



YouthPartnership

Youth Policy Development in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus



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YouthPartnership
Council of Europe
European Commission



c/o Council of Europe :: Directorate of Youth and Sport :: F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France
Fax: (33) 3 88 412 778 :: E-mail: youth-partnership@coe.int :: www.youth-partnership.net

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SUMMARY

The workshop on the development of youth policy in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, organised at the European Youth Centre in Budapest 18-19 June 2008, was organised by the Youth Partnership joint programme of the Council of Europe and the European Commission with the support of the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre. The event brought together 17 participants, most of whom came from the countries in the region. A majority came from the non-governmental youth sector, but there were also government representatives and researchers in the youth field attending the seminar.

The objective of the workshop was to promote youth policy development through the advancement of a regional dialogue in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and the sharing of information.

The presentation of reports by participants on the situation of youth policy in their respective countries was given ample time at the workshop. Gradually, the seminar then started focusing on identifying concrete challenges and major needs for further progress in youth policy development, and how regional cooperation can be a valuable tool to overcome barriers to improve the situation of young people in these countries.

The seminar resulted in a number of concrete proposals for follow-up and future concrete action in order to improve the development of youth policy in the region of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.



1. OPENING

The workshop brought together a total of 17 experts in the youth sector, representing the non-governmental sector, the governmental sector and the research community. All countries in the Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region were represented, in addition to a couple of participants (invited experts) from outside the region.

The activity was officially opened by Hanjo SCHILD, the coordinator of the Youth Partnership joint programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, which was the main organiser of the event. SCHILD presented the work of the Youth Partnership in Europe in general and towards the Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (EECA) region in particular, elaborating on its three interlinked areas of work; research, training and youth policy.

SCHILD emphasised the unique structure of the Youth Partnership, and how it targets all countries that are members of the Council of Europe and/or signatory states of the European Cultural Convention. Eastern Europe and the Caucasus is an important region both for the European Union and the Council of Europe, and thus inside the Youth Partnership. A

The youth policy assessment mechanism in the Council of Europe International Youth Policy Reviews was also outlined. It has become an important tool for promoting youth policy in Europe. The last country to have been reviewed is Moldova. Stressing that the Council of Europe is the organisation where all Eastern European and Caucasus states have the greatest influence as members, SCHILD elaborated on the development of a new youth policy platform of the Council of Europe, Agenda 2020, and the European Youth Ministers' Conference which will be held in October 2008 in Ukraine.

The floor was then passed to Andriy PAVLOVYCH, who represented the co-organiser of the workshop, the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre of the European Community Youth in Action Programme. PAVLOVYCH stressed that Eastern Europe and the Caucasus has become a priority within the new Youth in Action Programme following the latest two rounds of enlargement with 12 new countries and within the context of the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of the European Union. He informed that around 10 % of the budget of the new Youth in Action programme is allocated to the establishment of partnerships between EU and neighbouring countries.

PAVLOVYCH outlined the history of the SALTO Resource Centres, emphasizing the role of the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre which was established in 2004 and based in Warsaw, Poland. He also elaborated on the role of Eastern Europe and its relations with the EU member states and the European Union, informing participants that during the previous week, the countries of Poland and Sweden launched the initiative to establish a new programme for cooperation between the EU and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus countries. The working title of this programme is the "Eastern Europe Partnership Programme".

Marta MEDLINSKA, Programme Officer of the Youth Partnership, was then given the floor. She started by outlining the objectives of this specific activity. She emphasised that networking between youth policy actors in the EECA region and promoting dialogue between

representatives of the different parties in the "magic triangle" – being government, non-governmental youth associations and youth researchers – are essential for the promotion of youth policy development and was also the objective of this seminar. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the governmental and research sector are underrepresented at this workshop. However, the group of participants is impressive and includes all countries in the EECA region. A concrete objective for this event will therefore be to explore what are the possibilities for new and improved partnerships in the youth policy field in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

2. INTRODUCTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

After a round of introductions, the participants were asked to present their expectation of the workshop focusing on "What can I contribute and what do I expect from this seminar?".

All participants, most of whom came from the region of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, emphasised that they wanted to share knowledge about the status of youth policy development in their own countries, that they wanted to learn from other's experiences and were keen on establishing contacts in the youth policy sector.

Among other expectations that were mentioned by participants were:

- A wish to learn more about the EU and CoE programmes in the youth field;
- A wish to develop common perceptions of issues we discuss, challenges and methodology;
- A wish to learn more about what the European institutions are doing in the field.



3. THE STATE OF YOUTH POLICY IN THE EASTERN EUROPE AND THE CAUCASUS

Before the country-by-country presentations, representatives of the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) and the European Youth Forum (YFJ) presented the work of their respective organisations. This turned out to be a successful way of moving from the European level to the level of individual countries in the region.

