

A new youth policy for Europe

Towards the empowerment and inclusion
for all young people

European Peer Learning on Youth Policy
(2011–2013)

DOCUMENTATION



**JUGEND
für Europa**

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION PROJECT ON YOUTH POLICY

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Towards the empowerment and inclusion for all young people

European Peer Learning on Youth Policy

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Responsible editor: Hans-Georg Wicke, JUGEND für Europa

Editor: Frank Peil, JUGEND für Europa

Authors: Claudius Siebel, Dr. Bart Eigeman, Dr. Helle Becker, Christel de Lange

Translated by: Regina Baumert, Berlin

Layout: elfgenpick, Augsburg

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Youth
in Action

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The Multilateral Cooperation Project on Youth Policy has been realised within the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018).



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LUTZ STROPPE

Address

International and European youth policy is a main pillar of national youth policy for Germany with the latter being continually refined and adapted on the basis of the former. Germany clearly expresses its view that bilateral and multilateral collaboration and cooperation in youth policy within the EU have great significance.

This provides the basis for a more intense utilisation of international experience and makes it possible to give impetus for furthering the development of national youth policies. This will help, eventually, to create a stronger influence of national youth policies on European and international strategies.

On this background the federal youth ministry has established the program “European Peer Learning on Youth Policy” in late 2011 and invited six other member states, namely France, Sweden, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and the Flemish speaking community in Belgium, to

- exchange experience regarding concepts and practice of youth policy;
- jointly further the development of strategies in youth policy;
- generate recommendations for youth policy in the member states and in Europe.

With its Peer Learning the project also contributes to implementing the EU Youth Strategy in Germany and in Europe.



Lutz Stroppe

This brochure summarises the main findings of the two-year joint learning process and establishes six theses regarding youth policy which have been formulated and agreed by all involved partners. I hope that these results among other contributions will further inspire the debate about how to shape youth policy in Europe. We will provide the results for the EU Commission and other member states, hoping that they will serve as stimulus for the further process of planning youth policy (for instance for adopting the Work Plan for Youth).

[At the same time we want to use this brochure for presenting peer learning as an instrument of European collaboration and show the potential connected with it.](#)

For the German youth ministry the project “European Peer Learning on Youth Policy” has been an important contribution to intensifying collaboration in the field of youth policy within Europe. We will continue using this instrument and we encourage other member states to develop and implement Peer Learning projects.





1. THE POTENTIAL OF EUROPEAN PEER LEARNING

CLAUDIUS SIEBEL, JUGEND für Europa – Transfer Agency for the Youth Policy Cooperation in Europe

The Potential of European Peer Learning

The process and its values

The white paper “A New Impetus for European Youth” published in 2001 initialised a decade of continually spreading collaboration in youth policy within Europe and it was the starting point of a debate about elements and challenges of future youth policy. Eventually this led to the adoption of a new framework for cooperation in youth policy in Europe for 2010 – 2018 (EU Youth Strategy) by the EU youth ministers.

This youth strategy defines a common framework, targets, methods and instruments for a modern, integrated youth policy. One of the core components of this cooperation framework is mutual learning or peer learning, respectively. It offers the opportunity to find out about methods that have stood the test in individual member states and in generating knowledge from them in mutual learning processes – knowledge that can further the development both of a nation’s own youth policy and of the common European youth policy.

What are the arguments that might convince states or organisations to go beyond the limits of their national borders and to engage in international exchange or cooperation? What is the added value of this cross-border cooperation or these peer learning processes, as we will call them in this context?

» **Assuming that things generally cannot be understood provides the opportunity to deal with strange things without having to conquer them.**

(Prof. Dr. C. Schweppe)

The processes of transformation and global change that have been going on for some time have far-reaching influence on the European society. The space of experience and acting that is relevant for all policy fields must no longer be considered as limited by national borders, rather it has to be understood as being influenced at least by European or even global dynamics. In this context one can generally speak of a “transnationalisation of the social world” (Ludger Pries, 2007). In other words: “... social policy and social work exclusively based on national states are not able to offer viable solutions in ever more transnational settings” (Lorenz, 2000).

Altogether the understanding of the significance of international debates, comparative thinking and mutual learning, research and working has grown very much during recent years. What is going on abroad is considered to be a model and stimulus (e. g. if another country is thought to take a leading role in a certain respect). In addition to this, detailed national studies can contribute to overcoming deficits of knowledge and information and systematic comparative studies help to analyse and further develop own experiences.

In general it should be noted that national states are always involved in relationships of comparison and/or cooperation with each other. When two or more states are meeting or collaborating it can be assumed that processes of comparison and mutual learning are taking place. Comparisons, comparative thinking and mutual learning are fundamental features in international contexts. The point is to determine similarities and differences between two or more countries, systems, policies and to analyse their relationships. In doing so, two main functions or learning dimensions can be identified:

■ pragmatic value

By means of comparative, mutual learning processes it is possible to recognise alternative forms of practice and these may provide innovative stimuli for improving one's own practice, i.e. a pragmatic value.

