

# THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND YOUTH POLICY

Support, assistance and resources for  
youth policy development in Member States



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE





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## Introduction

This brochure is directed at representatives of national authorities responsible for youth interested in the standard setting work of the Council of Europe Youth Sector in the field of youth policy. In it, readers can find information about the engagement of the Council of Europe in this sector, including its key principles, such as co-management, which fosters youth participation in decision making, as well as about the Council of Europe's main activities in the area of youth policy. Furthermore, readers can find out more about the package of support measures offered to governments interested in developing and/or evaluating their youth policies, in part or in their entirety, in view of international, specifically Council of Europe, standards and about how to engage with those.





# 1. The Council of Europe and Youth Policy?

## The Council of Europe's youth policy credentials

Since 1972 the Council of Europe, its member states and young people have been working together to build more just, more democratic and safer societies all over Europe. The Council of Europe youth sector has been a pioneer in the field of youth policy, giving youth organisations and governments an equal say in decision making on a range of programme priorities and activities. Popularising this approach, known as co-management, among cooperating governments and organisations over more than 40 years, the Council of Europe youth sector has become a driving force behind youth policy development and youth work in Europe. At the forefront of these efforts has been its committee for inter-governmental cooperation, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and its non-governmental partners, represented in the Advisory Council on Youth. The CDEJ brings together ministries, public administrations and policy makers in charge of youth affairs in the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention.

One of the priority objectives of the CDEJ is to promote and support the development of state youth policies. It has developed a variety of principles and values that should underpin youth policies. Key ingredients of youth policy as promoted by the CDEJ and the Council of Europe include young people's access to human and social rights, learning, inclusion and social cohesion, citizenship and participation, safety, health and well-being.

It is suggested that public youth policies should have the following objectives:<sup>1</sup>

- a. To invest purposefully in young people in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way, wherever possible through an opportunity-focused rather than problem-oriented approach, by elaborating, among other things, standards and instruments of youth policy where necessary;

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<sup>1</sup> These objectives have been drawn from a variety of key Council of Europe texts on Youth Policy, including the terms of reference of the European Steering Group on Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council of Youth (AC), the Compendium on Youth Policy (2012), quoting the final report of the Working Group on Youth Policy Indicators of 2003. For more information please use the QR-code.



- b. To involve young people both in the strategic formulation of youth policies and in eliciting their views about the operational effectiveness of policy implementation;
- c. To create the conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure and enable young people to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in both the labour market and in civil society;
- d. To establish systems for robust data collections both to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth policies and to reveal the extent to which 'policy gaps' exist in relation to effective service delivery to young people from certain social groups, in certain areas or in certain conditions;
- e. To display a commitment to reducing such 'policy gaps' where they demonstrably exist;

Furthermore, the Council of Europe youth policy aims to contribute to the effective mainstreaming of youth policies across the Council of Europe programme of activities and to stimulate co-operation between the governments.

We take a standard setting approach, motivating States to adapt their policies accordingly, based on shared values and political will. This is also expressed in the fact the Council of Europe Youth Sector is charged with organising the Conferences of European Ministers responsible for youth, which take place once every several years and are hosted by individual Member States. These conferences are an important instrument of intergovernmental co-operation as they provide Ministers responsible for youth in the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention with an opportunity to meet on a regular basis to discuss topical policy issues and develop political and strategic orientations for the work of Council of Europe in the youth field. Including the first such conference in 1985 and the most recent in 2012 a total of nine Council of Europe Conferences for Ministers responsible for youth have been organised.<sup>2</sup>

Ministries, public administrations and policy makers often require support to evaluate, develop and implement their national youth policies. To meet such needs as experienced by states engaged in the Council of Europe youth sector, we have developed a programme of activities that can render such support through European exchange, cooperation and knowledge sharing.

<sup>2</sup> Strasbourg, France, 1985; Oslo, Norway, 1988, Lisbon, Portugal, 1990, Vienna, Austria, 1993, Luxembourg, 1995 (first informal conference), Thessaloniki, Greece, 2002, Bucharest, Romania, 2005, Kiev, Ukraine, 2008 and St. Petersburg, Russia, 2012.





The Advisory Council on Youth is the committee of international non-governmental youth organisations and National Youth Councils that participates with equal voting rights as the CDEJ in the co-managed decision making system that decides on the programme and budget of the Council of Europe Youth Sector, formally known as the Joint Council on Youth. For more information please use the QR-code.

The European Cultural Convention's purpose is to develop mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity, to safeguard European culture, to promote national contributions to Europe's common cultural heritage respecting the same fundamental values and to encourage in particular the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the Parties to the Convention. The Convention contributes to concerted action by encouraging cultural activities of European interest. For more information please use the QR-code.

The Council of Europe youth policy addresses children from the age of 10/12 and young people and young adults up to 30. Source: Guidelines for the implementation of the international reviews of national youth policies, Council of Europe Youth Department working document. For more information please use the QR-code.

## A package of youth policy development support measures

The CDEJ and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe jointly promote a programme of support measures for ministries, public administrations and policy makers wishing to adopt the standards of the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy. This comprehensive mechanism aims to prompt mutual advice and support, as well as exchange, between governmental stakeholders in the European youth sector on key issues of youth policy development and evaluation. Through this programme, it is now possible for governments, ministries and policy makers around Europe to receive specialised and targeted support for addressing their youth policy related questions, dilemmas and challenges from peers elsewhere in Europe with relevant experience and expertise.

The package has three main components including multilateral support measures that any state may participate in; bilateral support measures specifically tailored to individual states upon request; and standing resources that can be used by any stakeholder of the youth sector nationally or internationally on their own initiative. Each of these categories includes several key activities. These are developed in more detail in Part 2 of this brochure.



