

SHADOW REPORT ON YOUTH POLICY

A youth perspective



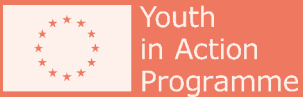
european
youth forum

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Foreword

*From Johanna Nyman
President of the European Youth Forum*



Youth policy has been a key tool to improve the lives of Europe's young people over the past years. However in 2015, young people still remain a group at great risk of marginalisation, facing specific challenges in becoming economically and socially autonomous. Many young people do not have access to their rights and youth is the age group that has been hit the hardest by the economic crisis and the cuts in social investment. Youth unemployment remains the default option for many young people who cannot access their rights to quality jobs, education or autonomy. Moreover, we cannot yet grasp the long-term consequences of a generation of young people lacking economic and social inclusion for our future and for our demographically rapidly changing societies. The truth is that young people are an untapped resource and with the right investments and with access to their rights, young people will contribute to our societies in an extraordinary way.

For this to happen, Youth Policy has to fulfil its role by coherently addressing issues and urgently achieving expected results. To do so, a holistic and cross-sectoral approach is needed, that brings together education, economic and social policies at the EU and national levels. Moreover, to match the real needs and respect the rights of young people, youth policies must be participatory across all stages. The report reveals that youth organisations as representatives of young people, are still not systematically involved in youth policy making. This is particularly striking for policies that concern young people but that are coordinated outside the youth sector (employment, health, education...). Young people and youth organisations have solutions and opinions to contribute with and a huge potential to be part of the change we want to achieve together.

We are well aware that political pressures demand quick solutions and swift results. However, sustainable solutions require long-term strategies. Quickly changing political priorities must not jeopardise quality work and the necessary time-investment to achieve results. This applies in particular to youth work and the work of youth organisations. We need to focus on long-term solutions that tackle the broader issues and challenges of young people, empowering them to become an active part of a more cohesive society.

Therefore, we welcome the efforts made through the EU Youth Strategy and the Youth Report to provide multi-annual frameworks for better youth policies across Europe.

Another element of successful youth policy is that it tackles both the individual young person and the environmental conditions. Indeed empowered young people need a youth-friendly society as much as society needs the positive contribution of youth.

I would like to invite youth-policy makers at all levels to have a close look at this report in order to guide their actions and implement suggested improvements. By making young people's voice heard through this report, we want to ensure that youth can positively contribute to policies that affect them, being actors of the positive change which we can best achieve together.

INTRODUCTION

In view of its 2015 Youth Report, the European Commission launched a broad and detailed consultation across Member States to gather a *'full picture of the situation of young people in Europe and how policy-makers have addressed it across all the 8 fields of action in the period 2013-2015'*. Member States were encouraged to consult young people when submitting their answers. However, the participation of young people mainly through the involvement of National Youth Councils has not been systematic and therefore there is a risk that the voice and views of young people may not have clearly been reflected. Our survey shows that **57% of the relevant youth organisations consider that their expertise has not sufficiently been taken into account.**

This is why the European Youth Forum has decided to launch its own extensive consultation open to National Youth Councils (NYCs) and International Non-governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs), in order to ensure that they can express themselves, share their experience and expertise. In total 22 National Youth Councils from EU Member States, 5 NYCs from non EU Member States and 9 INGYOs¹ have participated. We believe that young people, as a target of the EU Youth Strategy, but also as actors of its implementation, should be part of the evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and that their perspective on the development of EU and national youth policies should be included and explored in detail as part of this process.

Through this shadow report, we aim to ensure that the voice and views of young people are heard and that they can feed into the youth policy making at European and national levels. We want to provide a different but complementary perspective to the Youth Report prepared by the European Commission. This shadow report aims to (1) bringing a critical view on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, pointing out successes as well as

¹ EU National Youth Councils participating: Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium (francophone), UK, Denmark, Sweden, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Austria, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Finland, Bulgaria, Romania, the Netherlands, Cyprus
Non-EU National Youth Councils participating: Russia, FYROM, Serbia, Belarus, Moldova
INGYOs participating: EEE-YFU, TEJO, WOSM, CESI-Youth, JECI-MIEC, EUDY, Active, ECYC, OBESSU.

weaknesses and to (2) analyse the role played by youth actors at national level (both in advocating for youth rights and in carrying out activities at grassroots level).

As youth policies are developed at national level, where the core competences remain, the European Union has a limited degree of manoeuvre. However, the EU, through the EU Youth Strategy, has developed a clear vision and proposes to address young people in a comprehensive manner.

For the European Youth Forum, youth policy should be aimed at young people and needs to stem from their rights. Its aim is to improve the living, learning and working conditions and participation of young people, and to provide a secure environment to develop as individuals and as part of a bigger community. The European Youth Forum has identified the following as three main principles of youth policy:

Youth policy must be participative and involve young people in its design, implementation and evaluation through sustainable participative mechanisms.

Youth policy must be rights-based, namely it must consider young people as rights-holders and provide a framework that covers the rights of all young people.

Youth policy must be cross-sectoral, where coherent and co-ordinated efforts across different policy and administration sectors are ensured through integrated actions.

Even though those principles are acknowledged by most of the Member States and the European institutions, this report highlights that more can and needs to be done in order to ensure that those principles are translated into action and are fully respected. Youth organisations are key actors in the development, implementation and evaluation of youth policies. We want youth organisations to contribute more and better to youth policy development in order to obtain more relevant, effective and accurate policies for young people.

Our consultation and outreach has highlighted the following:

In terms of the EU youth policy:

- The framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) provides guidelines and support to National Youth Councils, however INGYOs assess that it had a limited impact. In order to strengthen the potential of the cooperation framework, the Open Method of Coordination should have measurable benchmarks and Member States should propose action plans to outline how they can better adapt the European objectives at national level.
- Cross-sectoral cooperation can still be improved, notably through better coordination of different strategies and enhanced coordination of youth policies across sectors.
- There should be an assessment of the Structured Dialogue with young people's impact on EU and national policies.

In terms of national youth policy:

- The Youth Forum asks Member States and the EU to implement a clause for “impact assessments” of all policies that might have an impact on young people.
- National Youth policies must be more consistently built on a rights-based perspective. Employment remains a priority, and for NYCs, further efforts must be done to successfully implement the Youth Guarantee in all Member States.
- 40% of the National Youth Councils rate the quality of the internships offered in their country as low and quality internships and investment in entrepreneurship education are seen as two key measures to support young people's transition from education to employment.
- Regarding civic and social rights, National Youth Councils point out that more effort must be made to ensure the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Also the involvement of youth organisations should be enhanced, as only 36% of the National Youth Councils were involved in national working groups in charge of the development of validation mechanism. Non-formal education still remains rather ignored by formal education providers. Public authorities should encourage more interaction between both sectors, engaging youth organisations and implementing citizenship education at schools. There should be free access to formal education for all, as its absence is one of the most discriminatory factors leading to social exclusion and marginalisation.

The value of youth organisations:

- The shadow report gives multiple examples of how youth organisations are contributing to reaching the objectives set in each of the 8 fields of actions of the EU Youth Strategy.
- Through their reach to a wide range of young people, youth organisations bridge the gap between politics and practice and they positively influence young people in all areas relevant for them, for example in employment (92% of the National Youth Councils empower young people in developing skills that are assessed as useful by employers), or education (68% of the National Youth Councils carry out cross-border activities in order to promote participation and mobility and more than 50% provide citizenship education to young people through their activities).
- Unfortunately, the report reveals that 72% of the youth organisations do not feel valued enough by public authorities. The Youth Guarantee is an example of this, when only 36% were involved in the discussions at national level on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.
- Policy-makers (primarily those in the youth sector, but also those working on youth issues outside of the youth sector) must bring youth organisations to the table and involve them at all stages of policy-making.

1. THE EU COOPERATION FRAMEWORK: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR YOUTH POLICY?

1.1 Assessment of the EU cooperation framework

In 2009, the Council of the European Union endorsed the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) also known as the Youth Strategy. Its objectives are to:

- Create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market
- Promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

In order to achieve the objectives set in each of the 8 fields of action of the strategy, **the cooperation framework outlined several instruments** that should be used by Member States, notably evidence-based policy making, mutual learning, regular progress reporting, Structured Dialogue and EU programmes. On top of that, in 2014 in order to strengthen the cooperation of the Member States in the youth field, the Member States adopted an **EU Work Plan on Youth** that designates specific objectives to reach for a two-year period.

In spite of these efforts, the European Youth Forum considers that **the cooperation between Member States in the youth field remains very weak** and does not lead to consequent policy changes in the Member States. The current intergovernmental conceptions and structures of EU youth policy limit the level of ambition for the cooperation. The impact of the EU Work Plan on Youth in terms of efficiency and commitment from the Member States is not yet visible and **has not yet brought about substantial improvements in the coordination amongst different policies, and in bringing youth policies at the centre of the Europe 2020 strategy.**

Overall, we find it **difficult to assess whether the objectives (detailed above) set in the Youth Strategy are being reached** in the EU Member States. Indeed, **there are no clear**

benchmarks and measurable instruments that allow the European Commission to clearly assess whether an objective is reached or not. The European Youth Forum is convinced that **it is time to put a strong emphasis on the effectiveness of youth policy cooperation** and transform the political commitments into concrete action for tangible outcomes.

In order to strengthen the Open Method of Coordination, the Youth Forum calls for:

- The development of measurable indicators and a benchmarking system for the implementation of the common objectives
- The development of concrete action plans by Member States aligned with the Work Plan on Youth
- Creating genuine partnerships between youth organisations and the public authorities responsible for the implementation of the Youth Strategy.
- Creating stronger links between youth policy and other areas relevant for young people, in which the EU has competences.

The review of the EU Youth Strategy currently carried out by the European Commission should take into account those proposals in order to strengthen the cooperation in the youth field.

The International Non-governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs) which took part in the consultation confirmed the lack of policy impact, as they shared that the Erasmus + programme is for them the main impact of the EU in the youth field. They added *“while the European cooperation provides great opportunities in terms of (learning) mobility and projects carried out by youth organisations, there is not enough commitment from the Member States to adapt national youth policies to the EU recommendations.”*

Moreover, WOSM (World Organisation of Scout Movement) stresses that the new “Youth Article” (Art 165(2)) in the Lisbon Treaty concerning youth participation in the EU has not yet been implemented through new policies. “The legal basis for a EU level competence would allow for a more ambitious level of youth participation in EU level policies.” Consequently, the **Youth Forum would expect the European Commission to formulate concrete proposals aiming to enhance young people’s participation**, for instance by providing support for Member States to develop citizenship education at school, by promoting the vote at 16 for EU elections etc.

In terms of content of the EU Youth Strategy, INGYOs responding to the consultation considered the fields of action of the framework as being relevant for their work and fields

of actions. This shows that the EU Youth Strategy interlinks well with what are the core activities of the European youth organisations.


However, only a minority of INGYOs (WOSM, EEE-YFU, TEJO) report that the framework and its objectives strongly guide their work, other INGYOs (ACTIVE, OBESSU, CESI etc...) instead mention other strategies and programmes as guiding their work (Europe 2020, Education and Training 2020, European Voluntary Service, EU Alcohol Strategy). This illustrates the **importance of linking the various EU strategies together to ensure coherency** in the work carried out by youth organisations.

1.1.1 Cross-sectoral cooperation in the youth field

The need to ensure the cross-sectoral dimension in the youth field is widely acknowledged, notably in the EU Youth Strategy (*“Mainstream cross-sector initiatives that ensure that youth issues are taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other fields with a significant impact on young people, such as education, employment or health and well-being”*).