European Youth Forum (YFJ)

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is the European umbrella organisation of national youth councils (NYCs) and international youth associations (INGYOs) in Europe. It has more than 90 member organisations. YFJ is represented in EECA through national branches of INGYOs and through national youth councils in all seven EECA countries.

The YFJ considers youth policy to be a cross-sectoral policy, as all government policies affecting young people are of relevance to them (from employment to health and discrimination). Youth policy should aim at providing a better, safer and equal environment for young people and providing them with the adequate means and policies for the present and the future. Therefore, YFJ, especially in the context of European institutions, focuses on two areas with regard to policies that target young people:

Youth Participation: Young people's participation as equal partners in the development of youth policy and in society in general is a central priority for YFJ. The organisation works on promoting such partnerships at all levels. YFJ is also advocating for lowering the voting age to 16 in Europe. The Youth Forum pursues its agenda through collaborating with its member organisations, through European and international institutions and through a broad network of civil society NGOs.

Volunteering: The European Youth Forum advocates for a better and safer environment for volunteers in general, and for volunteering which leads to commitment and engagement in youth organisations in particular. In this regard, the YFJ develops, together with its member organisations, a framework for the rights of volunteers. This document is being advocated towards European and international institutions and will be used in various institutional processes such as the European Union's Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the youth field. The YFJ, believing that volunteering needs more visibility and attention, is together with other NGOs advocating for 2011 to be declared the European Year of Volunteering.

With regard to the EECA region, YFJ is basing its work on its existing Youth Work Development strategy, of which monitoring of the youth policy development in each country of the region is a major element. YFJ has a strong interest in the youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe and it follows closely the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Youth Forum also focuses on capacity-building of its member organisations – national youth councils and the branches of international non-governmental youth organisations. As tools to monitor the realities in different countries, YFJ conducts study visits, meetings, uses its own “think tank” the Youth Work Development Working Group, etc. Based on this, YFJ makes analyses and works out recommendations on further actions to be carried out in order to improve the youth sector. It also organises training activities for member organisations on

different topics related to youth work and youth policy, and cooperates with different institutions and the SALTO EECA.

The European Youth Forum maintains a close focus on Belarus and the National Youth Council in Belarus, RADA, which is a YFJ member organisation. RADA has been going through difficult times since it lost its legal status, but YFJ is observing that the situation is slowly improving.

National youth councils from all Eastern European and Caucasus countries are members of YFJ.

The National Council of Swedish Youth Associations (LSU)

The National Council of Swedish Youth Associations (LSU) is the umbrella organisation of more than 80 national youth organisations in Sweden. In addition to having a national platform, LSU has a wide international involvement. One of LSU's initiatives is the Eastern European Youth Cooperation (EEYC), which involves all the EECA countries: Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova.

Sweden currently has the chairmanship of the Council of Europe, and has just launched an initiative together with the Polish government to strengthen Eastern European cooperation within Europe. LSU has for several years been an important player in promoting closer Eastern European cooperation in the youth sector, and is trying to benefit from its government's initiative. The Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Carl Bildt, has been very open to involve LSU and young people in a dialogue on this issue (Bildt has a history as a former board member of LSU himself, so he has a good understanding of youth policy and the role that youth organisations can play.)

Through EEYC, LSU promotes networking and closer cooperation among youth organisations in the EECA countries as a way to empower young people. One of the issues that are in focus is the visa issue.

Armenia

National youth policy was first presented as a concept in Armenia in 1997-98. In 2004-05, a process took place to develop a National Youth Policy Strategy, which was adopted by the Government. Youth organisations were also somewhat consulted in this process. The adoption of the strategy was followed by a large scale research on youth issues in Armenia, as a result of which a "National Youth Report" was produced. As a further step, a National Youth Policy Review was conducted by the Council of Europe in 2006. The current government conducted a revision of the youth policy strategy in the first half of 2008, and the minister responsible for youth has promised that young people will be involved in the process to develop an action plan.

The Government adopted in 2006 a paper which formally recognises the concept of non-formal education and which devises a strategy for the development of non-formal education in Armenia. This is the first time this concept is legally defined in the country. The document was developed in cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs and the National Pool of Trainers, which provided experts pool from NGO sector.

The first Council of Europe training course that took place in Armenia focused on government – NGO cooperation and was very successful. One of the follow-ups of this event was the establishment of two co-management structures in Armenia. First, the Council of Youth Affairs under the Prime Minister, with an equal composition of representatives of government bodies and youth. Second, a co-managed structure was established under the ministry responsible for youth issues, responsible for decision making on the allocation of grants from the state budget to NGOs.

A number of youth organisations exist in Armenia, and many of them are members of the National Youth Council. Besides youth NGOs in almost all universities, there are student self-government organisations (such as student councils and student scientific societies) which unite young people. Some youth branches of political parties also exist, as well as several national donor-agencies, the largest of them being the "Pan-Armenian Youth International Center" Foundation and All-Armenian Youth Foundation.