## The added value of working with us

What can interested States parties gain from engaging with the package of youth policy development support measures proposed by the European Steering Committee for Youth with the support of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe?

States parties cooperating with the Youth Department and the CDEJ under the package of support measures will have access to some specific benefits. Among others, such benefits include opportunities for staff and representatives of public authorities to acquire:

**COMPETENCE:** Interested parties stand to gain competence for the further implementation of their ongoing and future youth policy tasks. CDEJ and Youth Department activities under this package of support measures offer governmental stakeholders the opportunity to be exposed to new and innovative methodologies, approaches and concepts, as they are being developed in the international youth policy community of practice.

**EXPERTISE:** The Youth Department and the CDEJ have privileged access to a wide-ranging network of experts all over Europe that possess a variety of different youth policy related knowledge and expertise. Participating in activities under this package of support measures brings specific governmental stakeholders into contact with this network and with experts they would otherwise unlikely be in a position to find by themselves.

**LEGITIMACY:** Working with the Council of Europe, through the CDEJ, underwrites activities of individual governments with international, institutional recognition and legitimation for their work on youth policy, given the Council of Europe's institutional relationships, its history of standard setting, and the moral authority of its rights-based philosophy of youth work and youth policy.

**QUALITY:** The Council of Europe's Youth Department is recognised as standing for quality in youth policy and youth work in the international youth sector and in sectors of wider relevance to youth policy, such as education, lifelong learning, and civil society development. Associating with it and the expertise it can mobilise added value to the youth policy of individual States.



## 2. How can interested State parties engage?

### Getting engaged?

The different activities included in each of the categories of support measures outlined here will be interesting for different kinds of stakeholders in the governmental and non-governmental youth sectors around Europe. So, who is eligible? There are only two basic conditions for engaging with these offers:

- the request for support has to come through the representative of the respective government to the CDEJ, even when the request is for tailored measures to address needs found and expressed at the local or other levels of governance in the country concerned. This is because the package of support measures is addressed to national governments with an interest in the longer term strategic development of their national youth policy, even though these usually reach beyond the national level. Furthermore, national authorities engaging with these measures commit to full participation irrespective of whether the measures address the national level;
- the requesting party has to be located in either a Member State of the Council of Europe or in a State that has signed the European Cultural Convention.

### The Package elements

The package is made up of three main categories of offer and support measure of which Member States of the Council of Europe and States signatory to its Cultural Convention may avail depending on their interests and needs, and to which they can contribute with their specific expertise.

These are:

- Multilateral support measures prepared by the Youth Department and in which any and all Member States and State Signatories to the European Cultural Convention can participate;
- Bilateral support measures specifically tailored to individual Member States/State Signatories to the European Cultural Convention upon request;



- Standing resources that can be used by any Member States/State Signatories to the European Cultural Convention on their own initiative.

Each of these categories includes several key activities. Almost all of these have a peer-to-peer learning component, and pursue the aim of learning across borders and European exchange, knowledge production and transfer.

The different activities are described in more detail including through first hand testimony from previous users. In addition, the modalities for how states can engage with these measures are described.

## 2.1 Multilateral support measures and activities

### What are multilateral support measures and activities?

Multilateral support measures are activities prepared by the Youth Department and offered to interested representatives of public authorities, bodies and institutions in Member States of the Council of Europe and State signatories to the European Cultural Convention. They are organised to foster peer learning and exchange in the Council of Europe Youth Sector. Usually, the CDEJ decides on the priority themes for these activities, individual States offer to host one or more, and the costs are shared between hosting States and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. Multilateral activities are usually open to participation of individuals and authorities based on interest through an application or registration procedure. Some are also organised on request to the Youth Department by a specific State.

#### **A. CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES**

Every year, the Youth Department is charged by the CDEJ with organising a series of capacity building activities, as part of the CDEJ annual programme. The number and type of activities decided upon by the CDEJ on the basis of the budget available and the offers/requests received from member states. The nature of the activities are fairly constant with three main training formats being implemented, as follows:



## **The European University on Youth Policies (Summer University)**

### ***Description:***

The European University on Youth Policies, otherwise known as the Summer University, is organised with the aim to improve the motivation and competence of CDEJ and Advisory Council members, as well as select other civil servants with an interest in the thematic focus on the event, promote Council of Europe standards in youth policy, and for those who participate in the co-management, to get to know the system. Summer Universities are organised to improve participants' understanding of European approaches to youth policy; familiarise participants with the values, objectives, programmes and structures of the Council of Europe and its Youth Department, and of the European Union's youth policy and programmes; familiarise participants with the reality of youth, youth policy and youth work of the host country; exchange knowledge and views on youth policy issues relevant to debates taking place in Council of Europe's youth sector and to facilitate peer advice and networking. Summer Universities are usually organised on a yearly basis, and often in summer (hence the name). These activities are hosted by individual States (sometimes linked to Council of Europe Chairmanships<sup>3</sup>), and have a thematic focus of relevance to both the host and the Council of Europe's youth sector. Over the years, Summer Universities have been organised on Roma youth issues, youth participation, co-management, social inclusion of youth, to mention just a few themes. The programme of a Summer University usually alternates inputs with field visits and practical on site meetings. This methodology helps participants to understand the practical implications of abstract concepts.

### ***Procedures:***

States interested in hosting a Summer University should contact Secretariat of the CDEJ directly or at the following email address: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int). Such requests should come from the representative of the country in the CDEJ, and include a proposal for the theme and main programme priorities of the University, a brief presentation of the proposed venue for the University and three potential dates. In order to ensure proper preparation of the Summer University, States should foresee making their proposal no later than 12 months in advance.

