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Consultative Meeting

Addressing challenges to transition to working life and autonomy of young people in Europe

18 - 19 February 2014

European Youth Centre Strasbourg

REPORT

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Introduction

The Consultative meeting on the transition of young people to autonomy and working/labour life took place in the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, on 18 - 19 February 2014, aiming to define the approaches and priorities of the new expected result of the youth sector of the Council of Europe on how education and training can contribute to young people's autonomy and a better transition from education to working life/labour market' in the policy and programme of the Youth Department.

Transition to autonomy and labour life is a newly expected result in the programme of activities of the Council of Europe aiming to develop innovative youth policy and youth work responses to the current challenges posed to young people. The expected result and associated activities are planned to run for two years (2014-2015) in the programme of the Council of Europe Youth Department, but it is highly likely to be continued in the future. The expected result and related activities are supporting and advancing the work done by the Council of Europe Youth Department on access to social rights, youth participation and human rights education and recognition of non-formal learning and youth work.

The specific objectives of the meeting were:

- To map existing youth policy initiatives addressing young people's autonomy and a better transition from education to working life/labour market;
- To map initiatives within youth work and by youth organisations that address the topic;
- To clarify the links between the new expected result and the previous and on-going projects of the Youth Department and their results;
- To define the scope in terms of sub-priorities, target groups and type of activities to be developed within this new expected result in 2014 and 2015;
- To identify stakeholders to involve in the preparation and implementation of activities under the new expected result;
- To explore the expectations for the "Forever Young?" Symposium on challenges to transition to working life and autonomy of young people in Europe to be organised in the fall of 2014.

The meeting gathered key stakeholders, including the representatives of the statutory bodies of the youth sector, both from the CDEJ and the Advisor Council on Youth, the European Youth Forum, international youth organisations working closely on this topic and other sectors of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

The programme of the meeting was devised to start from experiences of the participants on the topic of transitions and a definition of the concepts we operate within the expected result, to mapping the potential role and function that youth work and youth policy play in the process of transition of young people to adulthood. Furthermore, the participants had the time to identify the challenges faced by young people in the transition process in the current context of the economic crisis and reflected over the potential changes in the transition process as opposed to other generations. While the first day was more dedicated to understand the context and realise an initial mapping of potential solutions/actions, the second day of programme aimed to articulate an action plan for the Youth Department for the next four-five years and to gather ideas and expectations for the activities foreseen in the next two years.

The meeting was successful in as far as it managed to provide the Youth Department of the Council of Europe with a close insight on what is already existent in the field (institutions and organisations, initiatives, research, policy measures, etc.) and to come up with concrete proposals on what the contribution of the youth sector of the Council of Europe can be for this area of youth work and youth policy. Several principles stemmed out as essential for the participants:

- a. the Action Plan has to operate in a human rights framework and have a human rights approach;
- b. transition to adulthood encompasses more processes than just access to labour market for young people. Without neglecting the importance of the employability of young people as well as the opportunities and support they need to have to access the labour market, other processes such as access to housing, health or social security, access to education, along with the capacity to exercise the right to participate are essential in a successful transition process and should not be left aside in the light of the current emergency posed by the unemployment crisis;

- c. access and capacity to enjoy and exercise one's human rights, and particularly social rights, has to inform the work done with young people and with other stakeholders in youth policy and youth work;
- d. cooperation with other stakeholders is essential for the success of such an initiative. This has to start from involvement in the discussion of education and labour sectors, as major players, but should as well include the private sector and different agencies and services that although are not primarily targeted at young people, serve an important role in their transition to adulthood (i.e. local authorities, job seeking agencies and services).
- e. the specific needs of vulnerable youth need to be taken into consideration and a constant need assessment needs to be done together with them. Particular legal situations, such as the one of unaccompanied and separated minor refugees and asylum seekers should be paid specific attention to and complementary measures should be taken.
- f. Successful intervention stories are always contextual; policy measures are more relevant at national level, while the European will serve as a framework and guidance. Exchanges of good practices are relevant in as far as there is room for adaptation.
- g. Youth work and non-formal education can contribute a lot to the transition process of young people, and are already doing so. For this to be reinforced, there is a need to advance the recognition agenda at national and local level, as means to both add to the recognition and validation of the competences acquired by young people through youth work and non-formal learning, but also to give the sector the means and priority necessary to further develop quality work.

Further information about the proposed activities and their articulation can be found in the dedicated chapter to the action plan. While 2014 is a preparation, networking and mapping year in the whole action plan, 2015 already involved meetings at national level and a training course focused on transition processes involving policy makers, youth workers and representatives of other sectors involved in the process. The online platform should support exchange of practices and initiatives, but also to gather statistical data and support networking between different actors.

What do we mean by transition to autonomy and work life? What does it entail for young people?

The first day of the meeting was dedicated to defining transitions to work and labour life and mapping the opportunities and challenges that young people are facing in today's societies, as well as sharing the experiences of work on the topic in the group and learning from them. The group expressed the need to clarify what is meant when we talk about transition to autonomy and work life of young people, as well as to reflect how we can respond to such questions as: when does the process of transition start and when does it end? What are the particular aspects that such a process entails? What are the challenges and opportunities young people experience in this period? Moreover, eventually what is a successful transition to adulthood?

In an attempt to identify factors that define autonomy of young people, the group came up with the following list, which is not to be seen as exhaustive:

- Capacity and resources to make decisions independently;
- Access and respect to human rights, with a particular focus on access to social rights. The following were mentioned by the group as being essential: access to social security, access to work opportunities that suit one's needs and desires; access to education opportunities; access to social security and health; access to housing.
- Recognition as equal in the society, including capacity and possibility to participate at all levels and in all aspects. This includes citizenship and participation competences.
- A sense of self-esteem and resilience;
- The existence of support networks;
- Financial independence.

It is very hard to define when the transition period to adulthood starts and ends, since it involves many processes from psychological to acquirement of legal responsibilities, to financial independence, but as well such processes as establishing a family of one's own or having a personal living space. Eventually, each young person has its own transition story and trajectory that is marked by different

circumstances and contexts, opportunities and challenges, and eventually different starting points, so the end of such a transition process is a subjective opinion. However, there are objective factors that can be assessed in the process.

Similarly, the transition to working life was defined as a period characterized by active job search and/or career options for young people and finalized with stable satisfactory employment (quality employment). What many studies reveal is that the transition phase might entail several work experiences by young people that can give different level of satisfaction and work experience. Equally, there is the possibility that young people return to the transition phase, and also sometimes they might not finish the transition phase while still within the scope of youth policy (where defined by age limits).

As Howard Williamson highlighted in his input on the topic¹, what needs to concern us are the quality of life they are *living* in the transition process, but also the quality of life they are *building*.

