6. In this article, the term 'transformational' refers to the status or condition, in the sense that somebody or something is undergoing change. 'Transformative', on the other hand, refers to the capacity to cause change.
7. European Commission (2013), *Youth in Action programme guide*.
8. Communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression.
9. Ratto-Nielsen, J. (2012), *Youthpass and human resource development: the missing link towards employability*, SALTO Training and Cooperation resource centre.
10. Kloosterman, P., Markovic, D. and Ratto-Nielsen, J. (2012), *Youthpass unfolded: practical tips and hands-on methods to make the most of the Youthpass process*, SALTO Training and Cooperation and Inclusion resource centres.

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Tools

Youthpass

<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass>

Youthpass is the European tool to improve the recognition of the learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning of young people, youth workers and youth leaders who participate in projects supported by the EU programme Erasmus+: Youth in Action. It consists of certificates that can be obtained by participants in programme activities. Youthpass process helps young people and youth workers to reflect about their learning according to the EU's eight key competences framework. With Youthpass, participants in projects can describe what they have done and show what they have learnt. It also has an impact on organisations, helping them gain greater awareness of the value of their work. Youthpass certificates for Erasmus+: Youth in Action are available for youth exchanges, European Voluntary Service and youth workers' mobility.



European good practice

Polish Jews — multicultural education through documentary

The project 'Polish Jews — multicultural education through documentary' was run for 11 months in 2009-2010 by six young people from Warsaw — members of the Polish-Jewish Youth Organisation. The idea was to collect memories of Jews living in pre-war Poland, and to make a documentary that would preserve an image of the coexistence of Jews and Poles in the multicultural Polish state. It was also designed to allow young Polish Jews to meet the generation of their grandparents, and to bridge the gap between the youngest and oldest representatives of the Jewish community in Poland, which has emerged from the Second World War and decades of communist domination.

The idea of the movie *Eight stories that haven't changed the world* is simple. Distinct from depicting history solely in the context of the Holocaust, it presents individual people, their everyday lives, their attitudes and their reflections, which gives it at the same time a universal quality. It features eight Polish Jews born between 1914 and 1933 telling stories of their childhood, dreams and adventures, based on their earliest memories. The interviews are linked with fragments of feature films from the period between the two world wars to reflect the environment and the atmosphere in which they grew up.

The documentary was also a step towards laying the foundations for a Polish-Jewish intercultural dialogue, built on openness and mutual respect across generations and among peers. A series of workshops on the film were organised for 300 pupils in nine schools in the region, to raise awareness of discrimination and xenophobia and to dismantle stereotypes. The workshops introduced Jewish society in Poland and its culture, customs and traditions. The organising group prepared the workshop programme and took part in the training on how to work with young people. The activities were intended to contribute to a new form of patriotism among local youth, based on active citizenship and respect for diversity.

Using the movie during the workshops with youngsters helped build understanding between Poles and Polish Jews, and sparked interest in young people in the cultural and human heritage of their country,





and indeed of Europe, giving a national project international resonance. The movie was subsequently seen by around 1 100 people; the shows were accompanied by discussions and concerts. The documentary has since also been shown at film festivals around the world and has earned awards and distinctions.

Making the movie involved consultations with a director and a journalist, working on the script, deciding on interviewees and interviewers, renting camera, lighting, microphone and other equipment and recording and editing the material. When organising the premiere and promotion of the film, young people sent invitations, established contact with media, prepared the website and rented the theatre, as well as producing a DVD. The group acquired skills in logistics and practical organisation while preparing and running the workshops, establishing contacts with schools, companies and various institutions.

A youth initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Poland.

Project carried out by the Polish-Jewish Youth Organisation (Poland).



Get ready for social entrepreneurship

A training course in Romania in mid 2014 for youth workers from across Europe focused on how social enterprises can offer an alternative model for entrepreneurship through an innovative way of civic engagement and participation. It was also underlined that entrepreneurial skills can help youth adapt well to other non-entrepreneurial careers.

The European Commission defines a social enterprise as an operator in the social economy, embedded in the real economy, close to people and local communities whose main objective is to close social gaps and contribute to the general good of society while doing business differently. It aims at a social impact rather than at making a profit for their owners or shareholders. The impact can be on society, the environment or the local community, by providing employment and dealing with social and civic issues, and the underlying values are compatible with youth work's attachment to solidarity and community work, inclusion and participation.

Sixteen participants came from Belgium, Germany, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden. The learning-by-doing approach allowed them to present and share





their project ideas and to raise their awareness about the factors for success of social entrepreneurship, including funding opportunities in the Erasmus+ programme.

Experts and local social entrepreneurs provided training and experiences of combining creativity and innovation using profit for community benefit and participatory management, and the training sessions included field visits to functioning social enterprises. Participants were encouraged to develop future projects by setting their own agenda, so many of the sessions were presented by the participants themselves, on subjects such as alternative financial instruments or how to start a social enterprise with less than EUR 100.

Project ideas included connecting public institutions and companies with social entrepreneurs to respond to community needs, promote the personal development of young people with fewer opportunities through non-formal learning and empower socially excluded groups of people through local businesses in the food sector. The need to provide young people and young entrepreneurs with opportunities for entrepreneurial learning, training and coaching was highlighted as well.

The project-based learning approach was judged by participants to be useful, and the skills acquired included teamwork and managing frustration and conflict in a positive way, as well as familiarity with non-formal learning methods.

A training course for youth workers and multipliers organised by SALTO-Youth participation in partnership with the Erasmus+: Youth in Action national agencies in the French speaking community of Belgium, Hungary, Romania and Sweden.

Empowering young people through non-formal learning activities: principles, methodological approaches and coaching

MONIKA NOVOSADOVA

Introduction

Recognition of non-formal/informal learning in youth work activities is based on recognising individual learning outcomes. It becomes increasingly evident that learning in this environment does happen. But opinions remain divided over describing when, how and what conditions need to be fulfilled. Practice in the youth field is so varied that a single overview of all the approaches, methodologies and individual methods, tools and activities can hardly be comprehensive, and it is difficult to draw conclusions that would apply universally. However it can be stated that certain typologies and identifying main features are possible.

Defining and describing competences acquired through non-formal learning can help people find a more suitable job — of obvious importance with an average of 20 % of young people unemployed in Europe.

Interest in how far non-formal learning can boost the employability of young people has increased, both among young people themselves and among other stakeholders. But a dilemma arises as to whether employability is only the responsibility of other sectors, and whether it is the role of non-formal education to fill the gaps in other systems in supporting the employability of young people.

EU youth programmes ⁽¹⁾ have created space for young people's learning through personal experience. There has not been enough exploration of what the outcomes are, what competences they acquire and how this empowers them, what approaches can serve such purpose and how successful approaches can be adopted in other schemes. Some measures have already been taken in empowering young people to assess their own competences, to communicate them and to take responsibility for their own learning and development (and further on for their lives) within the context of lifelong and

lifewide learning. Youthpass has become one of the tools to support and empower young people in doing so.

Non-formal learning and empowerment

Any search for connections between non-formal learning and empowerment requires some consensus on terms. Empowerment is defined as a 'multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important'⁽²⁾. In practice, what non-formal learning offers in terms of empowering young people is the following.

- (i) Creating an understanding of how society (and local communities) works based on practical involvement in projects (specifically within youth initiatives). The principles and core themes of the EU youth programmes, such as participation, active (European) citizenship, a multicultural approach and inclusion, have contributed to young people's understanding of what those terms mean in practice and how they can be lived.
- (ii) Supporting young people in discovering different pathways to education, employment and jobs and, in a wider sense, how they would like to build their future (such discovery is strongly embedded within the European Voluntary Service - EVS).

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- (iii) Motivating young people to become actors of change. Young people have an opportunity to explore issues and to become actively involved in dealing with them. They learn how to take matters into their own hands, to progress beyond complaining and to influence constructive change.

Non-formal learning activities help young people to be capable of change. Views on the results of such change depend on the perspective taken. Much of empowerment relates to learning and to the ability to apply learning outcomes in life, in terms of gained competences, both personal and professional. The process can be examined from at least three distinct bases. Taking account of these different focuses is important when supporting empowerment within projects and communicating the learning outcomes to different stakeholders.

Individual perspective — focus on attitude

Young people, especially those without previous experience of learning outside the school environment, are often not aware of their strengths and frequently lack belief in their capacity to achieve anything. It is important to provide them with the opportunity to test their abilities, and to succeed and build up confidence. Positive experience of this sort, either individual or shared by a group, can change the attitude of young people towards themselves and their perception of their own capacity. Changing attitudes is internal to each individual, and even though it can be verbally communicated by participants to the outside world, only through action can it be observed.

Collective/group perspective — focus on skills

Attitudes are internal, but the group perspective of a change is often based on seeing and perceiving evolved skills. For instance, participants who may have been timid and lacking in confidence to speak English at the beginning of a youth exchange are at the end able to communicate with each other, using diverse ways for making themselves understood. Or a participant who was shy about speaking in front of a group becomes capable of running a short energiser for the whole group by the end of the project. Or a person continually asking what to do at the beginning of the project ends up coordinating the work of a small group in the kitchen. Many more examples attest to the fact that perceiving learning outcomes is often a matter of assessing personal skills shown in practice. The group can perceive whether or not participants have learned and have started to feel more comfortable in using their competences (ergo have been empowered to do so).

Societal perspective — focus on knowledge and resulting competences

From a wider point of view, developing competences is important, and even more important is how far the young people are able to persuade others of what they have learned and how they make use of it later. As distinct from the previous perspective, where skills are understood through interaction within a group or through achieving a shared outcome, the societal perspective offers cognitive and descriptive assessment — a need to communicate one's learning based on analysis, and at the same time use of the competences acquired. A part of this perspective stresses that the competences shall serve for a greater good, for example by supporting others, getting involved in voluntary or other public activities or starting up one's own project or organisation. Within this perspective, this proves that the learning has happened and the learner is able to use their competences in real-life situations, so he/she is not the sole beneficiary of the learning.

Non-formal learning activities within the EU youth programmes focus on one or another of these perspectives, and sometimes on two or even all three. The direction chosen by the organisers depends on the type of activity, the participants' level of experience and the environment where the activities take place. But in all cases there are outcomes connected to empowerment. The choice is based on the simple premise that non-formal learning provides space and opportunity for young people to try things out, to make mistakes and to learn from them. In this way they can gain self-confidence based on better understanding, in terms of feeling and knowing, their own capacities and how they can use them.

Different methodologies and approaches have been generated through the support provided via the EU youth programmes, such as training and cooperation activities or pools of coaches and trainers organised by the national agencies. These respond well to the learning needs of programme beneficiaries, increasing their competences and so the quality of youth work.

Non-formal learning processes

One of the cornerstones in non-formal learning in the youth context is the creation of a framework for learning, planned and organised in such a way that it responds to the needs of the individual, group and organisation (which in this sense means the local community, society or other relevant stakeholders). As a result, participants are empowered and become able to understand

more coherently what they have learnt, how they have learnt it and how they can use and benefit from the learning outcomes in the future. The main principles of such a learning framework include the following:

Needs and situational analysis

Activities are based on needs of stakeholders (participants, wider target groups, partner organisations) and adapted to the reality within which non-formal learning happens, and this is clearly communicated.

Project management logic

The process and activities are directed to defined aims and (specific) objectives, with each part of the programme built on the rest.

Reflection embedded in learning

Reflection on personal learning is promoted systematically throughout the project, so that participants can understand their own experience, structure it and look at ways they can build on it.

Learning through experience (or learning by doing)

The project includes experience that allows participants to test their knowledge, skills and attitudes in real-life situations.

Learner-centred approach

Attention is given to participants' individual needs and abilities, and the educational project is adapted accordingly.

Variety of methods and techniques

Diverse creative techniques and methods are adapted and used in response to the situation (needs, group dynamics, learning styles and level of competences of participants, etc.).



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Holistic approach

During an educational project, attention is paid to all three aspects of competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes), and space is provided for experience, reflection, generalisation or contextualisation, so participants can try out what they have learned and assess whether new competences have been acquired.

Needs analysis is a basis for developing non-formal learning projects in youth work. When the analysis conducted by different stakeholders is taken into account and the educational project is adapted adequately, a suitable environment for learning results, with space for participants to set personal learning goals in line with individual learning needs. And organisers can choose appropriate methods to help achieve the goals. For example: a group of young people is unsure of how to spend their free time but keen to do something. A youth worker, aiming to give

them some experience of spending their free time actively and contributing to the local community, engages the group in discussion about changes they would like to see in their own immediate surroundings. They say that the playground for children cannot be used and needs reconstruction. So they create — with the support of a youth worker⁽³⁾ — a youth initiative. Another group in another country with similar desires for active use of free time starts a project providing activities for seniors in a local residence. Each group is carrying out activities in their home environment, but they communicate with each other about what they have done, show the results of their work and support each other based on the experience acquired. At some point both groups meet and introduce what they have done to the other group. They might also start to discover interests that they share. And based on a discussion — for example how they like to spend free time, or possibilities for spending free time actively in their towns, or what facilities they miss — they organise a youth exchange.

EU youth programmes have provided a range of activities appropriate to gaining competences at different levels. Entry points can vary — it can be a youth exchange, a youth initiative or EVS, depending on the needs, interests and abilities of each young person. Within the EU youth programmes even unorganised young people can develop

activities of their own. They can start as participants, acquire some small responsibility within the next project, then become members of an organisational team, and finally become coordinators of the whole team.

Methodologies and approaches

Non-formal learning supports individuals within a group to learn based on their own needs and in line with expectations from different stakeholders. Many approaches are used within non-formal learning in youth work that match these different aims. The selection below focuses on those that strongly empower young people.

Providing experience: learning by doing

Providing an experience from which participants can learn is one of the key elements of the learning process in non-formal learning. In the real-life situations or simulations participants experience the situation authentically, with their whole being — bodies, minds, emotions — and therefore learn holistically. Experimental learning is meaningful.

Giving a choice: using different methods and techniques

Non-formal learning in the youth work context benefits from a variety of activities that organisers choose to pursue the educational aims and objectives: simulation exercises, discussions, group work, buzz groups, self-reflection spaces, brainstorming, presentations and case studies are obvious examples⁽⁴⁾. Creative techniques such as different arts or tools (theatre, painting, music, cards, games) enrich individual methods adapted to specific projects.

Focusing on the present: responding to the current needs of participants

While formal education explores general concepts within a curriculum covering what students might need to know, non-formal learning activities focus on the here and now. This is possible by creating space for young people to actively participate and back up their learning goals with the needs and motivation they communicate before and during the educational project so that the project fits into the expectations throughout.

Making learning interesting: enjoying time together

Activities which people enjoy make learning more interesting and accessible for them. Sharing joyful moments in a group reinforces this. Educational projects should combine hard work and gaining deep experience with time for relaxation and enjoyment. This brings balance to learning and helps participants to learn in line with their goals. Energisers, group-building exercises and games are important in non-formal learning activities. So too is trust — trust in the organisers and in the group, so that participants are able to open up and share — whether moments of success or of uncertainty or ambiguity.

