

InterREGIO – The Role of Federal States and Regions in Youth Policy and Youth Work European Conference

IMPRESSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

3–5 September 2012, Potsdam

 **JUGEND
für Europa**

EUROPEAN PEER LEARNING ON REGIONAL YOUTH POLICY

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InterREGIO – European Peer Learning on Regional Youth Policy

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Editor: Frank Peil, JUGEND für Europa

Co-editor: Jochen Butt-Pošník, JUGEND für Europa

Editorial Support: Jana Schmitz

Interviews: Marco Heuer, Ulrike Wisser

Translated by: Karin Walker, Bonn

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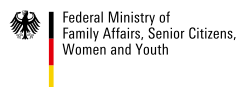
Youth
in Action

InterREGIO

The Role of Federal States and Regions in Youth Policy and Youth Work

DOCUMENTATION

InterREGIO is part of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany.



Introduction

InterREGIO – We need more Europe!

Opening the InterREGIO conference, Brandenburg's Minister of Education, Youth and Sport Martina Münch highlighted why European networks are important for the regions. Referring to the media coverage of the current Euro crisis, she stated that European cooperation and solidarity is particularly important when times are difficult. That is why, she continued, we need not less, but rather more Europe! Münch felt that it was the politicians' responsibility to find out what constitutes the essence of Europe and why it makes sense to fight for it. In that context, she believed the EU Youth Strategy is primarily an appeal to all of us to approach our work from an European angle and to identify, establish and strengthen contacts to experts outside of Germany.

The European Conference InterREGIO put the focus on the role of federal states and regions in shaping and implementing youth policy and youth work. It was not solely the Minister's speech which highlighted the role for example of the German Länder, whose youth and family ministers have pledged to play an active role in implementing the Youth Strategy in Germany. We saw a number of good examples of integrating European exchange and peer-learning into regional policies and activities in the project presentations during the conference. We heard from the Chair of the Commission for Education, Youth, Culture and Research (EDUC) of the Committee of the Regions, Alin-Adrian Nica that "about 70% of the EU legislation is implemented on the local and regional level [...]. It also helps bringing Europe closer to its citizens and encourages a culture of subsidiarity in order to ensure that decisions are taken at the closest practical level to the citizen". We led discussion with the participants of how to strengthen this close relationship towards

an active role of regions in the field of youth policy and youth work.

In 2012 two initiatives fostered this discussion for the regional level (Conference InterREGIO in Potsdam) and the local level (Conference InterCITY, October in Leipzig). Approximately 200 representatives, youth policy makers of the different levels, youth workers, and young experts found their way to the two venues. We saw engaged discussions, brilliant practical examples and encouraging follow-up ideas. Today we are glad to notice plans of our colleagues from Finland to host a conference "PEER LEARNING IN YOUTH WORK" in Helsinki in fall 2013 with a prospect of a third one in the City of 's-Hertogenbosch (Netherlands) in 2014. It is aimed "to develop peer learning as a Europe-wide practice in youth work and to establish a European Network of Local Government Youth Work".

Furthermore a number of regions from Germany and Austria are in the process to plan a common activity with the Committee of the Regions in 2013, focusing on the role of regions in co-creating European youth policy. It seemed that these two conferences in 2012 met an urge of different stakeholders to strengthen debates on the important influence regional and local bodies can have on the further development of a youth policy which encloses a European dimension.

We look forward to new developments in this important area.

JUGEND für Europa, Transfer Agency for Youth Policy Cooperation in Europe, Organizer of the InterREGIO-Conference

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1. SPEECHES →

SPEECH BY BRANDENBURG'S MINISTER OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORT DR MARTINA MÜNCH delivered at the opening of the European InterREGIO conference on September 3, 2012 in Potsdam.

Ladies and gentlemen,
It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the European InterREGIO conference here in Potsdam. I am delighted that so many of you have travelled here from Spain, the UK, Turkey, Malta, Austria, Belgium, Poland, Armenia, Switzerland, Russia, Lithuania, Hungary, Greece, Croatia, Portugal, Sweden, France and Italy. We have come together in Potsdam to discuss the role of the regions in youth policy and youth work. I am also pleased to welcome representatives of our partner regions Zachodniopomorskie in Western Pomerania in Poland and in Lithuania and Northern Ireland.

In 1945, Potsdam was host to a conference whose delegates adopted decisions that would divide Europe for almost half a century. Today it's as a matter of course that we work together even more strongly across borders when it comes to youth policy and youth work. European cooperation is highly visible and very intense between the stakeholders in these fields. This is confirmed by the many diverse forms of cooperation between organisations, between experts and between young people.

In these difficult times European cooperation and solidarity takes on an even greater significance than usual, as we can see from the daily discussions on how to rescue Europe's single currency. The only possible answer to the crisis is not less Europe, but more! We need an even stronger awareness of the importance of pan-European solidarity, and a better understanding of the needs and worries of all people in Europe. It's not enough to see Europe as an economic community that

is threatened by the Euro crisis and needs to be rescued through enormous amounts of financial aid.

We need to discuss what constitutes the very essence of Europe, and why it makes sense to fight for Europe. Sometimes it seems as if we Europeans have lost sight of our original goal – to have a strong, peaceful and free Europe that is based on social and democratic values and that offers all of its citizens a decent life and an opportunity to participate in society.

Europe has enjoyed peace and cooperation for decades. Many generations have been born and were raised during this phase. They have never known anything else, and they take peace in Europe for granted. However, we know that many of the older generation have had quite a different experience. Close cooperation in Europe is the result of efforts to create lasting peace in Europe. And it is also the goal of the process that has just commenced to deepen European cooperation in the youth field and to develop a common youth policy.

» The only possible answer to the crisis is not less Europe, but more!

» *Essentially, we need a ‘life policy’ that is designed for and in cooperation with the EU’s young citizens.*

The 27 Member States of the European Union are home to more than 95 million young people. The EU impacts on all aspects of our lives, whether economic, political or cultural. The EU’s increasing integration already offers us ample opportunities for shaping our personal lives and life stories. The circumstances in which young people grow up in the EU today are converging, a process that will continue also in future.

To ensure these circumstances are ideal, we need regional and national strategies, but also a framework for international dialogue and shared commitment across the EU in the shape of a common youth policy. Essentially, we need a ‘life policy’ that is designed for and in cooperation with the EU’s young citizens. In Germany, we refer to this European youth policy as the ‘EU Youth Strategy’. This strategy is the first common youth policy to be drawn up by all 27 Member States under an approach that has been commonplace for decades in economic cooperation or employment. This approach began a few years ago and it is being driven ahead with a great deal of energy and commitment.

Today, we have a common youth policy – a reason to rejoice, but also a responsibility. A responsibility that requires us to fill this common youth policy with life. The EU Youth Strategy doesn’t mean having to put new and additional issues on the agenda. Rather, it requires us to ‘think European’ when it comes to our everyday work as youth work experts, youth social workers and youth association representatives, and to maintain a European approach in everything we do. The EU Youth

Strategy is largely based on what the experts call ‘peer learning’. Youth work specialists extend their horizons by exchanging opinions and expertise with other specialists, learning from each other, and gathering inspiration and ideas that could be useful to them. At the end of the day, peer learning means looking at what others are doing in our fields and deciding what we can learn from them. It means learning about approaches that may be valuable in our own work environments. And it certainly also means institutionalising a level on which experts can meet and liaise with their counterparts and where young people can communicate with their peers in other European countries.

» *We want to create stronger links between German and European youth policy.*

To me, the EU Youth Strategy is above all an appeal to take a European attitude to our work and to build and strengthen networks and relationships between German and international experts. The youth and family ministers of the German Länder have often confirmed their commitment to the EU Youth Strategy and have pledged to take an active part in translating it into practice in Germany. We want to create stronger links between German and European youth policy. Allow me to illustrate this by using three examples that relate to Brandenburg.

First: The venue for the youth work conference in November 2011, namely Frankfurt (Oder) and its twin city Slubice just across the river in Poland was not selected just by chance. After all, the conference was entitled ‘Youth without borders...’ Besides speakers from Germany, experts from other European countries were also invited to talk about their experiences with various approaches in youth work in their own countries.

Second: Early this year we completely revised Brandenburg’s guidelines on youth work promotion. Previously there were separate rulebooks for non-formal youth education and for international youth work, and now there is one set of integrated guidelines for both. National and international youth education and youth projects are now promoted under one integrated scheme.

Third: From now on we will endeavour to invite speakers from a European country to all of our events and conferences for experts in the youth work and youth social work fields, so we can learn from their experiences, extend our own horizons, and build new relationships.

My special thanks go to JUGEND für Europa, the national agency in Bonn, which organised this conference. Thanks also to Stefan Zab-
orowski from Foundation Sozialpädagogisches Institut Berlin, our regional cooperation partner.

I wish you all a successful European conference with interesting talks, inspiring ideas and new contacts.