The process of ‘coming out of age’, as once defined, has varied from generation to generation in terms of trajectories, opportunities and challenges that define it. However, there are elements that different generations identify as being relevant: education and vocational training, employment, health, housing, crime, relationships, leisure time and opportunities, travel and mobility and hobbies. In comparison with other generations, the transition process is not as direct and clear as it once used to be. There is, therefore, not one single trajectory, transitions rather than transition are multiple, are complex, and are reversible. They deal with questions of opportunity and risk, of inclusion and exclusion, of identity to mention a few.

The experiences of childhood and youth period influence the transition to autonomy, hence the barriers and opportunities that young people experience in this period, be they real or perceived, are of huge relevance in their transition period. At global level, we can speak of a gender gap in terms of equality, which although mostly measured for adults has significant roots in the transition period.

Transition to adulthood happens in many diverse cultural contexts in Europe and a sensitive approach to local situations is needed. Cultural expectations and indicators

¹ Howard Williamson, Forever Young – Transition and what does it mean for young people today, Presentation held during the consultative meeting, available online here: <http://www.slideshare.net/hrecoc/strasbourg-forever-young-201402131>

of what means to become an adult are diverse and sometimes contradictory within the scope of one country. For example, the establishment of a household can be a marker, while in others living with parents might be consistent with all adult roles.² Transitions to adulthood are also subject to historical contexts, the current one being of the youth unemployment crisis in Europe, the rapid development of the information technology and social networks, the increased mobility of young people, globalisation and an increased speed of societal changes. This implies generational gaps that do not always allow that the transition process to be prepared exclusively on an extrapolation based on learning from experiences of previous generations.

The success of the transition process is generally measured at individual level and is of subjective matter, but as Amartya Sen explains the aim of the process is to ensure young people develop capabilities that will allow them ‘to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have’.³

The Milltown boys of Howard Williamson have started their transition period in correction facilities in Wales, and many of them have lived lives marked by marginalisation. However, many have made life choices that will not fit the ‘normative’ pattern of success, as defined by policy or culture and yet come to live a full life. They equally give an account on the difference in life opportunities, challenges different groups have within a transition process.⁴

While the transition process concern youth work and youth policy primarily, it does not exclusively concern youth sector: is a shared responsibility with other policy areas, such as formal education and labour policies to name the obvious.

Challenges to a successful transition process young people face nowadays

The second level of mapping realised together in the consultative meeting aimed at determining the current context and the challenges that young people face in their transition process to autonomy and work life. This exercise was essential in

² National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries*. Panel on Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries, Cynthia B. Lloyd, ed. Committee on Population and Board on Children, Youth, and Families. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2005, p 25.

³ Amartya Sen, *Editorial: Human capital and human capability*, in *World Development*, 25(12),1997.

⁴ Howard Williamson, *Professional fouls*, in *The Guardian*, based on the research ‘The Milltown Boys Revisited’, Bloomsberry Academic, 2004.

understanding the areas of intervention and support that youth work and youth policy at different levels can act in.

Access to human rights in general constitutes a great area of concern for participants in the consultative meeting. This starts with young people’s access to information and education about their human rights and goes forward to the lack of competences to access and exercise their human rights or act against human rights violations. Furthermore, the different systems in place fail to ensure the necessary provisions for the enjoyment of particular human rights at stake in the transition process.

Access to social rights constitutes a major area of challenge in the transition period of young people in Europe nowadays. The provisions of the European Social Charter highlight some of the most painful areas in what concerns young people today.

Access to the labour market and the choice of a profession of their own are issues of high concern in the current youth unemployment crisis. According to an International Labour Organisation study, the youth unemployment rate has doubled in the European Union since the beginning of the crisis, with percentages arising to 56.8% in Greece, 53.9% in Spain and 49.0% in Croatia at the beginning of 2014. The 50% barrier has also been broken in countries such as Serbia, ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ and Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁵ Besides this a high number of



⁵ For further statistical information on youth unemployment, see: Eurostat, Euro area unemployment rate at 11.8%. EU 28 at 10.5%, available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-02052014-AP/EN/3-02052014-AP-EN. (accessed 20 May 2014) and Global Employment Trends 2014: Risk of a jobless recovery?, International Labour Office, Geneva, ILO, 2014.

young people are currently labelled as NEETs (not in employment, education and training), with their number reaching as high as 14 million in 2014. The European Social Charter (revised) contains specific provisions for the right to work, the access to labour market of young people and the investment in training and apprenticeships opportunities for them.

The risks of a delayed process of transition to labour market have been highlighted by many studies to have a severe impact on life projects in the long-run; they do affect access to social security schemes, professional development and, not the least, the self-esteem and resilience of young people.

The current concerns have led to policy measures within European Union (the Youth Guarantee and associated measures) and beyond and have placed the youth unemployment crisis on the agenda of the policy makers. However, the focus seemed to be on the employability of young people and a current shift in educational policies (of all sorts) to ensure that employability is increased.

Precarious work opportunities pose a big challenge to young people nowadays as most of the work opportunities they can access are characterized by low level of qualification (sometimes much lower than their level of education and qualification), are temporary and provide little or no social security. This impacts not only on their transition to autonomy, but as well on their general well-being and life prospects. A delayed integration on labour market and the capacity to access only precarious jobs affects on youth's capacity to build up a successful adult life and on society in the current system of social protection. The costs of this delayed transition are still to constitute the scope of a research that can better inform youth, education and labour policies at European level. This generally relates with the capacity of job centres and guidance services to cater for young people and to be sensitive to their needs in the process of integrating themselves on the labour market.

The International Labour Organisation has defined the existence of 'a crisis before the crisis', given that youth unemployment rates were already rising at a steady pace before the outburst of the current financial crisis. The questions of mismatch of skills between the demand of the market and the generational offer, a certain inflation of the educational system and an already delayed process of transition was making its way through. In this overall bleak situation, those who are part of vulnerable groups are

finding themselves to deal with even bleaker life prospects, as they now compete on the job market with over-qualified peers.

While this is an obvious concern, the participants in the consultative meeting were concerned that the focus is on young people as a problem and an issue, rather than on society and macro-economic measures. The depiction of the current generation of young people as the 'NEETs', the 'lost generation' cumulated with an aggravated sense of disenchantment with the current system, lack of opportunities to meaningfully participate in decision making processes lead to a further crisis of marginalization of young people in Europe nowadays.

Access to quality education, training and apprenticeships schemes are also a question of concern in respect to youth's capacity to choose independently a life project and as well for the level with which these schemes are driven both ways, being decided by those shaping the labour market and young people.

Recognition of the competences acquired through non-formal education and youth work is still limited, though successful initiatives exist. A wealth of skills and experience acquired by many young people is ignored in the process of integration on the labour market, and the field is given little support for the work done.