Moreover, the Council Conclusion on “enhancing cross-sectoral policy cooperation to effectively address socio-economic challenges facing young people” adopted under the Latvian Presidency in May 2015 highlighted that if the principle is widely agreed upon, we lack real implementation in several Member States.

The INGYOs’ assessment goes towards the formulation of two main challenges:



There is a need to improve cross-sectoral practices at EU level. Inter-service consultations within the Commission cannot guarantee the specific youth dimension of policies affecting young people.

1. **The different sectors that deal with issues that affect young people do not work together sufficiently.** The Youth Forum would encourage the development of coordination structures that could ensure that the youth dimension is more taken into account in different services of the European Commission, beyond the Youth Unit of the Directorate General of Education and Culture.

2. There is a **lack of coordination amongst the Youth Strategy and other EU strategies** that exist and that affect young people. For instance, it is quite surprising that **the Education and Training 2020 strategy does not even make a reference to the EU Youth Strategy**, since Education and Training is one of the 8 fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy.

The same occurs in the field of Health, with the Health Strategy. ACTIVE, one of the Youth Forum's members that works on health and well-being regrets that *"none of those existing strategies reflect the objectives which have been set in the EU Youth Strategy, making it difficult for all the actors involved to work hand in hand"*. In theory, the programme mentions that there should also be synergies exploited with other programmes, among others Erasmus+, but the actual regulation does not explicitly say how these synergies could actually be achieved in practice. **Health and well-being are not strongly referred to in the youth employment policies** either, despite *"the correlation between alcohol, other drugs addiction and school dropout, youth unemployment or else social exclusion."* (ACTIVE)

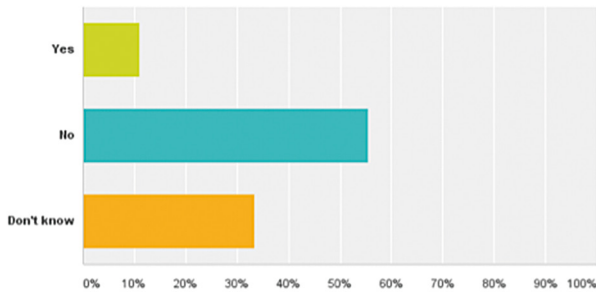
The thorny issue of youth unemployment in particular, needs to be addressed by different actors together. WOSM considers that *"the recognition of young people's skills is an essential way to improve their employability; Currently the labour market focuses mainly on formal qualifications and diploma. This leads to a perception of a skills gap between the jobs and the unemployed youth. In reality, however, many young people possess relevant experience and skills acquired through non-formal education. A better recognition of those skills by the employers and society at large would increase the confidence of the employers to recruit young employees."* In its opinion, *"there is a gap between the different dimensions of the EU Youth Strategy: a European strategy on youth employment should be based on a wider recognition of non-formal education and volunteering, which are mentioned in the EU Youth Strategy"*.

We can conclude that there is currently not **enough coordination among various policy areas. The impact of the Youth Strategy is still limited in the other policy areas beyond the classical youth sector.**

Moreover, the risk of low cross-sectoral cooperation, is that the other sectors would bring the youth aspect only from their perspective, not taking into account that youth policy must look at **young people as a whole.**

Q23. Do the EU measures that aim at tackling youth unemployment take into account the other priorities of the youth strategy?

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For instance, more than 50% of the INGYOs consider that EU policies on employment **do not take into account the other elements that form a youth policy**, namely participation, autonomy, health etc.

This leads to “youth policy” often being confused with “youth employment policies”, and forgetting to put efforts and resources into a coordinated youth policy that address the different elements that young people need to develop as active citizens.

This is why **the Youth Forum asks Member States, but also the EU, to implement an “impact assessment” for all policies that are formulated, and that can have an impact on young people.** This will enable the coordinating youth body to have a global view on the development of the policies and to ensure their coherency.

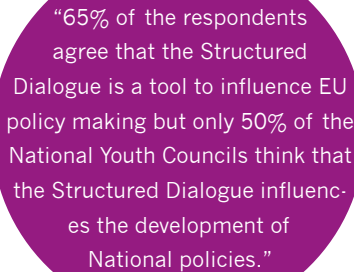
1.1.2 Participative youth policy

At EU level, the participative aspect of youth policy is mainly enabled through the Structured Dialogue (SD). Indeed, most of the INGYOs responding to the survey do not have direct contact with EU institutions. The **European Youth Forum as a platform enables INGYOs to be involved in EU policy-making**, but some respondents would expect additional participative mechanisms, notably in the fields of employment or education.

The Structured Dialogue is appreciated as a unique tool that enables young people across Europe to formulate recommendations, together with decision-makers, on priorities set by the Trio-Presidency. National Youth Councils consider that the **Structured Dialogue**

provides the framework for young people to be able to contribute to EU policy-making. 65% of the respondents agree that the Structured Dialogue is a tool to influence EU policy making. However, they do point out that the reality is more complex and they have difficulty in assessing whether their input really shapes EU youth policy. In particular, they stress that it mostly depends on whether the recommendations are being taken into account by the Youth Working Party when drafting Council Conclusions. Respondents are also quite realistic, pointing out that *“it can be an efficient tool to influence the EU priorities regarding youth policies, but it is so far not used as an effective tool to influence EU priorities in other policy areas.”* (Dutch National Youth Council)

On the other side, respondents are more **critical in regards to the national impact of the Structured Dialogue**, in terms of policy-making; indeed, only **50% of the National Youth Councils consider that the Structured Dialogue influences the development of national policies.** For the Romanian National Youth Council *“The SD can be an effective tool if it is well connected to local/regional/national realities and actors, and if it comes higher on the political agenda of high level politicians.”*




“65% of the respondents agree that the Structured Dialogue is a tool to influence EU policy making but only 50% of the National Youth Councils think that the Structured Dialogue influences the development of National policies.”

All in all, National Youth Councils and INGYOs pointed out the following remaining challenges:

- 1. The Structured Dialogue has little impact** on policy-making. On the one hand, the Structured Dialogue on Youth addresses issues where the EU has only a supportive and supplementary competence. This strong role of subsidiarity in the youth field and the fact that it is the Member States themselves implementing youth policies makes it difficult to identify the impact of EU youth policies. On the other hand, the level of commitment to this process varies strongly from one country to another one and results in diverse situations across Member States.
- 2. The lack of monitoring mechanism** prevents the actors involved from keeping track on how the recommendations are being implemented (or not) in the various national realities.
- 3. The Structured Dialogue being a long process** (18 months for one cycle) with limited concrete impact, National Youth Councils stress the **difficulty in engaging young people sustainably** and to keep them actively involved.

4. The outcomes of the Structured Dialogue are **not always disseminated to and followed-up by to the right stakeholders**, and therefore only feed in the Youth Working Party's discussion and conclusions, and not to other relevant formations of the Council of the EU. However, we notice that respondents are much more positive regarding the potential **impact of the Structured Dialogue in creating participative behaviours amongst young people**.

For the Portuguese National Youth Council, *"The SD is an effective tool to promote the discussion of relevant topics between young people and decision-makers and is a tool to ensure that youth policies go in line with the concerns and priorities of young people."* However, as the Spanish National Youth Council points it out *"the SD has a big potential to enhance youth participation, but it has still problems to involve young people from the grassroots (both associated and non-associated)".*



80% of the respondents consider that the Structured Dialogue is an efficient tool for enhancing young people's participation in decision-making processes.

This established dialogue between young people and decision-makers is taken as a model by some National Youth Councils that are implementing similar processes at national level. For instance, in Slovenia, it seems that the SD process at EU level is an entry point to call for a *"more systematic participation of young people and for mainstreaming the principle of including young people in decision-making processes at all levels."*

However, if **we are satisfied that the Structured Dialogue contributes to the citizenship education of young people who get involved in this process, we still regret that its initial purpose of involving young people in decision-making has not been fully reached.**

On that aspect, the National Youth Councils propose the following recommendations to improve the process:

The development of a monitoring system for the Structured Dialogue outcomes, enabling period reviews and assessing the impact of each cycle of recommendation. As formulated by the Cyprus National Youth Council, this would need *"a growing engagement of the DG in the process at all stages (1), an increase of the resources dedicated in the process (2) and the establishment of a regular monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the process at all levels (3)".* On top of that, this would require a strong commitment from the National Working Groups (NWGs) to engage with national relevant actors and to be pro-active in following-up on the recommendations reflected in the Council Conclusions.

- The European Youth Forum calls on the European Commission to conduct an impact assessment of the Structured Dialogue, since its establishment in 2010. This is needed in order to have a first view of the impact and influence of the Structured Dialogue on policy-making and such a report can be a motivating tool for engaging more young people.
- **Increasing the visibility of the process** and especially in non-organised and marginalised youth, notably through strengthened partnerships with local public authorities (to inform them about the Structured Dialogue and encourage them to trigger discussion at local level) and with local associations as well as youth workers at local level.
- **Improving the quality of the process**, notably with connecting the EU Youth Conferences with local realities, including more actors such as the European Parliament for instance, but also with connecting and aligning as much as possible the SD process with the political process.

The question of whether the Structured Dialogue should go beyond the youth field divides the NWGs. Some National Youth Councils consider that it would be very beneficial to widen the spectrum of topic to be discussed (“To be more effective, the SD should tackle direct competences of the EU and involve policy makers and decision makers from different fields (not only youth sector but also employment, education, social affairs and any other areas that could directly effect young people”). Yet, this would require some clear changes in the process and in the involvement of the actors. Some other NYCs consider that it is better to stay focused on the fields of the EU Youth Strategy and to aim to have clear impact in these areas.

1.1.3 Assessment of Youth Policies at EU level

EDUCATION

Regarding education at EU level, International Youth Organisations expect the European Commission to support and encourage the Member States, on the two dimensions of education. Indeed, even though there is already a Council Recommendation on the validation of NFE, there is still a need to provide a framework for valorising the knowledge, competence and attitudes, which are acquired through

INGYOs expect strong proposal in favour of the recognition of Non-Formal Education (NFE) and of youth work, notably through the creation of an EU framework of competences acquired through NFE and youth work.

youth work and non-formal education activities. Several organisations highlighted the provision of **additional structural funding for youth organisations** and NFE actors in order to build their capacity in promoting youth work and NFE. Youth organisations have a key role in providing educational activities to young people across Europe, and notably for INGYOs, to developing European conscientiousness. This would contribute to strengthening and professionalising the most relevant non-formal education providers in the youth sector.

On the other hand, INGYOs expect the European Union to further reflect on **how to facilitate the promotion of vocational education and training opportunities and advantages for young people, especially in a time of high unemployment rates**. Moreover, INGYOs insist on the role of the European Union in ensuring equal access to education for all young people. Indeed, as OBESSU points out, “Participation in society starts in schools. Only by giving everyone – regardless of background – equal access to education, can something resembling equal chances in life be reached. Education is not an EU competence, but through, for example, the EU work on early school leaving, Erasmus+ project funding, targeted money through Opening up Education and similar initiatives, the situation can be improved”

EMPLOYMENT

Regarding the policy field of employment, the INGYOs expect the European Commission to strengthen its support in the field of entrepreneurship. Acknowledging that entrepreneurial ideas can be one part of generating more jobs and making Europe an attractive investment zone, youth organisations call for:

- The creation of support mechanisms to incentivise young entrepreneurs.
- **Easier access to credit for start-ups and young entrepreneurs**, with governments.
- Support from the **educational system at all levels, with young people to be provided with relevant information, financial literacy, and development of skills, competences and attitudes to set up their own businesses**. It would be beneficial for young people to be “*provided with training activities and mentoring, but also with easy to access and youth friendly information on “how to set up your own business”* (CESI-Youth)
- A specific focus on **supporting social entrepreneurship and the social economy** due not only to their ability to create jobs but also to their contribution to the development of communities, supporting environmental sustainability and ensuring social resilience in times of crisis. (JECI-MIEC)

On the **Youth Guarantee**, the respondents questioned the real impact of the scheme, suggesting that the current program be revised and amended. ACTIVE also stressed the relevance of involving youth organisations in such a revision “We also suggest involving youth organisations in the implementation of the programme and taking into account their experiences and insights, since the youth organisations work more on the ground”.