InterR
Exploring the role of
Regions in Youth Poli



‘THE REGIONS HAVE TO BE GIVEN MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EU YOUTH STRATEGY’ – The InterREGIO Conference in a nutshell

Kamila Anna Grześkowiak didn't have to travel far to the conference – Poznan is just less than 300 km from Potsdam. Still, the young representative of the Polish peace organisation One World Association was surprised at the passion and commitment with which neighbouring Germany is debating how to strengthen the EU Youth Strategy at the regional level. Kamila had come to the InterREGIO conference in Brandenburg for one particular reason. She wanted to find out how the actual contents of the strategy, which is often perceived as unwieldy and abstract, could be better communicated to young people. ‘I would like to see a greater awareness among young people of the strategy,’ she commented. *‘I’m sure that if they knew more about how the EU wants to assist and support them, they would be more willing to get involved in European projects. But so far there’s very little awareness of it.’*

A participant from France was also interested in the role of the regions in the context of European youth policy, and wanted to find out what kind of cooperation structures and maybe also political structures need to be established between governments and the region to this end.

‘Learning from each other’

Exchanging good practices, launching co-operation projects, encouraging regions to become actively involved in shaping youth policy and youth work at the European level – those were the goals of the InterREGIO conference in September 2012 in Potsdam, which drew around 80 regional and Länder representatives from Germany and across Europe. And why were these the goals? Because in many European countries, responsibility for youth work and youth policy lies with the regions, Länder or départements. They shape the legal framework, implement national rules and regulations, provide on-the-ground support and give political expression to the way in which youth work and youth policy are managed and implemented. And that is why they play an important role in implementing and shaping the EU Youth Strategy. This was confirmed by the Chair of the Commission for Education, Youth, Culture and Research (EDUC) of the Committee of the Regions, Alin-Adrian Nica. He stopped off in Potsdam on his way back from Brussels to the city of Dudeștii Noi in Romania, where he is mayor. Nica discussed the various youth policy initiatives of the Committee of the Regions that have contributed to developing the EU Youth Strategy for many years. The Youth in Action programme, he said, had set standards and had to be continued no matter what, just like the Structured Dialogue.



The day before, Martina Münch, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport in the Land of Brandenburg, had described her view of the current state of affairs in Europe. In times of crisis like these it was important to fight for a common European youth policy, said the Minister, speaking at the Lindenhof centre for sociocultural events in Potsdam-Babelsberg. 'We have to learn from each other. The EU Youth Strategy doesn't mean having to put completely new issues on the agenda. On the contrary, a lot has already been done. But now we need to learn to approach matters from a European angle,' said Münch.

Examples of interregional cooperation

For Olov Oskarsson, the benefits of interregional cooperation are obvious. Together with Beat Rohner from Switzerland, the young Swede had travelled to the conference to represent the Youth Regional Network. 'Exchanging ideas and good practices is always a major benefit for all participants,' he commented. His colleague Beat Rohner introduced the Promoting Youth Employment (PYE) project of the Assembly of European Regions, under which four partner regions from Croatia, Portugal, Serbia and the UK are engaging in a peer review to discuss ways to tackle youth unemployment. Several more exemplary interregional cooperation projects were presented, demonstrating the wide range of issues that youth-related cross-border activities are focusing on: youth policy, sports, culture and the media, environment, volunteering schemes, youth participation, and economic and social affairs.

To be continued...

All participants agreed that there was no question but to extend the dialogue: for one, to continue strengthening structures for cooperation and for another, to generate the political backing that is necessary to implement the European youth strategy in the regions, Länder and départements. The participants made a firm commitment to promote joint interregional youth projects in various fields such as environmental protection, volunteering schemes for young people from the immigrant community, and an exchange of methods and approaches between regional youth parliaments and councils, but also projects with a cross-sectorial theme such as youth work and police, youth work and vocational training and so forth.

The attending politicians and decision-makers, in particular, felt it was important to continue the dialogue on the role of local and regional authorities in shaping the EU Youth Strategy. To this end, both German and international representatives suggested the continuation of existing forms of cooperation, for instance by organising a follow-up conference to InterREGIO.

**“INFLUENCE OF REGIONS ON YOUTH POLICY IN EUROPE” –
Speech by the Chair of the Commission for Education, Youth, Culture
and Research (EDUC) of the Committee of the Regions, Mr Alin Nica**

Ladies and Gentlemen,
It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you in Potsdam at the InterREGIO Conference. First of all, let me thank you for the invitation to deliver a speech to this extremely interesting event. I am here as a young local politician and Chair of the Commission for Education, Youth, Culture and Research of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union.

A few words about the Committee of the Regions: As many of you know, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) was established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1994 as a consultative body to provide representatives of local and regional government with a voice at the heart of the European Union. The European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament are obliged to consult the CoR's 344 members on proposed EU laws across a wide range of policy areas, including education, culture, and information society.

In fact, about 70% of the EU legislation is implemented on the local and regional level depending on the governance structure in each Member State. So it is the CoR that gives this level a say over the drafting of the legislation. It also helps bringing Europe closer to its citizens and encourages a culture of subsidiarity in order to ensure that decisions are taken at the closest practical level to the citizen.

The Committee of the Regions and Youth in Action

The CoR has acknowledged the importance of the Youth in Action programme in many of its opinions. For example, the CoR has recognised the very positive results of measures to support political participation of young people in the current Youth in Action programme. This is especially true for the structured dialogue and the youth seminars on social, cultural and political issues of interest to young people. These actions are highly important and should by all means be continued and further developed under the new-generation programme.

The CoR feels that it is absolutely essential, when restructuring the support programmes, to continue to provide for youth support tailored to the specific needs of young people. This new integrated programme should build on the positive foundations of the current Youth in Action programme. It should promote, in line with the EU Youth Strategy not only the development of exchanges between young people and skilled workers but also the increased participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

» *To be a volunteer is to do something without being forced to do it. That is an attitude underpinned by the great European values of freedom and autonomy.*

The CoR and Youth Policy – Volunteering

The EU Committee of the Regions supports European cooperation in the youth field, notably through enhanced policy cooperation, better use of recognition and transparency tools and the dissemination of good practices. For example, last year the CoR promoted action by regional and local authorities during the European Year of Volunteering and Voluntary Work 2011. The Year of Volunteering was an excellent opportunity to put this noble cause on the agendas of the Member States, regions and cities, focusing on the values they represent. To be a volunteer is to do something without being forced to do it. That is an attitude underpinned by the great European values of freedom and autonomy.

To do voluntary work is also to exercise one's freedom of choice and will, but, what is more, without seeking any benefit for oneself. This behaviour prizes giving freely, the contribution that each of us can make to the public good. Here we are with voluntary work at the heart of the values underpinning the European social model. These are values which we must all promote, as local and regional elected representatives and, all the more, as ordinary members of the public.

The EU certainly has a role to play in increasing recognition of voluntary work/volunteering and encouraging the Member States not to create legal barriers for those wishing to engage in these activities. Moreover, it must also respond to the need for expertise to be shared among projects and local players and for truly effective regulatory and political

frameworks. Back in 2010, the Committee of the Regions commissioned a study on the mobility of young volunteers across Europe, and the cross-border aspects of volunteering.

In view of the importance of the subject I would like to mention a few key elements of the study:

- the Europe 2020 strategy aims to encourage cross-border mobility of young people within the EU as one of the best ways to prepare the future workforce for a fast-changing knowledge-based economy;
- in this context, regional and local authorities have a key role to play in facilitating cross-border volunteering, first and foremost by supporting the development of new host and sending organisations and promoting international volunteering to young people locally;
- a typical European cross-border volunteer is likely to be a university graduate from a higher social class. Few disadvantaged young people have access to these opportunities or are motivated to use them. We therefore have an educational talk to perform;
- the most frequently cited reasons for volunteering abroad have to do with education – the wish to get to know a new country, to learn a language, gain skills or test a career in a particular field. If the costs are covered, volunteering can also work as a temporary solution for unemployed young people.



In short, the Member States pursue various approaches with regard to volunteering and pay it less attention when it takes place in another country. The EU's task is therefore to better coordinate Member States' approaches to volunteering, as operators and organisations are faced with numerous legal, administrative, organisational, socio-economic, financial, social and cultural obstacles. Volunteering is a way to encourage young people's sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance between themselves, to involve them in democracy, promote cultural diversity and shape the Union's future. Young human capital is a priority of the European Union's social vision and without any doubt a profitable area of investment, especially in the economic and social crisis that we are experiencing today.

The CoR and Youth Policy – Youth mobility

In addition to volunteering, I would briefly refer to the benefits of mobility in improving young people's knowledge, skills and experience and thus facilitating their entry into the labour market and exploit their potential to the full. The CoR insists that education must be at the heart of youth mobility. It urged that educational projects which promote mobility be extended beyond 2013 and requested more funds for establishing future framework

programmes. This request was responded to, at least from the European Commission, that proposed for the post-2013 period a 73% increase in funding for the next "Education Europe" programme. In recent opinions, the CoR has noted that in the assessment of all the educational mobility programmes, which give rise to a new financial framework in the post-2013 period, it is vital that the key contribution of local and regional authorities to promoting young people's mobility for educational purposes be taken into account.

We can underline the important role of the European Commission's flagship initiative "Youth on the Move". This is an ambitious strategic initiative, which aims to improve young Europeans' mobility, education and integration into the world of work. It is the first time that the European Commission devised a youth policy framework encompassing both education and employment. The objective is to improve young people's knowledge, skills and experience to facilitate their entry into the labour market and exploit their potential to the full, thereby enabling the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy to be attained. It is obvious that education is about more than simply improving employability, and it should have the broader goal of developing the per-

son as a whole. The objectives of the “Youth on the Move” initiative will only be achieved in partnership with local and regional authorities and other youth organisations and associations.