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<sup>3</sup> Estonia (18 May-November 2016); Cyprus (November 2016-May 2017); Czech Republic (May-November 2017); Denmark (November 2017-May 2018); Croatia (May-November 2018)



## **The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres**

### ***Description:***

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres is an opportunity for existing or planned youth centres in Member States and signatory states of the European Cultural Convention to subscribe to the values and youth policy priorities of the Council of Europe. It offers them a means of encouraging quality development on the basis of established standards for educational and policy approaches within the youth sector of the Council of Europe, for international networking and exchange through a dedicated platform, a mechanism for the promotion of quality standards in non-formal education and international youth work, and access to specialised training.

Youth centres are awarded the Quality Label for promoting Council of Europe values, youth policy approaches and youth work standards, after a qualitative assessment process organised by the Youth Department, involving governmental and non-governmental experts from other states. The criteria for this assessment have been established through an extensive process of intergovernmental consensus building in the CDEJ. The community of centres acquiring the label is constantly growing. As a result, the label has developed both social and political recognition around Europe as a sign of excellence in youth work. The costs involved in the acquisition of the label are shared by the Council of Europe Youth Department and the requesting authority and youth centre.

### ***Procedures:***

Youth Centres interested in acquiring the Label should consult the explanatory brochure. It contains all relevant instructions for how to begin the process, and explains all relevant administrative and financial procedures. A list of youth centres already holding the quality label is available on the same webpage.



**”** *Being part of the Quality Label programme started to make changes in Timisoara Youth Centre (FITT) from the very beginning – starting with the internal changes made in order to be able to start become one of the labeled centres. After we got the label we experienced changes in at least three important areas:*

**1 – Local/national cooperation** – public authorities became more open for cooperation with us, with the result that we became part of the National Consultative Body to the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Romania. Trust in our organisation had increased, so we have an easier time start cooperation with partners in both in Timisoara, and in Romania.

**2 – International cooperation** – we started to receive requests to act as partners in different projects, we noticed that we are selected to be partners in applications more often, because our work is validated by an external body. We are now also asked to participate as experts in the field of youth and youth policies by universities or different bodies. We received requests from Athena and Bucharest to help them to develop their own municipal youth centres and have begun the process.

**3 – Educational programme development** – having this trust accorded by Council of Europe we managed to persuade West University of Timisoara to start a formal educational programme for youth workers together with the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Taking part in the Quality Label programme and facing the challenge to acquire the label had a big impact on the activities of our youth centre and especially on our staff. We learned about our strengths, but more importantly how to improve our work. Since then we developed internal procedures and standards for the work of our Centre.. This not only increased our quality of the work, but also made us more efficient. Having the label is a prestige for us, but also a positive pressure to evolve. Now we are considered as an example of how youth work should be done in Romania.

*Mihai Adrian VILCEA, Vice President  
Timis County Youth Foundation / Fundația Județeană pentru Tineret Timiș*



## **Seminars**

### **Description:**

The Youth Department organises some other multilateral activities relevant to representatives of public authorities interested in youth and youth policy in Europe. These are often 'one-off' seminars and activities to explore specific issues and priorities of the CDEJ in a given period. Sometimes, these activities are organised in or by States at the request of the CDEJ, with the programmatic and/or financial support of the Youth Department. Activities of this kind are advertised on a regular basis on the following website <http://www.coe.int/youth> They are generally organised on the principle of open participation through an online application or registration procedure.

### **Procedures:**

States wishing to co-organise such an activity should contact the Secretariat of the CDEJ at the following email address: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int) with a proposal for the main theme and programme elements of the activity, providing a rationale for how it fits with the youth sector priorities of the requesting State. Costs for such activities are usually shared between the Council of Europe and the inviting State.

## **Secondments and traineeships**

### **Description:**

Staff of governmental authorities can also develop their capacity by taking up a period of service at the Council of Europe's Youth Department through a secondment or traineeship at the European Youth Centre the European Youth Foundation, in the Education and Training Division or in the Youth Policy Division in Strasbourg, France or at the European Youth Centre in Budapest, Hungary.

*Secondments:* The Council of Europe regularly advertises positions to be filled by nationals of a given country, already employed in public service. These are known as secondments. Seconded staff are often mid-career professionals. Seconded experts are fully integrated into the functioning of the Youth Department as full members of staff. They have the opportunity to develop an understanding of the European perspective promoted by the Council of Europe.

*Traineeships:* For more junior professionals, the Youth Department offers the opportunity to apply for a traineeship. Over a period of professional service of three to six months at





one of the European Youth Centres, or with the European Youth Foundation, trainees learn about the Council of Europe approach to youth policy and youth work. Trainees benefit from on the job training and supervision by an experienced member of staff.

**Procedures:**

To find out more about the benefits of secondments and traineeships and how to apply for available positions, consult the website of the Department for Human Resources at <http://www.coe.int/en/web/jobs>

**B. OTHER MULTILATERAL ACTIVITIES**

**The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card**

A Partial Agreement allows member States to join or abstain from a certain activity advocated by other member States. A Partial Agreement has its own budget and its own working methods which are determined only by its members. The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card was set up in 1991 following the Council of Europe Conference of ministers responsible for youth in Lisbon, Portugal, which advocated for an increase in youth mobility. The aims of this Partial Agreement are:

- to facilitate youth mobility as well youth access to the various goods and services necessary for their personal and cultural development through a Youth Card scheme;
- to foster the development of better youth policies with and for member governments.

