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Report

The state of youth policy in 2014

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The existence of national youth policies

The existence of national youth policies

What were we looking for?

We were looking for a national youth policy in the form of a policy, strategy or law. Depending on the governance context and culture, a national youth policy might be developed by the government as a policy document or decided upon by the parliament as a law or developed through a public consultation as a strategy document – sometimes also in specific and unique combination of these options.

What did we find out?

- » Of 198 countries, 122 countries (62 %) have a national youth policy, up from 99 (50 %) in 2013.
- » In each of the five continental regions, new national youth policies were introduced during the past 15 months. Europe leads with 8 newly adopted national youth policies, followed by Asia and the Americas with 5 each, Oceania with 3 and Africa with 2.
- » Oceania has the highest rate of countries with adopted national youth policies: 14 out of 15 countries (93 %) have a policy.
- » Africa has the lowest rate of countries with adopted national youth policies: 23 out of 54 countries (43 %) have a policy.

- » Across all continents, 37 states (19 %) are either developing a new or revising their current youth policy, down from 56 in 2013.
- » 31 countries have no national youth policy at the moment (16 %), down from 43 in 2013. The majority are located in Africa (14 countries) and Asia (9 countries). In both cases, there is only one region (Southern Africa and Central Asia) in which every country has a youth policy that is active or under development.
- » Of the 20 countries worldwide with the youngest population, 9 have a current national youth policy, 6 are revising their policy, and 5 have no policy at the moment.
- » We will publish additional findings of our analysis of national youth policies later in the year, leading up to the First Global Forum on Youth Policies.

What did we change in comparison to 2013?

We introduced the categories unclear and unknown in addition to yes, no, revising and developing. We wanted to capture those few cases where either no reliable information is available at all, or where available information seems to be misleading or contradictory.

Which categorisation did we use?

We used the following categorisation:

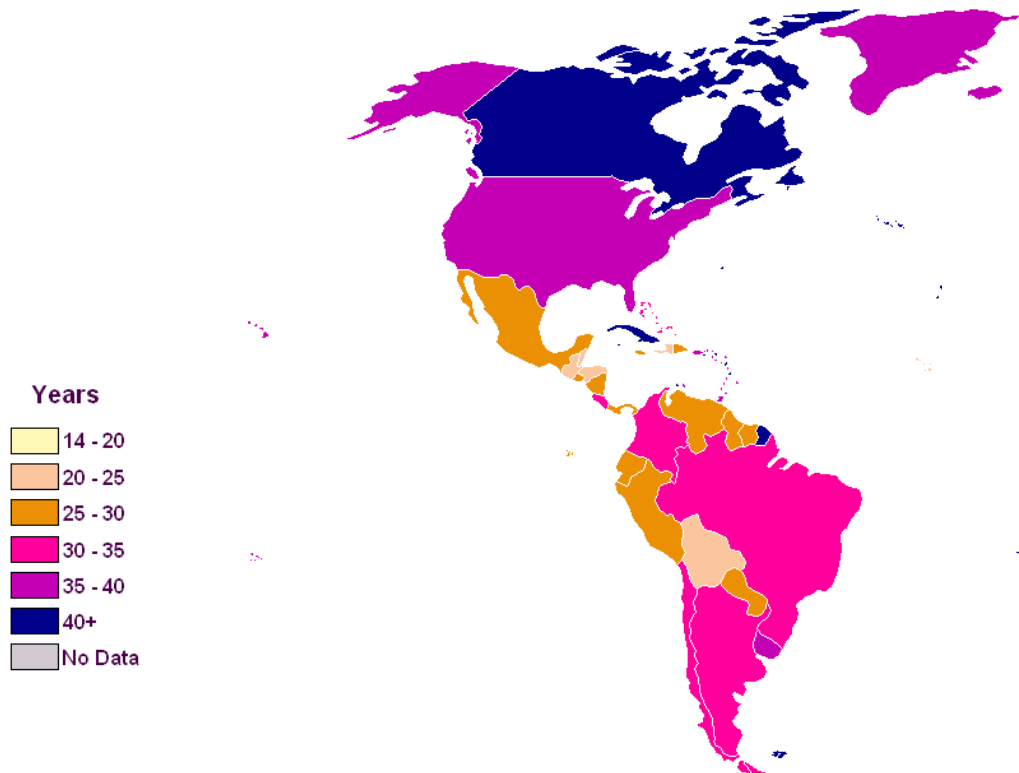
- » **YES** (1) A national youth policy exists without date limitation, in the form of a policy, strategy or law, (2) A national youth policy has a date limit, which is current and is still within that limit, (3) A national youth policy has a date limit, which has expired less than 18 months ago (in 2013 or 2014), (4) A country has a transversal or cross-departmental approach, which is clearly articulated and described, (5) A country has delegated youth policy to regional level and 2/3 or more of the regions have current regional youth policies, (6) A recent draft of a youth policy exists and is actively discussed and pushed towards adoption.
- » **NO** (1) No national youth policy exists in the form of a policy, strategy or law, (2) An old national youth policy exists without date limitation but is documented as inactive, (3) A national youth policy has a date limit, which has expired more than 5 years ago (2008 or before), (4) A country has delegated youth policy to regional level with less than 2/3 of the regions with current regional youth policies (5) Thematic policies exist, but there is no explicit cross-sectoral strategy in place.
- » **REVISED/DEVELOPED** (1) A currently active or recently expired national youth policy is under active revision, (2) A new youth policy is being developed for the first time, (3) A new youth policy is being developed with the previous one having been defunct for more than 5 years.

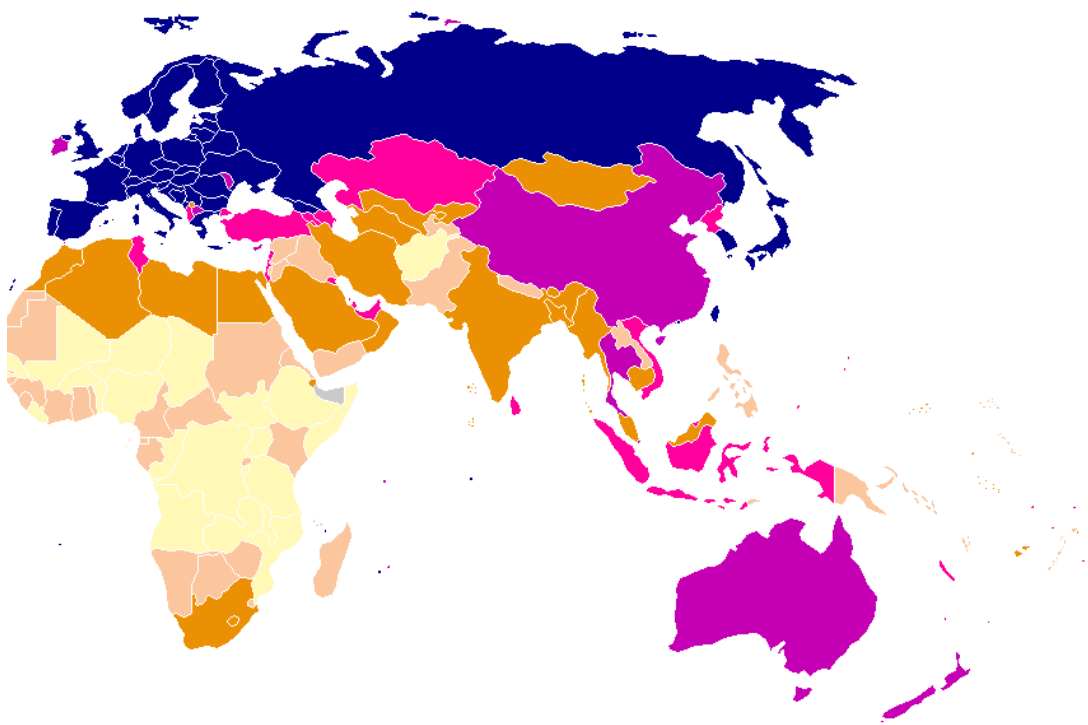
What does this section contain?

On the following pages, you will find:

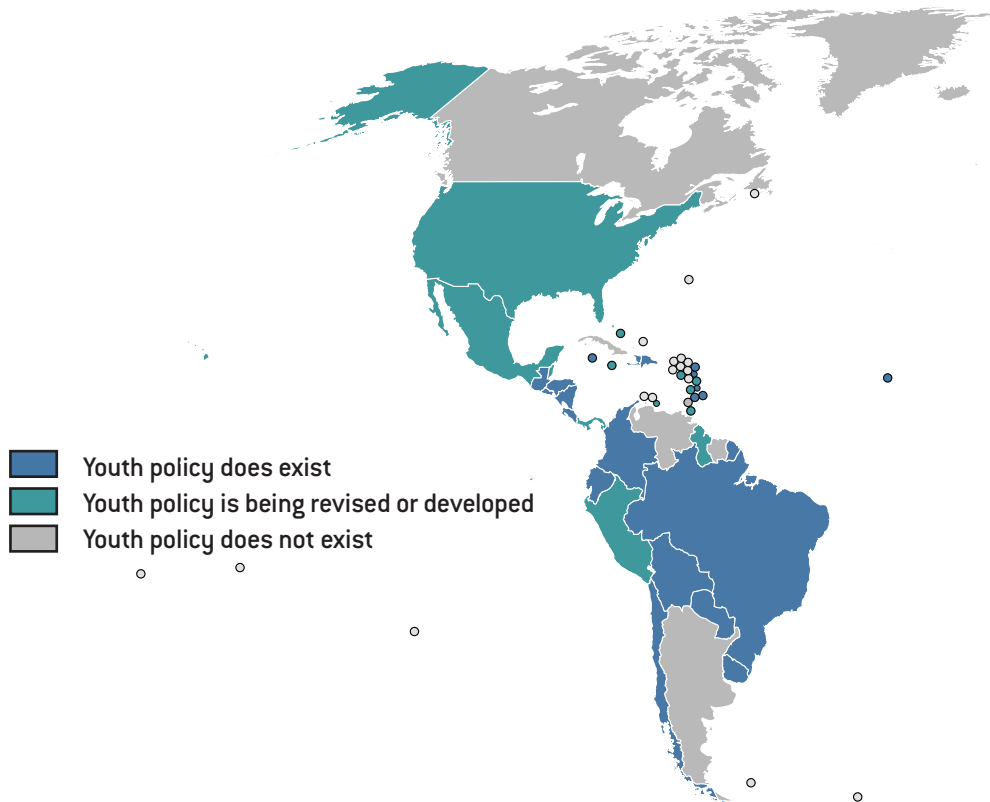
- » Three maps:
 - (1) a map illustrating the global median age, with 2013 data – maintained and kept current by the Wikipedia community, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Median_age.png
 - (3) a map illustrating the state of youth policy in 2013, and
 - (4) a map illustrating the state of youth policy in 2014 – both our own illustrations.
- » Two tables with a global overview, comparing the figures from January 2013 (from our last report on the state of youth policy) to figures from April 2014 (this report).
- » Ten tables with regional overviews for each of the five continental regions, again comparing the figures from January 2013 (from our last report on the state of youth policy) to figures from April 2014 (this report).
- » Note that we use the United Nations classification for macro-geographical regions and subregions, see the map of the UN geoscheme at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:United_Nations_geographical_subregions.png.