Creating a space for observation: reflection

Non-formal learning benefits from reflection, as a way of creating awareness of personal learning and the ability to build it up. It permits clearer understanding of the learning process and its outcomes. Group reflection is also helpful — sharing of perceptions within a group, so that participants can compare experiences and learn from others too, recognising that each person perceives things individually.

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Supporting competence building: self-assessment

Empowering young people to describe and evaluate their own competences is important in non-formal learning, but is not often taught. Tools and methods range from self-assessment through questionnaires to more creative methods. Young people may need support in self-assessment: mentoring, counselling or coaching have their place in that.

Youthpass is one of the tools to support reflection, structuring personal learning and assessing competences. They help young people understand their own learning outcomes, develop the ability to describe acquired competences and communicate the learning outcomes to the outside world.

Coaching: maximising personal potential

According to the *Youth in Action programme guide*, 'coaching is partnering with young people in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal potential. Coaching honours young people as the experts in the project and believes that every young person is creative, resourceful and whole. Therefore a coach should listen, observe and customise their approach to young people's needs. A coach should: discover, clarify and align with what young people want to achieve; encourage young people's self-discovery; elicit young people-generated solutions and strategies; and hold young people responsible and accountable' ⁽⁵⁾.

Coaching has been used to support young people in the EU youth programmes mainly within youth initiatives or even EVS, demonstrating that coaching and non-formal learning can support each other in the following ways.

- (i) Building a team and team spirit create an atmosphere of trust where its members can express themselves and show their potential in front of the others.
- (ii) Only when the team is established and all its members feel that they have a place in the group should attention turn to the goal of the project.
- (iii) The team as such should agree on goals (or aims and objectives) based on common understanding of what they want to achieve. Imposition by a youth worker or youth leader compromises motivation.

- (iv) Roles should be allocated according to each person's capacities, but everybody should also be supported in creating challenges for themselves, exploiting the potential of each individual and the group as a whole.
- (v) Appreciating and celebrating group successes (or small steps towards the goal) strengthens learning and motivates young people to take on further responsibility.
- (vi) Setting an agenda in such a way that the team knows it has support if needed but can deal with many issues independently empowers the team to take on responsibility for the whole process.
- (vii) Creating space to dream, imagine ideals and speak about personal values provides the team with a deeper basis for connecting beliefs with actions.
- (viii) Tools such as wheel of balance or different scales⁽⁶⁾ help the team understand how to structure their own thinking.

Added value of coaching in the context of non-formal learning and youth work is linked to building up young people's self-confidence, their ability to work effectively in a team and their sense of responsibility. Coaching helps them realise what they have achieved and how they have done it; it helps them understand their abilities and what they have learned. They learn how to support each other and learn from each other, while retaining final responsibility for a project. It also creates a sense of responsibility at a personal level and for one's surroundings, and nurtures a belief that, if they want, they can exert influence to change things.

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Wider perspective: empowerment towards employability

The EU youth programmes have offered opportunities for comprehensive learning. Through this process young people acquire knowledge and develop a range of skills and attitudes (often including pro-activity, solidarity, respect, problem-solving or flexibility), as well as discover their own interests and motivation. They can benefit from all of that when looking for a job. According to surveys ⁽⁷⁾, non-formal learning and youth work provide young people with space to improve their transversal skills, which are increasingly valued by employers ⁽⁸⁾. And since the labour market has become more global and companies increasingly operate beyond their local environment, with employees from diverse backgrounds, the need for competences for operating effectively in a multicultural environment has increased, with complexity of languages, perceptions, approaches and ways of doing things. The EU youth programmes have focused on activities in a multicultural setting, which promotes skills connected to intercultural awareness. Research shows that young people who have taken part in activities organised with support of the EU youth programmes have become more receptive to multiculturalism, to working abroad or to improving their language skills ⁽⁹⁾.

The classic steady job is only one of the possible employment pathways; becoming self-employed or starting up an organisation or a small business are other options for entering the labour market. Young people who already have experience in running projects are equipped with skills that help in taking up such challenges, through an NGO, an SME or a social business.

Looking forward

There are many other trends and challenges that influence non-formal learning, youth work and employment that merit examination.

- (i) As unemployment of young people is still high, non-formal learning will play an important role in employability by providing space and support for learning skills relevant for the labour market.
- (ii) Describing competences gained outside formal education will become increasingly important, especially when looking for a job. It will also support young people in getting their learning outcomes validated, as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) are further developed.

- (iii) Tools like Youthpass guide young people through self-assessment and/or description of individual learning outcomes in non-formal learning. Further support should be given to young people and youth workers to use them effectively.
- (iv) Initiatives bringing together youth work, employers, formal educational institutions and public authorities sometimes face a language barrier. Finding a lingua franca to improve common understanding is a challenge, especially in communicating learning outcomes of young people involved in non-formal learning activities.
- (v) It is also important to communicate more effectively to other stakeholders what youth work is as a sector and how it functions. In this way, education becomes a continuum where formal education, non-formal education and vocational education and training are complementary and support each other.
- (vi) Discussing the quality of youth work and non-formal learning within it has been on the agenda of many stakeholders. Bringing together the different initiatives supporting recognition of youth work as a sector and youth workers as professionals and coming to at least a minimum agreement would be beneficial for all actors.



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Notes

1. EU youth programmes refer to: Youth for Europe (1988), European Voluntary Service (1996), Youth (2000-2006), Youth in Action (2007-2013) and the current Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014-2020).
2. <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999october/comm1.php> [15.11.2014].
3. Youth worker is meant in a wider sense as someone working with young people in the context of non-formal learning.
4. The methods mentioned in this chapter are based on a set of 12 methods as described in *Do Evropy hrou II*, Czech National Agency Youth.
5. Coaching as described in *Youth in Action user guide* (2013).
6. Wheel of balance: <http://www.pure-coaching.com/IWLlink.html> [20.11.2014]; using different scales: <http://articlescoertvisser.blogspot.cz/2007/11/scales-practical-change-tools.html>
7. In non-formal learning both tools, the wheel of balance and any scales, use numbers, not percentages, and they start at number 1, not at 0, in recognition of the experience that each participant already brings to the project from what they have done before.
7. For example, *Study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability* [31.10.2014].
8. Research has been carried out within the project KomPrax: Kompetencie pre prax (Competences for practice) by Iuventa, Slovak National Institute (http://www.iuventa.sk/files/documents/publik%C3%A1cie/metodick%C3%A9%20materi%C3%A1ly/particip%C3%A1cia/zs_mlady%20veduci.pdf [20.11.2014]).
9. Research-based analysis carried out by the RAY network: <http://www.researchyouth.net/publications>.

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Tools

RAY Network

<http://www.researchyouth.net>

This research-based analysis and monitoring of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme (and previously the Youth in Action programme) improves understanding of the processes and outcomes in youth work and non-formal learning. It assesses the effects on young people, youth workers and youth leaders and related organisations. It also explores how and what they learn from involvement in the programme and how the learning context can be improved so as to support the development of the eight key competences, as well as better promoting active and democratic citizenship and participation in civil society, the values of tolerance, solidarity and understanding, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and networking in youth work. It is implemented by a network of 17 Erasmus+: Youth in Action national agencies and their research partners.



European good practice

Theatre of the oppressed

The project 'Theatre for all — dealing with topics of our time' was carried out by Neront, an informal group of 24 young people from Estonia, Spain, Hungary and Austria. They organised a youth exchange in Riedau, a village in Austria, for a week in the summer of 2012. An innovative and creative approach was chosen to tackle social and political problems in a solution-oriented way, including the economic crisis, unemployment (especially among young people), climate change and environmental disasters. They applied the Augusto Boal 'Theatre of the oppressed' method, with engagement of the audience, where the stage is used to reflect on conflicts and to find new solutions for common problems while expressing the ideas in new ways, and seeing controversial issues from other points of view. Instructed by a professional drama educator, the participants subsequently learned how to create their own plays dealing with their chosen topics — including healthy lifestyle, democracy, civil courage, racism and bullying. Finally they performed the plays to the public in Riedau.

The dramatic structure of the plays focused on obstacles preventing the protagonists from reaching their goals, and engaged the audience in helping deal with the problem. The audience could see the power relationships and identify with the protagonist, and the protagonist could share knowledge and creativity with the audience. Dialogue was based on much more than words, so language barriers were less important. Through theatre play the participants improved their intercultural, verbal and non-verbal communication skills — learning that gestures, expressions and interjections do not have the same meaning in every culture and country. At the same time, the project promoted self-confidence and helped the participants to recognise their own skills and capacities, as well as weaknesses. By living and working together with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds, the project prompted intercultural learning — notably demonstrating that everybody is different, but equal. During the exchange the participants were accommodated for free by local village families, who also learned that young people from across Europe share some of the same needs, ideas and beliefs. It provided the local community with a new European and global awareness, and increased solidarity between younger and older people. It also promoted the Youth in Action programme and encouraged local young people to become active and experience the possibilities the programme offers.

The project fostered entrepreneurship and creativity through the activities developed by the participants as they brought in their own ideas and in-





terests. The activities integrated the young people in small teams: interest groups working on documentation, taking photos, making videos or writing reports, and learning from each other's expertise and sharing their know-how; responsibility groups handled catering, administration or planning; and family groups developed from the accommodation arrangements.

An intercultural night allowed each group to present its home country through songs, pictures, dances and food. The host families also attended the intercultural night, and the participants explored Riedau and talked to the locals to find out about the area. Information was provided via public relations about the youth exchange, both in newspapers and through word of mouth, since the exchange was situated in a small village.

The project showed how local action can raise awareness, and it motivated young people to become active in respect of global challenges. Long-term partnerships and friendships were established. Many participants wanted to implement their own youth projects.

A youth exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Austria.

Project carried out by the Neront informal group of young people (Austria), in partnership with Continuous Action (Estonia), Intercambia (Spain) and the Jólélek Psychological Foundation (Hungary).



The story of my life

The project was inspired by the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, and featured youngsters and senior citizens with very different life experiences — some finishing their careers, others only just starting adult life. The aim was to build intergenerational dialogue, to increase tolerance and understanding between cultures and to help both young and older people to be active and caring participants in society.

It was a response to the often-made suggestion that generations are not able to communicate with each other, and proved that the generation gap is not actually so big.

Thirty-five young people from seven European countries (Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Italy, Austria, Portugal and Finland) met with residents from Estonian seniors' clubs in August 2012 for 10 days. They organised outdoor activities, discos, workshops and a public event in Tallinn and Venivere in Estonia. Initially, the young people got to know each other, and discussed age and society issues across Europe, with each country making a short presentation. Then they spent time together with the elderly people, interacting with discussions on active ageing, the keys to a long and happy life or what intercultural and intergenerational dialogue could





do. Personal information was shared — travel stories, childhood dreams, work experiences — on the basis of photos or objects each participant had brought from home. The elderly people also spoke of life in the past, such as keeping old cars running or doing jobs that no longer exist. And the young people got tips from seniors on how to avoid ill health and loneliness in old age. The public event that the whole group prepared took place at a local market in Nõmme in Tallinn. It gave some entertaining views of active ageing and intergenerational dialogue, with shared intercultural experiences and presentations on the project and participants' home countries. There were performances of dancing, singing, diabolo, martial arts and sketches, along with children's activities and a photo exhibition. The final phase of the project was a summary of the experience by the young people — which prompted some ideas to develop back home.

The project gave rise to pan-European contacts, and many participants were motivated for self-development. Nõmme Seniors' Club started organising English lessons for themselves and created projects with similar organisations. Younger participants developed new international projects.

The project confronted participants with two very different challenges: age related and culture related. And participants concluded there is more that we all share than what divides us. 'Even though we came from different backgrounds and cultures — and our senior participants even from different generations — we understood that many of our problems and joys are the same. Everybody realised that even if we might want different things in life, we all get sad and happy the same way. We are all equal.' Participants discarded stereotypes and developed their cultural and social awareness. 'Older people seem to think that youngsters do not know much about life. The same goes for youngsters — many of us seem to think that older people are boring and very strict. This camp proved this really is not the case! We all are different and rather than making generalisations based on age or nationality, everybody should make an effort to get to know each other.'

As participants were involved in the preparation and implementation of the project, this also meant that they gained valuable organisational skills, which boosted their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. And because young people came from seven different countries, everybody — including the elderly — had to try to communicate in English, so they all developed their language skills.

A youth exchange project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Estonia. Project carried out by MTÜ Headest (Estonia), in partnership with Jeugd, Cultuur en Wetenschap vzw (Belgium), Città di Nichelino — Servizio Informagiovani (Italy), aha — Tipps & Infos für junge Leute (Austria), Município de Vila Nova de Famalicão (Portugal), Nuorisokeskus Villa Elba (Finland) and Regional Youth Council Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany).



A volunteer on snowy roads: learning mobility and learning through cultural difference as a strong formative experience

IOANA-MARIA BERE

Over the course of time, every one of us gathers information, emotions and experiences that mix together in different combinations and give birth to wishes that we carry with us so long that sometimes we forget where they came from, and we are left only with persistent unconscious desires.

It was that sort of wish that impelled me to leave home, become more independent and deviate from my linear life track. I was a normal child, got good results in school, engaged in extracurricular activities, was open to proposals from my parents for camps, summer courses, etc. It was comfortable but I came to feel that I wanted to choose more for myself. That presented difficulties at home where my family had always been an influence on all my decisions. I started dreaming of getting away for a while. It was probably a normal desire among young people, but stronger for me because I was doing my university studies in my home city. I needed something else.

I started wishing to get as far north as possible. Why north? Because it was an unknown place that seemed very different to what I had back home and therefore more of a challenge. I felt that only by challenging myself and removing myself gradually beyond my comfort zone, in a different environment where my actions would be motivated by my own wishes rather than by what others around me hoped for, could I better understand my expectations in life. Although I appreciated all the help and protection, I felt I was being prevented from taking responsibility for my own decisions about my life, and even from identifying what I really wanted to do.

In 2011 I obtained a good degree in landscape architecture studies. I had chosen that course 4 years earlier, merely following what everyone around me did or wanted me to do — to study at university. The topic vaguely overlapped with my loosely defined desire to be working outside and involving art and creativity in my job. But although this



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I was still determined to go north, and I wanted to do something with people, perhaps with children. After applying for projects in Norway, Iceland, Finland and Denmark, I chose an offer of 6 months of volunteering in Finland, where the contact person had already inspired me. It proved a good choice.

So in January I started a 2-day journey north, initially to the small city of Kokkola, 400 km from Helsinki, and then to my destination — Nykarleby, ‘the happiest town in Finland’, according to Google. It turned out to be a village with 3 000 inhabitants on the western Finnish coast in the Swedish-speaking area of the country.

The low temperature, the empty landscape and the road signs warning of reindeer were utterly new to me. In the hibernating Nykarleby, covered by a thick layer of snow that blurred its shapes and contours, the streets were not cleared. I felt I had travelled from the crowded and noisy Cluj-Napoca in Romania to another world. But I learnt new things: every rare sunny hour was a reason to be joyful, east and west were no longer connected with sunrise and sunset and day and night started and ended when people chose, irrespective of the dark that dominated the world outside. The temperature could suddenly drop to minus 32, making the air almost impossible to breathe and obliging drivers to plug their cars into mains power so they could start their engines the next day. Then, after 3 months, this frozen world melted away: April replaced the snow with green grass and brought another landscape into being, with a sun that seemed never to tire of shining, and light that tempted everyone out of their houses. After being cooped up during the winter, people were now active for 18 or 20 hours of the daylight and still had energy in the evening. So daily activities expanded into the evenings and the time

was the moment when I was supposed to start my ‘real life’, I did not feel ready for it; I was increasingly aware that landscaping was not my main interest. I decided to test what I was good at and how I could make best use of my unknown capacities that did not relate to formal education. Outside of studying, I lacked confidence. So only real-life situations could provide me with the challenges where I could really discover myself.