Other social rights neglected concern: access to housing, access to health services, access to social security schemes and measures to combat the effects of a delayed access to the labour market for the current generation of young people conjugated with a lack of proper information on the consequences it has on their life prospects, along with heavy concerns of discrimination. The questions of freedom of mobility and of labour market driven migration of young people should also be reflected and researched.

In the current situation, the prospects of the creation of an international treaty to protect against age-based discrimination and to ensure specific measures for the enjoyment of human rights by youth as a particular vulnerable part of the population are advancing as a meaningful solution. The work and arguments brought forward by the European Youth Forum speak in this direction.

However, while new international instruments might prove part of the solution, it is clear that policy and youth work responses to the current situation are required. This

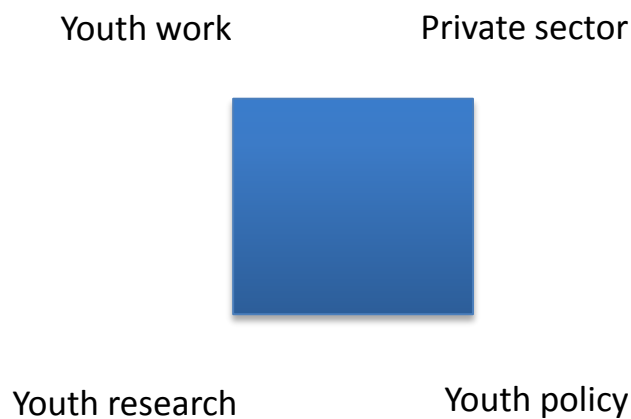
starts with a broader perspective to the transitions process and with basing these policies on human rights principles.

Participation of young people stems out as a condition to ensure that policy measures, in youth sector and beyond, are realised with their input and consultation, while ensuring that their needs, and not only those of the labour market, are taken into account. Information services that provide them with clear youth friendly information about the impact of the choices made now and that come to support them in making choices that are in accordance with their needs and desires are also needed.

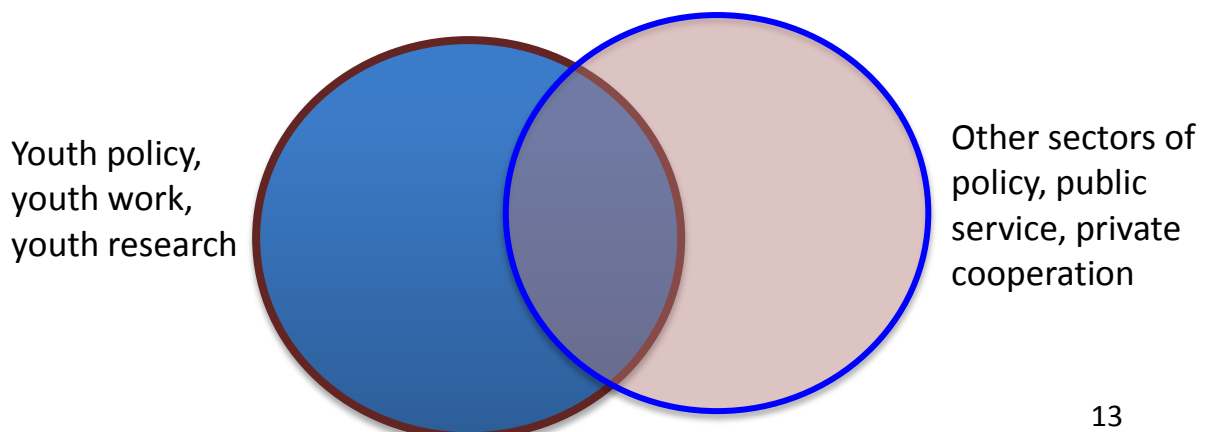
While a number of good practices exist at national level, little cooperation exists at international level. Many of the practices are contextual and can hardly be applied at European level, hence the conclusion that most of the focus of such a programme by the Council of Europe has to focus on strengthening the capacity of national actors to devise policies and programmes. Similarly, it is clear that successful policies rely on the cooperation of different stakeholders, coherent integrated policies in respect to education, youth, labour market and economy, as well as social affairs, and are beyond the sole scope of youth work and youth policy.

Shaping directions for innovative youth policies and youth work in support of successful transitions of young people to work and labour life

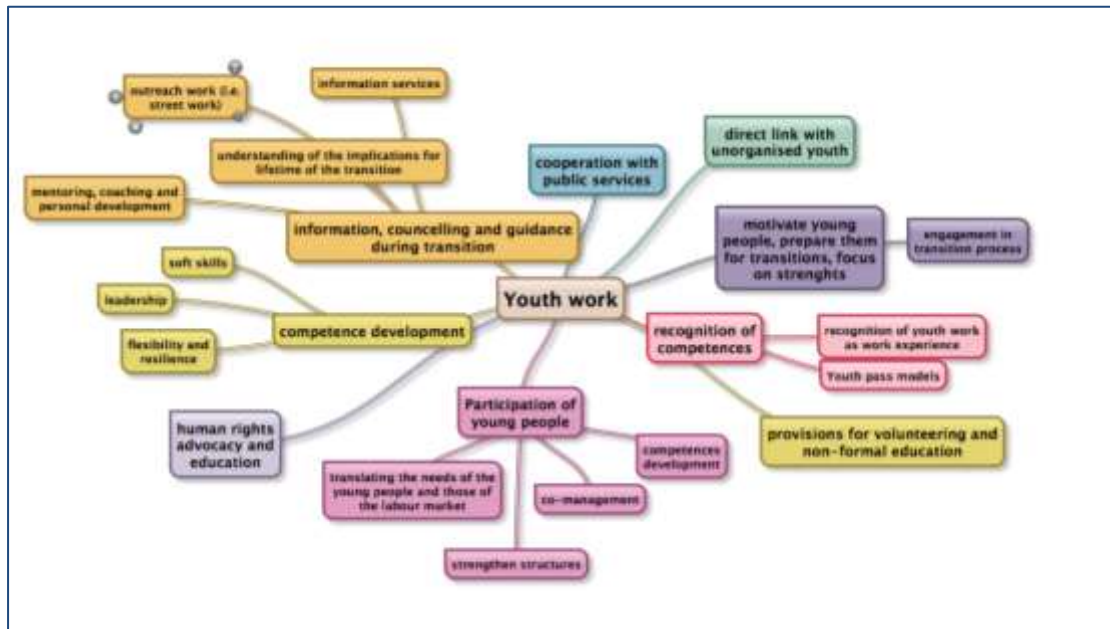
While much is dependent on the cooperation between the different policy sectors, the consultative meeting was concerned to identify the scope and contribution of youth work and youth policy to ensure successful transitions to autonomy and work life.



