

REVIEW OF NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES

YOUTH POLICY IN THE NETHERLANDS

**A report by an international expert group
appointed by the Council of Europe**

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1. Introduction

1.1. Objectives of review

The report on the youth policy of the Netherlands is the second in turn within the review of national youth policies in European countries. If the review of the youth policy of Finland was the *breakthrough*, entering a new field, then the second step now will have to clearly outline the *possible direction* that will ensure quality and efficiency of the orientation decided upon. On the basis of the experience of the two countries, we have the opportunity to evaluate the genre itself and have a better idea about it in the long run.

The present report, to a great extent, has been constructed on the basis of the Finnish experience. The objectives that are *implicit* and embedded in the "starting model" of the initiative, are as follows: 1) promote the self-assessment of the national youth policy (by means of the national reports presented also at European level); 2) obtain information about the policy from one more, international, source; 3) get an idea about the national youth policy in supra-national context. "In other words, our "theoretical framework" for considering youth policy in Finland was shaped by local, national *and* supra-national consideration. The latter is not, in some ways, of specific concern to Finnish youth policy ... but it is important in terms of projecting a framework for longer-term international review process" (Youth Policy in Finland 1997: 4).

These being the objectives of the review of European countries' youth policy, it can be said that the first of these objectives has been implemented at a high level in the Netherlands (in so far as not only national, but also international motives have stimulated the preparation of the national report).

The report of the international expert group should meet the second and third of the obvious objectives of the review. In the Finnish model, this contradictory task has been solved by a non-systematic approach due to the individual qualities and efforts of the expert group members. In prospective, however, the contradiction virtually exists and it should be overcome at methodological level, too.

In case the emphasis is put on the European dimension, the report itself will acquire a new appearance and will fit the topic *The youth policy in the Netherlands in the European context*. The international expert group is not likely to undertake making such a presentation since it requires a different working approach, as well as another system of sources to be used. Besides, the group consists of different experts and this presupposes better possibilities for mutual acquaintance and co-operation.⁽¹⁾ The European dimension has been taken into consideration within the range of possibilities granted by the starting model.

Within the same range, also the task of the youth policy in the Netherlands to present itself has been implemented. However, with regards to it the expert group is faced by a contradiction, namely the constraints, which ensue from using predominantly the Netherlands sources provided.

Therefore, as if a vicious circle occurs. (a) If the emphasis is put on the European dimension, the report will be obviously too independent; its preparation requires completely different methodological and organisational procedure and a different structure of the final product. The temptation of *European loftiness* arises which would eventually turn the experts into something like Euro-inspectors looking at the national youth policies from above. On the other hand, (b) if the emphasis is put on the national presentation, the report of the international group will be dependent on the national report and will inevitably summarise its contents. This is a task that is also beneficial and also completely possible for the Netherlands presenters to implement. Of course, a position of assessing the national report may also be assumed. However, such a turn of direction will raise some of the concerns related to the first scenario. The people that have worked before us have racked their brains a lot to find a way out of this ambiguous situation, in order to find the trade-off between the warning: "It is important to emphasise that it is not an evaluation, nor a critique of the National Report" and the confession statement: "There will clearly be some evaluative dimension to our commentary, but we prefer to consider what follows as one contribution to the different "regimes of truth"..." (1997: 1).

Obviously, it is desirable that the Report of the international expert group is not to be a repetition of the national one, but that it is not an abstract of it, either, and further on, not a supra-national report. The international working group has taken advantage of this – larger than desired – freedom in order to focus the attention on some key issues which clarify the strategy of the national youth policy in the Netherlands, the concrete innovations to it, its achievements and problems. The task is not to evaluate this policy – since it is evaluated by the electorate of the Netherlands and the youth themselves – but to present it at pan-European level. The assumption is that, on one hand, the problems of European youth are common to a great extent and the exchange of information about the way of solving them in the different countries is of substantial importance. On the other hand, the institutional building up of united Europe will inevitably include the youth sphere and has found *expression* in the notion of “youth policy of the Council of Europe”.(2)

1.2. Methods of work

The input information source of the international expert group is the national report of the Netherlands. It is not our task to check the report, nor to compare it with original sources of information; the report is interpreted as the complete illustration of the youth policy of the country. Further on, the members of the expert group use vast information obtained during their two visits to the Netherlands. This consisted mainly of meetings and discussions with responsible politicians and civil servants, with Netherlands researchers, with practitioners dealing with youth issues and organisations set up by youths themselves. During the meetings in Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Leiden, Deventer and Goirle not only important scientific applied information has been obtained, but also unique personal impressions were gathered. The experts had the opportunity to personally see how the policy was designed at the different governing levels, namely central, provincial and local, as well as to hear the point of view of both the institutions and the youth. Statistical, sociological and socio-psychological sources have been used, such as monographs and papers on Netherlands youth issues.

Last, but not least, the direction set by the "Finnish pioneers" was applied again; this consisted in the use of available empirical information from European surveys, which cover the youth in the Netherlands, too.

2. Background

2.1. The Netherlands tolerance

The Netherlands is a small country in terms of its territory, but great in terms of its place and importance in the history of Europe. We cannot imagine what European culture would have been without Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh, without Erasmus and Hugo Grotius, without Huygens and Spinoza; the European way to modernity – without the Netherlands revolt, without the flourishing and self-government of towns in the Netherlands; the European expansion – without the Netherlands fleet. Also we cannot think of the European civilisation without the Netherlands tolerance. It is manifested not only in the refining humanism of Erasmus and the philosophy ethics of Spinoza, but also in that standard of civic culture which was attained by Netherlands society as a whole, outstripping almost all other countries on the continent. Having come into existence as an attitude towards the *otherwise-believer*, tolerance expanded its essence to become an attitude towards the *other* and the *otherness*. In the post-war years, it manifested itself in a number of various aspects (including liberal attitude towards homosexuality, towards the use of "mild" drugs). Tolerance in the Netherlands is not a psychological luxury but a vital element, a cohesion of society which ensures its stability, development and prosperity. It is particularly in the atmosphere of love for freedom and tolerance that political extremism, both left and right, is pushing its way through with still bigger difficulties in the Netherlands. And it is again for the same reason that the Netherlands used to be and remains an attractive country to foreigners who, for one or another reason, are looking for new opportunities.