Russia

A new governmental structure has recently been established in Russia, in which there is a separate Deputy Minister of Education responsible for youth issues and a separate department for youth policy. The Deputy Minister for Youth is a former board member of the National Youth Council of Russia, who has a good understanding of youth policy. The National Youth Council of Russia has been lobbying for the development of a co-managed Advisory Board which will give recommendations to the Ministry on youth issues, but the results of this effort are still uncertain.

Youth policy development in Russia is currently undergoing some challenges. One is financial, as it is difficult to ensure sufficient funding for youth-related programmes and activities. With regards to budget for youth activities and for implementing youth policy, the regional administrations have much larger budgets than at the federal level. Second, there are strategic challenges. A National Youth Policy strategy was proposed in 2006, but it has not been implemented due to a lack of funding. The third challenge regards research on youth. There is a lack of reliable and comprehensive data on youth on a national level, and no clear understanding of what their real needs are and how they can be addressed by a coordinated national youth policy. One measure to improve the situation in the research field is to promote closer cooperation, and an initiative has therefore been taken to establish a national network of youth researchers.

A youth law is currently being drafted in Russia. A draft law will be subject to public hearings, and the National Youth Council and other stakeholders will be able to submit their proposed amendments and revisions to the draft law.

The National Youth Council of Russia (NYCR) has existed for 16 years and is a well established partner with the government. There are a number of large youth NGOs in the country. A new and positive development in the youth sector is that the youth branches of political parties, which are relatively independent from their mother parties, have expressed an interest in becoming members of NYCR.

Moldova

The Government of the Republic of Moldova declared 2008 as the Year of Youth. Young people make up approximately 1/3 of the population.

A National Youth Action Plan was developed in Moldova in 2003-04. Since then, however, the Youth Ministry was discontinued and youth issues are now handled by the Ministry of Education and Youth. At the Parliament, there is a separate commission responsible for youth, and at the regional level there are several institutions dealing with young people.

With the change of government in Moldova, the National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM) has had to re-establish its relations with the state authorities. However, this has also opened up new possibilities for the youth council, which has been in a position where they could show their vast competencies on youth policy and international cooperation in the youth field. However, a general lack of political stability in the country, with frequent change of political leaders and governments, makes it difficult for the non-governmental sector and CNTM to establish lasting working relations with the government. Adding to this is that it is difficult for NGOs to register as legal organisations. This has been a traditional barrier for establishing closer cooperation with consecutive governments.

Of all non-governmental organisations in Moldova, 60 % have activities for young people and students. However, there are only few which are actually working *with* young people or who are administered by young people themselves. Some local youth councils have been emerged, but most of the work is conducted by adults. There are currently ongoing efforts to develop a national students organisation.

Azerbaijan

After Azerbaijan gained independence, many challenges emerged. A military conflict with Armenia has still not been resolved, which means that approximately one fifth of Azeri territory is occupied and that around one million refugees are internally displaced. This situation has a great direct effect on young people, since it means that youth unemployment and other problems for young people are much greater than they would otherwise have been.

More than 2/3 of the population of Azerbaijan is under 30 years old, making the country the "youngest" of all member states of the Council of Europe. The government has a constructive approach towards working with youth. However, financial funds available for youth policy are scarce.

In terms of youth policy development, the situation has improved with the recent development of 4 regional youth centres. Furthermore, as of 2008, the National Statistics Office will collect annual statistics on youth. This is an achievement of the Ministry and will enhance what we know about young people. A National Youth Programme (2005-2009) exists, and a new programme is now under development. Youth NGOs do take part in a consultation process, and the Youth Minister has shown receptive towards involving civil society in policy development.

The National Youth Council in Azerbaijan, NAYORA, has developed a tradition of having its leaders in high political positions. The current chairman of NAYORA is a Member of Parliament, which was also the case as with the three previous chairmen. The Deputy Minister responsible for youth is also previous chairman.

Recently, it has become much easier for non-governmental youth organisations to register and gain legal status. There are still some challenges for political youth organisations, although youth branches of political parties are free to register.

Georgia

According to Georgia's state statistics agency, young people in the age group 15-34 makes up 31 % of the country's population.

The responsibility for youth issues is located in the Ministry for Culture, Monument Protection and Sport, with a Deputy Minister as responsible for youth issues. The Ministry is responsible for developing state youth policy. It also provides some support for activities to be implemented by the non-governmental youth sector, although the annual budget is rather limited (in 2008 it amounts to USD 20500). There is a law on state support for children and youth organisations in Georgia, but no specific legislation on youth policy.

The main objective of the National Council of Youth Organisations in Georgia (NCYOG) is to promote and support the development of youth policy issues towards state authorities of the Georgian Government and international institutions. According to NCYOG, a national youth policy should be developed focusing around the following themes: Education, youth participation, youth organisations, culture and traditions, sports and leisure, religious, sexual and ethnical minorities, creation of a legal framework (youth law), promoting youth research, and around the social issues of employment, healthcare, gender equality, young families and housing.