The 'magic triangle' of youth policy is essential in the development and implementation of such a programme, as there is a clear need for dialogue between policy makers, practitioners and researchers in further defining the steps in such a programme of the Council of Europe. The process of transition falls within the scope of many stakeholders, the participants propose to expand the partnership to integrate as well the experiences and views of the private sector and of other policy areas, such as employment and labour and formal education.



A summary of the discussions is available in the graphic below:



Several areas where the contribution of the youth work is essential in the successful transition of young people to autonomy and work/labour life emerged out of the discussions of the working groups as outlined below:

- a. **Participation** of young people, especially in what concerns the development of competences to participate in decision-making and a particular attention given to the strengthening of the structures of young people and their organisations. The model of the co-management can serve a great deal at national level to ensure that youth voices are taken into account both when designing youth policies, but as well when it comes to other policy sectors. A particular role that youth work has is to translate the needs of youth to different actors and equally translate the needs of the labour market to young people and facilitate the dialogue between the two.
- b. Youth work can contribute to **motivating** young people, especially in a context where much of the public discourse is discouraging, and support them in identifying their strengths and competences, focus on building their

resilience and engagement in the transition process. This links with building their competences needed for such a process, such as soft skills.

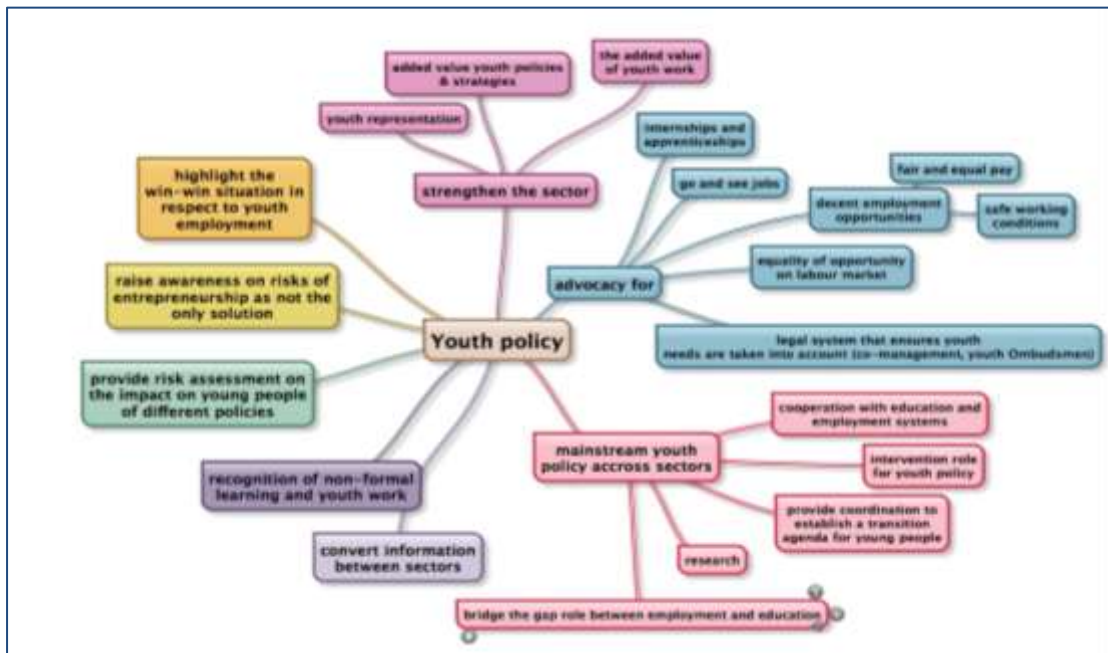
- c. **Information**, counselling and guidance services play an important role in the transition(s) process, and this particular area of youth work should be involved in the programme of the Council of Europe. Mentoring and coaching are useful tools often used in youth work, together with well-equipped information services and campaigns that target youth in a proper manner and addresses their needs rather than the needs of the labour market.
- d. The **cooperation** of youth work and other public services is also essential in both assisting young people.

The current debates and concerns with the transition of young people to adulthood, seen from the narrow perspective of youth employment force as well youth workers to focus on the individual development of competences and choices that lead to successful integration on the labour market. However important that is, youth work has the function of working together with young people as a collective as well to solve social problems. It goes beyond the individual biographies, although relevant and important in the process, and focuses on the development of competences of participation, of critical citizenship and is concerned with democracy and human rights respect. This was an important dimension that the group highlighted when looking at the functions and the role of both youth work and the principles on which youth policy should be based upon.

A summary of the discussion on the contribution of the youth policy in the graphic below:

Several areas of intervention for youth policy also emerged in the discussions of the participants:

- a. Advocacy area focused on ensuring legal provisions for youth participation either under the form of co-management, youth Ombudsperson or similar measures. Another area of advocacy and cooperation between youth policy and other policy areas focuses on providing: equality of opportunity on the labour market for young people and on providing decent employment opportunities. A particular attention will be given to internship and apprenticeships schemes that support and prepare young people for the labour market and develop their competences, while still making sure that these schemes are not abused to acquire cheap labour force. Programmes such as ‘go and see jobs’ are also



essential in supporting orientation on the labour market for young people.

- b. Mainstreaming youth across policy sectors is another important role that youth policy needs to undertake in order to ensure cooperation and consistency between education and labour policies, and to inform the human rights based approach to these policies, as well as to bridge the gap in between the former two, provide and convert information that is relevant for all.

- c. It is important to avoid focusing on entrepreneurship as the only solution to the current levels of youth unemployment. Youth research should also be focused to provide accurate data and research on the impact of delayed and long transitions on young people, as well as to provide risk assessment for different policies.
- d. Recognition of non-formal learning and education, as well as recognition of the experiences and contribution of youth work and youth organisations need to constitute an important aspect of the work.

Youth research and knowledge gathering should also be part of the efforts to ensure successful transitions and should focus on better visibility to different practices at local and national level, as well as to providing a space/platform for discussion and exchange. A common concern is the gathering of quick data and aggregate research stemming from different sectors, but as well in terms of monitoring the impact of current youth policies.

An action plan for the Council of Europe Youth Department

The second day of the consultative meeting focused on shaping the expected result of the Council of Europe for the period 2014-5, and beyond it, as it is clear that the first two years are to be seen as a starting point in achieving consistent results.

The Secretariat presented what has been foreseen in the programme of activities, particularly for 2014:

- a consultative meeting to better inform the overall programme and give basis for the work to be undertaken (February 2014);
- a seminar addressed to National Youth Councils and governmental representatives on youth employment policies (EYCB, September 2014)
- a symposium provisionally entitled 'Forever young?' (EYCS, December 2014) focusing on gathering relevant actors from the youth sector and beyond
- an online platform to facilitate the aggregation of research, good practices and facilitate the exchange between different actors
- study sessions realized together with international youth organisations, particularly in cooperation with ETUC and IUSY.