2.2. Ethnic minorities

In the last decades the Netherlands tolerance faced a new challenge, a new – double – historical test. Most of all, because the Netherlands is becoming a multi-culture country. In the very first years after World War II quite a number of Indonesian immigrants settled in the country. This first wave was absorbed by the Netherlands society and today they are not discussed as an ethnic minority. However, this is not the case with the immigrants from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and the Antilles/Aruba who came to the country during the last decades. They are present in the Netherlands with their sub-cultural specificity, religion and customs. On the other hand, the ambient conditions also change. Of course, the problems of European integration are of a completely different nature, but they also include the issue of cultural interaction, the impact of: say, language and culture of the big, and especially the Anglo-Saxon countries. There is a definite link between the internal and external changes. The new multi-cultural European environment enhances the internal cultural differentiation. At present Turkish immigrants can select out of different channels of satellite Turkish TV and different newspapers in Turkish. The concentration of ethnic minorities in the bigger cities creates a specific situation for the young generation (in the capital city, Amsterdam, 50% of the youth come from them).

2.3. Historical background

What is typical of Netherlands society after World War I was the so-called pillarisation (“verzuiling”), i.e. the division of the special structures (political parties, trade unions, business associations, professional groups, youth organisations, sports clubs, etc.) into different blocs (“zuilen”) on religious and ideological basis (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Liberal and Social-democratic). Since the 1970-ies the pillarisation as a system has started losing strength.⁽³⁾ Its influence upon the overall process of socialisation of youth used to be of primary significance. Even until nowadays the education of young generations is entrusted to schools which are mostly Roman Catholic and Protestant. Only 18% of secondary

schools belong to public education. However, the pattern of public life is vastly changing. The trend towards secularisation of public mentality is significant, and after the end of the cold war also a trend of de-ideologisation has occurred.

This development has of course also influenced the development of the (traditional) youth organisations. Until the 70-ies they were given - together with other voluntary organisations and movements - responsibility for the implementation of most of the (preventive) youth policy and with a considerable general financial support from central government.

Following the growing demand from central government for more efficiency and better quality of their preventive work the voluntary (youth) organisations gradually transformed themselves into highly effective, professional agencies with hired personnel. At the same time and because of that they lost their original broad membership support. They had little interest in keeping it up. Their influence and their economy was by now more dependant on the professional and efficient work of their organisation, or now rather their 'agency'. They were now competing with other (business) agencies about a share of the central, earmarked project funding for their work - and for their existence.

2.4. Political background

The political system in the Netherlands has specific characteristics. The political forces are minorities, which practically have no chances of dominating the situation independently. Political balance is maintained by dialogue and by the co-operation of the political elite of the basic blocs. The final result for the outside observer is the "Netherlands paradox": the country is more divided (segmented) and more stable at the same time. There is a specific term in the Netherlands not only about division, but also about consent: *consociationalism*(4).

Youth participation in social life is not characterised by any violent manifestations or by extreme activity. Youth policy is traditionally formed from the top. Youth problems are discussed during election campaigns; they are not, however, in the limelight. The differences between the political parties are differences in the accents. The governmental policy on children's and young people's

issues has had no alternative during the last few years. It seems to be marked by consensus (5), which undoubtedly makes it firmer. (6)

3. General features of youth policy in the Netherlands

3.1. The problematic situation

The Netherlands society of the 1990-ies is gripped by the trend of technological, social and cultural changes, internationalisation and globalisation. A key concept of the changes according to Netherlands researchers is the individualisation of society. The relationship between the individual and the group (bloc) is changing. The sphere of choice is widening. This implies a new starting point also with regards to socialisation and social integration of young generations. In general, the range of opportunities for them should be expanded. However, not only from the example of the Netherlands, but in general it is obvious that this does not happen automatically and changes can even cause complications in the youth situation, and especially in the development of a young personality. The National Report shows that the contradiction has been clearly seen. On one hand, "Key socio-cultural trends are ongoing individualisation and the development into a pluriform and multicultural society". On the other hand, "Today's young people are increasingly forced into choosing their own direction and identity in an unclear and rapidly changing '(jobs-led) world'."(RNYP 1998: 1.3.1.) In other words, individualisation of society and the pressure of society on young individuals are both increasing simultaneously. In psychological terms an astonishing discrepancy is reached: the Netherlands' economy is flourishing, democracy is stable, youth prosper in a number of aspects, but there are some manifestations of general dissatisfaction, drifting away from politics, growing symptoms of psychological instability and deviations in conduct.

3.2. Strategic orientation

A way out of the problematic situation can be sought in two different directions. One of them is intensifying the control over

youth, repressive measures against youth deviations and ideologisation of youth in view of greater interior compacting of the normative system. The basis underlying this approach is a *negative* or *problem-oriented* understanding of youth as a risky group. The alternative is the opposite, namely, to rely on the youth creative potential, the capacity for self-approration of young people, of youth involvement. This approach can be called *positive*. There are a lot of synonyms and aspects.

In trying to understand the youth policy in the Netherlands and its strategy, the international expert group experienced some unexpected difficulties, because of an apparent dualism in the Netherlands' (governmental?) concept of youth policy.

The National Report presents the youth policy of the Netherlands - and covers the whole range of policies concerning youth, from education and leisure to employment etc. But when looking more into the details and examples of projects presented in the report and through our visits and meetings the expert team gradually came to understand that what was most often called youth policy was in fact rather what we would call a preventive youth policy - which is normally only a part of (general) youth policy.

It was not always clear to the team whether this rather narrow concept of youth policy was also behind references to or quotations from researchers (Winter et al) or behind the governmental memo 'Youth Deserves a Future' from 1993.

Most of the terminology used refers to the context of prevention - and when the expert team asked why most of the statistics in the report referred only to the 15 % 'problem-youth' we were told that the remaining 85 % had no problems and therefore no need of special youth policy initiatives.

In a country like the Netherlands which is well known for its welfare-policy and its wish to take good care of its citizens especially the young citizens, it is understandable that efforts are concentrated - also within youth policy - on diminishing the problems which youth (or 15 % of youth) encounter or create.

But it also raises some questions concerning (general) youth policy. Some of these questions will be taken up at the end of chapter 4 of this report

However, since the task of the expert team has been to comment on youth policy in the Netherlands as presented, this is what we have tried to do. Youth policy in the Netherlands seems to us to be almost exclusively preventive and this is therefore what our report refers to - unless the question of preventive youth policy as or versus general youth policy is explicitly raised.

Probably the most essential detail related to the preventive youth policy in the Netherlands is the clear vision of these alternatives (the negative and the positive approach) as such and a declared principal orientation towards understanding youth positively. This appears in scientific publications, in statements of institutions, and in the national report. "From 'youth as a problem' to 'youth as a potential'", proclaims an analytical scientific monograph (Winter 1997:20). The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (according to Mr. Pennecamp) considers "youth policy = fight against criminality" and "young people = problems" to be wrong formulas. It considers young people as a positive source and wanted to stimulate the positive side.