We also have to mention the role of Local and Regional Authorities in providing structures to support mobility in programmes for Vocational Education and Training. These programmes for mobility in education must be accessible under equal conditions to all students, regardless of the geographical location of their home region. Support should also be given to regions with specific geographical features, such as the outermost regions, whose mobility policies are seriously hampered by their distance and geographical isolation.

It is also important to take in consideration non-formal education for young people, complementary to formal education, which should be supported to contribute to lifelong learning in Europe, by developing its quality, recognising its outcomes, and integrating it better with formal education. Because it is essential for all young Europeans to receive an education that suits their professional needs and personal development throughout their lives, but it is equally important for them to receive, throughout their time at school, the knowledge that will enable them to feel like EU citizens.

The CoR and Youth Policy – employment

Nowadays, employment is a fundamental and multi-faceted issue, including unemployment, late entry into the world of work, insecure nature of work, difficulties in obtaining housing and the consequent difficulties in choosing one’s path in life and reach adulthood ... The CoR believes that employment policy action in member states and at EU level should be coordinated in order to facilitate transitions from school to work, or from inactivity or unemployment to work. The aim is to increase and improve investments in providing the right skills for those who have jobs on the labour market and, in the longer term, to better anticipate the skills needed.

We also have the conviction that a good education system, with a low school dropout rate, is the best remedy against unemployment. That is why recently, EU called for immediate action to drive down youth unemployment by preventing early school leaving, ensuring young people get work experience and boosting young employment.

Youth week 2011

Last year, the CoR was invited by the European Commission to host the European Youth Week. Young representatives from National Working Groups across Europe came to our premises for the Structured Dialogue session of the European Youth Week 2011. They delivered their verdicts on the priorities for Europe, going into the 18-month EU Trio Presidency of Denmark, Poland and Cyprus. One of the key points of the Structured Dialogue Conclusions was to make sure information about Structured Dialogue, the process of policy consultation in the youth field, was more youth-friendly and more visible on a national level – a commitment which Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Youth, welcomed very much when the recommendations were announced.

Closing remarks

I would like to conclude by thanking again the organisers for this very relevant and timely conference. Increasing the participation and inclusion of young people, in particular through education, training, voluntary and exchange activities, is vital for the achievement of the goals of the European Union in terms of employability, social inclusion and the forging of a European identity and active citizenship.

I wish you fruitful debates and good exchanges of ideas and views, and thank you for your attention.





'THERE'S A LOT LEFT TO DO IN THE ITALIAN REGIONS'

Interview with **Giusy Rossi**, a youth culture officer in Scandicci, a town with 50,000 inhabitants in Florence province.

JFE: Ms Rossi, you work for Scandicci Cultura, a public-sector cultural institute. How is the EU Youth Strategy impacting on your community and the surrounding region?

Giusy Rossi: That's not an easy question to answer. Regional autonomy has always been a touchy subject in Italy. Many people, whether at the national, regional or local level, are highly distrustful of the central government. If you ask me, Italy urgently needs an institutional reform. The country's bureaucracy needs to be slimmed down and public administration structures made more efficient. That's the only way to encourage the regions to play a more active, maybe even leading role in youth policy.

JFE: How is the strategy being implemented in practice in Italy?

Giusy Rossi: Our supreme authority when it comes to youth is the Italian Youth Ministry. It has a monitoring function and decides how the strategy is to be implemented across Italy. In youth policy matters the Ministry liaises with other ministries, the national agency, and with the regions, provinces and local authorities. So-called Framework Programme Agreements have been concluded with all regional governments which detail the objectives to be fulfilled. These are: to encourage young people to participate in public life, to strengthen their role as independent active citizens, and to develop the Structured Dialogue. The regions can also choose their own priority areas in line with the EU Youth Strategy.

JFE: What has Tuscany done in this respect?

Giusy Rossi: In June 2011 Tuscany launched a project entitled *GiovaniSI* (Yes to Youth, www.giovanisi.it). It's designed to improve the support we give to young people as they enter adulthood and move into working life. The main target groups are young men and women aged 18 to 40. That's a large age range, but then again in our region the young generation is facing major challenges. There's not enough jobs and useful internships. We have no qualified vocational training and development courses. Another problem is that many young people finally want to stand on their own two feet, but they can't afford to move out of their parents' home into their own place.



Interregional cooperation projects – Example presented at the InterREGIO conference

Youth Regional Network (YRN): YRN was established in 2008 in Wiesbaden, Germany by young people from 55 European regions. It is recognised by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) as the official youth representation body at the Council of Europe. It considers itself a ‘platform of regional-level youth parliaments, councils and organisations from the wider Europe’ and aims to give ‘young people from diverse regions a collective voice on the European stage while introducing a European dimension to youth policy in those regions.’ YRN’s objectives include influencing regional and European policy and ‘exchanging best practice and experience’. Its five Committees (Sustainable Development, Professional Life and Entrepreneurship, Education and Culture, Health and Social Affairs, and Social Media) work closely with the AER’s Committees, to whose agendas they contribute youth issues and concerns.

For more information, go to: www.aer.eu/en/main-issues/youth/aer-youth-regional-network.html. YRN was represented at the InterREGIO conference by its then President Olov Oskarsson (Sweden) and Vice-President Beat Rohner (Switzerland).

JFE: What are your expectations of the EU Youth Strategy?

Giusy Rossi: Now we need to start making progress. Of course there are young Italians who see Europe as a natural part of their everyday lives because they have a sense of initiative and sufficient access to support. However, they’re a minority. I’d like all young people to be able to spend time abroad, no matter what their social background and no matter whether they want to study there, work there, or maybe just have a good time in a different country. I think the regions need to start taking more responsibility.

JFE: Have you returned from the conference with fresh inspiration?

Giusy Rossi: Absolutely. I’m always amazed at how the Germans approach challenges like these. They have the ability to take a longer-term view when it comes to analysing data, projects and objectives. We Italians have a lot to learn from them. Just look at our governments. The targets they impose on us change so quickly that we hardly know how to respond any more. Despite all these difficulties, however, most of us are ardent defenders of Europe. At least that’s one thing we can be proud of.

‘COOPERATION IS A GREAT WAY TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER AND ENHANCE INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS’ –
Interview with Marie-Therese Sagl, Regional Youth Officer in Eastern Styria (Austria).

JFE: Ms Sagl, you’re a Regional Youth Officer in Eastern Styria, a region of Austria. The Regional Youth Management Office is responsible for interregional youth work cooperation and for child and youth work strategies. What exactly does that mean?

Marie-Therese Sagl: My organisation ... represents the interests and concerns of the young people in the region,
... puts youth on the agenda of the region,
... develops regional youth work structures,
... verifies demand for and ensures the availability of appropriate youth work measures and initiatives,
... provides information and advice on youth issues,

... liaises between young people and organisations and stakeholders in the youth field,
... provides advice and support on projects and events for and by young people,
... provides information on current issues, events, projects and activities, as well as on training,
... manages public relations and lobbying activities in the field of youth.

JFE: Liaising with regional child and youth work organisations on the ground is an important task, since Eastern Styria considers child and youth work to be an important interface to other areas. Is this also applicable at the European level? Do you feel it’s important to liaise with regions in other European countries when it comes to youth? And if so, what are you doing in this area?

Marie-Therese Sagl: Of course cross-border cooperation in the youth field is very important to us! The Regional Youth Management Office has been affiliated with Eastern Styria’s EU Regional Management Office since March this year. We’re running several international projects in a variety of areas. Now we plan to make use of these international contacts for the youth field, too. At the moment we are working particularly closely with our neighbouring countries Hungary and Slovenia. We’ve organised reciprocal study visits, seminars, lectures and so forth. We’re currently planning a joint youth football tournament and – a recent idea – a large-scale participation project. By the way, that idea was a direct outcome of the InterREGIO conference!



Interregional cooperation projects – Example presented at the InterREGIO conference

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), which has been in existence for more than a decade, was represented at InterREGIO by the youth secretariat of Western Pomerania in Poland, the member region holding the Presidency in 2011 and 2012. Within the BSSSC, the working group on youth policy is responsible for representing youth policy issues and initiatives in the context of interregional cooperation among the member regions. They also organise seminars on youth issues in the region and participate in the annual BSSSC conferences.

For more details, go to http://www.bsssc.com/index.php?system_cms=7&s=25. The youth secretariat of Western Pomerania (Małgorzata Ludwiczek) can be contacted via mlodziez@wzp.pl.

JFE: What is the added benefit of European and cross-border cooperation in the youth field for Eastern Styria?

Marie-Therese Sagl: European cooperation offers us an opportunity to reflect on similar challenges from various angles and to learn from each other. By working with international cooperation partners and organising a cross-border exchange between youth work experts, we can share expertise and knowledge and exchange best practices between us. We believe that such exchanges are useful not just for identifying and acquiring funding, but also for identifying synergies that offer benefits to both sides. Cooperation is a great way to learn from each other and enhance intercultural awareness.

JFE: What could or should the EU do to strengthen youth work and youth policy in your region?