Anyone under the age of 30 can become a youth card-holder – a young person does not need to be a student or a resident of a European country. Youth cards provide access of young people – residents or travellers – to advice, discounts and benefits in the fields of mobility, accommodation, culture, language courses and services and products both on- and off-line. Youth cards are issued by national youth card organisations.

The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) works to ensure that the Youth Card Organisations are providing quality services to young people.

The second goal caters to the interests and needs of governments on youth mobility and youth card issues. A work programme is promoted to generate and mobilise knowledge



on these issues, share best practices and develop improved policy solutions for this work field. Best practice publications and recommendations for specific actions to member states and EYCA Members member organisations are the main outputs of the work programme. The work programme is open to states outside the Partial Agreement at their own expense. Participation of member states is fully covered.

**Procedures:**

The procedures for joining the Partial Agreement differ according to whether a State is already a member of the Council of Europe and a party to the European Cultural Convention.

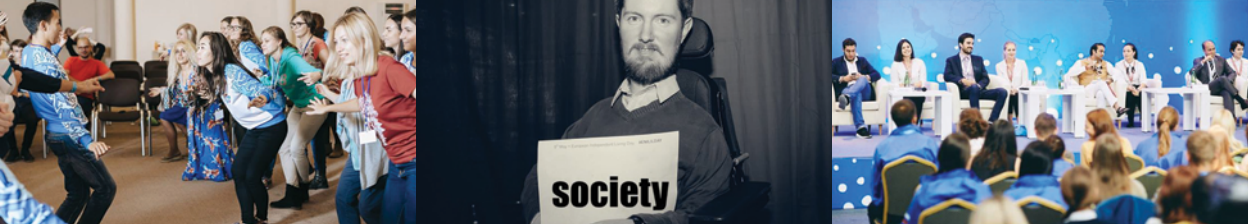
*For member states of the Council of Europe and states party to the European Cultural Convention:* Member states may join the Partial Agreement at any moment by simply making a declaration to this effect to the Secretary General. This consists in sending an official letter or a verbal note from the Minister of Foreign Affairs or from the Permanent

Representative of the country to the Council of Europe addressed to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

*For states outside the Council of Europe and not party to the European Cultural Convention:* On a proposal by the European Youth Card Association and the Board of Co-ordination of the Partial Agreement, the Committee of Ministers may invite any non-member State of the Council of Europe to join the Partial Agreement, following the consultation of any other non-member states already participating.

For more information on initiating an application for membership, please send a request to the following email address: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)

The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) is a non-profit organisation that represents 37 youth card organisations in 35 countries across Europe. All are committed to promoting youth mobility and active citizenship to more than 6 million cardholders. EYCA has one member organisation in every country/territory where it is represented; this member develops the youth card and provides young people access to discounts and benefits in the fields of mobility, accommodation, culture, services and products. EYCA member organisations are NGOs and private foundations, as well as state and public institutions and social benefit enterprises. The highest governing body is the General Assembly, which elects ten members of the Board and the President. For more information please use the QR-code.



**”** *The Partial Agreement has been very helpful, as we got in touch with the Ministry of Youth and Sport. It brings us more visibility and credibility on the national level, as we act in the framework of this internationally recognised structure, which takes on board both youth card and governmental representatives. Vice versa, it enables us to bring the issues of youth mobility from the local and national directly to the international level, providing space for knowledge exchange and networking leading to joint initiatives.*

*Gazela Pudar Draško, Evropski omladinski centar (EOC)  
EYCA member organisation in Serbia*

**”** *European Youth Card services are on the ground with young people and this proximity allows the youth card to respond to young people’s needs, including on employment issues. This programme has created opportunities for meaningful experience and knowledge sharing between professionals and young people.*

*Gordon, Luxembourg*

**”** *The European Youth Card was an important tool to me from the beginning. Through the card I received discounts and I was provided with an insurance, which made everyday life much easier since I had to travel a lot. I cannot imagine working without this card. I can use it almost anywhere!*

*Tytus, Poland*



## 2.2 Bilateral support measures and activities

### What are bilateral support measures and activities?

Bilateral support measures are activities specifically tailored to the needs and requests for support in the area of youth policy by (mostly governmental) actors of the youth sectors in individual States. They are offered to assist public institutions, especially governmental authorities with responsibility for youth issues, to address their youth policy tasks and challenges.<sup>4</sup> Usually, a Member State or a State signatory to the European Cultural Convention will approach the Secretariat responsible for youth policy matters at the Youth Department to initiate this kind of activity. Some of these activities are quite involved, and demand extensive time and financial commitment from both the requesting State and from the Youth Department. They are designed specifically for certain target groups and categories of participant in mind, considering the local context and needs of the requesting state.

### Which are the support measures and activities?

#### A. CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Seminars, training courses or study visits can be organised in line with the needs of the requesting member state. The Youth Department developed the format of 50/50 activities with participants from both the governmental and non-governmental sectors. These activities have proven most apt to develop common solutions and to produce sustainable results.

#### '50/50' training activities

##### **Description:**

The '50/50' training activities are designed to develop the competence of youth sector professionals, ranging from civil servants responsible for youth policy implementation at national through local levels, to youth-led and other NGOs delivering youth work

<sup>4</sup> Here, 'governmental authorities' refers to members of the CDEJ, representatives of the Ministry in charge of Youth, representatives of the Permanent Representations of member states to the Council of Europe, or any other representatives of national authorities of Member States or of State Signatories to the European Cultural Convention.



and services to young people, for cooperation and partnership in the service of youth policy implementation. The '50/50' training concept is based on the understanding that effective youth policy needs to include all actors and stakeholders, notably public authorities (national and regional and/or local) with competences in youth policy and youth organisations or other structures of youth representation and participation. And as the name '50/50' suggests, the course concept requires the participation of 50% governmental and 50% non-governmental representatives.

