Youth Policy Manual

How to develop a national youth strategy

Finn Yrjar Denstad

Council of Europe Publishing

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the European Commission or the Council of Europe, their member states or the organisations co-operating with the institutions.

To receive further information about the Partnership's projects, please check our web-site (www.youth-partnership.net) or contact us by e-mail at youth-partnership@coe.int.

Cover design: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe
Layout: Jouve, Paris

Council of Europe Publishing
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
http://book.coe.int

ISBN 978-92-871-6576-3

Printed at the Council of Europe

Contents

Abbreviations

The following is a list of abbreviations and acronyms that are common in the European youth policy discourse or may appear in this manual.

CDEJ	The European Steering Committee for Youth in the Directorate for Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe.
Council of Europe – the Organisation	Council of Europe, a pan-European intergovernmental organisation, established in 1949, with 47 member states (as of 30 April 2009).
The Congress	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, one of the principal bodies of the Council of Europe.
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Culture and Youth, led by a Commissioner of the European Commission, responsible for issues relating to youth policy and the European Commission's programme for young people, called the Youth in Action Programme.
EC	The European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union consisting of the College of Commissioners (a total of 27 commissioners, of which one is president) as well as a number of Directorates-General (DGs), which can be compared to ministries in a national government.
EU	The European Union, a supranational European intergovernmental organisation with 27 member states.
EYF	European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe.
IMWG	Inter-ministerial working group, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy proposed in this manual.
LCP	Local consultation partner, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy proposed in this manual.
MDGs	The Millennium Development Goals are eight goals that the member states of the United Nations at the Millennium Summit in 2000 agreed to achieve by 2015.
NC	National co-ordinator of the process to develop a national youth strategy.

NGO	Non-governmental organisation.
NGYO	Non-governmental youth organisation.
NYS	National youth strategy.
OMC	The Open Method of Co-ordination. This is a mechanism within the European Union for harmonising policy in areas where the member states set their own national policies, rather than having an EU-wide policy laid down in law. Among these are youth policy.
SC	Steering committee – a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy proposed in this manual.
SALTO RC	SALTO Resource Centre. Eight RCs have been established by the European Commission to focus on training within the Commission's youth programme (currently the Youth in Action Programme for the period 2007-2013). The RCs exist in the following areas: cultural diversity, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, European–Mediterranean co-operation, inclusion, South-Eastern Europe, training and co-operation, participation and information.
TWG	Thematic working group, a part of the structure to develop a national youth strategy proposed in this manual.
UN	The United Nations.
UN CRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was set up in 1989, and currently has 193 signatory states.
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond – an international strategy on youth adopted in 1995 by the United Nations, in which UN member states committed themselves to follow up on 10 identified areas for priority action. In 2005, the number of priority areas was extended to 15.
YFJ	The European Youth Forum – the pan-European umbrella organisation consisting of more than 95 member organisations, national youth organisations and international non-governmental youth organisations, based in Brussels. YFJ is a main partner of the European and international institutions on issues relating to youth policy.

Foreword

Young people today, in the spring of 2009, live in a very different world from young people a generation ago. In 1988, Europe was still divided between the East and the West, the European Community was a "rich men's club" of 12 member states focusing on economic development, and travelling abroad was considered a luxury for most. Today's dominating communications technologies, Internet and the small hand-held mobile phone, were unimaginable for most of us.

Much can be said about the incredible changes that have taken place in the last twenty years, but this is a task that I will leave to others. What I do find relevant for this *Youth Policy Manual*, however, is the development of a youth policy across Europe, developing in parallel with the ever-increasing political and economic integration of Europe. From Baku to Barcelona and from Madrid to Moscow, we can find examples of joint efforts to improve the lives of young people and involve them at all levels of decision making on issues that have an impact on them. Across the continent, governments are developing and revising national youth strategies and action plans on youth policy at an unprecedented pace.

It is clear that we have much to learn from each other's experiences, although policies must, of course, be adapted to a local context. Still, amid the significant and growing literature on the subject of youth policy in Europe, there are few publications that are easily available which provide concrete advice and practical examples on how to develop a national youth strategy.

The *Youth Policy Manual* aims at providing concrete and useful information on how to develop a national youth strategy. It presents examples of how young people can be involved both in the development and the implementation of the strategy, and provides an overview of how European institutions, as well as the United Nations, work in the youth policy field, and whether it is relevant to speak of a European standard of youth policy. The manual also suggests a model for how a national youth strategy can be developed from start to finish. However, it must be emphasised that it is just that: a suggestion. There is no unique formula for how to develop a youth policy. But there are a number of principles that should be followed, which are elaborated here.

The inspiration to write this manual comes particularly from my involvement as a freelance consultant and trainer in promoting the development of national youth strategies or action plans in Moldova (2003) and Armenia (2004), as well as following the strategy processes in Montenegro (2004-06) and Serbia (2008) as a monitoring expert and evaluator.

In 2008, I become involved with the efforts of the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in promoting the development of youth policy in South-East Europe (SEE) and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

(EECA). Through attending three seminars on youth policy development with representatives of governments, non-governmental youth organisations and researchers in the youth field, I gained further insights into the needs and challenges of youth policy development in parts of Europe that have a shorter tradition of applying an integral and cross-sectoral approach to youth policy, with the active involvement of young people. I am indebted to Hans-Joachim Schild and Marta Mędlińska in the Youth Partnership secretariat, for giving me the opportunity to become involved in these activities and for enabling me to publish the *Youth Policy Manual* within the Youth Partnership agenda for youth policy development.

I am greatly indebted to a few friends and colleagues who have provided valuable comments and suggestions to previous drafts of this paper. They include James Doorley, Danijela Jović, Marta Mędlińska, Hans-Joachim Schild, Aleksandra Vidanović and Howard Williamson. Their advice has always been relevant and to the point and has increased the quality of the final product. However, I take full responsibility for any mishaps and/or mistakes that may have found their way into the text. A special thumbs up goes to all the great people at the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Serbia, whose dedication and skills led to the successful development of an impressive national youth strategy in the country. The model of a project design presented in the *Youth Policy Manual* draws to a large extent on this process.

Finally, I would like to pay homage to a person who served as a professional mentor and personal friend in the European youth sector. Without him, I would not be where I am today. Peter Lauritzen, Head of the Youth Department and Deputy Director at the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, dedicated his whole professional life to European youth policy. The *Youth Policy Manual* is dedicated to his memory.

Introduction

The concept of national youth policy has become well established in Europe. The European institutions of the Council of Europe and the European Union have become strong advocates for the development of national policies that aim at improving the situation of young people. They are pursuing different mechanisms for encouraging their member states to undertake measures to develop cross-sectoral holistic policies that perceive young people as a resource and which actively involve young people and non-governmental youth organisations in decision making on issues that affect them.

During the last ten years, events have taken place which have accelerated the development of national youth policy in Europe and lifted it to a whole new level. First, the Council of Europe, through the first international expert review of the national youth policy in Finland in 1997, established a mechanism for assessing national youth policy in Europe, which rapidly became popular with member states keen for guidance on further developing their youth strategies. By early spring of 2009, international

expert reviews of 16 member states were completed,[1] and more countries had filed a request for an assessment.

Second, as part of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, established in 1999, a Working Group on Young People created a new dynamic in the youth policy field by actively promoting the development of national action plans on youth policy in the Balkan region. This had a positive impact on the development of national youth strategies in South-Eastern Europe, with Romania being the first country to launch its National Youth Action Plan in 2001.

Third, after a comprehensive consultation process with young people throughout Europe, the European Commission tabled its White Paper on Youth entitled "A new impetus for European youth" in November 2001. This brought the issue of youth policy to centre stage of the European Union at a time when 10 candidate countries were very receptive to guidance and direction from the European Commission and eager to develop their policies in line with EU policy.

National youth policies throughout Europe are different. They have to be, since they respond to different challenges, cultural specificity and are developed and implemented in countries with vastly different resources at their disposal. But is it nevertheless possible to speak of a "European standard" of youth policy? And is it meaningful to present a common model for how a national youth strategy can be developed in Europe today? This manual suggests that it is possible to respond affirmatively to both of these questions. It discusses the concept of youth policy and youth participation, it explores the policies of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations system in this field, and suggests a number of elements that must be considered in the process of developing a national youth strategy document. Finally, it proposes a concrete example of how a national youth strategy process can be implemented.

The *Youth Policy Manual* targets both young activists in non-governmental youth organisations who want "ammunition" and inspiration to lobby their governments to improve their youth policy, as well as politicians and government officials who are looking for new ideas and examples of how a national youth policy can be developed. The manual primarily targets countries in South-East Europe and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, which have a limited tradition of applying a resource-oriented and cross-sectoral perspective of youth policy. However, its content can also be of interest to practitioners of youth policy in the rest of Europe and beyond.

According to the World Bank's *World Development Report 2007*, there are three main reasons why it is so difficult to develop successful policies directed at young people.[2] First, a successful youth policy requires working across many sectors to develop one coherent, holistic and intersectoral strategy, with clear priorities and measures for concrete action. However, youth policy today too often stands alone and is not integrated into the overall national development policy. Second, youth policy fails because young people have not had a voice in the design and implementation of the policies that affect them. And finally, achieving success in youth policy is challenged by the fact that there are few success stories and examples of best practice.

1 International youth policy reviews have been completed in the following countries: Armenia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

2 World Bank (2007), pp. 211-212.

The focus of the *Youth Policy Manual* is how to develop a national youth strategy, while taking into account these challenges. It emphasises the need for intergovernmental co-operation and for maintaining a cross-sectoral approach. Furthermore, the active participation of young people and in particular non-governmental youth organisations is at the core of the model for strategy development which is presented here. It also draws from previous experience in developing national youth strategies in some European countries, which may be applicable and useful to the reader. While the focus of the manual is on developing national policy, it may indeed also be a tool to inspire youth policy development at the local and regional levels as well.

As a last note, it should be mentioned that the focus of this publication is on the development of a national youth strategy – the articulation of the plan. Chapter 5 includes some reflection on the implementation of policy, but the focus still remains on the methods, tools and references for developing a youth strategy at the national level – with the active involvement of young people.

What is a national youth policy?

A national youth policy is a government's commitment and practice towards ensuring good living conditions and opportunities for the young population of a country. It can be more or less targeted, weaker or stronger, narrow or wide-ranging. A youth policy is not necessarily articulated in a specific strategy document (although this is certainly preferable!), but can be a set of established policy practices or rooted in a number of different documents, which together determine how a government deals with issues that address young people. It is not a prerequisite of a youth policy (or any other policy, for that matter) to be based on legislation; this will depend a lot on the national context. For a youth policy to be strong and effective, however, it should comply with a number of factors, which will be addressed in this chapter.

There are different ways to categorise what youth policy actually is. This is because youth policy is more than just a list of issues that should be included. It is also about methodology, target groups, stakeholders, budgets and so on. Howard Williamson, who has been central in the international youth policy review process of the Council of

Europe, has argued that there are five components to youth policy, which can be labelled "the five Cs":

- Coverage (geographical area and social groups that are covered, plus policy domains);
- Capacity (the role and relationship of government and youth NGOs);
- Competence (the question of training and qualifications);
- Co-operation, co-ordination and coherence (hierarchically and horizontally);
- Cost (the financial and human resources required).

In this chapter, I will outline what I perceive to be among the necessary requirements of an effective, modern and European-oriented national youth policy, without going down to the level of discussing the specific policy areas to be included. Many of the points elaborated on below will be further developed in the following chapters.

➔ 2.1. A clearly defined government authority on youth

A governmental authority must be assigned the responsibility for being the co-ordinating body for youth-related issues and for co-ordinating the development of a national youth policy. This is typically a ministry. In cases where this governmental body is not a ministry, it is of great importance that it has strong direct links with a ministry, in particular for ensuring an inter-ministerial co-operation (see below).

Examples do exist where a country has developed a national youth strategy in which there was no responsible government authority assigned the responsibility to co-ordinate its implementation. In these cases, a lot of resources and time went into developing a strategy which involved a comprehensive consultation with young people and civil society, but with a minimum of government ownership. The end result was that the strategy was never implemented. Instead, the process of developing the draft strategy became more of a training- and capacity-building exercise for the persons and organisations involved, but it did not do much to improve the situation for young people in the country.

➔ 2.2. A clearly defined target group

When is a person considered "young"? The concept of youth is socially constructed rather than biologically determined, meaning that it differs with time, socio-economic development of a society, and even according to whom you ask. Who the target group of a national youth policy should be, differs therefore in individual European countries and depends on the national context. There is no universally correct answer as to which age category defines "young people" in Europe. Some national youth policies have strict lower and upper age limits, while others have rather blurred boundaries between children and youth, operating instead with a "children and youth policy".[3] Many countries in Europe, however, have youth policies which define their target group as young people between 15 and 25, which is the definition of the European Commission White Paper on Youth. What is important, however, is that the policy operates with clearly defined lower and

3 Williamson, Howard (2002), pp. 31-32, refers to the team of experts that conducted the international youth policy review in the Netherlands, which argued that operating with a wider "children and youth policy" can have both positive and negative consequences. On a positive front, it ensures "seamless" transitions between policies for children and those for young people. On a negative front, however, the expert team asserted that there was an inevitable drift towards a policy focus on children, at the expense of young people.

upper age limits, even if this may mean different age limits for different targeted policy measures.

The concept of when a person is "young" and thus a target of a "youth policy" is indeed subjective. A society changes rapidly and continuously in a global world. So too do the social conditions for young people, as well as young people's (and the general population's) expectations of the role of government. Let us just take one example of how this plays into the area of youth policy – access to housing – and how this plays out in some parts of the European continent. With the difficult socio-economic conditions in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, and the high levels of youth unemployment these regions are experiencing, many young people finish their education only to land a poorly paid job or enter the unemployment statistics charts. Unable to support themselves or move into the housing market, they continue to live at home and depend on financial and other support from their families. People become financially self-sufficient and establish their own families at an older age than used to be the case less than a generation ago, pushing the upper age limit of what can be considered to be young. The issue of creating favourable conditions for affordable housing for the young generation has, therefore, become an important youth policy challenge for many countries throughout Europe.

A youth policy should target all young people. In line with the argument that will be developed later in this chapter, the government should see young people as a resource and thus the focus of youth policy should be to facilitate young people's opportunities to realise their full potential as citizens. A government has a special responsibility to ensure that more vulnerable young people or young people with special needs enjoy the rights and opportunities they are entitled to. This includes, for instance, groups of young people that suffer poverty, are disabled, have become involved in criminal environments or have developed problems related to heavy alcohol consumption or drug abuse. These young people are in need of closer follow-up and guidance and should therefore be especially targeted in a national youth strategy.

→ 2.3. A concrete and transparent strategy

A high-quality national youth policy is not about which country allocates the highest budgets for youth organisations or young people. Rather, the best policy is the one articulated in a clear strategy which, in the best way possible, analyses and addresses the real needs of its youth population, manages to develop concrete goals and objectives and applies measures which, to the best extent possible, achieve the goals that have been set.

While the strategy should include long-term goals, objectives and measures, as well as analyses which justify why these goals have been identified, a separate action plan should outline the short- and medium-term objectives (for example, up to four years), measures, indicators or benchmarks and proposed actions. It should also, of course, include a budget put forward for approval by the government or parliament.

Including clear goals, objectives and measures which are closely linked to high-quality indicators or benchmarks is absolutely essential to a good strategy. Breaking down overall goals into objectives, measures and indicators and, finally, activities, is a process that requires training and special expertise. In many cases it will therefore be necessary to bring in external specialists in strategy-development methodology.

One such methodology, which is being much used internationally as a tool for strategy development, monitoring and evaluation, is the logical framework approach (LFA).[4] Specialists in the use of strategy-development methodologies can often be found within international organisations, since applying for larger project grants from, for example, the European Commission, or the organisations of the United Nations, typically requires such skills.

Developing a concrete strategy with all its different elements is also important in order to design an effective framework for monitoring and evaluation. A plan for monitoring and evaluating the youth policy should be integrated into the plan itself, or at least made public.

The youth policy must be transparent. This means a number of things. It should be clearly stated which government authority – as well as minister, or high-ranking government official – has the overall co-ordinating responsibility for its implementation. It should also be clear which ministries are responsible for the different areas that are addressed in the policy. It also means that the relationship between goals and objectives on one side, and concrete activities on the other, is clear and self-evident. A transparent policy should preferably be laid out in publicly accessible documents. Finally, transparency also means being open about the political challenges a country faces and being willing to address them in a political strategy.

Ensuring that the national youth strategy is concrete and transparent has a lot to do with keeping government decision makers accountable to the young people who are subjects of the strategy, as well as towards the citizenry at large. Maintaining transparency is also a strong confidence-building measure. This will be further discussed later in this manual.

➔ 2.4. A knowledge-based policy

A youth policy must be based not on the perceived needs of young people, but on real-life needs that can be documented through research. A knowledge-based policy comprises two dimensions of knowledge: research/scientific knowledge and practical/experiential knowledge. Both are equally important to the development of policy.

Any government planning to develop a national youth strategy would need to first collect relevant updated research on young people, or initiate such research in cases where the existing material is insufficient.

An evidence-based approach is crucial for the implementation of the strategy. How else could we know with certainty which measures do and do not work, in terms of policy that aims to bring young people into the labour market? Or how to work with young offenders in order to help them become fully appreciated citizens in society? It is not only about which measures to use, but also when to implement them, and how. Applying relevant research will help us figure out the correct answers to these questions.

4 The logical framework approach (LFA) is a way of structuring the main elements in a project, highlighting logical linkages between intended inputs, planned activities and expected results. It is a management tool often used in the design, monitoring and evaluation of projects. LFA was developed for USAID at the end of the 1960s, and has since then become widely utilised by international development agencies as well as national governments and international organisations.

Finally, basing a youth policy on relevant evidence is essential for the monitoring and evaluation process. Without accurate baseline data, which only comprehensive field research can provide, it will not be possible to measure the real impact of the policy.

Maintaining regular contact with relevant research communities and encouraging and supporting research on young people is a responsibility of the government body in charge of youth. Such contacts can be maintained through regular meetings, where ministry staff and officials are briefed on recent developments and ongoing research on young people, and/or through (annual) seminars or conferences bringing together both the research community, government representatives and the non-governmental youth sector.

➔ 2.5. Young people as a resource, not a problem

A youth policy can have different perspectives, some of which mirror how the government perceives the role of young people in society. "Young people are a resource and not a problem" has become a well-known cliché, but perceiving young people as a "resource" or as a "problem" is in fact an important dichotomy in the perception of youth policy.

Traditionally, a problem-oriented perspective has dominated governments' approach to youth policy. Through such a perspective, young people are either vulnerable and in danger and need to be protected through government policies, or they are troublemakers. They are conceived of as either potential victims of their upbringing and conditions, or as victims and potential perpetrators because of their personal traits and character.[5] Consequently, youth policy targets specific segments of the youth population, with very limited or no co-ordination between different sectors.

Taking the perspective of seeing young people as a resource in society – as valuable citizens in their own right and capacity as young people – the natural focus of a youth policy is to ensure the active participation of all young people in society and to explore and find ways that empower them to realise their full potential as citizens. It also supports young people in living life appropriate to their age group and encouraging their independence and critical thinking. Such a policy targets all young people and aims at having an integrated cross-sectoral governmental approach towards them and their needs and challenges. Through this perspective, the role of government is to provide "packages of opportunity" for young people.

The two opposing perceptions are explained here as theoretical models to highlight their differences. What is important to stress, however, is the constant need to move the focus away from a problem-oriented approach towards seeing young people as a resource that can contribute actively to society. Eastern European and South-Eastern European countries have a particular challenge in this regard, as their historical-political heritage is one of strong governmental control of the youth population and a rather problem-oriented approach to youth policy.

➔ 2.6. Promoting youth participation

In line with the argument that a youth policy needs to perceive young people as a resource, it should include provisions for how young people, on a continuous basis, will be involved in both developing the youth policy and implementing it.

5 Walther, Andreas, et al. (2002), pp. 28-29. http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/pdf/YoyoWP1-StateofArt.pdf (accessed in April 2009).

Non-governmental youth organisations should play an important role in any youth participation model or mechanism, and should have strong recognition and support from the government. As civil society organisations they involve a lot of young people. Therefore, they have a democratic right to be heard on issues that are of concern to young people. Most countries in Europe have a national youth council, which is an umbrella organisation for the non-governmental youth organisations in the country. These councils should play a privileged role as a government partner in the development of youth policy. Involving non-governmental youth organisations in youth policy development and implementation has indeed become a strong European standard, and is expected to take place at any level of government.

A youth policy should give clear recognition of the non-governmental youth sector, and include measures that encourage more young people to become involved in non-governmental youth organisations, as a way of fostering citizenship and taking active responsibility for shaping the society.