Through a local NGO (Board Game Centre Mirakolix) I came into contact with non-formal learning methods, with the EU Youth in Action programme, and then the European Voluntary Service (EVS), which seemed the perfect opportunity for me, and I decided to apply.

was marked only by the clock; both the light and the temperature made it seem as if it was permanent day.

This showed me how the geography and local environment influence the way people organise their life throughout the year. It demonstrated how people living under harsh weather conditions work as a team to overcome natural obstacles.

My 6 months as EVS volunteer in Finland provided me with responsibilities and a completely experience-based learning process. I worked in the highly professional municipal department of culture and leisure. I helped out teachers in a kindergarten and a school preparing activities for the children, making presentations about Romania and supporting ongoing work. I was also involved in cultural and sport events: concerts, art exhibitions, championships, youth exchanges, workshops and public events.

Encouraged by the supportive department team, I had the opportunity to develop a personal project responding directly to my own interests. Together with two other EVS volunteers I obtained a small grant from the Finnish Youth in Action national agency and organised an EVS caravan running non-formal learning activities among young

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people in three Finnish municipalities and so promoting cultural diversity, tolerance and non-discrimination. I experienced all the steps in running a project: identifying the idea, building a team, finding finance, preparing an application, planning activities, organising and implementing them, evaluating and reporting.

Altogether, my EVS experience exposed me to situations where I could choose how to act in line with my interests and my own sense of how to develop. Being able to try things out with some personalised guidance allowed me to learn by doing. It also allowed me to make mistakes — a normal part of the EVS experience and just a starting point for a lesson to be learned. It was not always easy. At times I did not know what to do or I felt I needed a change, and at first I missed my family around me. But being surrounded by great people who wanted to show me possibilities without pressuring me towards any of them helped me decide for myself. My mentor and coordinator Tina was always there when I needed someone to talk to or to get a hug from, or just to listen to me. Her limitless patience and capacity to support volunteers and make them feel appreciated was invaluable. Working in such a culturally diverse environment she always supported but never judged. I learnt from her how important that is in a successful learning environment: you can count on someone when you need to but you are free to make your own decisions — and mistakes.

Living and working side by side with Finnish people I was part of a group where individuals trusted and respected the system they had built up, based on mutual dependence, and never placing their personal interests above those of the community. It was a delight to discover their habit of hard work and their appreciation of a job well done. I saw that what we tend to consider as a utopian desire in Romania, can be realised.

I grew to appreciate cultural diversity and to see how the context influences customs and behaviours of different nations. Some cultural differences were very obvious: Finnish punctuality, the Finnish attachment to gender equality, the space Finns like to maintain in relationships or the way Finnish teachers address — and respect — the children in their charge. Small things helped enlarge my horizons, and I realised how important it is to understand and accept differences from country to country. I became more aware of my personal background in Romania that was influenced for almost 50 years by a communist regime during which values were destroyed.

Learning about people in different contexts also teaches you a lot about yourself. When, to my surprise, I found my opinions were taken

seriously, I came to understand how important it is in building trust, irrespective of age differences or the topics under discussion. This encouraged my self-confidence and empowered me to take responsibility for my own ideas — and to put them into practice. I also learnt that I was good at working with children, while preparing activities for different age groups and overcoming cultural and language barriers. And so I discovered that I enjoyed working with people too much to dedicate my life to plants and landscaping.

The complex learning process I was involved in allowed me to assess what I should do about my own future. I realised that I can transform experience into decision by reflection, drawing conclusions and pondering implementation. I acquired control of things I wanted to develop by setting goals, finding ways to realise them and turning mistakes into learning experiences that could help me further.

Back home and more decisive about what I wanted, I started working in the NGO field, initially as a volunteer coordinator at Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Centre, which promotes volunteering as a contribution to community change and a way to develop personal interests. I have been coordinating more than 20 EVS volunteers, in charge of all the stages of an EVS project, from developing an idea and identifying partners to hosting and monitoring the volunteers, as well as promoting the project and disseminating its results.

Now I see myself developing skills relevant to the international youth work and this provides me with the opportunity to explore even more and walk on new roads — snowy or not.



IOANA-MARIA BERE

is a programme coordinator in Cluj-Napoca Volunteer Centre and a trainer on the Erasmus+ programme. With a particular interest in experiential learning and efficient learning methods, she has been involved in volunteering activities for 8 years, as a volunteer herself both locally and abroad (including in the European Voluntary Service), and in coordinating and developing volunteering programmes and providing consultancy on volunteer management strategies for NGOs in Romania. She graduated in landscape architecture in 2010 and is now working on her second bachelor's degree in psychology.



Tools

Erasmus+

http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

The EU is investing EUR 14.7 billion in Erasmus+, the programme for education, training, youth and sport for 2014-2020. It seeks to boost the job prospects and personal development of young people, as well as to help education, training and youth systems deliver teaching and learning that give people the skills they need in today's labour market and society and in the future.

The Erasmus+ integrated programme has three key actions and provides opportunities for all:

key action 1: learning mobility opportunities from and to Europe for students, doctoral candidates, young volunteers and youngsters in general, as well as teachers, trainers, lecturers and youth workers;

key action 2: the opportunity to build partnerships that drive collaboration within and between education, training and youth institutions and organisations, as well as between the worlds of education and work;

key action 3: supporting the process of reflection, dialogue and evidence building to deliver reform in education, training, and youth policies and systems.



European good practice

Mending the nature trails in Iceland

Reg (27 years old), an artist from Belgium, spent 8 months (2008-2009) as a volunteer carrying out conservation work in Iceland with seven other volunteers: Alistair (28), Carmel (26), Rachel (24) and Margaret (25), all from the United Kingdom, Alexandre (27) from France, Marta (23) from Spain and Nicola (29) from Italy.

Umhverfisstofnun is the Environment and Food Agency of Iceland, operating under the Ministry for the Environment. Its role is to promote the protection and sustainable use of Iceland's natural resources as well as public welfare by helping to ensure a healthy environment and safer consumer goods. One of its fields of operation is the conservation of designated protected areas and it is to help with this work that some 150 volunteers are invited each year from around the world.

On arrival, Reg and his co-volunteers were put through some intensive training to ensure they could cope with the particular demands of the project. Divided into teams with a trained leader, often a former volunteer, they were then involved in all aspects of practical conservation tasks in a variety of locations. Much of the work focused on upland trail construction and maintenance, repairing heritage sites and the removal of invasive plant species from protected wilderness areas. The volunteers also carried out domestic duties around the camp and day-to-day problem solving.

The programme was very challenging and having to work outdoors, sometimes in severe weather conditions, with volunteers from different cultural backgrounds greatly improved the teamwork skills and mutual understanding of the young people. Out of the eight volunteers, three have obtained jobs in the environmental field due to their experience as a volunteer and five have returned to Iceland at their own expense to offer their services a second time.

The landscapes of Iceland have influenced Reg's art in a major way, helped him to find some kind of artistic voice, and led to his first solo exhibition. For him, with his artistic eye, digging a hole and building a stone step could be interpreted as the first important cultural act one can perform.





The condition of Iceland's exceptionally beautiful and well-kept environment is in no small way due to their policy of inviting committed volunteers from around the world to help them in their work of preservation.

A European Voluntary Service project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Iceland.

Project carried out by Umhverfisstofnun (Iceland), in partnership with Fédération régional maison des jeunes et de la culture région centre (France), Anffas Onlus Pordenone (Italy), AFS Interculturele Programma's VZW (Belgium), Ayuntamiento de Zaragoza, Servicio de Juventud (Spain) and BTCV (United Kingdom).

5

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Strategy for inclusion in the EU youth programmes: young people with fewer opportunities, including cultural minorities, as a priority group for a more cohesive Europe

MARIA-CARMEN PANTEA

Although youth work has always included young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and cultural minorities, the professional community holds incongruent views on whether and how youth work can act towards social inclusion. This chapter aims to present some of the arguments surrounding this debate, with a focus on young people from a cultural minority (e.g. Roma, migrants, refugees). It will examine the ethical concerns involved in a normative character of inclusion alongside the contestatory social legacy of youth work. In doing so, it will discuss the potential and limitations of three possible ways youth work can respond to the tensions involved in working with minority youth, namely tolerance to ambiguity, cultural competence and a political stance that critically addresses oppression. Ultimately, the chapter will touch upon possible challenges of the new Erasmus+ programme, in relation to: (i) the need to be proactive and supportive of young people; (ii) the need to maintain the principles of social inclusion in youth work in a context of greater involvement of the private sector; and (iii) the context that may dissuade non-profit organisations from working with young people with fewer opportunities. The paper addresses the role of the strategy for inclusion in EU youth programmes⁽¹⁾ in improving the quality of inclusion and diversity projects. The discussion is grounded on a broad definition of youth work as ‘a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. Increasingly, youth work activities also include sports and services for young people. Youth work belongs to the domain of “out-of-school” education, most commonly referred to as either non-formal or informal learning’ (Lauritzen, 2008).

Overview of social inclusion principles as reflected in EU policy on youth

By and large, social exclusion refers to processes that prevent individuals, groups or communities from accessing the rights, opportunities and resources (e.g. housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation) that are normally available to members of society and that are key to social integration. Social exclusion may be the consequence of structural forces such as laws, public policies, institutional practices, organisational behaviours and prevailing ideologies, values and beliefs (Todman, cf. Russell and Cohn, 2012). Despite being linked to poverty, social exclusion is a wider phenomenon that describes complex processes of social disintegration in the relationships of individuals and groups with society. It also has political and cultural dimensions; it is concentrated in particular places, is dynamic in time and produces effects across generations (Williamson, 2007).

The EU defines social inclusion as 'a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Social inclusion also ensures that vulnerable groups and persons have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and that they can access their fundamental rights' (European Commission, 2010). Social inclusion is one of the eight policy areas underlining the cross-cutting approach of the EU youth strategy, and was a key priority of the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013).



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The programme aimed to encourage a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to engage them in shaping the future of the European Union. Grounded in a strong social inclusion approach, the programme prioritises young people with fewer opportunities, including cultural minorities (e.g. young immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families, young people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, young people with problems of linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion, etc.). Overall, close to 24 % of Youth in Action participants were young people with fewer opportunities (European Commission, 2014b).

The Youth in Action programme brought a proactive approach to social inclusion by: (i) providing additional resources for enhanced mentoring support; (ii) using award criteria meant to ensure the involvement of young people who face several obstacles; (iii) a rigorous application assessment procedure emphasising requirements that apply to young people with fewer opportunities; (iv) the identification of the hard-to-reach groups that tend not to access existing programmes; and (v) a strong focus on documenting the lessons learned.

The interim evaluation of the programme highlighted the unique nature of the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, compared to other programmes (European Commission, 2011). It also came to the conclusion that Youth in Action compares well with other schemes as regards the client satisfaction expressed by the participants. The programme was designed in a way that addressed the needs of young people with fewer opportunities, and its commitment for social inclusion is going to be continued and further developed under the new Erasmus+.

The inclusion and diversity strategy of Erasmus+: Youth in Action is going a step further in the sense of understanding that reaching the disadvantaged groups is important, but not sufficient. It is also essential to equip young people and youth workers with the necessary competences to successfully manage and support diversity. This will strengthen positive interaction with different groups, regardless of their ethnicity, (dis)ability, religion, sexuality, skin colour, socioeconomic background, appearance, educational level, language spoken, etc.

Taken as a whole, the Erasmus+ programme pays particular attention to the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. There is extra funding available for allowing a project to accommodate people with special needs and to cover the exceptional costs related to inclusion and diversity (European Commission, 2014a). The award criteria and funding rules for mobility projects for young people and youth workers, which include European Voluntary Service (EVS), youth exchanges and youth workers' training and networking, take into consideration the specific needs of

young people with fewer opportunities. In addition, strategic partnerships, youth capacity-building projects and the structural dialogue are relevant for inclusion as they have a strong participatory character.

Social inclusion, youth work and some unsolved tensions

Although youth work has always included young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and cultural minorities, the professional community holds incongruent views on whether putting the concern with social inclusion at its core is, indeed, legitimate. There is a tension in the current youth work agenda between the focus on experimentation and 'celebrating the present', on the one hand, and a historical social mission, on the other (Coussée, 2010a).

One challenge to the concern with social exclusion is the wide range of the term itself, since it can cover exclusion from the educational, labour market, spatial, relational or sociopolitical perspective (Fangen, 2010). Conversely, it was argued that 'even the most marginalised, for example homeless people, trafficking victims or so-called irregular immigrants, are related to society in several different ways' (Fangen, 2010, p. 136). In addition, minority groups may perceive social inclusion in certain circumstances as cultural imposition/assimilation, and that may lead to manifestations of cultural resistance (see also Giroux, 1983; Okley, 1997; Archer, 2003; Furlong, 2005). The increased 'compartmentalisation' of youth work by creating clusters of 'problematic' young people has also been questioned (Coussée, 2010a). And some of the rationales for social inclusion policies (e.g. reducing welfare dependency) have been a matter of debate as well (Roth, 2004).

Similarly, the notion of social inclusion is rendered problematic by its inherent normative character. Whether youth work needs to embrace a social mission leading to inclusion has long been a matter of controversy. There is a difference between an approach aimed at fitting young people in (ultimately preserving the status quo) and a more critical stance that actively seeks to create social change and alter an unjust status quo that generates exclusion. If the conviction is that 'youth work should start where young people are, and not where we want them to be', youth work need not be concerned with social inclusion (Coussée, 2010a) — although this position might well be open to influence from young people themselves. The more recent inclusion and diversity strategy of Erasmus+: Youth in Action resonates with this view also by referring throughout to diversity in all its forms, alongside inclusion.

If, by contrast, it is considered essential that youth work should promote critical social thinking and activism, then it would be necessary for youth work to include young people with fewer opportunities. Taking part in youth work is one of the ways that young people learn participatory democracy. Encouraging young people with fewer opportunities to think and act politically is part of this. A distinction exists between the conventional idea of good citizenship — which in some crude interpretations has connotations of loyalty to the state and conformism (Honohan, 2004) — and active citizenship, a participatory act that embraces social change from below.

In this second perspective, an inclusive approach should be encouraged as a 'restoration of voice' (Strike, 2006, p. 185) — an argument advanced for legitimising affirmative action policies in higher education. Given the role of youth work as an emerging place of influence for civil society, to avoid an inclusion character in youth work would be to send a political message tantamount to diminishing young people's right to be heard in places of influence (Strike, 2006, p. 190). Consistent with this rationale, Youth in Action projects embrace a strengths-based approach: a perspective which emphasises a positive view of young people's potential and capacity to articulate their concerns in the public arena. This view makes a shift from a deficit approach, which stresses young people's weaknesses, inabilities, etc.