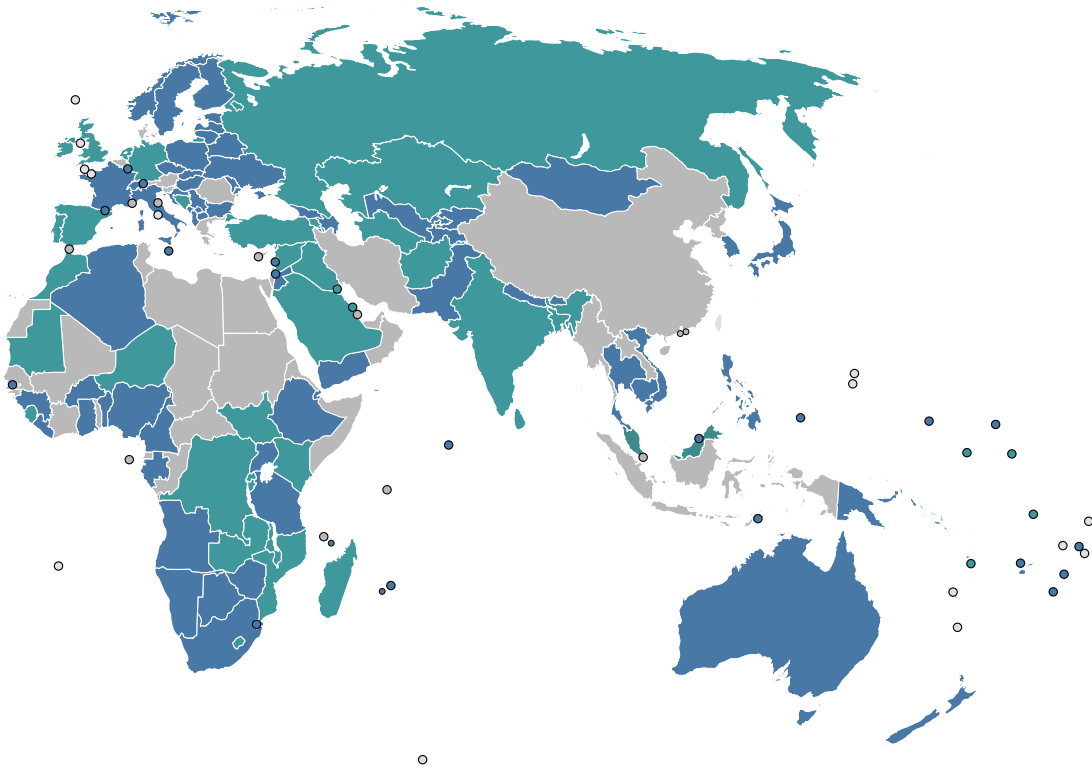
National median ages worldwide in 2013



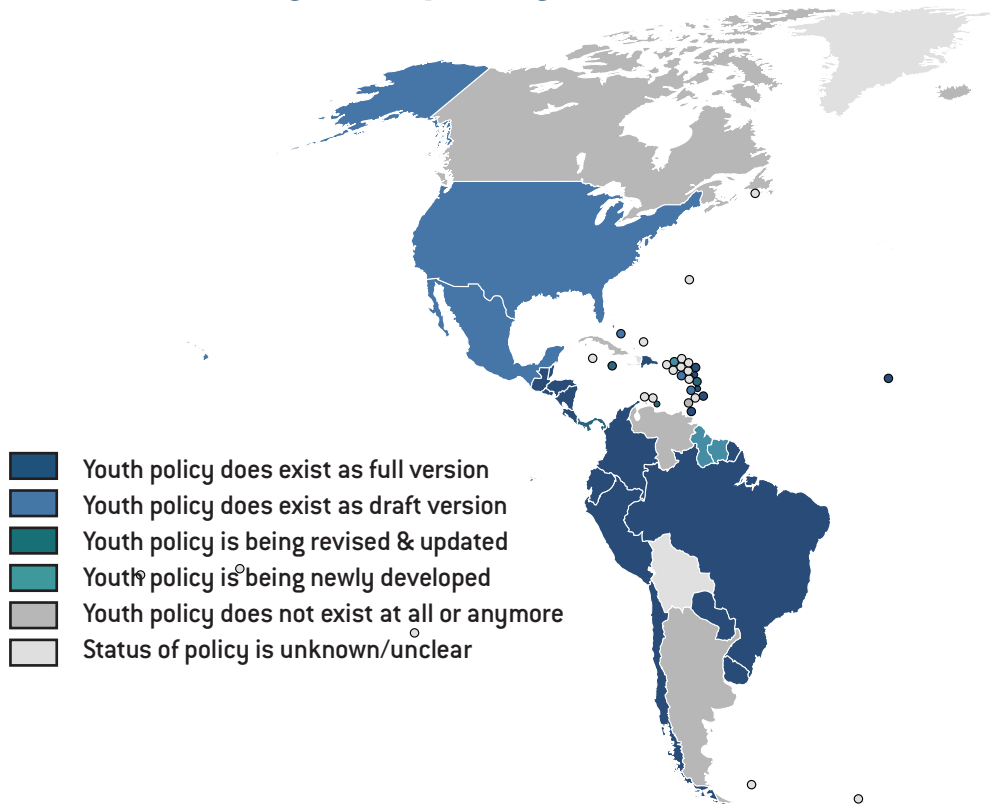


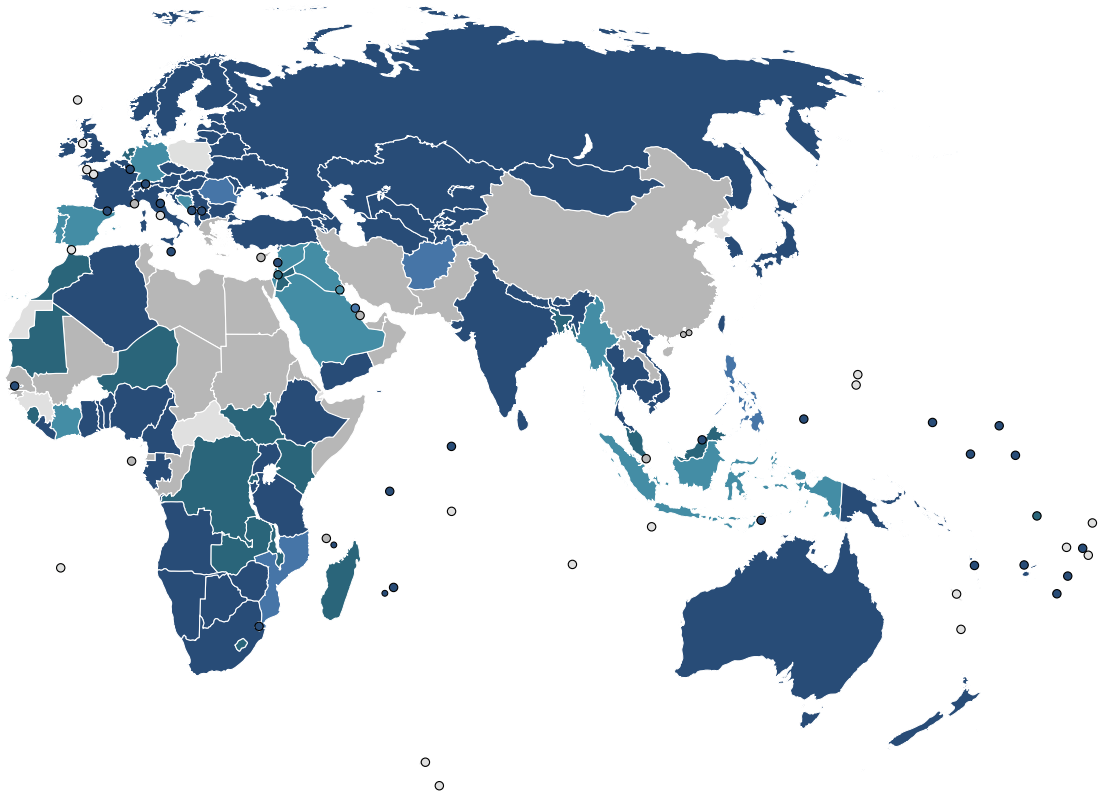
The state of youth policy in 2013





The state of youth policy in 2014





Global overview: status of youth policies per continental region (I)

Development at continental level between January 2013 and April 2014

WORLD	Total n° of Countries	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months
		Exists in full or as a draft	Exists in full or as a draft		Is revised or developed	Is revised or developed	
	N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N
Africa	54	21 39 %	23 43 %	+ 2	16 30 %	14 26 %	- 2
Americas	36	17 47 %	22 61 %	+ 5	14 39 %	6 17 %	- 8
Asia	49	23 47 %	28 57 %	+ 5	14 29 %	11 22 %	- 3
Europe	44	27 61 %	35 80 %	+ 8	8 18 %	5 11 %	- 3
Oceania	15	11 73 %	14 93 %	+ 3	4 27 %	1 7 %	- 3
World	198	99 50 %	122 62 %	+ 22	56 28 %	37 19 %	- 19

Global overview: status of youth policies per continental region (II)

Development at continental level between January 2013 and April 2014

WORLD	A National Youth Policy...			The status of the policy is...			Total n° of Countries <i>control figures</i>
	Total n° of Countries	Does not exist at all 01.2013	Does not exist at all 04.2014	Change in 15 months 2013-2014	Unclear <i>new category</i> 04.2014	Unknown <i>new category</i> 04.2014	
	N	N and %	N and %	N	N and %	N and %	
Africa	54	17 31 %	14 26 %	- 3	3 6 %	0 0 %	54 100 %
Americas	36	5 14 %	5 14 %	± 0	3 14 %	0 0 %	36 100 %
Asia	49	12 24 %	9 18 %	- 3	0 0 %	1 18 %	49 100 %
Europe	44	9 20 %	3 7 %	- 6	1 2 %	0 0 %	44 100 %
Oceania	15	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	15 100 %
World	198	43 22 %	31 16 %	- 12	7 4 %	1 1 %	198 100 %

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Africa, per subregion (I)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

AFRICA	A National Youth Policy...		A National Youth Policy...		A National Youth Policy...		A National Youth Policy...	
	Total n° of Countries	Exists in full or as a draft	Exists in full or as a draft	Change in 15 months	Is revised or developed	Is revised or developed	Change in 15 months	
	N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N	
Eastern Africa	18	5 28 %	7 39 %	+ 2	9 50 %	7 39 %	- 2	
Middle Africa	9	3 33 %	3 33 %	± 0	1 11 %	1 11 %	± 0	
Northern Africa	6	1 17 %	1 17 %	± 0	1 17 %	1 17 %	± 0	
Southern Africa	5	4 80 %	4 80 %	± 0	1 20 %	1 20 %	± 0	
Western Africa	16	8 50 %	8 50 %	± 0	4 25 %	4 25 %	± 0	
Africa	54	21 39 %	23 43 %	+ 2	16 30 %	14 26 %	- 2	

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Africa, per subregion (II)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

AFRICA	A National Youth Policy...			The status of the policy is...			Total n° of Countries <i>control figures</i>
	Total n° of Countries N	Does not exist at all 01.2013 N and %	Does not exist at all 04.2014 N and %	Change in 15 months 2013-2014 N	Unclear <i>new category</i> 04.2014 N and %	Unknown <i>new category</i> 04.2014 N and %	
Eastern Africa	18	4 22 %	3 17 %	- 1	1 6 %	0 0 %	18 100 %
Middle Africa	9	5 56 %	4 44 %	- 1	1 11 %	0 0 %	9 100 %
Northern Africa	6	4 67 %	4 67 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	6 100 %
Southern Africa	5	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	5 100 %
Western Africa	16	4 25 %	3 19 %	- 1	1 6 %	0 0 %	16 100 %
Africa	54	17 31 %	14 26 %	- 3	3 6 %	0 0 %	54 100 %

Regional overview: status of youth policies in the Americas, per subregion (I)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

AMERICAS	Total n° of Countries	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months
		Exists in full or as a draft	Exists in full or as a draft		Is revised or developed	Is revised or developed	
	N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N
Caribbean	14	5 36 %	7 50 %	+ 2	7 50 %	3 21 %	- 4
Central America	8	5 63 %	7 88 %	+ 2	3 38 %	1 13 %	- 2
South America	12	7 58 %	7 58 %	± 0	3 25 %	2 17 %	- 1
Latin A. & Caribbean	34	17 50 %	21 62 %	+ 4	13 38 %	6 18 %	- 7
Northern America	2	0 0 %	1 50 %	+ 1	1 50 %	0 0 %	- 1
Americas	36	17 47 %	22 61 %	+ 5	14 39 %	6 17 %	- 8

Regional overview: status of youth policies in the Americas, per subregion (II)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

AMERICAS	A National Youth Policy...			Change in 15 months	The status of the policy is...		Total n° of Countries
	Total n° of Countries	Does not exist at all	Does not exist at all		Unclear <i>new category</i>	Unknown <i>new category</i>	
	N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N	04.2014 N and %	04.2014 N and %	<i>control figures</i> N and %
Caribbean	14	2 14 %	2 14 %	± 0	2 14 %	0 0 %	14 100 %
Central America	8	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	8 100 %
South America	12	2 17 %	2 17 %	± 0	1 8 %	0 0 %	12 100 %
Latin A. & Caribbean	34	4 12 %	4 12 %	± 0	3 9 %	0 0 %	34 100 %
Northern America	2	1 50 %	1 50 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	2 100 %
Americas	36	5 14 %	5 14 %	± 0	3 8 %	0 0 %	36 100 %