Marie-Therese Sagl: The EU is already assisting us with various projects in Eastern Styria, the main benefit of which is felt by the participating boys and girls. These non-formal learning activities allow them to develop life skills. Through these unforgettable experiences, they develop an understanding of other cultures and of what it means to be European. That said, the EU should remove the red tape and make it easier for young people to organise and manage their own projects. There should be competent advisers on hand, not just within the Youth in Action programme, who can provide assistance with implementing projects.

‘IN BRITTANY, YOUTH IS A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE’ -

Interview with **Loranne Bailly**, Head of the Department for Regional Planning and Solidarity at Brittany’s Regional Council (France).

JFE: Ms Bailly, last year Brittany’s Regional Council adopted a ‘Young People’s Charter’ in Brittany. What exactly is that?

Loranne Bailly: Our Regional Council is responsible for grammar and other secondary schools, regional public transport and vocational training, so we are an important actor when it comes to promoting the welfare and successful development of young people. The region has launched a series of dedicated initiatives in various areas including culture, sports, associations, housing and health. The primary target group of all of these initiatives is young people aged 15 to 29 who are on their way into adulthood. The Charter allows us to manage these measures within an integrated context, to take a holistic perspective, and to identify synergies, shared obstacles and new projects, all on the basis of a common understanding of the needs and expectations of young people.

The ‘diagnosis’ we conducted beforehand was a major step towards a formalisation of youth policy. A vital contribution from the regional partners, especially from the regional advisory bodies (notably the council for business, social affairs and the environment). The aim was to explore all of the lifestyles and habits of our young people so we could adapt our strategies and measures accordingly. As a result of this process we identified one overarching priority for youth policy, namely that young people have to be given a voice in selecting and designing the measures, especially those that affect them directly. Another priority is to encourage active citizenship by creating a public space that feels inviting and open. These are the most important priorities, yet incidentally also the most difficult ones to implement.

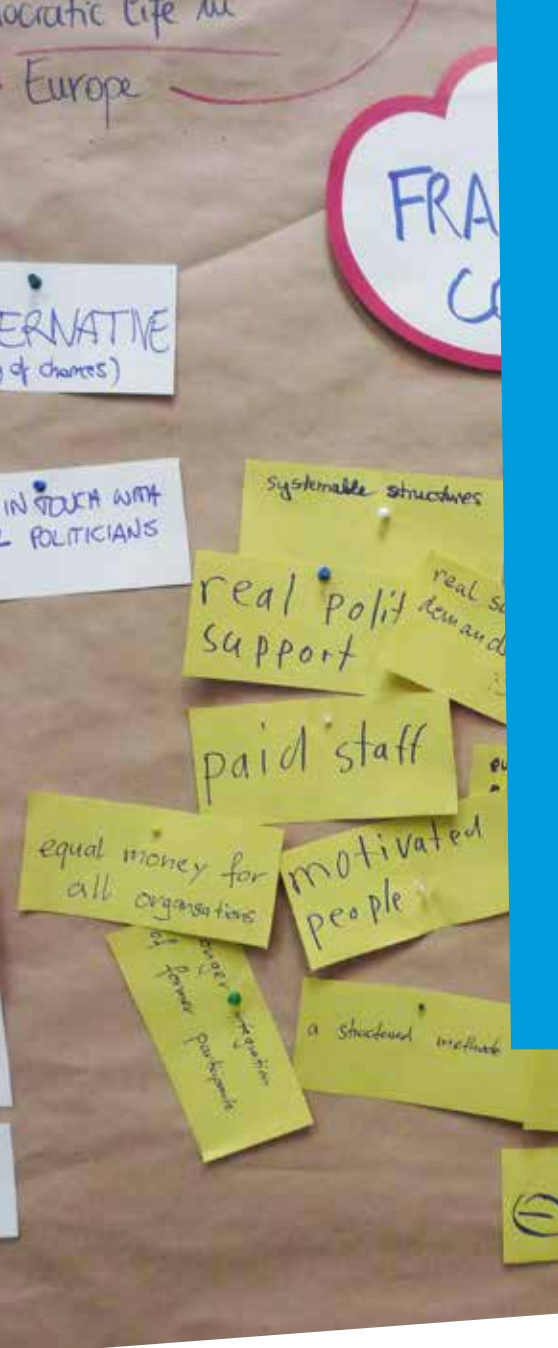
JFE: The Charter considers European and international mobility for young people to be one of the most important ways to improve their life situation. Why is this aspect so important for Brittany’s young people?

Loranne Bailly: In a knowledge society, the experience and skills of each individual are just as valuable an asset as the physical and geographical features of a given region. Geographically speaking, Brittany is not exactly at the heart but rather on the periphery of Europe, also in terms of transportation links and the big decision-making centres in Europe. Maybe that’s why we have to make a greater effort than other regions to focus on the talents and skills of our population. In this context, all experiences of international mobility are seen as a resource that benefits young people as they grow into independent adults, integrate into society and working life, and develop their personalities,

Each year the Regional Council provides funding for 13,000 pupils, trainees, students and interns who take part in mobility schemes. It supports international non-profit projects involving young people or European Voluntary Service participants. It also promotes exchanges with our partner regions in Saxony, Wales and Wielkopolska in Poland as well as International Voluntary Service initiatives in the private sector. The Council has an annual budget of EUR 3.8 million for activities in this area.

Focusing on the talents and skills of our population.





JFE: You're trying to create access to mobility schemes for all population groups. How exactly are you doing this?

Loranne Bailly: The Regional Council regularly meets with all educational institutions to discuss existing mobility activities. The financial position of many young people and their families is deteriorating, so the region is planning to adjust its measures to better fit the needs of disadvantaged target groups in the interest of equal opportunities. To this end, the Council plans to increase the maximum amount of funding available for longer-term measures. Trainees, pupils and students on

vocational training courses who come from disadvantaged backgrounds will be given priority when applying for funding. This reform is expected to have quite an impact since it accounts for almost 85% of the region's entire mobility budget, which provides financial support to 13,000 young people every year.

JFE: Brittany works with other regions in Europe and worldwide to develop joint youth measures. What are your objectives and priorities in this respect?

Loranne Bailly: We have signed cooperation agreements with Saxony, Wales, Wielkopolska, Shandong in China and Anosy and Analanjirofo in Madagascar. The background to these agreements isn't always just institutional; on the contrary, many of them are the result of personal contacts and exchanges that civil society organisations had established in years past. The regional governments decided to build on these dynamic relationships and has strengthened them further by setting up exchange schemes and partnerships between the governments.

Through the exchange schemes, young people have been able to explore other ways to become active and to obtain professional training. The schemes have also produced a dialogue between experts working in the youth field.

JFE: Has interregional cooperation influenced the strategic development of Brittany's youth policy?

Loranne Bailly: Brittany has been a member of the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning for a number of years now. EARLALL works in vocational training, professional orientation and youth and dedicates a lot of resources to raising awareness of these issues among its members.

Interregional cooperation projects – Example presented at the InterREGIO conference

The Youth Sports Association of the German Land of Hesse introduced its Europe of Regions in Sport network. The primary aim of the network, which consists of 14 partners in 12 Länder, is to use sport to encourage the development intercultural skills and European understanding, teach history, and promote personal, social and athletic achievements. The network's main activities are multilateral youth exchanges and youth sports camps.

For more details, go to <http://www.sportjugend-hessen.de/Internationale-Jugendarbeit.246.o.html>. Inquiries: Behzad Borhani/Peter Brinks, Youth Sports Association of Hesse

In 2010, we set up an exchange scheme with the region of Saguenay – Lac Saint Jean in Quebec, Canada, to learn more about how to prevent young people from dropping out of school and vocational training, a problem that has emerged in recent years. The School of Public Health (EHESP) in Rennes will soon establish a Chair of Youth Research that will be co-funded by the Regional Council. It will conduct research in this field by comparing and exchanging data on youth issues that is being gathered in Europe and beyond. After its inauguration on 16 November the Chair will start to work with the insights gained by experts and public institutions working in the youth field and channel valuable results back to the practitioners' community. With this Chair Brittany has given itself a research and experimental tool that is unique across Europe. It is the first research chair of its kind in France.

Once we have adopted our new youth policy, we plan to become a member of the European Regions for Youth (ERY) so we can be part of a wider dialogue on all issues that affect young people and be inspired by the best practices that are being applied in other regions in Europe.

JFE: What can the European Union do to encourage even more interregional cooperation? What are your expectations?

Loranne Bailly: When it became known that existing mobility programmes would be consolidated under the Erasmus for All programme, there were concerns that this would lead to budget cuts for non-formal education programmes, of which Youth in Action is one. However, non-formal education, which complements the formal education sector, is an exceptionally valuable asset for young people, particularly for those who are at risk of dropping out. In future, local decision-makers and youth work organisations should review their practices and structures to ensure that their exchange schemes and cooperation projects give priority to this most vulnerable group.

‘EUROPEAN INITIATIVES? SOME PEOPLE WOULD SAY THAT’S THE LAST THING WE NEED’ – Interview with **Matthias Hoffmann**, desk officer in the Department of Youth Work, Youth Social Work, Parental Support, Child and Youth Services Planning and Socio-educational Professions at Brandenburg’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (Germany).

JFE: Mr Hoffmann, how has the EU Youth Strategy impacted on your work in Brandenburg so far?