The concern with social inclusion through youth work is legitimate because the principles of equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination are at the core of European policies and programmes. The European Union itself is built on cultural, religious and social diversity (Rudiger and Spencer, 2003), and this needs to be reflected in its youth programmes. A more inclusive Europe is a strategic goal to which youth work should contribute. Interestingly, research on the history of youth work (Coussée, 2010b) suggests that, despite recent discourses on inclusion, youth work was inclusive in its earlier stages — perhaps more so than today. Broadly, one may distinguish two orientations in youth work, each linked to a specific perspective on young people. According to Coussée (2010a), one orientation sees young people as a social group in its own right (here and now) and favours experimentation, leisure and celebration of the present. The second approach looks at young people as future citizens. It is argued that, despite differences, the two share the same roots and that European youth work does not need to abandon its social legacy (Coussée 2010a) in the dash towards experimentation and celebration of the present. A proposed recommendation is for youth work to see itself in relation with other social work, in its more conventional forms, namely community work, welfare work, street work, health work, arts, sports, cultural projects, etc.



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In this context, Peter Lauritzen articulated a practical view on the role of youth work in regard to social inclusion: 'Today, the difficulty within state systems to ensure adequate global access to education and the labour market means that youth work increasingly deals with unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion. Increasingly, youth work overlaps with the area of social services previously undertaken by the welfare state ... Youth work often seeks to reach out to particular groups of young people, such as disadvantaged youth in socially deprived neighbourhoods, or immigrant youth including refugees and asylum seekers' (Lauritzen, [2006] 2008, p. 370).

Dilemmas related to the practice of inclusion

Youth work has often avoided analysing the way different power dynamics intervene in its everyday practice. Yet, especially when working with young people with fewer opportunities, there is a need to ask some of the questions that are more often addressed in community-based youth work (Batsleer, 2008): how do youth workers treat those they work with as equals or with mutual respect in situations of practical inequality? Inequality may occur along generational or class lines, but can also feature elsewhere, for instance in disability

and the lived experience of discrimination. The stakeholder consultation that preceded the drafting of the inclusion and diversity strategy of Erasmus+: Youth in Action highlighted practitioners' need for better knowledge, skills and attitudes to improve the quality of inclusion and diversity projects (European Commission, 2014b). Definitely, one of the novel elements brought by the strategy is the focus on equipping youth workers with the necessary competences to successfully manage and support diversity. They are particularly relevant, given that youth work often finds itself competing with other dimensions of identity and inclusion.

Young people are influenced by families, neighbourhoods, schools, religious institutions or, by real or imagined communities of home. In some circumstances, youth work is consequently confronted with dilemmas: how to celebrate diversity, whilst being aware of instances when culture is oppressive to individuals and groups (Okin, 1999; Hoskins and Momodou, 2011); how to balance a move towards celebrating diversity and inclusion with the individual's inclination to preserve a sense of togetherness with a familiar culture? If youth work is to promote individual rights, how does it cope when those contradict the culture of a group? Is celebration necessary and appropriate? Paraphrasing a similar question addressed by the United Kingdom's Dialogue Society (2014), would a sense of inclusion be best promoted by more or less focus on cultural differences?

The next part will provide a brief overview of three possible ways youth work can respond to some of the above dilemmas. They are not exclusive one of another and the distinction is rather a pedagogical exercise than a clearly delimited classification. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the ongoing debate on social inclusion and youth work.

Tolerance to ambiguity

Tolerance to ambiguity is a psychological construct that denotes the capacity for neutral and open perception of information and behaviour that is vague, fragmented or contradictory. The research background on tolerance to ambiguity is rather 'scattered and diffuse' (Furnham and Ribchester, 1995). The concept has been linked to leadership styles (Wilkinson, 2006) and organisational behaviour. In youth work, it has been related to intercultural learning.

It acknowledges the 'intrinsic incomplete character of each cultural system' and accepts the ambiguity and multiple uncertainties created in cultural encounters. As the value attached to uncertainty runs counter to the normative character of formal education and may

subvert the power of the dominant culture, the concept has been considered both revolutionary and emancipatory (Cunha and Gomes, 2012). Ultimately, it leads to the humble recognition that all cultures are incomplete and can be enriched by dialogue, and all cultural systems have concepts of human dignity, respect and means for conflict resolution (Cunha and Gomes, 2012). Accordingly, youth workers need to discover in every culture the internal principles that inform non-racist, non-sexist, non-heterosexist and non-violent social practices (Cunha and Gomes, 2012).

However, an approach to youth work based on tolerance to ambiguity is not without dilemmas. This view was considered part of the process of depoliticisation of intercultural learning in the youth field, and especially in the programmes of the European Commission and the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe (Ohana and Otten, 2012). A major limitation is that tolerance of ambiguity does not protect against the risk that youth workers might embrace the 'arbitrariness of values': undifferentiated acceptance of cultures, regardless of instances of rights violations (Fennes and Otten, 2008). In responding to these dilemmas, Otten favours a necessary distinction between the 'tolerance of ambiguity' (as the ability to tolerate different interests, expectations and needs) and the 'obligation to be intolerant' of violations of human rights (Otten, 2009). The author argues that 'intercultural learning is always political' (p. 8) in the sense of implying references to the concept of justice. As society needs to rethink tolerance in a proactive way that differs from neutrality, the more recent call ⁽²⁾ for increased competences in youth work is both timely and necessary.

Cultural competence

Often, youth work incorporates values and practices that differ from those of young people from a cultural minority background. For instance, the importance attached to self-esteem, self-disclosure and self-empowerment during training sessions may be at odds with the values of privacy and modesty cherished by some minority young people. Projects designed for the majority population cannot always be transferred to young people with a cultural minority background. It was argued, therefore, that it may be more appropriate, when a project is not attaining its objective, to reflect on the relevance of the project for minority youth rather than to assume that efforts need to be intensified. With a culturally competent approach, practice should leave room for questioning the validity of a project for minority groups. This will help youth workers to design activities in ways that respond to actual needs and that resonate with young people's cultural background.

Cultural competence is a concept that has developed alongside multiculturalism, in accordance with which 'people should not only appreciate and recognise other cultural groups, but be able to effectively work with them' (Sue, 1998, p. 440). It connotes an attitude in which practitioners are at ease with differences of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. (Sue, 2006). Cultural competence has become a standard of practice⁽³⁾ in social work, psychotherapy and counselling. For practitioners, it involves a continuous process of becoming and learning.

Cultural competence presupposes cultural humility and recognition of practitioners' scope for improvement in working with multicultural groups (Sue, 2006). It acknowledges the central role that culture plays in people's lives; it empowers individuals and groups; and it affirms their strengths in a culturally responsive manner (Comas-Díaz, 2014). Without cultural competence, youth workers may, unknowingly, perpetuate oppression against the most powerless young people.

It incorporates three levels: (i) cultural awareness of one's own biases; (ii) cultural knowledge of the groups one is working with; and (iii) cultural skills to intervene in a way that resonates with the minority people one is working with (Sue, 2006). Concepts such as cultural sensitivity, responsiveness and humility are related to cultural competence, but are not necessarily interchangeable (Betancourt et al., 2003). Whilst assimilation and pluralism are ideologies, cultural competence refers to the abilities of a practitioner (Hall, 1997).

Cultural competence was driven by the inadequacy of assistance to minority groups and the need for culturally responsive treatments (Sue, 1998). A 'movement toward cultural competence' has been posited (Betancourt et al., 2003, p. 294), which tends to include youth work. Hiring youth workers with a cultural minority background, for instance, is a 'constituent-involving strategy' (Kreuter et al., 2003) that leads to a higher understanding of the inner dynamic of a culture and is likely to increase the participation of minority youth.

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However, a major risk of cultural competence is that of 'othering': the assumption that young people from a cultural minority share the value and characteristics commonly attributed to the group. In this way, culturally competent projects can legitimise segregation (Sue, 1998 and Kramer, 1984). To avoid this danger, one needs to distinguish between cultural 'targeting' (a single programme for a group understood as homogenous) and 'tailoring', aimed at individuals (Kreuter, 2003). The strategy for inclusion in EU youth programmes insists on the need to analyse the profile and special needs of the young people and on a tailor-made approach.

Cultural competence accommodates differences and does not engage in processes leading to cultural change. Thus, it actively interrogates the power relationships shaped by colonialism and race, but leaves unaddressed the dynamics of power that generate oppression inside a minority group. In particular, the gendered and generational distribution of power and advantages may remain unaccounted for in the larger debate on culturally competent practice. In her seminal article ('Is multiculturalism bad for women?'), Susan Okin argued that female members of a patriarchal culture 'may be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women' (Okin, 1999, p. 48).

As a result, should one always cherish the cultural characteristics of a group? Are cultural values always harmless and the external inquiry always illegitimate? How can individual rights be protected when the culture of the group contradicts such an approach? How does the social justice agenda of youth work intersect a culturally competent approach that requires youth workers to act in a culturally responsive manner? What are the implications of legitimising oppressive practices by 'culturally sensitive' approaches in youth work? Ultimately, is there a risk that youth work will reinforce oppression by remaining apolitical and value free?

A political stance that critically addresses oppression

Education is always political, and this includes also the politics of non-involvement. To a certain extent, youth work has often tried to avoid confrontation with such intricate issues as those outlined above. But there have been isolated and influential calls for youth work to embrace challenging issues relating to social inclusion of cultural minorities (Cunha and Gomes, 2012; Coussée, 2010b; Coussée and Williamson, 2011; Fennes and Otten, 2008; Suurpää, 2002). Such calls imply a shift from the focus on pedagogy (how to do things) toward

thoughtful inquiries on the very role of youth work (if youth workers are doing the right things) (Coussée, 2010b). There are calls for ‘the approach of intercultural competence ... to be more political and more involved in dismantling the structures that oppress’ (Hoskins and Momodou, 2011). The ultimate purpose is to equip young people with the abilities to act for social justice: to identify racism, sexism and colonialism, and to be disposed to intervene.

It may be that the inclusion of cultural minorities requires from youth workers openness for behaving in a more political manner. This may involve readiness to take action for peaceful social change through reducing inequalities and discrimination, but also creating the enabling circumstances for young people to change structures, such as laws (Hoskins and Momodou, 2011). According to Suurpää (2002), the tendency toward using diversity in a tokenistic way that solemnises differences (Gunew, 1997) needs to give place to a more critical look at concepts like equality, anti-discrimination and race, and how these concepts are enacted in young people’s everyday lives (Suurpää, 2002, cf. Honkasalo, 2008).

However, a major risk in youth work is to place the responsibility for intercultural competence and dialogue on individuals alone, whilst implicitly absolving public institutions of their obligation to address oppression (Hoskins and Momodou, 2011). The current emphasis on intercultural dialogue/awareness/competence, etc., while well intentioned, is centred on individuals’ actions and overlooks the cultural and structural nature of oppression and discrimination. From a more fundamental perspective, social exclusion needs to be read as a consequence of a ‘political economy by which some groups secure privileges and power at the expense of others’ (Williamson, 2007, p. 25).

The practical guidelines to work with inclusion and diversity in Erasmus+: Youth in Action (European Commission, 2014a) are likely to stimulate reflection on practice. They contain several keys to success — questions inviting organisations to improve the quality of their projects. In this way, as well, the inclusion and diversity strategy of Erasmus+: Youth in Action has the potential to prompt youth work to revisit its mission and its theoretical assumptions. This process could cover notions of conflict of values, power and oppression, and in a manner that goes beyond practical, hands-on techniques, tools and tips. It could instil a sense of belonging to European society in a way that considers both the legacy of youth work as a self-reflective practice and the theoretical acquisitions from the area of cultural competence and social change.

Looking forward

Youth in Action was influential in ensuring that young people with fewer opportunities were brought from the margins closer to the centre of organisational interest. The new Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) is built on this legacy of youth participation, social innovation, active citizenship and solidarity. It is attracting high expectations at a time of change in Europe and beyond. As the crisis is not only economic, but also social, political and moral in nature, the new Erasmus+ programme needs to maintain the integrated approach to youth that characterised the Youth in Action programme. This would go beyond economic imperatives and promote the fundamental values of the EU among young people, in particular respect for human dignity, equality, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination ⁽⁴⁾.

A challenge for the Erasmus+ programme is to foster a more proactive approach on matters of global concern. Climate change, the growing class divide, political instability and the consequences of an economy geared to profit maximisation are all challenges of a global nature that young Europeans should not remain indifferent to. Young people in Europe may need increased awareness and capacity to react in innovative ways to global issues, as well as to build solidarity with young people from regions outside Europe. Through its focus on youth mobility, Erasmus+ provides increased support for such developments.

New dilemmas are likely to arise in the next period from the greater involvement of private and corporate actors in activities that concern youth (for instance, the emerging trends in youth entrepreneurial learning and the increased number of commercial providers of training, volunteering, internships and youth camps). These new partnerships can bring novel opportunities and openness to innovation, but also unanticipated challenges in sustaining principles of social inclusion, or reconciling actors with different world views. Previous research examined at length the tensions in what has been called the 'marketisation' of the non-profit sector (Eikenberry and Kluver-Drapal, 2004; Salamon, 1993) and its consequences for the ability of non-profit organisations to create and maintain a strong civil society (Eikenberry and Kluver-Drapal, 2004). The implications of this process for the social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities have not yet been fully explored.

Commercial thinking has a convoluted relationship with democratic ideals of fairness and justice, or the principles of social inclusion. Since developing inclusive projects is not cost free, it is uncertain how much commercial actors involved in youth projects would be willing to pay for social added value or whether they possess the professional competence to secure social inclusion. Involving young people with fewer

opportunities, including cultural minorities, is demanding in terms of time and resources, and often requires deep personal engagement and a heavy workload. The outcomes of many projects are not easy to measure and often fail to attract high public visibility. To a certain extent, the participation of for-profit actors may risk mission drift, may involve approaches that over-simplify complexity or result in the 'replacement of a benevolent spirit with a mindset of competition' (Bush 1992; Smyth, 1999; Eikenberry and Kluver-Drupal, 2004). There is consequently a need for a coherent frame that ensures preservation of the principle of social inclusion. It is important for states to ensure that private actors involved in youth work, as well, comply with them.

Despite social inclusion being a stated policy goal for governments throughout the EU (Rudiger and Spencer, 2003), still non-profit organisations may be dissuaded from working with young people with fewer opportunities. Because of resource dependency and institutional transformations (including private-public partnerships), non-profit organisations are compelled to become more market-like in actions, structures and philosophies (Eikenberry and Kluver-Drupal, 2004). In a highly competitive and outcome-focused environment, they may feel discouraged to work with hard-to-reach young people who require high resources. This brings the risk of screening out clients that are too loaded with problems (the so called 'pistachio effect' ⁽⁵⁾, cf. Lorenz et al., 2010), as well as a tendency for organisations to provide measurable services (Alexander, 1999; Williamson, 2007). The role of Erasmus+ is paramount for supporting ways of action that value a culture of inclusion and human solidarity. Ultimately, this will help maintain a strong role in civil society for young people with fewer opportunities.