To make the Youth Guarantee work beyond mere festive declarations of intent, and in order to avoid it becoming a wasted opportunity, it must have clear definitions, the goals of the funding schemes have to be stated and a monitoring system has to be implemented.

The respondents hence call for the European Commission to provide:

- **Tailored career guidance** for every young person accessing the scheme
- **A private-public partnership** involved in the implementation at national level
- Strengthening and implementing the role of public and private employment agencies as one of the crucial stakeholders for the success of the Youth Guarantee programme.
- **The involvement of youth organisations** in its design and implementation.
- **Continuous evaluation and improvement of the programme** and measures based on the results.

MOBILITY

Respondents consider mobility is one of the key areas where the European Union should be actively working. Mobility is the freedom to move from one European country to another, and while doing so, to both experience cultural difference and feel a sense of unity with other Europeans. Yet, **the full right to mobility for all young people is still not available**. Youth organisations are asking the European Institutions to “remove any administrative obstacle that makes it very difficult for young people to study, volunteer or do an internship in a European country”. (EEE-YFU) and to ease administrative procedures for issuing visas and residence permits for non-EU pupils, students and volunteers coming to the European Union in revision of the Visas Directive.

Moreover, several INGYO share the concern that the “exchange year abroad during secondary school is very often not recognised and not validated”, thus making it more difficult for pupils to use this mobility programme. The European Commission should therefore also **facilitate the mobility process from high school to high school**.

On the mobility programme **Erasmus +**, there is very significant support for the impact of such a programme, yet, it is pointed that that “EU-funded projects are very useful, but only a minority of people actually can access those” (YEU). Therefore, “a state-level awareness and

action, coordinated and supported at European level” is vital, to ensure a wider audience and reach to those programmes” (TEJO). **Youth organisations working at local level should be prioritised and further supported.**

Moreover, **INGYOs regret the decentralisation of the programme management that has weakened the EU perspective and has led to much administrative burden.** This situation limits the opportunities of action on EU level, since the national agencies have a narrower national outlook. In order to avoid this issue, WOSM claims that “youth organisations could be further consulted in the setting up of the programme and actions to ensure that this addresses better the needs of young people in Europe”.

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

How youth organisations are contributing:

Youth for Understanding (EEE-YFU) is a non-profit youth exchange organisation, providing exchange programmes for 15 to 18 year old students in more than 50 countries worldwide.

The Young Europeans’ Seminar (YES)

The YES is a unique yearly event, organised by EEE-YFU for YFU European students who have just finished their exchange programme within a European country. It has around 500 participants and consists of 5 days of seminars, workshops, lectures, panel discussions and other activities. The YES provides YFU programme participants with an educational activity that enhances their exchange experience. It also encourages participants to understand themselves as young European citizens with responsibilities and opportunities in a changing independent world. In addition, the event aims to make participants aware that finishing their exchange year is not an end. It can be the starting point of a learning process in the field of intercultural understanding, democratic involvement and social responsibility.

At EU level, the participation of young people in democratic life is a real challenge, illustrated in the latest European Parliament elections in 2014, with only 28% of young people (16-24 years old) turning up to vote for their representatives.

To increase engagement of young people at European level, **INGYOs call for the EU to ensure greater access to and dialogue with policy-makers and politicians** (EEE-YFU, Active), **as well as participation in decision-making processes** (ECYC, WOSM). A specific example mentioned by CJE is the **reinforcement of the Erasmus+ KA3 actions which**

promote activities with policy makers, as well as participation of young people in the decision of EU grants both at national and European level. Spain is an example of good practice in this sense, as the NYC (CJE) is included in the Erasmus+ Youth National Agency.

The INGYOs also request that the European Commission puts into practice measures implementing the Art 165.2 of the TFEU, for example through dedicated funding through existing and new programmes, promoting the vote at 16 and citizenship education. On the latter, the European Commission could contribute to the setting of standards for quality citizenship education at EU level - by **setting out the direction of a European citizenship education** action roadmap. One concrete proposal could be to set up a **European knowledge centre on European citizenship**, which could be a virtual library of methodology and content that could inspire national curricula centres. Other ideas include asking the Commission to set up a **European pool of young citizenship education trainers** who are available to support the Member States (schools, youth organisations) in the implementation of citizenship education, where needed (along the model of the EU Aid Volunteers).

1.2 Impact of the EU Youth Strategy on the development of national level youth policy

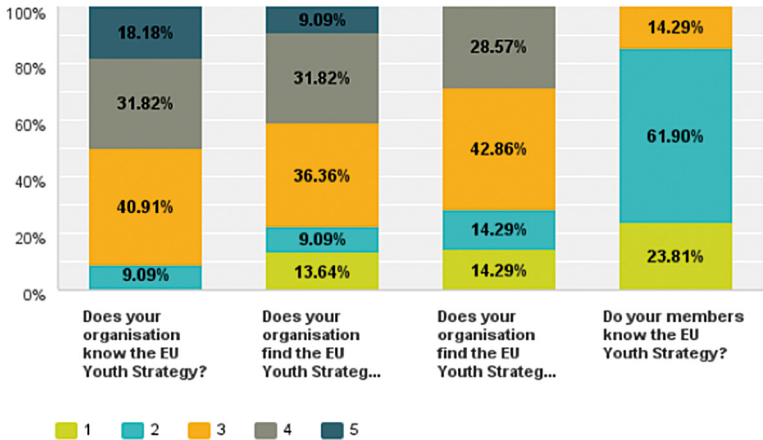
The consultation amongst National Youth Councils enabled us to have an overview on the state of youth policy in Europe. In the EU, although all respondents confirm that there are policies in place that specifically affect young people, there are **still 4 countries that do not have a specific youth strategy** (Cyprus, Denmark, Latvia, Malta).

For some countries, such as Bulgaria, the EU Youth Strategy has greatly influenced the development of the national youth strategy, but for most of the respondents, **the EU Youth Strategy is rather a guiding framework that is used to support national strategic priorities.**

In general, National Youth Councils see the EU Youth Strategy as a resource: 43% of the respondents consider the EU Youth Strategy quite useful for the development of the internal work of the organisations, while only 29% find it very useful.

Q13. On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very well)

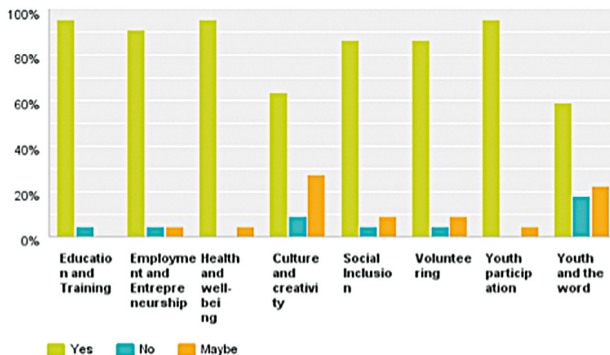
Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



The figure below informs us that the **National Youth Councils consider the 8 topics chosen in the EU Youth Strategy as relevant**. Only “**Culture and creativity**” and “**youth and the world**” receive a lower score of 60% of support amongst National Youth Councils.

Q14. Do you consider the 8 priorities of the EU Youth Strategy relevant to the current challenges faced by young people?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



This can be explained by the fact that those two areas are less concrete and directly influencing young people's quality of life.

On the other hand, the respondents did mention a few areas, which they believe the EU Youth Strategy should focus on: sustainability (43%), human rights (61%), gender equality (29%), poverty and migration (31%).

The most recurrent challenges pointed out by NYCs as regard to youth policy in their countries are:

- Lack of human resources and capacity in this field – 22%
- The cross-sectoral implementation of the youth policy – 24 %
- The evaluation and follow-up phases – 27%
- Youth policy not seen as a priority for the government (tendency increased with the crisis) – 31%
- The lack of regular involvement of youth organisations – 51%

1.2.1 Cross-sectoral cooperation at national level

As pointed out above, cross-sectoral cooperation remains a huge challenge for Member States. Firstly, a positive finding: **75% of the National Youth Councils from the EU responding to the survey share that a cross-sectoral mechanism is in place in their country.** However, despite existing cross-sectoral mechanisms, different levels of implementation exist in reality:

1. The mechanism is in place, but it is not yet working (fully). For example, “In Portugal, there is an inter-ministerial commission on youth, but in reality it has never met.”

2. There is no specific mechanism: it is the youth department itself that coordinates youth policies. Example: “Youth Department under the Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Latvia represents the coordinating mechanism”

3. A robust independent mechanism system is in place. Example: “Youth Chamber, an advisory body to the minister responsible for the youth field, and the activity of the cross-sectorial thematic groups coordinated by the Youth Department of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.” (National Youth Council Czech Republic)

4. The mechanism in place includes youth representatives. Example “the Advisory Board on Youth of Government of the Republic of Croatia represents a national coordination mechanism for cross- sectorial development of youth policies. It is an advisory board of 24 members from different sectors: 14 representatives of relevant government bodies, members of the Coordination of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Union of Counties, three representatives of scientific and educational institutions, and seven representatives of youth organizations.” (National Youth Council Croatia)

This more realistic point of view on the state of cross-sectoral cooperation at national level confirms the **need to encourage the Member States to focus on the exchange of good practice and peer learning in this field.** The Youth Forum encourages the Member States to identify good practices and strengthen the peer learning on that specific issue.

2. NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES: LIVING UP TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS?

The European Youth Forum strives for a **Rights Based Approach (RBA) to youth policy**, namely we call on decision-makers to take the responsibility of having a long-term vision that ensures that the rights of young people are fulfilled. Yet, one important parameter for a RBA is that young people themselves are aware of their own rights and responsibilities. However, **member organisations (MOs) report a lack of rights awareness amongst young people and an even greater lack of knowledge on relevant procedures to claim rights or seek redress on rights violations**, in addition such procedures are often lengthy and bureaucratic, rendering them inaccessible to young people.

30% of the respondents referred to the existence of citizenship education through the formal education system. However even amongst these countries, Youth Forum member organisations (MOs) often regard citizenship education as inadequate, as studies reveal a persisting lack of rights awareness amongst young people (Croatian Youth Network: *“Although certain steps towards education of young people about their rights have been made in recent years with attempts to introduce some model of civic education in primary and secondary schools, there is still lack of systematic approach for regarding the education of youth about politics and their civil rights.”*)

Six MOs mentioned the role of civil society organisations in educating young people about their rights. Actually, the consultation reveals that rights awareness is greater amongst young people who are involved in youth organisations and/or activities.

In the context of the **Paris Declaration made by education ministers**, the Youth Forum believes **that there should be a greater focus given to the rights awareness of young people**, as a first step for healthy youth policies. It is clear that there is a

“The young people active in different organisations are relatively very well aware of their rights and about how and where they can claim their rights, meanwhile the young people that are not involved in activities nor in organisations are much less prepared”
(Alliansi)

need for governments to focus on civic and citizenship education as also pointed out by the Council of Europe.

2.1 Transition from education to employment: still a long road towards autonomy

Getting into employment is one important entry way for young people to access their social rights and autonomy. **62% of young people answering to the Youth Forum Yo!Quest survey believe that youth unemployment is the biggest problem for young people across Europe.**

The situation varies greatly from one country to another.