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Asia, per subregion (I)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

ASIA	Total n° of Countries	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months
		Exists in full or as a draft	Exists in full or as a draft		Is revised or developed	Is revised or developed	
	N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N
Central Asia	5	3 60 %	5 100 %	+ 2	1 20 %	0 0 %	- 1
Eastern Asia	6	4 67 %	4 67 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0
Southern Asia	9	4 44 %	6 67 %	+ 2	4 44 %	1 11 %	- 3
South-Eastern Asia	11	6 55 %	6 55 %	± 0	1 9 %	3 27 %	+ 2
Western Asia	18	6 33 %	7 39 %	+ 1	8 44 %	7 39 %	- 1
Asia	49	23 47 %	28 57 %	+ 5	14 29 %	11 22 %	- 3

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Asia, per subregion (II)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

ASIA	A National Youth Policy...			The status of the policy is...			Total n° of Countries <i>control figures</i>
	Total n° of Countries	Does not exist at all	Does not exist at all	Change in 15 months	Unclear <i>new category</i>	Unknown <i>new category</i>	
	N	01.2013 N and %	04.2014 N and %	2013-2014 N	04.2014 N and %	04.2014 N and %	
Central Asia	5	1 20 %	0 0 %	- 1	0 0 %	0 0 %	5 100 %
Eastern Asia	6	2 33 %	1 17 %	- 1	0 0 %	1 17 %	6 100 %
Southern Asia	9	1 11 %	2 22 %	+ 1	0 0 %	0 0 %	9 100 %
South-Eastern Asia	11	4 36 %	2 18 %	- 2	0 0 %	0 0 %	11 100 %
Western Asia	18	4 22 %	4 22 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	18 100 %
Asia	49	12 24 %	9 18 %	- 3	0 0 %	1 2 %	49 100 %

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Europe, per subregion (I)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

EUROPE	Total n° of Countries	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months 2013-2014	A National Youth Policy...		Change in 15 months 2013-2014
		Exists in full or as a draft 01.2013 N and %	Exists in full or as a draft 04.2014 N and %		Is revised or developed 01.2013 N and %	Is revised or developed 04.2014 N and %	
Eastern Europe	10	8 80 %	9 90 %	+ 1	1 10 %	0 0 %	- 1
Northern Europe	10	6 60 %	9 90 %	+ 3	2 20 %	0 0 %	- 2
Southern Europe	15	9 60 %	11 73 %	+ 2	3 20 %	3 20 %	± 0
Western Europe	9	4 44 %	6 67 %	+ 2	2 22 %	2 22 %	± 0
Europe	44	27 61 %	35 80 %	+ 8	8 18 %	5 11 %	- 3

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Europe, per subregion (II)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

EUROPE	A National Youth Policy...			Change in 15 months	The status of the policy is...		Total n° of Countries <i>control figures</i>
	Total n° of Countries N	Does not exist at all 01.2013 N and %	Does not exist at all 04.2014 N and %		Unclear <i>new category</i> 04.2014 N and %	Unknown <i>new category</i> 04.2014 N and %	
Eastern Europe	10	1 10 %	0 0 %	- 1	1 10 %	0 0 %	10 100 %
Northern Europe	10	2 20 %	1 10 %	- 1	0 0 %	0 0 %	10 100 %
Southern Europe	15	3 20 %	1 7 %	- 2	0 0 %	0 0 %	15 100 %
Western Europe	9	3 33 %	1 11 %	- 2	0 0 %	0 0 %	9 100 %
Europe	44	9 20 %	3 7 %	- 6	1 2 %	0 0 %	44 100 %

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Oceania, per subregion (I)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

OCEANIA		A National Youth Policy...			A National Youth Policy...		
	Total n° of Countries	Exists in full or as a draft 01.2013	Exists in full or as a draft 04.2014	Change in 15 months 2013-2014	Is revised or developed 01.2013	Is revised or developed 04.2014	Change in 15 months 2013-2014
	N	N and %	N and %	N	N and %	N and %	N
Australia & New Zealand	2	2 100 %	2 100 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0
Melanesia	4	3 75 %	4 100 %	+ 1	1 25 %	0 0 %	- 1
Micronesia	5	3 60 %	5 100 %	+ 2	2 40 %	0 0 %	- 2
Polynesia	5	3 75 %	3 75 %	± 0	1 25 %	1 25 %	± 0
Oceania	15	11 73 %	14 93 %	+ 3	4 27 %	1 7 %	- 3

Regional overview: status of youth policies in Oceania, per subregion (II)

Development at regional level between January 2013 and April 2014

OCEANIA	A National Youth Policy...			The status of the policy is...			Total n° of Countries <i>control figures</i>
	Total n° of Countries N	Does not exist at all 01.2013 N and %	Does not exist at all 04.2014 N and %	Change in 15 months 2013-2014 N	Unclear <i>new category</i> 04.2014 N and %	Unknown <i>new category</i> 04.2014 N and %	
Australia & New Zealand	2	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	2 100 %
Melanesia	4	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	4 100 %
Micronesia	5	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	5 100 %
Polynesia	5	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	5 100 %
Oceania	15	0 0 %	0 0 %	± 0	0 0 %	0 0 %	15 100 %



The existence of national youth platforms

The existence of national youth organisations and associations

What were we looking for?

We were looking for national youth organisations or associations that are recognised as the national representative structure for youth by governments, media and/or regional or international forums. It can take various forms, such as a council, body or platform. We are not yet including national youth parliaments in this analysis.

What did we find out?

- » 66.2 % of all countries (131 countries) have a national youth organisation/association.
- » In 33.8 % of countries (67 countries), information on a national youth organisation or association could either not be found (17.7 %/35 countries), or it was unclear as to the status of the organisation or association (16.1 %/32 countries).
- » 93.3 % of all countries in Oceania (14 out of 15) have a national youth organisation.
- » 95.5 % of countries in Europe (42 countries) have a national youth organisation or association, with the only exceptions being Monaco and Bosnia & Herzegovina.
- » Within Asia, 49.0 % of countries (24 countries) have a national youth organisation/association. Sub-regionally, South-Eastern Asia has the highest concentration of national structures (9 countries out of 11).
- » 63.0 % of countries in Africa (34 countries) have a national youth organisation/association. Sub-regionally, every country in Southern Africa (5 countries) has a national structure, while only 1 out of 6 countries in Northern Africa has an identifiable youth organisation/association.
- » Across the MENA region (Middle East & North Africa, 21 countries), 33.3 % of countries (7 countries) have a national youth organisation or association, whereas in 4 countries (19.0%) it is unclear, and in 10 countries (47.6%), no evidence of a youth structure exists.
- » In Northern America, neither Canada nor the USA have a national youth organisation or association. Across the Americas, either no evidence could be found (25.0 %/9 countries), or it was unclear as to the status of the national youth organisation/association (27.8 %/10 countries), for a total of 19 out of 36 countries (52.8 %).

Global overview: existence of national youth platforms per continental region

Does the country have a national youth organisation/association (council, platform, body)?

WORLD	A national youth organisation...			
	Total n° of Countries	Seems to exist	Seems to be absent	Situation is unclear
	N	N and %	N and %	N and %
Africa	54	34 63 %	8 15 %	12 22 %
Americas	36	17 47 %	9 25 %	10 28 %
Asia	49	24 49 %	17 35 %	8 16 %
Europe	44	42 96 %	1 2 %	1 2 %
Oceania	15	14 93 %	0 0 %	1 7 %
World	198	131 66 %	35 18 %	32 16 %

The label of “unclear” was used when:

(1) An organisation appears to have the largest youth membership in the country and is consulted in decision-making processes, but clearly belongs to one political party, (2) An official national youth organisation exists, but is unclear to what extent it is comprised of young people, (3) An organisation seems to behave both like the de-facto Ministry of Youth (e.g. implements policy and delivers services on behalf of the government) and as a national youth organisation/association (e.g. voluntary membership, civil society participation), (4) An organisation exists but does not seem currently active, (5) Government and/or media reports that a national youth organisation / association ‘will be formed’, but there is no indication that this has happened.



The existence of national youth authorities

The existence of governmental authorities responsible for youth

What were we looking for?

We were looking for governmental authorities (ministries, departments or offices) that are primarily responsible for youth on the national level. It often includes “youth” in its title (e.g. Ministry of Youth and Sports), is assigned responsibility for youth by policy or law, or is recognised as having the primary responsibility for youth by media and/or regional or international forums.

Countries where responsibility for youth is devolved to the regional or local level, and which appear to exist in a vast majority (two-thirds) of the sub-national units, are included in this list.

What did we find out?

- » Nearly all countries (96.0%/190 countries) have a national governmental authority responsible for youth.
- » This authority can take the form of a ministry, department or office. They range widely in financial resources, cross-sectoral influence, integration, and responsibility.
- » While some countries have a dedicated ministry for youth, most include youth within a wider portfolio. For example,

“youth” is often linked with “sports” with varying levels of significance and priority.

- » In 4.0% of all countries (8 countries), either no evidence of a governmental authority for youth could be found (1.0%/2 countries) or it was uncertain as to the status of the governmental authority (3.0%/6 countries).
- » Canada and Eritrea are the only countries in the world to not have a national level youth ministry, department or office. In Canada, while responsibility for youth is devolved to the provincial level, very few provinces have a governmental authority dedicated to youth. In Eritrea, there is no single governmental authority that is responsible for youth, despite various agencies delivering programmes to youth.
- » While some countries have no identifiable governmental authority, Tanzania has two, with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Youth Development and the Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports appearing to have responsibility for youth.
- » While we haven't quantified this yet, many national youth policies and portfolios are managed by youth ministries with limited political power and resources.

Global overview: existence of national youth authorities per continental region

Does the country have a governmental authority that is primarily responsible for youth?

WORLD	A national youth authority...			
	Total n° of Countries	Seems to exist	Seems to be absent	Situation is unclear
	N	N and %	N and %	N and %
Africa	54	52 96 %	1 2 %	1 2 %
Americas	36	33 91 %	1 3 %	2 6 %
Asia	49	47 96 %	0 0 %	2 4 %
Europe	44	43 98 %	0 0 %	1 2 %
Oceania	15	15 100 %	0 0 %	0 0 %
World	198	190 96 %	2 1 %	6 3 %

The label of “unclear” was used when:

(1) it was not clear if the institution is governmental or voluntary (as is the case with various communist states), (2) the authority previously assigned responsibility for youth no longer exists or has changed form, and there is no clear indication of which authority is presently responsible for youth, (3) An organisation seems to behave both like the de-facto Ministry of Youth (e.g. implements policy and delivers services on behalf of the government) and as a national youth organisation/association (e.g. voluntary membership, civil society participation), (5) Media reports that a national youth authority ‘will be created’, but there is no indication that this has happened, such as a mention on the government’s website.

Articles featured on youthpolicy.org

The revolt of the young

Whatever intergenerational contracts may have been in place – spoken or unspoken, real or perceived – are largely gone. The promise and hope of previous generations—in the Western world at least, the majority of young people around the world could never dream of such things to begin with—to lead a better life than their parents is a flickering image of the past.

But it's not the lack of economic prosperity alone that infuriates young people. Not that it wouldn't be reason enough: close to 90 million young people are unemployed, constituting about half of all unemployed people – and also roughly half of all young people interested in working. And that's the average – in Syria, to quote but one example, the unemployed young people make up nearly 80% of the working-age unemployed population. The growing youth employment crisis, earmarked by these ballpark figures, has been largely ignored.

Add the unsustainability of the current growth-and-screw-the-environment-mantra and the

massively rising social injustice to the colossal employment mess, and you get a highly explosive mix, which keeps bubbling to the surface on the streets across the planet. Young people have to watch how the world as we know it, its economic, social and political fabric, disintegrates, day by day. They don't like the *mélange* of the cocktail of political, economic and social disfranchisement, and have begun to show their anger about being robbed of their own future with what Heribert Prantl calls *“the sacred rage of the young.”*

The exploding and imploding inequalities are one of the most impactful consequences of a well-known dilemma: what Zygmunt Bauman calls the tripod of economic, military and cultural sovereignties has long lost its stability. Economic globalisation and the deterritorialisation of capital and labour leave current political structures crumbling and humbled.

As Bauman puts it in his newest book *“Collateral Damage. Social inequalities in a global age (2011)”*:



A global youth revolt in the making.