The programme for 2015 was to be defined particularly based on the results of the consultative meeting, but should further involve the development of the platform.

Participants in the consultative meeting were invited to reflect on the objectives of the expected result for the upcoming 4-5 years and to propose activities to support it for the next two years, while defining specific expectations for the activities planned for 2014. What follows is a proposal for an action plan based on the proposals of the working groups in the Consultative meeting, as well as the detailed reflection on particular upcoming activities. The results of the working groups on the action plan are appended to this report, while the results of the working groups on the particular activities foreseen for 2014 have been integrated here.

There is a clear need to base the current project within the framework of the work done by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in the field so far, and notably in relation to the work on:

- a. **access to social rights** in the framework of the Enter! Project. A specific attention should be given to the Recommendation on access to social rights for all young people and its foreseen provisions, and the learning taken from the training courses with youth workers. Advocacy measures for the adoption and further on implementation of the recommendation should be taken also in conjunction with the current project on transitions to autonomy and labour life and the two should inform each other. furthermore, the work of the Youth Department should be correlated, should build upon and inform the work of the European Social Committee and measures taken in the implementation of the European Social Charter.⁶
- b. the current debates on **youth access to human rights** in general and the potential for a legal instrument in this sense should also be correlated with the current project.
- c. the provisions of the **Charter on youth participation** at regional and local level should also inform the work on transition, along with a close correlation of the work done to further address indicators for youth participation and involvement of local and regional authorities.⁷
- d. the work done around the implementation of the **Charter on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education** along with efforts to ensure access to human rights education for all young people are also seen as related with the current work on transition to autonomy and labour life.
- e. the current project on advancing the agenda on **recognition of youth work and non-formal learning**, along with the recognition and validation of competences acquired by young people in the framework of those is also seen as intrinsically linked with the current project, providing opportunities of mutual support.

⁶ More information about the Enter! project is available here: <http://enter.coe.int/>

⁷ More information available here: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/Youth_Participation_Charter_en.asp

Before defining the activities and specific objectives of such an action plan, the group stressed the following working principles as being essential when formulating the contribution of the youth sector of the Council of Europe.

These guiding principles are:

- a. a **human rights based approach**, with a specific focus on social rights, but as well entailing human rights education, information and reflection on how measures related to the current crisis respect human rights principles, and a particular focus on youth participation in the process.
- b. the programme should go **beyond the focus on youth employment**, and strive to take into account and deal with the multiple facets of transition to autonomy.
- c. A programme based on **constant needs assessment and dialogue** between young people and youth organisations (including here youth workers), policy makers in the youth sector and beyond and youth research, with the addition of the private sector as a key player in shaping the agenda on employment and transition.
- d. constant reflection on the **needs of vulnerable** groups and articulation of specific policy measures and youth work responses that respond to their concerns. A special attention should be given to their involvement in all stages of the project.
- e. a **cross-sectorial approach**. The activities in the programme should strive to involve a variety of ‘new’ partners in the process: policy makers in other fields such as education and labour market, trade unions and their youth branches, where existent, private sector representatives, organisations of young entrepreneurs and so on. The initial steps should focus on networking and learning from each other and the programme can serve as framework for doing so.
- f. **youth policy and youth work responses are contextualised**, and their best application is to be found at national and local level. The programme should not seek to find a one size fit all policy response, but be based in its initial stages on learning and facilitating learning from different practices and solutions found at local level. The strength of community based

solution and integrated approaches at local level should be encouraged and tools to support this to be developed.

The Youth Department does not work on its own, its work essentially is there to further and strengthen the work of the member states governments, of youth organisations and of youth workers.

The objectives of the plan defined together are the following:

- a. to promote and continue the work on access to human rights of young people, especially through measures that support their empowerment to exercise their human rights.
- b. to provide a platform for good practice sharing between different actors involved, with a particular focus on systematic research. This can and should involve mapping what already exists in terms of research, but as well filling in the gaps through commissioning research;
- c. to ensure policy support by ensuring that transition agenda is placed on the national youth policy agenda and ensure a transfer of practices between different stakeholders, hence creating a context for cross-sectorial dialogue and integrated policies;
- d. to increase the capacity of youth workers, youth organisations and other services (public or private) involved in the transition processes in supporting young people in their transition to autonomy and work life;
- e. to stimulate and provide the space for dialogue between youth work and other sectors at national and European level, strengthening networking and supporting the search for solutions and responses together;
- f. to advance the recognition of youth work and non-formal education in terms of competences acquired by young people, as well as in respect to their added value and support needed;
- g. to initiate and coordinate the knowledge gathering and research on transition of young people to autonomy and labour life.

Since the work of the Youth Department in different projects and programme intertwines and supports itself, some of these activities are belonging to other expected results, but they do influence the work within this programme and are

relevant to consider in order to ensure coherence and consistency. The programme of activities proposed gradually increases intensity and starts from further attention given to learning from the practice and networking between different stakeholders, to formulation of youth work responses and youth policy recommendations. It is a mixture of local, national and European activities, which is subject to further scrutiny as the programme advances and knowledge is gathered, hence consultation with partners will be essential in the further development.

Timeline of activities proposed:

2014

1. A mapping research on youth employment measures and practices in the framework of the transitions process and making the links with social rights and their accessibility by young people (foreseen to be ready by September 2014)
2. Seminar with National youth councils and governmental representatives on transition to work/labour life and the current challenges faced by young people (September 2014)
3. Mapping research on online platform addressing transition of young people and similar initiatives, aiming to propose the role and function of such a platform, the potential structure and the resources needed to ensure its interactivity.
4. A beta version of the online platform (ideally before December 2014) to allow its testing and improvement
5. Symposium ‘Forever Young?’ aiming to bring together different stakeholders and young people, to support the dialogue between different sectors and to learn from different policy and youth work practices (December 2014). The Symposium should also formulate recommendations for further activities in the programme, i.e. the training course.
6. Study sessions realised in partnership with ETUC and IUSY.

In correlation with the specific activities in the expected result:

- further actions to ensure the adoption of the Enter! Recommendation on access to social rights for all young people and activities to raise awareness and support its implementation;
- activities aiming at the recognition of the non-formal education and youth work.

2015

7. European pilot training course focusing on developing the competences of youth workers, policy makers and representatives of orientation services in supporting young people's transitions to autonomy and work and labour life. The training course will look into cooperation of participant with local stakeholders and aim to develop a methodology of work on the topic, beyond strengthening the competences and capacity of the participants and their supporting organisations/institutions. The training course should also have a multiplying effect at national and local level and should allow for the mainstreaming of
8. a research on 'Transitions to autonomy and work life' of young people with a more specific topic to be defined as a result of consultations held throughout 2014;
9. Support to activities at national level that support the sharing of good practices between different stakeholders and support the cross-sectorial dialogue;
10. Full functioning online platform dedicated to transitions to autonomy and labour life and activities to support its further development in terms of content and usability by stakeholders involved in the programme and beyond.
11. Study sessions realised in cooperation with international youth organisations and networks.