This turn is a particularly substantial key change in the youth policy strategy. It will be an idealisation to believe that it will not clash with the inertia of residual paternalism. As researchers warn, "the net effect of the processes described here is that in our society children and young people are looked upon more and more as constituting a (potential) problem" (1997:20).(7) It is far from an easy task for the institutions that have to implement a new youth policy. The reconsideration of institutional policy cannot happen all of a sudden.

3.3. Dynamism

Suffice it to enumerate the major laws and government decisions of the 1990-ies which refer to the youth problems in order to understand the extensive and intensive dimensions of youth policy in the Netherlands. An asset of the national report is the historical tradition reviewed in it and the profound attention given to the legislative level of management decisions.

The document *Youth Deserves a Future* (1993) is as important as a program; it contains the philosophy of new youth policy and

comprises the basic starting point of the national report on youth. In the field of youth policy, Netherlands agencies and institutions enter a real contest with time, understanding that today's youth is the society of tomorrow.

3.4. Definition of youth policy

Re-directing youth policy from problem-oriented into opportunity-oriented requires substantial changes in the structure and functions of socialisation factors. The integral approach implies also integrative factors to be in place. In the case of the Netherlands, the view of a transition from "*state policy*" towards "*society policy*" has been formulated. It is not a matter of changing the terminology, but rather of principal expansion and modification of the socialisation factors. School, police, family, neighbours become involved in youth policy in a different way. These are important elements of innovation projects such as *Coach* and the *Partner School*.

The agents of youth policy are: the State (central, regional and local authorities, state youth work), the civic society (church, youth research, youth work of voluntary, non-profit agencies, youth organisations, neighbours, NGOs etc.) and family.

Central government – fulfils core duties (facilitation, monitoring and innovation) and gives an orienting framework to lower levels.

The national report defines youth policy exclusively institutionally and fixes its structure hierarchically. The role of the NGOs has not been a subject of special analysis. The role of voluntary sector is only referred to – it is not discussed at least on equal terms with that of other sectors but even it is not expected that it can contribute to widening the scope or raising the effectiveness of youth policy. Drastical change of their relationship with local authorities – becoming more businesslike and competitive, less preparedness for co-operation and hence less integral policy.

Focus on young people – not only as recipients of care but also as agents. This should be stronger, not only stated.

3.5. Definition of youth

Youth policy in the Netherlands is based on a very broad definition of youth comprising the age group of 0 – 25. The acceptance of this period as the border marks of 'youth' has its positive and negative consequences for youth policy.

First of all this concept allows an integrated and consistent youth policy to be devised from the 'coming to Netherlands' of the newly-born to his/her acceptance in the group of adults. Childcare in this way is not a closed in itself policy but has schemes and measures that allow the smooth transition of their objects into adolescence and youth. Youth policy in the Netherlands applies a broader approach linking the problems of young first-time parents and small children and allows a bridging between age groups. On the other side, however, there is a potential danger that such youth policy bears strong traces of child policy's focus on care and protection which is not easily reconcilable with the specifics of youth stage – with its autonomy and the expected focus on participation.

The emphasis on the continuity of youth policy to a certain extent is achieved for the account of laying a shadow on discontinuity, on the qualitative border between children and youth. Including the group from 0 to 3 years of age in one and the same category with persons of 20 – 25 years of age in essence does not mean that different generations are combined in one and the same category. According to statistical data of 1997 3/1,000 out of the 15-19 aged and 45/1,000 of 20 – 24 years olds have children. Out of the women at the age of 25 (1996 data) 13 % have one child (in 1980 – 23 %), 6 % – two children and 1 % – three children (Statistical Yearbook 1998: 44, 45). So a more appropriately defined title for the National Report would be "*National Children and Youth Policy*". In the currently defined title, children are officially a part of the youth. In real fact, however, there occurs the possibility to reduce youth to a common denominator with children.

The report by the international working group considered exclusively the issues related to youth in the more precise meaning of the word, i.e. within the age range 15 – 25 years. Of course, certain relativity is present here, too, insofar as the Netherlands data

itself often define youth as a subgroup of the youth policy targeted at people of 12 – 25 years of age.

4. Implementation and balances

4.1. Decentralisation

Decentralisation is a new trend in youth policy of the Netherlands starting with the Welfare Act adopted in 1987, followed by the Youth Care Act in 1992, the Youth Employment Guarantee Act in the same year, the Temporary Act on Social Renewal in 1994 and has not yet been completed. De-centralising operations of youth policy makes it closer and more sensitive to actual local problems of young people in their micro social context by allowing de-regulation and de-standardisation of decision-making. Resources, which have been separated under various schemes, are now being united in the hands of one governing body thus widening the scope of its policy. However, transferring duties and responsibilities to authorities in the provinces (regional level) and the municipalities (local level) has been accompanied by cuts in financing which limited instead of increasing the opportunities of local governments to intervene in youth problems. As the authors of the national report critically observed: 'In some cases this has caused general youth and community services nearly fully to disappear from the social map in municipalities (RNYP May-1998: 1.2.2.). Another problem is the legal approval of the increased formal power of the local authorities. The local authorities need extra resources to conduct their new functions.

Greatest effect of this decentralisation is the integrated approach – cross sector co-operation and links between social problems. Youth problems are seen as interrelated among themselves, as well as with other problems of the communities they live in and the society at large.

Innovative aspects: preventive youth policy based on the creation of appropriate networks of local, provincial and central governments, voluntary agencies and young people, and making use of co-ordinated information. A priority of the project is involving

youth realised through four modules: youth information, communication with young people, young administrators and structured implementation. The project 'Development of Local Preventive Youth Policy' (OLPJ) includes 'Youth Participation Scenario' for spotting, promoting and supporting initiatives of young people.

Successes in developing youth policy by the local authorities in the field of preventive policy, although only a minority have adopted its true innovative approach – emphasising the creation and promotion of opportunities and development and not as early addressing the problems held or caused by young people.

The simultaneous requirements for management decentralisation and a meaningful change in youth policy create a problem. The problem approach is easier to realise and implement on the lower levels of power.

4.2. Innovations in youth care

Preventive youth care services locally based. This includes an impressive array of measures: reducing the number of school dropouts, preventive youth health and mental health services, employment services, crime prevention. There are efforts to shift the policy from curative and repressive to preventive. For many local governments youth policy is to combat inconvenience caused by youth. Their preventive activities lack coherence. Unlike the preventive youth services, the curative youth care does not aspire to be an entirely new policy.

Curative youth care is the more traditional strand of youth policy as contents and as an approach. It is concerned with provision of major youth services such as educational and health services and has a curative and repressive orientation, saving society from youth and youth from its problems. It is the responsibility of the middle (meso) level of the structure of youth policy – that of regional authorities – in provinces and metropolitan areas. It includes field, day and residential youth care, judicial youth protection, family supervision (including fostering) and health services.