Ukraine

Issues relating to youth policy and young people rests with the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport. The current youth law is from 1993. The current efforts of the government in the field of youth policy focus on improving opportunities for young people's meaningful leisure time, and the development and adoption of a programme for orphaned children. There is also a youth policy project under development with the support of the UNDP Country Office in Ukraine, called the National Doctrine of Youth.

Ukraine is experiencing political instability, with governments typically lasting for less than a year. The political implication of this is that consecutive governments have been hesitant and even resistant towards advocating for substantial changes which they will not be able to follow up on.

Youth policy in Ukraine has traditionally been rather problem-oriented, and focuses primarily on the needs of especially talented young people and those with special needs. There is no specific focus on providing young people in general with resources and opportunities to ensure a quality upbringing, or a strategy of support to the non-governmental youth sector. Other important issues that remain to be tackled concern the health and well-being of street-children and orphans.

Since 1998, several rivaling youth platforms in Ukraine have existed side by side. One of them – the Ukrainian Youth Forum (UYF) – has become a member of the European Youth Forum (YFJ).

Belarus

The administration of youth affairs is located within the Ministry of Education. The existing legislation on youth was adopted in 1997, but a new law is currently being developed and will be adopted in 2008. In the new legislation, all references to NGOs have been deleted, meaning there will be no legal basis for the government to give financial assistance to non-governmental organisations.

The only non-governmental youth organisation that seems to be supported by the government is the Belarussian Patriotic Youth Union, which is developed across the country.

There is a National Youth Council in Belarus called RADA, which is a member organisation of the European Youth Forum. This platform has encountered problems with the Belarussian government, however, and has been stripped of its legal status. Without legal status it is very difficult to operate and RADA is going through difficult times. The government has supported the establishment of a rival national youth council, but this council has not received the support from the youth NGO sector.

Within the system of secondary education, there is a strong focus on "patriotic education". In most Eastern European countries this has to do with promoting active citizenship, but in the situation of Belarus there is an increasing focus on military discipline and training. The concept of non-formal education is not very recognised in the country.



4. GROUP WORK 1: INTERACTIVE EXERCISE ON THE "MAGIC TRIANGLE"

Three placards with "government", "youth organisations" and "research" were posted in different corners of the room. Participants were then asked to go to the corner where they had their "heart", reflecting where in the "triangle" they would have liked to be. Most participants gathered around the "youth organisations" poster; some around the "government" poster and a couple under "research". An interesting exchange of views then followed. On the one hand, one person said that while he belonged to the NGO sector, he wanted to be in government since it would give him more influence to make real change. On the other hand, two of the participants under the "youth organisations" poster said that they both worked in government but wanted to be in the NGO sector since this gave them better opportunities to make real change.

Next, participants were asked to reflect on where they had the most experience and change their position in the room accordingly. Finally, participants were asked to go to the corner where they would like to see major change in the near future, and outline what those changes should be. This formed the basis of three more or less equal groups on "government", "youth research" and "youth organisations", which sat down in different areas of the room for discussion and reflection.

Following discussions in three groups, short presentations were given by one representative of each of the groups. Among the central points that were mentioned:

"Non-governmental organisations" group

- It is important for different actors in the "magic triangle" to cooperate and synchronise their actions
- NGOs should see it as their task to lobby for youth legislation
- Youth NGOs should take into account the role of international organisations
- The development of youth platforms/umbrella organisations as a method of coordinated action and cooperation should be encouraged (national platform, regional and thematic platforms)

"Youth research" group

- There is a need for more descriptive youth research (what is the situation for young people?) in order to reach youth policy development
- There is also a need for more analytical youth research (what is needed in order to make change?) in order to advance in the youth policy field
- More focus must be placed on monitoring and evaluation
- There should be more research on best practices within countries and among countries in terms of policy development
- When can we say that youth policy exists? What is needed in order to have a policy?

"Government" group

What should gov't be responsible for?

- Legislation and policy development and implementation

How can government improve its efficiency?

- Develop bilateral and multilateral agreements as a way to compensate for political instability and short government history
- Must improve their bad image, increase transparency
- Refer to European practice and international conventions
- More youth exchanges necessary!

How can we influence government?

- Refer to international agreements and conventions
- Share experiences – it is possible to make change!
- Not always lack of interest but lack of knowledge

5. DEVELOPING YOUTH POLICY IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE CAUCASUS: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND HOW CAN THEY BE OVERCOME?

Finn Yrjar DENSTAD, a Norwegian freelance consultant on European youth policy with experience from youth policy development in Southeast Europe as well as Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, was invited to give a plenary input on current challenges in developing youth policy in the EECA region and how these challenges can be overcome¹.