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Notes

1. Strategy for inclusion in EU youth programmes refers to the concept developed under subsequent EU youth programmes — youth (2000-2006), Youth in Action (2007-2013) and the current Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014-2020) — which complement and build on each other.
2. One aim of the inclusion and diversity strategy of the Erasmus+: Youth in Action is to invest in the intercultural and social skills of youth workers as well as their competences to manage and work with diversity in all its forms.
3. Various professional groups established standards for culturally competent care, assistance, intervention, etc. as a matter of ethics and effectiveness.
4. Article 2 of the Parliament and Council Decision No 1719/2006/CE.
5. 'The harder nuts to crack are, at best, left until later, or, at worst, simply disregarded' (Tiffany, 2007, cf. Lorentz et al, 2010).

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Tools

Inclusion and diversity strategy

<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3103/InclusionAndDiversiferguartyStrategy.pdf>

The inclusion and diversity strategy of the Erasmus+ youth chapter builds on the inclusion strategy of the Youth in Action programme. It integrates diversity so as to complement outreach to underprivileged groups and to strengthen positive interaction among groups regardless of their ethnicity, (dis)ability, religion, sexuality, skin colour, socioeconomic background, appearance, educational level or language spoken. Building intercultural competence and acceptance of diversity will ultimately benefit young people with fewer opportunities and their inclusion in society. Inclusion ensures that all young people can take part, and the focus on diversity ensures that everybody can do so on their own terms, recognising the value of differences in norms, beliefs, attitudes and life experience. Erasmus+ youth projects support inclusion, and at the same time these projects train young people, as well as youth workers and youth leaders, to manage diversity in a constructive and respectful way. In this way, Erasmus+: Youth in Action is a lever for positive change for disadvantaged groups in society.



European good practice

Pictures give a voice to excluded young Roma

Young Roma people from Romania and Slovakia were encouraged to take part in decision-making processes on social exclusion. The approach was unconventional: using photography to help give them a voice. But the results were very tangible, with an impact in local politics and policy, ranging from better school provision to cleaner water, and to a permanent influence on community relations.

Between February 2009 and March 2010 the young people involved acquired skills and abilities in civic participation, and awareness was raised among the general public and relevant authorities on social exclusion issues for Roma teens.

Thirty-nine Roma participants used a method known as PhotoVoice to identify and articulate their views. This makes use of photo-shooting sessions on aspects of a problem, group discussions around the pictures and an exhibition at the end of the process to demonstrate the challenges and potential solutions. This tool is particularly suitable for social groups with little familiarity with more conventional public policy approaches such as debates or round tables, since, to a great extent, the pictures do the talking.

The participants were given initial training in their home towns on photography and on how images can convey messages. Then they were supported in creating pictures that focused on their priority issues. The young people were subsequently invited to choose among the pictures they had taken, for public exhibitions in Romania and Slovakia that they also helped to organise. The participants met for the first time in November 2009 in Slovakia and exchanged ideas on their problems and the illustrations of them. At the exhibitions, the young people from both countries took part in public discussions. Key elements from the exhibitions were reproduced on postcards with appropriate messages. These postcards were made available to visitors with an invitation to send them to the relevant authorities so as to promote the search for solutions.

The outcomes included creation of mixed classes for Roma and non-Roma, a school bus to help young people to get to classes, financing for clean water supply in one of their villages, new access to EU funding for housing and jobs for Roma and the election of a local Roma leader as mayor and councillor.





The participants acquired not only new professional skills in photography techniques but also improved communication skills, social competences and cultural awareness.

A youth democracy project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Romania.

Project carried out by the Resource Centre for Public Participation (CeRe) (Romania), in partnership with Association Partner for You (Romania) and Modrý Motýl and Život je šanca (Slovakia).

Lost in transition? Challenges for social inclusion and employment of young people in Europe

ROBERT ARNKIL

Introduction: Many initiatives — and many traps

According to the summary report of Eurofound (2012) on recent developments related to those not in employment, education or training (NEETs), the Member States have implemented a wide range of policies and measures to facilitate the transition from school to employment. These include providing information, career counselling and work experience opportunities, improving the relationship between education and the world of work, providing guarantees of employment or training and specialist assistance in job searching. Member States are also investing in opportunities for young people to improve their employability by developing soft skills such as communication and teamwork, as well as participating in apprenticeships, internships and retraining courses. Other barriers to employment, including language competence, availability of the internet, transport and childcare, need to be addressed. Stimulating demand by lowering the threshold to employ young people with subsidies and vouchers is also used. In general, the awareness and cooperation of all stakeholders is promoted, the Youth Guarantee ⁽¹⁾ — the key initiative in Europe to offer young people education, work practice or employment — being a case in point.

So social inclusion and employment of young people are, with good reason, gaining attention. But there are also some serious traps.

To start with, quite often there is a split into a good and bad market: national, regional and local actors and employers have separate approaches to the 'better end' of the economy and labour market, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and to the 'worse end', through activation and intermediate labour market approaches — but without connecting the two. This leaves the results of social activation and inclusion, however good they may initially be, hanging in the air, without organised links to the real working world. The benefits wither away, or worse, leave the activated even less motivated. We need a fully integrated approach.



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Another trap is treating unemployed young people, or NEETs, as a passive target group, a problem instead of a resource that could transform interventions, relegating them to a peripheral role in the design, language and implementation of the interventions.

Time is also an important factor. Some good practices can be disseminated and applied immediately or in the short term, but others need longer to produce results. Youth Guarantees fall between these categories: building and sustaining a collaboration between local and regional actors requires years of work, and it is not easy to transfer practices of networks from one context to another.

So promoting social inclusion and employment is complex — and all the more so against the rapidly changing world of work. Are the measures taken in social inclusion, tackling the challenges of NEETs and promoting employment well connected to the changing world of work and labour markets? How could this connection be improved?

Changing working life, skills and attitudes

Crisis and change in global markets and in the world of work are so frequently reported that the young generation inevitably finds it confusing, precarious and even scary as they think about careers, skills and jobs. At the same time Europe is aging. The baby boomers, who had a strong belief in progress, education and growth, and who had relatively stable

careers, are retiring. The advice they received, and that they passed on to their children — ‘Get a good education and you will have a job for life’ — is no longer valid. There is now a wide gap between the world of many young people and the changing world of work.

The ‘X, Y and Z’ generations (Tapscott, 2009; Gratton, 2011) are full of energy and creativity and with new ways of connecting and learning, proficient in the digital world and rising environmental values. But they often possess only fragmentary educational and working careers, they suffer frustration with their aspirations being blocked and they are disillusioned with the response of those in authority to the challenges.

The rapidly changing world of work offers scenarios that oscillate between a negative future where everybody scrambles for scarce jobs, and a more positive ‘crafted future’, which allows people to shape their lives and work (Gratton, 2011). The negative scenario envisages work becoming increasingly fragmented and project-based, requiring continual alertness and responsiveness to demands, consuming all free time. The worker is precarious, drifting, lacking the opportunity to develop skills and forced to sell labour cheap and take low-quality jobs. This stressful work environment undermines the positive meaning of work, eliminates possibilities to learn and precludes professional identity. The tough competition condemns those with weaker resources and connections to be the big losers, but the phenomenon affects everyone. Such a scenario runs strongly against the attitudes and values of the young generations, who want a meaningful job that also leaves space for living and self-expression.

The alternative, more positive ‘crafted future’, requires continual development of skills and know-how to acquire mastery in one or more areas, with a premium on the ability to create and combine know-how from different areas. Such hybrid know-how (Gratton, 2011; Vuorinen, 2013; Arnkil and Spangar, 2014) increases the options for participating in working life and for coping better with the continual changes it imposes. Gratton (2011) concludes that mastering work calls for ‘serial mastery’, the ability to slide and morph into new areas of skills, to self-market and to create credentials.

At its best, this can be combined in a positive way with an individual’s life-course, providing a sense of ownership, meaning and passion (Järvensivu, 2010). This is a common aspiration among young people.

Exercising the positive alternative also demands connections via networking, links to different know-how communities, in paid work, voluntary work, free time or hobbies, so as to accumulate social capital, a

collective pool of resources. Belonging to a community gives access to help in solving problems, to different skills, and to a sense of solidarity.

By implication, the challenge in education and in subsequent work-related services is to maximise the possibilities for each individual in the hybrid development of skills and networks.

The young generation is already more connected than its predecessors, by using digital skills in a digitised world. But are they using their connections to carve out meaningful careers? To carve out a good career? Are they aware of what the world of work requires? And what implications does all this have in tackling NEETs and promoting social inclusion and employment of young people?

Challenges to promote transitions

Transitional labour market

Already in 1995, during a recovery from the world economic crisis, Günther Schmid famously asked 'Is full employment still possible?' His view was that working life and labour markets have become transitional, and the transitions need attention to make them beneficial. This approach has been developed in European discussions in the concept of the transitional labour market (TLM). Careers are now full of transitions — from education to work (or further education), from NEET to activation, from unemployment to employment, from sickness or family periods to work, from salaried employment to self-employment (and back), even from pensions back to work. Transitions are often precarious, and tailored and timely support is needed for them. Sisson and Jones (2012) are asking whether the young (or anybody) are in danger of being 'lost in transition'.

Long careers are a thing of the past — and so too is the assumption that a job is secured by commitment and diligence (Guest, 1999).

In consequence, young people's attitudes and motivations are also changing. A pessimistic view, or an inability to understand these changes, can seriously undermine motivation to study and result in drop-outs and NEETs.

Important questions need answering about the supportive measures and services to promote the transition of young people from the educational phase to personal and professional self-reliance, and to provide second chances and alternative routes for drop-outs and victims of NEET.



At present, the institutions and methods to support such transitions are geared heavily towards a disappearing world, with their continuing emphasis on matching a specific education and skill to a particular job, which is principally viewed as a salaried career rather than self-employment or hybrid working. Education is often out of touch with working life, and offers few opportunities for work practice, or for testing entrepreneurship in a safe environment. Most entrepreneurial training is given through a specific, separate route, so pupils tend to learn little at school about self-employment or creating a business.

A new kind of fully integrated curriculum, at all stages of education, could provide valuable entrepreneurial knowledge and skills that would be useful whatever career was ultimately followed.

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The situation is aggravated by the fragmented nature and limited co-operation that characterises most provision for support and services for transitions from education to work, for second chances or further education. So what can be done?

Early stages of education

Prevention is less time consuming and resource intensive than reintegration for those who have become disengaged, as the Eurofound report remarked on NEETs.

Early diagnosis of problems, good monitoring and parent involvement, targeted funds, support for teachers, providing alternative learning environments and offering good guidance and counselling are examples of measures during education, especially the early stages. A case in point is the work of one of the projects, Prevent, of the EU Urbact programme ⁽²⁾. Prevent proposes an innovative approach that enlists parents as central to reducing early school leaving, and sees cities as drivers of synergies, common understanding and collaboration between stakeholders.

Transforming education can go further. It is important to give young people, as early as possible, a lively, inspiring and also realistic experience and knowledge about the changing world of work, and about entrepreneurship. An example of providing sixth graders (12–13 years of age) with an experience of being an entrepreneur is ‘Me & my city’

in Finland ⁽³⁾, which has been operating since 2010. This is a study module on society, working life and entrepreneurship, offering information and positive experiences of enterprises and different professions. It includes training for teachers, teaching materials and a visit to a 'MyCity' learning environment — a miniature town containing business premises and public services. During their 1-day visit, pupils work in a profession, earn a salary and act as consumers and members of their own society. So far, 40 000 sixth graders and over 1 700 teachers have visited 'MyCity' learning environments around Finland.

Later stages

Better cooperation: Youth Guarantee

One of the key interventions to promote integration and combat disengagement and NEET is the Youth Guarantee, now applied widely in Europe.

Young people's school-to-work transitions can be long and complex, including alternating phases of education, work and potentially periods of unemployment and inactivity. Ensuring a good-quality offer entails organising the support around the journey of the individual young person, rather than the interests of service providers.

In many cases this will require rethinking the stages of interventions so that the transitions for the young person are positive and as seamless as possible, with periods of unemployment and inactivity kept to a minimum to avoid long-term adverse effects.

To address these challenges, the Youth Guarantee needs to be a genuine structural reform of public, private and voluntary sector engagement with and support for young people, so that they complete education and enter the labour market through a coordinated, holistic and individualised approach that meets the needs of each young person. It must be more than a sum of existing and often uncoordinated measures. The experience of Finland in implementing the Youth Guarantee may be helpful, particularly since the initial results have been independently evaluated (Tuusa et al., 2014).

The evaluation found good overall performance, but with differences at local level in cooperation and capabilities. The highest awareness of the programme is among youth work, education and youth workshops, and youth outreach has been successful, despite resource shortages. Most success has been achieved in education, while there has been less success in promoting youth employment. Better coordination at local level is needed, as is greater focus on those in the most difficult situation and better links to rehabilitation and to health services.

Reintegration

Offering second chances and reintegration can also widen possibilities for young people — as do the Youth Competence Centres (YCCs) in Antwerp. These are run by JES, a non-profit organisation that initiates projects aimed at giving young people in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent opportunities for creative and meaningful free-time activities, employment and training, participation in society and policymaking. The projects offer a low threshold for reintegration, and they build on the strengths and informal activities of young people. These people need encouragement and help to develop their skills and make them visible. The YCC focuses on youngsters aged between 16 and 25, and applies an integrated and multidisciplinary approach combining leisure, employment and education. It cooperates closely with counsellors of the Flemish Employment Service (VDAB) and Study Choice counsellors (Studiewijzers).

The strategy is to increase young people's awareness of their competences — a so-called competence-led strategy. This helps them identify their professional abilities and qualities, develop them and gain formal recognition and validation. This strengthens self-esteem and stimulates personal development, participation and labour-market acceptability.

Within the competence-led strategy, two professionals play a crucial role: the WAC (work-related acquired competences) and RAC (recognised acquired competences) counsellors. RAC counsellors focus on youngsters between the ages of 12 and 25 whom they meet in their leisure time (e.g. youth work, cultural activities, sports, events and voluntary work). They help young people to define their competences and talents and develop them through voluntary work. WAC counsellors focus on youngsters aged between 16 and 25 who are in a particularly vulnerable position because they have left school and/or are unemployed. They meet these youngsters in public spaces or popular hang-out spots (e.g. teahouses or football clubs), and not only support them in finding and defining their main competences and strengths, but also guide them towards schools, training opportunities and jobs where they might develop their particular competences.

Similar low-threshold and street-savvy measures have been developed in many cities, such as the Street Games in Birmingham ⁽⁴⁾.

Another example of giving young people inspiration and access to entrepreneurship — and also to combat NEET — is the Bad Idea competition ⁽⁵⁾, initiated in Glasgow in the 'My generation at work' Urbact project ⁽⁶⁾. It is a new accredited enterprise and personal development programme in the form of an enterprise competition to inspire creativity, self-confidence and entrepreneurial attitudes. High-school pupils submit ideas for innovative products and services online, and the most imaginative are shortlisted and then invited to workshops. During the workshops

the participants are mentored to develop their idea into a business model and learn other entrepreneurial matters. The methodology was especially developed to tackle the obstacles that disadvantaged young people face in attempting self-employment. Bad Idea can be seminal on many counts: breathing meaning and motivation into young people while they are in education, boosting confidence and forging a path to alternative careers. The campaign has been piloted successfully, and is now spreading in Scotland and around Europe.