Matthias Hoffmann: We all know that it takes a while before a new initiative really gets going. We’re still at the stage where we need to raise awareness among organisations and experts of the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. We’ve organised several meetings and events attended by Landesjugendring (the regional youth council), associations, youth education centres, Land working groups and other specialist organisations in Brandenburg. We’ve also raised the issue with the directors of the youth welfare offices and among the youth work experts and youth social workers in these offices.

JFE: What progress have you already made?

Matthias Hoffmann: We’ve found that people are most willing to play an active role when they realise that implementing the EU Youth Strategy won’t create extra work for them. The main priority in Brandenburg is therefore to encourage practitioners working in the field to ‘think and act more European’. In practice, this means inviting speakers and experts from other European countries to our conferences where this makes sense. That allows us to hear what people are doing in other countries and encourages peer learning among experts. And since we want to create a stronger link between the work being done at the national and European level, this year we decided to merge two sets of previously separate guidelines. Since 1 January 2012, national and international youth education and youth exchange activities in Brandenburg have been managed under one integrated scheme.

JFE: And what obstacles are you still facing?

Matthias Hoffmann: As expected, we’re finding it a challenge to implement the EU Youth Strategy at the local level, where many still think that the strategy is a pure EU issue or some form of international youth work. The three core themes of the strategy – successful transition from school to training to working life, youth participation and the recognition and visibility of non-formal education – are still not sufficiently recognised as youth policy priorities for which the EU Youth Strategy acts an engine and catalyst for quality improvements.

JFE: How could the Strategy be given an even stronger role to play in the regions?

Matthias Hoffmann: Although we’re still looking for the right approach, I could make a couple of suggestions. Public-sector funding in Brandenburg is allocated according to the principle of ‘strengthening strengths’. It’s a philosophy that could be adopted for the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy at the local level. It’s not the case that none of the youth work being done at this level is ‘European’, or that there are no efforts to bring existing approaches in line with the Youth Strategy. However, the stakeholders do need more support from us as they do their work and draw up concepts and strategies. It may produce a copycat effect for others.

The example I just mentioned – inviting European speakers to youth work events – could also work. Once participants at these events realise how things are being done in other European countries and start reflecting on their own work, some may find that it’s definitely

worth looking beyond their own horizons and making use of what's out there.

Another approach involves the many partnerships that exist between cities, counties and local communities. They could be used as a vehicle for injecting the European ideal inherent in the Youth Strategy into local cooperation structures. It may even have a valuable knock-on effect in that these structures could be given a new lease of life.

Finally, I have great expectations of the InterCITY conference that will be held in Leipzig in October 2012. A large number of representatives have already confirmed their attendance.

JFE: Are you an ardent defender of Europe?

Matthias Hoffmann: (laughs) I think that all of us who work in European contexts have found that it can be very difficult to keep European issues on the day-to-day agenda. A lot of the time we hear people say, 'Don't talk to me about Europe. I have other things to worry about.' Many people are quick to judge European initiatives as the last thing they need. I believe that we've lost sight of the real overarching goal – we no longer know why it makes sense to fight for Europe and why cross-border cooperation is so important for the peaceful coexistence of all nationalities, in Europe and beyond.

Europe has enjoyed peace and cooperation for decades. Many generations were born and raised during this phase. They've never known anything else, and they take peace in Europe for granted. However, European history teaches us that many of the older generation have had quite a different experience.

JFE: What are the next steps for Brandenburg?

Matthias Hoffmann: Berlin and Brandenburg have set up a joint working group to implement the EU Youth Strategy. The group consists of representatives of the Ministry, the Berlin Senate Administration for Education, Youth and Science, the Brandenburg youth



welfare office, the Landesjugendring chapters in Berlin and Brandenburg and Sozialpädagogisches Fortbildungsinstitut Berlin-Brandenburg. We're currently discussing the setup of a special information service for youth work and youth social work experts. Another possible project involves encouraging existing partnerships between cities, counties and local authorities to engage in implementing the Youth Strategy. But to be fair, we do need to remember that our colleagues in the Länder have many other things to worry about as well. The EU Youth Strategy is only one concern of many.

JFE: How does Brandenburg feel about the Bund-Länder cooperation structures?

Matthias Hoffmann: The Bund-Länder working group takes an exceptionally constructive and partnership-based approach to its work. I think that's a very important quality.

JFE: How significant is the Structured Dialogue in Brandenburg?

Matthias Hoffmann: Brandenburg is making several efforts to promote youth participation. For instance, we have a dedicated youth participation agency and this year also set up a youth participation programme for Brandenburg. However, the methods of the Structured Dialogue haven't really taken root in Brandenburg yet. That said, contact has been established between the Brandenburg Landesjugendring, the Berlin Landesjugendring and LiJOT, the National Youth Council of Lithuania.

‘THERE’S GREAT POTENTIAL IN THE REGIONS’ – An interview with **Olov Oskarsson**. In 2010 the young Swede became President of the Youth Regional Network (YRN) of the Assembly of European Regions.

JFE: Olov, the Youth Regional Network was established by AER in 2008. First of all, what is AER?

Olov Oskarsson: AER has more than 250 member regions from 35 countries as well as 16 interregional member organisations, making it the largest independent network of regions in Europe. It was founded in 1985 as a forum for interregional cooperation and the representation of regional interests at the European level. AER was instrumental in establishing two regional advisory bodies at the Council of Europe (the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities) and at the European Union (the Committee of the Regions).

JFE: And what is the role of YRN?

Olov Oskarsson: We are the only platform in Europe to enable a dialogue between young people at the regional level. We hold two major plenary assemblies each year, one in spring, the other in the autumn. Each assembly has a specific European theme. Naturally, all themes have to have a regional relevance. For instance, the themes of our last two meetings were ‘Eastern partnerships’ and ‘Equal opportunities for all young people’. Our assembly in October will be all about democracy and participation. And of course we always invite lots of experts to attend.

JFE: Who is responsible for setting the YRN agenda?

Olov Oskarsson: We have five Committees that each has their own area of activity: Sustainable Development, Professional Life and Entrepreneurship, Education and Culture, Health and Social Affairs, and Social Media. They draw up recommendations that we submit directly to the decision-makers in the regions.

JFE: To what extent does the EU Youth Strategy impact your work?

Olov Oskarsson: It has a major influence. In fact, we try to reflect all of the strategy’s fields of action in our work. Our structures are ideal for that purpose, because the decision-makers in the regions are in close contact with young people there. That’s the way things should be.



Interregional cooperation projects – Example presented at the InterREGIO conference

The Europe Office of Eastern Thuringia was represented at InterREGIO to present the continued development of transnational and interregional cooperation in the German Land of Thuringia. Its regional service network, which is co-financed by the European Social Fund, supports and advises the many participating organisations in the Land and its partner regions in implementing the youth, labour and education policy objectives of the ESF within Thuringia. The Europe Office of Eastern Thuringia is responsible for improving coordination between projects and European activities in the Free State of Thuringia. Most of Thuringia's interregional cooperation activities are performed with 13 priority regions across Europe with the aim of strengthening economic, social and cultural ties between them.

For more details, go to <http://www.es-thuringen.de/>
Inquiries: Christina Martens, Europe Office of Eastern Thuringia.

We have to reach out to young people and allow them to be part of the decision-making process. They know best what they need and what changes have to be made. That's an opportunity we need to use. Also, youth urgently needs to be mainstreamed in all areas of politics.

JFE: What are the biggest obstacles faced by YRN?

Olov Oskarsson: I wouldn't necessarily say there are obstacles. That said, we shouldn't let the EU Youth Strategy impose too strict limits on our work. One third of our members come from non-EU regions and they, too, want better perspectives. So we need to make an effort to bring about improvements on a wider scale.

JFE: Did you return from the Potsdam conference with any fresh ideas?

Olov Oskarsson: Of course I already knew a lot about the EU Youth Strategy. But in Potsdam I once again saw with my own eyes how many

great regional initiatives there are, which made me realise once again that our work really does make sense.

JFE: In Potsdam you took part in a panel discussion on the role of the regions in European youth policy and youth work and the tradeoff between the benefits and disadvantages of the extra work involved. What's your personal opinion?

Olov Oskarsson: I firmly believe that exchanging ideas and good practices is always a major benefit for all stakeholders. After all, we are all working towards the same goal: the greater involvement of young people.

‘YOUNG PEOPLE FROM IMMIGRANT FAMILIES ARE STILL UNDERREPRESENTED’ – Interview with Peter Brinks, head of international youth work and sports travel of the Youth Sports Association of Hesse.

JFE: Mr Brinks, what is the role of the EU Youth Strategy in Hesse?

Peter Brinks: Its primary role is to lend EU-level legitimacy to our long-standing international youth exchange scheme, which makes it easier for our colleagues in the 14 European partner regions to apply for funding for youth exchanges. For in these regions international youth work is not as strong as we would like it to be. Thankfully, these efforts are helping to draw attention to new target groups when it comes to organising these exchanges.

JFE: So this is a step in the right direction?

Peter Brinks: Yes. The strategy strengthens our long-standing projects to promote the involvement of young people in our Association's youth department. I'm thinking above all of our Junior Team project and our Integration through Sports programme. Unfortunately, our programmes have so far failed to attract a larger number of young participants from the immigrant community.

JFE: What aims has the Youth Sports Association set itself?