A youth policy should be a concrete and transparent strategy with is evidence-based and with a clear goal, clear objectives, measures and indicators. It should be cross-sectorial, addressing all spheres of policy relating to young people, as well as inter-ministerial, defining the roles of different governmental bodies. Furthermore, it should be developed in consultation with youth organisations and young people and be in line with European and international practices and documents. Finally, it should include a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation

Next, several universal challenges in the development of youth policy, which can be identified more or less in any European country, were defined. These include first of all a “wish to include everything”, and second; a risk that the process becomes too result-oriented (and does not give enough attention to the process itself as being part of the goal). A third challenge is that government often have a lack of experience in using participatory models and how to involve young people. Finally, a more universal challenge to youth policy development is to make the plan concrete, realistic and implementable.

Some challenges that are more specific to the region of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus were also suggested:

- Lack of government ownership to policy processes;
- Rivalry between government ministries and limited inter-ministerial cooperation;
- NGOs and NYCs exist, but often limited influence because of a lack of recognition;
- Lack of tradition for involving stakeholders in decision-making;
- Limited development of civil society and a culture of critical thinking;
- Lack of tradition for addressing youth as a cross-sectorial strategy area;
- Formalistic approach (without youth legislation we cannot have youth policy);
- Lack of understanding of “policy” as a concept (policy = politics??);
- Lack of trust in politicians because politicians do not feel accountable;
- Lack of trust in government because of lack of transparency; and
- Difficult to involve marginalised groups and national minorities.

¹ The Powerpoint presentation is attached as an appendix to this report.

Finally, possible ways in which to overcome challenges to youth policy development in the region were discussed. A central point in this regard is the need to develop a knowledge base and conduct youth research. Also, gather examples of best practice from other countries and acquire a thorough knowledge of strategy development. It is important to maintain transparency and openness throughout the youth policy development process, and to involve other ministries, young people and other relevant stakeholder groups at all stages. Remember to develop a concrete and implementable plan, which may be less than optimal, but which includes thoroughly developed baseline indicators. Also remember that a national youth policy strategy should identify and refer to European and international documents and practice, and not the least: It is essential to realise that the *process* of developing a national youth strategy or an action plan is oftentimes as important as the final product itself.



6. GROUP WORK 2: REGIONAL CHALLENGES TO YOUTH POLICY AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

Following DENSTADs presentation, participants were split into four working groups and asked to elaborate on what they see as the challenges to youth policy development that are primarily of a regional character in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, and how they can be overcome.

Principal challenges to the development of youth policy in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus:

- Insufficient research on young people
- Lack of co-management bodies and structures with youth participation;
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms because of a lack of transparency;
- No clear concept of what a youth policy is or what it should be, and a lack of tradition for addressing youth as cross-sectorial area;
- Lack of transparency in government processes in general;
- It is difficult inside the government to prioritise funding for youth policy development
- There is a general lack of support to non-governmental associations;
- Lack of participation of society in decision-making processes. People feel excluded, and people are not aware that they should play a role in youth policy development. People are to some extent apathetic and want others to decide for them;
- There is a lack of trust in the NGO sector because of lack of knowledge and because a few NGOs have created a bad image of all organisations;
- Lack of trust in politicians and government and the political system in general;
- Lack of capacity-building

The challenges to youth policy development mentioned above can (at least partly) be overcome or reduced by taking the following measures:

- Exchange experiences in the youth policy field;
- Raise the awareness of the importance of focusing on youth policy and on the role of non-governmental youth organisations;
- Keep a clear vision of a common goal;
- Conduct more research on young people;
- Cross-national development, need for regional cooperation;
- Develop regional monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that are open and transparent;
- Develop national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that are open and transparent

7. INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION AND GROUP DISCUSSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Following group presentations and a discussion which focused on challenges and barriers to youth policy development in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, but which also elaborated on possible solutions, Marta MEDLINSKA guided the participants through an exercise which focused on agreeing on possible next steps and identifying finding solutions.

Participants were asked what they see as important next steps in different areas, such as youth policy, youth research, dialogue among stakeholders, exchange of information and experience and practice (how, when, with whom) and visa issues and youth mobility.

Time was given for individual reflection, with participants writing down their suggestions on pieces of paper which were then posted on the wall and clustered into different main areas. After some discussion in the plenary, it was decided to group the input into three main clusters which would then be subject for working groups. A fourth cluster, relating to the European dimension of youth policy, was also identified, but it fitted equally under all three other themes and was therefore left as a cross-thematic dimension:

Youth research

- How to reach success and gain recognition?
- How to achieve regional cooperation?
- In cooperation with whom?
- Cross-sectorial research is important

Youth policy

- How to ensure exchange of information, experience and best practices?
- What is comprehensive and effective youth policy?
- Monitoring and evaluation at a regional level
- What is good National Youth Policy evaluation methodology
- Exchange of good practices of youth legislation
- Improvement of legislation necessary
- Mobility issues must be addressed

Dialogue between stakeholders

- How to ensure dialogue within the magic triangle
- Dialogue among stakeholders
- Improve dialogue between government agencies
- Youth policy advocacy among NGOs
- How to use the media to promote development

European perspectives

- What are the European perspectives?
- What is the added European value in youth policy development?