However, there are also many young people who are not members of youth organisations, and a government youth policy should also give them the opportunity to be consulted on issues that have an impact on them – in particular at important stages of redirecting a country's approach to youth policy, such as when a government is developing a new national youth strategy. In such cases, the government should organise comprehensive open consultations with young people, typically at the local level, throughout the country. Such consultations can be organised with the assistance of local government, through the school system or together with non-governmental youth organisations.

→ 2.7. A cross-sectoral, integrated approach to youth policy

Governments have a wide range of responsibilities that should be addressed in a national youth policy. In every European country, education is considered to be a major policy sector; health and employment are equally strong policy areas for any government. What is particularly significant for youth policy is that it should include a coherent and integrated strategy for how a government will view these different policy sectors in relation to each other. There are many policy areas that are seen as belonging to different sectors, but will nevertheless have a strong impact on each other and should therefore be co-ordinated. For example, the level and quality of education (one sector) has a direct impact on whether or not young people will get a decent job (a different sector) after graduation, and may also affect young people's awareness of health-related issues (a third sector).

There is a range of different areas that are important components of youth policy, which criss-cross traditional policy sectors. The relationship between education, employment and health is just one. Another example is the comprehensive issue of lifelong learning, which comprises formal education, non-formal learning and vocational skills: we do know that involvement in youth organisations or working as a volunteer tutor or youth leader in a youth club provides a young person with valuable life skills that cannot be taught through the formal education system. Yet another example is that young people's opportunities to participate in sports and otherwise have a rich and quality free time – for example, through participating in non-governmental youth organisations – is known to have an impact on the number of young people who turn to illegal drugs or alcohol, or who may even become offenders.

The need to find ways of co-ordinating policies in different sectors leads us to speak of youth policy as a cross-sectoral policy. By an integrated policy, we mean that a government's actions and measures in these different areas must be co-ordinated into one comprehensive strategy addressing youth – although the responsibilities for implementing the different parts of the strategy will remain in the relevant ministries or government bodies.

➔ 2.8. Inter-ministerial co-operation

Youth policy differs from other public policies in the way that it touches upon many policy areas. It is therefore essential to find ways of involving different ministries and government agencies in the youth strategy development process. Ministries to be involved in such an inter-ministerial co-operation will depend on the national context, but will typically include at least the ministries responsible for health, employment, education and culture.

Ensuring a successful inter-ministerial co-operation is difficult and has proved challenging in many countries. It can be hard to develop a strong ownership for the same strategy across several different government institutions, as they will all want to be the lead agency in the process and often have different working cultures, competing interests and so on. However, many European countries have youth policies which include mechanisms for ensuring good inter-ministerial co-operation. This can be a committee of state secretaries, or a working group of senior government officials. Ensuring a well-functioning inter-ministerial co-operation during the national youth strategy development process is as important as during the policy implementation stage.

➔ 2.9. A separate budget

A national youth policy will need to have a separate budget in order to realise the measures and activities it proposes. It may consist of allocations within different governmental bodies and should be well co-ordinated.

If a government acknowledges the contribution of non-governmental youth organisations (youth NGOs) and associative life, funds should also be invested in the development of youth initiatives and a sustainable youth NGO sector. In line with what is already an established practice in many European countries, governments should allocate part of their budget to youth organisations through so-called administrative grants, which enable the organisations to run a secretariat and otherwise carry out tasks that are not specifically project-related (statutory meetings, communication with members, and so on). There should also be a state budget for project grants, for the implementation of activities to be carried out by the youth NGO sector.

➔ 2.10. Established links between local, regional and national levels

A national youth policy should outline steps to be taken and measures to be implemented at the national level. At the same time, however, a national youth policy cannot become a reality without focusing on what needs to be done at the local (and regional) level, and with the active involvement of local government authorities. It should therefore recognise the competencies and responsibilities of local and regional authorities, and propose ways and means of implementing policy in co-operation, co-ordination and partnership with them.

The degree of local self-autonomy for municipalities differs from country to country. In any case, a youth policy should be designed in such a manner that it provides a stimulus, guidance, examples of best practice and financial, as well as other incentives, for local authorities. Government authorities at the local level should get a boost of motivation to address youth issues and develop local youth action plans, as a result of the effort at the national level.

➔ 2.11. In line with European and international practices

The following chapter outlines what can be considered a "European" or "international" standard of youth policy, and refers to European and international documents and practice. Any national youth policy should be developed and implemented in an open and transparent manner, actively involving young people and non-governmental youth organisations in the process, seeking to consider the extent to which their own youth policy development might be aligned to these standards.

Youth policy in Europe

… and is there a "European" or "international" standard of youth policy?

"What is the European standard of youth policy and what do we need to do to reach this level?" This question is often asked by youth policy activists and government officials who want their country to get on the path to membership of the European Union, or who otherwise have an ambition to increase the quality of their national youth policy and would like to see a blueprint for the necessary requirements for living up to a "European" or "international" standard of youth policy.

So, is there a blueprint or a formula, with clear goals and objectives, for what a European or international youth policy is, or should be? Inevitably, there is no short or simple answer to this question. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a national youth policy depends on the context and reality of each and every country. Priorities and challenges will obviously differ in the countries of Albania, Austria and Armenia – three countries which are all member states of the Council of Europe. Having said this, however, the European intergovernmental institutions (the Council of Europe and the European Union) have become strong advocates

of the development of national youth policies in Europe – in particular over the last decade – and a number of decisions have been taken and resolutions and documents adopted, which suggest that it does make sense to talk about a European standard of youth policy. And while these documents, decisions and practices do not lead to a blueprint for a national youth policy, they do suggest certain criteria, indicators and lists of areas to be covered within such a policy.

At the international level, a number of documents relating to youth policy have been developed and/or adopted by organisations within the United Nations system as well, suggesting that there is also an international standard of what should be considered a national youth policy.

Let us take a closer look at the European and international organisations in question, and see how they address youth policy issues through their decisions and practices. By doing so, we can learn a lot about what can be considered "European" and "international" standards of youth policy, and how they can be guiding principles for national youth policy in Europe and beyond.

➔ 3.1. The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe was established in 1949 as an intergovernmental organisation promoting democracy, rule of law and human rights, based in Strasbourg, France. At that time, however, it became entangled in the realities of the Cold War, and up until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Council of Europe only consisted of what were then considered western European countries. This all changed with the fall of communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. During the decade following 1989, the organisation became the first pan-European intergovernmental organisation promoting democracy and human rights. At the time of writing (spring 2009) the Council of Europe has 47 member states.

The organisation was first among the international institutions to develop an agenda focusing on the interests of young people and youth participation. Partly as a response to the social unrest of 1968 across Europe, which engaged young people in particular, and the recognition that addressing young people's interests and concerns had to be done through cross-border co-operation, the Council of Europe established a European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972.[6] In the same year, the European Youth Foundation was also set up, as a means of fostering the voluntary sector in Europe by providing financial support for multinational activities, run by non-governmental national and international youth organisations.

While 1968 can be seen as having triggered the development of a focus on youth participation, two other years hold particular significance for specific areas of the youth and human rights agenda of the Council of Europe. The year 1989, which symbolises the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe, led to an increased focus on intercultural learning, as a common challenge for a united Europe inside the organisation.[7] The terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, on the other hand, led to an increased fear of radical Islam and suspicion towards people

6 A second European Youth Centre was established in Budapest in 1995.

7 The opening of the second European Youth Centre (in Budapest in 1995) signaled a new pan-European focus and membership of the Council of Europe. During that same year, the Organisation carried out the first European "All Different – All Equal" campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

of Arabic descent throughout Europe. The Council of Europe responded to this by increasing its focus on mobility, intergenerational and intercultural co-operation and by focusing on faith within the context of human rights.

The 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, which took place in Kiev in October 2008, adopted a long-term strategy of the Council of Europe in promoting youth policy in Europe. The document, entitled *The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020*, outlines three areas that the organisation will prioritise in the next decade: human rights and democracy, living together in diverse societies and social inclusion of young people.

3.1.1. The decision-making structure of the Council of Europe youth sector

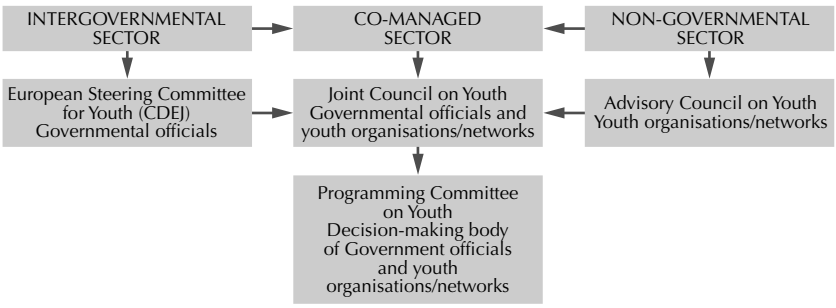
Recognising the importance of involving young people in making decisions on issues that concern them, the Council of Europe has applied a rather unique decision-making structure, labelled "co-management".

On the one side, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) brings together representatives of all signatory countries to the European Cultural Convention (currently 49 states),[8] and is the intergovernmental body consisting of senior governmental representatives. It encourages closer co-operation between governments on youth issues and provides a forum for them to compare national youth policies and learn from each other's experiences. The CDEJ also organises the European Youth Ministers' Conferences. On the opposing side is the Advisory Council on Youth, made up of 30 representatives from non-governmental youth organisations in Europe. The Advisory Council gives its input and opinions on a range of different issues and ensures that young people are involved in all matters relating to the Council of Europe youth sector.

When these two bodies meet together they make up the Joint Council. The Joint Council decides on the work programme and budget of the Council of Europe Youth Sector and the European Youth Foundation. The Joint Council is especially significant because it involves sharing decision-making powers equally between representatives of governments and non-governmental youth organisations. This is what is called co-management.

The Programming Committee on Youth is a subsidiary body of the Joint Council, consisting of eight members each from the CDEJ and the Advisory Council. It establishes, monitors and evaluates the programmes of the European Youth Centres and of the European Youth Foundation.

8 As of April 2009, Belarus has not been admitted into the Council of Europe because of issues related to democracy and human rights. It is still represented within the CDEJ, however, since the country has ratified the European Cultural Convention. Also the Holy See has signed the Convention. Thus, the countries represented within the CDEJ are 49, while there are 47 member states of the Council of Europe.



Source: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/co_management_en.asp

This co-management model carries wider significance because of its strong recognition of the right of young people to take equal part in decision making on issues that affect them. The fact that an international intergovernmental organisation can go so far in formally involving young people in deciding on activities and budgetary issues has made many young activists (and some government officials, too!) question why the same model cannot be applied at a national level. This co-management system, therefore, as well as its potential applicability at the national or local levels, continues to be a model for discussion in Europe.

3.1.2. Youth Ministers' Conferences

For a number of years, the work of the Council of Europe in the youth field focused primarily on giving recognition to the non-governmental youth sector, youth participation and the promotion of civil society through training and education of youth leaders in non-governmental youth organisations throughout Europe. With time, the Council of Europe has also come to focus on strategic policy development with regard to young people. The first Youth Ministers' Conference was held in 1985, and consecutive Youth Ministers' Conferences have been held every two to four years since.[9] These conferences and their final declarations have played a role in identifying youth issues as a policy dimension with transnational and cross-border significance, and have been instructive in developing common principles of youth policy.

9 Youth Ministers' Conferences held under the auspices of the Council of Europe have been held in Strasbourg (1985), Oslo (1988), Lisbon (1990), Vienna (1993), Bucharest (1998), Thessaloniki (2002), Budapest (2005) and Kiev (2008). In addition, an informal meeting of Youth Ministers was held in Luxembourg in 1995.

Excerpts from the Final Declarations of some Council of Europe Youth Ministers' Conferences

From the 5th Youth Ministers' Conference in Bucharest, 1998:

"We call on the Governments of the Council of Europe … to encourage equality of opportunity by recognising training and skills acquired through informal education as an intrinsic element in vocational training and finding various ways of endorsing experience and qualifications acquired in this way…"

From the 6th Youth Ministers' Conference in Thessaloniki, 2002:

"Youth policy should … be anchored in human values of pluralist democracy and human rights, … have a cross-sectoral dimension, … integrate the educational dimension, taking into account young people's commitment through volunteer work, … facilitate active participation of young people in decisions which concern them, … facilitate the access of young people to the labour market, … facilitate the access of young people, notably from disadvantaged groups, to information which concerns them, … promote youth mobility, … and promote non-formal education/learning of young people as well as the development of appropriate forms of recognition of experiences and skills acquired notably within the framework of associations and other forms of voluntary involvement, at local, national and European levels."

From the 7th Youth Ministers' Conference in Budapest 2005:

"We recognise … the need to develop violence prevention strategies based on the specific approaches of youth policy and youth work, in particular [those of] non-formal education/learning; and in this context, the importance of actively promoting education, for citizenship and participation … We furthermore recognise the need to implement policies in the area of violence prevention with the active participation of non-governmental youth organisations and networks, whilst encouraging them to develop partnerships with other civil society actors …"

From the 8th Youth Ministers' Conference in Kiev, 2008:

"We, the Ministers responsible for Youth from the 49 states party to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe … are committed to actively promote … the development of youth policies which are likely to result in the successful integration of all young people into society.

In this regard, we are determined to pursue the objective of ensuring young people's access to quality education and training, to decent work and living conditions, as well as developing the conditions to enable them to contribute to the development of society."

3.1.3. European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress), which is one of the pillars of the Council of Europe, stepped into the youth policy arena in 1992 when it adopted the European Charter on the Participation of

Young People in Local and Regional Life (usually referred to as the European Youth Charter). This document was again adopted by the Congress in a revised version in 2003, but this time it was accompanied by a recommendation from the Committee of Ministers, the highest decision-making body of the Council of Europe. The charter stresses that young people and non-governmental youth organisations have the right to be consulted and take active part in decision making on issues that affect young people at the municipal and regional level. Giving the European Youth Charter the status of a recommendation signals that the Council of Europe considers youth participation in policy development and decision making as a European standard that all member states should adhere to.

Implementing the European Youth Charter in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Around the time when the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life was adopted in 2003 (Council of Europe, 2003a), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina entered into a partnership with the Council of Europe Field Office in Sarajevo to promote the European Youth Charter. Together, they co-financed the translation of the charter into local language and printed more than 10 000 handbooks that were distributed to non-governmental youth organisations and government officials at all levels. They were also distributed to school classes across the country. Around 30 OSCE field offices across Bosnia-Herzegovina organised awareness sessions on the charter with youth NGO representatives, and trained them on how to use the charter as a lobbying tool when addressing local politicians and government officials.

Promoting the European Youth Charter across Bosnia-Herzegovina raised awareness around issues relating to youth participation and young people's rights to be consulted on issues that have an impact on them. It also reminded government officials of their country's responsibilities in becoming a member state of the Council of Europe in 2002. Very concretely, the charter helped youth NGOs at the local level in approaching local government officials, made municipalities allocate small budgets for youth NGO activities, was instrumental in convincing local government to establish youth clubs, and so on.

The European Youth Charter can be a powerful tool in promoting youth participation in policy development in the youth field. It can illustrate to local government officials and politicians that youth participation is indeed a European standard. And since almost all countries in Europe are members of the Organisation that has adopted the charter, they should feel bound to comply with its principles. The Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe has developed a manual on the Youth Charter called *Have Your Say!* which explains in more detail what youth participation is and gives good ideas and examples of how the charter can be used to promote youth participation.[10]

The European Youth Charter, as well as resolutions and follow-up documents related to the charter, can be downloaded from the Internet at the Council of Europe's website and the European Commission Youth Partnership (see address at the end of this chapter).

10 The publication *Have Your Say!* can be ordered from the Council of Europe at http://book.coe.int

3.1.4. National youth policy reviews

In 1997, the Council of Europe developed a mechanism or system for reviewing and evaluating the national youth policies of its member states. The system was established upon a recommendation from the member states themselves, and is initiated following an official request from a particular member state. The international review team of each country being assessed usually consists of recognised youth researchers, an official from the Council of Europe as well as representative(s) of the statutory organs of the Council of Europe youth sector.[11] At the start of 2009, 16 member states of the Council of Europe have been subject to an international youth policy review.[12]

This mechanism has become an important tool for assessing youth policy in Europe, and for giving constructive recommendations on the future direction of youth policy in the specific countries in question. It has also given us a wealth of valuable information about the situation of young people in Europe. A natural question is therefore "what can these national youth policy reviews tell us about what should be considered a 'European standard' of youth policy?". Howard Williamson, in his synthesis report of the first seven Council of Europe international policy reviews, *Supporting young people in Europe* (Williamson, 2002), summarised a number of domains and issues that, in his view, need to be addressed within a youth policy framework:

Key policy domains:

- education (schooling and non-formal learning/youth work);
- post-compulsory education and training;
- employment and the labour market;
- health;
- housing;
- social protection and income support;
- welfare and family;
- criminal justice;
- leisure (including sports and arts);
- national defence and military service;
- values and religion (the church)*.

Key policy issues:

- opportunities for participation and citizenship;
- safety and protection;
- combating social exclusion and promoting inclusion;
- the provision and use of information (including new information technologies);
- mobility and internationalism;
- multiculturalism;
- equalities;
- radicalisation/reaction of segments of the youth population versus conformity*;

11 Williamson, Howard (2002), p. 5.

12 In alphabetical order: Armenia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

- local versus global pressures*;
- centre – periphery*;
- urban – rural polarisation*;
- elites and outsiders*;
- environmental issues*;
- the role of the diaspora*.

*These were added as supplementary bullet points in the second synthesis report of the international youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe. See Williamson, Howard. *Supporting young people in Europe. Volume 2*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2008, pp. 25-37.

In his second synthesis report, analysing the international youth policy reviews carried out until spring 2008, Howard Williamson reflects upon whether or not it is meaningful to speak of a "European" or "international" standard of youth policy and how appropriate it is to assess the youth policies of emergent European and other developing countries towards such standards.[13] He argues that there is not a given set of measures that should be considered to make up a European youth policy, and that there can be no universal benchmarks for thinking about youth policy achievements. He does refer to one model or framework for further deliberation and judgment, however, namely a Council of Europe report on youth policy (2003b) indicators developed by a group of youth policy researchers in 2003. This work has also been highlighted by other experts in the youth policy field since it was published, and merits a closer look.

3.1.5. Suggesting a "European standard" of youth policy within the Council of Europe

From around year 2000, a whole new dynamic had been created in Europe around the theme of youth policy. The United Nations held its first ever Conference of Ministers for Youth in Lisbon in 1998. A specific reference to youth had been made in the Declaration of the European Council in Laeken in 2001,[14] and the European Commission launched its White Paper on Youth in November that same year. The 5th and the 6th Conferences of European Ministers responsible for Youth were held in Romania in 1998 and in Greece in 2002, respectively, and the Council of Europe and the European Commission launched in the same period a new partnership in the youth field. Furthermore, the Council of Europe had developed a mechanism of international reviews of national youth policy, which was becoming well established. In South-Eastern Europe, the Stability Pact Working Group on Youth, consisting of European and international organisations and national governments, was established in 2000. The strongest point on its agenda was to promote the development of national youth strategies in the region. This contributed to the first national youth action plan of a country in the region – Romania, in 2001.

Within this context, a discussion of what should be considered a "European standard" of youth policy had become ever more relevant. The Council of Europe therefore

13 Williamson, Howard (2008), p. 53.

14 The "European Council" is the highest political body of the European Union. It comprises the heads of state or government of the Union's member states, along with the President of the European Commission. It should not be confused with the Council of Europe. The "Laeken Declaration" carries particular significance because it outlined the future of the European Union and necessary reform of its institutions.

decided to invite a group of experts with a research profile to come together and make some policy recommendations to be addressed to the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector. This resulted in a report which has since been cited by many as providing the best model so far for what should be considered a more universal standard of youth policy, at least for Europe.[15]

According to this expert group, a youth policy should have the following objectives:

a. to invest purposefully in young people in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way, wherever possible, through an opportunity-focused rather than a problem-oriented approach;
b. to involve young people both in the strategic formulation of youth policies and in eliciting their views about the operational effectiveness of policy implementation;
c. to create the conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure and enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part both in the labour market and in civil society;
d. to establish systems for robust data collections, both to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth policies and to reveal the extent to which "policy gaps"[16] exist in relation to effective service delivery to young people from certain social groups, in certain areas or in certain conditions;
e. to display a commitment to reducing such policy gaps where they demonstrably exist.

The group emphasised that youth policy development should be seen as a process of creating "packages" of opportunity and experience, again stressing that youth policy should primarily be focused on creating possibilities and opportunities for young people to achieve their full potential, and seeing young people as a resource. The following different areas were identified as important components of such a youth policy:

1. Learning (lifelong, formal and non-formal) education and training, recognition of informally acquired skills and competencies;
2. Access to new technologies;
3. Specialist personal advice and support, career guidance;
4. Information;
5. Access to health services and social protection;
6. Access to housing;
7. Access to paid work;
8. Mobility;
9. Justice and youth rights (to assistance, for example);
10. Opportunities for participation and active citizenship;
11. Recreation: cultural and social;
12. Sports and outdoor activities;
13. Away from home, youth exchange and international opportunities;
14. Safe and secure environment.