25% of National Youth Councils report that there is no clear referral toward tailored employment measures, such as career advice and mentorship, in their country. The three existing key measures, which were mentioned by the other 75%, are:

1. Local employment services, offices, job centres or youth information centres,
2. Advice and counselling services provided in the formal education system through schools and/or universities,
3. An action plan or measures related to Youth Guarantee.



The right to employment, if acknowledged by public authorities, remains unfulfilled while there are still more than 20.6% of young people unemployed in the European Union (Eurostat June 2015)

For instance, the National Youth Council of Austria (ÖJV) explains that *“There are tailored employment measures for youth, such as career counselling, provided by a youth-specific service at Public Employment Services. The quality of the counselling, however, is impossible to estimate from an external perspective. Moreover, there is a programme called “youth coaching” (Jugendcoaching), which has enjoyed a good reputation since its implementation in 2014. It has been established in close cooperation between the Federal Ministry of Education and Women’s Affairs (BMBWF) and the Social Affairs Ministry (BMASK) and is implemented by the latter. In difficult periods of decision-making many young people need professional advice and support, in particular in relation to their plans for the future and related career choices. Therefore the idea was conceived to contact young people towards the end of compulsory education directly at schools they attend and offer them counselling of personal assistants (Youth Coaches) who provide free and uncomplicated advice and support*

in matters of education, career or personal problems. Youth Coaching is targeted primarily at pupils, but also at young people under the age of 19 who are no longer in the education system and at young people under the age of 25 with special educational needs or disabilities. There are already several initiatives on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economy.”

Regarding **the Youth Guarantee, the level of implementation also differs strongly, and several National Youth Councils pointed out the discrepancy between the action plans and the reality.** For example, *“as part of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Cyprus, national authorities have come up with an action plan that originally foresaw tailored employment measures. However, due to budgetary constraints the final version of the action plan does not include any such tailored measures as part of the youth guarantee implementation.”*

Some National Youth Councils pointed out at the difficulty for the Youth Guarantee (YG) to reach out to **young people in general**. Registration to the YG scheme through Public Employment Services is often the only way for young people to have access to the YG. This is a problem, as employment services and their understanding of *service* and *job provision* tend to be quite far from young people’s real needs.

The National Youth Councils therefore recommend that their countries ensure:

- One-stop-shops that can ensure that all services and guidance are available for young people at one location;
- Better cooperation between employment services and the education system, with the possibility for instance for teachers to be trained by the public employment services about the job research process and the YG schemes;
- Better communication of the scheme in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and in particular youth organisations;
- The possibility for projects run by youth organisations and youth workers to benefit from YG funding to help to reach out to more young people;

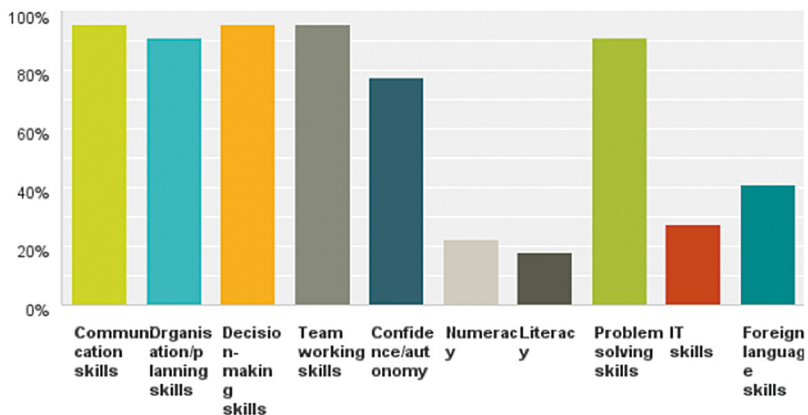
2.1.1 Youth organisations and employment

The input collected from the National Youth Councils enables us to get an overview of the role they play in facilitating the transitions from the school system to work.

First of all **92% of the National Youth Councils confirm they provide young people with skills which are useful for the job market**. Below, we can observe which are the skills that young people gain while being active in youth organisations.

Q.25 If yes, which ones (please tick the ones your organisation is providing)

Answered: 18 Skipped: 4



By being active in a youth organisation, young people develop communication skills, organisational skills, decision-making as well as team working skills. As already pointed out in Youth Forum’s study on the impact of Non-Formal Education on employability¹, **there is a match between the skills demanded by the job market and the ones developed in youth organisations.**

This strongly emphasises the **role played by youth organisations in building bridges between the education and the job market**, and reinforces the importance for public authorities to support the work carried out by youth organisations. On the other hand, there is a need to better inform employers of what is happening in youth organisations and to increase the value given to young people’s experiences through youth movement.

¹ Study on the impact of Non Formal Education in youth organisations on youth people’s employability, 2012

“A continuous involvement of the Youth Council in policy design and conceptualisation phase from the start through active participation in working groups with federal ministries and other social partners need to be reinforced in the field of employment “ (ÓJV)

For the Slovenian National Youth Council (MSS) *“Work in youth organisations increases employment possibilities for youth. Youth and non-governmental sector has a great potential for different types of quality employment, which remains untapped and is way below EU average (8.1 %) and is at 0.88 %. Non-governmental organisations, among which are also youth organisations are a great base for employment of youth. Therefore it is essential to establish connections of formal education and training system with the non-governmental sector to improve employability of youth.*

Youth organisations and other NGO’s are very active in the field of informal education and training, but unfortunately competences young people acquire in this way, are not properly recognised and valued. Therefore it is of great importance to implement a proper national system of recognition and valuation of informal education and working experience.”

On top of providing soft skills that are useful for the job market, **41% of National Youth Councils claim they have specific activities to support the transition of young people from university to the job market.** For instance, they ensure career guidance, organise training and workshops on building CVs etc.

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

The Croatian Youth Network developed the project “Extending entitlements: making the Youth Guarantee in Croatia work for youth leaving alternative care” that is aiming to contribute to social inclusion of young people leaving alternative care through enhancing the effects of the YG scheme in Croatia. The expected results are:

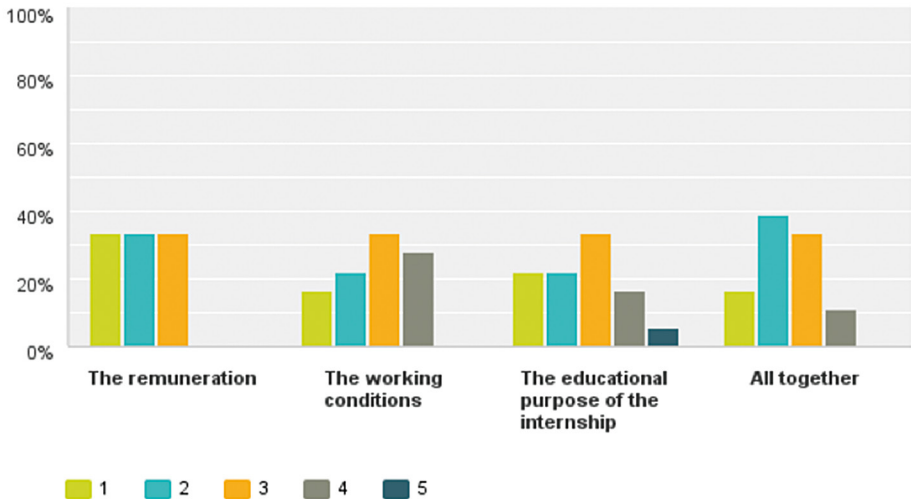
- Effective system of monitoring implementation of the YG with special emphasis on youth from alternative care piloted and put in place
- Strengthened capacities of Croatian project partners to monitor and advocate for concrete policy changes within the YG framework with special emphasis on youth from alternative care
- Feasible and evidence-based policy alternatives/proposals for full integration of young people from alternative care in YG schemes developed and advocated to key stakeholders.

2.1.2 Internships: what about quality?

National Youth Councils were asked to evaluate the quality of internships in their country based on four criteria: remuneration, working conditions, educational purpose, and overall (altogether). The results are available in the figure below:

Q28. Could you rate from 1 (not good) to 5 (very good), the quality of the internships in your country, based on:

Answered: 18 Skipped: 4



As depicted, on a scale of 1 (not good) to 5 (very good) the majority of National Youth Councils did not rate any of the four criteria highly; all of the criteria are rated as mostly 1, 2 or 3. **Two thirds of National Youth Councils rate remuneration very low (1 or 2), 44% of National Youth Councils rate working conditions and educational purpose as either 1 or 2 and 52% of NYCs rate the quality of internships altogether as either 1 or 2.** Educational purpose is the only criterion deemed 'very good', and this was the case reported by only two National Youth Councils.

Yet, over **half of National Youth Councils (52%) report that there is no legislation regulating internships in their Member State. When it exists, legislation is assessed as insufficient.**

Legislation is diverse across countries, falling under different categories including employment and remuneration (CNAJEP, National Youth Council of Slovenia), education and labour (NYCR), social protection/benefits (Allianssi), as well as the Youth Guarantee or a Youth Contract (Portuguese National Youth Council, British Youth Council). DUF (Denmark) reports a specific legislation on the educational value and remuneration of internships, which guarantees that young people can obtain ETS-credits from their internships. Some National Youth Councils indicate that internships are only regulated for professional schools, higher education institutions or their graduates (CTR, National Youth Council of Latvia).

ÖJV (Austria) highlights that there are a variety of internships for diverse audiences (students, graduates, scholars, etc.), however underlines the fact that **higher education graduates are often exploited as cheap or unpaid labour forces.**

Unpaid internships in public administration were banned in 2012 but this is not the case for the private sector, where clear guidelines are needed.

Therefore, we believe that we need:

- Comprehensive legislation shaped in cooperation with relevant stakeholders including youth organisations.
- The legislation should take into account the Quality Frameworks for Traineeships, and implementation should be based on the guidelines outlined in the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships

In particular, as stressed by the Dutch National Youth Council, *“It would be especially important to improve regulation regarding the unpaid intern- or traineeships of young people that have already completed higher education. Political regulation should specifically target this legal gap by providing clear guidelines for companies, regulating the most common modes of intern- and traineeships, for instance payment according to minimum wage etc.”*

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

CNJC is currently promoting the adoption of a legal, binding framework towards the quality of internships in Catalonia. “We have held meetings with all the parties at the Catalan Parliament in order to pass a resolution on the topic, and there has been a very good reception of the initiative. Almost all the parties have jointly entered the resolution into the Parliament’s register, and they are currently bargaining the final text of our proposed resolution.

If approved, the resolution will urge the Department of Employment to create a working group on the topic in order to develop the common legal framework to ensure the quality of internships. The working group should ensure the presence of youth organisations, youth branches of the labour unions, representatives of corporate and labour fields, as well as from the employment and education departments. We’ve also held meetings with relevant stakeholders of the department in order to jointly discuss our demands with regards to quality internships.”

Key demands from the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships:

We urge European institutions and social partners to commit to establish legal quality frameworks for internships and apprenticeships. We call on internship and apprenticeship providers and public decision makers to adopt a system of certification and to ensure the recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired through internships and apprenticeships.

Art. 1: Internships and apprenticeships should be primarily a learning experience, which includes that: they should not replace jobs, they should aim to help young people to acquire practical skills, they should be conducted under the guidance of a competent supervisor, there should be channels for evaluation and complaints and interns or apprentices should be thoroughly informed about their rights, obligations and risks at the workplace.