Yet, since the early 1990s curative youth care is also undergoing changes to address current problems of social change in

Netherlands society. First of all the agencies responsible for youth provision are radically reorganised as regionally based alliances which bring about greater coherence and co-operation between youth care agencies. It is realised through regional networking, which involves even wider institutions such as schools. Second, an attempt is made to change the approach of youth care from a provision oriented one to a function oriented approach. On the basis of the report, it is clear that the latter change has not been implemented and it is still in the phase of 'advocating' the idea. Currently (since 1992) the reorganisation of curative youth care is realised in four aspects: decentralisation – in the way preventive policy is; growth in scale (which remains rather dubious when the 'major' (RNYP 1998: 2.6.3.) cuts in resources are taken into consideration); reallocation of provision for a more even spread over the country; and standardisation meaning that standard amounts should be developed for the cost price of care. The fourth facet of reorganisation remains rather dubious – if the objective is to address the individual needs of the clients this tendency toward standardisation is in contradiction.

Positive – maybe puts an end to the former fragmentation of youth provision and makes it more efficient. The centre for this effective care is the Youth Centre Frontoffice – the single door through which youth care is channelled per region and to which all young people in need can turn to.

Goals of the changes: higher accessibility of curative youth care, improved youth care quality, the development of regional visions and improvement of policy information.

From traditional curative youth care system characterised by a wide variety of separately operating bodies (institutional autonomy) to standardise procedures and criteria.

This standardisation puts an end to the fragmentation – in the Youth Care Frontoffice.

Mounting pressure upon youth care system as a result of the fact that provision development did not parallel developments in client needs. A contradiction – between the change in care targeting the reduction of the number of residential placements and the further expansion of heavy care due to the increasing number of youngsters with serious psychological trouble. Two-track policy – allocating

more funds to residential care and the promotion of a shift from heavy to lighter forms of intervention.

4.3. Youth participation

This is a new approach in central preventive youth policy which is directed toward increasing the opportunities of young people to develop and manifest their positive abilities. It represents a break with the negative image of youth focusing on social problems held and caused by youth. This *opportunities approach* is directed toward developing of young people's 'social capital' – to enhance young people's social ties with society and activate them to challenge their own strengths.

This concept seems to characterise Netherlands sociology of youth since the early post-World War II period – 1945 although with different interpretations: from enlightening the young about what proper citizenship is, through young people's insistence to participate in political decision making, through encouragement of individual development and self-expression.

The report remarks that this turn of youth policy toward a focus on youth participation in the 1990s is a top-down approach. The memorandum *Youth deserves a future'* makes empowerment of youth the key objective of the innovations in youth policy – the youth policy should create conditions for youth to practice their roles, skills and attitudes that are relevant for their participation in society.

Youth participation is seen as active and passive. The *active participation* encompasses involvement in youth organisations, in planning and administering youth services and political participation aiming at influencing government policy. *Passive participation* – consuming youth services, mostly in leisure. This seems a very 'adult' view – view from above on youth participation; young people are no less creative in leisure than in other spheres. This top-down approach is manifested in the national projects such as the National Youth Debate which end with annual reports which are then circulated 'amongst Members of Parliament, the participants, youth organisations and youth workers all over the country' (RNYP 1998: 2.1.3.2.).

The National Youth Debate is also an illustrative example in the on-going debate about participation of different 'youth bodies' and of their representativity.

It is evident from the National Report that the youth organisations - especially the political youth organisations - are not considered representative of all Netherlands youth

In order to establish a more representative youth body the National Youth Debate between a youth panel and ministers from the government has been introduced. The youth panel (100 - 200 young people) is duly selected by researchers each year in order to create a real (sociologically) representative youth body - containing typical specimens of all (youth) classes/categories

In a representative democracy - like European countries - the parliament (or the local municipal council) is normally supposed to represent the electorate (the population/the people) as such. Few have seriously questioned its representativity - even though it may not at all live up to the sociological definition of representativity. They are of course expected to represent also those 'classes' or categories, which might not have won a seat in parliament or council.

It has of course always been a challenge for any representative democracy to make sure that also underprivileged groups make use of their constitutional rights to vote.

But it is hardly a solution to solve this problem by replacing an elected, representative body by a (sociologically) representative group or panel, selected by researchers, - to replace, so to say, the "voice of the people/youth" by the "voice of the researchers".

The law on students' participation in the management of universities was changed a year ago. Students got full voting rights and had one third of the seats on the University Council. After the change they have voting rights on certain matters and advisory votes on others. The councils have been also changed. Now the following model exists: a council of the employers and a students' council; this is a model of co-partnership. These two models gave students fewer rights, according to some students' opinions.

The report considers young people's participation in youth organisations and remarks that their social relevance has declined as

their members belong to the middle class while youth policy is focusing predominantly on underprivileged youth. This apparent contradiction is largely due to the focus on national youth organisations only. Why not local as well. Some researches in East European countries show that there are many local organisations very active in the youth field but who remain invisible to the centre and to surveys designed from the centre. While the report is discussing youth participation at local level it mentions young people's joining in discussion of policy, in control of facilities, in implementing measures and in relapsing projects. Here the partners seems to be local government and organisations working with youth but young people are seen as individuals and not as organisations.

The effectiveness of this policy according to a study of local authorities (DSP, 1996) – a third do not focus on youth participation, half do so occasionally and only 10% – systematically. From the experiments in eight pilot municipalities it is seen that the ways of thinking and the skills of administrators and officials have not changed accordingly and they insist to hold the lead rather than allowing 'too much' power to the young fearing that this might create 'order taking' situations. On the side of the young people there is disillusionment with this strand of youth policy – joining discussions is of no use.

The problem however is not only in the 'thinking' of local administrators and of their 'natural' dislike to take orders from lower standing clients (young people). It is on the central level where debates remain a goal in itself. Even when the report is enlisting the forms of youth participation, it is considering such important sphere for the young as leisure as only consumptive but not creative and is not mentioning such important, at least to youth in East Europe, form of participation as participation in the labour market and in work. The report itself suggests that if youth is taken into account seriously, other issues will be raised into youth policy debate such as environmental health, combating racism, etc. Cross-border participation, evaluated positively by young people, does not reach genuinely disadvantaged groups.

The opportunity led approach to youth participation is still underrated.

Opportunity approach is a needs led approach in contrast with the problem oriented one and with an instrumental nature. It is expected that it will have a catalysing role in changing the compartmentalisation of local authorities and the gap between citizen and local authorities.