“...the exclusive compound of growing social inequality and the rising volume of human suffering relegated to the status of ‘collaterality’ (marginality, externality, disposability, not a legitimate part of the political agenda) has all the markings of being potentially the most disastrous among the many problems humanity may be forced to confront, deal with and resolve in the current century.” (Bauman 2011:9)

Current events only seem to underline Bauman’s grim analysis:

- » whether it’s the civil unrests in 2005 in Clichy-sous-Bois, in 2007 in Villiers-le-Bel or in 2011 in London;
- » the England riots and the United Kingdom anti-austerity protests;
- » the grassroots protests in 2009 in Iceland, 2010 and 2011 in Greece, 2011 in Portugal and Spain;
- » the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt;
- » the civil uprisings in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen;

- » the protests in Algeria, Chile, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Oman;
- and the list doesn’t end here! The calls for change—various kinds of change, for different sets of reasons, caused by different triggers, each unique and standing in their own right—have a decisively amplified tone, scale and intensity.

Much has been written and said about all of these events,

- » from different, diverse and disputed opinions on the London riots
- » to the role of young people and the role of social media in the Arab spring,
- » from the Spanish grassroots protests including nolesvotes.org, the Democracia Real Ya collective and the acampadas
- » to the clash of generations in Greece.

Probably Slavoj Žižek has, with this observation:

“Opposition to the system can no longer articulate itself in the form of a realistic alternative,”

offered an analysis widely shared across countries and contexts.

Without wanting to or claiming to offer a definite understanding for the various protests

The note says, in Catalan, “I want to grow up in a better world”



and movements across the globe, Manuel Castells summarises more drastically what seems to be happening:

“The disgust becomes a network.”

There is a determined and unifying No! to the increasing inequality and a loud and clear Yes! to much-needed change and a different way

of living, and living together. It’s obvious that young people, who are expressing their anger and frustration as much as their desire and hope for change so forcefully these days, are determined to shape our times.

“Will it be revolution, evolution, or resignation?” –

so wonder the minds behind One Young World, the global youth leadership summit, in their new 2011 White Paper *Beyond the Long Spring of Dissent*.

It certainly doesn’t look too much like resignation right now...

In his article *The dead end of globalisation looms before our youth*, Pankaj Mishra argues that we are witnessing a fresh political awakening, a world awakening with rage about “a condition of prosperity without equality, wealth without peace.”

Wolfgang Gründiger of the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations makes an equally strong statement when he writes, and warns, that “*all those who claim this generation is apathetic should know: the revolt of the young has only just begun.*”

Current events certainly suggest that Mishra and Gründiger are spot-on. Yet, the question remains: **Where are we headed?**

What is a youth perspective?

The booklet “What is a youth perspective?,” (pdf) authored by Perla Sofía Vázquez Díaz¹, is the newest edition of *Guidelines for Debate*, a series of publications by the Mexican NGO Espolea, aiming to influence the formulation, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies through fostering debates of progressive ideas:

“The collection features a cool exchange of data and theoretical and methodological tools for analysis and action aimed at emerging political generations.”

The intent of the edition on the youth perspective is to clarify the term and its evolution and to consider approaches and tools for implementing a youth perspective. In the words of the author:

“When we analyze initiatives aimed at young people, often times we face a problem: there is no ‘youth perspective’ in them. But what does it mean to include a ‘youth perspective’ in initiatives, actions, plans or programs for young people?”

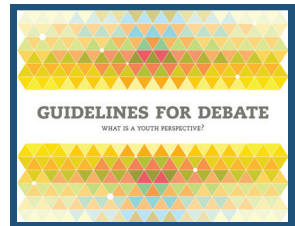
The booklet sets out with an overview of institutional approaches to defining what

youth is, from youth as a stage of life to youth as revolutionaries, summarising the approach and identifying elements to be questioned for each of them.

Drawing on the gender perspective as an example—a comparison bound to attract criticism as it tends to limit both gender and youth to social roles²—Perla Vázquez, while shying away from attempting a definition, describes the youth perspective as

- » glasses through which to analyze the role of young people in reality,
- » as well as tools of reflection through which to generate policy.

The small booklet is rounded off with a basic checklist for identifying the role of young people within a program or policy – a checklist which, as the author reminds readers, is not enough to define a youth perspective:



Both the starting point and the intention of the booklet and its author are most likely widely shared in the youth sector, regionally and globally. The approach, in particular the direct comparison with the gender perspective, is certainly worth critical consideration

Link to the **post announcing the booklet**:
www.espolea.org/3/post/2012/03/gpd-qu-es-la-perspectiva-de-juventud.html

Link to the **English pdf-file** of the booklet:
youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/guidelines-debate-youth-perspective.pdf

IN YOUR ADDRESSING OF YOUTH have you considered the following?

NOTE THE DEFINITION USED FOR YOUTH

- How is a young person named or symbolized? Have you considered a “teen”, a “demographic bonus”, a “revolutionary youth” or in a “transition phase”, etc...?
- Are you generalizing young people and homogenizing youths?
- Do you consider and refer to young women?
- Does your construction of youth involve the perspective of those involved?

IDENTIFY THE PARAMETERS OF YOUTH

- Have you reflected upon ethnic, gender, creed and other contextual constructions?
- Are you applying participation mechanisms for young people?

ANALYZE THE POWER RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH EMANCIPATION AND AUTONOMY

- Does the document identify equitable relationships between young people and other institutions (adults, parents, governments, etc)?
- Do you consider the power relationships between men and women?
- Do you plan any participation, contribution or collective construction from young people themselves?
- How do you define autonomy? Is it within expression of opinions, involvement in decision-making, or the sole responsibility of young people to change?

– a shame that this edition of the guidelines for debate stops short of where a—most useful and necessary—debate could begin: a definition of what comprises a youth perspective, and a review of the tools commonly used in youth policy development to ensure a youth perspective.

- 1 Perla Sofía Vázquez Díaz (2012). What is a youth perspective?
- 2 and tends to ignore other aspects including those of identity or discrimination and how these change throughout the lifecourse of a (young and/or female) person

A Convention on the Rights of Young People: good idea or bad idea?



The need to increase young people's access to their rights is beyond controversy. The rationale for a Convention on the Rights of Young People has been increasingly discussed within the youth rights discourse in Europe, questioning the possibility of binding and non-binding instruments to ensure that young people can adequately access their rights. We summarise some arguments in favour and against a dedicated youth rights convention.

The arguments stem from a 2011 Youth Rights Symposium that aimed to highlight the current challenges for young people in accessing their rights, to review the existing framework for ensuring the rights of young people and to critically engage with the recent debates on the need to increase young people's access to their rights. Read the full report of the symposium.

Overarching questions

Throughout and beyond the Youth Rights Symposium, the question of a youth rights convention has been debated across and beyond Europe, with several overarching questions emerging:

- » Which rights are specific to young people?
- » How do these rights differ from the rights of children protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights of adults protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights?
- » Which existing youth rights are violated?
- » Which necessary youth rights are missing?
- » Which added value would a Youth Rights Convention offer? Which risks does it carry?
- » How would a Youth Rights Convention relate to the youth rights discourse and movement?

Key arguments for a Youth Rights Convention

- » A convention would champion a rights-based approach to youth policy development and practice.
- » Two regional youth rights conventions have already been developed and introduced.
- » The challenges young people face are different from children's and adults' challenges.

- » The existing instruments do not fully protect and promote the rights of young persons.
- » Youth empowerment depends on others giving up power by free choice and with good will.
- » Debating youth rights will allow young people to drive forward cultural and political change.
- » The rights of young people remain unfulfilled across the globe, at least partly.
- » Young people are disenfranchised culturally, politically and economically.
- » Young people are not given spaces for meaningful political participation.
- » The youth rights discourse is a way to negotiate power between generations.
- » As long as laws treat young people differently, their rights need to be asserted.
- » As a result of that marginalisation, the convention would undermine youth and human rights.
- » A youth rights convention would inevitably overlap with other conventions and frameworks.
- » A convention would need to detail different sets of rights for young persons up to, and above 18.
- » It remains unclear how a balance between protection, provision and participation can be achieved.
- » A youth rights convention will likely reinforce the struggle between children's and youth policy.
- » A youth rights convention would only accelerate the inflation of rights and not change much.
- » The demand for a convention is based on needs of young people, not on their violated rights.
- » A youth rights convention would contribute little to mobilising young people to use their rights.
- » A convention providing young persons with meaningful rights would not be easily ratified.

Key arguments against a Youth Rights

Convention

- » Research remains inconclusive about the need for an instrument to protect youth rights.
- » There is not yet a specific set of rights proposed beyond the general demand for a convention.
- » Youth might be marginalised as a group with a subset, and not the full panoply, of human rights.

Read the full report of the Youth Rights Symposium: youthpolicy.org/symposia/2011/08/14/brussels-report/

Professionalising the youth sector: charting murky waters



In October 2013, a youth sector conference hosted in Estonia interrogated the current state of play regarding the training and development for youth sector professionals. The conference took a thematic focus on youth work and a geographic focus on Europe, with occasional glimpses at other youth sector professions as well as other countries.

A lack of consolidated data

Quite astonishingly, no internationally comparative overview of youth worker education and training schemes exists.

The 2008 study on the socio-economic scope of youth work in Europe, conducted by a research consortium led by the Institute for Social Work and Social Education for the Youth Partnership, largely came up with a blank when trying to collate information about youth worker training.

In 7 of the 10 surveyed countries, no data was available on the education, training and qualification of youth workers, and in two of the remaining three, 80 per cent of the respon-

dents opted not to answer questions related to their qualification.

Failing to prepare youth workers for reality

The mixed picture presented in this study was reflected in the reality of the participants in Tallinn: Many cited a complete absence of locally available and formally recognised qualification pathways for youth workers in their national context.

During the conference Jennifer Brooker – the Youth Work Coordinator at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia – presented a comparison of curriculums for youth worker training in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, showcasing that where youth worker training does exist, it often fails to prepare youth workers for the needs and realities of the sector.

Given this situation, it's no wonder then that our fictional youth worker Bob (watch him at <http://vimeo.com/youthpolicy/bob>), invented to illustrate the context of the seminar in October 2013, is disillusioned and despondent.

So, is there any hope for Bob, any hope for the average youth worker out there?

Repeated policy commitments

At the very least, the youth sector is certainly not shy of initiatives to shape, reform and professionalise youth worker education.

A number of political resolutions at EU level have underlined the importance of providing education and training to youth sector professionals, inviting stakeholders to:

- » promote different kinds of sustainable support for youth work, e.g. sufficient funding, resources or infrastructure. This also implies removing barriers to engaging in youth work and where appropriate create strategies on youth work;
- » enhance the quality of youth work, the capacity building and competence development of youth workers;
- » support the development of new strategies or enhance existing ones for the capacity building of youth workers;
- » promote the employability of youth workers [...] and their mobility through better knowledge of their qualifications.

Source: Council of the European Union (2010). Resolution of the Council on youth work

Similar calls for recognised standards, college level programmes, skills based certification and more were heard at the 2013 edition of the Commonwealth Conference on Education and Training of Youth Workers.

A myriad of opportunities

Turning from resolution to the realities of youth work training and qualifications, at first sight it can hardly be argued that there is an absence of opportunities. At regional level across the globe, substantial efforts have been made to establish training structured programmes, from the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work delivered in 45 countries and the (currently stalled) Masters in European Youth Studies to the BSc in Youth Development Work offered in the Caribbean and the series of trainings for Asian Youth Workers.

Alongside these opportunities a range of online and distance learning opportunities, including the introductory Youth Work Matters course offered by the University of Minnesota and the Open University's BA Honours in Youth Work, provide anyone with enough time, financial resources technical equipment and reliable internet access the opportunity for professional development in the field, wherever they happen to be located.

Moreover, there are extensive non-formal opportunities that aim to develop youth workers' competencies such as the range of trainings offered through the SALTO-YOUTH programmes and by the Youth Partnership. Increasingly, programmes are being built that reflect and respond to specific regional needs, from the Caucasus to the Mediterranean. Globally, symposia and conferences provide opportunities for networking and exchanging practice, and for the curious self-initiators there are a number of open access journals, online resource centres, and libraries.