8. GROUP WORK 3: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Participants went to one of three working groups of their own choice. Based on input received from participants through individual reflection and plenary discussion, the following three working groups were identified: Youth research, youth policy and dialogue between stakeholders. To the extent that the working groups had time, they should also address the issue of the European dimension of youth policy as defined above.

The task for the working groups was to think of how concrete and positive change can be made and what kind of action can be taken.

Working group on dialogue between stakeholders

The working group identified four categories of stakeholders:

- Non-governmental youth organisations that are members of a national youth council
- Non-governmental youth organisations that are *not* members of a national youth council
- Youth researchers
- Government

It should be a priority task to identify youth researchers in the EECA countries and develop a network of or a pool of researchers.

The working group further identified that there is a concrete need to establish dialogue between the above-mentioned stakeholder groups in the EECA countries. Such a dialogue, or a platform, should have the following aims and tasks:

- Share good practices
- Organise joint researches
- Identify common problems and address them together with European structures
- Share results of such research
- Mapping of challenges and opportunities to donors
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Identify opportunities to make positive change in the countries

It was stressed that the European Youth Forum has good lobbying possibilities and networks in the different EECS and the European institutions, these should be used to promote such a dialogue.

Ensuring transparency was also seen as a priority, and this should be achieved through the sharing of examples of best practice

Working group on youth research

It was stressed that the EECA countries are all post-Soviet societies, which share some similarities although there are differences.

All countries have a rather formalistic approach to policy development. This means that youth legislation is a necessary prerequisite for youth policy. The group emphasised however that it is not sufficient to have a developed youth law if there is no clear policy guidelines for how it should be implemented in practice.

A community/network of youth researchers should be promoted in the different EECA countries and at the regional level. Maybe it exists, but it is not known. Related to this was an idea to develop a regional research centre for youth policy development.

Governments in the EECA region should take the initiative to establish joint contact with researchers and youth NGO representatives. This will facilitate youth research, and help spark the interest of the research community to use the valuable potential for quantitative and qualitative research data that the non-governmental youth sector inhibits.

Exchange of experiences and examples of best practice are essential. While this should be promoted within the EECA region, it should also be promoted between the regions of Southeast Europe and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The Youth Partnership should organise a joint symposium to promote the exchange of best practices, recognising that these two regions share some of the similar challenges and opportunities.

The Baltic states have developed a good network of sharing of experiences with regard to the situation of young people in their countries, we should have a lot to learn from them.

Working group on youth policy

The working group focused its discussion on the concept of youth policy. What is youth policy, and when does youth policy exist?

The group discussed two different positions:

- Youth policy is a government strategy, it needs to be approved and ratified by the government
- Youth policy reflects a type of action. Does not need to be a government policy, NGOs can also have a youth policy.

These two different positions, which are both applied in the field and legitimate in their own right, highlight the need to develop a common position and universal understanding of what youth policy actually is.

Several different "buzz-words" in the youth policy terminology, and their meaning(s), such as "advocacy" and "lobbying", were also discussed.

The second part of the working group discussion focused on what youth policy should consist of. It was agreed that focus should be on youth, it has to be inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial. Ideally, the government body responsible for youth policy should be placed directly under the prime minister, in order to ensure a true cross-sectorial dimension and inter-ministerial cooperation.

9. CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP

The final session of the workshop was spent concretising proposals for further action and follow-up. Participants were asked to develop their concrete proposals on paper, which were then presented in the plenary.

1. Proposal to develop a network of researchers on youth in Russia and neighbouring countries
2. Proposal to organise a cross-regional SEE EECA youth policy conference on AIDS and drug addiction
3. Proposal to map the existence of co-management mechanisms in EECA region
4. Proposal for identifying National Research Correspondents for the Youth Partnership from Armenia
5. Proposal to map the legal and institutional basis of youth policy in the EECA region
6. Proposal to develop a youth research centre in Georgia
7. Proposal to organise a joint SEE – EECA symposium aimed at promoting youth policy through cross-regional partnerships

The proposals for further action are attached to this report.



10. CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP

Hanjo SCHILD thanked participants for their commitment and active participation at the workshop on youth policy development in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus on behalf of the Youth Partnership. SCHILD focused on the networking potential of participants following the event as well as on concrete proposals for follow-up. After a quite long time of preparation he saw some progress made now in the cooperation of the countries in the region.

SCHILD concluded that some of the results of the seminar were already known before:

- the need for a stronger involvement of the region in European level political processes and operational programmes (eg the YOUTH IN ACTION programme)
- the need for an enhanced dialogue between youth policy makers, youth researchers, youth workers, representatives of youth NGO's and young people themselves
- the need for more exchange of information and good practices in the region and beyond the region with other European countries
- in more general terms the need for a further development of civil society structures, in particular improving and building capacities of youth organisations.