■ analytic value

In addition to the above, comparative, mutual learning processes require the critical consideration of one's own theory and practice and thus offer the opportunity to view them from an international perspective (distanced view at one's national situation). This generates an obvious analytical value. (Friesenhahn/Kniephoff-Knebel 2011)

By the way, this so-called "policy borrowing" (policy transfer) is not in the foreground of peer learning processes because only in very rare cases it is possible to transfer policy systems or strategies.

Yet, comparative, mutual learning processes will always provide stimuli when the respective national context is taken into account and continually reflected. Peer learning offers the opportunity to extend learning and reflection processes beyond one's own assumptions and practice. "Productive difference" means to question established and existing assumptions and discover potential for change.

Therefore peer learning offers learning potential in several respects:

- peer learning as precondition for self-reflection and critical consideration of own points of view and truths;
- peer learning as getting to know and admitting other possibilities and approaches;
- peer learning as transfer between one's own reality and the reality of others.

In this context it should be noted that peer learning may also have an unpleasant component since it may cause distress by questioning realities to which people have been used for a long time. However, it is in particular these "disturbances" that trigger changes.

Altogether it is valuable to get disturbed in planning, implementing and evaluating practical activities again and again by the idea that things might be different and not to use only one reality for defining issues and targets and evaluate actions but to admit that there is more than one reality. What is decisive is the ability to take a look from the outside at one's own fundamental assumptions and allow the transfer between one's own reality and the reality of others.

These processes will be most successful if they do not take place only once but in the form of a long-term and continuous activity. Exactly this was the intention of the program "European Peer Learning on Youth Policy": to initiate a long-term, mutual learning process that would provide for the countries involved "pragmatic" and "analytical" learning and that would also further the debate about how to shape youth policy in Europe in general.





2. EUROPE'S GOT TALENT

DR. BART EIGEMAN, THE NETHERLANDS

Europe's got talent

Positive Youth Policy as a source of peace, prosperity and participation

Every country in Europe seems to have this popular TV-show: Holland's got talent, Czechia's got talent, Belgium's got talent ... Young people on stage, showing their talent and adults supporting them; working on conditions to make youth discovering themselves and giving feedback.

In June 2012 Germany initiated an international peer learning project to exchange experiences on Positive Youth Policy. The aim of this project is the same as in the TV-show; how can we achieve that young people appear on stage to show their talents and adults support them? The importance of a positive youth policy

During the international exchange between 7 countries it became clear that, besides a lot of differences, there was also a shared (public) value: Young people are part of the community. This is not only a starting point but also the central value of positive youth policy. The value of youngsters is not only to be found in becoming an adult. Youth policy is not a question of 'well becoming' it is a serious working on 'well being' in daily life. Therefore youth policy is not only about youngsters now and then advising bureaucracy adults. Youth policy is about youth in the centre, having the stage, being part of the community equal to the way adults take part.

Elements of positive youth policy are:

- Young people contribute as young people, even in their earliest years;
- Young people are neither objects nor purposes of policy; they are subjects in contributing as citizens;
- Youth policy is about taking part, developing talent although it often is the contrary: problem oriented in order to control risks.

Pedagogically it is clear that expectations and challenge stimulate the development of children. Positive youth policy is in fact creating a positive pedagogic climate to make young people taking the stage. Why is this so important?

There are various reasons why a Positive Youth Policy is so important:

1. There is a need for positive contributions to society. Taking part is indeed taking part as citizens. This is not just a small piece of education during school time. It is a matter of public values in the heart of democracy. In a lot of countries hatred and differences are exploited to further the division of people. Peaceful living together in Europe is threatened from the inside.
2. In some parts of Europe there is, literally, a need for young people. Smaller communities are eroding and young people seem to have no future and therefore move into the cities. Communities do not have a future without these new generations.

3. Long term reasons: In Germany unsatisfactory results of education awakened the interest in talent development. Prosperity needs innovation. Every talent is welcome to contribute. In the Netherlands the positive approach, based in the community, is motivated by a need to reduce expenses for care.
4. Short term reasons to solve problems of youth unemployment, suburban (multi) problems, the dropout rate in education: these problems all endanger and limit prosperity and participation and cause poverty and exclusion, a source for hatred and social and cultural division.

Peer learning process

Our peer learning process was a journey with four stops: from Berlin to Rotterdam, via Prague to Brussels. The route we followed teaches us what the most important elements of Positive Youth Policy are:

1. Creating full democracy means to include young people as they are – they are full citizens taking part in society, a society without walls (Berlin). Participation of youth is not an effect but a condition for youth policy.
2. Re-creating community conditions by bridging generations and (sub-)cultures, everybody takes part (Rotterdam).
3. Participating in a Civic Forum: good governance based on trust instead of control (Prague).
4. Revitalizing the European integration process requires conditions that place young people in the centre (Brussels), to live the European dream of peace, prosperity and participation.