Peter Brinks: We want to professionalise our international activities, which is why we are involved in projects such as JiVE's Kommune goes International scheme. I believe we're making progress. The state of Hesse has established a working group called Hessen total international that's made up of a wide variety of partners such as our Ministry of Social Affairs, local youth education organisations, and youth associations and clubs. That was an initial step towards giving international youth work activities in Hesse greater visibility.

Then we organised an Hessen total international information event where young people came to learn more about our projects. Now we want to reach out to multipliers working in youth centres, associations and clubs and organise expert meetings where they can discuss and exchange good practices.

JFE: What do you expect from the Bund-Länder working group on the EU Youth Strategy's implementation?

Peter Brinks: To be honest, the first time I heard about the working group was at the InterREGIO conference.

JFE: And what do you think of the Structured Dialogue?

Peter Brinks: That's really just a new term, a pithy name for the work we are already doing. Participation for and involving young people is what we've always done.

JFE: Do you expect that sports will gain greater recognition under the successor programme to Youth in Action?

Peter Brinks: Sports was integrated into the Treaty of Lisbon, so it's already been given a boost. That said, I'm very doubtful that will lead to more funding for sports-related international youth work activities. The image of sports in Europe is still mainly driven by Bayern Munich. They certainly don't need funding through Youth in Action. Youth sports activities are still completely neglected in the Federal Government's Child and Youth Plan.



‘YOUTH AS A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE SOUNDS GOOD, BUT IT’S STILL DIFFICULT TO REALISE’ – An interview with Wolfgang Schick, youth officer in the Austrian Land of Salzburg.

JFE: Mr Schick, did you bring back some useful results from the youth policy conference in Potsdam?

Wolfgang Schick: Yes. For one, the event was very well organised. For another, it gave the regional representatives exactly the kind of support they need to implement the EU Youth Strategy at the regional level. I hope we’ll be able to continue the dialogue at this level soon.

JFE: What is the current significance of the EU Youth Strategy in the Land of Salzburg?

Wolfgang Schick: The written documentation underpinning youth policy in Salzburg for the current period of government through 2014 makes express mention of the eight fields of action of the Strategy. In other words, we have pledged to implement the four general objectives of our youth policy

- to appreciate young people
- to give young people a voice
- to give young people space
- to give young people perspectives

in the context of these eight fields of action. Our youth policy priorities are integration, migration, youth participation and stronger political education. Also, Austria has set the voting age for young people at 16 for both Länder and national elections. From a youth policy point of view, that’s a major step forward.

JFE: How is the EU Youth Strategy implemented in Austria?

Wolfgang Schick: We have set up a national working group with representatives from the federal government, all Länder and the Austrian National Youth Council. The group is lead-managed by the Council together with Dachverband Offene Jugendarbeit (a roof organization for open youth work), Jugendinfo.cc and the Austrian national agency for the Youth in Action programme. It fulfills two major aspects of the EU Youth Strategy: its practical implementation in Austria and the implementation of the Structured Dialogue.

JFE: Are there any difficulties when it comes to implementing the Youth Strategy?

Wolfgang Schick: We regularly encounter difficulties especially when it comes to mainstreaming youth as a cross-cutting issue. There’s still quite a bit of resistance from other policy areas.

» *Our youth policy priorities are integration, migration, youth participation and stronger political education*

Interregional cooperation projects – Example presented at the InterREGIO conference

European Youth Competence Centre Saxony-Anhalt, introduced its transnational partners and network activities at InterREGIO. Saxony-Anhalt maintains an internationalisation and Europe strategy within which interregional cooperation on youth issues plays a major role. GOEUROPE! is part of a network of five European regions in Germany, France, Lithuania, Belgium and Greece. Saxony-Anhalt, too, uses the European Social Fund to strengthen interregional cooperation and promote support organisations such as GOEUROPE!.

For more details, go to <http://www.goeurope-lsa.de/>
Inquiries: Christian Scharf, GOEUROPE!

JFE: What positive aspects are there to report?

Wolfgang Schick: We're doing very well on our policy area 'giving young people a voice.' A whole range of events are being organised in that respect, such as youth parliaments, local youth meetings and round tables involving politicians. We're very proud of our achievements in that area. But generally, it's fair to say that like our German counterparts, we're still very much at the beginning of the implementation process. We have proposed a number of new working instruments that are currently being discussed by the Austrian Youth Ministry. We have decided not just to focus on EU issues and their significance for Austria, but also to develop our own Austrian approaches when it comes to issues that interface with the EU.

JFE: How could the Strategy be given an even stronger role to play in Austria's regions? Who's responsible for the next steps?

Wolfgang Schick: The Federal Government recently published its new youth strategy, which is heavily influenced by the EU Youth Strategy. The new national youth strategy is

now being discussed in the Länder and we expect that it will soon be implemented in a similar manner there.

JFE: How does Austria feel about the Bund-Länder cooperation structures in Germany?

Wolfgang Schick: We think it's a very valuable approach, one that we would like to pursue in Austria in the coming years, too. At least that's what the Länder would like. We have a lot to catch up on since Austria joined the EU in 1995. For a long time we didn't even consider cooperation, although this would have been necessary and possible. That's changing now.

JFE: And what do you think of the Structured Dialogue?

Wolfgang Schick: We're satisfied with it. The national working group has been highly committed to its work from the very beginning and has already produced some genuine outcomes with the four Länder events. We're particularly pleased that many young people decided to participate in the consultation on democracy.





THE ROLE OF THE REGIONS IN EUROPEAN YOUTH POLICY AND YOUTH WORK – Conclusions from the InterREGIO conference

The motivation for the conference, which took place on 3-5 September 2012 in Potsdam, was an urgent need for a dialogue on the role of the regions in shaping European youth policy and the benefits of interregional cooperation for the regions' own youth policies and activities.

In many countries across Europe, responsibility for youth work and youth policy lies with the regions, Länder and départements. They shape the legal framework, implement national rules and regulations, provide on-the-ground support and give political expression to the way in which youth work and youth policy are managed and implemented. They play a vital role in the context of implementing the EU Youth Strategy. How can and how should this role be fulfilled, in the opinion of regional representatives? What are the

benefits to them of transnational cooperation with other regions? These were the questions discussed at the conference.

Regions as vital players in shaping and implementing youth policy cooperation across the EU

The structures below the national level – which in many Member States are the regions – have widely differing powers and responsibilities when it comes to youth policy. Generally speaking, however, they play an important role in implementing European strategies. This statement is shared by the European Union's Committee of the Regions. In its Opinion on a renewed European Strategy 'Investing in Youth', the CoR calls for 'the opinion and contributions of local and regional authorities to be taken into account in the development of youth policies, owing to the relevant competences that these authorities possess in most Member States.' It also 'endorses the need for an active positive, cross-cutting youth policy, that addresses the potential of all youth by providing favourable conditions to develop their talents and skills to live, work, and actively participate in society.'

The Committee of the Region's White Paper on Multilevel Governance describes the role of the regions in the context of the European process. The CoR considers multilevel governance to mean 'coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities, based on partnership and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies.'



Multilevel governance, states the White Paper, is not simply a question of translating European or national objectives into local or regional action, but must also be understood as a process for integrating the objectives of local and regional authorities within the strategies of the European Union.

Both of these processes are relevant for the EU Youth Strategy, too. For the youth field, this form of governance translates into

- empowering regional representatives to engage in shaping youth policy,
- strengthening the interregional dialogue to ensure the voice of the youth field is heard,
- and an integrated role for youth policy and youth work in the Europe 2020 strategy.

How does the EU Youth Strategy contribute towards achieving the EU's core objectives?

The EU Youth Strategy forms part of wider strategies designed to develop the European Union further. These crucial programmes for the current decade are expressed in the Europe 2020 growth strategy on the one hand and in stronger European integration and the creation of a 'Europe of citizens' on the other.

Following the first phase of implementation, the EU Youth Strategy underwent an analysis from which it has emerged with a strong integrative function. In a Communication, the European Commission describes this thus: 'For the coming years, the strategy should

» *For the coming years, the strategy should increasingly focus on the consequences of the current crisis and its effects on social inclusion and the health & well-being of young people.*

increasingly focus on the consequences of the current crisis and its effects on social inclusion and the health & well-being of young people. To this purpose, it needs to step up its focus on participation in democratic and societal activities, as well as build on youth work in developing young people's life skills, their overall personal development and a sense of belonging to the society in which they live.'

This statement highlights the youth policy responsibilities and realities in many regions across the European Union.

How do the regions feel about the current transnational cooperation structures within the EU in the youth field?

The trends in interregional cooperation clearly show that in addition to cooperation in the field of business, education and culture, exchanges between young people and experts are gaining currency. Policymakers and practitioners in the youth policy and youth work fields understand interregional cooperation to be a vehicle for developing a common understanding of youth policy in Europe and for promoting the attractiveness of their own regions.

Insight into ideas from other regions



Report

Crime-Geschichten

... von ...

Erfolg vom Warten

... von ...

20 GLOBAL GOAL GETTER

Giving a life to the youth

Supporting the Next Generation of Sustainability Leadership

Ethical, Sustainable Leadership for Challenging Times

... von ...

... von ...

... von ...

Youth group in Brandenburg visit

... von ...

LAND BRANDENBURG

NEE|B

Protokoll

... von ...

German link with North East stands out

... von ...