Problematic young people are perceived as clients and not as prospective partners. Involvement of non-problematic youth - as opposed to inclusion of youth at risk - in the processes of preparation, administration and implementation was seen to function and to be beneficial (the children's town council in the city of Goirle, where children are given the space, resources, support and responsibility to pinpoint, assess and improve certain problems of their municipality, as well as suggest and plan cultural, sports and leisure activities for children). If this has been such a success with children, why cannot adolescents and « older » young persons be equally involved in improving their local environment? Active participation cannot be limited to involvement or inclusion; it should also imply awareness to responsibilities and the actual transfer of these responsibilities. Of course, this would be inconceivable if the other « party » is not considered to be a partner in the decision-making process.

4.4. Young peoples' need of ideas

Today's young people in the Netherlands have impressive physical dimensions (average height 183 cm for young boys and 170 cm for young girls): the young people are more educated and receive more money compared to the young people of the previous generation. They are also offered a wider range of entertainment. At the same time young people today do not have higher self-confidence; the manifestations of psychological instability and deviating behaviour are on the increase. In order to understand such a situation it is necessary to take into consideration the interrelations between the material and ideal aspects of life. Certain dissatisfaction with the present forms of ideological commitment can be perceived in some trends: young people distance themselves from traditional religions, from modern ideologies, from the ideological content of youth subcultures. On the reverse side of de-pillarisation are the symptoms of a vacuum of ideas. Naturally, it is not characteristic for

a liberal state to determine the ideology of its young people. However, without paying sufficient attention to the necessity of social and personal ideas, typical for a young age, the counteraction of their substitutes, such as consumerism, alcohol, and drugs, could hardly be successful.

4.5. Youth organisations

Numerous youth organisations seem to be led and managed by adults. This raises the basic question of why young people follow and continue to allow adults to « *do things for them* » rather than preferring to « *decide and do things for themselves* ». Are they so used to this state of affairs that they have no choice other than accepting what is offered in order to feel accepted; are they simply indifferent to what is happening around them; do they feel helpless in influencing « adults »; are they just waiting until the overnight change when they can join the « adults » group, that is when they turn eighteen years of age?

The system and approaches that are implemented in the Netherlands as regards to formal academic education is definitely of a very high standard. However, on the contrary, the importance of youth organisations as basic elements of civil society, in terms of non-formal education is hardly recognised and they are not, therefore, considered and supported in similar, professional methods and standards. In fact the notion of non-formal education in character-forming of children and young adults is absent from the national report and was hardly encountered with during our visits. Of course, from contacts with leaders and representatives of youth organisations, it remains evident that the whole concept of non-formal education, which is indirectly the result of voluntary youth work, irrespective of whether it is accomplished by political, environmental, educational, religious, leisure or exchange organisations, remains their top priority. Our considerations are therefore aimed at youth policy makers in the sense that non-formal education should first and foremost be seen as an invaluable asset and as a complement to formal education. Furthermore, decision-makers need to recognise that youth organisations are essential in the development of active citizenship in a civil and democratic society.

4.6. Paternalism

Paternalism that has been characterised by the typical hierarchy-based understanding of the relations between people of different ages and sex was severely undermined by the overall progress of development of modernity. However, it cannot be said that it is only a part of past history. Paternalism is coded in the basic postulates of various religious beliefs, and it is particularly characteristic of Islam. Paternalism resorts to political umbrellas of various extreme movements – openly in the extreme right and concealed in the extreme left. The administrative socialism in Eastern Europe prolonged, in a modified form though, the historical life duration of paternalism. (There are researchers (8) who find a parallel between the post-revolutionary paternalism in the East and the non-revolutionary paternalism in the West). Paternalism, however, exists also at the social psychological level. We can call it *residual paternalism*. The key terms of patronage, paternalist youth policy, are care and prevention. Of course, care and prevention may be spoken about not only in terms of paternalistic position. What matters is the understanding about both in the general context and in their relationship with the subjective position of youth. The youth policy in the Netherlands throws an obvious challenge to the residual paternalism and at the same time shows how difficult it is to overcome it. Youth participation is interpreted as an active role of the youth. Projects like the *Partner School* demonstrate the exclusively fruitful attempt to solve certain problems of the extremely vulnerable youth through its active involvement.

4.7. Prevention as basis for all youth policy

As already pointed out (chapter 3.2.) youth policy in the National Report is normally referred to as ‘Preventive youth policy’. According to the report, youth policy is part of the welfare policy, which also encompasses nurseries, childcare and other social work. The term ‘youth policy’ is often replaced by ‘youth care’. (9)

Naturally, an important part of every national youth policy must be how to deal with that part of youth, which is at risk in one, or another way. For this part of the youth policy, a preventive

approach has doubtless advantages compared to the process of taking measures post factum. At the same time, prevention, as a point of departure for all youth policy sets as a premise youth as a problem, thus influencing the overall understanding of youth policy.

Psychologically the preventive approach may suggest that the main task is to preserve the citizens' peace and quiet from the deviations on the part of the 'troublesome young', i.e. from those young people who do not successfully and smoothly integrate into the present, adult society. Youth at risk of exclusion therefore has to be taken special care of - to be 'cured' for their lack of ability to become integrated.

In this way society - so to say - puts the blame on the individual young person at risk - in stead of considering possible shortcomings or failures of the educational, social or employment systems and policies of society.

The preventive approach may be considerably improved by active participation or involvement of youth in the process. The inclusion of youth in the processes of preparation, implementation and administration - "allows for improving the quality of policies and respond to a client-centred and needs-led approach" (RNYP 1998: 2.1.4., 1.2.2. et al). Such terminology - at least - leads one to understand participation of youth/clients as a means of improving the necessary treatment of the clients - a well known approach from the spheres of curative institutions etc. - i.e. - to include the clients and stakeholders in the processes of quality-improvements of social institutions.

The young people at risk become the clients of a preventive system whether 'caring' or 'curative'. What remains to be done is to analyse the clients' needs with the help of professional experts and researchers.

This new 'involvement-of-youth approach' in preventive youth policy may very well be 'client centred' and 'needs led'. The youth at risk, with their problems nevertheless remains clients, i.e. dependent on the preventive or curative system.

Previous experiments in several European countries have shown that quite often young people are categorised as 'youth at risk', because they do not feel that they belong to society: Society does not seem to need them; they are not valued and not given any

opportunity to commit themselves and take responsibility. If on the other hand these young people are met with an appeal to their positive potentials - and an honest wish to make use of it - they may very well develop into active resource persons, both in their group and in their neighbourhood. The positive approach re-establishes their self-esteem and self-reliance, (See Council of Europe reports “Participation as a means of integrating young people at risk into society” 1990, - and “ The development of an integrated approach to youth policy at local level”, 1993).

4.8. An educational approach to a general youth policy

Emphasising the preventive approach for an overall or general youth policy may solve some of the problems of (the 15 %) of youth who are supposed to be disadvantaged or at risk. On the other hand it may as well prevent - or at least make it more difficult - to pursue other important aims of a general youth policy.