1. Society without walls

A lot of young people live with the endless possibilities offered by the World Wide Web. These possibilities are not just a part of daily life, they are daily life itself. The 19th and 20th century structures of politics and education are radically democratized by the existence of easily accessible information. Expertise is not a privilege of experts anymore. Building communities is not the privilege of the 'eminence grise', building a community has got a totally different meaning since social media came into existence. This information revolution has its effects in all areas of society, in education and in politics. The pedagogical concept of youth policy 'teaching young people how to copy the adult world' is eroding rapidly. Who teaches whom? Knowledge is no longer 'searching to know', it is much more 'knowing to search'.

The central idea/goal of youth policy is often still based on reducing risks as we, adults, think young people lack experience and are not ready to take responsibility. This has been the case for a long time. Even Socrates was, in his time, already complaining about young people. So the interesting question is, as adults see young people potentially as problem makers, perhaps the adults are the problem!?

»» Even Socrates was, in his time, already complaining about young people. So the interesting question is, as adults see young people potentially as problem makers, perhaps the adults are the problem!?

I choose a completely different starting point: Young people are not the risks or the problem makers, they are valuable for being young. This is not a soft kindness, it is a hard precondition for creating a society that fits the 21st century. In all their diversity, young people show characteristics that are very valuable for the community such as: questioning, acting by intuition, showing emotion without fear or shame, the ability to play and enjoy the moment, unlimited or at least willing to overcome barriers, experimenting to discover, rebelling against 'it is as it is'.

These competences of youngsters are needed badly to find solutions for short and long term problems in economy, banking, environment and cultural misunderstanding. So, in the era of the World Wide Web I believe it is a necessity to change our perspective on youth and therefore our youth policy!

An interesting study on 'Political participation and EU citizenship' (European Commission, EACEA, 2013) says: "Young people are the new Europeans who replace the group of those who have been holding up Europe as a peace project after the world war for a long time. Young people in the 15 – 24 age group reported stronger feelings towards "EU citizenship" than older age groups. Almost 50 % stated that they have a positive image of the EU; two thirds believe that being part of the European Union will be an element of their perceived identity." „Young people are the ones opting for new forms of participation that offer them more personally meaningful, informal and non-institutionalized channels of action.”¹⁾

This is a big dilemma in youth policy: non-formal learning, non-formal activities of community building are 'movers' for (youth policy in) society. But this movement can be made stronger in cooperation with formal education, formal policy and formal professionals. The formal bureaucracy often brings control, risk-management and interests of institutions. Through cooperation for implementing public values we can create 'stages' to adapt the 21st century's skills needed for a prosperous and peaceful society in which everybody can participate.

¹⁾ <https://www.jugendpolitikineuropa.de/beitrag/die-wahren-europaeer-jugendliche-sind-politischer-als-mandenkt.9785/>,

About: Political Participation and EU Citizenship: Perceptions and Behaviours of Young People. Evidence from Eurobarometer surveys. Report produced by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency EACEA (Brussels, 2013).

Of course it is necessary to be aware of the various difficulties connected with implementing this approach: Young people are young only for a short time, participation of young people asks for ‘moving (flexible) structures’, flexible professionals to create and recreate the contact with young people. And yes, as adults we also have valuable competences. The challenge is to create a reciprocal relationship between young people and adults in education, policymaking, entrepreneurship, as well as in professional youth work. There are no walls, the question is, how to bridge generations.

Conclusion

The life phase of ‘youth’ has to be brought better into the focus of youth policy – the reduction of young people to (future) work force or target groups of different administrative, educational and social work activities is not justifiable any more.

Participation of youth is not an effect of youth policy, it is a condition!²⁾

2. Participation across generations and cultures

In certain urban neighbourhoods, children cannot travel safely to school. The experts on city building, however, rarely pay attention to this. Rotterdam started a project with children (8–12 years): ‘looking at a neighbourhood through the eyes of kids’. The idea was to give youngsters an opportunity to participate in area planning. And what happened? Children came up with all kinds of great suggestions for urban design to improve their own safety. It turned out that the kids were pretty good experts. This example shows that the best solutions for satisfying the people’s needs by public services, efforts of authorities and professionals are not found by their expertise alone (we as professionals know what is good for the world ...). Organizing complementary expertise is a key to a better well-being of the local community. The local community, in every aspect, has to be the point of departure. Health, housing, education and jobs are important.

During the peer learning programme, Prof. Dr. Richard Münchmeier pointed out three different ways to work on participation:

- Consultative participation: young people are consulted as experts, adults decide
- Democratic participation: young people have limited influence, adults make decisions
- Direct participation: young people have the opportunity to identify their own goals and initiatives.