2016-2017

12. Provide research and tools to assess the different measures undertaken at national and European level. Particular tools and potential educational materials are to be identified in the first two years of the programme. This should include the analysis of 'Fake solutions', in respect to research on the efficiency of volunteering and internship schemes.

13. Continued support to national level dialogue and measures, along with support to practices in youth work in the field – testing approaches;
14. Support study sessions in cooperation with international youth organisations and networks in order to further develop practices, approaches and ensure multiplying effect.
15. Continuous development of the online platform;
16. Closely coordinate with the existent efforts to have a non-formal education charter;
17. Ensure the organization of another symposium to take stock of the achievements of the programme and support the preparations for a policy document at European level;
18. Prepare and propose a policy document at European level to inform national youth policies on the transition processes.

THE TRANSITIONS PLATFORM FUNCTION was further defined in working groups. The platform should serve the aim of collecting data (from statistics to research on the topic and sub-topics); to support and showcase examples of practice in order to inspire, mobilise and motivate; to be a platform for networking and dialogue between different stakeholders and to provide resources for advocacy. The platform content should focus on all aspects of transition and should ensure information and educational materials about human rights, but feature such issues as social entrepreneurship and volunteer opportunities.

While the platform addresses a variety of stakeholders with different levels of experience and involvement, it should be accessible to young people and should consider them as a primary target as well. A particular attention to the language used and to aspects of interactivity, safety and data protection and connection with social media is important.

The platform should feature: life trajectories and biographies of transition, concrete examples of projects that were successful and the reasons behind, unsuccessful examples, contacts and information in a youth friendly manner about different policy examples, measures, etc. The platform in itself should be a model on how other online platform could be used at local and national level to foster youth participation and dialogue on the topic of transition.

The **SEMINAR ON ACCESS TO LABOUR MARKET** should strive to be a first platform of dialogue between different stakeholders. The group recommended a thorough mapping of international institutions and organisations active in the field, along with the need to involve as many national representatives relevant in order to ensure the start of the dialogue. It should refocus the discussion on youth employment from a purely economic perspective and look at it from a human rights perspective. The seminar should allow a better understanding of the situation at national level, and support learning from each other in terms of practices and policy measures. The seminar should reflect on how the issue of access to labour market links with other aspects of transition to adulthood and further inform the work to be undertaken by the Council of Europe.

The **SYMPOSIUM ‘FOREVER YOUNG?’** should be an opportunity to gather a variety of partners and stakeholders involved, while aiming to further support dialogue and cooperation at all levels. However, it should ensure that young people are at the centre of the activity, that they inform and shape it and that their voice is truly heard and taken into account. The Symposium should further be a moment to inform the rest of the activities in the action plan and allow a discussion on policy measures and plans.

The activities foreseen in the first year of the programme are meant to ensure a better mapping, understanding and dialogue with stakeholders in order to ensure effective and innovative policy measures.

Conclusions and follow-up

The consultative meeting showed the need to initiate the discussion on the contribution of youth work and youth policy and highlighted the difficulties in understanding what is the specific contribution that can be done by solely these two. It is clear that policies and measures to support transitions to autonomy and work life of young people cannot be done without engaging in cross-sectorial dialogue, and without a continuous reflection and assessment of the impact of policy measures.

Another clear conclusion of the consultative meeting is that it cannot be expected that the current programme provides hard results in the next two years and that work will need to be continued at least in the next biennial cycle of 2016-7 to at least ensure the existence of sustainable results and proposals.

Equally, it is clear that the most relevant work is to be done at national and local level and that the programme of activities of the Department should focus to inform and support the work at these two levels, rather than coming up with 'one-size-fit-all' solutions at European level, hence the proposal to have a policy document and to carefully assess the need and scope of such a document only towards the end of the second cycle (2016-7).

The discussions and proposals of the Consultative meeting will inform the development of the programme of activities of the Youth in the next two years, but it is clear that a constant reflection on the activities to be developed is necessary in developing and informing the programme.

Appendices

Agenda

17 February

Arrival of participants

18 February

8.30 Travel reimbursements (fifth floor – office 5.20)

9.30 Opening and practicalities of the meeting

9.45 Scope, objectives and background to the meeting

10.15 Introduction on participants' experience in relation to transition of young people to autonomy and working life/labour market: what do we do about this?

11.00 Coffee break

11.30 Transition and what does it mean for young people today?

Input and discussion with Howard Williamson

13.00 Lunch break

14.30 Defining the expected results

Mapping the issues and the needs to be considered

Other initiatives and partners to take into account

Objectives

Ways of intervention

Target groups to be involved

16.00 Coffee break

16.30 Working groups on the role and function of youth work and youth policy in supporting transitions of young people to autonomy and work labour

18.00 End of the first day programme

19 February

9.30 Conclusions from the first day

Introduction to the activities foreseen in 2014 and 2015 with Rui Gomes, Head of Education and Training Division, Youth Department

- 10.00 Working groups on specific activities and proposals for the project
- 12.15 Presentation of the results
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Overview of the Action Plan on transitions based on the results of the working groups
- 14. 15 Working groups on defining specific activities for 2014:
 - a. Symposium “Forever Young”
 - b. Seminar with national youth councils and governments on policies for youth employment
 - c. Online platform on transitions
- 15.30 Commitments and roles
 - Support measures related to this expected result (follow-up group etc.)
- 16.00 Summary of the meeting results and closing

20 February

Departure of participants

List of participants

Vinicio Satorato, IUSY

Laura Lopez, European Youth Forum

Anna Ludwinek, Eurofound

Sladjana Petkovic, Pool of European Youth Researchers

Biljana Vasilevska, Youth Social Rights Network and participant in Enter! LTTC

Achilleas Stravrou, youth worker and participant in Enter! LTTC

Milos Ristevski, youth worker and participant in Enter! LTTC

Caroline Bennett, Preparing for adulthood/Council for Disable Children

Nadine Lyamouri, expert

Howard Williamson, expert on youth policy

Sergio BELFOR, Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe

Dimitrios MAKRYSTATHIS, Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe

Lyobomir TODOROV, Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe

David Hayrapetyan, European Steering Committee on Youth, Council of Europe

José Pedro Castro, European Steering Committee on Youth, Council of Europe

Mirka Gajdosova, European Steering Committee on Youth, Council of Europe

Andre Jacques DODIN, Youth Department, Council of Europe

Hanjo Schild, Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth

Marta Medlinska, Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth

Rui Gomes, Youth Department, Council of Europe

Mara Georgescu, Youth Department, Council of Europe

Ruxandra Pandea, Youth Department, Council of Europe

Menno Ettema, Youth Department, Council of Europe

Dr. Howard Williamson, University of South Wales, Forever young – transition and what it means for young people - presentation, 18 February

Available here: <http://www.slideshare.net/hrecoe/strasbourg-forever-young-201402131>

Group work on the role and functions of youth work and youth policy in respect to transitions of young people to autonomy and labour life – 18 February

Group 1

Youth policies for autonomy

Health:

- Health education provided at school as a way to contribute to raising awareness of young people's rights and responsibilities for their health and well-being.