In the necessary renewal of society for the next century - “youth is society’s capital; - the innovative drive of society, its hope for the future, the powerhouse of change that shows society the way to the future”, (R. Mönchmeyer, CSO, ‘Youth at risk’ - conference 1996.).

One overall aim of a youth policy might be to create the openings and possibilities within all policy-areas for youth to learn to develop and prepare themselves for their (!) future society. To pursue such an aim may necessitate a renewed consideration of the concept of participation. To be given responsibility for running a local playground may be a - modest - beginning. But to be given influence and responsibility for one's own life sphere means to be acknowledged and accepted as an equal partner - also in the necessary decision-making processes.

Experiences from the few local pilot-projects where this has been tried out in earnest - also in the Netherlands - show that the most difficult part of such experiments seems to be to persuade adults from the administrative and educational sector that giving more influence and responsibility to youth also means to give away part of one’s own power. The challenge to such local pilot projects seems to be educational - for both young and for adults.

Another important aim of a general youth policy might be to take up the challenge from the new generation - and try to answer their open or implicit questions about the value-systems upon which our democratic welfare society has been built.

This should, of course, not be a matter of indoctrination or mere 'teaching', but rather an invitation to an open dialogue between equal partners about common values, common responsibilities.

The 'de-pillarisation' of the Netherlands society seems to have left some symptoms of a vacuum of ideas and ideologies. Young people are said to distance themselves from traditional religious belief, from modern ideologies, from the ideological context of different youth sub-cultures etc. This is probably not because they reject all values. But rather because they find the traditional frameworks or fora for such value discussions outdated and not corresponding to the challenges they see today.

To familiarise the young generation with democratic values and practices and with the humanistic philosophy which lies behind our ideas about welfare and solidarity - and thus prepare them for their active participation as citizens - is important in every democratic society.

Sharing influence and responsibility is not only a way for young people to learn democratic ways of living together. It is also a way to give them a more meaningful life.

It may be necessary to re-create or restore important elements of civil society such as democratic (youth) organisations, grassroots movements and other fora for the open dialogue about the common values of our future society. But such a revitalisation of our representative democracy requires an educational approach to the overall youth policy.

The new generation must learn how to function in a democracy and how to establish their own voice in society whether it be based on the present model of our representative democracy - or on their own innovative, improved, but democratic, models.

Such a learning process may be supported by introducing civic education in the curricula of the formal school-systems. But learning the practice of such a process has always been one of the most important functions of the free, independent organisations and

movements of civil society - including youth organisations. The personal competencies - like creativity, ability to work together in teams and take decisions etc - gained here are now also highly valued new competencies in the business world.

Some of these movements and organisations - the more traditional ones - may not now be able to fully live up to this educational challenge and may need help to re-juvenate their work. But it is hardly a sustainable solution to abolish these important elements of civil society and replace them by top-steered bodies or 'panels' selected by researchers and/or authorities in power.

The re-juvenation of the learning and practical training for democracy is a non-formal educational challenge for any youth policy - the concept of which seems to be almost totally absent from the National Report.

5. Some specific fields

5.1. Education

It is no wonder that in a country where over 90% of 15-19-year-olds are in education, education constitutes an important part of Netherlands preventive youth policy and especially for its innovative strand – youth participation. Educational policy with its three major goals: to enhance young people's personality development, to prepare them for democratic citizenship, and for participation in the labour market, bears a direct relationship to youth welfare, prevention and care. Since the 1960s, educational reform is aiming at combating inequality in opportunities with special provision available for young people of immigrant backgrounds. A specific feature of Netherlands educational system is its high degree of compartmentalisation based on both religious (denomination) affiliations and philosophical and teaching principles.

Changes in the field of educational policy comprise shifts in its institutional structure and policy approach. Preserving the freedom of denomination and organisation, a process of secularisation and de-compartmentalisation is underway. This tendency has yet a minor effect on the educational infrastructure. Perhaps a more significant

feature of administrative reform in the field of education is the drive toward restoration of autonomy of schools and the widening of the scope of liberties, responsibilities of school management, especially the role of headmasters. Schools are made to account to the public at large, primarily to parents for their policy and educational results. Large-scale merger operations such as the regional platforms serve to concentrate educational resources and operate within budgets that have been converted from provision-led to needs-led.

The new approach of educational policy or the new 'vision' as the authors of the report put it is to raise the importance of non-cognitive skills that the educational system should develop – such as independence, sense of responsibility, flexibility and immunity to stress. These new social and emotional skills of young people should enable them to adapt to the new information environment of the computer age.

However, individualistic independence combined with financial facilities may not necessarily lead to responsibility and immunity to stress, - the high percentage of suicide attempts among Netherlands youth might be the negative outcome of exaggerated, premature independence. The existential problem of all young individuals is that personal freedom and autonomy presupposes a minimum of self-esteem, self-knowledge or self-reliance, - qualities that are related to real, innerdirected freedom and independence - as opposed to independence acquired only by financial facilities. Immunity to stress could be sort of chameleon-type adaptability with no moral restrictions on the axis of personal interest and profit or pure egotism.

Such a call for caution may of course easily be misused by the open or hidden 'paternalists' of education. But it is a challenge for the educational system - also in view of the new computer- and media-age - to make sure that youth are given sufficient possibilities for learning to analyse, evaluate, select and reflect about the huge amount of information. In short: they must learn to distinguish between good and bad.

With the view of the goal – to enhance equality of opportunities – it remains unclear how young people choose between the four types of secondary education or its three pathways (theory, practical and educational) that are currently being introduced. Boys and ethnic minority children are over-represented

among students in special primary and secondary education. In the sphere of higher education women predominate among social professions, child education and health care while men outnumber women in sciences and technology and the differences between their shares is two, three and even more times. Such complementary forms of education that are encouraged by the Adult and Vocational Act (1996) and the Employment Service Act (1997) could play a greater role but statistical data on their effects were not provided in the report – to be able to judge their effectiveness.

Statistical data show an increase of the number of pupils in secondary education paralleled by a decrease in the numbers in mainstream education. This has been addressed by measures to reduce the gap between the two types of education such as the project Back to School Together Again, pupil-based financing and co-operation between the special and the four-year mainstream forms of pre-vocational and junior general secondary education. Also, parents are encouraged to send their children to regular schools and use additional help provided by experts from specialised schools or by teachers from regular schools paying them with vouchers received from a Regional Education Centre. To address the needs of those young people who remain incapable of obtaining mainstream qualifications despite the extra support, there is a labour market oriented pathway of education. However, the report does not give more concrete information about it.