²⁾ The TV show “ ’s got talent” gives us incredible examples of what young people are capable of. There are also examples of successful youth policy where young people in problematic circumstances are motivated by putting them and their own dreams in the centre of the approach: school drop outs are brought back to school or to work (TOM’s Place in ’s-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands), youngsters who were excluded from the labour market (Buzinezzclub in Rotterdam, Bauschule in Berlin) become successful entrepreneurs or employees.

The last approach is community based, working on real life experience instead of talking about it.

Direct participation is about young people on the stage and essential for a Positive Youth Policy! It is a way to look for talent instead of having a problem-orientated approach. We need to realize that this approach touches the heart of the role of the administration, its policymakers and the professionals. Governance changes from service-delivery to giving citizens opportunities to discover their own powers. A key to success is that professionals no longer provide solutions. Professionals have to be facilitators for participation, based on the competences/talents of people, no matter what age they are. Participation of young people needs participative professionals combined with contributions by citizens in the daily life of the community.

Citizenship 2.0 is a “new concept of citizenship”. “They no longer perceive voting at national elections or participation by other traditional means of political participation as a ‘duty’ and it is replaced by a-hoc actions, issue-specific and individual activities.”

In organizing citizenship, there is often a gap between youth work in the daily life of the community and formal education at school. There is a gap between hard and soft skills to learn. It is a challenge for positive youth policy to bridge the gap between formal and non-formal learning.

Conclusion

In the development of a subject-oriented positive youth policy, local governments play a vital role for a successful implementation of youth policy which is about supporting young people in daily life experience and organizing stages to act on.

3. Civic Forum: every individual can make a difference in society

As we have seen, the way policymakers and professionals look at young people is essential for the success of Positive Youth Policy in society. The way professionals (as well as volunteers) work in the community can activate prosperity and participation in daily life. Not the fact how young people become a ‘good’ adult, but the ‘well-being’ in intergenerational relationship is starting point and aim.

Is this plea for Positive Youth Policy a plea for bottom-up empowerment? No, it is not. That is to say, my argument is that bottom-up and top-down need each other. It is clear that there is not one model for creating citizenship through Positive Youth Policy. It is a continuous movement driven by public values of equality and quality in the relationship between adults and young people.

A successful Youth Policy can be more than just coincidence or the-luck-of-the-appropriate-people in your community. On the other hand a well-organized administration and governance is no guarantee for success either. Can there be something like ‘organized coincidence’ that brings the best elements of the bottom up and top down approach together in a programme?

Talent can be stimulated by skills, and skills grow when there is confidence. Leadership can bring this confidence and leaders in administration and in policy can make a difference as we see in the Czech Republic, in France, in Germany, in the Netherlands and in Lithuania. All countries are creating a movement on Positive Youth policy on national level, all of them their own way. Good governance in this context is not the same as instrumental organization of goals. Key aspects are ambition and the trust between the different levels. The local and regional levels can really feel the support by a national programme. At the national level there needs to be the awareness that their policy cannot be directly connected to daily life of young people but that their administrative support can generate coincidences through support for professionals by giving them time and supporting their learning processes.

»» **Young people seem to respond positively to the change. The formula: the closer to real life policy is the more interested and active are young people.**

All countries that were involved in the peer learning process showed that a high ambition generates movement. Positive Youth Policy can make a difference when there is reasonable mutual support between the international, national and local levels and a programme providing for good conditions. A multilevel approach where European strategies are adapted on national level and practiced on local level can create a climate of trustful relationships. Charta 77 itself has been a multilevel movement for democratic values in which individuals could make a difference. To make a change in a context that is hard to change is only possible when people start to participate in a movement.

Positive Youth Policy is education for a society without walls, bridging generations to create trustful relationships, resulting in participation. “However, young people seem to respond positively to the change. The formula: the closer to real life policy is the more interested and active are young people.”

Conclusion

Ambition creates movement and a civic forum supported by policy makers brings ‘spring’ in cooperation for participation. Positive Youth Policy is neither a coincidence from bottom-up nor organized top-down. What is needed is a ‘Ministry of movement’ which embraces the relationship between daily life in community and reasonable professionals in youth work, administration and politicians that have the guts to take part in participation.

4. Moving towards a strong Positive Youth Policy, supported by a European programme

As stated, a Positive Youth Policy is about creating opportunities for young people to be in the centre, on stage, to perform as citizens. There is a need for Positive Youth Policy for several reasons. Again: this is not a matter of luxury, it is a prerequisite for a peaceful, prosperous Europe where everybody takes part.