The essential features of the '50/50' training activities is that every aspect of the seminar programme should support dialogue, bringing to the table the multiple perspectives of all stakeholders of the youth sector on youth issues and youth policy implementation realities, including the challenges of democratic and inclusive decision-making, responsibilities of public policy makers and authorities delivering policy and accountability mechanisms. The '50/50' concept can be applied to different activity formats, ranging from longer training courses with several phases to short or targeted capacity building seminars.

### **Procedures:**

'50/50' training activities take place in the requesting country, and are co-organised between the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and the national authorities responsible for youth. The national authorities commit to the recruitment of both governmental and non-governmental participants and to working with any recommendations resulting from the dialogue between them. The costs for '50/50' training activities are shared by the Council of Europe and the requesting country, and depend on the desired format, duration and scale of the capacity building foreseen. Requests to organise a '50/50' training activity should be addressed to [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int) no later than February and ideally 12 full months before the desired activity is supposed to take place. The request should include a strategic rationale for why specifically a '50/50' training activity would support youth policy development and implementation in the country concerned and what the national authorities hope to be able to do on youth policy implementation as a result of the activity.



**”** The ‘50-50’ seminar helped in building bridges between Albanian stakeholders in the youth field. In particular, it improved the collaboration between NGO youth leaders and public authorities dealing with youth policies. The National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020 marks an important turning point in Albanian youth policy and the ‘50/50’ seminar undoubtedly provided an opportunity for mutual learning and dialogue among participants to develop a coherent approach to its implementation. It also showed new ways of involving youngsters across the country in activities and programmes of the National Youth Service, how to increase their capacities, and how mobilise them as real agents of change.

*Brisida Sula, Program Specialist, National Youth Service, Albania.*

**”** When selected for the Long Term Training Course for Trainers I already thought of myself as an experienced trainer and youth worker, but at the start of the course we participants felt alien! We couldn’t find any common language to discuss what we had been doing, let alone on how to measure the impact of our work. We went through this Training for Trainers in Non-Formal Education and it was like magic, like a childhood birthday party when you get presents all day long. But, for us it was a whole year of personal attainment through self-development, doubt and hard work. We received the gifts of knowledge, skills, evaluation, mentorship and team support. The training changed our work and, moreover, provided us with a lot of very important networking connections, institutional support, a very important feeling that we are not alone in the work we do. It changed my life crucially.

*Polina Dubina, Head of the International Programme for Children and Youth ‘Jey Camp’, Moscow, Russian Federation.*



**” I was honoured to be accepted for the Training seminar for specialists from state, regional and local authorities and representatives of non-governmental organisations working with young people in the Russian Federation (“50/50 training”) on the access of young people to social rights in May 2016 at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. The training seminar was organised by the Council of Europe’s Youth Department and the National Youth Council of Russia. First of all, I should say that this project was an eye-opener for me. I found out about social rights and how different NGOs and policy-makers approach them in their work. I learned that there is an agenda for the achievement of social rights, but as a result of the lack of dialogue between NGOs and policy-makers, activities are not coordinated. The ‘50/50’ training seminar became a unique platform for establishing communication and cooperation. I also discovered Human Rights Education. It is an approach that I will certainly promote through my youth work and in the youth policy development in my region.**

*Yulia Koroleva, Head of ‘Youth Centre Motherland’ (municipal organisation) and of the Tula Regional Branch of the ‘Russian Youth Union’, Russian Federation*



## **B. RAPID RESPONSE**

### ***Description:***

As its name suggests, this support measure is intended as a 'quick and easy fix' to a specific question or set of questions. Governmental authorities and other actor of the youth sector often have questions regarding youth policy issues for which they find it challenging to find an answer. They might be in the process of establishing new programmes, procedures, legislative measures or any youth policy related activity, for example, establishing a new financing system for youth NGOs, or revising the country's current youth law, or establishing a qualification process for youth workers, to name just a few. Sometimes they need support to find partners from which they can ask advice and expertise. Stakeholders of the youth sector can and do benefit from learning about the experiences of other countries represented in the CDEJ that have already had success in developing similar initiatives. As a response to any such request for assistance or advice, the Youth Department will send the request to the members of the CDEJ and relevant specialised networks for information and examples of good practice. The Secretariat commits to collating all responses received or to providing its own answer as appropriate.

### ***Procedures:***

Requests of this kind should be sent to the following email address [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int). Requests will be addressed as soon as possible. Given that the Secretariat has to contact the CDEJ and other networks this means requesting parties can expect a response within approximately 2 weeks.

## **C. PEER-ADVICE AND PEER-COACHING**

### ***Description:***

Governments often need more than a rapid response to address their youth policy challenges, especially in the phases of youth policy development and evaluation, and when developing specific programmes. The Youth Department will accept requests for advice and expertise in a specific youth policy field over a longer period of time (12 months plus). The Youth Department will help a requesting country to develop a support process involving 2-3 other countries that can provide relevant advice over a longer period of time





for their specific issue. Depending on the issue, this advice might be provided by CDEJ members themselves or by national experts nominated by the CDEJ members involved in the process. The Youth Department commits to identifying the two to three countries that are best placed to support the requesting party, to set up and co-ordinate the process.

In principle, the requesting country will be responsible for all costs incurred for the peer-advice/coaching process - i.e. any sending or receiving costs. As a rule, experts involved in such peer-advice/coaching processes will be civil servants/national governmental experts, and therefore fees for their involvement are not foreseen. Upon request, the Youth Department can assist financially with the coverage of international travel costs and insurance for national experts that have to travel to the requesting country to conduct peer-advice/peer-coaching processes.