15 Council of Europe (2003b).

16 The overall assumption is that a youth policy will fulfil the needs of young people and that all young people will be fully equipped to meet the challenges of adulthood. This is a utopian assumption, and there will be weaknesses in any policy designed to meet those needs. It is "shortfalls like these" in the effectiveness of policies which are referred to as "policy gaps".

The Council of Europe youth policy experts' group furthermore identified three cross-cutting themes:

- information;
- participation and active citizenship;
- power (both in relation to age limits governing rights and responsibilities of young people, and in relation to budgets available for certain youth policy issues).

Together with the bullet points provided by Howard Williamson in his two reports on the international youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe, these points make up a valuable list of issues that should be covered by a national youth policy in Europe.

The Council of Europe has a long history of promoting youth policy, compared with the European Union and UN organisations. However, it is not alone in advancing what should be considered a European standard of youth policy. Let us look at what is being done within the context of the European Union to promote youth policy, and how its work contributes to the perception of a European standard of youth policy.

→ 3.2. The European Union

The day-to-day involvement of the European Union on issues relating to youth policy is handled by the European Commission, more specifically the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC). One unit within DG EAC is responsible for the Youth in Action Programme, while another takes care of youth policy issues. In addition to the responsibilities of the Commission, the youth policy of the European Union is shaped by decisions and resolutions made by the European Council and the Council of Youth Ministers as well as the European Parliament.

Up until the decision was taken to develop a White Paper[17] on Youth (adopted in 2001), the involvement of the European Union on issues relating to youth policy was primarily limited to the administration of the European Commission's youth mobility programmes, the first of which was established in 1988. The EU youth mobility programmes have increased young people's possibilities for working abroad as volunteers, carrying out group exchanges to other countries and getting funding for youth activities that involve participants from the different EU member states, other programme countries and so-called partner countries.

Today, the European Union is widely involved in advancing youth policy in the member states. There are different components to this involvement.

- Promoting young people's citizenship and active participation in all areas of society (through the policy priorities of the Commission, the Youth in Action Programme and the European Youth Portal; see the links below);
- Promoting education, youth employment and social inclusion, in particular stressing the transition phase from education to employment which is often precarious for young people (through the implementation of the European Youth Pact);[18]
- Advocating for the inclusion of a youth dimension in other sectoral policies.

17 Commission White Papers are documents containing proposals for action to be taken by the European Union in a specific area. Each presents a detailed and well-argued policy for discussion and for decision and can lead to an action programme for the Union in the area concerned.

18 The European Youth Pact was integrated into the Lisbon Treaty when the treaty was revised in 2005, and focuses in particular on the social dimension of youth policy (education and training, youth employment and family life). See section 3.2.5.

In November 2008, the European Council adopted the first ever recommendation in the youth field [19] on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union. The recommendation seeks to boost co-operation between organisers of voluntary activities in the member states of the European Union. This has increased the attention to youth policy on the EU agenda.

3.2.1. The dynamic between the EU institutions and the member states

Understanding the roles of the different institutions of the European Union, the dynamic among them and between them and the member states, is indeed something that can take some time to learn. The situation in the youth field can also be complicated. With regard to how youth policy is promoted and developed in the European Union, it is essential to understand the mechanism called the "Open Method of Co-ordination" (OMC, see below). Through this mechanism, the European Commission and the Council of Youth Ministers are the dominant players – together with the member states, of course, which all meet within the Council.

The Commission maintains a close dialogue with the member states and is responsible for co-ordinating and processing the feedback it receives from them. It also makes proposals (called communications) and reports to the Council of Youth Ministers. The Council, which consists of all youth ministers in the member states, plus the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, adopts resolutions (called council resolutions) calling upon both the EU member states and the Commission to initiate action and report back to the Commission and the Council, respectively. The European Parliament does not play a strong formal role in the OMC process, but can comment on the reports of the Commission and produce its own reports whenever it deems it relevant. It also adopts resolutions in the youth field.

3.2.2. The European Commission White Paper on Youth

The White Paper on Youth, entitled "A new impetus for European youth" was launched in November 2001 by the European Commission. It was preceded by a consultation process which was by far the most comprehensive in regard to any white paper that had been launched by the European Commission. This illustrated the strong commitment of policy makers, at the European level, to consult young people and involve them in decision-making processes on issues that have an impact on them. This commitment sent powerful signals to the central European countries in particular, which were then candidates to join the European community.

Through the White Paper, the European Commission recognised that the area of youth policy is very diverse and primarily a responsibility of the respective member states. However, the policy document identified four different areas where the EU member states were invited to co-ordinate their policies in the youth field. These areas were participation, information, volunteering/voluntary activities and greater understanding of youth. The Open Method of Co-ordination was introduced in order to achieve closer co-operation between the different member states' youth policy in these areas.

19 A Council Recommendation carries even more weight than a Council Resolution, sending a strong signal to member states about a preferred action to be taken or policy to be adopted.

3.2.3. The future youth policy of the European Union

The youth policy co-operation framework outlined in the White Paper on Youth was set to expire in 2009. It was therefore natural to assess and evaluate the existing framework and suggest improvements in a revised youth policy framework that should be effective as of 2010. The new framework, called "An EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering", was adopted by the College of Commissioners in April 2009. The time span of this Commission Communication is nine years, from 2010 to 2018.

As with the process leading to the White Paper, a comprehensive consultation with young people and other stakeholders was carried out before the drafting of the Communication. In addition to involving non-governmental youth organisations, youth researchers, government officials and other experts in the youth field, the Commission organised an online consultation with young people. This consultation brought in more than 5 000 responses from young people across Europe, who in this way identified what the major challenges for young people in Europe are today and what their own countries and the European Union can do to address them. Through this comprehensive consultation, the Commission again stressed how important it is to involve young people in policy development at all levels.

What is new with this nine-year strategy is a set of new priorities and its strong focus on the cross-sectoral and transversal nature of youth policy. The Communication proposes three long-term goals for an improved youth policy in the European Union. Furthermore, it suggests two or three "fields of action" which link up with each goal and are to be reviewed every three years. The new priorities are as follows:

- Creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment.
  Fields of action: education, employment plus creativity and entrepreneurship.
- Improving access and full participation of all young people in society.
  Fields of action: health and sport plus participation.
- Fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people.
  Fields of action: social inclusion, volunteering plus youth and the world.

Under the new framework, the Commission has at its disposal primarily the same tools as before: the Open Method of Co-ordination, the European Youth Pact, the Youth in Action Programme and the "structured dialogue".

3.2.4. The Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC)

The Open Method of Co-ordination is used in several policy areas where the European Commission has limited competencies, meaning that member states set their own national policies rather than having an EU-wide policy laid down in law. However, under the OMC, governments learn from each other and share best practices, enabling them to focus on improvements in their own domestic policies.[20] In general terms the OMC in the youth field works like this:

20 Developing common practices through co-ordination, co-operation and examples of best practice, which is what the OMC methodology in principle consists of, is considered by many to be the future of policy making inside the European Union. This is because the increasing number of member states makes it more and more difficult to reach unanimous decisions on EU legislation.

1. The European Commission identifies its long-term priorities in the youth policy field through a policy document (the White Paper on Youth in 2001 and the Communication on a new youth policy framework in 2009);
2. Through a dialogue with the member states, the European Commission proposes common objectives for each priority;
3. The Council of Youth Ministers then adopts common objectives for the priorities;
4. Member states are then responsible for implementing the common objectives. They report regularly back to the Commission on what they have done to implement them;
5. On the basis of these reports, the Commission prepares progress analyses which are then presented to the Council of Youth Ministers;
6. The Commission also makes proposals to the Council of Youth Ministers on how to advance the priorities further;
7. The Council of Youth Ministers then decides on the proposed new follow-up. In this way, the process continues by going back to stage 4), in what is being called the "rolling agenda".

It is important to mention that even though there has been no formal minimum requirement for what each member state has to achieve within the different priority areas, the member states' obligation to report back to the Commission on their achievements certainly implies a degree of responsibility and commitment. Resolutions adopted by the Council of Youth Ministers also have to be followed up by every member state. Member states agreed in 2008 to define concrete national measures and set up mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the common objectives, committing themselves further to streamlining their youth policies in different policy areas.

Through the OMC, every member state is required to consult young people before they submit their national reports to the Commission. This re-emphasises the strong focus on youth participation which the member states have committed themselves to.

3.2.5. The European Youth Pact

In terms of identifying elements of what can be considered a "European standard" of youth policy, it is also relevant to look into another of the tools of the European Commission in the youth policy field: the European Youth Pact. The European Youth Pact was developed as an integral part of the Lisbon Strategy for promoting growth and jobs[21] when the strategy was revised in 2005. This brought the area of youth policy to a level previously unseen in the European Union. Within the European Youth Pact, a range of policy measures were introduced to address the following three strands:

- employment, integration and social advancement;
- education, training and mobility;
- reconciliation of family life and working life.

21 The Lisbon Strategy, also known as the Lisbon Agenda or Lisbon Process, is an action and development plan for the European Union. Its aim is to make the EU "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010". It was set out by the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000 (www.wikipedia.com).

Among the specific policy priorities mentioned in the strategy which should be given particular attention are the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the need to increase focus on these areas.

Once again, the European Youth Pact re-emphasises the need to consult young people and their organisations on the implementation and follow-up of the Pact at the national level, and that national youth councils shall be among the actors consulted. It also draws attention to the fact that a number of different policy areas should have an integrated youth dimension.

The member states of the European Union report back to the Commission every year on their progress in implementing the Lisbon Strategy.

3.2.6. The Youth in Action Programme

Youth in Action is the name of the European Commission's mobility programme for young people, which runs from 2007 to 2013. The programme aims at inspiring a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans. The main target group is young people aged 15-28, with some possibilities for participation offered for the expanded age group 13-30. The programme supports five different categories of youth activities, called "actions" (Action 1, Action 2, etc.), and is implemented through national agencies in all programme countries.[22]

The current programme is a successor to previous mobility programmes of the Commission, going back to 1988.[23] In other words, promoting opportunities for mobility, exchange and co-operation among young people has been a priority for the European Commission for more than twenty years.

The Youth in Action Programme is an integrated element of the Commission's youth policy through the mere fact that it provides tens of thousands of young people every year from across Europe with opportunities to develop active citizenship and participate in society. A large majority of projects funded also refer to youth participation as among the main aims. One of the five categories of youth activities that can be funded through the programme, called Action 5, offers concrete support to youth policy development in Europe. The general objectives include: encouraging the exchange of good practice between policy makers and young people; supporting structured dialogue between young people and policy makers; fostering a better knowledge and understanding of youth and promoting co-operation with international organisations active in the youth field.

22 An important distinction is made between programme countries and partner countries. In the Youth in Action Programme, there are 31 programme countries; the 27 EU member states plus the four non-EU states Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Turkey. There is currently (spring 2009) a process under way to also establish national agencies in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and in Croatia. All actions within the programme are open to these countries. The so-called "partner" countries also have opportunities to take part in the Youth in Action Programme, but their opportunities are more limited and they have to be invited by partners in the programme countries.

23 The first of these was Youth for Europe (1988-1991) followed by Youth for Europe II (1992-95) and Youth for Europe III (1996-99), European Voluntary Service, EVS (1996-99, later integrated into the consecutive youth programmes), the YOUTH Programme (2000-06) and, finally, the current Youth in Action Programme (2007-13).

3.2.7. The "structured dialogue"

To highlight the importance of maintaining a close dialogue with young people within the framework of the European Union, the Council of Youth Ministers adopted a resolution in 2005, which invited both the Commission and the member states to develop a structured dialogue with young people and their organisations, researchers in the youth field and policy makers. The need for a structured dialogue was also supported by a Council Resolution in November 2006 and by the Communication on "Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society" adopted in September 2007.[24]

The "structured dialogue" is a mechanism for ensuring a comprehensive dialogue with young people at all levels within the European Union. Governments and administrations, including EU institutions, discuss chosen themes with young people, in order to obtain results which are useful for policy making. The debate is structured in terms of themes and timing, with events taking place on a regular basis where young people can discuss the agreed themes amongst themselves and also with local, national and EU politicians.

Youth organisations play a particularly important role in the structured dialogue, as they speak on behalf of a great number of young people. The main partner of the EU institutions is therefore the European Youth Forum. However, the structured dialogue also aims at reaching youth that are not formally organised and young people with fewer opportunities.

3.2.8. The Renewed Social Agenda

When providing an overview of how the European Commission promotes improved living conditions for and the active participation of young people in society, the Renewed Social Agenda must also be mentioned. Proposed in July 2008 through a Commission Communication, the agenda puts children and youth among its seven priorities when outlining policy areas which the Commission will prioritise when addressing the social challenges in Europe. The Renewed Social Agenda is based on three interrelated goals of equal importance: creating opportunities, providing access and demonstrating solidarity. One should note that these three goals have also been translated into the goals of the renewed EU youth co-operation framework presented in the Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering", adopted in April 2009.

→ 3.3. The Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe

The European Commission and the Council of Europe first entered into a formal partnership in the youth field in 1998, in the area of European youth worker training. This co-operation has since then expanded to youth research and Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, and ten years after its establishment, it now covers five different areas: European citizenship; human rights education and intercultural dialogue; quality and recognition of youth work and training; better understanding and knowledge of youth; and youth policy development.

The Youth Partnership has in particular developed a focus on youth policy development in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (EECA) and in South-East

24 See links at the end of this chapter.

Europe (SEE). In both these regions, conferences and seminars brought together representatives of governments, non-governmental youth organisations and researchers in the youth field. The agenda at these events focuses around closer regional co-operation, sharing information and examples of best practice, and building partnerships for further enhancing youth policy development. Events are organised in partnership with the EECA and SEE SALTO Resource Centres, respectively.

Training of youth leaders, youth workers and activists is also high on the agenda for the Youth Partnership. A number of training seminars and related events are organised every year, many of them with SALTO Resource Centres and local partners. Two of the main priority areas are training in European citizenship and training for trainers. Information about past and upcoming training events can be found at the Youth Partnership's web portal (see the link below).

Also on its web portal, the Youth Partnership has developed a virtual Internet-based European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. It summarises the policy positions of the European institutions in a number of different areas, among them youth participation, information, social inclusion and young people's health. It also includes a comprehensive database with information about youth policy status in most of the countries in Europe. Country by country information papers on youth policy and on different specific themes of youth policy have been compiled by so-called national correspondents, who are youth researchers or civil servants in the respective countries nominated by the governments. The database comprises a comprehensive amount of information and best practice examples, and is a good place to get an overview of youth policy in Europe. The web portal also includes a database of European youth policy experts.

➔ 3.4. The United Nations system

The main bodies of the United Nations consist of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Committee and the International Court of Justice. The UN family is much larger, however, consisting of more than 15 agencies and a number of programmes, missions and projects.

In this short brief, which outlines how the United Nations has contributed to the development of what can be called an "international standard" of youth policy, however, it is natural to focus only on the most significant documents that have been adopted by the General Assembly and the ongoing efforts of the Secretariat and different UN organisations/agencies.

Promoting youth participation in government decision making and in society in general, has arguably been the main pillar of the UN's effort to influence national youth policy in the different member states. As articulated in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12, all children (up to the age of 18) shall be provided with the means to participate in society and be consulted on issues that concern them.[25]

3.4.1. World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Development Goals

The UN General Assembly observed 1985 as International Youth Year, bringing the issue of youth participation to the fore as a means of achieving the United Nations

25 See Chapter 4.1. on youth participation, which has more comprehensive coverage of this issue.

Charter. Ten years later, in 1995, the organisation strengthened its commitment to young people and the promotion of national youth policy further by adopting the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY). WPAY is an international strategy still operative, and the UN Secretariat is responsible for the review and monitoring of the implementation of the Programme. Through the WPAY, UN member states committed themselves to follow up on 10 identified areas for priority action:

1. education
2. employment
3. hunger and poverty
4. health
5. environment
6. drug abuse
7. juvenile delinquency
8. leisure-time activities
9. girls and young women
10. the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision making.

The WPAY was followed in 1998 by a World Youth Forum, (Braga, Portugal) and the first World Conference of Ministries Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, Portugal). The conference re-emphasised the importance of the WPAY priorities and specifically emphasised the formulation of comprehensive national youth policies and action plans through the adoption of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes.

The commitment to the WPAY strategy was again confirmed at the UN General Assembly in 2005, where five additional areas were added to the list, bringing the number of areas by which the UN member states should prioritise their efforts to improve the situation of young people to 15:

11. globalisation
12. information and communication technologies
13. HIV/Aids
14. armed conflict
15. intergenerational relations.

Also in 2005, it was decided to mandate the UN Secretariat to establish a broad set of verifiable indicators that could be used to monitor the progress achieved in these priority areas. Such a list has been established, and is available at the UN web portal (see the address below).

The Millennium Development Goals are eight goals that the member states of the United Nations agreed to achieve by 2015 at the UN Millennium Summit. The goals are as follows:

- eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- achieve universal primary education;
- promote gender equality and empower women;
- reduce child mortality;
- improve maternal health;
- combat HIV/Aids, malaria, and other diseases;
- ensure environmental sustainability;
- develop a global partnership for development.

Governments have committed themselves strongly and publicly to achieving these goals, and the issue is high on the UN agenda. During the World Summit in New York in 2005, which leaders of all 191 member states of the United Nations attended, a renewed commitment to the Millennium Development Goals was made. Additional funds were also allocated to different UN agencies towards this end.

Recognising that youth policy is a transversal and cross-sectoral policy, which should be an important component of all the Millennium Development Goals, an independent group of youth experts, young people from across the world, took upon themselves the task of developing a manual on how youth policy can be promoted nationally through applying the Millennium Development Goals. The manual, entitled *Youth and the Millennium Development Goals*, was released in spring 2005 and can be downloaded from the Internet (see address below).

3.4.2. The UN Secretariat and different UN agencies

The focal point of the UN Secretariat on youth issues is the Programme on Youth (previously called the UN Youth Unit). The Programme on Youth is located in the Division for Social Policy and Development within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Its website provides valuable information on different opportunities for youth participation at UN level, as well as for the development of youth policy. Due to its very limited staff and resources, however, the UN Programme on Youth is not sufficiently able to interact with youth organisations around the world.

During the last decade, a number of the different agencies of the United Nations have developed mechanisms for involving young people and youth organisations in their work and policy priorities. They typically take the shape of special working units or youth advisory boards. For example, the Youth Co-ordination Unit of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) addresses issues and organises actions for youth within the scope of the organisation, and hosts a Youth Forum every two years. Similarly, the following UN agencies and organisations have special co-ordinating bodies on youth:[26] UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), UN Programme for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT), UN Population Fund (UNFPA, focusing on youth policy), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNDCP), as well as through agencies for children, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Other organisations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) do not have such youth advisory boards, but are still active in addressing youth issues as part of their policy agenda.

Many of these organisations have a national office or representative in different countries, and can play a supportive role in the promotion, development and implementation of youth strategies at the national level.

26 Ashton, Melanie, et al. (2005), p. 32.

→ 3.5. Web resources

Council of Europe:

The Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport: www.coe.int/youth

Final declarations of the European Youth Ministers' Conferences: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/IG_Coop/ministers_conferences_en.asp

Council of Europe Experts on Youth Policy Indicators, Final Report (2003): www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2003_YP_indicators_en.pdf

Information about the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and follow-up documents: www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/BGKNGE/Participation

Information about the co-management system: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/co_management_en.asp

European Union:

The Youth Sector of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/youth

The European Youth Portal (information portal for young people): http://europa.eu/youth

The European Commission White Paper "A new impetus for European youth" (2001): http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc26_en.htm

Overview of EU legislation in the youth field (communications from the Commission to the Council of Youth Ministers, resolutions by the Council): http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/s19003.htm

Commission Communication on the implementation of the European Youth Pact (COM(2005) 206): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0206:FIN:EN:PDF

Commission Communication proposing common objectives for participation by and information for young people (COM(2003) 184): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2003:0184:FIN:EN:PDF

Commission Communication proposing common objectives for voluntary activities among young people (COM(2004) 337): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0337:FIN:EN:PDF

Commission Communication proposing common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth (COM(2004) 336): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0336:FIN:EN:PDF

Council Resolution defining common objectives for the participation by and information for young people (November 2003): http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2003:295:0006:0008:EN:PDF

Council Resolution defining common objectives for the participation by and information for young people (November 2006): http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st14/st14471.en06.pdf

Council Resolution defining common objectives for voluntary activities for young people (October 2004): http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/04/st13/st13996.en04.pdf

Council Resolution defining common objectives for voluntary activities for young people (November 2007): http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14425.en07.pdf

Council Resolution defining common objectives for better knowledge and understanding of youth (November 2004): http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1052_en.pdf

Council Recommendation on mobility of young volunteers across Europe, (November 2008): http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st14/st14825.en08.pdf

Information on the Renewed Social Agenda: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=547

Youth Partnership of the European Commission and the Council of Europe:

The Council of Europe and European Commission Youth Partnership: http://www.youth-partnership.net

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy: http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/index

United Nations system:

Youth at the United Nations: www.un.org/youth

United National Convention on the Rights of the Child: http://www.unicef.org/crc

World Programme of Action for Youth: http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/ywpa2000.htm

Youth Development Indicators (for all 15 WPAY priority areas): http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthindicators1.htm

Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: http://www.takingitglobal.org/themes/mdg/youthinpolicy.html

Why youth participation – and how?