On the *school achievements – school failure* scale, attention is focused on the negative spectrum. Educational disadvantage remains a problem for youth policy in the Netherlands although it concerns only about 10 per cent of young people. Surveys reveal its correlation with the family – the educational, vocational and ethnic backgrounds of the parents. It is usually associated with early school leaving and non-attendance at school. These problems are addressed by the following measures: Educational Priority Policy Act (1998) and Educational Disadvantaged Policy Act (1998) which delegate a lot of power to local government. Their key target groups are immigrant pupils and pupils with poorly educated parents. Also, a Regional Report and Co-ordination Centre on Early School Leaving is planned to be set up to register the early leavers and guide them either back toward education or the labour market.

Another big problem is violence at school in which young people - fellow pupils and teachers are both victimised. Surveys estimate that between a tenth and a fourth of young people are regular victims of bullying. In 1995, a 4-year campaign to promote safety in schools was launched by the central government but the report does not give details about its contents and methods nor about its effectiveness.

5.2. Welfare

The health status of young people in the Netherlands is relevant to the advanced countries in the world, although it is questionable if the fact that 5% have made one or more attempts of suicide and a further 10% have considered suicide (sometimes or often) is a 'normal element of this life stage'.(10)

This strand of youth policy seems to have a very good information base with a national representative survey conducted every four years. Alcohol consumption and drug use is on the increase, which is closely linked to the preferred types of youth leisure – associating with friends and going out. Survey results reveal a positive relationship between drug use and the drug use of family members and friends, outgoing behaviour, committing petty crime and truancy.

It is worth noting the existence of an extensive system of youth health care service – with general preventive orientation as well as with specific focus on particular groups as to reduce socio-economic health inequalities. The latter is tackled within a special programme (SEGV) and a committee. Also, there are specialised programmes for people with disabilities, which are directed toward supporting people with disabilities to be active in mainstream society rather than isolating them in specialised residential institutions. The country has a developed network of specialised agencies supporting young addicts. These provide counselling, out-patient services and in-patient treatment for young people with addiction problems. We do not have enough information to judge about the specificity of its activities (in comparison with other European countries) and the effectiveness of this system.

5.3. Leisure- participation

Leisure is assuming a growing importance in young people's life whilst, at the same time youth policy is paying a declining attention to it.

Several trends can be discerned in youth leisure in the Netherlands.

While younger children are less likely to be left to play in the streets unattended and are taken by their parents to and from for practising sports or visiting clubs, older pupils participate less often in organised sports whereby girls switch off at a younger age than boys do. Associating with friends, visiting pubs and discos in small groups are on the increase as are enjoying computer games and the new media. Watching TV and video is very popular while reading, especially from libraries, and going to theatres, cinemas and concerts is not, young people preferring to make music themselves or at least choosing their own style.

It is probably so that no youth policy initiative can do away with or substitute the expanding private commercialisation of leisure-time and related activities. This is a general trend in all developed societies. Young people tend to register as potential customers much more easily, influenced uncritically by mediatic advertising - and having difficulties in escaping the commercialisation process of every aspect of social life. Today the trend is to persuade everybody to adopt a new life-style, so that the rest of the process will be automatic. Since young people are more keen to experiment with new social fashions and life-styles they are also more easily manipulated: "A good customer is an un-critical, passive and automatic customer".

Also here - within the area of leisure-time activities - there is a challenge for non-formal educational initiatives: to counteract this development towards passive consumerism, which could also be a danger for civil society.

Formal politics, the church and ideological movements do not appeal enough to new generations so that we can note some trends to youth de-ideologisation and de-politicisation. However, there are two important stands, which should not be overlooked by those dealing with youth policy. The characteristics of another type of policy and ideology are emerging in youth expectations. Issues such as human rights, poverty, third world, peace, discrimination,

environment are of great interest to young people and they are ready and willing to comment upon them. Also, while young people dislike joining organisations they remain prone to enthusiastically join spontaneous activities such as manifestations, protest actions, etc. A reason for this attitude of spontaneity might be that mediatic and electronic (visual) messages are too fast to wait for analyses, and people forget very quickly whatever is important today under the social pressure of temporarity. Fragmented and simulated information do not formulate ideologies and solid political interests. They produce temporary mimetic fashions and spontaneous enthusiasm for some noble causes such as environmental issues or protection of disappearing animal species.

This is a global trend as influenced by post-modern media + internet styles and can be found also in Eastern European countries where these influences are expanding to youth even faster than free market's effects. (Kovacheva 1995).

Perhaps the most marked tendency in the field of youth leisure is the proliferation of youth subcultures. While they are not a new youth phenomenon, there are unique characteristics of the present-day youth subcultures in the Netherlands. In the enormous diversity of styles and liquidity of youth cultures, the former idealistic notions or critical messages to societies, typical in the previous decades, seem to have been lost and young people find themselves engaged in the so-called 'style surfing'. As the authors of the report put it – style has become a pure form without contents.

One (cynical) explanation could be that the market forces and the establishment noticed the critical messages of the former sub-cultures (the 'Provo's etc.) as being potentially dangerous, because they ridiculed some basic trends of modern market philosophy and values of society. Such sub-cultures could be 'dis-armed' by transforming them into a matter of fashion and style. As a result today's sub-cultures are less polarising and more conformist than during the previous decades. The same mechanism could be behind the tendency to 'de-politicisation': If protest actions and manifestations for human rights, poverty or environment etc. can be referred to as temporary fashions and 'style-surfing', then society (the market-forces) does not need to take the protests seriously.

In this diversified and anarchic milieu of highly individualised youth leisure pursuits, the traditional preventive youth policy is definitely out of place with its patronising and enlightening approach. Is there a new approach in youth policy in the Netherlands, more relevant to the youth interests described above? In our judgement, the new decisions are highly inadequate. The report puts in the first place the policy attempt to regulate TV and the new media to diminish young people's access to 'violent material' and 'unsuitable or unpleasant information'; in the second place – Youth in Motion Task Force – to put young people back in organised sports. It is not clear, why sports have been allocated such a small space.. It is probably here that a serious resource for youth policy in the Netherlands could be found – as an obvious instrument or a 'gateway' for young people and a potentially powerful resource in civil society and in non-formal education.

5.4. Youth information

This term entered debates in youth policy since 1985 – the International Year of Young People. It was expected that it could serve as a basis for a modern youth approach enhancing youth participation and having preventive effects. Above all, youth information offers young people new possibilities for independent decisions and the right of choice; at the same time students have to assume higher responsibility for their own choice. In the Netherlands youth information was developed within the infrastructure of existing youth services unlike the change in other countries where new services for youth information were created. This might have a positive effect of developing youth information close to the services as a new instrument in their own practice. On the other side, this could be a hindrance for the system of youth information not allowing it to develop in an all-encompassing way and keeping it fragmented.