Employment

- access to quality jobs with fair remuneration and safe working conditions;
- equalitarian employment policies regarding minimum wages that prevent discriminatory practices based on age;
- ensuring quality internships for young people that are remunerated;
- measures to support implementation of Youth Guarantee.

Education and competence development

- recognition of the role of youth organisations as providers of quality education;
- validation of competences gained through non-formal education in youth work;
- establishing partnerships among different education providers in different education systems.

Transversal

- Coordinate actors to develop a transition agenda for young people that is cross-sectorial and encompasses all dimensions affecting the life of young people.

Youth work for autonomy

Participation:

- to connect youth policy-makers with young people, bringing together their voice and actions;
- Co-management bodies;
- Spaces & structures for sharing information and practices among young people and between young people and policy-makers;
- Multi-disciplinary research teams composed of researchers, practitioners, young people and policy-makers

Education and competence development:

- information and guidance to strengthen young people's competences in the decision-making process
- empowerment of young people to claim their human rights;
- building young people's competences & facilitating awareness-raising of their competences, so they can clearly communicate them to others;
- reinforcing their competences, particularly their social competences and life skills, as a means to social inclusion and personal development;
- bring together different actors as a way to truly get to know each other without judgments.

Group 2

It is important that the sector exists and that it is strengthened, this requires that in some countries the relevant governmental structures are strengthened or even formed.

Youth policy is the framework for action and youth work is a tool for youth policy. Both of them need to be based on the continuous **needs assessment** (of young people, of youth work and other stakeholders in the field), regularly and proactively updated, this being the basis for the provision(s) of youth work and youth policy.

Youth policy

Legal system should guarantee that youth needs are considered (such systems of consultation and decision making as co-management in the youth sector of the Council of Europe, youth ombudspersons in Sweden; youth councils should be in place). While it is important to work with experts in the process of devising youth policy measures, it is equally important that young people feel ownership and are not alienated from the process. This will lead to gratification and motivation of young

people, especially if given feedback on how youth influenced decisions, they will experience responsibility taking.

Functions of youth policy

a. cross-sectorial

Youth policy has the role to convert information from other agencies/services to bring to young people and vice versa. If there is no opportunity for direct participation and for non-organised youth, it is important to establish channels of communication in order to avoid that participation is reserved only for a group of privileged youth. The main responsibility is to bring the voice of youth to youth policy and other sectors, e.g. interference principle: intervening in policies.

b. youth policy has the role **to bridge the gap** with other sectors. This can be done using several strategies: research; coordination between different sectors.

c. Education

Youth work has a complementary role to formal education: it allows for a better outreach to youth; or substituting it, for those for whom formal education is not an option; (deformalizing the formal education!)

d. Employment

1. internships_– clear end (learning and other) outcomes; trade off question;

2. go and see the jobs_– how they really are.

e. **Bridging the gap between employment and education** – providing statistics on offer and demand

Youth work

a) Provision of non-formal education and volunteering opportunities for capacity building.

b) Welfare organisations such as Caritas and others should be considered as youth work providers and supported as such, easing transition between school and work (within a monitored framework of soft skills provision as an expected outcome)

c) Offering information and advice:

○ information centres/materials;

○ mentoring and coaching; e.g. social workers working in school classes, focused on individuals; youth workers may establish what the gaps

might be and helping to identify where the information needs to come from;

- youth and information centres/clubs open to all (!) young people;
- street work.

Group 3

Youth research

- to map and monitor system existing policies/practices in the field of transition to autonomy and their effects;
- to monitor pilot projects and their effects; to impact assessment (what works, what did not work);
- to research about transition realities, including here the variety in different countries, but as well the differences between different groups of young people and to propose relevant strategies to cover the different dimensions.

Youth work

- has the role to establish platforms for inter-sectorial dialogue (research)
- to demonstrate the role of cross-sectorial dialogue and the relevance of dialogue between different practitioners;
- to provide specialized training for youth workers and leaders to deal with the topic of transition;
- investment of crowd-funding;

Youth policy

- how to draw policy from different experiences in the field; requires that youth policy and decision makers are in close contact with youth workers and organisations active in the field;
- to work on the improvement of the dialogue between different stakeholders (private sector, other governmental agencies, etc), ensure sharing of experiences and coordination between initiatives and measures;
- to develop young people social entrepreneurship (green economy, creative economy, young people as job creators);
- inform those in youth policy;

- to focus on awareness about social rights, to also monitor the access to social rights of young people.

Creating an Action Plan for the next 5 years – articulation of principles, objectives and proposed activities

Results of working groups – 19 February

Group 1: Action plan for 2014-2016.

The action plan and those involved in the implementation should be keep in mind the following aspects:

1. Ensure that representatives from different levels are involved in the process (local, national and international); equally that actors from the same country meet and cooperate.
2. Ensure a cross-sectorial approach that can follow through on agreed measures that are functional. This might involve:
 - a. Go beyond the European Steering Committee on Youth scope and ensure cooperation with other ministries.
 - b. Ensure cooperation with the Youth Partnership on transition to working life.
 - c. Ensure cooperation with Education Department of the Council of Europe for the recognition of NFE.
 - d. Involve other stakeholders, such as: trade unions, private sector representatives.
 - e. Explore how existing funding can be geared towards supporting youth in transition and how cooperation between departments can create cooperation between funding lines (i.e. Erasmus +)
 - f. Reflect the need for special measures for vulnerable groups (for example: Roma, rural, criminal groups, Youth with disabilities, gender, migrants/refugees). Support field research with these vulnerable groups about their real needs and ensure they are part of the consultation process at the Youth Centres. This process should also lead to
 - g. Job centres should provide information about developing competences that would help youth to develop their competences.

- h. Council of Europe should keep the focus on access to Social rights, not limiting to employment. This includes training and information about human rights for the youth and how to access them.
- i. Develop standards and guidelines on providing information and guidance/support mechanism to young people in transition.
- j. Have research available to help develop quick relevant data on what is happening in the field, this might involve ensuring the collection of data provided by others.