So with the support of policy makers and the apparent availability of opportunities, **why do many in the sector perceive there to be a failing in the quality and provision of youth work training?**

Many small opportunities mask the bigger problem

Three main reasons emerged from the discussions at the Tallinn conference:

1. First, in too many countries there simply aren't structured pathways or a qualification framework for youth workers to develop professionally and obtain recognised status – too much is left to chance. In many places regional training programmes mask the dearth of opportunities available.
2. Second, the continued absence of a comparative international overview of the situation of youth work education means that there is an incomplete picture of the failings and shortcomings. Such a picture would be a useful starting point for the initiation of a more strategic approach to youth sector training.
3. Third, the myriad of international non-formal trainings, whilst frequently valuable and relevant, fail to add up to something greater than the sum of their parts. A collection of disparate training activities, workshops and seminars is certainly no substitute for a comprehensive qualification pathway that could be used to leverage and confer needed status to the profession.

A bias that neglects the prototypical youth worker

At the Tallinn conference, Yael Ohana guided the way through the maze that the various initiatives have created over the past years (presentation, mindmap, video). By dissecting the competence profiles for youth work professionals and the studies produced to that end, Yael illustrated that the focus has largely been on European-level youth trainers, and the—arguably prototypical—neighbourhood youth worker has only received marginal interest so far.

Where to from here?

The number of gaps—that can be turned to opportunities for intervention and change—in relation to the education and training of youth



workers are plenty. One idea that has gained traction among the attendees of the Tallinn conference is to shift some of the attention to local level initiatives. Several ideas emerged for training & exchange programmes between municipalities within and beyond Europe, which may well become one of the tangible outcomes of the conference.

The European youth work mapping remains as relevant and overdue as when it was requested by the Council of the European Union in 2010; with the push from various directions including the Tallinn conference it will hopefully be commissioned and become available in 2015.

The larger shift that is needed in the sector, however, is to focus less on those who have the strongest voice, namely European and international trainers, and to focus more on those who have no own organisations, no own networks, and no own voices at international level, but who arguably do the bulk of the work: local youth workers.



While pushing for that shift, however, we should respect and embrace the diversity of youth work practice from the start. We don't need more possibilities for youth workers, seen as one homogenous group. Much rather, we need more offers and options for various professional profiles in the youth sector.

At the start of a new generation of European programmes, this shift is possible – and in our hands. But will it happen?

Which structures really change the world?

Despite so much at stake, global governance is in crisis and is failing to respond to the political, economical, social and environmental breakdown throughout the world with international institutions unable to act with the speed, urgency and gravity needed.

At the same time, we have never had so many civil society organisations, mobilised individuals and campaign movements with the skills, experience and finance needed to champion, deliver and evaluate social change.

But if so many movements and campaigning organisations exist, why are we failing to achieve the changes needed to respond to the growing number of threats humanity faces?

The curating team of youthpolicy.org/participation asked five leading figures from the world of global activism, politics, NGOs and the UN for their perspective on:

Which structures really change the world?

Our high level contributors are:

» **Jeremy Heimans – CEO & Co-Founder of Purpose.com & Avaaz.org.** Jeremy discusses movement building through story telling and networks.

“Movements are dynamic social structures that aggregate our voices, tap into institutional power while resisting the pressures to become institutionalized and static.”

» **Kirsty McNeil – Former advisor to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.** Kirsty argues that electoral politics drives change and that youth must engage.

“Electoral politics is slow and hard and often boring, but Europe’s young people simply can’t reverse the coordinated austerity without it.”

» **Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar – Country Director, The Hunger Project.** Dr Badiul laments top-down failures and champions the bottom up approach.

“The top-down approach, depending on the generosity of the rulers, even when they are elected, has not in many cases succeeded in providing better lives for most citizens.”

» **Jamie Drummond – Co-Founder & Executive Director of ONE.** Jamie says that it's traditional NGO campaigning that creates change.

"In 10 years together we've helped a series of campaigns go from margins to mainstream and make change happen. Credit for these achievements doesn't lie with celebrity rockstars, though they've helped."

» **Ravi Kakara – Expert on Children & Youth, UN-HABITAT.** Ravi explains how the UN is changing to support young people.

"The proposed changes at the UN mark a shift that needs to be recognised in the time to come and the greatest test will be how youth worldwide are recognised through their voice, action and partnership in the UN systems and beyond."

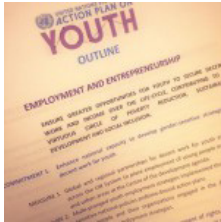
The System-wide Action Plan on Youth: A first analysis

The launch of a coordinated action plan on youth by UN agencies marks a potentially transformative approach to the way in which the United Nations works with and for young people across the world.

Under the leadership of UN-DESA, UN-HABITAT and UNFPA, the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) has sought to address both internal and external criticisms through the development of a System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP).

The Youth-SWAP – which forms a part of the Secretary-General's Five-year Action Agenda related to youth – aims to establish a coordinated and coherent approach to youth development across the United Nations agencies.

It focuses on five thematic areas: employment and entrepreneurship, political inclusion, civic engagement and protection of rights, education including comprehensive sexuality education, and health.



Although in its early stages, the development of the Youth-SWAP is demonstrative of a renewed and reinvigorated effort by the UN to give ascendancy to youth issues; the energy

and commitment required to establish a clear strategic vision and commitment to the agenda across dozens of disparate UN agencies, programmes and offices should not be underestimated. By seeking to visibly mainstream youth in the UN, the Youth-SWAP has the potential to raise the profile of youth issues in a number of important policy areas, whilst also improving the accountability of the UN system.

The UN has consulted and created opportunities for youth to contribute to the development of the Youth-SWAP. 13,500 people participated in a SWAP survey designed to seek input from youth and other stakeholders, and over 150 youth sector professionals had the opportunity to contribute to discussions at the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development's Open Meeting (18-20th September 2013).

The attempt to establish horizontal coordination across UN entities, spearheaded by the Youth-SWAP, will not be without challenge. So,

whilst welcoming and acknowledging the work done to date, let's examine five of the bigger challenges that still have to be overcome.

1. In implementing the Youth-SWAP, the UN system will 'identify ways in which existing activities can complement each other in order to exploit synergies'; there is explicitly no new money – despite repeated arguments, including by the UN Youth Envoy, that the youth sector is chronically underfunded within and beyond the UN. The Youth-SWAP therefore risks to exclusively tweak and repackage existing activity, encroaching on the potential to create much-needed conditions for cross-agency collaboration. While it is encouraging that the Youth-SWAP will explore the process of developing joint programming, this must become a reality and will require the redistribution of existing resources as well as strategic and substantial fundraising for new resources.
2. Although the inter-agency coordination required to develop the Youth-SWAP has already demonstrated its potential to establish a clearer strategic vision on paper, it has yet—beyond the meetings associated with its production—to deliver concrete action. The Youth-SWAP must ensure that the efforts to describe and communicate a

- more coordinated approach do not distract resources away from achieving the aims of the agenda.
3. The Youth-SWAP Action Plan details a range of commitments and measures with lead/ supporting entities and indicators. In its current form and format, the plan fails to set out a credible causal link between the overall goals and the proposed actions. Rather than focus on outcomes, it lists activities—that may or may not affect the desired outcome—and proposes measures that effectively involve ‘counting activity’ rather than monitoring progress towards the desired outcomes. Surely, measuring progress in fighting youth unemployment, for example, should focus on the number of new and decent jobs that are being created rather than whether new reports, frameworks or strategies have been developed.
 4. It remains unclear to what extent the indicators under consideration can be properly measured and against which criteria the indicators will be assessed. Where will the data come from? How robust will the data be? Who will collect the data, who will provide it, how will bias be prevented? The Youth-SWAP’s impact framework remains to be designed, and answers to these questions have yet to be developed; answers that will effect not only the feasibility and impact of the System-wide Action Plan on Youth but in extension also mark the quality of accountability mechanisms within the UN system and towards the stakeholders of the global youth sector.
 5. To-date, no concrete decisions have been made about which 15 countries will be prioritised for the pilot launch of the Youth-SWAP, resulting in a sense that the agenda has been designed back-to-front. How can a credible action plan be developed without a comprehensive understanding of context? This issue becomes even more important when, as a member organisation, with limited budget, the action plan’s aims relate to issues over which the UN system has very little direct control. For example, UN agencies have limited influence over the ‘number of financial institutions scaling up financial services for young people’ (3.2.1), yet it is currently one of the SWAP indicators under consideration.
- One exciting development, as was inferred during the Open Meeting of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, is to review commissioning and partnership arrangements to enable youth-led or youth-sensitive organisations to design and deliver services. This has the potential to

allow the UN to support innovative and disruptive approaches to service delivery that become exemplars of effective practice, though the exact details of this proposal are not finalised.

Despite many challenges on the road to implementation, the Youth-SWAP represents a significant and welcome shift in focus, coordination and alignment of UN programmes. Its success will only become fully assessable in some years, but a first immediate sign of success or failure will be its transition from an agreed strategic document to a real change in the working relationships of UN agencies.

Will agencies begin to cooperate more strategically, seeking to cover the priority areas of the System-wide Action Plan on Youth? Will the resulting cooperation agreements be bureaucratic monsters, or will they allow dynamic, locally-led and context-specific interventions to emerge? Will these interventions focus relentlessly on improving the lives of young people, and will such improvements be sustained and systemic?


We do hope so, and will continue to cover the developments around the System-wide Action Plan on Youth on [youthpolicy.org](#) regularly.



Time to act before England burns again

A year on from the England riots, we wanted to investigate what life was like for children and young people in England and what – if any – impact the riots have had on policy makers and policy making.





Over two weeks in July 2012, we visited young people and youth projects in London and Nottingham and met leading figures from the Riot Panel and Lambeth Council. Our film, *England Riots: A year on*, shows the lives behind the riots and the constraints on policy makers and the limitations of change in the current economic climate.

“Residents in communities where riots took place last summer want rioters – any of whom had long criminal records – appropriately punished. However, they also believe that action is needed to ensure that in future, these individuals and those displaying worrying signs of similar behaviour can play a positive role in their areas.”

– Riot Panel

In *The 5 days when England burned*, we set out causes and effects of last summer’s violence and in this second article we take the *Riot Communities and Victim panel’s (Riot panel)* recommendations¹ and explore what’s changed in terms of youth unemployment, police relationships and community participation and give our own thoughts on what needs to happen next.

“My life is hell.”

A 16-year-old boy, who has just finished school, described how he now faced nothing.

He’d tried to get a job and had been laughed at and has regular interaction with the police. Despite trying to set up a community-recording studio with a group of friends, his future, he feels, is bleak.

The story of Bookie from Nottingham is not uncommon and without some form of positive intervention in his life, his future remains uncertain and is likely to spiral downwards. In addition to his anger for the system and hatred of the government and police, he wasn’t expecting life to get better.

Youth Unemployment

“Many young people the Panel met following the riots spoke of a lack of hopes and dreams for the future – particularly because they feel there was no clear path to work in an age of record youth unemployment.”

– The Riot Panel

Figures released in July show that despite a fall of 10,000 young people out of work, still over one million are not in education, employment or training in the UK – a fifth of the UK’s youth.²

On youth unemployment, the Government’s independent Riot Communities and Victims panel recommended that:

- » Government and local public services fund a *'Youth Job Promise'* to get as many young people as possible a job, where they have been unemployed for a year.
- » Government provide a job guarantee for all young people who have been out of work for two years or more.
- » Local areas, particularly those with high levels of youth unemployment, establish neighbourhood 'NEET Hubs' to join up data and resources.

When Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister launched the *Youth Contract*, worth £1billion, it was hoped that the new initiative would create 410.000 work opportunities for young people over 3 years.³ But the scheme doesn't actually provide jobs in itself. The scheme is a wage incentive for businesses and although makes it cheaper for businesses to hire young people, it relies on businesses being in a position to hire staff at all.

A *'youth job promise'* for young people unemployed for a year – which has gone up 264%⁴ in the past year – and a *'job guarantee'* for young people out of work for two years or more are needed and positive steps. But given the scale of the issue, local authorities and the government must do more for young people.

A *'NEET hub'* could provide the level of intensive, multi-agency working needed to tackle

the many problems in the cycle of unemployment and poverty that prevents people accessing employment. More net jobs are required, but jobs alone won't solve the cycle of poverty and despair as many would lack qualifications needed, the stability to make work sustainable and the trust and confidence in authority.

As local authorities face large cuts from government funding, the reality is that little spare money means these kind of solutions are unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future.

But when they have got spending power, they must use it to maximum benefit.