Euro-Vision keeps international trade link right on song

... von ...

Education minister capote young Germans in Korea

... von ...

Magieraleit links with Germany move forward

... von ...

Bosnian conflict focus for N young people

... von ...

Youth links in Bosnia

... von ...

Vermittlung zwischen Fronten

Konflikttraining-Workshop in Nordirland

... von ...

It became clear during the InterREGIO conference that there are various reasons why regions want to strengthen interregional cooperation. Participants mentioned

- the implementation of mobility programmes,
- a technical and political dialogue with peers and the possibility to jointly represent regional interests at European level,
- an exchange of ideas and approaches to similar political challenges,
- the possibility to look at similar challenges from a variety of angles and to learn from each other,
- better learning mobility opportunities for all young people (for professional or personal reasons) as a responsibility of the regions,
- mobility as an investment priority; all experiences of international mobility are seen as a resource that benefits young people as they grow into independent adults, integrate into society and working life, and develop their personalities,
- training for experts so they can develop a more European outlook on their work as educators,
- insight into ideas from other regions on how to shape regional youth work politically,
- increasing the visibility of the benefits of international and interregional youth work and youth policy,
- the use of interregional cooperation to encourage the involvement of civil society, public administrations and policymakers,
- inspiring and promoting innovation and exploring new areas of action,
- enhancing the capacities of the stakeholders, e.g., through personal experiences, improved communication and foreign language skills, and greater intercultural skills.

What do the regions need to meet their responsibilities under the EU Youth Strategy?

Naturally, none of Europe's regions are equipped in the same way when it comes to interregional cooperation in the youth field. The European single market and the creation of a European labour market have led the regions to engage in a rising number of networks, notably in the private sector, science, education and training.

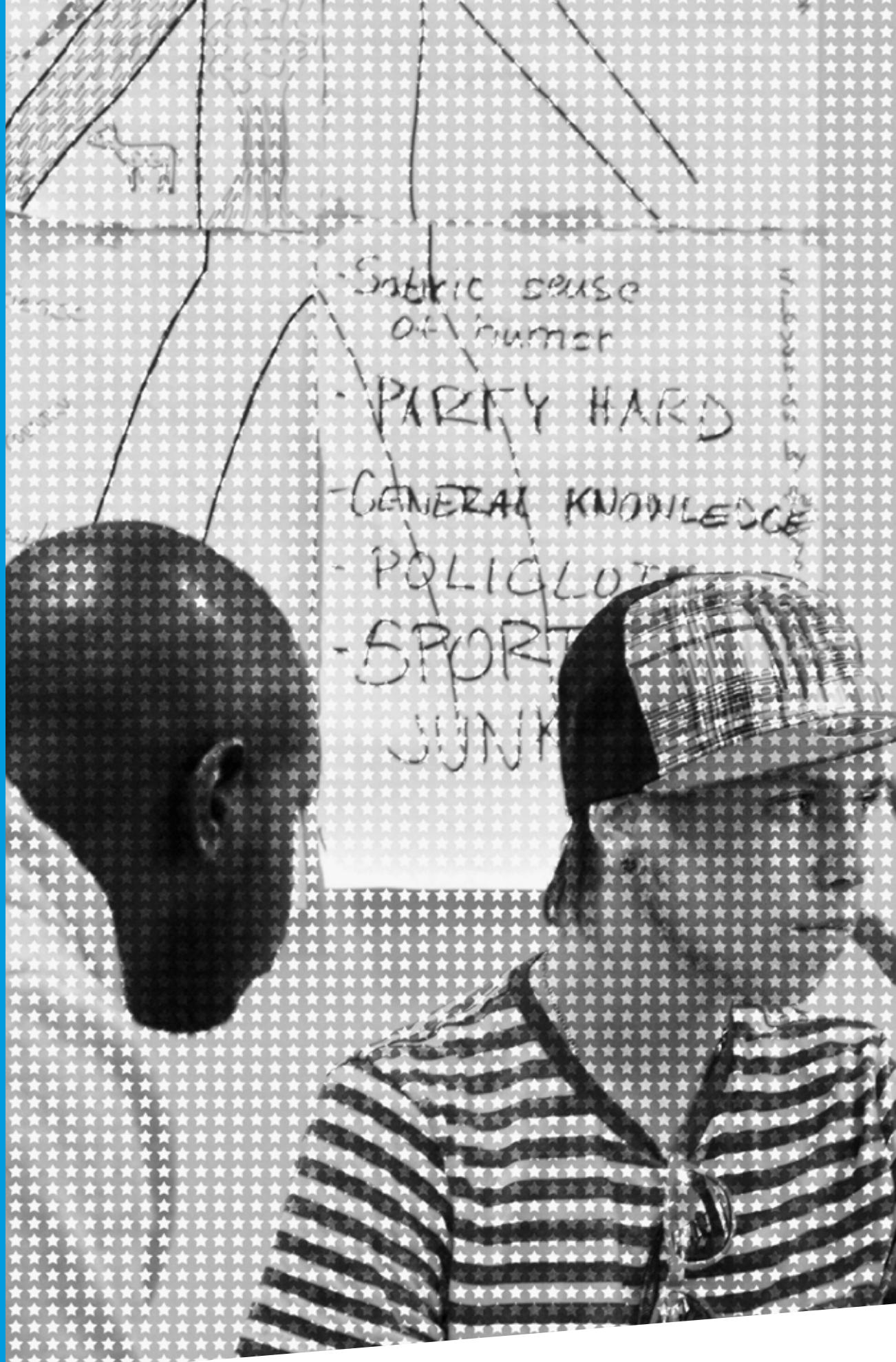
The ever louder public call for more learning mobility opportunities, changing attitudes to lifelong learning and a growing level of cooperation across Europe in the youth field are just some of the reasons why regional youth politicians, too, are beginning to take a different stance. Some regions have developed European youth policy concepts. Others have integrated European aspects into their regional youth policies.

To strengthen interregional cooperation on youth, the regions need reliable stakeholders on the ground alongside strong partnerships and membership in interregional networks.

They also need political backing in the regions in order to implement the EU Youth Strategy. Political recognition of the role of the regions in European youth policy and youth work is, however, just as important.

Finally, they need human, infrastructural and financial resources. While politics can provide the framework, the initiation and implementation of activities requires active contributors, qualified experts and committed young people.

The Committee of the Regions, in particular, can play a role in gaining greater political recognition of the role of the regions in European youth policy and youth work. This would require including in the CoR's list of priorities the need to recognise and highlight the contribution of youth policy to the Europe 2020 strategy as well as its contribution to the process of EU integration.



Sarcic sense of humor

- PARTY HARD

- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

- POLIGLOT

- SPORT

JUNK

by [illegible]



4. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS →

List of Participants

A

Daniel Adler GOEUROPE! LKJ Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany

B

Iris Bawidamann, Paritätisches Bildungswerk Bundesverband e.V., Frankfurt am Main, DE – Germany

Steffi Bergmann, BJR, München, DE – Germany

Behzad Borhani, Sportjugend Hessen, Frankfurt, DE – Germany

Attila Boros, NIFSP-Mobilitás Regional Youth Service of Western Transdanubia, Győr, HU – Hungary,

Peter Brinks, Sportjugend Hessen, Frankfurt, DE – Germany,

Bill Brodie, Brolancon, Berlin, DE – Germany,

Yvonne Buchalla, JUGEND für Europa, Bonn, DE – Germany,

Jochen Butt-Pośnik, JUGEND für Europa, Bonn, DE – Germany

C

Tiago Calhau, ADCM Associação de Divulgação Cultural de Mora, Mora, PT – Portugal

Sefa Cetin, GOVERNORSHIP OF KONYA PROVINCE, TR – Turkey

D

Michael Dembowski, Kindervereinigung e. V., Seelow, DE – Germany,

Katerina Donovska, BIC Nordthuringen, Nordhausen, DE – Germany,

Sandy Dörner, Europa-Jugendherberge Schloss Colditz, Colditz, DE – Germany

E

Hendrijke Eger, Stiftung SPI, Niederlassung Brandenburg, Senftenberg, DE – Germany,

Elena Eichner, Jugendhaus Karlsruhe, Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e.V., Karlsruhe, DE – Germany,

Aikaterini Emmanouilidou, Praxis, Serres, GR – Greece

F

Florian Fangmann, Centre Francais de Berlin gGmbH, Berlin, DE – Germany

Romed Felderer, Die Grünen Wien, Wien, AT – Austria

Doreen Frenz, Landesjugendamt des Landes Brandenburg, Bernau, DE – Germany

G

Valeria Gheradini, AICS ASS.ITALIANA CULTURA SPORT, ROMA, IT – Italien

Kamila Grzeskowiak, One World Association-Service Civil International polish branch, Poznan, PL – Poland

Tomasz Grzych, Centrum Inicjatyw UNESCO, Wroclaw, PL – Poland

H

Marco Heuer, Journalist, DE – Germany

Sandra Hildebrandt, Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft, Berlin, DE – Germany

Matthias Hoffmann, Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport, Potsdam, DE – Germany

K

Lars Kascha, Baltic Sea Secretariat for Youth Affairs, Kiel, DE – Germany

Orsolya Kovacs, Sustainable Ormansag Non-profit Ltd., Kemes, HU – Hungary

Torsten Krause, DIE LINKE. im Landtag Brandenburg, Potsdam, DE – Germany

Sylvia Krautscheid, LEB e.V., Gransee, DE – Germany

L

Francine Labadie, Institut national de la jeunesse et de l'éducation populaire (INJEP), Paris, FR – France