Further education and employment

Giving young people opportunities for contacts with working life while still in education is another way of stimulating and motivating studies and paving the way for effective transitions to working life. Internships and work practice are simple examples, but there are others. For instance, Proakatemia is an entrepreneurship unit at Tampere University of Applied Sciences in Finland ⁽⁷⁾ that offers the chance of becoming an entrepreneur while still studying. The programme begins with the formation of a team company, a cooperative of some 15-20 students, who then take part in team meetings and group workshops, and conduct projects that concentrate on marketing, communication, sales, event organising, graphical design, project management, innovation and utilisation of computing skills. Entrepreneurship, creativity and business skills are studied through project-based learning, and simultaneously the programme offers international networking possibilities. The threshold to entrepreneurship is lowered by working as a team, receiving professional training and operating in a safe financial environment. Participants learn both individual and teamwork skills throughout.

Intermediate stages

Cities and local-regional actors can also encourage working-life and business contacts for people resistant to entrepreneurial possibilities, or who have been adrift after education. One-stop shops, face-to-face



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and digital spaces for connection and business development can take the form of business incubators and hubs, but Torino, for instance, is developing low-threshold spaces for connection for young people, educators, business people and other local actors, linked to a campaign and competition for social innovation. Torino Social Innovation⁽⁸⁾ is a set of strategies, instruments and spaces — a new ecology — to support new enterprises that address social needs such as education, employment, mobility, health or inclusion, and that create value for society, both social and economic. The aim is to sustain young social entrepreneurs, their creativity, their digital competences and their perception of social improvements. Similar developments are underway elsewhere, including in Valencia and Braga, which are partners in the EU Urbact project ‘My generation at work’.

Developing an integrated approach

There are no easy answers to the challenges of social integration and youth employment, but two Urbact projects, ‘My generation’ and ‘My generation at work’, illustrate some possibilities of an integrated approach. Both projects promoted youth engagement and employment across 14 large cities in 2008-2014.

Transforming the ecology of engagement with young people

European projects often suffer from target-group thinking that relegates the people that the project is designed for to a passive, uncreative and peripheral role. Even the widely implemented Youth Guarantees risk providing activities for everybody except the young people themselves. ‘My generation’ demonstrated that transforming the target group into a co-creator requires transformation of the project: the way of communicating, the way of running workshops, the way of delivering results. It means transforming the ecology of engagement with young people from day one. It means using young people — like former NEETs or the unemployed — as role models, ambassadors and street-savvy brokers to establish contact and a working relationship with young people. It means understanding the lives and the situation of young people from the inside. It also means using the whole range of human senses — stories, sound, music, picture, dance, multimedia — and not just words, to communicate, to engage and to facilitate creativity. The talking heads approach of ‘death by slide presentations’ and lecturing people on what to do does not provide a connection to young people, especially if they are already disengaged.

This has wider implications. Typically, the NEET young people have low educational attainment, leaving them vulnerable, with little capacity for self-marketing and few credentials to start a career. Nev-

ertheless, most of them are creative and skilful, and have aspirations and skills they have developed in their own time and through peer networks. In these circumstances, there is potential in a broad approach to learning and skills, promoting free-time activities, hobbies and the passions and aspirations of young people outside the formal systems of education or other support institutions. Street workers, events, special youth competence centres, the Street Games and Bad Idea, as described above, are examples of this.

But ill-designed services can alienate young people. A Copenhagen job centre failed to attract or retain young people without work, or NEETs. They walked away because the office looked intimidating and bureaucratic to them. So the job centre hired a group of anthropologists, who lived for a while with the young people and then walked through the entire service process with them. Suggestions resulted in changes in the initial contact, the appearance of the facilities and the transparency of the service process (Adams and Arnkil, 2013).

Developing enterprising skills and attitudes — everywhere and with everybody

The well-established need for adaptability, teamwork, self-steering and networking, and for digital skills to complement specific job skills is reflected in the eight key competences identified for lifelong learning in the EU. These are: mastery of the mother tongue; proficiency in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences (personal, interpersonal and intercultural competences), sense of initiative and entrepreneurship (which means the ability to plan, manage, innovate and take risks); and cultural awareness and expression (which means creative expression in performing arts, literature and visual arts) ⁽⁹⁾.

Exploring the need for a more comprehensive approach to working life in a changing world, 'My generation at work' focused on developing enterprising attitudes and skills of young people. 'Enterprising' in 'My generation at work' refers to actively creating skills, job and career, be it eventually working as an entrepreneur or a salaried worker (or both, or alternating).

Developing enterprising skills and attitudes does not refer only to entrepreneurial education or starting an entrepreneurial career, which, in a narrow sense, are already well catered for in entrepreneurial routes and training courses ⁽¹⁰⁾, traditionally quite separate from other training, or entirely absent from the curriculum. A new concept of an enterprising curriculum envisages all education containing components that prepare for both salaried and entrepreneurial careers,

a hybrid working life and transitional labour markets. This means providing inspiring contacts with working life during education, along with possibilities for low-risk entrepreneurial experiences such as co-operatives. This reflects the reality that most new jobs are created in self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship.

The experience of 'My generation at work' points to a need to change the ecosystem of support for transitions in the changing world of work. Even in countries where there is already a well-established system of career guidance there is a need to reinvent career counselling. In countries which are now building such systems, the challenge is to build them in a way that takes the changes in working life into account, rather than emulating existing systems.

Conclusions

Empowering young people to be proactive

As these examples show in their approach to working life, labour markets and integration, a job is not there waiting for young people as a package that matches packaged skills created in education. Rather, it has to be carved out, assembled from pieces, grabbed from connections and assimilated, using the opportunity to create skills and networks anywhere. This might also be in free time or through informal activities — i.e. acting more like an entrepreneur building an enterprise than a salaried worker expecting to be employed. This is no panacea against unemployment, but prepares better for rough weather.

The young generations with their free-time activities and social media are already doing much of this, without necessarily realising the link to their future and to possibilities of work, and without opportunities to develop these contacts and skills in the form of more serious steps towards working life. The purpose of education is also largely rejected — and this is where there is a need for working-life experts and models, brokers and different kinds of learning spaces, to prevent drop-out, to reintegrate NEETs and to motivate young people.

Such spaces and brokerage need to be understood in a multidimensional way, not just a physical space where work practice, meetings, events, incubators or workshops can be arranged, either in education or elsewhere. Space needs to be understood at the same time as a physical, psychological, mental, cultural (and today also increasingly virtual) space, a learning space, more like the common mental discovery journey of a network (Takeuchi and Nonaka, 2004). As the world, and the world of work in it, becomes more complex and rapidly changing, there is also a growing need for go-betweens, mediators, navigators, third parties that connect and counsellors who provide a possibility, a space for reflection, search and connection.

Messages to all stakeholders

In a recent report for the United Kingdom government on the future of work until 2030, connection to working life is actively promoted ⁽¹¹⁾.

For employers the message is to encourage the development of skills, to prepare themselves for more diversity in the workforce and to intensify collaboration with education, so everyone understands the needs of the changing world of work and provides real learning spaces for young people.

For young people, and indeed for everybody, the message is to change mindsets regarding work, accepting more responsibility for continuously developing and updating skills and carving out a career proactively, instead of waiting for the job to be available. The connections and skills can be developed everywhere, not just in formal education. The skills and attitudes needed are more like being an entrepreneur of your own life, being enterprising and ready to morph to new areas. Young people need to engage in co-creation, in transforming the operation of education and career support. And they need support every step of the way to achieve this.

For educators and career support professionals, the message is to collaborate with young people and employers in transforming education, to provide guidance to better respond to the shifts in the world of work, offering a more inspiring ecology for young people to launch careers and to prevent demotivation and drop out.

For policymakers the message is to promote engagement and commitment of all stakeholders, and to empower them to promote the changes needed. The future is already here, albeit unevenly distributed and challenging to grasp.



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Notes

1. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>
2. <http://urbact.eu/prevent>
3. <http://yrityskyla.fi/en/>
4. <http://www.streetgames.org/>
<http://www/category/spirit-cities/birmingham>
5. <http://www.badidea.org.uk>
6. <http://urbact.eu/mygeneration-at-work>
7. <http://www.proakatemia.fi/en>
8. <http://www.torinosocialinnovation.it/english/>
9. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm
10. Also supported by many European programmes and initiatives like the EIP-programme (http://ec.europa.eu/cip/eip/index_en.htm), including Erasmus for young entrepreneurs (http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu/index.php?lan=en#U_MWaEj_Gwk).
11. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobs-and-skills-in-2030>

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European good practice

ITER — a new route to self-sufficiency

ITER brings together young people with different needs from different backgrounds, and gives them the chance of doing one to three months of voluntary service in a European country to offer them new experiences in a wider context, with activities that are meaningful and manageable for them. This promotes their inclusion in society and employment.

The young people selected all have trouble with the self-sufficiency, motivation and skills to find work or to follow studies. Most have had no upper-secondary education, and some did not even complete primary school. They are usually in need of mentoring, and not only to find an occupation. They often have only a fragmented network, lack of support and uncertain housing situations that inhibit the focus on finding work. Some have a background in criminality, drug abuse or other difficulties on their way to adult life.

ITER takes a holistic view on helping them across all the aspects of their life puzzle. Comprehensive and long-term support is needed, since many have been repeatedly abandoned and disappointed and have lost faith in themselves or in society. ITER aims to build genuine trust and confidence, which takes time and requires dedicated staff.

Each young person is allocated a personal mentor or coach, and they operate as volunteers abroad, after which they are given the opportunity for a 6-month period of employment funded by the municipality and helped in their contacts with authorities. The results are better than the initial goal: most of the participants in 2011-2012 moved on to work or education.

ITER received co-funding from the European Social Fund in 2011 and 2012, which allowed it to create a methodology in a long-term approach, and the municipality of Gothenburg, another co-founder of the project, decided to fund it for at least another year. ITER was also supported by funding from the European Voluntary Service (EVS) within Youth in Action. In 2011-2012, five EVS projects within ITER were carried out in Estonia, France and the United Kingdom in partnership with organisations from those countries.

The aim was to help the participants to enter working life or education and no longer be dependent on welfare, so it was central to the project that the participants understood that the EVS project





was a means of finding employment on returning to Sweden. The intention was to find out what each participant would like to work with in the future, and match the options to the right volunteer position in the right country. Participants could visit the volunteer location in advance of making a decision. A complete plan was put in place that also covered the post-volunteer period. The participants also evaluated the time spent as a volunteer together with ITER. The knowledge and skills acquired during the voluntary work were highlighted through the Youthpass, to increase the chances of finding a job. ITER's contact person continued to meet the participant after EVS as necessary.

Two years after the implementation of ITER, there were tangible results: 61 young people took part in information meetings to consider the project and their participation; 31 participated in the preparatory phase; 26 completed the preparation phase, gained experience in voluntary service and participated in the follow-up phase.

Six months after the end of the voluntary service more than three quarters of the participants were engaged in work or study. Participants felt more independent and more confident in their own abilities and had wider networks and better dietary and sleeping habits.

European Voluntary Service projects funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Sweden.

Projects carried out by the City of Gothenburg (Sweden), in partnership with Continuous Action MTÜ (Estonia), Association Citrus, Maison des bateleurs — Solidarités-jeunesses Poitou-Charentes, Solidarités jeunesse, Villages des jeunes — Vaunieres, Solidarités jeunesse — Le Creneau and Solidarités jeunesse — Le Rev (France) and Everything is Possible (United Kingdom).



Urban instantaneous interaction

This project involved an informal group of young people interested in architecture and working together on redevelopment of public areas in Rome. It took the form of a series of workshops and performances designed to make young people feel closer to the city they live in, by making it an easier place to feel a sense of belonging to. The project ran for almost a year in 2011-2012 and the final product was a toolkit for the approach and methodology used.

There were three public micro-events, which were deliberately temporary in nature, and a final construction workshop that led to a semi-permanent structure. In the three happenings, the group met other similar





groups in Rome to try out techniques for giving new value to forgotten spaces. The first focused on creating shared urban gardens. The second aimed at transforming unsightly areas through the use of recycled material. The third contributed to reactivating abandoned buildings, and included an intercultural market in an old multiethnic area.

The workshop, which also involved a Madrid-based collective and 30 students from the Sapienza University of Rome, developed an organisation for restoring to use derelict spaces and buildings. It created a playground, from only recycled materials, in a public garden between a residential neighbourhood and a former military fort that had been abandoned for decades but was reclaimed and restored by citizens as a thriving cultural centre. The neglected space between the two was turned from an unsafe wasteland into a place for encounters and communities, even equipped with low-technology illumination and seating spaces made from recycled materials.

The young people learnt participative methodologies, improved their individual skills and competences and were empowered by decision-making on the management of a public space. They also became more aware of European youth policies and their own role in the future European cities, and they shared experiences with young people from different countries, involving intercultural learning. Young people from disadvantaged areas of Rome, including migrants, also had the chance to express their views and opportunities to develop a sense of initiative and creativity. All project participants shared good practices and views about environmental sustainability, and the activities had a lasting impact on urban spaces.

A youth initiative project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Italy.

Project carried out by Association Orizzontale (Italy).

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CLIVE BONNICI

Youth participation as meaningful citizenship experience: a challenge to improve democratic life

JORGE BENEDICTO

The participation of young people in the public sphere of our democratic societies has long been a subject on which there is, at first glance, wide consensus. However, a deeper analysis reveals a series of disconcerting paradoxes. Participation has become the main theme in youth policies and, in general, everything in connection with the young. The need for young people to participate, the benefits of participation and the consequences of participation in the development of political life are all part of a familiar refrain. It is logical therefore that the European Union also states it as a main objective, in the Treaty of Lisbon reference to ‘... encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe’ or in the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). Despite broad agreement on the importance of fomenting youth participation, the results are often not what were hoped for. The institutions responsible often complain that, in spite of all their efforts, few young people become involved and the returns on the investment are minimal. Young people often claim that the initiatives taken by institutions do not respond to their needs or characteristics and as such do not offer any real scope for them to become actors and to take decisions.

In consequence, concerns grow over young people’s distance and scepticism about involvement in the public sphere — or at least as far as adults interpret the situation. Specialists’ diagnoses provide more questions than answers. Does youth participation, as it is thought of, fail to attract young people socialised in a digital world in which the immediate and the spectacular take precedence? Are younger generations less supportive and less interested in collective issues because of growing individualism in post-modern societies and new systems of prevailing values? Are young people questioning the value of participation because of disaffection amongst citizens towards institutions and the decline of organised loyalties? The predominant theme to emerge is that the youth of today changes so quickly that any diagnosis is difficult. At the same time, a moral argument arises about the apparently minimal predisposition of younger generations towards collective agreement. Even more importantly, the accompanying confusion favours the generalisation of the social image of young people’s disengagement.

This idea, constantly repeated in the media, and assumed to be self-evident in the prevailing discourse, should not be allowed to obscure the reality that young people have also played a significant role in some of the most novel sociopolitical phenomena of recent years (global protest movements, promotion of sustainable development and consumption, new forms of interactive communication through social networks, etc.). The representation of young people as careless of the world around them and closed off in their private sphere is, at best, only a partial view of a much more complicated reality.