"The successful contractor benefits the local community, for example by publishing details of: the number of local jobs and apprenticeships created, work experience offered and links to schools, colleges and wider youth provision."

– The Riot Panel

Local authorities spend £88 billion – roughly £185 million in each local council – per year on procuring services from the private sector.⁵ Contracts should work for the communities they serve and must include a fixed number of jobs for local young people, work experience placements for those without the necessary qualifications and apprenticeships for a vocation to be learnt.

Police

At a time when only 56% of the public think the police do a good job in their area,⁶ the concept of policing is changing and needs to respond to the community expectations of their role and relationship. On policing, some of the key recommendations from the Riot Panel were:

- » Improved success rates and transparency in the use of Stop and Search
- » Police services proactively engage directly with their communities to debunk myths on issues that affect the perception of their integrity,
- » Police services should identify all ‘trust hotspots’ and immediately put in place a programme to improve confidence in these areas.



- » Police services continue integrating community policing values into wider teams.

“Many communities, but particularly those in London, do not feel that stop and search is conducted fairly.”

– The Riot Panel

In 2009/10, 1.3 million people were stopped and searched.⁷ Out of these only 9% were arrested⁸ and around 0.5% led to a conviction for carrying a dangerous weapon.⁹ In our film, many young people said they felt harassed by the police.

A member of the public can be stopped under two powers. Section 1 of Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)¹⁰ which can be made by any officer and requires an officer to have “reasonable grounds for suspecting” a crime has been committed. Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act

1994¹¹ is different and needs to have the authorisation of a more senior officer who designates an area or zone in which the power can be used. Section 60 does not require any suspicion that by searching an individual, an officer will find something illegal.

Section 1 of PACE is the most commonly used power and in

2010/2011, 1,205,495 people were stopped and in April 2011, stop and search under Section 1 was at its highest since 2001.¹²

The Metropolitan Police have committed to halving the number of of Section 60 stop and searches¹³ but this is a side track seeing as these only account for 4.7%¹⁴ of all stop and searches. It is Section 1 were such a commitment is needed and has so far not been made.

The Riot panel called for improved rates of success rates and increased transparency in the use of stop and search powers and in Haringey, the London borough which includes Tottenham, change seems to be happening.

In Haringey, stop and search was used 534 times in June, as opposed to the power being used 1.261 times in June 2011.¹⁵ More so, 14.4% led to an arrest versus 8.6% last year.¹⁶ In addition, no approvals for the use of Section 60 powers have been made since February.¹⁷ Training on stop and search is now part of the induction for new PC recruits.¹⁸

Borough Commander, Sandra Looby said,¹⁹

“We recognise that stop and search is a key area of frustration among some members of the community and we are changing the way we use the power to make it more targeted and effective.”

This is a positive move and more boroughs and police forced need to follow suit in making powers effective and targeted, leading to less stops and more arrests.

“Police services proactively engage directly with their communities to debunk myths on issues that affect the perception of their integrity.”

– The Riot Panel

Our perspective is defined by our reality. If police only see young people committing crime or engaging in violence, they will naturally be suspicious, guarded and defensive. Likewise, if young people’s only experience of the police is stop and search, they will feel harassed and disrespected. We need to stop the only interaction of both sides being a negatively prejudiced situation and change the experience for both sides.

“Communities want better engagement and better quality contact with all levels of police, not just community police officers. There should be a common set of values across the entire police force.”

– The Riot Panel

Simon Marcus, a member of the Riots Panel, as well as *Just for Kids Law* told us that a Stop & Talk²⁰ rather than Stop and Search approach was needed. Young people felt that the police

were not there to protect them and this needs to be challenged in the actions, not just words, of the police force.

Police talking to young people would help build confidence and although it would take time to establish a trusting relationship, it's a step we must take to create respect and understanding between communities and those charged with protecting us. While this is needed from both sides, it is the police who are the professionals not the public and it is their actions that can make a positive change in the community.

“Protecting – although not preserving – the front line.”

– HM Inspector of Constabulary

Between 2010 and 2015 the police need to make £2.4 billion worth of cuts after the police force budget was cut by 20%.²¹ This will result in 28,400 members of the police force losing their jobs.²² The reorganization, which by 2015 will see between 81% & 95% of police officers on the front line,²³ needs to be accompanied with a change in training to ensure those at the forefront of policing are qualified and able to engage positively with the community – particularly young people.

Community involvement

“Everyone’s aiming for the government today. Everyone’s voices needs to get heard. And that’s what it was.”

– Reading the Riots

13 out of the 63 recommendations by the Riots, Communities & Victims panel reference local authorities and as town halls are the most common interaction that the public have with the government they play a crucial role in the lives of citizens through local services delivery.

In Lambeth, Councillor Steve Reed is overseeing a £76 million cut in the Council’s budget over the next three years with £20 million expected to hit Children and Young people’s services.²⁴ Figures released last month showed long term youth unemployed rising by 243%²⁵ in the borough with 30 people chasing every 1 job.²⁶

Whether spurred on from the riots or the dramatic cuts Councils are having to manage, Lambeth Council – a self proclaimed Co-operative Council – is reimagining the way services are delivered.

In Lambeth, including young people in the way things are run could help to bring people into the heart of community decision making. From

next year, a new cooperative organisation, with young people as its members, will take control of a multi-million pound budget and be legally responsible for the commissioning and delivery of children and youth services in the borough.

We don't know whether this will work, but what we have seen is that throwing money at a problem, hasn't always given us the outcomes we'd expected and Local Authorities must explore new ways of running services rather than simply cutting the cord from town halls to neighbourhoods. Time will tell whether this new entity has the ability to deliver services on a shoestring and take young people seriously. Few people want to see multi-million pound cuts in services, but that is the reality we're faced with.

Conclusion

While many of the cuts and withdrawal of services may have been contributing factors to the riots, what is most noticeable is the negative culture and feeling of worth as a generation that this perpetuated. The atmosphere of anger, hopelessness and insecurity about the future is palpable for the youth generation as they struggle to carve out an identity and self worth that is not defined by the length of the benefits line.

But to do that young people need help.

“Having a mentor can help young people ... feel more positive about their future.”

– The Riot Panel

When we met Bookie and heard his story in Nottingham, it was clear he needed someone to guide and support him. The Riots panel championed mentoring for young people leaving prison to tackle reoffending, but it is also needed for the many people not passing through the youth justice system. Having a role model, someone you can relate to, connect with and who understands your experience can make the difference between a life of uncertainty and fear and a life of worth and self-fulfillment.

Many parents, families and friends play this role but for those who don't have a stable home life need a mentor figure to act as the voice of direction, support and guidance. This urgently needs acting upon by schools, local authorities and central government. Following the success of Team GB at London 2012, there are no shortage of positive role models and a nationwide mentorship programme could transform the attitudes and outlook of despondent and hopeless youth.

Moving forward

In the short term, we'll need to find ways of tackling these problems with much less public money than there was before. Changing the way the police approach young people on the street doesn't have to cost a lot of money. Stopping and Talking costs no more than Stopping and Searching and building relationships can be done for free.

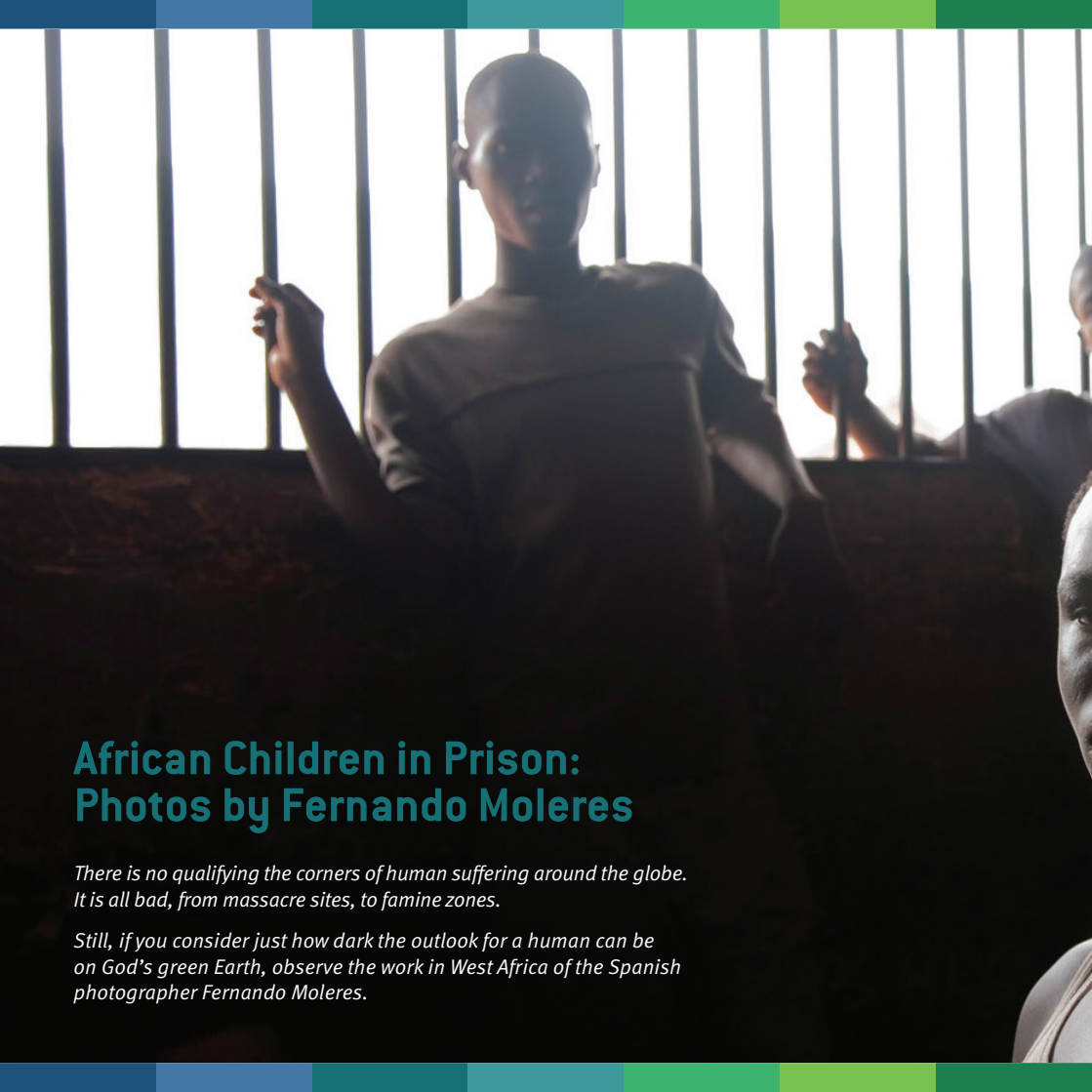
But increased spending alone has often failed to tackle social problems and now is a time for new approaches to the way services, councils, police and communities run and interact. Throughout history, the hardest of times have sparked the most innovative of solutions – think of the NHS, women's empowerment, medical and technology advances. In Lambeth, the experiment of delivering youth services in a cooperative model is one example of the kind of thinking needed.

There is also something more fundamental at work. Economic approaches, regeneration, growth and jobs all play a role in the solution in tackling our underlying social problems, but they miss a crucial aspect of the anger and frustration that people feel. For many, the issue is about justice, fairness and equality. Justice in terms of government, police and press corruption, fairness in cuts equality in lowering the gap between rich and poor.

Life, for those we met, is little different now than last year and without action we risk a repeat of the riots. Throughout the past year, much time has been spent reflecting and analyzing the causes of the riots and the recommendations give a clear pathway for action. But little has been done.

The debate on causes and effect was needed, but must end here. The time of navel-gazing at society is over and we must now deliver change before further failing a generation.

- 1 Riot, Communities & Victims Panel Final Report.
- 2 The Office of National Statistics
- 3 HM Cabinet Office, April 2012.
- 4 TUC Report.
- 5 The Federation of Small Businesses.
- 6 The Guardian.
- 7, 8, 9 Home Office data.
- 10 Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.
- 11 Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.
- 12 Home Office data on Stop & Search.
- 13 The Guardian.
- 14 Total Stop & Search use in 2010/2011 was 1,276,669. Use of Section 60 was 60,180 or 4.7%.
- 15-19 Tottenham & Wood Green Journal.
- 20 Stop & Talk campaign.
- 21-23 HM Inspector of Constabulary.
- 24 Lambeth UNISON.
- 25 London Assembly Labour.
- 26 Chuka Umunna, Shadow Business Secretary.