Art.2: internships should meet the following criteria: existence of a written contract between the host organisation and the intern or apprentice, length and tasks of the internship correspond with the specific learning objectives, guidance through a competent supervisor, the right of the intern to get expenses compensated, decent compensation for overtime and additional tasks not foreseen in the contract, clear evaluation criteria.

Art. 3: ideally there should be no internships outside formal education but where they exist they should meet the criteria of: decent remuneration not below the poverty line, restricted use should be made and only for a fixed amount of months, there should be a reimbursement of costs, inclusion of the intern in the social security system, there should be a mid-term evaluation and the possibility to be hired as an employee should be discussed, detailed task description and of working conditions when advertising the internship opportunity should be provided.

Art. 4: stakeholders should progressively develop support and monitoring policies for a better implementation of quality internships: a robust legal framework in conjunction with a mechanism to exchange good practices across the European Union and a national and European system for certification and recognition of skills, statistics should be available on internships at national and European level to allow for monitoring, partnerships between schools, the social partners and civil society, in particular youth and pupils organisations should be established.

2.1.3 Youth entrepreneurship: investing in young people's potential

Young people often find themselves disadvantaged, especially when attempting to embark on entrepreneurial endeavours.

The responses collected from the National Youth Councils **highlight the lack of finances and resources available, the unfortunate lack of support from educational and governmental structures.**

For these reasons, National Youth Councils called on their Member States to:

- **Give better information on entrepreneurship** and support programmes is required. Indeed young people need more information about the already existing entrepreneurship support programmes and services.
- **Ensure schools provide time, space and recognition for projects** initiated by young people themselves, including projects through which pupils can act as peer-educators and multipliers. For instance, the Czech NYC points out *“Basics of entrepreneurship should be included in the school curricula from theoretical knowledge to practical skills”*.
- Promote entrepreneurship in society in general, support of small businesses and the self-employed **through lowering the level of bureaucracy.**
- **Support youth organisations as provider of entrepreneurial skills** *“Member States*

should recognise youth organisations as a main provider of non-formal education and learning and thus providing entrepreneurial mind-set and skills. Member States should strengthen the support for youth organisations in providing guidance, mentoring, quality training and simulation programmes.” (Cyprus Youth Council)

Non-formal education and the informal learning taking place in youth organisations and civil society are a basic and ideal environment for promoting a culture of creativity, personal and professional development, self-responsibility and self-expression and contribute to the employability of young people.

50% of the National Youth Councils responding and 45% of the INGYO's assess that they contribute to the development of entrepreneurial mind-sets thanks to their activities. Indeed, a key aspect of becoming an entrepreneur is having the **confidence and ability to take your ideas forward** and to build on existing contacts and networks in order to test, market and promote a product or service.

In order to do that young people need to build up “soft skills” such as negotiation, mediation, public speaking and the ability to coherently express themselves. In youth organisations this takes place through **non-formal education that in its essence, consists of actions activities, processes and projects that are undertaken by, with or for youth with the aim of providing a space for young people for their personal development.**

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

“The Scout method is one of the effective ways to promote youth entrepreneurship. This is because long-term programmes in scouting offer young people progressive opportunities to lead to the development of their own project and initiatives. By being at the heart of their own personal development, scouting strengthens the sense of initiative of young people, needed for entrepreneurship.”

“The Cyprus NYC has been active in organising seminars, workshops and training that aim at a) educating and informing young people of any possible opportunities at national and EU level regarding youth entrepreneurship, b) empower young people by providing necessary soft skills and dexterities using non-formal education tools and c) assisting young people by providing career guidance and CV clinic services”.

2.2 Creating the conditions for civic and social inclusion

2.2.1 Time to take non-formal education (NFE) and youth work seriously!

Over one third of National Youth Councils (37%) indicate that non-formal education (NFE) is not included in any legislation and/or mentioned in political strategies in their country. In the EU, 7 National Youth Councils out of the 22 respondents (32%) point out that NFE is not mentioned in any legislation. When it is mentioned, it appears in national policies or strategies on education. In some cases, NFE is included in the national law on education, or related acts/strategies regarding lifelong learning or adult education.

Non-formal education promoted by youth movements has a great impact on young people's development. However, it seems that there is still a lack of recognition of the benefits and the value of non-formal education.

This is why the National Youth Councils are calling for:

- 1. A legislative framework about NFE that acknowledges its educational purpose.** Non-Formal Education is mainly recognised when providing “hard skills” and not “soft skills”. As illustrated by the Austrian National Youth Council, “as the reform seeks to provide youth with better labour market opportunities, the discussion focuses very much on “hard” job-related skills and potentially neglects the chances arising out of non-formal skills. ÖJV tries to advocate for a stronger recognition of those skills during the process. “
- 2. Put further efforts into implementing the recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.** Member organisations are very keen to see validation frameworks at national level being developed. In the field of validation, the expertise of youth organisations is often neglected and they have been poorly involved in the national validation processes (see page 38). For example, **50% of the member organisations responding to the survey have actually developed internally within their organisations, validation frameworks to support their volunteers in the process of self-awareness and of valuing the skills and competences acquired.** This also shows the willingness of the youth field to contribute to the validation of the competences acquired.
- 3. Fostering the cooperation between formal education (schools), civil society and providers of NFE, cross-sectoral approaches.** More focus on establishing links between civil society, especially youth organisations, and schools on the local level could improve the links between non-formal and formal education. Moreover, we also identify a need for

better political recognition of the role and impact of youth organisations in developing competences amongst young people. Political recognition is key in order to consider including youth organisations and NFE providers in the reflection regarding educational policies in the countries. We identify a **need for further funding available at all levels**, for projects that encourage cooperation between formal and informal actors on the specific issue of citizenship education.

4. Support and recognise youth organisations as agent of NFE

There is a need for a better recognition by teachers (and formal education actors) of the educational purpose of youth organisations. It seems that there is a lack of mutual recognition between teachers and Non Formal Education educators (trainers, youth workers etc.).

We would see beneficial the organisation of forum of exchanges that connect all these actors, and more exchanges between formal and NFE practitioners. This would weaken the resistance and restlessness in cooperation and learning from each other.

“In order for the government to ensure the recognition of NFE and of youth work, the government must work in close partnerships with both NGOs and other NFE providers in order to make NFE more relevant for both youth and the employers. This can be done through partnerships in order to give incentives to participating employers and through better promotion of the benefits of NFE.” (Maltese National Youth Council)

One way for youth organisations to cooperate with formal education institutions is actually to be involved and recognised as **trainer for teachers** on this specific subject. Youth organisations, through identified youth workers/trainers, share with formal education teachers, their **competences, expertise and input regarding the content of “citizenship education courses”** but above all **on the methodology** to adopt.

In some cases, individual teacher decide to invite a youth organisation active in the field of citizenship education, peace education etc., and propose to them to carry out some (or the whole) course on citizenship education in the schools.

The British Youth Council believes that *“there is currently too much focus on certified learning, mostly exams based, and thinks the government should do more to encourage a holistic development of young people.”*

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

“**Europe4Youth**”, a member of the **Polish National Youth Council**, cooperates with Jagiellonian University in Cracow within the initiative called “Class of intercultural competencies” consisting in cycle of meetings for high school pupils (30 recruited people from different high schools in Cracow) in the university delivering citizenship education (workshops and simulations on political systems, civil society mechanisms, public participation opportunities etc.). The programme lasts 3 years (high school time) and ends with gratification and extra points for application procedures on universities and recognition of learning outcomes.

The National Youth Council of Czech Republic developed two projects called “**Keys for Life**” (<http://www.nidm.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot>) and “**K2 – quality and competitiveness in non-formal education**” (<http://www.nidm.cz/k2>) financed by the European Social Fund, which were created and implemented with the active participation of the National Institute for Children and Youth and are further implemented by the National Institute for Further Education. The Youth Council was the initiator of the Keys for Life project, some of its former key professionals were involved and CRDM was partially included and consulted throughout the whole project and involved to some extent also in K2 project. Personal competence profiles of youth workers were defined, a set of self-evaluation tools published and disseminated and an online Personal Competence Portfolio developed.

WOSM: Scout organisations throughout Europe have developed several tools to validate the competences of their young volunteers. These tools are for example “**Valorise-toi!**” of the Scouts et Guides de France or “Scout Leader Skills” of the Belgian Les Scouts and Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen. Many other national members have initiated processes of self-assessment and validation of competences. The Scout method is aimed at the acquisition of skills and competences such as teamwork, problem solving, decision-making, communication and interpersonal skills, confidence, autonomy. WOSM clearly positioned itself in all its communications (toward authorities, young people and their parents) as an educational provider and therefore, the final objective of their activities is the acquisition of skills and competences through youth work. The developments of self-assessment tools are contributing to this promotion.

2.2.1.1 Youth organisations and Non Formal Education

82% of the National Youth Councils responded that they promote quality youth work as a way to gain competences and skills. In Slovenia “*what is also worth mentioning in the field*”

of youth work is the approval of initiative to establish a national vocational qualification (NVQ) youth worker. The process will continue with the establishment of working party that will define the competences and skills for NVQ youth worker. We expect that the representative from the youth sector will be invited to participate in the working party. If process will continue without interruptions the final proposal of NVQ youth worker should be prepared by the end of the year. When proposal will be prepared it will be submitted to the aforementioned committee which will decide to adopt or dismiss the NVQ youth worker.”

Youth work in Croatia has been developing for the past 20 years but there is no institutional framework defining, recognising and supporting youth work. MMH is working towards establishing a “common ground on what youth work is and how to support its development on the long-run through European funding. Currently we take part in the national expert group which has a task of examining possibilities of professionalisation of youth work. We are also implementing a two-year project which focuses on piloting online and offline training opportunities for youth workers.”

2.2.2 Social inclusion must be ensured throughout all youth policies

The economic and financial crisis has had significant negative effects on young people with cuts in public budgets, especially to education, and greater flexibility of employment regulation. As a result of such austerity measures, more than half of young Europeans feel that in their country young people have been marginalised from economic and social life.

In order to foster the inclusion of all people, National Youth Councils encourage the Member States to work towards:

1. Equal and free access to education including access to scholarship and greater investment in infrastructure. **Equal access to education is still not a right in all countries of the European Union.** National Youth Councils call for free access to quality education, but also access to scholarship and a fair funding for higher education. However, as shown in a study from the European Commission², Investment in education fell in eight out of 25 Member States. Cuts of more than 5% were imposed in Greece, Hungary¹, Italy², Lithuania and Portugal, while Estonia, Poland³, Spain and the UK (Scotland) saw decreases of 1 to 5%. However, five Member States increased education spending by more than 1%: Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg, Malta and Sweden, as well as the German speaking area of Belgium.

² “Funding of Education in Europe: The Impact of the Economic Crisis”

Investment in infrastructure for children seems also to be a priority for several National Youth Councils: investing in infrastructure for children, for example kindergartens or after-school care clubs (free of charge, the whole year), investment in playgrounds, investments in leisure time activities. *“We believe it’s important to raise the aspirations of young people who think going to university is “not for people like me” or would never consider the idea. We believe that we need to be able to access clear advice on what we need to do to gain access to the right university course for us and what financial support is available. Ensure fair funding for higher education. We oppose any form of tuition fees because they act as a barrier and a deterrent to participation. We believe there should be a properly funded education system, free at the point of entry, funded by progressive taxation gathered via the income tax system.”* (BYC)

2. Youth organisations and youth work should be supported as they do great work in working with young people with fewer opportunities and minorities (see below). 56% of MOs indicate that they use non-formal education and youth work as a tool for social inclusion and social cohesion, targeting in particular NEETs and young people with fewer opportunities. Several MOs explained that they organise training activities to promote non-discrimination and social inclusion (NYCM, PROM, CYC, NJR, MMH, TEJO).