Even though the concept of youth participation in government decision making has become recognised as one of the basic and important features of a European youth policy, there is still a long way to go before this principle is followed and adhered to across Europe. This is especially true when we go down to the municipal level of government. Sometimes the reason for a lack of participation is rooted in the mentality of the established decision makers. They may feel that young people – many of whom have not even reached the "legal age" or voting age – cannot possibly contribute to making responsible decisions. Or politicians and government officials may be convinced that they alone have the mandate to take political decisions and develop and implement policy, and that it would be wrong to let "special interest groups" be allowed to influence these decisions.

However, the reason for not inviting young people to the decision-making table is often that these politicians and officials do not know *how* to let young people participate. They may have no prior experience in involving youth, and there may be a lack of examples of good practice for how it can be done. After all – we must recognise that involving young people in decision making

can be challenging, and it calls for different methods to those when one involves adults. We cannot just pick up a few teenagers from the streets and put them in the municipal assembly hall, expect them to act like experienced politicians and then clap our hands and say: "Yes, now we have involved young people!" Let us therefore explore a bit more *why* youth participation in decision making is important, and *how* it can be done.

➔ 4.1. Why youth participation?

The idea of youth participation in government decision making and the special role of non-governmental youth organisations in being institutional partners in youth policy development and implementation has become a mantra in the European and international youth policy discourse. There are several good reasons for why this is important and is being advocated by European and international organisations as a recommended practice.

One of the reasons is rooted in the perception of young people as a resource.[27] Young people are full citizens making important contributions to their everyday society: they involve themselves in organisations protecting the environment and fighting poverty, they help their peers, take part in initiatives to improve their own society, start up new businesses and contribute to the family. This contribution by young people to society today is often overlooked, instead of seeing young people as *future* citizens. When we see young people as a resource and assets to their local communities and active agents of change who can contribute their energy, idealism and insights into improving society, it becomes natural to involve them in every possible way in policy decision making on issues that affect them.

Second, no one is more expert at being young than young people themselves. In order to ensure that we understand the needs, issues and challenges facing young people, and that we select the measures that will address these issues in the best possible way, we should involve those who know the youth reality first hand – namely young people themselves.

Third, by involving young people, one also creates a wider ownership of the decisions that are taken. Passing on the ownership of important decisions that relate to youth ensures that a policy will be easier to implement and will also be advocated and supported by young people themselves. This will ensure a higher certainty of success in implementation.

Fourth, young people cannot be considered to be simply another "interest group", and this argument be used for keeping them out of the decision-making process. Young people are a heterogeneous group, with diverse interests and concerns. But they make up a large percentage of the population, and in some European countries they are in fact a dominant part of the population. For example, in Norway, with its relatively "old" population, young people between 16 and 30 years of age still make up more than 18% of the population.[28] On the other hand, Kosovo, with one of the "youngest" populations in Europe, has approximately 60% of the population in the same age cohort.[29]

27 Denstad, Finn Yrjar (2009).

28 According to *Statistics Norway*, the Norwegian official bureau of statistics (www.ssb.no/english).

29 World Bank Mission in Kosovo (2005), p. 2. The Kosovo statistics are for the age cohort 15-29 years of age.

Finally, there are formalistic and legal reasons for why young people should be natural partners in decision making: in order to keep to promises made by being signatory parties to European and international agreements and commitments. All European countries have already in different contexts committed themselves to actively involve young people in decision making. Let us just briefly look at two of these commitments:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) was signed in 1989, and currently has 193 signatory states.[30] The CRC is legally binding to all the signatory parties, who have to report back to the UN every five years on their adherence to the provisions of the Convention. It addresses the rights of children up to the age of 18. Article 12 specifically addresses the issue of children's participation in government decisions that affect them:

Article 12:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

The Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life[31] was adopted in 2003 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, one of the pillars of the Council of Europe. It was adopted as a recommendation by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2006,[32] upon the unanimous decision of all member states, which gives it a strong leverage as a document that all member states should comply with. The charter stresses that:

- participation of young people in local and regional life must constitute part of a global policy of citizens' participation in public life;
- all sectoral policies should have a youth dimension;
- various forms of participation must be implemented, which follow in consultation and co-operation with young people and their representatives;
- the participation by young people from disadvantaged sectors of society must be promoted.[33]

30 The only two UN member states that have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are Somalia and the United States. The US opposition stems in part from the argument that in the US federal system, family policy is a matter for the individual states rather than the federal government. It is also argued that it is in conflict with the US Constitution, and that ensuring the rights of the child is an issue that should be left to individual governments.

31 See also Chapter 3.1.3.

32 The Committee of Ministers is the highest decision-making body of the Council of Europe.

33 See: www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/BGKNGE/Participation

In addition to these two specific documents, which all European countries have an obligation to adhere to, there are a number of European Union and Council of Europe documents which address the issue of youth participation in government decision making.[34] Together, they have played an important role in making this practice an undisputable standard in Europe.

With specific reference to EU documents, the Commission White Paper "A new impetus for European youth" does of course stress the issue of youth participation. Furthermore, the European Council of Youth Ministers has made several resolutions that commit the member states to implement this practice.[35] Most recently, this was stressed in the Resolution on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities (April 2008). The Commission has also passed on several relevant communications to the Council of Youth Ministers. Following up on the Lisbon Strategy and the European Youth Pact, an act of explicit relevance is the communication from the Commission of 5 September 2007 on promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society.

The Council of Europe has been at the forefront of promoting youth participation in decision making. No surprise, then, that the final declarations of successive European Youth Ministers' conferences, being organised within the framework of the Council of Europe, to some extent address the issue. The text of the final declarations of the latest conferences can be found on the Council of Europe's web page (see the address below).

The United Nations also has a number of documents, resolutions and programmes relating specifically to the importance of youth participation in government decision making. These can be downloaded from the organisation's web portal (see the address below).

➔ 4.2. Why youth organisations?

Non-governmental youth organisations (NGYOs) have been given an important and, in the eyes of some, privileged role when it comes to being promoted as government partners on issues relating to young people. Taking into account that many young people are not involved in youth organisations, why are they seen as so important?

Everyone recognises that at the level of central government, it is not feasible, or indeed possible, to include all young people in making government decisions. Non-governmental youth organisations are therefore consulted and included on young people's behalf, as they are seen as representatives of young people. Of course, they can only claim to represent the people in the organisations they come from. Nevertheless, involving representatives of non-governmental youth organisations in political decision making is beneficial for government officials and policy makers, since in this way they reach out to many more young people, considering that the NGO representatives represent larger groups of young people. Youth NGOs also often have the resources and expertise to address youth issues at different levels of policy.

34 See the last section of this chapter.

35 Of particular relevance is the Council of Youth Ministers "Resolution on youth participation" (February 1999).

The legitimacy of youth NGOs to be involved in government decision making rests on two basic premises which must be fulfilled:

- the youth organisations must have a fully functional internal democracy, with their leaders being elected by the membership;[36] and
- the organisations should be controlled and governed by young people themselves, so that they are in fact youth organisations and not adult organisations with young people as a "client" group.

Non-governmental youth organisations should be considered government partners in decision making, based on their capacity as representatives of larger groups of young people. In other words, the youth NGOs are a tool for reaching out to young people, and not a goal in themselves. Other ways of reaching out to many young people simultaneously should also be explored, and youth NGOs should not have a monopoly position as representatives of young people. They can also be supplemented by other groups (for example, youth clubs), depending on the national reality and context.

However, in the different countries in Europe, the existence of non-governmental youth organisations is a great benefit to society, and it is only natural that they have a right to be consulted and involved in decisions that affect young people. This recognition means that national youth councils – which are umbrella associations of non-governmental youth organisations in a country and most often created in order to have a unified and strong voice in the promotion of the interests of young people from the perspective of youth organisations – are most often appreciated as government partners in the countries where they exist. Almost all national youth councils in Europe receive financial support from their governments for maintaining their role as young people's voice at the national level.

The European Youth Forum (YFJ), based in Brussels, Belgium, is the non-governmental umbrella association of national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations at the European level. YFJ is an important partner for the institutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations system, and is actively consulted on issues that relate to young people. The principle behind the strong recognition of YFJ among these intergovernmental organisations is the same as the principle for involving youth organisations at the national level. In other words, respecting the role of non-governmental youth organisations as representatives of young people has become a strong and recognised practice by these organisations.[37]

The recognition of the important role that non-governmental organisations can play as representatives of groups of young people in government decision making, is one of several reasons why any government should promote the development of such organisations. Other, and equally important reasons why a government

36 In this regard, it is acceptable that the organisation operates with a lower age limit than that granting full democratic rights, such as the right to vote. Where this age limit should be set depends on the national context.

37 In addition to YFJ, another example of the strong recognition of the role of non-governmental youth organisations at the European level is the status of the Advisory Council, explained in more detail in Chapter 3.1.1, which is composed of representatives of youth organisations and is part of the co-management structure of the Council of Europe youth sector.

should actively support – financially and by other means – the development of non-governmental youth organisations are that such organisations:

- enable young people to gain a lot of different practical skills, knowledge and experience that they do not learn through the formal educational system but will nevertheless be important for their future;
- provide young people with opportunities for active free time;
- teach young people to care for each other, take responsibility for their local community and take action, instead of just having opinions on an issue;
- are schools of democracy, in that young people learn in practical terms about the concepts of representation and responsibility, about standing for election and casting a vote;
- promote citizenship among young people, important for the long-term sustainability of European ideas, values and practices of democracy.

➔ 4.3. How to involve youth in decision making

It is often not a question of not wanting to involve young people in decision making. Rather, there can be a lack of knowledge of how it can be done, and – as we shall see – how to give young people maximum influence on the decisions in the best possible manner. This manual seeks to be a handbook and guide to national youth policy and the development of a national youth strategy, and will therefore present some ideas and examples of how non-governmental youth organisations can be involved in decision making at the central governmental level.

The main difference between youth participation at the national level and at the lower levels of government (in particular the municipal level) is that youth participation at the central level has to go through representatives of young people rather than involving them directly, in most instances. The non-governmental youth organisations, often organised through a national youth council, should play a central role in this regard.

4.3.1. The ladder of participation

Before going on to present different examples of how young people can be involved in decision making at the central governmental level, let us discuss for a moment a central concept of youth participation. What actually constitutes youth participation? Roger Hart, an American psychologist, wrote a book for UNICEF in 1997 called *Children's Participation: The Theory And Practice Of Involving Young Citizens In Community Development And Environmental Care* in which his "ladder of youth participation" appeared.[38] It quickly became a valuable tool in measuring various degrees and different stages of participation by children and young people.[39]

Hart deals with eight different stages of children's participation, arguing, however, that the three bottom steps of the ladder do not actually account for real participation. While originally developed for reflecting on children, the ladder is just as

38 Hart's model is actually an adapted version of "the ladder of citizen participation" developed by Sherry Arnstein, appearing in an article in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* already in 1968.

39 Several other scales or matrixes for youth participation – both horizontal and vertical – have been developed over the years, but Hart's ladder of participation remains the most referenced and acknowledged tool to date.

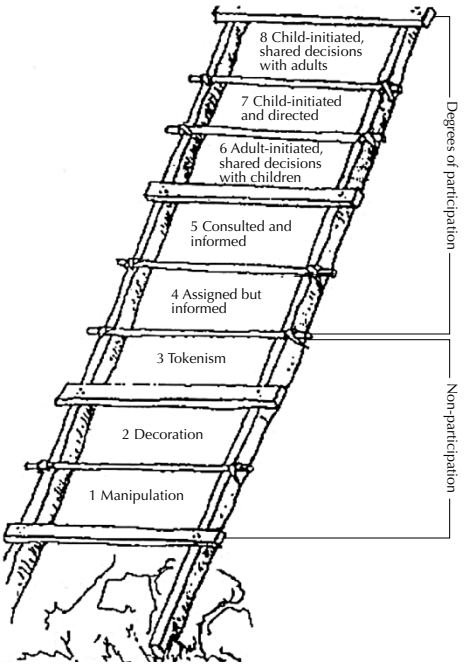
applicable for the participation of young people. Hart's references to child-initiated activities have therefore been replaced with youth-initiated in the following text.

Hart's ladder should not be interpreted as meaning that we always have to make sure that we are at the highest stage on the ladder, but rather that we should aim at avoiding the lower rungs of non-participation and think of ways to genuinely involve young people in decision making. The different rungs of the ladder can be explained as follows:[40]

8. *Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults*. This happens when projects or programmes are initiated by young people and decision making is shared between young people and adults. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

7. *Youth-initiated and directed*. This step is when young people initiate and direct a project or programme. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.

6. *Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people*. Occurs when projects or programmes are initiated by adults but the decision making is shared with the young people.



5. *Consulted and informed*. Happens when young people give advice on projects or programmes designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.

4. *Assigned but informed*. This is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.

3. *Tokenism*. When young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

2. *Decoration*. Happens when young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.

1. *Manipulation*. Happens where adults use young people to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people.

40 The illustration is downloaded from www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl/greenervoices/ladder.html and the short description of the rungs from www.freechild.org/ladder.htm

Applying this model to youth participation in political decision making at the central governmental level, it is not too difficult to perceive how "tokenism" or even "decoration" to a large extent can be, and has been, used by adults with little interest in or knowledge of how real participation is exercised. An example is when a group of young people, with no prior training or preparation, are invited to a high-level conference for adults in order to serve as a "youth alibi". Another example is occasions where young people are asked to give their opinions, but where their ideas are never intended to be taken into account or considered.

At the level of national government, youth participation, where it exists at all, very rarely reaches the highest rungs of the ladder. This should not be all that surprising, since it is very often the government that takes the initiative to consult young people or youth organisations on issues where the government will be responsible and will want to have the final word (for example, when the government is developing a new action plan on youth employment and invites the national youth council to contribute their ideas and proposals in writing before a specific deadline). And since any national government is responsible for its political decisions, it can hardly be blamed for not giving away its final decision-making authority to young people or their representative organisations. Therefore, youth participation at this level usually fluctuates between rungs four and five and, on rare occasions, may even reach level six.

In fact, while government at the municipal level may want to experiment with youth participation at the highest rungs of the ladder, the reality is that what we should strive for at the national level is that young people (which, at the central level of government, means the non-governmental youth organisations or the national youth council, if it exists) should always be consulted on issues that involve them, and receive guarantees that their opinions will weigh heavily when decisions are taken. It can hardly be demanded from a government that it should allow young people to make political decisions by themselves, as there will be budgetary consequences, with the government being obligated to implement them. But let us go through some examples of how a government can exercise youth participation at the national level, when developing a national youth strategy or implementing a national youth policy.

4.3.2. Examples of youth participation at the national level

Chapter 7 outlines how youth participation should be a central element in the development of a national youth strategy (NYS). We will therefore not spend much time and space covering these steps here, beyond summarising some bullet points:

- Youth NGOs should take part in seminars/conferences outlining the priorities and objectives of the NYS;
- Youth NGOs should be involved in the steering group, different working groups and other parts of the structure to develop the NYS;
- Young people should be consulted directly through round tables or other activities organised especially for young people, carried out at the local level.

When it comes to ensuring long-term youth participation during the implementation of the national youth strategy, meaning the regular day-to-day activities and responsibilities of the youth ministry, there are different ways in which this can be ensured.

One very concrete way of involving non-governmental youth organisations in the implementation of the strategy is to earmark project funds or grants specifically for the realisation of some measures in the strategy or action plan of the youth organisations. This can be the organisation of training courses on specific subjects, for example: How can youth organisations take measures towards inclusion, participation and human rights? (Several activities in the framework of the European "All Different – All Equal" campaign carried out in 2007 and 2008 in countries throughout Europe are good examples in this regard.) Some youth NGOs may have developed special expertise in non-formal learning, environmental issues, working with minorities or less privileged young people. These organisations may be able to organise training activities, or other measures, for the implementation of the youth strategy in a much cheaper and more efficient way than the government. So why not "outsource" these activities to the youth NGOs, thereby strengthening and empowering the organisations at the same time?

There are also many ways in which a government can institutionalise youth participation in youth policy – both in the concrete implementation of a strategy, but also in the continuous work by the government to improve the situation for young people. There is, however, a great difference depending on whether or not a national youth council exists in the country concerned.

The existence of an independent national youth council (which is the legitimate umbrella association for most of the national youth organisations in the country) greatly simplifies the possibility of having a close and ongoing dialogue between youth organisations and the government. There are many ways in which the government can ensure youth participation through closer co-operation with a national youth council. The following are some good examples and practices, already established in many European countries:

1. Provide the national youth council with an administrative grant[41] which makes it possible to maintain a satisfactory level of administration. This will in turn enable the organisation to become more stable and state its opinions more effectively and on a continuous basis, thus becoming a more reliable partner for the government.

2. Establish a practice of the ministry and the national youth council, inviting each other – for example, every six months – to exchange information on current matters of interest to the other party, and, as a general move, in order to maintain good working relations between the two parties. Such meetings should be held in an informal atmosphere, and include different ministry staff addressing youth issues and the board and staff of the youth council.

3. Invite the national youth council to express its opinions on an ad hoc basis on all major issues that affect young people, and to propose new measures to existing challenges.

4. Strongly encourage other ministries to be in contact with the national youth council when they are addressing issues with a youth dimension.

5. Involve the national youth council in a selection committee, which selects projects by youth NGOs that will receive financial grants from the government.

41 An administrative grant is meant to cover expenses for office rent, phone and IT equipment, staff salary and other running expenses linked to the general administration of an office.

6. Establish a youth delegate programme within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Upon the nomination of the national youth council, youth delegates should be appointed as official members of the country's delegation to the annual General Assembly of the United Nations.[42] Furthermore, youth delegates should be appointed to other sessions or important meetings of different UN organisations, as well as to other international organisations, where it is deemed relevant or where such a practice exists.

7. If a national youth council does not exist, the government should support youth organisations' own efforts to develop such a body. It is essential, however, that the youth organisations themselves are the initiators of a national youth council and that it is not established as a consequence of government influence or pressure.

An example of a way to encourage the youth organisations to co-ordinate their efforts, which may lead to establishing a national youth council, is what the Youth Minister in Serbia did during the government's process to develop a national youth strategy in 2007-08. She invited the youth organisations to agree on a common statement, a Youth Manifesto, which was then integrated into the national youth strategy as the "voice of young people". This did in fact lead to a renewed effort among the youth organisations to co-operate and to establish a common umbrella structure.

8. One way for the government to consult young people and to get input from youth organisations – regardless of whether a national youth council exists in the country or not – is to organise an annual youth conference, which brings together representatives of the youth organisations, youth researchers and the ministry responsible for youth issues, and also different government agencies and ministries. The objectives for such a conference should be to promote dialogue among youth NGOs and between youth NGOs and government representatives,[43] and give young people the opportunity to provide input into different government processes. An important confidence-building measure that will benefit future relations between the youth NGO sector and the government, could be for the conference to offer space for direct dialogue between the political leadership responsible for youth issues and the youth NGO representatives. If a national youth council does not exist, organising such an annual conference becomes even more important as a means of consulting young people.

9. Another way to ensure youth participation, independently of whether a national youth council exists, is to appoint young people as members of independent commissions or expert groups in order to explore a specific issue or advise the government on a certain policy area. Typically, young people are highly underrepresented in such commissions. But remember that young people are also experts and make up a large segment of a society, and should be included in such commissions and expert groups, even if they do not specifically address youth issues.

---

42 A total of 23 youth delegates from 16 countries participated in the United National General Assembly in 2007.

43 Therefore, it is important that the conference is organised with a dinner and nightly stay-over, which creates an informal atmosphere.

10. A number of governments in Europe have established commissions which advise the government on how state grants to the non-governmental youth organisations (administrative grants as well as project grants) should be distributed. These commissions have a strong representation from the national youth council, or a representative sample of national youth organisations. The idea behind this practice is that representatives of the youth organisations should have a say on how the government allocates funds to the organisations themselves.

These are just some examples of how a government can ensure institutional youth participation in decision making at the national level. All examples are based on existing practices from different European countries, and are therefore realistic and implementable. However, there are also other practices of youth participation in government decision making, so do not let this list limit your imagination! For inspiration, find out more about how different countries involve young people and youth organisations in decision making by visiting web pages of governmental authorities or national youth councils in Europe.