<p>Aim and objectives (in 4 years framework)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure continue the work on improving access to social rights, (incl. advocacy, awareness and knowledge) for young people in transition. 2. To initiate and support the cross sectorial approach to addressing transition of young people to working life, including business/private sector, governments, youth organisation, trade unions etc. 3. To build capacity of youth workers and civil agents in job and career guidance centres to be able to strengthen the competences of youth in transition, with a special focus on vulnerable groups. 4. Initiated and coordinate gathering data and youth research addressing transition.
<p>Focus of the proposal / Key activities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Complete the ENTER recommendation and launch it in light of the transition to Autonomy concerns of youth. (for example in a symposium/ seminar) b. Study sessions on promoting access to Social rights. c. Campaign to promote knowledge of Social

	<p>Rights among young people in transition. (use an internet platform, engaging approach.)</p> <p>d. Use the ENTER participants experience and add transition to their course, use their network to communicate the Social Rights.</p> <p>e. Options: Finalise the work on the Case Law examples on youth rights of the Advisory Council and use it as examples to promote knowledge of Social rights.</p> <p>f. Expert meeting to see which strategies all the different stakeholders already have and how can youth policy be integrated/respond to it. (first you need to map the stakeholders that you need to involve)</p> <p>g. Train multipliers that can create the cross sectorial approach at national/regional or local level.</p> <p>h. First a European level training to build the capacities of the multipliers that can do the national level trainings. (include a mapping of existing training manuals and information on this issue). Then at national level have trainings with persons working in the job centres and career centres.</p> <p>i. Continue the existing joint cooperation and programmes, and include the aspect of transition.</p> <p>j. To map existing experiences and multiply them (through national level trainings) on how competences developed through the youth work can be recognised by business etc. thought the cross sectorial approach at local/regional level.</p>
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	<p>k. Ensure the organisation of regional/national meetings that can lead to guidelines on how information and competence building support in youth centres can be done.</p> <p>l. Round table discussion with partners that have relevant data to see what is covered and what is missing. This can help set the outlines of the online info platform.</p> <p>m. Internet platform that collects data and research results. The platform should also collect youth worker examples and experiences as a source for more data and for inspiration and info.</p>
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Group 2

The group proceeded to review the potential role that each of the elements should play in the development of an action plan: youth research – can provide relevant data about the current gaps in terms of action, the effectiveness of measures taken, the directions unexplored; youth work serves as a tool which we know is effective in actual work with young people, can provide a number of good practices and can provide direct action; youth policy should provide recommendations, and also create the framework of action; this should include a prioritization of transitions of young people in the youth policy agenda in conjunction with other relevant topics such as youth participation, employment, support to vulnerable groups, etc.

A mapping of relevant partners must be done, and this must include relevant international institutions working on the topic (or aspects of the topic), such as the International Labour Organisation or the European Commission; but as well relevant partners at regional and national level. Tools should also be provided on how these mappings can be realized.

Youth research role in the Action Plan

- gather knowledge for the programme and ensure a good coordination between research and the different planned activities. This can be done through the Transitions platform, which should also be available in a rough format before the symposium;
- beyond research it should gather stories of transitions from youth workers; youth organisations and governments. These can be stories of success, or not necessarily; gather stories from young people about their life trajectories and understand the role that youth work influenced their path, where the case was; allow learning from this.
- the Transitions platform should gather around a group of researchers that can also monitor the effect and impact of the different measures taken. The option of a network of focal points at country level can also be explored;
- youth policy at European level can sometimes sound like a one size fit all, while the measures and practices for transition are actually contextualized very well in order to ensure success, this the platform should also reflect ways to do so.

Another important element (transversal) focuses on the recognition of the competences gained through youth work and non-formal education, such as volunteer experiences. The development of similar tools such as Youth Pass could be relevant for employment access, but as well for young people's reflection on the competences that they have developed.

Guidance of young people in transition is an important aspect that youth work can bring in, there are good practices in terms of mentoring and coaching that can be further developed, as well as more work needs to be placed in the ability to communicate the competences developed by young people through youth work and non-formal education. This should support both the employability aspects, but as well will serve as evidence for the relevance of the field. This should be done in cooperation with other stakeholders such as schools.

Some advocacy points in relation to the transition agenda:

- have governments place this as a priority in their youth policy with a cross sectorial approach;
- raising awareness for what is the benefits, and not only on the dangers (transition)
- create incentives for youth employment
- ensure equal opportunities and develop relevant coherent measures
- inform the discussion on economic policy on the risks and benefits of investing in youth; on the accompanying measures to youth employment schemes;
- establish a link with the Youth Guarantee measure in the European Union and reflect on the benefits of a Europe wide programme;
- work on a policy recommendation in the long run.

Objectives and related activities for the Council of Europe Action Plan for transitions

Objective 1

Create a knowledge platform that gathers information from a variety of sources: governments, youth organisations, etc. and encourages share of experiences and good practices, as well as networking.

Activities:

1. showcase tools from youth work and beyond;
2. have a mapping research in 2014 on what has been already developed, what would the platform can provide and the resources needed;
3. On a yearly basis, identify the gaps in research and commission potentially the PEYR to do 1-2 applied researches in order to cover the gaps. The researches should further inform the development of the programme.

Objective 2

Advance the agenda of recognition of non-formal learning and youth work at national level and local level and further develop the capacity of youth organisations

1. Support the capacity of youth organisations to deal with the transitions processes: include provisions for coaching/mentoring; working with other service providers – where they exist and support them understand how they can actually provide for the missing ones.

This can be done through training courses – residential that could have a snowball effect at national and local level, but the dimensions of online learning should also be taken into account when further developing the online platform.

Objective 3

To promote cross-sectorial cooperation between youth policy and other public sectors

Activities

1. Support the organization of national meetings between different stakeholders to first know each other and understand each other
2. Explore (research) and advocate for a similar scheme with the youth guarantee for non-member countries of the EU

Objective 4

Increase the capacity of youth workers and youth NGOs to do guiding and counseling within the transition period

Activities

1. models of cooperation between /with different services or how to compensate the lack of them
2. Develop a tool-kit mentoring principles and tools for mentors/coaches
3. Explore the possibility of training course at European level

Group 3

1. Good practices sharing – systematic research/ social science and economics – what works
Transitions to adulthood and links education to work and choice
2. Make connections between youth work and other centres/ sectors

3. Policy support to : share; transfer practices; put transition on the national agenda; work with cluster countries
4. IT – skill and information: employers, trade unions; formal education
5. Youth research: are policies making the impact they want to have
6. Youth works – inform and inform for choice
7. Youth policy : propose, facilitate, promote a discussion between public and private sectors on job creation
8. Political debate: blame the victim/ neoliberalism
9. Holistic approach – human rights