3. Ensure a youth perspective in policies dealing with equality and inclusion and fight against discrimination faced by marginalised groups, including multiple forms of discrimination. For example, the British Youth Council urges its country to recognise the rights of asylum seekers, and from a youth perspective, to ensure equal treatment amongst asylum seekers. We call for all actions to be according to the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child as well as other human and asylum seeker rights as laid out by international law. In addition to age-based discrimination it is important to recognise the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that young people may face due to race, gender, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or other status. (For further information see the Summary of Main Findings from the Youth Forum’s 2014 survey on “Youth and Multiple Discrimination in Europe).

In cooperation with civil society partners the European Youth Forum continues to call for the adoption of the Equal Treatment Directive since its proposal in 2008, but unfortunately it remains blocked in the Council of the European Union. The Council should move to swiftly adopt the directive without further watering down protections; broad age-based exemptions that have been proposed at times are likely to undermine the very purpose of the directive when it comes to combatting age-based discrimination.

2.2.2.1 Youth organisations and social inclusion

Respondents (INGYOs and National Youth Councils) were asked whether they have any specific projects aiming at including young people with fewer opportunities. 66% responded positively, illustrating the importance of this area of work for youth organisations. Examples of initiatives include the provision of fully funded places to participate in events, as well as building the capacity of member organisations to develop socially inclusive activities and to reach out to diverse groups of young people.

A number of MOs listed aspects beyond gender in which they are actively working to address discrimination and stereotypes. The most frequently cited aspect is sexual and gender diversity training, while other aspects include culture and race, as well as inclusion of Roma and migrant youth.

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

The Dutch NYC runs the project 'Shake up', which mixes high school kids with physically disabled kids of the same age, and lets them organise an event for elderly people. In this way, the participants have to do something good for someone else, and at the same time learn to cooperate with a group of young people they do not know and who are (apparently) different than they are. When organising the event, they discover there are not actually that many differences between the two groups of youngsters and they have a lot in common.

This project empowers both the high school and the physically disabled adolescents because they find out they can do more than they thought they could. Another project aimed at young people with fewer opportunities is 'Young Leaders'. Within this project we train young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to act as a role models for the younger people in their neighbourhood.

ACTIVE kicked off the "Do it Yourself - Soft Skills for Hard Workers" project with a five days seminar that took place in Bytom, Poland. It aims to coach a group of young people and educate them through NFE on social inclusion and the creation of socially inclusive activities. In a second stage, these peer leaders then contacted organisations and organised activities in their local communities that aimed to inspire others and create inclusive environments. The project culminated with a joint youth gathering filled with workshops and activities where the peer educators and representatives from the local organisations were able to draft recommendations on social inclusion on local and European level.

The NYC of the French Speaking Community of Belgium runs a program at schools to raise awareness about inclusion, called “Exclure les exclusions en tous genres” The project consists of working with a variety of methodologies on the topic of social inclusion with pupils from secondary schools. <http://www.conseildelajeunesse.be/projet-exclure-les-exclusions-en-tous-genres/>

WOSM has set social inclusion as one of its priorities for 2013-2016. Specific youth programme and strategies have been developed to propose scouting activities that would be adapted to the specific needs of the group of young people targeted (young people in rural areas, Roma, young people from excluded neighbourhood –scouting in “quartier” in France...)

2.2.3 Participation

Two thirds of National Youth Councils consider that young people in their country are participating in civil and political life, while only one third believe they are not. Far from being apathetic or disinterested, **young people are turning away from what they perceive as out-dated formal political structures in favour of more direct actions**, such as campaigning for causes that matter to them or participating in social movements, online and offline.


When we look beyond parties and elections, we see that young people are just as likely to protest, petition, or advocate for specific changes. We see youth movements leading the charge for marriage equality in Ireland, resisting austerity in Spain, or lining up to say yes/no to independence in Scotland. It is not that young people are not political – they are just not engaged by the structures that they perceive do not respond and do not deliver. To ensure a future for participatory democracy, democratic structures need to be rethought.

The most frequently cited measures that youth organisations demand from governments are:

1. To increase civic and political participation through structured **consultation and dialogue with youth organisations, as well as full participation of youth NGOs in decision-making processes regarding policies that affect them**. National Youth Councils as the representatives of young people demand representation at all levels of governance, from local to regional and national, as well as greater transparency in decision-making processes. National Youth Councils want to see legal recognition of the role of youth organisations in decision-making. *“There should be a requirement for youth representation at all*

levels of governance; in local and regional councils, in national assemblies, in the Houses of Parliament, and every other law-making body across the country. " (BYC)

Youth Organisation urge decision-makers to move away from simple consultation, and towards mechanisms of genuine co-decision and sharing of political power with young people on key political issues.



For 70% of NYCs co-decision has not been introduced at any level in their country.

Of the 30% of National Youth Councils that report it has, it is most frequently done at local or municipal level through youth councils. However, the situation varies widely. In some cases there is participatory budgeting, as reported by the Portuguese National Youth Council, whereas in other cases it is not nation-wide but rather limited to one or a few municipalities, as reported by CTR (Romania), where this is the case only in Cluj-Napoca, the European Youth Capital in

2015. The Netherlands present an innovative case, as NJR reports that co-decision is established in many education and healthcare institutions through Participation acts, supervised by a relevant inspectorate.

2. **40% of the NYCs referred to the need for citizenship education.** However simple introduction of citizenship education is not enough; **teacher training is also necessary** to ensure that such education will be effective (*"The inclusion of citizenship education in school curricula from primary, secondary and tertiary level is essential. To this end, an investment in training of teachers should be done and detailed programs established, including a chapter on the functioning of the state system."* Portuguese NYC).

Moreover, citizenship education should be addressed **through innovative and participative methods** that will provide the learner not only with knowledge, but also with practical competences and a sense of responsibility towards their community. **In that sense, strengthened cooperation between formal and non-formal education actors need to be systematically put in place to make full use of their complementarity.**

3. **Support of youth organisations is critical, in particular financial support.** This is all the more relevant given their role in providing civic and citizenship education.

4. To increase engagement of young people at European level, INGYOs call for the **EU to ensure greater access to and dialogue with policy-makers and politicians (EEE-YFU, Active), as well as participation in decision-making processes (ECYC, WOSM).** The EU

should comprehensively implement its **Civil Dialogue** obligations under Article 11 of the Lisbon Treaty. **Government should act transparently and use youth friendly language** with youth organisations and young people. A specific example mentioned by CJE is the reinforcement of the Erasmus+ KA3 actions that promote activities with policy makers, as well as participation of young people in the decision of EU grants both at national and European level. Spain is an example of good practice in this sense, as the NYC (CJE) is included in the Erasmus+ Youth National Agency.

Finally young people need to be addressed positively and seen as a resource.

According to the NJR *“Member states should promote and recognise forms of participation that depart from strengths of young people. Too often participation is centred around (local) youth councils and organised through discussions and meetings between policymakers and young people. However, these forms will always reach a selective group of young people that is comfortable with participating in these types of conferences and discussions. The majority of the Dutch youth is not reached in this way.”*

2.2.3.1 Youth organisations and participation

As one can read in the box below, youth organisations contribute heavily to ensuring dialogue between young people and decision makers (95.45% of the respondents), to build up young people’s willingness and interest in political and social participation (100%) etc.

“If we organise political and civic participation around young people’s strengths, for example their creativity, peer-to-peer learning, networking skills and ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking, a bigger group will be reached and participation will be more sustainable.”
-NJR

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Ensure dialogue between young people and decision makers	95.45% 21
Build up young people's willingness and interest in political and social participation	100.00% 22
Build up young people's willingness and interest in political and social participation, especially young people with fewer opportunities	100.00% 22
Increase young people’s participation through ICTs	90.91% 20
Provide information about participation’ opportunities	100.00% 22

Thanks to their efforts, support and activities organised by and for young people, youth organisations ensure young people contribute to their community. **68% of the NYCs carry out cross-border activities in order to promote participation and mobility, and 80% of the respondents explain that they provide, through their activities, access to (European) citizenship education.**

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

In Sweden, the LSU “**The Voice Journey through the EU**” is part of LSU’s long-term platform « Forces is Your » developed to enhance young Swedes’ commitment to EU policies. Ahead of the European elections in 2014 “ Forces is Your ” dealt mainly with raising awareness of the EU’s political role, and thereby encouraged more young people to vote in the election. Voice journey through Europe is LSU’s framework for developing young people’s political awareness to the opinions and concrete proposals within given framework to support the EU’s democratic political development. Voice Journey through the EU is therefore an important part of efforts to increase young people’s involvement in the next European elections.

“The Croatian Youth Network (MMH) is contributing to European citizenship education through our **Youth Rights Programme**. We are one of the organisations that are coordinating a group of NGOs that are gathered in the “Initiative for quality integration of civic education into schools”. Through “Initiative”, and other bodies where we have our representatives, we are advocating for full integration of citizenship education into our school system. Beside “Initiative”, we are also working directly with young people (through training, education, workshops, developing education tools) on gathering knowledge and developing their skills for being responsible active citizens.”

NJR supports the ‘**Europa in de klas**’ (Europe in the classroom) lobby, that aims to increase the amount of time teachers dedicate to the European dimension of different subjects, such as geography, economics, languages and history.

In Portugal, CNJ promotes access to participation spaces for young people to discuss topics of their interest, such as youth employment or housing. Furthermore, in order to promote young people’s participation in elections, they developed a project to raise awareness on the need to vote, but also to inform young people on the electoral programmes. In addition, as Portugal will soon have governmental elections, they will organise a fair with all the candidates running for Prime Minister for them to present their policies in the field of youth and also to promote a space for structured dialogue with young people.

In spite of their contribution, **72% of the responding NYCs consider that their role in promoting youth participation is not valued and promoted enough by public institutions.** Youth organisations feel that they should be better recognised for their work, **through access to funding, but also involvement in decision-making.**

Illustrating this situation the Spanish Youth Council (CJE) shares that *“We are afraid that some actors in the public sector are weakening even more the youth sector. The investment in youth organisations is decreasing in Spain, nearly all funds are addressed to project-based grants, and youth structures are starving of resources. The recent law in volunteering has been an effort of the whole third sector, but the youth sector as usual is kept apart. The only consultative body in which all the NGOs dealing with specific target groups were included, CEONG, is losing all its importance towards the so-called “Mesa del Diálogo Social” in which only the big platforms and Red Cross, Caritas and ONCE are included.”*

2.2.4 Volunteering

From a Rights-based perspective, **70.4% of NYCs report that volunteers have rights according to national legislation,** while 29.6% report that this is not the case. This figure is quite positive, as it shows that the statute of volunteer is valued and comes with rights and responsibility in most EU countries. **We urge the remaining EU countries to adopt similar statute, based on the values and principles of the Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers.**

The positive value of volunteering has been showcased on different occasions. Apart from the impact volunteers have in their community through their projects, volunteering has proved to enable young people to gain a wide set of skills and competences that will be beneficial at all stages of their lives, in and outside the employment sector. *“We believe that young people should be empowered to positively contribute to our communities through volunteering and that their volunteering should be recognised and celebrated by communities. We believe that employers in our communities should value volunteering undertaken by their young workers as it provides numerous benefits for volunteers, employers and the community.”* (British Youth Council)

National Youth Councils responding to the survey regret the little promotion of volunteering done by public authorities. In total, **64% of National Youth Councils consider that their government is not putting enough effort and resources in promoting volunteering amongst young people.** However, National Youth Councils appreciate the possibilities of cooperation with public authorities in the promotion of volunteering. It seems that

public authorities recognise their expertise in this field. Indeed, 60% of the National Youth Councils cooperate with local, regional or national public authorities in order to increase the opportunities of volunteers, notably regarding the promotion and management of the EVS opportunities.