### **Procedures:**

Requests for peer-advice/peer-coaching processes should be addressed to: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int). Such requests should include a rationale for the process, the thematic field and description of the issue/s of concern to the authorities making the request. Should financial support be required, a complete budget of the costs that are expected to be involved should be presented with the request. There is no specific deadline for presenting such requests, and all requests will receive feedback including follow-up steps foreseen within three to four weeks. In the case of requests requiring financial support, the Bureau of the CDEJ will be asked to make an assessment of need and to approve requests on a rolling basis. Requesting parties should be aware that it can take up to 6 weeks to set up peer-advice/coaching processes, and up to 3 months for processes which are receiving financial support.

## **D. YOUTH POLICY ADVISORY MISSIONS**

### **Description:**

Sometimes the Council of Europe and its international experts are best placed to provide the expertise and advice that a government requires regarding youth policy. In such cases, the Youth Department can be asked to organise a youth policy advisory mission. A youth policy advisory mission provides the requesting country with an assessment of their youth policy situation relative to a specific developmental question



or issue of concern. The Youth Department establishes a team of up to maximum five independent experts with special expertise in relevant issues, and organises one or maximum two short visits to the country to conduct the assessment and prepare their recommendations in line with accepted norms and standards current in the Council of Europe Youth Sector. The individual expert or team conducting the assessment is always accompanied and supported by at least one representative of the requesting national authority with relevant language and thematic expertise. This would usually be the civil servant with responsibility for following up the recommendations of the youth policy advisory mission. The result of the process is a concise report in English or French containing concrete and practical recommendations pertinent to the issues in youth policy development that the country is concerned about, and that can be followed up by the authorities in the immediate and medium terms. The reports can be made public or be treated confidentially according to the wish of the requesting authority. The CDEJ might request a report on the progress made in implementing the recommendations made by the advisory mission approximately 12 months after its completion.

**Procedures:**

Requests for youth policy advisory missions should be addressed to: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int). Such requests should include a rationale for the request, the specific thematic field and description of the issue/s of concern to the authorities making the request. There is no specific deadline for presenting such requests, and the Bureau of the CDEJ will be asked to approve requests on a rolling basis. Requesting parties should be aware that it can take up to 3 months to set up a youth policy advisory mission. Costs for youth policy advisory missions are shared between the Youth Department and the requesting State. The Youth Department covers all 'international' costs (international team of experts, fees, insurance and travel expenses, etc), while the requesting State covers all 'local' costs (board and lodging for the international team while in the country, travel within the country, translation for meetings and documents, etc).



**”** *I had the possibility to invite a Council of Europe international team to visit Helsinki for a youth policy advisory mission. The aim of the visit was to contribute to the revision of the Finnish Youth Act. The process was flexible and designed to meet our needs and wishes. The two intensive days that we worked together with the team gave us a valuable external view on some of the topics and helped us to identify some areas that needed further consideration. The process was very open, very constructive and cost-effective. I would warmly recommend other member states to use this instrument and the expertise of the Council of Europe.*

*Seija Astala, Member of the CDEJ, Finland*

## **E. INDEPENDENT EXPERTISE OR ASSESSMENT**

### ***Description:***

Sometimes a government or governmental institution requires specific advice in the development of a new programmatic document, strategy or youth related piece of legislation. To respond to such needs, the Youth Department can commission an assessment by an independent expert on said document at an early stage of its development to ensure that international perspectives and standards can be effectively taken into account as the document is developed. In such cases, the Youth Department identifies a suitably qualified independent international expert to conduct an assessment of the document concerned in line with a mutually agreed upon framework for analysis considering international standards and perspectives current in the Council of Europe Youth Sector. The expert develops their assessment based on textual analysis, and should that be necessary, may be requested to conduct some remote discussions with key stakeholders to gain additional understanding of context. The development of an expertise takes place in English or French. The requesting State commits to ensuring that the expert receives all relevant documentation and can conduct stakeholder discussions in either of those languages. Requesting States are encouraged to publish the expertise, to discuss its contents in a public hearing with key local youth sector stakeholders and make relevant amendments to the document before its adoption. The CDEJ will request a report on how the recommendations contained in the expertise have influenced the evolution of the document.



### **Procedures:**

Requests for such an expertise should be submitted in writing by a member of the CDEJ to the following email address: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int). The request should include a rationale for the request, a description of the stage of development of the document concerned, and of the issue/s of concern to the authorities making the request. However, any representative of a governmental body or agency that requires assistance with their policy document, strategy or legislation can make such a request through their representative in the CDEJ. Requests should be made at the earliest stages of the development of the document concerned (for example, 1st complete draft). This is a basic requirement for the commissioning of the expertise by the Youth Department. Documents that are shortly up for adoption or that have already been adopted will not be eligible for this kind of support. The Council of Europe will cover all costs related to the commissioning of the expertise (usually, the fees for work of the expert). The CDEJ Bureau will decide on a rolling basis which requests can be accepted and financed. A maximum of five such requests can be financed in any given budgetary year. Requesting parties should be aware that it can take up to four weeks to find and arrange for such an expertise. Nevertheless, the Secretariat commits to acknowledging receipt and outlining the next steps and timetable for decision making as soon as possible, and within no more than 2 weeks.