➔ 4.4. Web resources

European Union documents:

The European Commission White Paper "A new impetus for European youth" (2001): http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc26_en.htm

Resolution of the Council of Youth Ministers (1999) on youth participation: http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11604.htm

Communication from the Commission of 5 September 2007 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society: http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11103.htm

Council Resolution on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:141:0001:0003:EN:PDF

Council of Europe:

Final declarations of the European Youth Ministers' Conferences: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/IG_Coop/ministers_conferences_en.asp

Information about the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and follow-up documents: www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/BGKNGE/Participation

United Nations:

United National web portal on youth: www.un.org/youth

United National Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org/crc

Different UN resolutions on youth, including youth participation: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/library.htm#resolutions

Other resources:

What works in youth participation, International Youth Foundation, 2002: www.iyfnet.org/uploads/what_works_in_youth_par.pdf

A web portal on youth participation developed by six large British youth organisations: www.participationworks.org.uk/

The European Youth Forum: www.youthforum.org

Country by country database of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy of the Youth Partnership of the European Commission and the Council of Europe: www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/Country_2007

Some important issues to address when developing and implementing a national youth strategy

This chapter discusses certain issues that will have to be addressed when developing and implementing a national youth strategy. They are based on first-hand observations of national youth strategies in different countries in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Some of these challenges are general and will apply to any country, while others are more specific to countries with a lack of tradition in having a cross-sectoral national youth policy developed within the context of a strong civil society and perceiving young people as a resource.

If the government is taking the initiative to develop a national youth strategy, it is essential that there is a clear commitment and honesty from the start for making a realistic plan, including a budget that makes it possible to implement the strategy. Developing a plan with long-term goals must not become an excuse for not doing anything now!

When it comes to implementing the strategy, there are unfortunately too many examples of excellent plans and strategies in different policy areas that never go beyond the drafting stage. Ensuring that the plan is realistic, involves the

right partners and has sufficient levels of local ownership are essential qualities of a successful strategy.

➜ 5.1. Why do we need a national youth strategy?

Let us first clarify why we believe that a national youth strategy is important and can make a difference for the realisation of youth policy.

Developing a coherent strategy along the lines advocated in this manual is important for a number of reasons. First of all, and most evident, it ensures that there is a medium- or long-term plan for improving the situation of young people, with a set of defined objectives and corresponding measures for each of the objectives. Carrying out a youth policy on an ad hoc basis, on the other hand, makes it more difficult for it to reach its objectives (if they are in fact clearly defined).

Second, a youth strategy ensures youth participation. A well-developed strategy will ensure that young people and non-governmental youth organisations are involved in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation in different policy sectors, in line with what is an established European and international practice laid down in European and international treaties and conventions.

Third, it makes youth policy more flexible. A national strategy makes it possible to prioritise between different objectives and measures for implementing a national youth policy. It makes it possible to adapt the policy to changing political realities and to deal strategically with possible budget increases or cuts.

Fourth, developing a strategy creates wider ownership of youth policy. It is natural to involve different ministries and government bodies that address policy areas that affect young people in developing the strategy, as well as different stakeholder groups that can also play an important role in the implementation phase. Local government should also be involved.

Fifth, ensuring a cross-sectoral dimension to youth policy is much easier with a strategy. An ad hoc policy approach does not make it possible to co-ordinate action between different policy sectors simultaneously, such as health, education, employment and leisure time activities. A strategy makes it possible to develop an integrated youth policy.

Sixth, a youth strategy increases the quality of the measures applied to achieve the goals of youth policy. A strategy makes it possible to plan ahead and make arrangements for future activities, to involve the best possible experts and to carry out necessary research. There are also plenty of examples of how the active participation of young people in all stages of policy creates better solutions for the target group of the policy: young people themselves.

➜ 5.2. Ownership

The most essential challenge in developing a national youth strategy, arguably, is to ensure a wide local ownership. Ensuring a wide ownership to the strategy – both within government and among the non-governmental youth organisations – is absolutely crucial for guaranteeing the implementation of the strategy. One can always hire a small group of international experts to come in and finish the whole strategy in a matter of weeks and assign different responsibilities for its implementation to various government ministries. But when these ministries do not have a

sense of responsibility or natural interest in the strategy and nothing is at stake for them, they will not care whether the strategy succeeds or fails. They will have little interest in its implementation. Likewise, if non-governmental youth organisations do not have ownership of a governmental strategy or action plan for youth, they will be much less likely to contribute to its success. So how can a strong local ownership be guaranteed?

In a discussion on ownership, there are two words that carry particular significance: responsibility and interest. If a ministry or government agency is responsible for a certain action, but has no interest whatsoever in implementing it, there is somewhat less of a guarantee that the task will in fact be carried out. On the other hand, if the same agency has an interest in carrying out the action because it is seen as important or urgent, but does not have the responsibility or authority for carrying it out, there is also a possibility that the outcome will be the same. However, when these two components work together, and there is both a responsibility as well as an interest to carry out the action, it is much more likely to be implemented. The reason for this is that the ministry or agency has developed an institutional ownership, or commitment, to carry out the action. This kind of ownership is also necessary for guaranteeing the implementation of a national youth strategy.

5.2.1. Government ownership

In terms of ensuring government ownership, the first essential thing is that there is an identified governmental body responsible for both the development and the implementation of the national youth strategy. This may sound self-evident, but the fact is that there are examples of national youth strategies being developed in countries where the government made a vague commitment to take part in the process, but where no government authority responsible for the implementation was identified. The message here is: do not start the process of developing a national youth strategy if there is no government authority assigned the responsibility and with the motivation to lead the process. In this context, "government body" means the ministry primarily responsible for youth. Even if youth issues on a day-to-day basis are handled by a directorate or a secretariat, it is important that the ministry takes the lead in the matter of developing a government strategy.

Second, the ministry responsible for the development of the national youth strategy should have a team of experts assigned to the process as their primary task, headed by the national co-ordinator (see section 6.4). If possible, the national co-ordinator should be at the level of senior official, deputy minister or state secretary – someone who has the leverage and capacity to take important decisions and who can contact other ministries if and when it is necessary. Having a group of experts assigned the responsibility to develop the strategy, managed by someone who has the capacity to lead the process, will be absolutely crucial for positive group dynamics and a feeling of ownership of the process.

In the process of developing a national youth strategy in Serbia (2007-08), the inter-ministerial working group of the government consisted of the following 13 ministries:

- Ministry of Youth and Sport
- Ministry for the Diaspora
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Infrastructure
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Science
- Ministry of Government Administration and Local Self-Government
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Economy and Regional Development
- Ministry of Internal Affairs

Third, keep in mind that youth policy is cross-sectoral in nature. It will therefore require budgetary resources for its implementation, in areas that fall under the responsibilities of different governmental bodies. This makes it necessary to involve all ministries which address issues relating to young people. Ensuring that the ownership extends to all those governmental authorities is a real challenge. Developing an inter-ministerial working group or committee (consisting of senior officials other than politicians) will be necessary. As far as possible, try to insist that a small working group is set up in each ministry involved in the national youth strategy development process, rather than leaving all responsibility to the person assigned to the inter-ministerial working group. It will be very difficult to develop ownership of the process in the different ministries if they only have one person involved with it. Furthermore, make sure that the same individuals attend all the meetings of the inter-ministerial working group. This is important since the members will then develop personal bonds and a group dynamic, which will again be favourable for the development of ownership of the national youth strategy process within the different ministries represented in the group.

Fourth, building the capacity of the government to address youth issues breeds ownership. This goes for different government institutions and the different ministries in the government. Involving them with the various thematic working groups that address specific policy areas should therefore be a priority.

Fifth, getting positive media attention for the strategy can promote ownership. If politicians and senior policy decision makers see that the process attracts attention from radio, TV and/or the printed media, the process will be seen as more important. They can then commit time and attention to it more easily. This is good, but it does not in itself indicate strong ownership. However, media attention gives everyone involved in the process a feeling that what they are working on is important and interesting for others. It adds a level of urgency to the work. Someone cares about the strategy we are developing! This creates ownership.

Finally, it is important to involve the highest political levels in order to extend governmental ownership to the process as far as possible. One way to do this is to establish some kind of reporting mechanism to the minister responsible for youth

issues or to the cabinet (depending on the political structures of a country). This will increase the status of the national youth strategy process. Furthermore, involve the minister responsible for youth and any other relevant ministers in government in specific events, such as seminars and conferences, related to the strategy development. Not only will it spark a feeling of responsibility, interest and ownership among the ministers themselves for the continued work of the strategy, but it will also create a feeling of importance and boost the motivation of everyone involved in the process.

5.2.2. Ownership by non-governmental youth organisations

Extending ownership to non-governmental youth organisations is important for obvious reasons. Any government will want to have strong endorsement for a national strategy from the main category of stakeholders that will be affected. If the youth organisations do not have any ownership of a national youth strategy at all, they will easily feel indifferent to it and believe that it is not important. They will most likely not want to contribute to the implementation process, and will not speak favourably about the plan towards the constituency they represent and whose interests they protect: young people. Still more significantly, if young people and youth organisations do not have any ownership of the national youth strategy at all, they may even undermine any prospect of positive development.

So how does one ensure strong ownership of the national youth strategy process among non-governmental youth organisations? The short and obvious answer is: youth participation. By inviting youth organisations to become involved in the process of developing a national youth strategy right from the planning stage, they will develop both a sense of responsibility as well as an interest to contribute. Do not wait until the main objectives of the plan have been defined to involve youth organisations – involve them from the very beginning!

If the country has an independent national youth council, which is recognised as the umbrella association of non-governmental youth organisations in the country, it should not be complicated to involve it from the early planning stages. If there is no national youth council, the government should reach out to the youth organisations through the national media and other methods that will engage the youth NGO sector. Even with a national youth council, the government should have a broad approach to inviting youth NGOs to seminars and conferences, as well as working groups and committees or open consultations, that are part of the national youth strategy development process.

There is one note of caution to a government when it comes to the extent of participation from the non-governmental youth sector, however: do not "give away" the whole strategy development process to the youth organisations, so that they come to dominate all aspects of the planning process, leaving limited space for government representatives and other stakeholder groups to be equally involved. Such a comment may sound misplaced, since more often it is the opposite which is true: that youth NGOs are not sufficiently involved. However, there have been situations where the non-governmental youth sector has come to feel such strong ownership for the youth strategy development process that it has alienated government officials – making them lose their sense of ownership of the process because it has become completely NGO dominated. In other words: encouraging maximum involvement and partnership from a range of different actors in a process to develop a national youth strategy can sometimes be a fine balancing act between governmental and NGO ownership.

5.2.3. Involvement of international organisations

International organisations, UN agencies or other external actors can sometimes exert a strong influence on a national government to develop a national youth strategy, coupled with privileged financial resources for its development. Sometimes, however, with the government agreeing to develop such a strategy, the external actor takes on such a dominant or important role in the development process that the government cannot develop sufficient ownership to actually implement the strategy. In that case, one is stuck with a nice and glossy strategy document, which never really does anything to improve the lives of young people. It is a sad fact that there are many such national strategies, which have been developed as a result of international pressure or influence, but with minimal governmental ownership. In such cases, the plans remain neatly piled on government desks or in closed drawers.

One reason why this happens is that an international organisation, which often contributes both financial resources and expert staff, has its own agenda to promote and its own sponsors or headquarters to report back to. Then, the temptation to influence the content and the speed of developing a national youth strategy can be just too great.

Some simple advice for international organisations…

The following are some simple rules that should be observed by an international organisation or external sponsor involved in the process of developing a national youth strategy, in order to ensure strong local ownership by the government:

- keep in mind that the more direct role you play in the process, the more you will challenge the government's ownership of the plan and commitment to implement it;
- sign a contract with the responsible government body, outlining what the responsibilities are for the different actors involved; and what the government's own contribution to the process will be (both in terms of finance and human resources);
- avoid taking direct part in a steering committee or similar steering body, where you will be seen as one of the responsible actors;
- if you are bringing in external experts as part of the national youth strategy development process, ensure that they will be in direct contact with the government body instead of you, as much as possible, preferably with office space on government premises;
- respect government proposals and decisions that may run contrary to your own wishes, as long as they do not conflict with the overall goals of the national youth strategy;
- accept that the government body may want to include external experts or organisations, other than your own, into the national youth strategy process;
- remember that the national youth strategy development process is a capacity-building exercise, and that the process itself may be just as important as the final product. Accept, therefore, that the process may take more time than first scheduled.

→ 5.3. Process focus versus goal focus

In an article about endurance training in a sports magazine, a very successful coach stressed that the reason why he managed to be so successful with his triathlon students was that he managed to change their focus from being result-oriented to being process-oriented. His philosophy was: if you enjoy the training process, the results will take care of themselves.[44]

We have something to learn from this perspective in relation to policy development, especially when it involves the inclusion of young people in the decision-making process. We have to remind ourselves that in the development of a national youth strategy, the process is in itself important. The process is a capacity-building exercise for both the governmental and non-governmental sectors, and it is also about creating trust and good working relations between these two sectors.

Of course, the final product – the strategy document – is very important. But the process of reaching out to stakeholders and involving them in developing the strategy can have far-reaching positive consequences. And, just as the triathlon coach stressed, if you pay sufficient attention to the process, you will also get the best results. Therefore, ensure that young people, as well as other stakeholder groups, are sufficiently consulted and involved, and that all issues that need to be included in the strategy, are sufficiently addressed. If proper involvement of stakeholders requires you to extend some deadlines and postpone the completion of the strategy document, keep an open mind and a flexible approach. Just remember that if you maintain a process-oriented focus, you are on your way to achieving your goals.

→ 5.4. Confidence, transparency and accountability

A good process will improve mutual confidence and relations between the different stakeholder groups and government ministries that are involved – something that all parties should understand will be in their self-interest. In order to build such confidence and trust among actors in the non-governmental sector, it is important for both government officials and politicians involved in developing the youth strategy to maintain sufficient opportunities for young people and non-governmental youth organisations to be involved. Sincerity and full openness and transparency by politicians and officials are equally important confidence-building measures, as are politicians who show in practice and not only in words that they are accountable to their constituents for promises they make.

Keeping the process transparent means several things. First, it involves spreading information about the process as widely as possible while it is ongoing. What is the strategy about? Who can be involved? What is happening when? Why? Use the different communication channels available: set up a web page, send e-mails, publicise through newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, send regular briefings and press releases to the media.

Second, transparency is about developing, publicising and then sticking to clear guidelines, with set criteria for the recruitment of non-governmental youth organisations, staff and members of different committees and working groups in the national youth strategy process, or clear selection criteria for projects to be funded by limited government grants, and so on. Vacancy announcements and calls for proposals must

44 www.trifuel.com/triathlon/triathlon-training/being-process-focused-vs-results-focused-001475.php

be announced and publicised widely, with sufficient deadlines for the target groups to respond to the calls. Results of selection processes must also be made public.

But transparency is also about being open about the political challenges that a country faces and the willingness to address them in a political strategy. Difficult issues to address often include ethnic minority rights, conditions in orphanages or institutions for mentally challenged young people, issues related to sexual orientation, and other areas where there may be practices which violate human rights. The more openly these issues are addressed, the more a politician and senior officials will be seen to be making an honest effort to change policies and practices for the better.

Transparency breeds accountability. Accountability is about standing firm and sticking to the political promises that have been made towards a constituency. Unfortunately, the political culture in some countries is that politicians very easily make promises (during an election year, in particular) that they know they cannot keep. This has created a lot of mistrust and disillusionment, in particular among young people, towards politicians. The best way politicians can regain people's trust and confidence is by maintaining an open and transparent approach, and by following up on the promises that have been given. In our context, accountability is about sticking to one's promises when it comes to youth participation in both the developmental and implementation stages of the national youth strategy.

➜ 5.5. Legislation

Different countries in Europe have different approaches as to the need for a legislative base, in order to successfully address youth policy. Countries with relatively long traditions in addressing youth policy have chosen different paths, with, for example, Finland having a separate youth law while Norway does not have any such legislation.

Non-governmental youth activists in most of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and in South-East Europe are often strong advocates for adopting a youth law in their countries. "If there is a law on youth," the argument goes, "the government will have to give priority to youth policy". This argument, while it may hold for a certain country under very specific circumstances, does not apply as a general answer or as a magical formula for focusing sufficient attention and resources to youth policy. Undermining the argument is the fact that there are indeed countries with a long-standing youth policy that do not have a specific youth law.[45] There are also countries that have adopted youth laws or strong policy resolutions at a national level, which have not secured the anticipated and desired progress in youth policy.

Howard Williamson, considered to be one of the most prominent current scholars on youth policy in Europe, has expressed his scepticism towards focusing too much on youth legislation as an essential element of a national youth policy. According to Williamson:

> Formal legislation has been viewed by some commentators as an essential prerequisite to credible and committed state youth policy, yet it does not appear to have impeded progress and may sometimes be viewed as too much of a holy grail, demanding too much in the way of political (and financial) guarantees.[46]

45 For example, Norway and the Republic of Slovakia.

46 Williamson, Howard (2008), p. 19.

Williamson also argues that the concept of "youth policy" in itself is a rather abstract policy field and therefore will be difficult to solidify through a concrete legislative provision. One should therefore be wary of focusing too much on the need for legislation on youth, in order to ensure high-quality implementation of youth policy.

→ 5.6. Cross-sectoral co-operation at the governmental level

When the national youth strategy is adopted, it will be the responsibility of the proper government authority responsible for youth to co-ordinate the implementation of the plan. This is most often a ministry or a national youth agency. While youth issues typically do not command an entire ministry of their own, they are, in most countries dealt with by a department within a ministry that also has responsibilities for other issues, such as education, sports, culture, or social affairs.[47] Therefore, we have tried to be consistent in referring to the "ministry responsible for youth" or "youth ministry" in this manual, while the highest political authority responsible for youth is called a "youth minister".

Most European countries (and international organisations concerned with young people) favour a model where there is a national agency for youth issues and youth policy.[48] In some countries, such an agency fulfils the complete role and responsibility of the government on youth issues (in terms of both developing and implementing policy), while in other countries there is both an active ministry responsible for youth and a national youth agency. In cases where a ministry and an agency co-exist, the role of the ministry is usually overall policy formulation and oversight, while the youth agency is allocated specific tasks of youth policy implementation.

However, it is important to anchor the responsibility for youth policy at the ministerial level and have a special unit within the ministry given the concrete task of overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the strategy. This unit should be responsible for submitting regular monitoring reports to the youth minister on a regular basis (for example, every six or nine months).

A successful implementation will depend on a comprehensive horizontal cross-sectoral co-ordination and co-operation between different governmental bodies and ministries that in some way address issues that have an impact on young people. It is absolutely essential to find appropriate ways of ensuring successful inter-ministerial co-operation on a theme such as youth policy, which is so cross-cutting by nature. This task can therefore not be taken seriously enough. Here are a couple of examples of how this can be done.

One way to ensure proper horizontal co-operation at the governmental level is for the youth ministry to initiate the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group of state secretaries from the different ministries that have specific responsibilities within the national youth strategy. An additional move can be to organise regular meetings at the level of senior civil servants. It may also be possible to revise the mandate of the inter-ministerial working group from the national youth strategy development process, which already consists of experts in different ministries who are familiar with the youth policy development process. What is important is that there is regular and constructive dialogue between the different ministries and the political will and ability to implement the strategy.

47 World Bank (2007), p. 215.

48 Williamson, Howard (2008), p. 21.

Another example of how to promote inter-ministerial co-operation can be found in Norway, where the Royal Ministry of Children and Equality is responsible for the inter-ministerial co-ordination of youth policy. Every January (after the approval of the state budget), the ministry releases a comprehensive publication, developed in close co-operation with most ministries in the government, providing an exhaustive overview of how much, and in what concrete areas, each and every ministry spends on issues relating to children and youth in the new budget year. The publication, called *Investing in Children and Youth*,[49] is sent out every year to all municipalities across the country, as well as to non-governmental organisations, and is a widely popular tool in providing an overview for how the government works with children and youth. While the final product has indeed become very popular, the process of developing the publication is useful and important for establishing inter-ministerial networks of civil servants addressing youth issues. It also gives recognition to the ministry responsible for youth policy co-ordination, since the publication shows in a very concrete way that there is indeed a need for some sort of co-ordination in the youth sector.

➔ 5.7. Vertical co-operation at the government level

Implementation of the national youth strategy will also very much depend on a close co-operation between the youth ministry and the level of local government: so-called vertical co-operation. In many ways, youth policy is local. It is the local communities that will feel the consequences of a successful or failed youth policy most immediately, and it is also very often the local level that can take immediate action to improve the situation for young people most urgently. Therefore, maintaining a strong link between these levels is immensely important.