African Children in Prison: Photos by Fernando Molerés

There is no qualifying the corners of human suffering around the globe. It is all bad, from massacre sites, to famine zones.

Still, if you consider just how dark the outlook for a human can be on God's green Earth, observe the work in West Africa of the Spanish photographer Fernando Molerés.

Pademba Road Prison in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown



Few places in the world hold the level of hopelessness of an African prison, for the most part vortexes that may release a human but never the human spirit. Now imagine a prison in a failed state in Africa. Now imagine a prison in a failed state in Africa that holds children.

This is the nightmare Molerés has found. No, it is not the worst place on Earth and yes there is human suffering that far surpasses what one finds in the Pademba Road Prison in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. But his work in this place, the images of the young and the hopeless, the squalor, the confines, the emotion, the dark cells streaked with precious sunlight, are a testament to how frightfully low a society can sink. And yet, it is also a reminder that the lack of amenities, if you will, are about the only thing that separates the misery of the Pademba Prison from any given youth detention center in the United States.

If only Molerés' work were about confinement and nothing else. There are wrongful convictions in this nation and other parts of the developed world, and structural deficiencies that put the poor at a disadvantage, to that question there is no doubt. But it is an understatement to say there is towering injustice in Sierra Leone, in Pademba Road and in Makeni Prison the decrepit provincial "facility" Molerés also visited.

Know this is not an easy journey for the viewer to take. Witness them though, because Molerés handles this horror with skill, grace and caring in a way that makes you understand the way of grotesque jurisprudence in another world. It is a strange soul indeed that would refuse to be stirred to outrage over these photographs.

So see it for what it is.

See a menacing guard with mirrored glasses, a necklace of handcuffs dangling around his neck, an image that foreshadows what is to come in Molerés' essay. This power figure in uniform stands on the back end of a freight car, or more accurately a cargo of human beings. Then there is the more personal; a small boy named Abdul, in court, then the shock of him literally behind bars. Such a cliché shot is hard to get in the States these days, but here it is, in all its stomach-churning glory.

But perhaps the most telling image isn't of prison bars or even an inmate, but of a clerk, seemingly asleep on his desk, a paralyzed and rotting bureaucracy showering down around him.

Farther down Pademba Road, into its hallways and inner cells you see the prison-scape that comes about when 1,100 men and boys are crammed into a space meant for 300.

The photography of this has been done before. It has even been done here, in this sprawling cage in Freetown. But Molerés somehow has found a deeper hopelessness, something that brings to mind slaving ships, the forgoing of freedom altogether.

He has managed to burrow so deeply into this subject because he cares so about what is going on here, the naked injustice of it all.

In a September 2011 interview with the British Journal of Photography, his frustration with the NGO community rose to the surface and exploded into the atmosphere. No one, not the United Nations, not the Red Cross, not Medecins du Monde, cared enough about

the situation at Pademba Road Prison to do anything about it.

“When I was in Sierra Leone,” he told the Journal, a representative from the [United Nations] came to the prison to visit the detainees. I went with him. He talked with a few dealers, the guards, etc. But when other detainees came to see him to denounce the injustice of the entire system, his answer was: ‘I’m not here to solve your personal problems.’ This man, whose name is Antonio Maria Costa [was the former head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime], has access to the country’s vice president and home affairs minister. He could have done something about it, but he chose not to.”



Pademba Road Prison, Freetown

Cantankerous? You bet he is. Then again, he’s got a right to be. Fernando Molerés is a one-man advocate for the children in this prison, so much so that he’s set his own structure in place to bail them out before they are lost, forever. He calls it, Free Minor Africa and in time he may just shame the mighty NGOs of the world into funding it.

This is not a passing fancy for Molerés. He's been working the Pademba Road Prison project since 2007 and he's been at photography for half his life, winning numerous top honors in international photography, including the the Luis Valtuena International Humanitarian Photography Award for his work in Sierra Leone.

He'll take the accolades but he'll also use his stage to call out the unwilling and scream to high heaven the injustice of Pademba Road and beyond.

The Editors managed an email exchange with Molerés recently when he was briefly at home in Barcelona (he's on the road a lot) and took the opportunity to ask a few questions.

Question: Has the attitude of the NGOs (non-governmental organizations, international relief groups, non-profits) changed in Sierra Leone? Are they so still so insensitive?

Fernando Molerés: Not all the NGOs are the same, not all the people inside them function the same way. My experience with the NGOs is that they are slow to act, all their decisions have to be made by consensus and within a bureaucratic process. The big NGOs have inflexible structures where it is very difficult to contact the person in charge of making decisions. Plans have to be made years before they will be carried out and an enormous amount of energy is spent in the administration.

When I asked the NGOs in Sierra Leone if I could help the prisoners, young or old, no one could offer me any help, suggestion nor interest for my request for what I was telling them.

Question: What is the status of Free Minor Africa? Are you getting support, contributions, from organizations and individuals?

FM: No, the project FMA, at this moment has no support. I have been getting some money by selling my pictures, ...or selling some photos or videos to some small magazines interested in this subject. All the money, 100%, goes to the project. Up to this moment only two persons have donated a total of \$80. In total, FMA has \$4,000 and there is a volunteer who will go to Sierra Leone. She will be paying her own way.

Question: How can people help?

FM: Go to the web page where you can find information on how to help directly or you may buy a photo to help Free Minor Africa. If someone wants to travel to Sierra Leone put them in contact with me.

Translated from Spanish by Rosana Ayala.

This piece originally appeared in the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. Photos by Fernando Molerés will appear on **JJIE's multimedia page, Bokeh**, for the remainder of the year:

<http://bokeh.jjie.org/fernandomolerés>

Improving youth policies through research & advocacy

Many countries have stated their youth policies, but are they executing them? Do these policies support young people to achieve their rights? In which ways do specific youth policies and broader policies affecting young people interact and with which results for young people? A series of youth policy reviews seeks to answer these and other related questions.

The first step to understanding is knowledge

Commonplace as it may sound, the first step to understanding really is knowledge. Many countries have stated their youth policies, but are they executing them? Do these policies support young people to achieve their rights? In which ways do specific youth policies and broader policies which pertain to young people interact and with which results for young people? What measures might ensure that young people get their fair share of policy attention and resources? To answer these and other related questions, the Open Society Youth Initiative (OSYI), which promotes youth advocacy and participation in all aspects of

their communities, started a pilot program to research and analyze public policies affecting youth in 2010. The project's main aim was to contribute to the elaboration of evidence on which young people and supporting institutions, such as the Open Society Foundations (OSF), can advocate not only for the adoption of sound national and international youth policies, but for their implementation. It further aimed at providing youth civil society and supporting organizations with what they need for holding governments and international institutions accountable to the promises they make to young people.

This first round of policy reviews has come to a close, and the final reports will be published as a series here on www.youthpolicy.org starting in autumn 2012. It was conducted in six countries across the globe: Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Serbia and Uganda. Countries were chosen based on OSF's National Foundation and Regional Programs' interest in engaging youth or youth issues in their strategies. In composing the pilot group of coun-

tries, OSYI sought to include conflict and post conflict countries, countries impacted by inward and/or outward migration of young people, those that are home to minority and/or marginalized youth communities, countries with a youth budge or an ageing population and those that have some form of stated youth policy. In addition, a fair geographical distribution across countries and regions was sought.

A broader look at policy in relation to youth

Many actors in the public sphere, from governments to youth civil society organizations, to international development agencies to mention just a few, have sought to describe youth policies in specific countries or regions. Several such projects have attempted to distill best practice on national youth policies – how to develop one, how to manage one, etc. Some have stated the case for more attention to be paid to young people in other policy fields, especially development.

This project differs from its predecessors in several respects. First, it takes a broader look at policy in relation to youth, analyzing not only specific youth policies, but the wider policy dossiers that can affect young peoples' lives, from housing to education, from health to participation. Second, it attempts to under-

stand the impact of said policies pertaining to young people on the achievement of their human rights, asking the question in which way do said policies support or hinder young people in becoming fully active and engaged citizens. Third, it acknowledges the role of international exchange and good practice in the development of youth policy knowledge, and tries to assess the extent to which international policy initiatives, legislation and declarations have influenced the national policy field – for better or worse. Finally, and not least importantly, this project has taken the rare approach of 'not waiting to be asked', in that it does not rely on government invitation to consider the merits and possible gaps in a country's policy provisions for young people, thereby making a strong statement as regards the necessity of government to be held to account by citizens.

The set-up and approach of the pilot review series

The evaluation process for each country involved a mixture of desk research, direct consultation with young people and in-depth field visits to ensure corroboration of results and depth of analysis. Each country review was conducted by a research team made up of experts in the field of youth policy, young

More information about this project and its various follow-up activities will be provided continuously at youthpolicy.org/reviews.

For enquiries concerning Round 2 of the Policy Reviews contact us at reviews@youthpolicy.org.



researchers, and grassroots activists with specific expertise in special context related factors for the country in question. Each country research team was further supported by an international expert – the so-called International Advisor, who assisted in the collection of relevant international literature, with the analysis and drafting process and in the implementation of the country field visit. The role of National Foundations and local partners supporting the research process was to support the team for the logistical organization of fieldwork and the collection of research materials, as well as for the planning of follow-up and advocacy work in the country and internationally as appropriate. An International Editorial Board (IEB), composed of three high level international experts, ensured ongoing quality control through an evaluation and provided advice on demand to the country review teams.

To ensure methodological rigor and some comparability of results, the project developed a multidimensional evaluation matrix. This was adapted to the specific country context by the country teams during the planning for their research process and was used as a basis for the evaluation of the impact of public policies on the achievement of young peoples' human rights in each country. Given the pilot nature of the initiative the matrix served as a training

framework for understanding the policy review process and was the basis on which the country report structure was designed.

The timeline of the first round of reviews

Project implementation began in February 2011, starting with the recruitment of the country research teams, International Advisors and members of the International Editorial Board. Spring 2011 was dedicated to orientation, structuring work plans; late summer and autumn 2011 was the time for desk research, in-country field visits and preparing early drafts of the country reports. Between February and April 2012, the research teams delivered individual country reports based on available local and foreign language literature, interviews with relevant stakeholders and direct consultations with or surveys of young people.

These country reviews not only shed light on the opportunities and challenges confronting young people, but also on how youth themselves might successfully advocate for the elaboration of reforms and even new policies to remove obstacles hampering the achievement of their human rights. They further consider socio-political barriers young people experience in their transition to adulthood and ways in which society might better value young peoples' potential contributions to their communities.

A clear account of policy realities

The country reviews present a clear account of the policies pertaining to youth, involvement of youth in policy development and the supportive structures that have been established at national through to local levels. It appears that for most countries youth policy implementation, nonetheless, operates with meager financial resources (which are erratically released in some countries) and weak institutional structures. Civil society organizations and the private sector have become increasingly important players in youth service delivery, working in partnership with both central and local governments. Financial means may well come from development agencies or foundations. This has hampered countries in their progress towards offering sustainable and appropriate services: where the state is dependent on donor funding for policy formulation, the formulated policies seem to have little impact on what is implemented. Political and other contingencies (including institutional factors) drive implementation to a large extent. This is not a very encouraging picture and it is necessary to understand more clearly the constraints and barriers for evidence-based policy development and implementation.

Gaps between policy, research and practice

Most of the countries identified gaps between policy makers, researchers and practitioners. These sectors often worked in isolation with very few institutionalized mechanisms to encourage cooperation and country ownership.

The invisibility of the United Nations

Interestingly, the role of the UN and other multilateral agencies in policy formulation was seldom captured in the country reports. Given that UN and multilateral agencies often offer technical and financial support to governments, and sometimes to civil society groups, for policy formulation it is interesting that their role was invisible in the policy review process especially with regard to capacity building or institutional strengthening.

Vulnerable and marginalized youth groups remain sidelined

Almost all the country reports also emphasized the fact that vulnerable and marginalized youth groups, although identified in the policies as requiring special support, continued to be sidelined. Certain youth groups were marginalized due to a range of cultural and political issues as well such as language, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation. Countries do not seem to have found effective means of

integrating all youth groups into even existing programs.

In terms of overall findings education, training, employment, access to the labor market, health and youth civic involvement were key issues that drew attention in all the country reports. These issues having transpired across countries call for coherent involvement of all stakeholders in the youth field and cross-sectoral collaboration through creation of linkages within relevant national policy frameworks.