The youngster does not exist. Young people differ in age, background, level of education, whether they live in a rural area or in a city etcetera. In addition to this it is important to realize that every region, every country, has its own starting point/context due to history, culture and traditions. In Belgium, for example, there is a strong tradition of informal youth activities, supported by the participation of youngsters. In the Netherlands the organized attention for young people is strongly problem-oriented and they have separate institutions for each problem. In Sweden governmental responsibility is strong, also in formal education. In an international peer learning programme these differences are not an obstacle but can help to stimulate learning: change through exchange.

When participating in an international peer learning group you are confronted immediately with yourself, your own situation, your own policy. The exchange with peers brings up questions about your own situation, which is an important condition for learning. This is why, in my view, it is extremely important to take a multilevel approach in creating a connection between the international, national and local levels each with own responsibilities, tasks and role. Europe's got talent and therefore a strong Positive Youth Policy is an opportunity.

Level	Europe	National	Local
Responsibility	International exchange	Inter-sectoral exchange	Intergenerational (ex) change
Task	Encouragement to participate	Facilitate of contributing	Facilitate cooperation
Role to play	Jury	Producers	Youngsters & Coaches

Programs on the local level must be flexible, as young people aren't young for a very long time, and relationships must be renewed every 2–3 years. Although the process might be the same, the culture and 'language' of young people can change rapidly. On the national level a program should have a longer duration. The inter-sectoral approaches, the connection between non-formal and formal education, the persons who facilitate and create conditions: all these factors demand changes in an unchanging context. This is why I plead for an international program. Learning bureaucracy is learning slowly. Positive Youth Policy needs peer learning groups, it is important to provide time for these learning processes to deepen and extend participation. It is not 'just' about implementing a model, it is about adapting a movement.

Conclusions

This article 'Europe's got talent' reflects the main results of our peer learning process, which are:

1. Positive Youth Policy is not a luxury in Europe but a prerequisite for 21st century European communities. It is about full democracy.
2. The perspective is: young people are valuable for being young, young citizens taking part.
3. Taking part is organized on the stage of daily life in communities on the local level; a combination of formal and non-formal support is necessary.
4. Ambition leads to movement towards peace, prosperity and participation.
5. Three levels of responsibilities can be distinguished: an international (encouragement and support for peer learning between member states), a national (inter-sectoral and positive approach) and a local (intergenerational acting) responsibility
6. Peer learning is an efficient and effective instrument to stimulate participation of young people together with adults.

What bridges all levels – European, national and local – is the confidence that a Positive Youth Policy is a matter of public value far more than a project or a temporal policy. The need for implementing a Positive Youth Policy, however, is not self-evident. The need for this approach becomes obvious in eroding communities, in anonymous suburbs, in youth-unemployment, in non-innovative and low education rates. But apart from the problem-oriented necessities there is a deeper value in establishing a Positive Youth Policy: the contributions young people make when they participate in their communities.

Moreover it is about our human capital, taking part or not taking part in a peaceful Europe.

Are we brave enough to accept youngsters as teachers? It can be easy, so why not create 'stages' to let youngsters show their talent?

Because Europe's got talent!

(Thanks to Drs. Miriam Voets for cooperating in this article)





3. A NEW YOUTH POLICY FOR EUROPE ❖❖❖

A new youth policy for Europe – towards the empowerment and inclusion for all young people

Results of the European Peer Learning on Youth Policy

There has been a broad consensus about the need for a renewal of youth policy.

Though there are huge structural, legal and political differences between the various countries, youth policy is postulated as a distinct field of interest which has to be strengthened on local, regional, national and European level. The participants agreed that a common fundamental “philosophy” of youth policy should be the basis of sustainable political strategies and starting point for all players “to speak a common language”. During the seminars this philosophy was discussed and shaped. Named with different labels (e. g. “new youth policy”, “positive youth policy”) there was a common understanding of the following features:

Youth policy should be inclusive:

For some time now, youth has been regarded not only as a transitional phase to adulthood, but as a stage of life with its own challenges. Even though youth is a status, it is more and more “at risk”. More and more young people face an indeterminate future and fundamental insecurities. As a group they have become more exposed to development challenges and a lack of financial and social guarantees. Since this concerns a majority of young people there is a need for a youth policy dedicated to all young people, paying attention to their special needs and fostering supporting conditions for them all.

Youth policy should be positive:

Young people should be seen as an asset, as a positive source in society. That means that youth policy should start from the strength of young people, their talents and their right to respect and support. Young people should be made aware of their talents and should be empowered in order to make full use of these talents and become activated to participate in society. Of course there are problems and challenges that young people have to face. “Positive youth policy” does not mean to disregard those problems and challenges but to tackle them in another way. There are young people who face severe problems, but it is still important for all professionals working with youth to focus on their resources and talents and to keep a positive approach. Thus, youth policy is considered to be an advocator for all young people, aiming to their well-being, empowering them, regarding their interests and needs, respecting their perspectives and opinions. Therefore policy makers and decision makers should be activated to enhance a positive approach towards young people. Depending on traditions and national discourses, this point of view was regarded as a kind of paradigm shift towards a new youth policy in some countries.