Christina Langhans, GOEUROPE! /.lkj) Sachsen-Anhalt, Magdeburg, DE – Germany

Kasparas Laureckis, KRC, Kursenai, LT – Lithuania,

Christa Lindemann, Louise-Schroeder-Schule, Wiesbaden, Fachschule für Sozialpädagogik, Wiesbaden, DE – Germany

Christian Lorenzen, Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend Belgiens, Magdeburg, DE – Germany

Malgorzata Ludwiczek, Secretariat for Youth of the Westpomeranian Region, Szczecin, PL – Poland

Marc Ludwig, Servicestelle Jugendbeteiligung, Berlin, DE – Germany

M

Oleg Malahovskiy, Tourists Club “LENA”, Saint-Petersburg, RU – Russian Federation

Christina Martens, Europabüro Ostthüringen, Gera, DE – Germany

Marta Michalakova, BABYLONIE, Frydek-Mistek, CZ – Czech Republic,

Bruno Molea, AICS ASS.ITALIANA CULTURA SPORT, Roma, I T – Italy,

Pierre Montaudon, ministère des sports, de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et de la vie associative, Paris, FR – France

Peter Music, EU-Regionalmanagement Südweststeiermark, Kaindorf/Sulm, AT – Austria

N

Alin Nica, Committee of the Regions, Chair of EDUC, Dudestii Noi, RO – Romania,

Nuno Nunes, ADCM Associação de Divulgação Cultural de Mora, Mora, PT – Portugal

O

Olov Oskarsson, AER Youth Regional Network, Aspås, SE – Sweden

P

Dejan Panow, Landesschülerrat M-V, Rostock, DE – Germany

Mirko Petrick, Stadt Halle (Saale) - Jugendamt, Halle (Saale), DE – Germany

Stefan Preininger, Regionales Jugendmanagement Steirisches Vulkanland; Region-Südoststeiermark, Kornberg, AT – Austria

R

Sabina Rademacher, THE GLOBAL CITIZEN PROJECT, Dartington, UK – United Kingdom

Laura Reiser, Fahrten-Ferne-Abenteurer, Berlin, DE – Germany

Steffen Reschke, Jugendclub Raßnitz, Schkopau, DE – Germany

Barbara Rink, Deutsches Jugendinstitut, München, DE – Germany

Paul Risse, Land Steiermark, Büro Landesrätin Mag.a Grossmann, Graz, AT – Austria

Beat Rohner, AER Youth Regional Network, Strasbourg, FR – France

Eric Ronniger, Europa-Jugendherberge Schloss Colditz, Colditz, DE – Germany

Giuseppina Rossi, Scandicci Cultura – Municipality of Scandicci, Scandicci (Florence), IT – Italy

S

Marie-Therese Sagl, EU-Regionalmanagement Oststeiermark, Weiz, AT – Austria

Christian Scharf, GOEUROPE! /.lkj) Sachsen-Anhalt, Magdeburg, DE – Germany

Wolfgang Schick, Land Salzburg Landesjugendreferat, Salzburg, AT – Austria

Katrin Schmeer, ASB Regionalverband Mittel-Brandenburg e.V., Königs Wusterhausen, DE – Germany

Dr. Uta Julia Schüler, AJA-Arbeitskreis gemeinnütziger Jugendaustauschorganisationen, Berlin, DE – Germany

Gerhard Sechtling, Hessisches Sozialministerium, Referat II 2 Jugend, Kassel, DE – Germany

Claudius Siebel, JUGEND für Europa, Bonn, DE – Germany

Monique Sturm, Geschäftsstelle “Zentrum Eigenständige Jugendpolitik”, Berlin, DE – Germany

V

Ferenc Zsolt Váradi, NIFSP-Mobilitás Regional Youth Service of Northern Hungary Miskolc, HU – Hungary

Manfred von Hebel, JUGEND für Europa, Bonn, DE – Germany

W

Sabine Wenzl, BIC Nordthuringen, Nordhausen, DE – Germany

Tomasz Wiktor, Marshal’s Office of the Wielkopolska Region, Poznan, PL – Poland,

Filip Winzap, Europäisches Jugendparlament Switzerland, Münchenstein, CH – Switzerland

Ulrike Wisser, JUGEND für Europa, Brüssel, BE – Belgium

Stefan Woll, Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport des Landes Brandenburg, Potsdam, DE – Germany

Y

Hasan Kürsat Yilmaz, Pursaklar Eurodesk Contact Point, Ankara, TR – Turkey

Z

Stefan Zaborowski, Stiftung SPI, NL Brandenburg, Frankfurt (Oder), DE – Germany

Jason Zammit, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, Santa Venera, MT – Malta

Christine Zeiser, Louise-Schroeder-Schule, Berufsschule, Wiesbaden, DE – Germany

Elena Eichner

Kar

th house"
Sport
Singing
much more





INVITATION

European Conference
Potsdam, 3rd–5th September 2012

InterREGIO

*The Role of Federal States and Regions
in Youth Policy and Youth Work*

Background

In many European states the responsibility for youth work and youth policy is given to and exercised by the regions or departments / federal states. Since they create the legal framework, implement directives established by the central governments, promote youth work and draft youth policies they influence the framework and content of youth policy and youth work.

In the context of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy regions and federal states play a decisive role. We want to discuss how they can fulfil their tasks from the perspective of representatives of regions and federal states? Which added value can be generated by transnational cooperation with other countries and regions? The conference wants to study these issues using a peer-learning approach.

Goals

Main goals of the event:

- Presentation of best practices which enables federal states and regions to create a specific added value by playing an active role in European cooperation in youth policy
- Encouragement of federal states and regions to take an active part in shaping a youth policy with a European dimension

- Giving stakeholders opportunities for mutual exchange and planning of cooperation
- Increasing the countries' and regions' awareness of the EU Youth Strategy and its added value for youth aid

Main Target Group

Main target group of this conference are representatives of the federal states and their European partner regions. A certain number of places is reserved for free application. We strongly

encourage young people/young adults to apply and join us to act as experts on their own behalf.

Organisational Issues and Application

The InterREGIO-conference is organized by JUGEND für Europa – National Agency for the EU programme YOUTH IN ACTION – Transfer Agency for Youth Policy Cooperation in Europe in cooperation with the federal states of Berlin, Brandenburg and Hesse, supported by the Brandenburg office of the Foundation SPI as local supporting organisation.

JUGEND für Europa covers the expenses of the participants for accommodation, meals and participation fee. The travel costs of participants are seen as their contribution and are not refunded by JUGEND für Europa.

Please apply online at:

➔ www.jugendfuereuropa.de/fortbildung/fortbildungskalender/832/

Agenda

Monday, 3rd of September

3.30 pm | Optional: Sightseeing Tour through Park Sanssouci

Address by **Dr. Martina Münch**, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport

Until 5.30 pm | Arrival and Check-in at the hotel

Brandenburg Evening – Getting to know each other in an informal way &

6.30 pm | Reception by the federal state of Brandenburg at Lindenpark

Cultural programme

Tuesday, 4th of September

9.00 am | Panel Discussion: *Between Added Value and Additional Work – the Role of Federal States and Regions in European Youth Policy and Youth Work*

with:

- **Marc Schaefer** (Committee of the Regions, City Council of Vianden, Luxembourg, tbc)
- **Kristina Dambrauskaite** (Ministry for Social Affairs, Lithuania)
- **Florian Fangmann** (Director Centre Français de Berlin)
- **Werner Theisen** (Director Ministry for Work and Social Affairs, Saxony-Anhalt; Bund-Länder working group)
- **Peter Matjašič** (President European Youth Forum, tbc)

Discussion in English with simultaneous interpreting German/English

10.30 am | European partnership

- Partner Regions present their Cooperation in the field of Youth Work
- Moderated plenary session

11.30 am | Information Input

The EU Youth Strategy – New Impetus for Cooperation in Youth Policy and a New Role for Youth Work

Presentation *JUGEND für Europa* – National Agency for the EU programme *YOUTH IN ACTION* – Transfer Agency for Youth Policy Cooperation in Europe

12.30 am | Lunch Break & Marketplace

- Good Practice Examples for Cooperation of Federal States & Regions
- Projects and Organisations present their Work

2.30 pm | Implementation of EU Youth Policy

Who does what & how? To what extent has the EU Youth Strategy already “arrived” at the member states

10 minutes time for a presentation by each national delegation

3.30 pm | Workshops

Topics of the EU Youth Strategy – European Impetus for Youth Participation, Mobility, Transition from School to Work, Social Integration, Recognition on Non-formal Learning etc.

6.00 pm | Diner

7.30 pm | Leisure time in Potsdam

Wednesday, 5th of September

9.00 am | Cooperation

Action Planning: Which new projects and activities can the partner regions envisage? Which new opportunities will be generated if youth work gets a more “European character”?

11.00 am | Closing session *What’s left? Retrospective on the conference by improvisation theatre*

12.00 am | Joint Activity *Planting the tree of European youth work*

12.30 am | Lunch

After Lunch Departure or leisure time in Potsdam

InterRegio is part of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany



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