However, in many countries, the municipalities enjoy a strong level of local self-determination and the central government has few opportunities to force the municipalities to implement policy. In such cases, the central government has to "govern by incentive" and by convincing the municipalities that they have much to gain from implementing central government policy. In any case, this way of exerting policy can be the most effective in countries that have a strong central government and limited self-determination at the local level, since the aim is to foster self-interest and thereby local ownership to develop a policy aimed at improving the situation for young people. There are a number of ways in which the central government can use the carrot rather than the stick to get the local authorities on board in implementing the national youth strategy, thereby ensuring a strong vertical governmental co-operation.

First, the national strategy could include some financial incentives for the development of a local youth strategy or for the implementation of the national youth strategy at the local level. Such incentives can be that the central government will pay a percentage of the cost for setting up a youth centre or specific youth services, or will pay half the cost of the salary of a youth expert.

Second, the ministry should take on the responsibility of training staff that are responsible for youth issues in the municipalities at regional and/or national training sessions. Among the topics to be covered are youth participation, improved cross-sectoral co-ordination among different youth services, the value of civil society and the importance of supporting non-governmental youth initiatives.

49 Freely translated from the Norwegian. Unfortunately, the publication is only available in the Norwegian language, at the Norwegian government's website: www.regjeringen.no/en

Third, a national conference which brings together municipal civil servants responsible for youth issues could be held every year, with the purpose of networking, exchanging experiences and in this way developing and expanding the ownership to implement the national youth strategy.

Fourth, concrete guidelines and information of best practice examples are always in great demand and very necessary. Therefore, a manual, a guide, or official documents with national guidelines, could be developed and distributed to all municipalities, informing them of the national youth strategy and of ways in which it should be implemented at the local level. It should be formulated in a way which attracts interest and excitement, with examples of best practices and ideas for involving young people in government decision making.

Study visits should be encouraged and sponsored by the ministry responsible for youth, between different municipalities which express a significant interest in investing in young people and youth policy.

➔ 5.8. Expecting the unexpected

Any country can experience sudden changes that very quickly have a strong impact on the implementation of government policy and strategies of different kinds. This is particularly the case for countries which are in, or have recently been undergoing transition. Such countries may experience a less stable political system, where incoming governments have no interest in pursuing action plans or national strategies which were developed by the previous government. In addition to changes in the political climate, a ministry can also find that a considerable reduction in resources will be available to maintain the youth strategy after it has been implemented. A strategy will have a lifespan of several years, while a state budget is for one year only.

For these reasons, one should make a risk assessment as part of the strategy development. Discuss possibilities and how to deal with them: is it possible that the government will fall after the next elections? If so, how can we ensure that the national youth strategy will survive under a new government? What shall we do if we experience a 50% budget drop for the implementation of the strategy?

There are several ways in which such a risk assessment can have a concrete impact on the youth strategy development process. First, try to get as much bipartisan political support for the youth strategy as possible, by involving the political opposition in the consultation process (for example, the youth branches of all political parties). Second, focus on objectives and outcomes that are more likely to have a lasting impact, or which will be irreversible once they are being implemented. Third, rank the objectives, outcomes and measures of the youth strategy in order of priority, knowing which ones you will have to cut if there is a sudden and/or huge drop in budgetary or the human resources needed to implement the plan.

Setting the stage: planning the strategy development process

There is a long list of issues that should be addressed in advance of starting the NYS development process. Issues related to ownership, accountability and transparency have already been mentioned. This chapter reviews more thoroughly the concrete preparatory steps that need to be considered and decisions that need to be taken before that NYS development process starts.

It also outlines an example of a project design with a number of different working bodies that are deemed appropriate for such a comprehensive process.[50] Furthermore, it presents the different levels of a strategy, how the overall goals can be "broken down" to their smallest components in order to ensure that the activities which will be implemented in the strategy actually correspond to the overall goals and objectives. However, as is emphasised below, this is but one example of developing a national youth strategy.

---

50 This example draws inspiration from the process to develop both the National Youth Action Plan in Montenegro (2004-06) and the National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2007-08), for which the author was responsible for conducting the external monitoring and evaluation.

➜ 6.1. A budget for the national youth strategy development process

In order to carry out a process to develop a national youth strategy, it is essential to allocate budgetary resources. The more resources are allocated to the process, the more participatory it has the potential to be. The budget will cover expenses related to setting up and supporting the structure outlined in this chapter, as well as for organising workshops, conferences and training activities that will be necessary in order to carry out the whole process.

However, the issue of local ownership also comes into play here. An external sponsor/international organisation may offer additional funds for the process to develop a national youth strategy that goes beyond what the national government is interested in. Knowing how difficult it often is to refuse external funding, the risk is that the government may accept this, even if it is in fact opposed to the idea of expanding the process. This may lead to a dramatic loss of governmental ownership of the process, and a reduced government interest in implementing the youth strategy once it is finalised.

The way to solve this issue, if it should arise, is through close dialogue and through an awareness and understanding from the side of the external sponsor of the need to maintain strong government ownership of the process, if it is going to succeed.

➜ 6.2. The need for research

The first important step is to map the situation for young people in the country. The ministry responsible for youth should collect research and analyses that have been carried out in recent years, including surveys and statistical data. The different sets of indicators, or areas, of youth policy that are mentioned in sections 3.1.4. and 3.1.5. can serve as a guide for which areas it is important to gather information on.

If no recent research on the situation of young people has been undertaken, or is available, it is of crucial importance that such research is carried out. It is a government responsibility to commission such research as the first step in developing a national youth strategy.

Even if it is the case that recent research does exist, it can be difficult for government decision makers, stakeholder groups and other interested parties to gather this information. The government should therefore take on the task of developing an overview of existing research, so that it can be brought to the attention of the different working groups on thematic areas that will be covered by the strategy.[51]

As part of mapping the situation for young people in the country, a focus should be on determining which groups of youth live in vulnerable situations created by either current circumstances, political conditions or long histories of social exclusion and discrimination.

➜ 6.3. Identifying the stakeholder groups

Stakeholders are both those who are influenced by and those who exert an influence on the policies and actions that will be part of the national youth strategy, directly or indirectly. It is important to take a broad approach when defining who

51 See Chapter 6.3.

the stakeholders are, since they will all have different expertise and competence to contribute to the process.

As should be self-evident from what you have read so far, young people are the primary target group and thus the key stakeholder group in developing a national youth strategy. Depending on the resources available when developing the strategy, it may or may not be possible to involve young people on a large scale. Recognising the practical difficulties of involving young people directly in the process, however, we have previously discussed the important role of non-governmental youth organisations and the existing European and international practice of consulting with youth NGOs and national youth councils on policy issues that relate to young people.

Other stakeholder groups that are more directly impacted by the youth strategy are parents and school teachers. One should therefore consider involving interest organisations for these groups into the process. Depending on the issues, it may also be relevant to involve a range of different professional groups who have expert knowledge and experience from working with young people. This includes business organisations and trade unions, organisations and authorities involved in areas such as housing and public health, youth workers, social workers, police authorities, counsellors and community leaders.

The category of stakeholders that exert an influence on the policies and actions of the national youth strategy are of course the different government ministries responsible for policies that have a youth dimension to them. This applies also to government agencies and directorates that do not have the status of a ministry. Youth researchers and academics addressing young people may also fall into this category, although they have a much more indirect impact on young people than the government decision makers do.

A stakeholder group which will most likely be affected by the national youth strategy but which may also be able to influence the policies and the actions to be included in it, comprises the international organisations in the country. Different UN agencies also fall into this category.

➔ 6.4. Developing a project design for the process

In order to develop an effective strategy, it is necessary to have a predefined plan of how to involve various stakeholder groups and ministries, while at the same time keeping the process to a tight time schedule. This is what we call the project design for the process.

How comprehensive a project design should be will depend on the resources available. A limited budget and scarce resources allows for a less comprehensive process with fewer working groups, fewer people involved and with a limited consultation. Although a larger budget and more resources for strategy development will make it possible to include a larger number of stakeholders, organise more activities which will involve more young people and so on, there is no formula that says that “bigger is always better”. It is much better to develop a national youth strategy with limited resources than not doing the job at all and a less ambitious project design, which is very cost-efficient may achieve impressive results if it is done right. Therefore, much effort should be put into recruiting the best persons, with a good understanding of how to carry out such a process with the active participation of young people and other stakeholders.

When developing a project design, it is important to keep in mind what it is you want to achieve. You want to develop a strategy of as high quality as possible with the resources you have available, right? What you need to reflect on is identifying the main elements of the strategy development process. No matter if you decide to go for a lighter version, or a comprehensive project design, you need to ensure that the following bullet points are fulfilled. The project design should facilitate and enable:

- a clear formulation of goals, objectives, outcomes, indicators and proposed activities;
- a continuous strong focus on research into the situation of young people;
- a comprehensive analysis of the situation of young people and what can be done in the different policy sectors to provide young people with opportunities;
- an inter-ministerial co-operation and partnership which in turn will lead to a cross-sectoral and integrated youth strategy;
- as comprehensive a consultation process with young people as possible with the resources available;
- the involvement of all different stakeholder groups influencing the situation of young people in society;
- the involvement of municipalities and local government officials which, in the end, will play an important part in the implementation of the strategy; and
- a clear plan for monitoring and evaluating the strategy once it is being implemented.

6.4.1. An example of a comprehensive project design

As mentioned above, a strong budget for a project design will allow for a wide consultation with young people. This should increase the legitimacy of the process and eventually also increase the quality of the strategy and its potential for success. It is therefore important not to underestimate the importance of developing a strong and structured project design. What follows is an example of a comprehensive structure with a countrywide consultation process with young people and relevant stakeholders. As has been stressed earlier in this chapter, it is also possible to develop a national youth strategy on a smaller scale, with a more limited consultation with youth and fewer people involved in the process. The reason why so much space has been given to present one example of a comprehensive project design in the *Youth Policy Manual* is that this model has proved successful when implemented in real life. This does not mean, however, that it is not possible to do it in other ways. So let the example presented here be a source of inspiration and information, rather than a blueprint for how it should be done!

Regardless of whether the project design is as comprehensive as suggested in this manual, or more limited, it will consist of different elements, which together form a structure. Two issues need to be clarified for each and every element of the structure. First, a mandate, outlining the detailed responsibilities and tasks, describing how this specific element of the structure fits in with the rest of the project design: the reporting mechanism must be clear and who receives instructions and/or feedback and from where. Second, a list of selection criteria for members of the different working bodies must be established.[52] Documents should be developed outlining the manner in which the different bodies of the structure will work together and

52 This does not include the position of national co-ordinator, which is appointed by the government. For the inter-ministerial committee, a mandate plus personal requirements for the position must be developed, while the representatives (and their substitutes) will be selected/appointed by their respective ministries.

what the selection criteria will be. This text must of course be open and transparent, accessible for anyone who wants to see and examine it.

If a national youth council exists, it is advisable to invite it to take part in elaborations on what the project design should be and how the different bodies can function together in the best way possible.

National co-ordinator

A comprehensive project design will need a clear and strong management. In the model described here, this role is given to a national co-ordinator who will manage the overall development of the strategy and the secretariat and prepare and chair the meetings of the steering committee and the inter-ministerial working group (see below). The co-ordinator will also be in contact with donors and relevant bodies and maintain contact with other governmental ministries and agencies.

The national co-ordinator should preferably be the deputy minister or state secretary in the ministry responsible for youth, or a senior government official within the ministry with direct links to the political leadership. Alternatively, such a role can be carried out by a taskforce or a small group of managers working together in partnership.

A reporting mechanism should exist, in which the national co-ordinator reports regularly to the youth minister or to the government/cabinet, depending on the practice in the respective country. This will keep the minister directly informed about the process.

Secretariat

A separate secretariat under the management of the national co-ordinator should be set up within the ministry responsible for youth. The secretariat will have a range of tasks, including:

- being responsible for the collection and synthesis of information, data and research which give an overview of the situation for young people in the country; and making this available to the co-ordinators of the thematic working groups;
- ensuring good communication links with the different parts of the structure;
- monitoring the different parts of the structure and ensuring that they perform the tasks they are allocated to do;
- following up tasks assigned to it by the steering group, through the national co-ordinator;
- managing the budget of the process;
- managing a publicity campaign (including design, production and distribution of promotion material) and maintaining close contact with the media;
- managing the consultation process with young people and different stakeholder groups;
- maintaining contact with governmental bodies and international organisations;
- administering the process to have the strategy adopted by the government.

It is important that the persons working in the secretariat are physically located together, allowing them to develop close working relations. They should be located within the premises of the ministry. If they are not already ministry employees, they should be encouraged to develop an identity as ministry employees, developing a strong ownership of the process of developing the national youth strategy.

Steering committee

The steering committee is the highest decision-making authority on the development of the national youth strategy, within the mandate given by the minister responsible for youth. The steering committee should be chaired by the national co-ordinator, but consist of an equal number of non-governmental representatives and government representatives – at most 10 persons. These people must be experienced and highly dedicated, having been appointed as individuals[53] in order to ensure consistency and personal ownership of the process.

A specific mandate outlining the responsibilities of the steering committee, working methods, frequency of meetings, decision-making mechanisms, and so on should be made public at an early stage, together with a list of the selection criteria for being considered as a member of the group.[54] The steering committee members are then formally appointed by the ministry of youth.

The non-governmental representatives of the steering committee can be nominated by the national youth council, if it exists as a way of giving the youth council legitimacy as a representative body for the youth NGOs.[55] Alternatively, the selection can be done directly by the ministry based on the list of selection criteria.

Among the governmental representatives, different alternatives should be discussed. One possibility is that two steering committee members should come from the youth ministry (including the national co-ordinator) while the other three are recruited from other ministries.

The steering committee should aim to reach consensus in all its decisions. If a vote has to take place, however, the vote of the national co-ordinator should count as double.

Inter-ministerial working group

The inter-ministerial working group should consist of representatives from all those ministries that have an impact on young people through their policies. This will at least include ministries of education, health, culture, justice and labour, and a number of other ministries, depending on domestic circumstances and the local context.

The members of the working group should be personally appointed (with a deputy) by each ministry, in order to avoid a situation where different ministry representatives attend different meetings. Each ministry should also establish a group or unit responsible for following up the commitments which the respective ministries are taking on, to ensure a wider ownership of and responsibility for the process.

The inter-ministerial working group will have several tasks. First, it should ensure that the national youth strategy is harmonised with legislation and policy strategies

53 A mechanism should be in place stressing that a person automatically has to resign his/her seat on the committee if s/he is absent from a certain number of meetings.

54 If a national youth council exists, it should be consulted in the process of developing selection criteria for the steering committee members.

55 Certain requirements can, for example, be that there should be at least two of each gender, that they should all come from different (categories of) organisations and all be between 15 and 25 years old.

in the respective ministries. Second, the members of the group should be responsible for analysing strategies, action plans, research and legislation relevant to their respective ministries, and pass this on to the thematic working groups. Finally, members of the inter-ministerial working group should ensure that drafts of the national youth strategy are shared with senior officials and the political leadership of the different ministries, provide feedback on the drafts back to the group, and work to ensure that the final youth strategy document is adopted by consensus in the government or cabinet of ministers.

Thematic working groups

The most important participation of the different stakeholder groups in the process of developing a national youth strategy will take place in the different thematic working groups. There should be several working groups, if possible corresponding to the number of policy areas/priorities that are identified as main objectives of the strategy.

The thematic working groups will play an important role in the process, as they should have the following tasks:

- receiving background information and research on the situation of young people in the country from the youth ministry/secretariat of the national youth strategy process, which can be supplemented by additional investigation from the working groups;
- producing a report outlining existing needs, challenges and opportunities in every priority area of the strategy;
- formulating clear goals, objectives and outcomes, in accordance with results from the objective development seminar (see below);
- formulating results-oriented indicators for each and every outcome;
- proposing activities that are in line with the result-oriented indicators;
- establishing baseline indicators for each and every result-oriented indicator.

Much attention should be given to recruiting members for these working groups, as well as co-ordinators. The defining criteria for membership should be competence, experience and knowledge, as well as recruiting people from diverse backgrounds, different stakeholder groups and different geographical parts of the country. One should consider how many people it will be practical to have in each and every group, since there will be challenges as well as benefits arising from smaller or larger groups.

Recruitment of the working group co-ordinators deserves special mention. The co-ordinators will be responsible for drawing on the competence of working group members, bringing together all the information and data on the different priorities and writing the reports. They will also be responsible for developing a consensus with group members on the formulation of everything from goals and objectives to baseline indicators. This will require the co-ordinators to work full-time for a limited period of time.

A budget should be set aside for covering travel costs of the members of the different working groups, as well as for honorariums for the working group co-ordinators. Providing financial compensation for working group co-ordinators usually achieves the best results possible, keeping in mind the substantial amount of work these co-ordinators typically carry out. Depending on the length of time the working groups will be active, other kinds of recognition and reward could also be considered, such as participating in a study visit or getting one's name on a publication.

Strategy formulation expert team

This team should consist of two experts with experience in drafting policy documents and legislation. It can possibly be one of the responsibilities of the secretariat, but can also be established as a separate team. The purpose of this team is to develop one final document, which is the national youth strategy. Before getting there, the expert team will bring together all results and documentation from the thematic working groups, and develop a draft national youth strategy, which will be the basis for a consultation. The expert team will then incorporate comments and input from the consultation process into a revised draft. This draft will then again be discussed among the different parts of the structure, including the thematic working groups and the inter-ministerial working group, before a final version of the strategy is developed.

Local consultation partners

In order to ensure that young people across the country who are not involved in non-governmental youth organisations get an opportunity to take part in the strategy development process, as well as stakeholders at the local level, there should be a mechanism for bringing the consultation process down to the level of municipalities and regions.

The example presented here suggests establishing a network of local partners. The local partners, or "local consultation partners" (LCPs), will have two important roles. First, they will be responsible for organising consultation activities in a predefined number of municipalities. Such activities may be round tables with different stakeholder groups, focus groups with young people, in-depth interviews with disadvantaged young people and activities within the confines of the school system. Second, the LCPs should also carry out awareness raising and publicity events, where the focus should be on the strong participative nature of the process, and the right of young people and stakeholders to be involved in the policy-making process.

Appointing LCPs is a way to empower and provide training and recognition to local non-governmental youth organisations, as well as a way to increase their capacities and skills. They should be selected through an open competition. The youth NGOs should receive training and close follow-up on how to conduct the consultations in a proper manner and how to report back to the secretariat. Each consultation partner should receive a small budget for organising activities related to their responsibilities, on which they will report back to the ministry.

The number of LCPs that should be established will vary. If there is an intention to organise a comprehensive consultation with young people at the local level throughout the country, it will be necessary for a larger number of LCPs. The size of the consultation is in turn partly determined by available time and financial and human resources. Each LCP can be responsible for organising round tables, consultations and activities in five or six different towns or places. This means that 30 LCPs may be able to reach out to a total of 150-180 locations. That is impressive!

Depending on the number of LCPs that are planned in order to involve the local level, one should consider setting up some regional support units, which will be responsible for providing support, expertise and any other assistance required by the LCPs. Each such monitoring and support unit should be able to provide support for a number of consultation partners.

Stakeholder advisory committees

The different parts of the structure that have been mentioned up until now are judged to be important in order to develop a national youth strategy with the participation of young people.

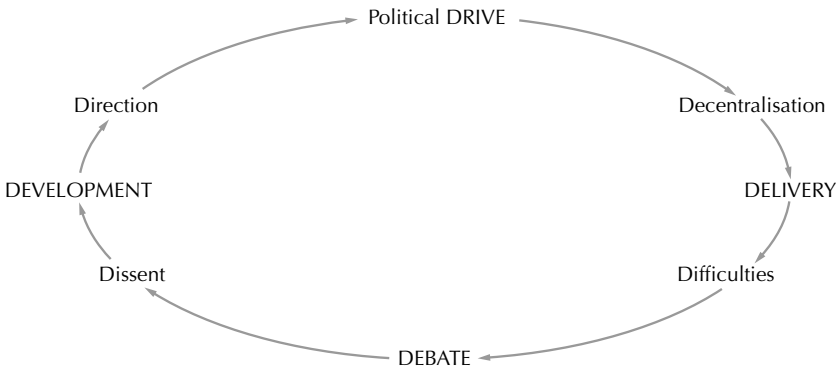
Depending on financial and personnel resources, establishing a number of so-called stakeholder advisory committees is also recommended. The role of these committees can be flexible. But should include giving input on goals, objectives and outcomes as participants of the objective development seminar (see section 6.4.), as well as providing feedback on the different drafts of the youth strategy document.

Stakeholder advisory committees will allow for a more comprehensive consultation of different categories of stakeholders, some of which may otherwise show a very limited involvement in the process. It will also encourage closer co-operation among stakeholders within the different categories. Examples of possible stakeholder groups include:

- non-governmental youth organisations;
- youth branches of political parties;
- local government authorities;
- entrepreneurs and the business community;
- international organisations.