The following ideas that aim at developing a positive youth policy have been gathered:

- youth policy should trust and believe in young people,
- youth policy should be based on real living conditions of young people,
- youth policy should support and facilitate youth work. Youth work gives young people space to develop personality and talents and empowers them to participate. Visions, methods and approaches of youth work are “positive”, a positive image of young people should be created (campaigning).
- cooperation should be sought with other sectors, such as the media and economy, creating an “alliance for youth” resp. a positive image of youth.

Youth policy should be participative:

Participation and active citizenship are indisputably parts and objectives of youth policy. Young people should be heard. Their expertise concerning their interests, needs and questions should be taken into consideration at all levels. In order to establish a positive youth policy it is important to include young people in the decision making process from the beginning. It also means that youth policy should be inclusive in the sense that all stakeholders are included and that everyone shares the same values and ideas. Therefore all stakeholders should be involved in the establishment of the common vision. The participation of the stakeholders also leads to joint responsibility.

The following ideas that aim at developing a participative youth policy have been gathered:

It needs sustainable structures for participation:

- good working relations between authorities (on all levels) and young people,
- youth-friendly structures,
- long-term strategies and resources, based on knowledge about youth,
- support for long-term and sustainable projects on participation,
- young people should be in charge of the projects.

It is necessary to raise the awareness about the added value of youth participation:

- use examples, stories and people to inspire others,
- evaluate the success of youth participation, e. g. through benchmarks.

It is necessary that politicians recognize young people for being young:

- strengthen the structured dialogue between politicians, civil servants and young people,
- let young people be in charge of planning meetings, change the power balance and transfer real power to young people,
- prepare politicians and civil servants beforehand.

It is essential to empower young people for participation:

- enable them with the necessary skills for participation,
- encourage them to be self-confident and use their talents,
- start at an earlier age, e. g. in kindergarten or pre-elementary education.

It is necessary to respond at short notice to young people's wishes in order to meet their interests as long as they are concerned with that issue:

- implement tools, structures and procedures that guarantee a channel between young people's wishes and a response by the administration in charge at short notice,
- monitor the results and the satisfaction with the action and the result.

Youth policy should be structured and cooperative:

The issue of responsibility and task sharing proved to be a central topic for all participating countries. Discussions related to the relationship between the state and the local level (municipalities with their self-administration) and to the implementation of national youth political strategies and quality concepts in a mandatory manner.

In order to realize a structured and cooperative youth policy the state resp. the national authorities have to provide:

- general and legal binding youth political guidelines/regulations which ensure fair and equal conditions for all children and young people,
- sufficient scope and autonomy for implementation at local level,
- an efficient organization of the cooperation, linking different levels of responsibility and authorities (local, regional, national level),
- sufficient financial support for the implementation.
- While implementing this, it is important to prevent an „overregulation“.

Youth policy should be cross-sectorial:

Though there was a common consent on the relevance of a distinct (clearly named and defined) youth policy, everybody agreed that youth policy should take into account and cooperate with several other policy fields such as educational policy, employment policy, health policy and other policy fields that have a direct influence of young people's living situation. All policy fields should keep in mind and consult the interests of young people.

All partners concur with the model of cooperation and communication in horizontal and vertical direction as well as in a cross-sectorial way, which means with different departments within authorities, as well as with young people, professionals and other stakeholders.

In order to realize a cross-sectorial youth policy the following preconditions must be fulfilled:

- existing awareness that youth policy is a joint task of all levels and sectors (shared reasoning and narrative for a “positive” and “distinctive” youth policy),
- political will and support,
- an obvious added value resulting from cooperation,
- a clear and comprehensive concept in horizontal as well as in vertical direction with clearly defined aims and tasks,

- a clear profile of every stakeholder concerning their responsibilities and their benefits to be drawn from a well-designed cross-sectorial youth policy,
- clearly defined and accepted coordinating bodies with a mandate (e. g. steering group) and clearly defined and explicit responsibilities,
- clearly defined paths of communication for a continuous and long-term dialogue, platforms and tools for information and networking,
- “true” participation of the people and bodies affected, and as a consequence commitment and a feeling of ownership,
- the exchange of knowledge between the various levels and sectors in order to support a mutual understanding and in order to make decisions based on evidence,
- a competence centre on youth that will provide necessary data, act as a channel between young people's wishes and different policy fields and facilitate the necessary youth participation.

In addition, further education and training was demanded. Resources in terms of time and money for the cooperation of those involved are required and good public relations (in order to make the strategies more visible and to increase the number of people involved) are useful.