Looking at concrete actions it got obvious to involve more stakeholders in the future cooperation process. Particularly youth policy makers should take a stronger lead and initiative in organising an enhanced dialogue in the region to improve conditions for policy making and of youth work practice. Also, knowledge and understanding of youth must be improved, both, scientific and experimental knowledge is needed and must be collected and provided. Networks of researchers and others are crucial. The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy could be a place where regional knowledge is gathered and presented. SCHILD presented the www.youth-partnership.net site, and invited participants to register as youth policy experts in the expert database.

Andriy PAVLOVYCH closed the event on behalf of the SALTO Resource Centre for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, stressing the continued involvement of the European Commission and SALTO EECA in promoting youth policy development in the region.

APPENDICES

Proposals for further action

1. Proposal to develop a network of researchers on youth in Russia and neighbouring countries
2. Proposal to organise a cross-regional SEE EECA youth policy conference on AIDS and drug addiction
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Powerpoint presentation

8. *"Developing youth policy in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus"* by Finn Yrjar Denstad

1. Proposal to develop a network of researchers on youth in Russia and neighbouring countries

This proposed action is developed by: Olga Perfilieva, Russia

Action (what?) :

Create a network of researchers on youth in Russia and the partner neighbouring countries

Description (why, how?)

The creation of a networking is a crucial for the youth research development and timely addressing the needs and queries of young people in Russia and beyond by means of effective and evidence-based youth policy.

The network will be built on the basis of strong cooperation and common development among national researchers and experts.

Next concrete steps (what, when?)

A meeting of experts and researchers in the youth field will be organised in the framework of a long-term project development, in Moscow according to the project working group's schedule.

Who should be involved?

National experts and researches focusing on a youth problems primarily

Whom else to involve?

National authorities responsible for youth policy development, national youth organizations, different international organizations representatives

2. Proposal to organise a cross-regional SEE EECA youth policy conference on AIDS and drug addiction

This proposed action is developed by: Ramil Khalilov, Azerbaijan

Action (what?) :

Organise a cross-regional SEE – EECA youth policy conference on AIDS and drug addiction

Description (why, how?)

Possible themes: exchange ideas, information, analyse and evaluate the situation in both regions, try to find best or better way how we can overcome these problems. Try to propose educational strategy programmes and also strategy programme fighting AIDS and drug addiction.

To be organised by the EU / CoE Youth Partnership in cooperation with Salto SEE and Salto EECA

Next concrete steps

It is important to develop closer dialogue among the NGO and government organisations, also organise possible monthly meeting before the Conference between NGO and government organisations for preparing the programme etc.

Who should be involved?

NGO / NYC representative and also government representative from each of the countries in SEE and EECA

Whom else to involve?

Also CoE and EU , European Youth Forum, experts from the other countries (United Kingdom, Germany, France), UNESCO

3. Proposal to map the existence of co-management mechanisms in EECA region

This proposed action is developed by: Areg Tadevosyan, Armenia

Action (what?) ”

Mapping of co-management mechanisms in EECA countries”

Description (why, how?)

The idea is to find out what are the current co-management structures mechanisms in EECA countries providing the participation of young people and civil society in decision making on youth affairs.

Next concrete steps (what, when?)

To communicate with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and propose them the action.

To prepare a questionnaire composed of a couple of questions (not too heavy) to be sent to National bodies in EECA countries (governmental and non-governmental)

To send the questionnaire (either through ministry and National Youth Council or, as suggested during the workshop, through the Youth Partnership)

To summarise the results of the survey and communicate the results to the colleagues from the EECA Workshop and to the organisers (SALTO EECA and the Youth Partnership)

Who should be involved?

Areg Tadevosyan

Whom else to involve?

The Youth Partnership

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs Armenia

National Youth Council of Armenia

The NYCs of Georgia, Moldova and Russia have also said that they will take part

4. Proposal for identifying National Research Correspondents for the Youth Partnership from Armenia

This proposed action is developed by: Areg Tadevosyan, Armenia

Action (what?)

”Identifying National Research Correspondents for the Youth Partnership from Armenia”

Description (why, how?)

The idea is upon return to Armenia to clarify with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs the situation with youth reserach correspondents and to arrange the nomination of one or two persons.

Next concrete steps (what, when?)

To communicate with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and propose them to identify and to nominate youth research correspondents from Armenia to Partnership. This can be people from the National Youth report team or other youth reserachers.

To communicate to the colleagues and organisers (the Youth Partnership and SALTO EECA) that the correspondents are nominated for further reference on youth research and information issues.

Who should be involved?

Areg Tadevosyan

Whom else to involve?

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs Armenia

5. Proposal to map the legal and institutional basis of youth policy in the EECA region

This proposed action is developed by: Yaryna Borenko, Ukraine

Action (what?)

Map the legal and institutional basis of youth policy issues in the EECA region

Description (why, how?)