From first findings to full reports: next steps

All six reports will be published as a series for download and in print versions. The main findings will also be integrated into the relevant country fact sheets on youthpolicy.org. In-country and international dissemination and advocacy events are currently in preparation. And last but not least, a second round of policy reviews has kicked off in 2013, with teams working in Colombia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Swaziland and Tunisia.



The review research methodology

Through our policy reviews, we take a broader look at policy in relation to youth, analyzing not only specific youth policies, but the wider policy dossiers that can affect young peoples' lives and rights. The key unique feature of the review process is its research methodology, a matrix specifically developed for this purpose, which we introduce here.

While this is not the only review process...

The pilot review process we are currently undertaking is not the only mechanism to undertake assessment of policies pertaining to young people. The Council of Europe has a longstanding process of national reviews supported by international teams. The review of a particular country is initiated by invitation from the government of the country concerned, and is not considered an evaluation per se, but rather as an international perspective on what a given country might consider to improve if and when youth policy is up for review.

Various specialized United Nations agencies and programs formulate review instruments and integrate them into their program plan-

ning processes. These are generally conducted on the basis of obtaining information for background descriptions or situation analyses for a country program document, and sometimes as was the case in 2007 for UNFPA, these have been conducted for a region (Europe and Central Asia). The World Bank and the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Youth Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs have all undertaken some form of youth policy review in the last decade.

... it has a unique approach

This project differs from its predecessors in several respects. First, it takes a broader look at policy in relation to youth, analyzing not only specific youth policies, but the wider policy dossiers that can affect young peoples' lives, from housing to education, from health to participation. Second, it attempts to understand the impact of said policies pertaining to young people on the achievement of their human rights, asking the question in which way do said policies support or hinder young people in becoming fully active and engaged



citizens. Third, it acknowledges the role of international exchange and good practice in the development of youth policy knowledge, and tries to assess the extent to which international policy initiatives, legislation and declarations have influenced the national policy field – for better or worse. Finally, and not least importantly, this project has taken the rare approach of ‘not waiting to be asked’, in that it does not rely on government invitation to consider the merits and possible gaps in a country’s policy provisions for young

people, thereby making a strong statement as regards the necessity of government to be held to account by citizens.

The key unique feature: the matrix

Probably the key unique feature of this review process is that it was rolled out on the basis of a specifically developed research methodology, known as the Matrix. This project’s approach to youth policy research can be broadly understood as one of impact assessment. Its contribution to youth research starts from fairly consolidated values and interests that are already based on strong institutional reflections.

The policy matrix was developed to assist in assessing the impact of public policy on the rights of young people in a variety of country contexts, and was first tested in the present pilot review. Given the pilot nature of the initiative the matrix served as a training framework for understanding the policy review process and was the basis on which the country report structure was designed.

First insights on the usage and usefulness of the matrix

According to the evaluation conducted by the International Editorial Board (IEB), the experi-

ence of working with the matrix has been mixed. Country teams were initially a little overwhelmed by its scope, but despite initial negative reactions to the matrix's complexities and ambiguities, teams were able to adapt and contextualize it for their country research processes. The matrix proved useful in the sense that its purpose was clear, and despite a broad scope, it provided the review team with rather concise questions pertaining to youth policy and comprehensively alluded to a detailed account of the different youth arenas. However, the country teams were confronted with a trade-off: the degree of in-country adaptation decided the extent to which the report would be useful for advocacy within a country versus easy international comparability.

Based on at least four of the country reports taken into consideration by the IEB, the country teams appear to have interpreted the matrix as a kind of check-list that would help them to identify and classify the issues relating to youth policy in the country under review. Accordingly, certain issues proposed by the matrix are missing in the individual reviews.

This can imply that local researchers or their international advisors consciously avoided a topic, but it may also indicate that they considered it irrelevant after serious examination. While the scope and breadth of the matrix

provided the teams with a useful framework for guiding the youth policy reviews, it also meant that in-country certain choices about what to include and what not to include had to be made. In some countries at least some of these choices were likely also determined by the expertise and interests of the local researchers rather than the actual situation on the ground.

Further, feedback from the country teams indicate that the matrix was useful for framing the youth policy review process and ensuring that it addressed the many issues affecting young people. It also helped ensure a certain degree of consistency in the structure of the country reports.

Next steps: how will the matrix evolve?

The Matrix is currently being re-developed to take into account the experience of the pilot round of reviews. The revised version will be used to orient the teams that will conduct the second round. In the long run, it is hoped that the rights-based approach it proposes can inform other review processes, and consequently, we will make the re-worked matrix available here on youthpolicy.org

Millions spent on meetings with no change

Since youth has become a new priority of the UN Secretary General, a flurry of activities has started. Most events are tokenistic and manipulative, dominated by hidden agendas and personal interests of people clinging to structures and jockeying for positions. The meeting reports are almost instantly as dead as the words on the page. Are we creating even more structures that are completely divorced from the young people they are meant to engage and represent?

Since Ban-Ki Moon announced youth as a new priority during his second term as UN Secretary General, a flurry of activities has started. Most events, called for at extremely short notice, are dominated by hidden agendas and personal interests. How can we achieve participatory UN youth structures, if consultation processes remain tokenistic and manipulative?

We cling to structures. They make us feel secure. If we build them ourselves, we feel even

more secure. How confident are any of us that the ambition in our words really matches the needs of those we claim to engage?

We investigate, analyse, talk, blog, tweet and even debate – and then we write a report. A document almost instantly regarded as dead as the words on the page.

The structures become political mechanisms for cloning another generation to become divorced from the young they probably really believe they represent.

At a time when action speaks – and can be volatile, do we need any more structures? A potential UN Youth Forum is under discussion; a Commonwealth Youth Council is under construction. Several other youth forums already exist; generating policy papers on any, and every, subject. And just what effect is this having on the deteriorating life-choices of an excluded generation?





We do need standards for meaningful youth participation in policy-making. We need them where it counts – in hierarchies of local communities; in the recruitment process in education; in the human resource policies of multinational businesses, and in the accountability of structures.

The best test of an effective structure for social change is that it puts itself out of business; makes its own existence unnecessary. Replicating weak systems can only stretch further the distance of accountability. It is a two-way street; the leaders need followers; the power-holders need security to act. But it has to be a managed deal. For those who sit on and run the structures, there needs to be rigorous external examination, by peers and the disenfranchised.

Until we get there, try this: work on the detail – who’s not in the room? Get it right and then build something you don’t want to serve on yourself.

Youth 21: pushing for change that’s not going to help

Two developments currently dominate the discourse within and about the United Nations and its attempt to better align its work in the youth sector.

The first of these two developments is the announcement of Ban Ki-Moon to make the “deepening the youth focus of existing programmes” one of the priorities of his second term in office to “address the needs of the largest generation of young people the world has ever known,” one aspect of which is the appointment of a new Special Adviser for Youth. (source: pdf, pp. 10-11)¹

The second of these two developments is the initiative of UN-HABITAT dubbed Youth 21, an attempt “to build an architecture for youth engagement” in the United Nations. The initiative kicked off with a planning meeting in December 2011 (report, pdf)¹, which was used to note the inadequacy of the Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development (IANYD) to “fully realize [...] meaningful participation by and focus on youth in the UN.”



Youth 21 is driven forward with impressive speed – mainly by UN-HABITAT and Norway – and has led to a series of meetings, declarations and documents since the kick-off in Oslo in late 2011:

- » At the beginning of 2012, UN-HABITAT published a document entitled “Youth 21: Building an Architecture for Youth Engagement in the UN System” (pdf)², suggesting three scenarios to strengthen youth participation in the UN.
- » The document was followed by four weeks of online debates from mid-January to mid-February about these scenarios, hosted at globalyouthdesk.org.
- » A stakeholder meeting in Nairobi in March 2012, convened by UN-HABITAT and UNDP with financial support from Norway, concluded the ten-week-long phase of hasty public(ity) action.

The “Youth 21: Building an Architecture for Youth Engagement in the UN System” (pdf)³ document published at the beginning of 2012 suggested three scenarios to strengthen youth engagement in the UN.

- » Scenario (1) – scale up the United Nations Programme on Youth (UNPY), which currently is the focal point within the UN Secretariat on issues related to youth, to

include youth engagement by expanding the programme’s mandate and budget.

- » Scenario (2) – appoint a Special Representative of the Secretary General on Youth, which Ban Ki-Moon did announce on January 25 – interestingly, surprising many – with the actual appointment of a person pending to date.
- » Scenario (3) – establish a UN Permanent Forum on Youth, A Youth Platform Assembly, and a Special Representative on Youth, three mechanisms meant to be reinforcing which could, and likely would have to, be implemented incrementally.

The document, as well as the entire Youth 21 Initiative, are pushing for the third scenario:

“Scenario 3 would best represent youth globally, giving them a forum in which youth can discuss youth issues and formulate policy, democratically elect members to the Permanent Forum, and have a Special Representative to advocate within the UN system and globally for decided upon priorities and policies. This scenario is the only scenario which truly allows for a comprehensive youth engagement in the UN.” (Youth 21 document, pdf, p. 28)³

While the document lists a few challenges for each scenario, for the most-wanted third

scenario these challenges are exclusively related to its implementation. No consideration is given to doubts or concerns, not in the document, and not in the Youth 21 initiative the document serves.

But there are very real dilemmas, shortcomings and dangers associated with the third scenario:

- » None of the three instruments – the UN Permanent Forum on Youth, the Youth Platform Assembly or the UN Special Representative on Youth – addresses the real dilemma of the UN: that more than 30 agencies, programmes, funds, offices, organisations, framework and initiatives work on youth issues and compete for attention, influence and funding, and do so at the expense of impact, significance and cogency.
- » A UN Permanent Forum on Youth would likely become a silo on youth issues in the United Nations, with every youth-related question being pushed onto its agenda for discussion and consideration without any real consequences. Youth issues would become marginalised.
- » Young people would not be involved in the various decision-making processes within the agencies and programmes, because youth engagement would become main-

streamed through the forum – which would then be little less but a tokenistic structure. Youth issues could be treated holistically within the Forum, but would be increasingly ignored at operational level.

- » The permanent forum would likely be constructed similar to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) with 16 members, half appointed by member states and half nominated by youth organisations, with its mandate restricting it to an advisory function. How much would it really strengthen youth engagement in the UN? What impact would and could it really have on the situation of young people across the globe, directly or indirectly?

It is, at first sight, perplexing why such an ill-considered scenario should be pushed for so strongly and quickly without taking the time to address these concerns. The confusion about half-baked documents arguing for just one way ahead, and meetings called for at short notice to rubber-stamp that push, clears up a little with some attention to detail:

“One possible option is to re-brand the current biannual World Urban Youth Assembly into the Youth Platform Assembly.”
(Youth 21 document, pdf, p. 28)³

The World Urban Youth Assembly is hosted by UN-HABITAT as an integral part of the World Urban Forum – and UN-HABITAT also published the three scenarios.

When looking closely enough, Youth 21 seems to reveal itself as little else but a hasty attempt of a few people to position one of the various UN agencies working on youth, and themselves, in the ongoing struggle for influence, power, positions and funding.

Valid concerns about the acceptance, suitability or representativity of such instruments fall by the wayside. We are about to create even more structures that are completely divorced from the young people they are meant to engage and represent (see p. 20: “Millions spent on meetings with no change”).

Why don't we discuss some alternatives?

1. How about an independent, co-managed Global Youth Agency, financed by voluntary contributions from governments, foundations and organisations?
2. How about an independent youth audit of the United Nations system, investigating how effective the various programmes and approaches actually are?
3. How about an NGO-driven youth monitoring group, reporting independently and

critically on the activities of the various agencies and programmes?

4. How about an independent grass-roots global youth assembly once every five years instead of five global youth events by individual UN agencies every single year?
5. How about a task-force, developing a coherent approach to cover youth issues in the Universal Periodic Reviews of the human rights records of member states?
6. How about shadow reports, uncovering and unraveling what the United Nations, the World Bank, the Monetary Fund and others are doing – and not doing! – for, on and with young people?

These are our six alternatives to the silo mentality of the scenarios put forward in the context of Youth 21.

What are yours?

- 1 youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2012_SG_Agenda_5_Years.pdf
- 2 youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2011_Youth21_Planning_Meeting.pdf
- 3 youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2012_Youth21_Scenarios.pdf

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