Youth policy should be evidence-based:

Evidence-based youth policy is built on knowledge about young people. It should be more proactive than reactive. It is very important to measure the effect of policies and measures and it can also be used to promote youth policy. Evidence-based youth policy is also important for convincing governments and institutions to allocate more money or funds to youth policy and to invest more in young people. Youth research can discover new evolutions and changes concerning the life and living conditions of young people and can help to make youth policy more flexible and adaptable. In this way youth policy can be better aware of new challenges and can be proactive.

The following ideas about how an evidence-based youth policy could be realized have been gathered:

- more and better research on youth: therefore authorities on all levels should allocate more funds for youth research projects,
- youth policy should ensure that research, practice and policy work together and exchange best practices and points of view,
- young people should be involved in designing research which concerns them directly,
- better transfer of youth research results to the policy level to achieve that they are given due consideration on the political level,
- research results should be disseminated to professionals working with young people,
- **the results should also be discussed with young people.**

Challenges, conclusions, recommendations

This in mind, the peer learning process has made us aware of crucial points which have to be considered in the future:

- There are many visions on youth policy. For some people it is mainly related to youth work, for others the educational sector is also part of the youth sector and others see youth policy as all fields that influence the living situation of young people. These different views are all rooted in different realities and structures. In order to better learn from experiences and examples, the different contexts and realities should be taken into consideration. It is worthwhile to come to a common understanding of what is meant by youth policy and youth work. This is a process which needs time. Every cooperation (and peer learning) should take this into account.
- Apart from professional demands for common terms, understanding and strategies, not every structure or model “fits all”. However the peer learning process has shown that there is a consensus concerning basic parameters about youth policy, but there is a need for specific, differentiated solutions in the different member states.

- There was a broad agreement that youth work and youth policy need more recognition and support on the political level, as well as more public awareness.
- The same is true for youth participation: There was a broad consensus that the idea and the implementation of youth participation needs more efforts in terms of political will, resources and tools on every political level.

The peer learning process

The peer learning project was highly appreciated by the “Peers”. The representatives of the member states’ authorities enjoyed the opportunity to exchange information, models, experiences, and ideas. With regard to the EU-Youth Strategy as a common framework, the partners valued the peer learning project as an opportunity to design European cooperation in the youth field. Moreover, peer-learning has been identified as a core instrument of EU-cooperation. It has raised awareness for the central issue of youth policy and has inspired the member states to rethink their own youth strategies. The partners evaluated the seminars very positively and highly regarded the effects stating

- that the exchange widened the horizons of reflecting on youth and youth policy,
- that every country had the opportunity to check its own model, to compare it to others and to get new ideas for renewals where required,
- that the exchange raised the awareness of a common concern, especially with regard to a common “European” youth policy,
- that common fields of interest and of action were identified (e.g. more public awareness, better strategies for cross-sectorial cooperation, etc.),
- that this could be an opportunity for European cooperation to improve the conditions for youth policy and youth work on the EU-level.





4. TABLE OF ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPANTS ❖❖❖

Table of activities and participants

Table of activities

19–20 January 2012, Brussels	» 1st preparatory project meeting
13–14 June 2012, Berlin	» European Peer Learning seminar I “Designing youth policy in Europe – What is the role of the regions and municipalities?”
16 August 2012, The Hague	» 1st Intermediate meeting
29–30 October 2012, Rotterdam	» European Peer Learning seminar II “Spotlight on positive youth and practice”
30–31 January 2013, Prague	» 2nd Intermediate meeting
8–9 April 2013, Prague	» European Peer Learning seminar III “Opportunities and challenges of cross–sectoral youth policy”
19–20 September 2013, Berlin	» Evaluation seminar
25 November 2013, Brussels	» Final event

List of participants

Belgium (Flanders)

Caestecker, Maarten » Policy coordinator, Stad Antwerpen

Caluwaerts, Lieve » Agency Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults
Division Youth

Cuisinier, Els » Agency Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults
Division Youth

Van Ceulebroeck, Nathalie » VVJ - Flemish organization for local youth policy
and youth services

Van Den Eynde, Caroline » Youth service City of Turnhout

Van Remortel, Eric » Youth service City of Sint-Niklaas

Van Roelen, Gerda » Agency Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults
Division Youth

Veraghtert, Stefanie » Flemish Youth Council

Belgium (Wallonia)

Letawe, Isabelle » Youth Ministry of the French Community of Belgium

Czech Republic

Blahetová, Kristýna » Trainee – young person

Doškářová, Sofie » Trainee – young person

Grösslová, Diana » Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – EU Department

Husák, Jan » Czech Council for Children and Youth

Mašková, Zdeňka » Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – Youth Department

Petrasová, Katerina » Youth Leisure Time Centre Luzanky (South Bohemian Region)

Urban, Michal » Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – Youth Department

Vilikusová, Ivana » Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – EU Department

Vymetaliková, Petra » Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – Youth Department