Better understanding of this apparent contradiction requires the abandonment of the classic perspectives, which merely count the individual participatory actions carried out by young people and compare them with the actions of the adult population, as a way to reach conclusions about the degree of youth involvement. On the contrary, to understand the relevance of participation for young people today it is necessary to consider it as a phenomenon of collective significance in which individuals register their individualities, and through doing so attempt to shape the social environment in which they live. From this new perspective it is possible to better understand the specific nature of youth participation and the challenge which it presents to the institutions charged with fomenting it.

Participation and citizenship — an essential relationship

The analysis of participation as a sociopolitical phenomenon highlights different aspects of great importance but focuses largely on its role as a central component of democratic citizenship. In democratic societies, citizenship and participation form part of an equation in which both need

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each other. Participation in the public sphere develops and completes the citizen condition of subjects. The way in which citizens understand themselves as citizens influences their participation, the way they participate and the motivations that drive participation (Jones and Gaventa, 2002).

Citizenship is the key collective identity in all democratic societies as it allows us to recognise ourselves, and others to recognise us as members of a community. There are two fundamental components upon which citizenship is based, and around which other concepts, images and content are organised (Benedicto and Morán, 2007). Firstly, the set of rights and duties attributed to the status of the citizen, which forms the institutional base of the recognition of belonging. Through exercising these rights and duties and the links of identification they produce, as much with others as with the community as a whole, individuals develop their status as citizens. At the moment, however, we cannot talk of belonging in the singular, but more of a variety of belongings which coexist in the identities of citizens. As such, in the global or cosmopolitan identities to be found in much of European youth, there is a combination of the restrictive logic of state membership, with another inclusive logic, based on new ways of relating to others, different principles of belonging and imagining other types of civic communities (Cicchelli, 2012).

The second component of democratic citizenship is participation. Although the definitions and conceptual distinctions between types of participation are endless (Loncle, Cuconato and Muniglia, 2012), here I will use the most sociopolitical meaning: it denotes those activities — individual or collective — developed by subjects to create and shape the society in which they live and to influence the functioning of the social and political processes therein (Spanning et al., 2008; Vromen, 2003). Through participation in the public sphere, individuals form and develop their citizen status. Becoming a citizen means not only being but also acting as a citizen, but the articulation of these dimensions in contemporary society presents many problems, mainly derived from the predominance of a formal conception of citizenship in which everything turns around legal recognition of status by the state. To be a citizen, from this perspective, is the result of a hierarchical relationship between the individual and the state, in which the state gives a set of rights to those who fulfil conditions frequently linked to the restrictive idea of nationality. The limitations of this perspective are evident when we focus on the most substantial aspects and their conflictive nature. We can then observe how actors conquer, exercise and reinterpret civil rights and duties through their more or less direct intervention in sociopolitical processes. In this way status and practice interact dialectically through the agency of individuals (Lister, 2003).

In the case of young people, this imbalance between status and practice greatly disfavours practice, because of the many impediments (lack of

civic resources, institutional obstacles to presence in public sphere, etc.) which hinder the exercise of formally recognised rights. For most European youth, the problem is not so much whether they have notional rights as whether they enjoy the socioeconomic, political and cultural conditions that would allow them to become active citizens through their agency. The environment in which young people become citizens is very complex as a result of the uncertainty and risk they face in making the transition to adult life successfully. The current uncertainty and risky nature of youth transitions (Bendit and Hahn-Belibtreu, 2008) are intensified by the secondary and subordinate position that young people occupy in society. Instead of being treated as citizens under construction, they are often treated as mere apprentices of a series of norms, values and rules which define the idea of the good citizen they should aspire to be (Hart, 2009; Morán and Benedicto, 2003).

This problem frequently becomes evident in the actions of political powers on youth matters. These actions start from the perspective that youth is a period of waiting and preparation for adult life. Adulthood thus functions as the ultimate reference point. The strategy designs normalised paths so that young people stop being young and become adults, and therefore citizens. But this overlooks the fact that, in a time of pluralisation of transitions, many young people follow individualised trajectories, in which the individual's decisions and actions are decisive in becoming an autonomous person. As a consequence the political focus should shift to the issue of young people in process of transition, their motivations, learning and participation (Walther, du Bois-Reymond and Biggart, 2006), where youth is perceived as a fundamental phase in the defining of individuals' life projects and the process of construction of citizenship.

Discussing the way young people become citizens prompts a dynamic conception in which participation occupies a central position, taking into account the fact that civic identities take shape through intervention in the public sphere, and new ways of recognition from adults are constructed (Benedicto and Morán, 2007). Most young people become citizens in a negotiated manner, through their own participation and actions, in conjunction with others, related to public problems. Spectacular protest events and mobilisation, as well as more informal activities connected with their everyday lives, constitute experiences of active citizenship through which young people attempt to make themselves present in the public sphere and play a significant role in the world in which they live. They seek recognition as legitimate actors whose voice must be heard by institutional powers. The previous formal process of belonging gives way, through participation, to a dynamic process in which civic identities take shape in response to practice and experience (Smith et al., 2005).



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The specific nature of youth participation

Although the depth of change in recent decades can be debated, we are undeniably witnessing a transformation of the context of youth participation and of the ways in which this is carried out in practice. Young people's mistrust and rejection of formal political activity are obvious indicators of these changes, although they are not the only ones. Despite the media transmitting a somewhat different message, the great majority of the available empirical research shows that political disaffection amongst young people does not necessarily imply delegitimisation of democracy or lack of interest in collective questions. There is a widespread sense that the institutions responsible do not attend to the demands of the young, and that politics takes place on the margin of their interests and needs. Instead of continuing to repeat again and again the slogan 'young people's disengagement', it would be more profitable to interpret this phenomenon as a profound reconfiguration of the relationship between youth and politics; and, in an even wider perspective, a reconfiguration of the civic links which unite the young with the communities to which they belong.

There are various factors at the root of this reconfiguration which well illustrate the transformation in the socio-structural context in which youth participation takes place. Firstly, the growing individualisation that characterises societies in the second modernity. The centrality of the individual and his/her desires and needs, combined with the decline in the socialising capacity of institutions, has obliged the subject to construct his/her own biography through self-reflection in an endless and constant search for coherence. In the specific case of young people, they have themselves become the protagonists, often involuntarily, of their own process of systemic integration, with all the

uncertainties entailed — uncertainties all the greater at a time when transitions to adulthood have lost the predictability of other eras. The individual–institution balance has tipped towards the individual and away from the institution, implying growing irrelevance of citizens' organisational commitment and a proliferation of individual strategies, often tied to a new model of dynamic life cycle based on open, fluid and shorter-term relations (Vinken, 2005). The individual becomes the reference point for action, while the link with the community becomes singularised and loses part of its collective dimension.

Another factor to be taken into account is the diminished relevance of politics in social life and, as a consequence, in the definition of civic links. Individualisation means that the younger generations have greater resources and competences to orientate themselves in the collective without depending so directly on institutions and actors of the political system. In addition, the great changes affecting our individual and collective lives develop increasingly beyond institutional politics (explosion of social networks, revolution of genetic research, etc.). The subjective importance attributed to the political sphere by young people continually shrinks because the political sphere no longer provides the necessary tools to give meaning to their actions (Bontempi, 2008). Politics ceases to be the privileged arena for participation and is substituted by civic solidarity. A shift occurs, from institutionalised and organised political commitment to civic commitment linked to the need for biographical self-fulfilment.

Another factor which we should not forget in order to understand the specific nature of youth participation is the role played by encounters with others in everyday space. In the society of individuals, some of the most characteristic elements of youth participation are being with others with whom a vague sense of belonging (generational, localised, cosmopolitan) is shared, or encountering others with whom there is common ground in order to do things in the public arena, connected in one way or another to everyday lives. This participation may be a one-off or a revocable occurrence, but is most often an action directed towards feeling as if one belongs, and it involves a wide range of emotions (Jasper, 2011). Sociability and links in everyday life are two key components of the experience of the collective, which should be borne in mind when reflecting on how young people participate, and why.

Transformation of the context in which youth participation takes place inevitably means that the ways in which it develops change too. Ways emerge with a logic that diverges in many aspects from that defended by adults, whose reference points are influenced by the idea of the commitment of the supporter and a symbolic framework of ideological origin. Most empirical sociopolitical research agrees that young people do not see much difference between different forms of participation. The traditional distinctions between political and social participation, formal

or informal, voluntary or involuntary, individual or collective have been shown to be less and less useful now that actors tend to mix them up, combining diverse areas and meanings within a wide and diversified repertoire of participation. Together with this fluid, undifferentiated nature of participation, which eliminates the contrast between old and institutional as opposed to new and individual ways, other characteristics need to be taken into account. These include the predominance of individual motivations and expressive needs, as opposed to the obligations defined by institutions; the search for more or less immediate efficiency, which manifests itself in finding the spectacular, dramatisation and personalisation; the tendency to informal participation and its link with the everyday experience of young people (Phelps, 2004; Smith et al., 2005; Harry, Wyn and Younes, 2010; Gaiser et al., 2010; Hustinx et al., 2012).

The result is a set of fragmented practices, not necessarily identified with groups, that create networks which are activated or deactivated according to circumstances. These practices tend to develop through informal structures which it is easy to enter and leave, depending on the personal circumstances of those involved. In summary, young people opt for a more individualised style of participation, which allows them to feel connected with similar people but without the demands derived from belonging to institutions or ideological identification.

This logic of youth participation has its roots in the transformations which affect the lives of young people, from structural transformations — which have modified the context in which participation takes place — to transformations in everyday life. It is sustained by an emerging model of the citizen. It is not only about participating in a different way and manner as compared to adults, but about having a distinct position as actors in the community. Many young people are, through their actions, making a new image of the individualised citizen appear, with diffused identities and multiple belongings which inhabit various political-cultural worlds (Benedicto, 2013).



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Learning, practices and experiences

These tendencies now appearing in our democratic societies coexist with more traditional tendencies, such as youth distancing from and disinterest in the public questions, put forward by the predominant ideological forces. These forces focus on effort, individual responsibility and personal preferences, thus delegitimising at the same time the collective and its connected actions (White, 2007). Both tendencies must be taken into account when we think about how to promote youth participation.

Traditionally, learning about participation by the young has focused on the perspective that deficits must be dealt with. The starting point has been that in order to participate in the public sphere a series of values, rules and competences which young people usually lack are needed, and therefore they must be taught. Consequently, efforts are made to teach participation through distinct programmes and plans of action, but this learning rarely involves taking action directly. Learning becomes a process directed by adults, who thus appear to be those who know what young people need in order to become active citizens. The learning process becomes one in which the subject makes no relevant intervention (Walther, 2012). The poor results of this strategy show the need to reconsider how young people participate, in line with the characteristics previously outlined.

This reassessment involves breaking with the monolithic vision and linear process of learning in which the subject is a mere receptor of the values and rules transmitted by others from an institutional position and in which participation is an instrumental component of the citizen model. On the contrary, taking into account what we have just discussed, it has become necessary to design a dynamic scheme based on some key ideas: learning about participation is multiple, mostly informal and linked to the experiences of young people. Young people learn to participate by participating and do so where they live, in the spaces — real or virtual — in which they find other young people to do things with.

Adequately interpreting these characteristics of learning youth participation is one of the principal challenges facing those institutions, especially European ones, which attempt to promote participation and active citizenship in young people.

Research shows that one of the main obstacles is the frequent tendency of many institutions, mainly educational ones, to present education in relation to citizenship as a reproduction of the status quo. Participation becomes formalised teaching, a repetitive exercise restricted to certain environments and themes, although these may barely be relevant either personally or collectively. In such conditions, young people learn that participation does not refer to important sit-

uations in their lives but only to themes formally defined which have no direct connection with their interests. By contrast, through practice and informal learning, young people feel that participation is significant for their own personal lives and for collective life. Participation is useful because it means some kind of influence over how things turn out (*UP2Youth — Final report, 2009*).

Youth participation from a politico-institutional perspective

In the phase our democracies are living through, dominated by the decline of citizen confidence and mistrust of professional political activity, civic integration of younger generations has become a key objective in order to provide a new impulse to the democratic life of our societies. Participation and active citizenship play an irreplaceable role in this connection. The European institutions have become conscious of the central importance of participation and have made it a pillar of the European youth programmes over the last 25 years. But experience has shown just how complex it is to talk about youth participation in institutions and to design instruments and mechanisms which promote it. Success is far from assured, especially at a time in which the young feel little identification with the political institutions which represent them at the national and European levels.

To make progress in this area, clearer determination is needed of the objective pursued by the institution with its youth policies because, despite similar discourses, the models and conceptions are very different. In some cases promoting youth participation is conceived basically as an instrument to legitimise the institution and its politics. Other cases start with the idea that youth participation is a tool to integrate young people by following hegemonic procedures, so they tend to prioritise control and avoidance of conflict. Other projects have a managerial focus, seeking youth participation so as to make public administration more efficient by incorporating the desires and aspirations of those at whom institutional action is directed.

Each of these approaches to participatory politics displays features to promote youth participation on the part of the institutions, but they all suffer from the same deficiency: young people are the object of the political action instead of being its subjects. The alternative is to recognise the prominence of the young people, and to work in such a way that, through participation, they become actors. Participation then acquires deep political meaning, as it provides individuals with the ability to influence the social environment, empowers them and, in the end, makes them political subjects. But to avoid the high risk of achieving

little more than technocratic talk, as so often happens in this field, this kind of approach needs two conditions. Firstly, the institutions must accept that if young people are recognised as actors with the ability to take decisions, then their interventions can significantly modify the priorities and procedures of institutional action. It is an open question as to whether institutions are prepared to accept the challenge of youth participation and the ability of young people to change the old script. Secondly, the opportunities for participation are limited by the sociopolitical context for many young people, where accumulated disadvantage presents them with difficulties in developing personal autonomy and citizen status. The risks of exclusion faced by young people in vulnerable situations demand specific attention from the institutions responsible for youth politics. Active participation becomes a key experience in the development of young people's civic biographies and an efficient tool of integration (Colley et al., 2007).

The scheme of structured dialogue with young people put in place by the European Union is an interesting institutional mechanism aimed at including the voice of young people in the decision-making process. Incorporating young people in the definition of European youth politics and seeking their collaboration with policymakers in this task constitute a significant advance in the recognition of the citizen status and role that should be played by youth in society. The success of the formula should not obscure its limitations. Young people should no longer be invited to participate through a series of pre-established themes. Instead it is young people themselves who, together with institutional representatives, should decide the agenda to be discussed and the procedures of deliberation to be used (EACEA 2010/03). An attempt must be made to tilt the balance in favour of youth prominence, with the goal in mind that the needs, aspirations and demands of European young people are placed at the centre of the whole process. Even more importantly than these procedural aspects, other fundamental issues should be taken into account. These include the following: youth participation principally takes place outside institutions and formal procedures; the large majority of young people, those who participate included, do not belong to organisations or associations which can represent them; only 'authentic' participation (Hart, 1993) in which young people are recognised as speakers who can intervene in an efficient manner, can permit the development of young people as citizens. As a consequence the goal of European politics (in which the voice and decisions of young people are indispensable) would be to design tools which make possible participation in the distinct areas of social, political, economic and cultural life of European societies to become a meaningful citizenship experience.