Nevertheless, the respondents also highlighted the risk of institutionalising volunteering. Indeed, some countries warn that the volunteering model promoted by public institutions is not fully democratic in the sense that volunteers do not participate in the decisions of the entity. Moreover, in some cases, volunteering can be established as one of the “mandatory” options to carry out. (Spain). This is not in line with the value of “free choice” regarding engaging into volunteering. The latter must be promoted and showcased, but should never become obligatory, as it wouldn’t have the same impact on young people.

2.2.4.1 Youth organisations and volunteering

Youth organisations play a key role in the promotion and awareness raising around volunteering, as well as in giving value to volunteering.

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

The National Youth Council of Slovenia (MMS) has run the “**Volunteer of the year**” award since 2007. The aim of this event is to promote voluntary work among young people and in the society, to promote active citizenship and to encourage youth work. The honorary sponsor of this event has already for several years, been the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

In the Dutch National Youth Council, they have realised that as long as you present volunteering to youth as an obligation, it has a negative image and 80% of the youth will not be interested. NJR has found a different way of stimulating youngster to volunteer, by making it voluntary and based upon the initiative of young people themselves. *“We support young people that have a plan to contribute to their community with counselling and financial support to execute their plans (Ik Ben Geweldig): Volunteering because you want to, not because you have to. We have noticed that this approach has a positive influence on the willingness of young people to participate in volunteering activities. With the project ‘Ik ben Geweldig’ (translated: I am great) NJR stimulates young people to do something good for someone else. Young people can hand in an action plan, and if approved, they can receive coaching and financial support (up to 1000) to fulfil their plan. The slogan is ‘do something for someone else, party for yourself’; avoids the word ‘volunteering’ because of its bad reputation among youngsters. (www.ikbengeweldig.nl).*

Allianssi Youth Exchanges works for intercultural learning and global understanding. *“We are a youth exchange organiser providing young Finns opportunities abroad. We believe in ‘learning by doing’. Our range of programs varies from work experience programs such as work and travel to voluntary work programs and other worldwide work opportunities. Some programs combine a language course and a work placement. We recruit about 500 young Finns annually to participate in our programs abroad. Additionally, we place about 200 international volunteers in our voluntary work camps in Finland every year. Those volunteers are recruited from the members and partner organisations of the Alliance of the European Voluntary Service Organisations. Since 1995, Allianssi Youth Exchanges has existed as a youth mobility agency concentrating on offering Finnish young people a wide variety of exchange programs. Our programs give the participants not only a chance to improve their skills and employability but also a possibility to widen their horizons and do something meaningful.”*

2.2.5 Culture and creativity

The area of culture in the Youth Strategy is not always well understood or valued. However, in this field, **youth organisations have a strong impact on young people’s capacity to unlock their creativity and potential to reflect, think critically and analyse** the society around them.

We asked National Youth Councils if they were contributing to:

Facilitating access to culture for young people, reducing obstacles	95.45% 21
Promote trainings in culture, new medias and intercultural competences	100.00% 22
The use of culture as a tool to enhance the participation and entrepreneurial skills of young people	90.91% 20

“By actively advocating for transparent and effective policy on managing public infrastructure, specifically potential venues for (youth) organisations working in the cultural field. We also take into consideration inputs from our MOs working in the field of culture, assuming horizontal approach to cultural policy by creating synergies between other elements of youth policy (such as youth participation or youth work).” (Croatian NYC)

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

The Austrian Youth Council (ÖJV) organises the “RDN WR KLRSEX” campaign (www.klarsex.at): it consists of a series of training for youth workers regarding youth, sexuality and the role of “new” media focusing on the prevention of sexting and cyber bullying.

In the Spanish National Youth Council (CJE), they mainstream culture alongside the usual working spaces, such as the *agora jove* (a weekend focused on a topic chosen by our member organisations, in order to train themselves and design policy proposals on the elected issue), in which they use creative methodologies, cineforums, exhibitions, etc.

For EEE-YFU, by providing an intercultural context in all their events and training, they are raising young people’s awareness about diversity and coping with others’ cultures, but also about themselves and their own identity.

2.2.6 Health and well-being:

mens sana in corpore sana

In the field of health and well-being, the situation from country to country differs widely. **Some National Youth Councils are very concerned about the cuts in public spending in the field of health**, while the crisis has affected the quality of the services provided. For instance, the Spanish Youth Council is extremely concerned about *“the big cuts to the Spanish health-care system carried out by many governments, both at national and regional level. The same happens with education and social services and we believe that the cuts in public spending demanded by the EU has been an excuse misused by the Spanish National Government and by many regions to reduce social benefits.”*

Certain standards of health, education and social policies should be guaranteed by EU (and monitored by EU towards member states) no matter where the EU citizen is living. Young people would benefit in particular from guaranteed social investments.

National Youth Councils therefore call for their Member States to provide:

1. Equal access to health services for all young people. There are persistently large inequalities within countries among people from different socio-economic groups, with individuals with higher levels of education and income enjoying better health and living standards several years longer than those being more disadvantaged.

2. **Health and sexual education need to be established in the school system.** Indeed, there is a need to invest resources in prevention and ensuring that young people have access to the information.

3 **Several organisations also called public authorities to focus on mental health** of young people, specifically on empowering youth and letting them know their talents and strengths. Burnout in the workspace becomes a recurrent topic and there is a demand for policies to tackle this issue. Mental health as a policy priority appears particularly focused on in Northern European countries (the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark).

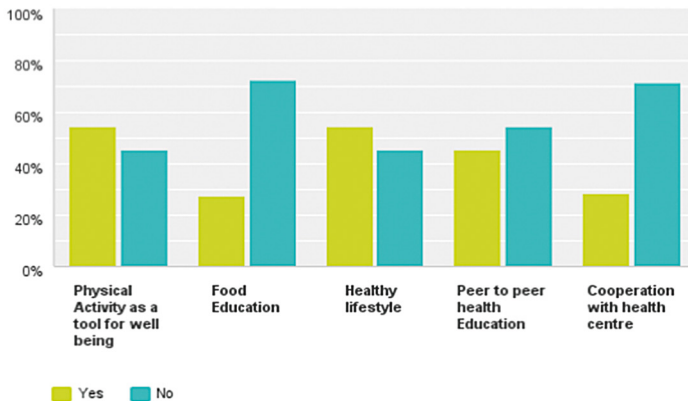
2.2.6.1 Youth organisations and health

Youth organisations across Europe consider health and well-being of young people a very important topic. Moreover, youth organisations have a direct reach to young people and therefore can maximise the potential of peer-to-peer education and information.

Their contribution differs but there are some good practices, for example:

Q37. Does your organisation/ NYC promote particularly:

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

In Catalonia (Spain) the youth council has committed to work deeper in mental health issues and mainstream the topic along our working plans, as well as to create synergies with expert organisations in the field to bring the youth perspective. In Catalonia suicide is the first reason of mortality of young people.

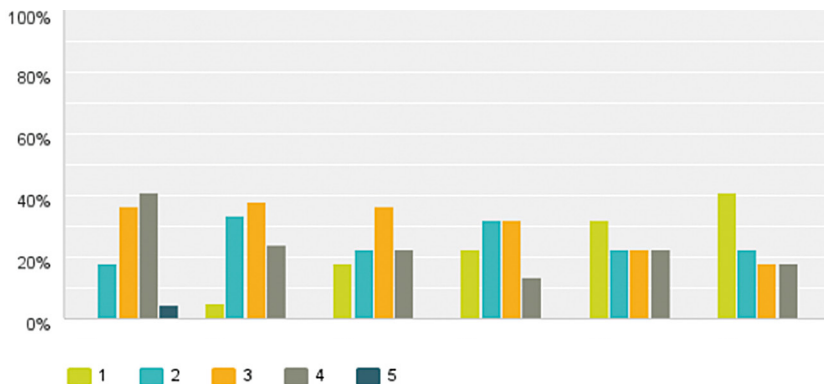
The Austrian National Youth Council cooperated during its campaign **“RDN WR KLRSEX”** (**“Let’s be clear about sex”**) with health information centres, different experts regarding questions about sexuality and a lot of other stakeholders (NGOs) in this field. Part of the campaign was a postcard campaign, which was used to gather the views of young people on what should be done regarding the topic youth and sexuality (information and guidance, education in schools and youth centres, free and anonymous access to prevention/contraception, information for parents etc). About 1,200 young people sent their responses.

A key issue that young people raised is that contraceptives should be easily accessible and ideally provided for free. Furthermore, they suggested sexual education at school should be reinforced. To gain a better outreach of the campaign and its message, the campaign included a blog, a video-spot that was broadcasted in cinemas, workshops, round-tables and several interviews in print and on TV.

3. TOWARDS THE RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS?


This report aims to shed light on the **role of youth organisations in reaching the objectives set in the EU Youth Strategy**. Through activities youth organisations implement in a vast array of thematic areas, they bring an added value and support to the role of public authorities and should therefore be considered as essential partners. However, the assessment from the National Youth Councils regarding the cooperation with public authorities is not always pointing in this direction.

In the graph below, we asked National Youth Councils to assess their level of involvement in youth policy from two perspectives:



Column 1: the development of policies in the youth sector
 Column 2: the development of policies that affect young people
 Column 3: the implementation of policies in the youth sector
 Column 4: the implementation of policies that affect young people
 Column 5: the evaluation of policies in the youth sector
 Column 6: the evaluation of policies that affect young people

On the one hand, we notice that **national governments tend to involve the Youth Representatives in the first phase of the policy development** (on a range from 1 -not at all- to 5 -very much-, 41% respondents rate 4 the level of involvement in the development of youth policy). However, this involvement and cooperation **drops dramatically in the following phases of implementation and even more of follow-up**. We regret the tendency of public authorities to involve youth organisations in the planning of the policies, but not to sustain this cooperation in the following phases of the policy process. It is all the more regrettable that the report stresses the vital role of youth organisations in implementing objectives set by public authorities and in contributing to the objectives set.



It is time to value the professionalism and long-term vision of youth organisations' representatives, who need to be involved in ALL phases of public policies.

On the other hand, this graph reveals that the **National Youth Councils have more difficulties to be involved and considered as partners when policies affecting young people are not developed by the youth sector**.

As illustrated in the table above, the percentage of involved youth organisations is always smaller when another stakeholder than the one in charge of the youth sector, develops policies. The Cyprus National Youth Council confirms this situation sharing that *"the role of youth organisations and the CYC is not adequately*

valued and promoted enough by public institutions. We are known and acknowledged by partners in the youth sector. However, public organisations outside the youth sector are not accustomed to the involvement of NGOs in policy making and especially the Cyprus Youth Council."

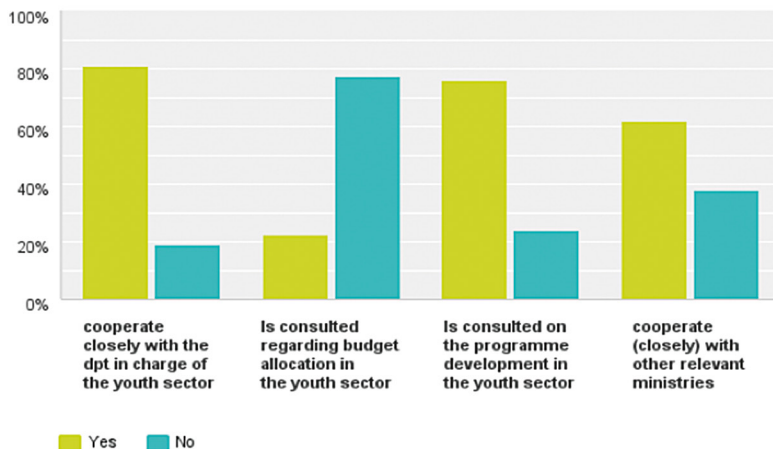
3.1 Cooperation with the government

The level of cooperation between the National Youth Councils and the Member States is rather positive, **with 80% of the respondents cooperating closely with the department in charge of the youth sector**. On a less positive note, **cooperation is too often based on a consultation basis, and lacks follow-up**, whereas true participation should go beyond consultation and along all stages of policy-making from the conception till the monitoring.