## **F. INTERNATIONAL REVIEWS OF NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES**

An international review of national youth policy is the most complex and comprehensive of measures fostering youth policy evaluation and development available under this package. Undertaken this process involves wide ranging commitment, from political to financial, for both the requesting country and the Council of Europe

The main milestones include the preparation of a national report about the youth policy and youth situation in the country, an expert team assessment of the report followed up with up to two intensive field visits around the country to study the particular perspectives, the finalisation of the international report further to input from the requesting government, and its presentation at a public hearing.



The Youth Department of the Council of Europe has been implementing the international reviews of national youth policies. An international review of a national youth policy takes place at the request of any States party, with the following objectives:

- to receive advice on its national youth policy;
- to understand ways in which it can approximate the youth policy standards of the Council of Europe;
- to gain an impartial, international and comparative view on specific how its youth policy functions within a wider European perspective.

These comprehensive studies have been conducted; the Council of Europe has been able to identify components that contribute to the development of a harmonised approach to youth policy across Europe and to gain knowledge and expertise for the development and implementation of its own youth policy and programmes.

Furthermore, it is expected that the requesting country shall implement part or all of the recommendations contained in the review and make public their progress in that relation through a progress report to the CDEJ three years after its completion. In addition, further support measures to help the country reviewed to implement the recommendations of the review teams can be considered, including post-review expert visits, the development of youth policy strategies and actions plans or capacity building and training activities. The experience and methodology of the international youth policy review can be adapted to other contexts than just the national. Hence, interested States parties can also request other formats of international review:

### ***International reviews on a specific youth policy issue***

To develop a format of international reviews of national youth policies focusing on one specific youth policy issue such as: youth participation and citizenship, equal opportunities/gender equality, etc. A policy review process on child and youth participation was developed in 2009 which elaborates on a methodology which allows for a high degree of involvement/commitment of key stakeholders at national level. This methodology could be used as a basis for outlining this option in the publication.



### ***International reviews of federal youth policies***

To develop a format for international reviews of youth policies taking into consideration the specific situations of federal states where youth policy is of the competence of regional authorities. Belgium was the first federal country to be subject to an international review in 2010-2011 and the methodology for this country's review had to be significantly adapted. The model developed for the Belgian evaluation could be used as a basis to develop the option for reviewing federal youth policies.

### ***International reviews at sub-regional level***

The possibility of implementing a format of international reviews carried out at Sub-regional level (e.g. the Baltic States, the Caucasus region, the Benelux, the Nordic countries, etc.) was evoked in previous discussions. Such reviews, the methodology of which would need further thought could perhaps be envisaged, providing there is a clear interest for the countries involved to carry out such reviews as well as a relevance for the Council of Europe in its approach to youth policy.

### ***Procedures:***

Requests for international reviews should be addressed to: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int). Such requests should be made by the Minister responsible for youth affairs and are presented to the CDEJ for approval. Given the extent of planning, organisation and budget commitment required for such an undertaking, requests including a rationale for the exercise, should be received no later than 1 February, a full 12 months before the requesting country wishes to begin the international review. This time frame also ensures the requesting country has enough time to prepare the national report and the political commitment to follow up on the recommendations. An international review represents a significant commitment of time and resources for both the requesting country and the Council of Europe. The requesting party is responsible for covering the costs for the preparation of the national review and the costs for the international review are shared by the requesting country and the Council of Europe (e.g. local costs for the international team's field visits are covered by the requesting country and the Council of Europe covers the fees and international travel costs).



**”** *In the framework of the review of youth policy in Belgium and the three Communities by an international team of the Council of Europe, experts visited youth policy institutions and youth work projects around the country. The report ‘C’est plus compliqué que ça’ (It’s more complicated than it might appear’), which was adopted in 2012 by the Joint Council on Youth reflected very well youth work and youth policy in Belgium and its three Communities. It also provided meaningful suggestions for the improvement of youth policy. The international expert team demonstrated genuine interest in the topic and the different perspectives of researchers, youth policy makers and youth work institutions were of added value to the process. The Flemish, the French and the German-speaking Communities welcome(d) very much this outside view on their policies.*

*Laurence Hermand, Armand Meys & Jan Vanhee,  
members of the CDEJ for the three Communities of Belgium*

**”** *To reform youth policy in Ukraine we have to develop, create and implement new mechanisms for youth participation and youth mobility, education for human rights and non-discrimination. The Council of Europe youth sector provided us with best practices and practical tools in those areas. The most important thing we have gained from the cooperation with the Council of Europe youth sector is experience, knowledge and understanding of youth involvement in the decision-making process. Council of Europe instruments facilitate our work and make the learning process an easier and more pleasurable process.*

*Irina Belyaeva, Member of the CDEJ for Ukraine*



## G. STUDY VISITS

### **Description:**

Study visits to explore and get to know the Council of Europe institutions can be organised for small groups of youth experts and youth workers. They provide the opportunity to learn about the youth sector's instruments, policies and programmes and other relevant Council of Europe activities. Such visits are usually organised over two to three working days, depending on the theme and the intensity of the programme proposed. The theme of study visits can be discussed with the Secretariat of the Youth Department. The programme is discussed with the CDEJ member of the country organising the study visit. Usually, study visits include such activities as meetings and consultations with staff and political representatives of the Council of Europe, visits of the European Youth Centre and the European Court on Human Rights.

### **Procedure:**

CDEJ members wishing to organise a study visit to the Council of Europe should contact the CDEJ Secretariat at [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int), preferably well in advance. The sharing of costs for study visits is negotiated on a case-by-case basis.





## 2.3 Standing resources

### What are standing resources?

The Council of Europe Youth Department and the CDEJ have developed a series of permanent open access resources on and around youth policy issues, of which any interested party, ranging from individuals to institutions, can avail free of charge.