→ 6.5. Drawing the time line

Some experts present the process of developing a youth strategy as a horizontal time line which goes from start to finish: you may start by reflecting on the need for a national youth strategy; then go through all the development stages and end up with a finished plan. There is nothing wrong with such an approach – in fact, it is the one that is being taken in this manual. For the sake of reflecting on the process, however, it is also useful to perceive it as a continuous cycle of youth policy development.[56] It is possible to enter into the cycle at any given point, and it will lead ultimately to a youth policy strategy. It runs clockwise in the following model:



56 Williamson, Howard (2002), p.123.

In this cycle, youth policy is developed through elaboration, debate and dissent. The finished youth policy strategy then points out a direction for action, which leads to a political drive for implementing the strategy. The next step is to clarify which actors will implement which parts of the policy strategy (decentralisation), followed by the actual implementation, or delivery. As the implementation of the strategy will eventually experience difficulties (since policy is never developed in a static environment, there will always need to be changes), this will generate a new debate, which will eventually lead to a revision of policy or the development of a new strategy.

But let us return to the practical planning stage and the issue of time. As part of the early planning process, it is necessary to develop a time line or a schedule, as well as determine some specific dates for when certain stages will be achieved or passed. This will both increase transparency and help build confidence in the process, and it will be a valuable planning tool.

How long does it take to develop a national youth strategy? Hard to tell for sure. But considering that the process should be participatory and comprehensive, and include both a strategy document and a supplementary action plan, one should plan for a process that lasts at least one year.[57]

When setting the time line for developing the youth strategy, it is important to consider possible obstacles, which may cause the process to take longer than expected. For example, take into account the holiday periods and that policy processes have a tendency of slowing down during the summer season. Trying to be over-ambitious may backfire! Furthermore, if you live in a country with a challenging topography, with some regions being hard to reach in wintertime, avoid organising the consultations at times when the roads are snow-covered and mobility is reduced.

➜ 6.6. Different levels of a strategy

As part of the preparation process, it is important to become familiar with the different elements of the national youth strategy that should be in place. Yes, the youth strategy can also include a comprehensive overview of the needs, challenges and opportunities for young people, but this is basically background information. The real strategy is the part of the document that outlines the goals and objectives, which, through an interactive and participatory process together with stakeholders, are "broken down" into the smallest concrete and measurable components possible. These are the different levels of the strategy.

The components of a strategy formulated below are taken from a strategy development methodology called Logical Framework Approach (LFA). This methodology is much used in development work and by international organisations, and we find it to be a logical way of developing a strategy in which the goals are closely connected to the specific activities that are proposed.[58] However, there are also other approaches to strategic development which can be very useful in strategy development, which use similar methods of breaking down goals and objectives to their smallest measurable components.

57 The process to develop the National Youth Action Plan in Montenegro took exactly two years, while the more time-efficient process in the Republic of Serbia took a little more than a year once the process really started.

58 For more information on LFA, see the section on web resources at the end of this chapter.

It is essential that everyone who is involved in the strategy development process is familiar with these different levels, in particular the strategy formulation expert group, the inter-ministerial working group and the co-ordinators and members of the thematic working groups. A workshop with skilled trainers on LFA methodology should therefore take place at an early stage in the process.

Vision

The highest abstract perception of what you want to achieve, where your strategy will only be a small but important piece of the puzzle. As opposed to the goals, the vision does not have to be concrete and easily measurable, and can be more of a political statement. The vision should be formulated as a final state/condition.

Goal

A crystallisation of the vision, which outlines what you want to achieve with this specific strategy. The goal is the overall long-term objective that the national youth strategy will help to achieve. The full achievement of the goal, however, will depend on other factors than just the strategy.

There should be one set of goals for the whole strategy, formulated as one comprehensive statement. It is important that the goals are concrete and achievable.

Objectives

The objectives are the concrete purposes for why the strategy is needed. This is where you outline the concrete prioritised policy areas where the youth strategy will work to achieve the goals you have set.

Limit yourself to only one (or possibly two) objective(s) for each priority policy area that you will include in the strategy. This will make the strategy more realistic and achievable.

Ensure that each objective:

- includes the target group in the formulation,
- is directly related to the goal,
- is achievable within the strategy,
- is realistic – meaning that it is likely to occur once the strategy outcomes have been achieved,
- is formulated as a desired end, and not as a process.

Example of an objective:

- A system is in place which ensures that non-governmental youth organisations are consulted by the government on a regular basis, on issues that affect the youth organisations themselves as well as young people…

Outcomes / Expected results

What do you want to achieve with this strategy? Outcomes are concrete results which refer specifically to one objective. The outcomes are the underlying causes for the objective, and there are usually several outcomes for each objective. In other words: achieving the outcomes that relate specifically to an objective greatly increases the possibility of success in achieving the objective.

Ensure that each formulated outcome:

- is fully achievable within the strategy,
- is directly linked to one of the objectives,
- is formulated in the past tense (as if it has been achieved),
- can be seen as a necessary means to achieve the objective.

Examples of outcomes:

- a selection committee with the task to assess and select project applications by non-governmental youth organisations to be funded by the youth ministry has been established, where the non-governmental youth organisations are also represented;
- the youth ministry has on a regular basis invited representatives of the national youth council to discuss relevant policy issues and taken the youth council's opinions into account;
- the youth ministry has organised annual conferences which have brought together representatives from the whole youth NGO sector, and put important policy issues on the agenda;
- a youth delegate programme has been established within the ministry of foreign affairs, which has recruited two youth delegates every year as full members of the national delegation which attended the UN General Assembly.

Indicators

The indicators are tools to measure your success in achieving the outcomes (and thereby also your objectives and goal). It is therefore most feasible to develop the indicators first, before going down to the level of developing activities. Once you have well-developed indicators, it is rather easy to decide on the activities necessary to implement the strategy.

The indicators must be SMART, meaning that they should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant and realistic
- Time-specific.

The fact that an indicator should be measurable does not necessarily mean countable. There are two kinds of indicators: direct indicators (easily measurable) and proxy indicators (or best approximation indicators). Political participation is an example of something that is difficult to measure. Examples of proxy indicators to measure political participation are participation in elections, attendance in public demonstrations and participation in non-governmental organisations.

There are three dimensions of measurements, and a set of indicators should include all three dimensions:

- quality
- quantity
- time.

The aim is to get the most accurate indicators for the lowest level outcomes, since these will then apply for objectives and goals as well.

Furthermore, all indicators must:

- reflect a fact rather than subjective opinion,
- be based on obtainable data,
- be objectively verifiable (meaning that different persons using the same measuring process independently of one another should achieve the same results),
- be realistically achievable. (Indicators which, after consideration of costs and usefulness, are found to be too expensive, must be replaced by simpler and cheaper indicators.)

Examples of indicators:

- the youth ministry has organised every August a preparatory meeting for the annual youth NGO conference with representatives of the national youth council, where the overall theme of the conference and the topics for discussion have been agreed jointly by the ministry and the national youth council representatives;
- the youth minister, as well as more than 100 representatives of diverse non-governmental youth organisations, have attended the youth ministry's youth NGO conference, organised every November since the year 20xx, where important youth policy issues have been discussed;
- more than 75% of evaluations by participants attending the annual youth NGO conference state that they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the conference.

Activities

Activities are the specific actions that will be carried out to achieve each indicator. There should be at least one activity per indicator.

The activities included in the strategy should be target-oriented, in that they focus on achieving a specific strategy output. Routine administrative tasks should therefore not be listed.

Note that the strategy should provide an overview of activities needed. The activities themselves should not be outlined in the strategy, this should be a separate exercise carried out by the ministry.

Baseline data

For a number of the indicators, baseline data will need to be identified in order to be able to measure progress. What is the reality, on the ground, at the moment the strategy starts to be implemented? In many instances, baseline data will be provided in the form of statistics and research on young people. However, on some occasions, it may be necessary to carry out additional research or conduct a survey among different stakeholder groups during the process to develop the strategy, in order to establish necessary baseline data.

It is important that baseline data exists for each and every indicator in the strategy. Indicators for which there are no such data will indeed have very limited usefulness, and should be avoided.

→ 6.7. Developing a publicity and communications plan

Having access to the media can make a great difference to the development of the national youth strategy. Sufficient press coverage will send a message to young

people that the government does prioritise youth policy, and it will increase the public awareness of issues relating to young people in general. As we have seen from the previous discussions in this chapter about ownership, confidence building and accountability, getting positive media attention for the youth strategy can make a big difference.

So how should one proceed when developing the youth strategy in order to get much wanted and needed media attention? There is of course no simple answer, but one thing is certain: careful planning and continuous effort greatly improve the chances of getting publicity. What is needed is a separate communications plan.

Developing a communications plan should be the subject of a separate workshop organised before or at the very early stages of the national youth strategy development process. It should include the different stakeholder groups, in order to draw on past experiences and particular expertise of individuals. Representatives from the press and professionals on media publicity should be invited to give their input. The workshop should also identify the specific training needs (how to appear before a camera, how to write a press release and so on).

What a communications plan should consist of will depend on the national context, but it should at least address the following issues:

- What is the message you want to communicate? Develop a slogan and be clear on what makes the national youth strategy process different from other policy processes.
- Who are the target groups for the information you want to communicate, and which media reaches out best to them? Which media should be targeted specifically?
- How to communicate with the media on their terms – reporters and journalists should be approached directly and ahead of time.
- Each event should have a "press package" attached to it (sending out press releases and information well ahead of time, and so on).
- In addition to the minister responsible for youth, identify politicians and "celebrities" who can support and endorse the youth strategy publicly, for example, at a press conference, or at the launch of the finished strategy document.
- Timing is key. Contact media sufficiently ahead of time. Organise your activities so that they do not clash with other important events. Never hold press conferences on a Friday afternoon!

Identify a spokesperson who will be responsible for contact with the media.

A budget should be set aside for producing publicity material related to the national youth strategy development process.[59] Such material will create a level of professionalism, status and recognition, and can be a valuable way to reach out to people with information about the process of developing a national youth strategy.

The secretariat should also be responsible for producing a newsletter on a regular basis, which should be distributed to all different working bodies that are part of the structure, as well as to government authorities, non-governmental youth organisations, representatives of the press – and the young people who sign up for a free copy through the Internet website.

59 Such material can be everything from pens and pencils, stationery, folders and posters to t-shirts and bags.

➔ 6.8. Monitoring and evaluation

It is a sad reality that monitoring and evaluation of the national youth strategy is something that is often neglected, or at least not given the attention that it deserves. Many governments spend significant resources in order to develop the national youth strategy and get it adopted by the government, only to put it back on the shelf or in the drawer once the mechanisms for implementing the strategy are in place.

Developing a strategy with the different levels outlined above, however, is a strategy tailor-made for monitoring and evaluation. The national youth strategy should include a text on monitoring and evaluation, where it is outlined how the strategy will be monitored and when and how a midterm evaluation and a final evaluation will take place.

Monitoring is the continuous or periodic surveillance of the implementation of the strategy. It should take the format of regular progress reports produced by the youth ministry, where not only the physical progress of the strategy, but also the impact of the project and any changes in the external environment are monitored. In addition to being important for the evaluation, such regular progress reports are especially useful whenever there is a change of staff, management or decision makers who are involved in implementing the strategy.

At a certain predefined point, a midterm evaluation should be carried out. The midterm evaluation should preferably be carried out by an external team of experts, who assess the physical progress and achievements of the strategy as well as the goals and the different elements of the strategy. Another objective of the midterm evaluation is to recommend any adjustments in the project design, or revise the ambitions of the strategy based on experiences learned, or due to factors in the external environment or other conditions.

A final evaluation is an independent assessment of the strategy, which should be carried out by an external team of experts. Its purpose is to assess the quality of the work that has been done, to the extent to which the goals and objectives of the strategy have been achieved, and to document the process, so that others can learn from the experience.

The national youth strategy should express clearly that the different stakeholder groups will have a central role in both the midterm and final evaluations of the strategy. One way to ensure this is to outline the criteria for the establishment of an evaluation reference group, to be set up when it is time for the midterm evaluation. The reference group should consist of representatives of the main stakeholder categories.

➔ 6.9. A strategy document and an action plan

An issue that also comes up in the planning phase when carrying out preparations for developing a youth strategy is what the final product should look like. Should there be one comprehensive strategy document that includes “everything”, or should the process lead to the development of both an overall strategic document and an action plan for the shorter term?

There are strong arguments for supporting the second option, namely to develop one long-term strategy and one action plan. The reasons for doing so are logical as well as practical.

First, a national youth strategy should have a longer time span than the action plan. While the action plan may be developed for a three-year period, the overall strategy should outlast two or even three action plans, meaning that the strategy should preferably last for eight to ten years.

Second, if the strategy and the action plan are merged into one document, the whole strategy will have to be approved by government every time a new action plan is developed. It is more logical to get the approval of the overall strategy by the government. The approval of the consecutive action plans can then be taken at ministry level.

The overall strategy document should, of course, be the main focus of the national youth strategy development process and be subject to a wide consultation with young people and different stakeholder groups. This document should include a comprehensive situation analysis of the different policy areas that are covered by the strategy, and outline the overall goals, objectives and outcomes. The strategy should emphasise how disadvantaged/less privileged young people in particular are targeted within the strategy. There should also be a separate chapter outlining how the strategy will be monitored and evaluated.

The action plan should, in addition to outlining goals, objectives and outcomes, include indicators and activities for all outcomes. It should also include baseline data and an overall (two or three year) budget. The different thematic working groups, the inter-ministerial working group and any stakeholder advisory committees should be involved in the process of developing indicators and activities. Specific workshops should be organised for the different thematic policy areas in order to work on this technical task. A more detailed annual budget, to be approved as part of the state budget, should also be included in the action plan.

➜ 6.10. Web resources

The use and abuse of the Logical Framework Approach, SIDA, 2005: www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=LFA-review.pdf&a=21025

The Logical Framework Approach: a summary of the theory behind the LFA methodology, SIDA, 2004: www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=SIDA1489en_web.pdf&a=2379

Logical Framework Approach: handbook for objectives-oriented planning, NORAD 1999: www.norad.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=1069

Ten steps to national youth policy formulation, United Nations Youth Portal: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/nationalpolicy.htm

The web page of the National Youth Strategy in Serbia 2008, where the strategy document and the external evaluation can be downloaded in English: www.zamislizivot.org

Developing a youth strategy in seven stages: an example

So far, the manual has focused on background information or issues that need to be taken into consideration for a government to successfully launch the process of developing a national youth strategy. This chapter is more concrete: it goes through the different stages of developing the strategy, from the first concrete preparations until the strategy is finished and submitted for approval by the relevant government body.

The example of a project design outlined in this chapter includes a comprehensive participatory process with different government agencies, civil society and with young people across the country, in order to develop a government policy strategy. It is this significance of the process which gives it its legitimacy and the strong ownership which, once again, is necessary in order to ensure successful implementation of the strategy. This is not the ordinary manner in which a government strategy is developed. However, we have argued that the development of a policy for young people requires extraordinary measures because of its cross-sectoral nature, and that it is necessary to bring young people and youth organisations into the process.

It has already been mentioned, but we repeat it again here: the project design

outlined in this chapter is indeed comprehensive. Some readers may even be alarmed and feel that they cannot develop a national youth strategy because they do not have the resources available to establish the structure suggested in this guide. The example below proved successful, and we therefore find it useful to share it in this manual. It should also be mentioned that although the structure seems very formalistic and complicated, with all its working groups and committees, there is a clear logic in the project design. Therefore, rather than focusing on the complexity of the example, let it be a source for ideas, inspiration and guidance for further enhancing youth policy.

→ 7.1. Stage 1: early preparations

Arguably, the most significant step in preparing for a comprehensive and participatory process to develop a national youth strategy is to adopt a budget.[60]

Get an overview of existing research on young people (about their living conditions, challenges, needs, and so on) including publications and surveys on young people and statistical data, which have been carried out in the last few years. If there is very limited research available, the government should consider commissioning research to be undertaken well before the national youth strategy process is due to be carried out.

Furthermore, find out about the state of development of youth policy in neighbouring countries and obtain information about their national youth strategies, if they have one. Also, become familiar with European and international documents outlined in this publication. Finally, get an overview of previous action plans that have recently been developed in your own country, in particular if they have had a participatory process linked to them. See if it is possible to learn something from them.

The national co-ordinator should be appointed as early as possible, and a specific secretariat for the national youth strategy process should be set up. The national co-ordinator should then invite the national youth council (if it exists) to participate in elaborations on project design ("how do we do this, and by when") and the selection criteria for members of the steering committee. The national youth council should also be consulted on the different working bodies that should be established within the process, as well as the selection criteria for their recruitment. Consider also the time line for the process, and avoid collisions between the national youth strategy process and other important dates or periods of the year. If there is no existing national youth council, the ministry should invite the major stakeholders – in particular non-governmental youth organisations – to an open meeting where they can give their input on the above issues.

Other preparations that need to be initiated at this stage are:

- invite other ministries to become involved in the process;
- carry out the recruitment process for members of the steering committee;
- determine how to reach out to different stakeholder groups that should be able to join;
- clarify training needs to the extent possible (both within the secretariat and within other working bodies that will be part of the structure);
- identify accomplished trainers on strategy development and stakeholder participation processes, invite them to become involved;

60 Refer to Appendix 1 for an example of budget items that should be considered when setting up a budget.

- develop a media plan/press strategy;
- start concrete preparations for an objective development seminar;
- contact international organisations present in your country and ask if they can provide financial support and/or expertise;
- start reflecting on monitoring and evaluation.

→ 7.2. Stage 2: getting started and the first consultation

This is the stage where the different working bodies in the NYS process are actually established. The first concrete step is to define the areas that will be included in the youth strategy, as well as the goals and objectives. The way this should be done is to organise an "objective development seminar", where the different stakeholders take part. This will constitute the first consultation. It is important that attention is given to inviting both youth organisations and other categories of stakeholders to the objective development seminar, since their opportunity to be involved at this stage will determine their feeling of ownership of the rest of the process.

Such an activity should take two full working days (or a weekend), and introduce participants to the NYS process, making them feel a part of "something bigger". Workshop methodology should be both working group focused and plenary discussions. A valuable tool in order to help identify goals and objectives is to involve the participants in developing a "problem tree" on the first day, which is then converted into an "objective tree".[61]

This seminar should be seen as the "launch event" of the NYS process, and should be given significant attention from the government side. It is also a good opportunity to invite the press.

Beyond the objective development seminar, other significant steps that should be taken at Stage 2 are to:

- establish the steering committee;
- establish the inter-ministerial working group;
- once the main objectives of the strategy are agreed, send out a call for applications for co-ordinators of the thematic working groups and finalise their recruitment;
- carry out the recruitment process of members of the thematic working groups, paying attention to include representatives from both government and non-governmental youth organisations;
- carry out the recruitment process for local consultation partners;
- carry out the recruitment process for the stakeholder advisory committees.

→ 7.3. Stage 3: the second consultation

While the consultation in the previous stage reached out to the different stakeholder groups and civil society organisations, the purpose of the second consultation is to reach out further – to young people and different stakeholder groups at the local

61 Facilitators familiar with the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) methodology should carry out such a training session. For more guidance on how to organise a workshop which focuses on developing a "problem tree" which is then turned into an "objective tree", you can download SIDA's very user-friendly LFA manual at www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=SIDA1489en_web.pdf&a=2379 entitled *The Logical Framework Approach: a summary of the theory behind the LFA methodology*, SIDA, 2004.

level. Their feedback will in turn contribute to the drafting of the first youth strategy document. At this stage, the non-governmental youth organisations which were previously selected to be local consultation partners (LCPs) will play a central role. Efforts should be taken to get national media attention to the NYS process at this time, and it will be important that the youth minister fronts the process publicly.

When the process has been started up and agreement has been reached on goals, objectives and the different areas that the youth strategy should cover, a two-day (weekend) workshop should be organised, with all the LCPs.[62] The purpose of this workshop is twofold. First, it should familiarise the LCPs with the process of developing the national youth strategy, inform them about what has been done so far and the important role that they play in the process. Second, the LCPs should receive draft guidelines for how they should organise the consultation at the local level. The guidelines should be discussed among the participants and then be finalised and agreed to by all at the end of the workshop.[63]

The reports from the consultation partners, with concrete input from the consultations they have conducted, will be an important contribution to the draft strategy. In order for the reports to be as useful as possible, they must be carefully developed before the consultation phase starts. The format of these reporting forms should therefore be discussed and decided upon with the LCPs at the workshop.

It is important that the government (youth ministry) gives sufficient attention and publicity to the workshop with the LCPs. This is when the partners will gain their ownership of the process, and a successful consultation will depend on their strong ownership. As part of this effort, and as a move to increase the recognition and support for the non-governmental youth organisations, the youth ministry should consider producing letters of endorsement to the LCPs which they can use when approaching local authorities and different stakeholder groups. Another move that should be considered by the ministry is to send out a letter to the mayors of all the municipalities in the country and ask for their support for the process.