When we asked the National Youth Councils if they feel valued enough by the public authorities, 72% answer negatively. The cuts to funding and institutional support (notably caused by the crisis), the lack of recognition outside the youth department, the lack of strongly established cooperation based on trust and mutual respect were some of the reasons mentioned by the respondents.

Q11. On the cooperation with the government, your organisation...

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



This highlights the limits in the awareness of the youth sector, outside the youth department.

Moreover, it seems that **the “culture of participation in policy-making” is much less developed outside the youth sector.** *“While our involvement is better in vertical policies in the youth sector (participation, youth work, youth organisations, communication, informal education) and some policies that affect young people (employment,), it is weaker in some horizontal policies that still have a big impact on autonomy of youth (formal education, housing, health, education policy)”* (National Youth Council Slovenia)

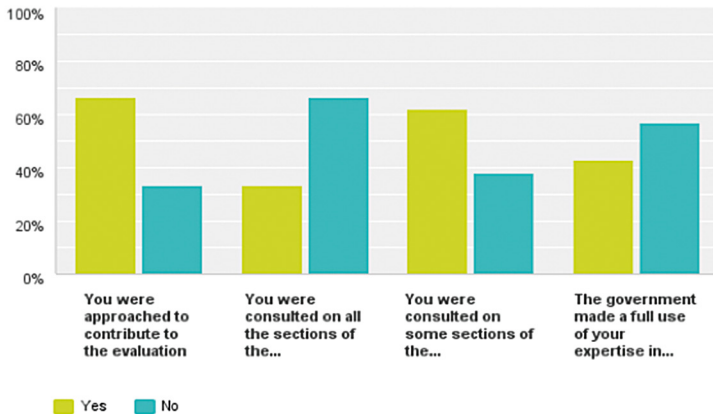
62% of the respondents claim that they do not work in close cooperation with other ministries than the one dealing with youth.

Involvement in programming and budgeting is very limited, but well developed in Spain, Croatia and Portugal, where there is a strong involvement of the National Youth Council in the Erasmus + coordinating body.

To confirm this fragile cooperation, **57% of the respondents considered that their expertise has not been fully taken into account by the national Government when responding to the EU Youth Report consultation coming from the European Commission.** Indeed,

Q16. Regarding the EY Youth Report 2015

Answered: 21 Skipped: 1



67% of the National Youth Councils were approached by the Government to contribute to only one section (most often the one of the SD). We regret that the value and expertise of youth organisations has not been taken into account sufficiently.

3.2 Financial support

81% of the responding National Youth Councils receive financial support from their national Government, which proves already certain recognition from decision-makers of their role. However, when asking more in depth about the kind of funding received (for those who receive funding), we realise that there is a vast diversity of situations.

Only 50% of National Youth Councils consider that they receive sufficient funding to ensure their independence and sustainability as an organisation.

As presented by the National Youth Council of Slovenia “Financial stability has a big impact on independence and involvement of youth organisations in policy-making process of youth policies. This is why it is essential to ensure adequate financial, administrative and infrastructure support for youth organisations and consequently realisation of their potential in participation in democratic process.” (National Youth Council of Slovenia) Financial sustainability is therefore still an important issue for youth organisations.

While youth is repeatedly claimed to be one of the top on priorities for national governments, funding is not sufficiently made available to ensure that youth organisations can continue carrying out grassroots work with young people.


“Another big challenge is the budget allocated to the youth sector - there should be more financial initiatives, other than one call for projects per year funded by the ministry (with the implementation period focused on summer)” (Romanian National Youth Council-CTR).

We call for Member States to ensure sustainable funding to youth organisations.

3.3 The Youth Guarantee and the validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning: youth organisations role unrecognised

Designed to move young people into employment, the Youth Guarantee’s effectiveness critically hinges on the comprehensive participation of young people in its implementation. In its recommendation establishing the Youth Guarantee, **the Council recommends the Member States ensure the consultation or involvement of young people and/or youth organisations in designing and further developing the Youth Guarantee scheme.** This aims to ensure that the national Youth Guarantee schemes are services tailored towards the needs of the young beneficiaries and to make youth organisations act as multipliers in awareness-raising activities.

This stands in stark contrast to the Recommendation of the Council. Furthermore, of those involved, **only four (18%) National Youth Councils have been comprehensively and continuously participating in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee scheme.** The other four National Youth Councils have either been only consulted at an early stage or only involved once the Youth Guarantee was up and running.



When asked about their involvement in devising the national Youth Guarantee schemes, however, only eight out of 22 (36%) National Youth Councils report that their government has involved them.

A few good practices...

The Croatian Youth Network has been actively involved in the process of creating the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) in Croatia. Our representative was the chairman of the task force for developing the YGIP. *“We are currently members of a body that is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Croatia. Unfortunately, this committee does not meet regularly. Implementation actions are therefore one-sided and pre-determined by the Ministry of Labour and pension system.”*

A good practice has been reported by Slovenia. **In the run up to the adoption of the Youth Guarantee, there was a broad coalition of youth and civil society organisations advocating for its introduction.** The instruments developed during the advocacy campaign, like a website and a Facebook page, are used until today to raise the awareness of young people about the scheme. In this campaign, a series of events and actions were organised, including high-level panels with the Prime Minister. During the negotiation process on the implementation of the scheme that lasted almost three months, youth organisations and the trade union youth made several proposals on how to improve the Slovenian Youth Guarantee. As member of the national working group on the Youth Guarantee, the National Youth Council of Slovenia also actively monitors the effectiveness and efficiency of the Youth Guarantee scheme and proposes improvements for the next financial period. It states that they are closely cooperating with the Ministry of Labour.

Therefore, we urge the Member State to ensure:

- Strong involvement of youth organisations to reach out to the most vulnerable young people. Thanks to their network and their everyday work, youth organisations can be intermediaries between young people and Public Employment Services;
- A better communication of the scheme in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and in particular youth organisations.

3.4 Youth organisations' expertise and perspective is not taken into account in the development of National Mechanisms for validation of Non Formal and Informal Education

The Council Resolution on validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning was adopted in December 2012. The recommendation sets as an objective the development, by 2018, of national mechanisms for validating the learning that has been acquired outside the formal education system and training. The Council recommendation *"promotes the involvement in the development and implementation (...) of all relevant stakeholders, such as employers, trade unions, chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, national entities involved in the process of recognition of professional qualifications, employment services, youth organisations, youth workers, education and training providers, and civil society organisations."*

The involvement of youth organisations in this process is **all the more relevant as every year they provide to millions of young people different types of educational experiences** that support them in their development as fulfilled and empowered individuals, serving as active members of society.

Throughout the consultation, we can notice that **only 36% of the National Youth Councils responding to the survey, were involved in national processes towards the development of national validation arrangements.** This is a very small number, bearing in mind that youth organisations are one of the main providers of Non Formal and Informal learning, and that it would be crucial to have them involved in order to explain the reality and specificities of this environment.

The Youth Forum regrets to see that the expertise of youth organisations is not taken seriously. This is all the more disappointing that **National Youth Councils have both interest and expertise in the field of validation. Half of the respondents (11 National Youth Councils) and 5 (out of 9) INGYO mentioned that they are working, within their organisations, on the development of validation mechanism¹.** This could be a real added value for national authorities to get inspired from these experiences and learn from youth organisations. They have a wealth of expertise in the youth field when it comes to self-awareness and self-recognition and national Governments should make use of it.

1 By validation mechanism, we encompass the 4 stages of validations that have been identified in the Council Resolution, namely identification, documentation, assessment and certification. It is important to note that validation doesn't have to lead to qualification to be completed, it can stop before.

Below are some of the tools the developed by youth organisations and aiming to supporting their members in identifying and documenting the skills and competences that they have acquired in through their active involvement in their youth organisations.

PRACTICES FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

“Personal competence profiles of youth workers were defined, a set of self-evaluation tools published and disseminated, as well as an online Personal Competence Portfolio developed. The Youth Councils takes part in various international initiatives such as the project “Road to recognition” aiming to exchange best practices in validation – supported by the former Grundtvig programme.”(Czech National Youth Council)

“Certificates for participants and volunteers, and NJR is working on an online platform on which skills and activities done in the past are visible on a personal page, visible for everyone.” (Dutch National Youth Council)

“Three of our MOs (Don Bosco, ASDE – WOSM and Didania, Christian Leisure Time Schools) have created a network call RECONOCE (Acknowledge) which is still in construction, and which identifies 12 key competences and is setting a pack of standards to allow the assessment by organisations, volunteers and companies, of the acquisition of these competences. CJE is giving institutional support and trying to increase the impact of this initiative.” (CJE)

In spite of working in the right direction, youth organisations are often not taken seriously enough in the negotiations around the validation of NFE and informal learning mechanisms, as regards to other actors which provide “out of work training, or adult education.”

It is crucial to further involve and acknowledge the expertise of youth organisations in this issue, and to involve them from an early stage, in the national reflections taking place on this topic.

CONCLUSION

Through broad and in-depth consultation with youth organisations across Europe, this shadow report points out several key elements of youth policy that should be considered by policy-makers in view of their implementation.

It has clearly been demonstrated that youth policy **needs to be properly coordinated** in order to support young people's development. The EU and Member States need to keep making efforts in order to ensure that **youth remains a priority in all relevant sectors** and that there is a coherent and coordinated approach to the policy answers provided.

Moreover, it has been demonstrated that whilst there is a need for specific efforts to address young people with fewer opportunities (physical, social, economical), **youth policies must address all young people** in a holistic manner. Otherwise, the policies might be perceived as stigmatising by the target group. Young people who are not the target will feel excluded and are likely to disengage, making policy efforts completely counter-productive.

Most importantly, youth policy has to empower young people in order to find meaning and to be fully integrated in their communities and society as a whole, but they also need to be empowered to positively contribute to the building of diverse and respectful societies. **The Shadow Reports highlights that this can occur by supporting political participation, giving a role to young people and acknowledging their expertise as well as by maximising the potential of youth work and youth organisations** that provide educational programmes for other young people. This explains the need for a two-fold focus on young people and their environment as well as cross-sectoral efforts in implementing them.

The European Youth Forum and its member organisations repeat that youth organisations are true and legitimate representatives of young people, more than political parties representatives can ever represent society. Being democratic, participative and youth-led grass-root organisations, they must be partners in youth policy-making. More support

and recognition will allow them to grow stronger and contribute not only to policy-making but also to its implementation. **The EU Youth Report still does not reflect this. The role of this Shadow report to demonstrate examples of how youth organisations have contributed to reaching the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy.**

Young people are growing and evolving in a continuously-changing fast paced society and environment. They must be empowered with the tools to prosper. Beyond ensuring access to social and economic rights, youth policy will need to increasingly adapt and deal with a wide range of factors, ranging from an ageing European society, to the migration flows, and to an increased impact of the digital area on the daily life of (young) citizens.

Ultimately, youth policy cannot be built as a reaction to external threat and fear. It will be crucial to ensure that youth policy remains reactive to young people's changing circumstances and focuses on releasing their potential.