### The Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of Youth

The EU-CoE youth partnership stems from the close relations that the Council of Europe and the European Commission have developed in the youth field over the years since 1998. The overall goal is to foster synergies between the youth-oriented activities of the two institutions. The specific themes are participation/citizenship, social inclusion, recognition and quality of youth work. The partnership has four main objectives:

1. 'Better knowledge' – a 'think tank' function to establish a clear picture of current and upcoming challenges (including the economic crisis and access to the labour market) and trends in participation for all young people, based on research evidence, sociological and statistical analysis and input from within and beyond the youth sector;
2. 'Promotion of youth work' – advocacy regarding the contribution of youth work to youth participation, including innovative youth work, partnerships, outreach, learning mobility and recognition of youth work;
3. 'Co-operation with a regional focus' – promotion of young people's participation through peer learning and capacity-building in specific European and neighbourhood regions: Eastern Europe and Caucasus, South-East Europe (Western Balkans), South Mediterranean within the specific themes;
4. 'Communication and information' – dissemination of results of activities among a wider audience.



### **The European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYC)**

As part of the action within the Council of Europe's Partnership with the European Commission on Youth, the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC) has been developed an on-line database to provide the youth sector with a single access point to reliable knowledge and information about young people's situation across Europe. EKCYC aims at enhancing knowledge transfers between the fields of research, policy and practice through the collection and dissemination of information about youth policy, research and practice in Europe and beyond. It includes sections on the situations of young people and youth policies of individual countries, specific youth policy topics of interest to both the Council of Europe and the European Commission, a searchable online library of documents relevant to youth policy, a database of good practices and a glossary of youth and youth policy definitions. Linked to EKCYC is a network of national correspondents, who are youth policy specialists responsible for collecting national data.

### **The Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR)**

PEYR is a unique initiative on the European level and it represents a contribution of both the Council of Europe and the European Commission to evidence based policy-making in the field of youth. The PEYR network consists of researchers and experts from across Europe who possess a wide range of expertise in different policy areas connected to youth. PEYR members have been selected on the basis of open calls issued periodically. PEYR is used by both the European Commission and the Council of Europe, supports the work of their partnership on youth, but is also open to any other interested stakeholder as a source of expertise and knowledge on youth. Besides providing expertise on demand, PEYR members also meet once a year to discuss broader issues connected to youth research and provide input to the two partner institutions.



## Youth information and counselling

The delivery of youth information is a central function of youth work and shares its key values: it is open to all young people and acts in their interest by covering issues that matter to them and by providing a large spectrum of activities. Youth information builds on the fact that it is not possible to make a sound decision without being informed about one's options and opportunities. In this context, youth information and counselling services provide young people with guidance and support, which will help them lead their choices constructively, develop critical-thinking and enhance their autonomous decision-making.

The Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) is an instrument to support member states in setting up and running quality youth information services. ERYICA organises regular training activities for professionals and organisations involved in youth information and in youth work. Since 1997, many activities, studies and manuals have been implemented and produced in the framework of the Council of Europe cooperation with ERYICA. Among them, it is worth highlighting the Youth Information Starter Kit, the Compendium on setting up national youth information and counselling structures, the CDEJ summer university on youth and information, or the regional seminar to support the development of youth information in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. More recently, the Partnership is joining efforts to develop resources for youth workers and youth information workers to better understand the phenomenon of youth radicalisation and violent extremism. The focus is on exploring the preventative role that youth information can play in supporting young people's critical-thinking and information/media literacy. It could be envisaged continuing the work in this area in light of the Council of Europe Action Plan to fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism.



ERYICA member organisations currently come from 26 of the Council of Europe member states<sup>5</sup> and an increased cooperation with ERYICA could be sought in terms of training opportunities to develop youth information services and increasing the number of member organisation from other Council of Europe states to enhance the quality of youth information at large. Member states and youth information providers could turn to the Youth Department and/or ERYICA to request support and assistance in setting up quality youth information services.

ERYICA was established to implement Council of Europe Recommendation (90)7 on information and counselling for young people in Europe. For more information please use the QR-code.

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5 At the time of writing in September 2016 Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Portugal, Switzerland, United Kingdom



### 3. Useful contacts

#### Council of Europe Youth Department

[www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth)

#### Youth Policy Division

Agora

1, Quai Jacoutot

F- 67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Email: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)

Tel + 33 3 90 21 52 54

#### European Youth Centre Strasbourg

30, rue Pierre de Coubertin

F-67000 Strasbourg

Email: [reception.eycs@coe.int](mailto:reception.eycs@coe.int)

Tel + 33 3 88 41 23 00

#### European Youth Centre Budapest

Zivatar utca 1-3

H-1024 Budapest

Email: [eycb.secretariat@coe.int](mailto:eycb.secretariat@coe.int)

Tel + 36 1 212 40 78

#### European Youth Foundation

30, rue Pierre de Coubertin

F-67000 Strasbourg

Email: [eyf@coe.int](mailto:eyf@coe.int)

Tel + 33 3 88 41 20 19





# The Council of Europe and youth policy

## Support, assistance and resources for youth policy development in Member States

This brochure is directed at representatives of national authorities responsible for youth interested in the standard setting work of the Council of Europe Youth Sector in the field of youth policy. In it, readers can find information about the engagement of the Council of Europe in this sector, including its key principles, such as co-management, which fosters youth participation in decision making, as well as about the Council of Europe's main activities in the area of youth policy. Furthermore, readers can find out more about the package of support measures offered to governments interested in developing and/or evaluating their youth policies, in part or in their entirety, in view of international, specifically Council of Europe, standards and about how to engage with those.

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[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