Why: To get a more complete picture of the institutional approach to youth in the 7 relevant EECA countries. This would be useful in order to define the actual situation and to create common basis for discussing youth policy issues in region.

Description (why, how?)

- to compare national youth legislation and institutions, and concrete work on youth issues (content analysis of documents / statistic / institutional system);
- to analyse development of youth policy in post-soviet period (the genesis of legislation and institutional system)

Next concrete steps (what, when?)

- to find partners in every country
- to collect relevant documents
- to define what is possible to compare
- to compare and design a report
- to organise focus groups
- to design final report, which includes the outputs from focus-groups
- to present the publication (policy-paper)

Time

1-year project

Who should be involved?

National experts and students in social / political science

Whom else to involve?

Governmental institutions and NGOs

6. Proposal to develop a youth research centre in Georgia

This proposed action is developed by: Vakhtang Asanidze, National Council of youth organizations of Georgia

Action (what?)

To create a “Youth Research Centre” in order to conduct research and analysis of needs of young people in Georgia. On the basis of research, a Georgian state youth policy action plan will be developed.

Description (why, how?)

The group of initiators interested in development of Georgian state youth policy action plan, is going to found the centre of youth research.

In Georgia a lot of steps have to be taken in order to develop modern national state youth policy, which should be one of the main priorities for any national government. In order to fulfil this aim, needs and interests of young people should be researched and analysed.

We will bring expertise and an experienced researcher in fields which are directly or indirectly connected with youth (education, employment, healthcare, social protection, youth NGOs, demography, sport, culture etc...) in to the process. The expertise will develop a strategy for what kind of methodology is needed to conduct research in different fields.

We are going to work on fundraising and press and communication for financial support of the centre (administrative and office supplies)

Next concrete steps

Official Registration of the youth research centre will take place in autumn. We will then start working for fundraising and collection of best practises from different countries.

Who should be involved? We would like to bring in expertise and an experienced researcher in the fields which are directly or indirectly connected with youth. Researchers and expertise will be invited from different universities, international institutions, research organisations and youth NGO representatives.

7. Proposal to organise a joint SEE–EECA symposium aimed at promoting youth policy through cross-regional partnerships

This proposed action is developed by Finn Yrjar Denstad (freelance consultant, Norway)

Action (what?)

Symposium: "Promoting youth policy development through cross-regional partnerships: SEE and EECA", EYC Budapest 2009 or 2010. To be organised by the EU / CoE Youth Partnership in cooperation with SALTO SEE (Ljubljana) and SALTO EECA (Warsaw).

Co-financing

UNICEF is actively involved in both SEE and EECA, and possibilities of bringing this agency on board as a co-sponsor, through its Europe/Asia Headquarters in Geneva, should be explored.

Description (why, how?)

The regions of SEE and EECA have much to gain from learning from each other's experiences in terms of youth policy development.

Such a symposium will be a natural continuation of the Partnership efforts to promote youth policy development in the regions of SEE and EECA, and will be a *groundbreaking event* in promoting closer cooperation between these two regions.

Possible themes:

- *Exchange of experience in strategy development.* Almost all SEE countries have national youth action plans, although some are very weak. Few EECA countries have such strategies.
- *Support to the development of the youth NGO sector.* All EECA countries have national youth councils (NYCs), while only one (in Croatia) exist in the SEE. The youth NGO sector remains rather weak in both regions.
- *Why and how to involve young people in youth policy.* Exchange of ideas and best practices for involving young people in policy development as well as policy implementation.

The programme of the activity should highlight each theme one full day, making it a 3-day event.

The symposium should be organised at EYCB, for practical but also also for symbolic reasons (crossing point between the regions).

To be included in the Partnership Programme for autumn 2009 or 2010.

Next concrete steps (what, when?):

Before hosting such an event, it is seen as necessary to organise a EU/CoE Partnership event for the EECA region in early 2009 where all categories of the "magic triangle" are equally represented, since there is a need to develop closer dialogue and synergies among the actors *within* the EECA region before promoting inter-regional cooperation.

Co-funding for an inter-regional symposium should be sought from one or several governments from inside or outside the region.

A planning meeting to further develop the concept of such a symposium should be organised as soon as the Partnership and the two SALTO centres agree to be organisers of the proposed event.

Primary target participants

The symposium should bring together one researcher, one youth NGO/NGO representative and one government representative from each of the following countries:

- SEE: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia
- EECA: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine

This is a total of 14 countries bringing the number of participants to 42.

Whom else to involve :

Apart from the organising team, the activity should include representatives from the Council of Europe and the European Commission in addition to the European Youth Forum.

European countries, organisations or actors from outside the SEE and EECA which have a strong presence in the youth field in either (or both) of the regions or which can play a particular positive role in youth policy development should also be invited to take part.

The total number of participants must not exceed 55-60 in order to maintain an informal atmosphere.