The LCPs should be instructed to organise (at least) two different events in each of the different areas/municipalities which they are responsible for. One event should target local stakeholder groups, such as the municipal government administration, local police and health officials, parents, teachers and non-governmental youth organisations. It could take the form of an open meeting or a round table discussion. The other event should be a consultation with young people only, as the main target group for the youth strategy. It should also be easier to communicate with young people in a setting where they are not "surrounded" by adults or local officials.[64]

It would be beneficial to have a publicity and awareness-raising campaign going on at a national as well as a local level during this consultation phase. This should bring the strategy to the attention of the central media as well as TV stations and newspapers at the state and regional levels and in the municipalities. Visibility in the media will enhance the status of the strategy work and create an atmosphere

62 The number of LCPs will depend on how comprehensive a consultation process the government is interested in and for which there are financial resources.

63 It is important that the guidelines for the LCPs are in fact finally approved by them; this will give them a higher level of ownership of the guidelines and the process.

64 One might even consider organising one consultation for youth aged 15-20 and one for youth aged 20-25.

of recognition and importance. As part of the campaign, PR and publicity material should be produced and distributed through the LCPs, as well as through the thematic working groups (TWGs), the stakeholder advisory committees, non-governmental youth organisations and at press conferences.

The local consultation partners will have played their most important role in the NYS process when they have submitted their reports with feedback into the strategy process back to the secretariat. However, it is important to be aware of the important resource the LCPs constitute, and that they can be great benefit to the future of the strategy. A huge momentum will have been created within the non-governmental youth organisations and within their local communities, and they will (hopefully and most likely) have received more recognition for their work and increased interest from other young people to join. Make sure therefore that the LCPs continue to receive information about progress of the strategy, and consider using them more actively in advertising for the strategy. Also, try to find ways of supporting them after the NYS development process is over.

→ 7.4. Stage 4: developing the first draft

After the goals and objectives of the national strategy have been defined, and comprehensive input has been channelled back from the local consultation partners to the secretariat, it is time for the comprehensive task of developing a first draft document.[65] The TWGs will play the most central role here, guided by their co-ordinators.

Each of the working groups should be assigned one theme and a strategic objective, and be chaired by a co-ordinator who is particularly knowledgeable on the assigned theme. The working groups' first task will be to get a comprehensive overview of their respective themes (for example, on youth employment, or on education) and develop a situation analysis. Research, surveys and statistics should be the basis for such an analysis, together with all the feedback from the comprehensive consultation phase. The government representatives in the inter-ministerial working group should contribute by submitting relevant material from their respective ministry to the working group co-ordinators. In addition to the situation analysis, each working group should submit a shorter summary, which can be included in the national youth strategy. It is the co-ordinators who will be responsible for writing these reports.[66]

The working groups should work independently of each other in developing outcomes and indicators that correspond and relate to their objective (see section 6.4.). This can be a challenging task, and requires training and skill. A workshop should therefore be held specifically on indicator development, which all working group co-ordinators and some of the members should take part in. Members of the intergovernmental working group should also be invited. This should be organised

65 The steering committee should be open to reconsidering the objectives after the comprehensive consultation process, opening up the possibility for revising the number of TWGs and the themes they address.

66 The situation analyses from the different working groups will most likely be too comprehensive for the draft youth strategy. However, they will still be important contributions to gaining an insight into the situation of young people. The government should therefore consider compiling the analyses together in a publication, or support someone to carry out this task.

as a one-day workshop with around 20-25 participants, with trainers who are skilled in strategy development processes being responsible for the input.

One should consider ways in which the stakeholder advisory committees can provide input on the work conducted by the thematic working groups. One possibility is that they get an opportunity (for example, a two- to three-week window) to look through and comment on the work of the different working groups, before it is sent off to the strategy formulation expert team to be harmonised into one strategic document.

In order to produce the quality product necessary, it should be expected that the co-ordinators of the TWGs work full-time, or at least invest a substantial amount of time in the national youth strategy process at this stage. In order to make this possible, it is advisable that they receive a salary/compensation/honorarium for their work. Furthermore, a budget should be set aside for covering travel costs and related expenses (lunches, for example, when there are all-day meetings) for the working group members.

When the TWGs have finished with their situation analyses and suggested outcomes and indicators, and the stakeholder advisory committees have had an opportunity to provide their comments, everything should be handed over to the so-called drafting team, who will have the concrete task of putting together the initial draft of the national youth strategy.

Once the initial draft is prepared, the different working bodies of the national youth strategy structure should review the document and give their immediate feedback. It is of particular importance that the members of the inter-ministerial working group share the document with officials in their respective ministries, to ensure that the strategy corresponds to objectives and budgets in their respective policy areas.

Comments and contributions should then be collected by the drafting team, who will integrate them into what will become the first draft national youth strategy.

➔ 7.5. Stage 5: the third consultation

Once the first draft of the national youth strategy is prepared, it should be made public and a new consultation phase initiated.

The objective of this consultation phase is to get as much constructive feedback as possible on the draft, so as to enhance its quality even further. This can be done in different ways, depending on time, plus human and financial resources.

The first draft national youth strategy should be publicised on the NYS process web page, or on the website of the youth ministry. Invitations to provide feedback should then be sent out to non-governmental youth organisations and different stakeholder groups that have an interest.

A national youth conference should be organised by the youth ministry, bringing together non-governmental youth organisations from across the country. The main purpose should be to go through the draft strategy, discuss the content and give concrete feedback on how it can be improved further.

In addition, the youth ministry/NYS secretariat should consider organising one or more open meetings with different stakeholder groups, in order to give them

the opportunity to provide their feedback too, both at the national and regional levels. This will provide stakeholder groups with concrete possibilities to give their input.

The local consultation partners also provide a valuable opportunity to get feedback on the first draft strategy. They should easily be mobilised to contribute further to the process to the extent of their availability, and assist in getting input at grass-roots level.

→ 7.6. Stage 6: final draft for adoption

The drafting team will be responsible for collecting all data, comments and input as to how the first draft can be improved. The resulting document will be the final draft of the NYS, which should be passed through the official procedure for approval by the government.

The formal procedure of adopting a government policy strategy differs from country to country. In some countries approval at the ministry level is sufficient, while in other countries the strategy will need the formal stamp of approval from the government or cabinet of ministers. In some countries it will be natural to consult the parliamentary committee responsible for youth. Typically, however, the strategy should be submitted by formal procedure to all ministries that will be affected, which will have to endorse the content of the document. As long as the inter-ministerial working group has been functioning properly and the relevant ministries have done their job, this should not pose any difficulties for the national youth strategy.

At the time of the completion of the NYS, a press conference should be held – again stressing the active participation of young people in the policy process.

→ 7.7. Stage 7: developing the action plan

Developing the action plan will be more of a technical task. The TWGs will have the concrete responsibility for providing input to the plan, but they should maintain close communication with the different ministries in the government through the inter-ministerial working group.

A workshop should be held, bringing together the co-ordinators of the TWGs, the members of the inter-ministerial working group and the members of the strategy formulation expert team (which will be responsible for harmonising all input into one coherent document). Clarify what will be the concrete time span of the action plan. Then, clarify the tasks of the process, and go carefully through all elements that the plan should include:

- objectives;
- indicators (which measure to what extent the objectives have been fulfilled);
- baseline data (clarifies the starting point from which to measure progress and achievement of objectives);
- activities (which must all be time-specific and concrete);
- clarification of which institution(s) will be responsible for implementing the activity;
- a budget (including which institution will provide the budget for each activity).

Ensure that all activities and budget items in the action plan are actually clarified with, and approved by, the agency or institution which is to carry it out. The action

plan should be a document with clear commitments and responsibilities, and not a political statement or a mere wish list.

➔ 7.8. Web resources

Denstad, Finn Yrjar, "As seen from the outside: developing a national youth action plan in Montenegro 2004-2006. An external evaluation of the process (executive summary), 2007"; www.europe.forumsyd.org/content/meny/S00D4EC11-00EDE4A7

Denstad, Finn Yrjar, "Developing a national youth strategy in the Republic of Serbia. An external evaluation, 2008": www.zamislizivot.org

References

- Ashton, Melanie, et al. (2005), *Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and opportunities for implementation*, Ad hoc Working Group for Youth and the MDGs.
- Barrington-Leach, Leanda, et al. (2007), *Investing in youth: an empowerment strategy*, Bureau of European Policy Advisers.
- Council of Europe (2003a), *Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life*, Council of Europe Publishing.
- Council of Europe (2003b), *Final Report: Experts on Youth Policy Indicators. Third and Concluding Meeting*, Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport.
- Denstad, Finn Yrjar (2001), "Conference Report from the Youth Policy Forum: Promoting the development of national action plans on youth policy in South East Europe", in Tanja Kalovska, *Between challenges and opportunities: young people in South East Europe*, European Youth Forum.
- Denstad, Finn Yrjar and Tobias Flessenkemper (2003), "Mission report: development of a National Youth Strategy in Moldova" (unpublished).
- Denstad, Finn Yrjar and Tobias Flessenkemper (2004), "Mission report: development of a youth strategy in Armenia" (unpublished).
- Denstad, Finn Yrjar (2007), *As seen from the outside. Developing a national youth strategy in Montenegro – an external evaluation of the process*, Forum Syd Balkans Programme.
- Denstad, Finn Yrjar (2008), "Developing a National Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia. An external evaluation" (unpublished).
- Denstad, Finn Yrjar (2009), *Youth participation in youth policy development – The case of Southeast Europe*, in *Coyote 14*, Council of Europe Publishing.
- European Commission (2001), White Paper: *A new impetus for European youth*, http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-policies/doc26_en.htm, accessed in April 2009.
- Forum Syd Balkans Programme (2004), *Information Pack, National Youth Action Plan Development Process in Montenegro*, www.gom.cg.yu/files/1127294864.pdf, accessed in April 2009.
- Kalovska, Tanja (2001), *Between challenges and opportunities: Young people in South East Europe*, European Youth Forum.

› Marković, Darko and Stanislava Vučković (2007), *Do all roads lead to youth policy? – A study on the state of youth policy at the municipal level in Serbia*, Forum Syd Balkans Programme.

› Ministry of Youth and Sport of Romania (2001), *Youth National Action Plan of the Republic of Romania*, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Republic of Romania.

› Ministry of Youth and Sport of Serbia (2007), "Presentation of the process to develop a National Youth Strategy in Serbia" (unpublished).

› Ministry of Youth and Sport of Serbia (2008), "National Youth Strategy, Draft February 2008", www.zamislizivot.org, accessed in April 2009.

› Molund, Stefan and Göran Schill (2004), *Looking Back, Moving Forward: SIDA Evaluation Manual*, SIDA, 2004.

› NORAD (1999), *The Logical Framework Approach (LFA). Handbook for objectives-oriented planning* (4th edn), Norwegian Agency for Aid and Development – NORAD.

› NYAP Montenegro Team (2006), "National Youth Action Plan of the Republic of Montenegro" (English translation).

› Örtengren, Kari (2004), *The Logical Framework Approach. A summary of the theory behind the LFA method*, SIDA.

› Siurala, Lasse (2006), "A European framework for youth policy", Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe Publishing.

› State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth of the Republic of Croatia (2002), "The National Programme of Action for Youth".

› UNFPA (draft 2008, publishing uncertain), *Counting on Youth* (Country reports on the situation for youth in 15 countries in Europe and Central Asia).

› Walther, Andreas et al. (2002), "Youth Transitions, Youth Policy and Participation – State of the Art Report", pp. 28-29, http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/pdf/irelanr.pdf, accessed in April 2009.

› Williamson, Howard (2002), *Supporting young people in Europe – Principles, policy and practice*, Council of Europe Publishing.

› Williamson, Howard (2008), *Supporting young people in Europe. Volume 2*, Council of Europe Publishing.

› World Bank (2007), "Youth Policy: Doing it and getting it right", in *World Development Report 2007,* World Bank.

› World Bank Mission in Kosovo (2005), *Youth in Kosovo – Policy Paper Young Voice Group Kosovo*, World Bank.

Appendix

➔ An example of a list of budgetary items related to the development of a national youth strategy described above

Preparatory stage

Budget item	Explanation
Advertising costs	Advertising costs for calls for applications for working bodies in NYS structure in the media

NYS development structure

Budget item	Explanation
Honorarium for TWG co-ordinators	Every co-ordinator should receive a salary for x number of weeks
Expenses related to TWGs	Remuneration of travel expenses, meals, meeting costs
Expenses related to steering committee	Meals, meeting costs
Expenses related to IMWG	Meals, meeting costs
Expenses related to LCPs	An administrative grant plus a grant for activities for each LCP

Workshops / training activities

Budget item	Explanation
Objective development seminar (3-day weekend seminar)	Accommodation, travel costs, trainers' honorariums
Workshop for LCP representatives (3-day weekend seminar)	Accommodation, travel costs, trainers' honorariums
National consultation conference for youth NGOs	Accommodation, travel costs
Workshop on objectives and outcomes	How to develop outcomes and finalise the input for the strategy document. Open to TWG co-ordinators, plus members of the IMWG. Accommodation Friday–Sunday, travel costs, trainers' honorariums
Workshop on indicator development	How to develop indicators and activities for the action plan. Open to TWG co-ordinators and members plus members of the IMWG. Accommodation Friday–Sunday, travel costs, trainers' honorariums
Workshops for all TWGs	Working meetings within the different TWGs on how to develop outcomes, indicators and activities for the action plan

Communication and publicity

Budget item	Explanation
Establishing and maintaining web page	
Publicity material	Design, production and distribution of different publicity items (shirts, pens, bags, folders, etc.)
Leaflets, posters and folders	Design, production and distribution
Publishing report on the status of young people	Design and printing costs, etc. Follow-up of the preparatory work done by the TWGs
Publishing national youth strategy	Design and printing costs
Translation costs	Producing English version of strategy document
Advertising costs	Advertising costs for the publicity campaign in the media

Sales agents for publications of the Council of Europe
Agents de vente des publications du Conseil de l'Europe

BELGIUM/BELGIQUE
La Librairie Européenne -
The European Bookshop
Rue de l'Orme, 1
BE-1040 BRUXELLES
Tel.: +32 (0)2 231 04 35
Fax: +32 (0)2 735 08 60
E-mail: order@libeurop.be
http://www.libeurop.be

Jean De Lannoy/DL Services
Avenue du Roi 202 Koningslaan
BE-1190 BRUXELLES
Tel.: +32 (0)2 538 43 08
Fax: +32 (0)2 538 08 41
E-mail: jean.de.lannoy@dl-servi.com
http://www.jean-de-lannoy.be

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA/
BOSNIE-HERZÉGOVINE
Robert's Plus d.o.o.
Marka Maruliça 2/V
BA-71000, SARAJEVO
Tel.: + 387 33 640 818
Fax: + 387 33 640 818
E-mail: robertsplus@bih.net.ba

CANADA
Renouf Publishing Co. Ltd.
1-5369 Canotek Road
CA-OTTAWA, Ontario K1J 9J3
Tel.: +1 613 745 2665
Fax: +1 613 745 7660
Toll-Free Tel.: (866) 767-6766
E-mail: order.dept@renoufbooks.com
http://www.renoufbooks.com

CROATIA/CROATIE
Robert's Plus d.o.o.
Marasoviçeva 67
HR-21000, SPLIT
Tel.: + 385 21 315 800, 801, 802, 803
Fax: + 385 21 315 804
E-mail: robertsplus@robertsplus.hr

CZECH REPUBLIC/
RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE
Suweco CZ, s.r.o.
Klecakova 347
CZ-180 21 PRAHA 9
Tel.: +420 2 424 59 204
Fax: +420 2 848 21 646
E-mail: import@suweco.cz
http://www.suweco.cz

DENMARK/DANEMARK
GAD
Vimmelskaftet 32
DK-1161 KØBENHAVN K
Tel.: +45 77 66 60 00
Fax: +45 77 66 60 01
E-mail: gad@gad.dk
http://www.gad.dk

FINLAND/FINLANDE
Akateeminen Kirjakauppa
PO Box 128
Keskuskatu 1
FI-00100 HELSINKI
Tel.: +358 (0)9 121 4430
Fax: +358 (0)9 121 4242
E-mail: akatilaus@akateeminen.com
http://www.akateeminen.com

FRANCE
La Documentation française
(diffusion/distribution France entière)
124, rue Henri Barbusse
FR-93308 AUBERVILLIERS CEDEX
Tél.: +33 (0)1 40 15 70 00
Fax: +33 (0)1 40 15 68 00
E-mail: commande@ladocumentationfrancaise.fr
http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr

Librairie Kléber
1 rue des Francs Bourgeois
FR-67000 STRASBOURG
Tel.: +33 (0)3 88 15 78 88
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 15 78 80
E-mail: librairie-kleber@coe.int
http://www.librairie-kleber.com

GERMANY/ALLEMAGNE
AUSTRIA/AUTRICHE
UNO Verlag GmbH
August-Bebel-Allee 6
DE-53175 BONN
Tel.: +49 (0)228 94 90 20
Fax: +49 (0)228 94 90 222
E-mail: bestellung@uno-verlag.de
http://www.uno-verlag.de

GREECE/GRÈCE
Librairie Kauffmann s.a.
Stadiou 28
GR-105 64 ATHINAI
Tel.: +30 210 32 55 321
Fax.: +30 210 32 30 320
E-mail: ord@otenet.gr
http://www.kauffmann.gr

HUNGARY/HONGRIE
Euro Info Service
Pannónia u. 58.
PF. 1039
HU-1136 BUDAPEST
Tel.: +36 1 329 2170
Fax: +36 1 349 2053
E-mail: euroinfo@euroinfo.hu
http://www.euroinfo.hu

ITALY/ITALIE
Licosa SpA
Via Duca di Calabria, 1/1
IT-50125 FIRENZE
Tel.: +39 0556 483215
Fax: +39 0556 41257
E-mail: licosa@licosa.com
http://www.licosa.com

MEXICO/MEXIQUE
Mundi-Prensa México, S.A. De C.V.
Río Pánuco, 141 Delegacíon Cuauhtémoc
MX-06500 MÉXICO, D.F.
Tel.: +52 (01)55 55 33 56 58
Fax: +52 (01)55 55 14 67 99
E-mail: mundiprensa@mundiprensa.com.mx
http://www.mundiprensa.com.mx

NETHERLANDS/PAYS-BAS
Roodveldt Import BV
Nieuwe Hemweg 50
NE-1013 CX AMSTERDAM
Tel.: + 31 20 622 8035
Fax.: + 31 20 625 5493
Website: www.publidis.org
Email: orders@publidis.org

NORWAY/NORVÈGE
Akademika
Postboks 84 Blindern
NO-0314 OSLO
Tel.: +47 2 218 8100
Fax: +47 2 218 8103
E-mail: support@akademika.no
http://www.akademika.no

POLAND/POLOGNE
Ars Polona JSC
25 Obroncow Street
PL-03-933 WARSZAWA
Tel.: +48 (0)22 509 86 00
Fax: +48 (0)22 509 86 10
E-mail: arspolona@arspolona.com.pl
http://www.arspolona.com.pl

PORTUGAL
Livraria Portugal
(Dias & Andrade, Lda.)
Rua do Carmo, 70
PT-1200-094 LISBOA
Tel.: +351 21 347 42 82 / 85
Fax: +351 21 347 02 64
E-mail: info@livrariaportugal.pt
http://www.livrariaportugal.pt

RUSSIAN FEDERATION/
FÉDÉRATION DE RUSSIE
Ves Mir
17b, Butlerova ul.
RU-101000 MOSCOW
Tel.: +7 495 739 0971
Fax: +7 495 739 0971
E-mail: orders@vesmirbooks.ru
http://www.vesmirbooks.ru

SPAIN/ESPAGNE
Mundi-Prensa Libros, s.a.
Castelló, 37
ES-28001 MADRID
Tel.: +34 914 36 37 00
Fax: +34 915 75 39 98
E-mail: libreria@mundiprensa.es
http://www.mundiprensa.com

SWITZERLAND/SUISSE
Planetis Sàrl
16 chemin des Pins
CH-1273 ARZIER
Tel.: +41 22 366 51 77
Fax: +41 22 366 51 78
E-mail: info@planetis.ch

UNITED KINGDOM/ROYAUME-UNI
The Stationery Office Ltd
PO Box 29
GB-NORWICH NR3 1GN
Tel.: +44 (0)870 600 5522
Fax: +44 (0)870 600 5533
E-mail: book.enquiries@tso.co.uk
http://www.tsoshop.co.uk

UNITED STATES and CANADA/
ÉTATS-UNIS et CANADA
Manhattan Publishing Co
2036 Albany Post Road
USA-10520 CROTON ON HUDSON, NY
Tel.: +1 914 271 5194
Fax: +1 914 271 5886
E-mail: coe@manhattanpublishing.coe
http://www.manhattanpublishing.com

Council of Europe Publishing/Editions du Conseil de l'Europe
FR-67075 STRASBOURG Cedex
Tel.: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 81 – Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 10 – E-mail: publishing@coe.int – Website: http://book.coe.int