France

Djermoun, M. Yann » Regional Council of Champagne-Ardenne

Mangematin, Virginia » Ministry of Sports, Youth, Popular Education and Community Life

Pairault, Frédérik » Director of ANACEJ

Richez, Jean Claude » National Youth Institut

Ridde, Alexis » Ministry of Sports, Youth, Popular Education and Community Life

Luxembourg

Schroeder, Ralph » Ministry for the Family and Integration

Lithuania

Alaburdaitė, Gintarė » Lithuanian Youth Council

Bačinskienė, Laura » Youth Affairs Department under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Dambrauskaite, Kristina » Youth Affairs Department under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Gricius, Egidijus » Rietavas municipal administration

Kislych, Evelina » Trakai district municipality

Laniauskas, Jonas » Vilnius city municipality

Lopatiene, Julita » Ukmerges district municipality

Vyšniauskaite, Jorune » Vytautas Magnus University, Youth researcher

Germany	
Abdi, Alan	» JoG (Jugendliche ohne Grenzen)
Adler, Daniel	» GOEUROPE! Landesvereinigung Kulturelle Kinder- und Jugendbildung (LKJ) Sachsen-Anhalt e.V.
Böttger, Elke	» City of Cologne
Finke-Timpe, Uwe	» German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)
Groschwitz, Stephan	» German Federal Youth Council (DBJR)
Hildebrandt, Sandra	» Senator for Education, Youth and Science Berlin, Youth De- partment
Hiller, Julia	» German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)
Ludwig, Nicole	» German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)
Mecklenburg, Roland	» Regional Youth Council of North Rhine-Westphalia
Müller, Jennifer	» German Trade Union Federation (DGB Deutschland)
Nörber, Martin	» Social ministry of the Federal State Hessen
Claudius Siebel	» JUGEND für Europa – Transfer Agency for the Youth Policy Cooperation in Europe
Schröder, Jana	» Child and Youth Welfare Association (AGJ)

Sweden

Ashing, Inger » Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

Hounsounou, André » Municipality of Malmö

Klint, Idah » Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

Larsson-Thörnberg, Jonas » Swedish National Board for Youth affairs

Modée, Elisabet » Ministry of Education and Research

Norberg, Mia » Municipality of Malmö

Sigurgeirdottir, Anna » Municipality of Lund

Svahn, Olle » LSU, Swedish Youth Council

Zethrin, Nils-Olof » Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

The Netherlands

Altunbas, Murat	» EU Coordinator for the City Council of Rotterdam
Amrani, Fatima	» City of Rotterdam
Bamberg, Marcel	» NJR, Dutch Youth Council
Blanchette, Lyne	» City of Rotterdam , Public Health Service
de Jong, Pauline	» Rotterdam Rijnmond, Public Health Service
Hebbaenaar, Marieke	» VNG, Association of Dutch Municipalities
Keltjens, Marjolein	» Netherlands Youth Institute
Kleefkens, Bonita	» Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport – Youth Department
Lachman, J.	» Swazoom, Amsterdam
Meijer, Ellen	» Netherlands Youth Institute (NJI)
Pans, Aleid	» City of Rotterdam
Riswick-Keultjes, Dorien	» Municipality of Zevenaar
Scalzo, Richard	» City of Rotterdam – Head of Department on Youth, Education and Society
Tol, Lucas	» City of Amsterdam
van der Burg, Jan	» Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport – Youth Department
van der Meijs, Loes	» Municipality of Doetinchem, Alderman Youth, Culture and Education
Van der Mooren, Francis	» Central Bureau for Statistics
Van Hoorik, Irma	» Netherlands Youth Institute (NJI)
van Westering, Yvonne	» Netherlands Youth Institute (NJI)
van Wijk, Gabe	» National Youth Council
Wibbelink, Henny	» Municipality of 's-Hertogenbosch

Experts/Observers

Baumbast, Stephanie » German Youth Institute
Evaluation of the project

Denstad, Finn » European Commission, DG EAC, Youth Unit

Dr. Hofmann-van de Poll, Frederike » German Youth Institute
Evaluation of the project

Dr. Eigeman, Bart » B3O, expert in youth and society policies and practice

Lekešová, Lucie » European Commission, DG EAC, Youth Unit

Medlinska, Marta » EU-CoE Youth Partnership

Prof. em. Dr. Münchmeier, Richard » Freie Universität Berlin

Rink, Barbara » German Youth Institute
Evaluation of the project

Schild, Hanjo » EU-CoE Youth Partnership

Van Mieghem, Séverine » Benelux Union

Moderator

Butt-Pośnik, Jochen » JUGEND für Europa – Transfer Agency for the Youth Policy
Cooperation in Europe

Franssen, Sanna » Saamwerk & Fluks
Evaluation of the project

General Rapporteurs

Becker, Helle (DE) » General rapporteur

de Lange, Christel (NL) » General rapporteur