Looking forward

Following on from the arguments contained in this short text, some basic ideas could usefully guide the debate about the principles that should underlie the future of European youth programmes.

- (i) Participation should respect the individual and collective differences of those participating in the process and take into account the social inequality which characterises our societies.
- (ii) For participation to be efficient, young people should be provided with the necessary knowledge and abilities to be competent, and special attention should be paid to those in vulnerable social situations so as to avoid participation being a privilege reserved for the most advantaged.
- (iii) Participation must create influential and empowered young people.
- (iv) Authentic participation means taking part in decision-making.
- (v) Youth participation cannot be limited to a series of questions and themes socially defined as those important to young people. Progress must be made towards intergenerational politics.
- (vi) In designing policies it is necessary to analyse the criteria used and objectives pursued when youth participation is proposed.
- (vii) Participation cannot be the result of a certain politics; it must be the axis around which policies are defined.
- (viii) The institutions must create mechanisms of participation which make youth participation possible for those from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds.
- (ix) Participation can be learnt only by participating. A shift is necessary from education about participation to active involvement.
- (x) Participation is the key to civic prominence for young people.



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European good practice

Youth go global: international model United Nations

This project encouraged 100 young people to react to challenges in their lives and their societies and to look for European solutions together. It was distinguished by its methodology, the number of people involved, the attention it won and because it introduced in Lithuania a worldwide model of learning — a model United Nations (UN) conference. Most came from Belarus, Germany and Lithuania, but there were also participants from Azerbaijan, Brazil, Kenya, Poland, Ukraine, the United States, Uzbekistan and Turkey.

The aim was to promote understanding about politics at international level, especially the UN system and the role of the European Union, by raising questions of global importance with young people and by engaging them and enabling them. The project equipped the young people so they could participate in public debates on questions such as the future of nuclear energy, international migration and human rights, and join the search for solutions. It enhanced partnerships among the participants from Belarus, Germany and Lithuania, allowing them to share experience in engaging with international politics; it also motivated them to develop further projects together.

The project ran for 6 months in 2012 in Siegen and in Vilnius. It involved preparatory meetings with policymakers at the UN headquarters in Bonn, the creation of a website, promotion of the event in Lithuania, running registration procedures and logistics. The participants followed special e-learning courses and studied the policies of the country they had been assigned. An interactive online platform allowed young people to learn about the concepts and documents relevant for the simulation and to test their knowledge. They also participated in online forums and discussed topics such as human rights.

The actual meeting, over 4 days, covered initial training on the simulation procedures and resolution writing on the first day, then the opening of the conference, a press conference and meeting with experts and decision-makers on the second day. The third day was spent on simulation sessions and a cultural event, and the fourth day was dedicated to a closing ceremony and a feedback workshop.

Participants used their learning in public speaking and rhetoric, writing resolutions, negotiating and debating, and in consultations with experts





and decision-makers. The simulation encouraged active participation, practice in real-life situations, mutual learning experience and direct application of skills and knowledge. In addition to making international friendships and enhancing partnership among conference partners, the participants also improved their skills in English language communication and in working in a multicultural environment.

The organising team gained skills in public relations and media campaigns, teamwork, problem solving and leadership, project planning and implementation, and digital media.

As a result of the evaluation workshop, the participants produced a manual for organisers of similar events in the future. They subsequently published it online, along with a video including interviews with organisers and participants.

A youth democracy project funded by the Youth in Action national agency in Lithuania.

Project carried out by the Young Leaders Forum of the Community of Democracies (Lithuania), in partnership with an informal group of students of the Institute for International Relations and Political Science of the University of Vilnius, the European Humanities University and E-akademija (Lithuania) and the Model United Nations Siegen and Debattierclub Siegen (Germany).

The role of the internet and social media: new forms of young people's participation

CLIVE BONNICI

Introduction

I only understood the effect of the internet on the level of participation of young people when I looked back and traced the path that brought us to the current situation. Sometimes we perceive the internet as a superpower, a deity beyond our reach, forgetting that it was an actual invention, to facilitate sharing of files in the United States during the Cold War. The real breakthrough was the introduction of the world wide web (WWW), originally intended to make it easier for scientists at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) to share information. Tim Berners-Lee, its inventor, created software making it possible to find specific documents by keywords instead of going through all the files one by one, manually. So at the beginning, the internet was really little more than storage to facilitate sharing of data. Only once it was commercialised did companies and individuals start to realise its potential. It is good to keep in mind that everything that the internet has on it was created and is still being created by humans and for humans.

The evolution of online communities such as The WELL (1985), Theglobe.com (1994), Geocities (1994) and Tripod.com (1995), what we would nowadays call social networks, made their producers aware that they were filling a gap responding to people's, and especially the younger generation's, needs. Today young people increasingly engage in social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Academia and many more. As a youth worker, what struck me even more than the level of engagement were the reasons behind the popularity and demand for such platforms. To understand what underlies this popularity and the growth of internet users, it is necessary to consider the transformation which our society went through in recent decades.

Before the industrial revolution, most people lived in villages with their extended families — in small communities of like-minded people: shared values united people. Young people were expected to follow the



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family profession, and raise their own families in the village of their parents. Most communities were self-sufficient, producing everything they needed for themselves, and families provided for their needs — perpetuating mutual support — with some additional input from the church.

With the industrial revolution, people moved to cities. In this new context, the attachment to the traditional values and institutions of the family and church declined, or changed, adapting to the realities of the emerging industrial societies. Education became more important because it improved the chance of getting better jobs. Division of labour, the main characteristic of the industrial society, meant that people no longer produced everything for themselves, but instead did specific tasks; line production required specialisation. The size of families decreased as people became more mobile. As George Ritzer states, society started to function more like a McDonalds fast-food outlet, as it was increasingly driven by efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. As rationalisation in the industrial society replaced traditions and values, the community fabric began to disintegrate and people became more individualised. Work was no longer the place where they could also socialise, as pressure to manage workloads required a focus on the task at hand.

The classrooms in most of the educational systems around Europe reflect the rationalisation process. For the sake of efficiency, predictability and control, schools design curricula solely to produce enough workers for industry. The same teaching methods are used, and all students are expected to learn the same. Young people are under pressure to complete their education and earn a degree, and parents are expected to do their utmost to help their children's academic success as a guarantee of their future. This fast-paced life, especially in West-

ern societies, imposes more structure on time, leaving less space for young people to 'play' and to socialise face to face.

The first social networks identified and filled in this gap in today's society, offering individuals the sensation of being part of a community, even without physical proximity. Social networking has been, in a way, a shift back from the industrial to traditional society; a return to living in communities with a sense of belonging. In this way, members of a society that is built on rationalised processes find a meeting point in the internet. The village square became a virtual one. In particular, young people are active in online communities through social tools.

Characteristics of the internet

The participation of young people in the online environment is influenced by the characteristics of the medium itself. Better understanding of the different levels of online participation requires understanding of the parameters and the rules of the game. The main feature of the internet, especially of social networks, is to allow and encourage the participation of the sender and the receiver at the same time. This differs markedly from the possibilities offered by television and radio, earlier forms of mass communication, where a model of one-way traffic made little or no provision for feedback from the audience. By contrast, the internet permits users to own the message, to be the producers of the message they want to convey. According to Neuman (1991), new internet-based media allow for faster, diverse, two-way communication between users who have more control over the medium. Young people produce large volumes of material every day about topics which interest them and their communities.

Another interesting characteristic is the lack of conventional face-to-face feedback. Some response of this kind is provided by using

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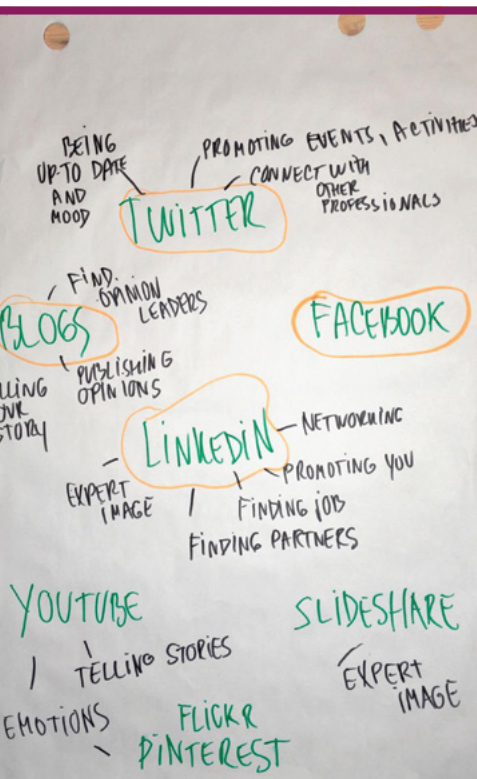


emoticons, which reflect the way a person feels. But the lack of physical proximity may offer some opportunities. Back in 1992 Kiesler noted that in chats on MRIC (a chatting software), people who are usually influential in offline face-to-face encounters are not so dominant in online groups. Mass communication before the age of the internet was frequently controlled by people with a political, religious or commercial agenda, while the internet cannot be so easily controlled, and anyone can produce content. To that extent, it can be argued that social networks present an opportunity for more democracy.

In many ways, online interactions are also replacing the socialisation processes which used to take place in face-to-face interactions between people. And since today people are spending more time online, the communication patterns are changing as well. The way that communication occurs ultimately changes the way people think. And shifts in communication styles and patterns also affect how our identity is formed (Kegan, 1982). Internet users have greater possibilities to experiment with different identities, and they can present themselves to others with no restrictions (Turkle, 2005). Online social networking acts as a site for identity formation.

Whether constructing their profiles on Facebook, creating a video on YouTube or talking to their friends in chat rooms, teens are constantly creating, recreating and forming their identities, which is a primary goal of adolescence (Greenfield et al., 2007). Young people interacting online have more control over the expression of their identity than in face-to-face interaction (Rheingold, 2000). Internet users can disclose as much or as little information about themselves as they choose, and can even remain anonymous, or create a new identity — young people need to experiment with the different facets of their own identity as they develop their personal traits. Online interactions can be more inclusive, since the playing field is more level for everyone, without physical limitations. According to Birkerts (1994), the internet offers freedom from the constraints of the physical world. And Tapscott (1998) argues that the internet has created a free zone for young people where they control their social network and communication. Today's young people are empowered through open discussion and immediacy on the internet, which may challenge the bureaucratic governance processes (Tapscott, 1998).

Changes also occur in learning behaviour. Marshall McLuhan (1964) argued that with the rise of electronic media, 'we will be extending our central nervous system itself in a global embrace'. Indeed, electronic media, and in today's terms the internet and social networking, are also changing the way people acquire information. Today everyone can ask Google. This demonstrates a shift from the importance of knowing things to the importance of knowing where to find information.



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In addition, when information came predominantly from the printed or broadcast media, it was provided in a one-way transmission: the sender controlled the information. In schools, books have been the main source of information, alongside teachers. Since a book usually presents information in a sequential manner, learning from books also takes place sequentially. But today young people deal with hypertextuality: when the word 'water' is Googled, millions of results are displayed, and each click on a link offers choices of articles containing even more links. In addition, the search engine provides presentations, videos, articles and other resources for acquiring information, putting the learner much more in control of learning.

E-participation

There is no doubt that young people increasingly spend time online, driven by the ever-wider offer of online services. But what levels of online participation are they involved in? The literature identifies three such levels: e-informing, e-engaging and e-enabling.

Young people are very selective about the level and subject of involvement. The power of social networks was demonstrated during the Arab Spring or the Ukraine revolution. People — and often young people — who wanted change had sought ways to achieve it. Social networks make it possible to bypass formal institutions and attract the attention of the authorities, the media and the public, so that local problems can be put on the world agenda.

Many institutions create platforms to attract young people. But young people react mostly to issues that they have identified on their own, from their own local context, on social platforms they are familiar with. Creating new platforms is not the most efficient way to encourage young people to be active and to engage in a discussion on issues and policies affecting them. Youth workers, NGOs and institutions interested in the views of young people should go on existing social networks and observe the comments which young people post, the pictures they upload, the stories they comment upon — they should seek to capture interest by hanging out in the places where young people choose to communicate, and by using language understandable by young people. The challenge is to be more flexible in

methods of gathering information, to relate to the context of young people, to be aware of the parameters of the internet and social networks and to play creatively within them.

By merely providing information online, the only level of participation that can be expected is e-informing. But even winning this form of young people's participation requires effort and creativity: too much text, too many technical words, website layouts that are too complex, information which is not easy to find or not relevant enough — these will all hinder the involvement of young people.

To be effective in engaging with young people, ideas should be sourced among young people themselves. It is not enough to wait for young people to pay attention to standard offerings. Energy has to be invested to reach out to where young people already are. The focus should shift from trying to make activities which will attract young people to discussing with young people what activities they want to do and in what ways, and providing them with time and space to create what they wish to see happening. The internet offers this opportunity, and youth workers should be more alert to it. If a topic is relevant to young people, they will find or create the online platform themselves, using their own language. Ultimately this means that the engagement of young people is already taking place, judging from the level of their activities online. Projects implemented using this approach have brought positive results, maybe not in the most expected way, but positive and fruitful for the young people directly involved. The internet is a versatile medium and can take you to places that you had never planned to go.

The internet experts are the young people themselves. Online participation will be at its maximum when they start using the platform that they are familiar with in the best way possible to send their messages. Youth workers need to learn to let young people do their thing. Their role is to coach young people through the processes, ensuring that what is done reflects young people's beliefs, ideas and agendas. If the agenda is imposed on them, the maximum level of participation will never be reached.

In the context of my online research 'R U Online?' in 2010, I collaborated with other non-formal educators to design a seminar on the internet and the development of young people. The concept was implemented in Finland in 2011 and 2013, with youth workers, youth leaders and young people discussing the effect of the internet on society, and on young people. Youth workers were initially critical of the internet as an impediment to the development of young people, but came to rec-

ognise that young people nowadays are continuously connected, and that being online is not an option but a fact of life. Understanding also emerged that creating an effective youth activity requires a mixture of online and offline engagement. A further seminar in Cyprus in 2013 shared good practices of e-participation. The discussion highlighted the interactivity, constant availability and anonymity of the internet.

Final thoughts

In the field of youth work, the internet should be used to build relationships with young people. Only through constant dialogue can young people be guided and motivated to attain their goals. Knowing their language will give a deeper understanding of their world. As Freire states, 'Our relationship with young people demands that we respect them and demands equally that we are aware of the concrete conditions of their world, the conditions that shape them ... Without this, we have no access to the way they think, so only with great difficulty can we perceive what and how they know' (Freire, 1996).

The way forward for education, both formal and non-formal, is to embrace this new medium, understand it and use it to the advantage of young people. Youth work should develop activities increasing awareness of the political, social and commercial factors that define the internet. Media literacy should be a standard curriculum topic. Instead of restricting access to the internet, we should guide young people to navigate carefully, with intelligence and a critical mind — and to be alert to bullying, sexual offences and other sensitive topics when they are online — just as we guide them on how to face these issues offline.



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