If the State did not create new structures to deal with youth information although it funded many projects in the field, the local authorities and youth workers set up Youth Information Points providing information and advice. Their activities are facilitated by the communication of various agents such as libraries, schools, and

social consultancies. An independent non-government organisation – The Netherlands' Youth Information Foundation is another active agent in the field which collects, processes and disseminates youth information.

Youth information is developed in close relationship with the other strands of youth policy – preventive youth policy and youth participation.

5.5. Employment

Young people's labour market positions and prospects have significantly improved over the past 10 years due to Netherlands' economic growth, educational expansion and the effective labour market policy. Youth unemployment rate is 12-13% (7% for the whole labour force) but this is mainly a short-term phenomenon. At the same time, young people in education have side jobs seeking economic independence and working experiences.

There are some negative developments as well, which cause anxiety. The proliferation of employment for youth has been mainly in temporary, low-skilled and low-paid jobs. Young people in the Netherlands do not stay unemployed for long periods not because of the good opportunities in the labour market for them but because they are not very demanding and accept jobs for which they are overqualified. Youth wages are kept low with growth of the minimum youth wage lagging far behind that of adult workers. Young workers are more vulnerable to economic fluctuations by having short-term contracts and being most likely to become redundant through cutbacks. On the other hand, those without qualifications and with low qualifications as well as migrant-descended youth have very poor prospects in the labour market and might enter the group of the long-term unemployed. The low skilled jobs for which they qualify are taken by young people with higher education or by those still in education.

Youth labour market policy in the Netherlands follows a comprehensive approach channelling school-leavers and young unemployed towards a job or training. It is pursued within the nation-wide network of employment services. These are regionally based and governed by tripartite administration of government,

employers' organisations and trade unions. The youth related facilities within them are the Incentive Policy on Youth Employment and the Youth Employment Guarantee Act. These schemes offer 'choice of career' tests, job interview training and vocational training courses and most importantly encouragement of employers for youth placements (under the Youth Employment Guarantee Act). They seem very effective as 80% of young people involved in the first scheme find paid work or a placement in mainstream education and about 25% is the gross effect of transfers of the second scheme. The Unemployed's Participation Act, launched by the government on 1 January 1998, provides subsidised employment under the scene 'social activation' targeting the most prospectless in the labour market. This act allocates more power and resources to the local authorities for active labour market policy and they receive additional budgets for the benefit of long-term unemployed and young people. There are also measures for some special groups in the labour market – young people with physical or mental disabilities, the latest act on this issue since April 1998. A new act TOGETHER is encouraging immigrants labour market participation. Not specifically targeting young people from ethnic minorities, this act improves their chances by obliging business companies and other organisations with more than 35 employees to have a proportional representation of employees of non-Netherlands backgrounds. The report does not make it clear what is the proportion, which the companies should stick to, and what definition of migrants this act has accepted.

In general, the new development in employment policy of the Netherlands – the deployment of social benefit funds for job creation and the reinforcement of the role of municipalities – have raised the effectiveness of this policy. There still remains the need for more measures directed toward the underprivileged group of early school leavers and ethnic minorities' young people. It should be noted as a positive development that this second report shows a growing awareness of the significance of unemployment in young people's lives since it has a special chapter on this issue unlike the first report where it is only mentioned. It seems that even greater attention to this problem is advisable as young people rank

unemployment second as a matter of concern, after pollution and before unsafety (NIBUD, 1994).

In perspective: a greater policy attention to young people's working careers and support for their career growth. Highly qualified young people should be assisted to transfer quickly from low-skilled unfulfilling jobs into more demanding jobs allowing the realisation of youth creative potential.

5.6. Delinquency

The Netherlands' policy on youth delinquency is under the contrasting pressures of two tendencies. On the one side, there is a strive to curtail crime and secure public safety, which seems to require tougher measures and on the other there is an aspiration to humanise this policy so that repressive measures do not lead to the isolation and social exclusion of young people.

Crime rate is on the rise in most countries on the continent and Netherlands society is no exception. There is a sharp growth of police figures on youth crime in the Netherlands since 1995 although crime rate is not particularly high – the hard core group of young offenders is estimated to be from 2 to 7% of the age group. There are two negative tendencies, which draw particular attention to Netherlands policy combating youth crime. One of them is the increase of violent youth crime which mirrors the increase of violent crime among adult population. Another problem is the concentration of delinquent behaviour among ethnic minority youth – they have 1.5 to 3 times higher crime rate than those of Netherlands origin and three times more police encounters.

The Netherlands' policy on juvenile delinquency is indisputably well highlighted. It also seems well funded and elaborated. It concentrates on three key strands underlined in the report: prevention and prospects offered to young people; early detection of problems and rapid intervention; stricter enforcement. Although the need of close co-operation with social services, education and other forms of youth provision are stated, the most important agents dealing with youth delinquency remain the police and justice departments. Basic characteristics of this policy are still its 'assertive' or even repressive attitude.

New tendencies in youth crime policy, which should be supported, are the socialisation of the law, as the report puts it, meaning the involvement of other non-judicial actors in law-maintaining tasks – such as local government, voluntary sector, young people themselves. Recent measures include Youth Crime Policy Scheme (1995), Memorandum 'Delinquency in Relation to Ethnic Minority Integration' (1997), Metropolitan Policy Covenant (1995-1999), etc. They start from the assumption that school is a key facility that can play a central role in promoting social cohesion. Parenting support and crime prevention at schools are new foci of Netherlands policy on youth crime. These measures also rely on effective actions of the police and judicial system and in this aspect there are concerns about the loss of youth expertise in regional police forces due to the reorganisation of the police apparatus and the limited expansion of the judicial apparatus lagging behind the upsurge in youth crime. Another problem which awaits its solution is the development of a uniform and nation-wide system of services to young convicts (youth probation).

As in other strands of youth policy, here we see efforts toward a local integrated approach to youth crime. It is aiming to provide a rapid, early and consistent response to youth crime, as well as an appropriate response – development of alternatives to traditional punishment (detention, fines), for example pedagogic and community sentences.

5.7. Drugs Problem

Drugs policy has its own perimeter. It is probably for that reason that the report on youth policy in the Netherlands does not consider this topic. And yet, the decisive territory on which society encounters the drug problem is connected particularly with children and young people.

The Netherlands' drug policy (initially tested informally and formalised in 1996) is well known for its unique characteristics. The rationale behind is the conviction that repressive measures are by themselves counter-productive. The use of drugs has been decriminalised; thus, society addresses free individuals, not criminals. The differentiation between hard and soft narcotics allows

the combination between repressive measures against the spread of the hard drugs and a liberal regime as regards the second ones. The idea is to treat a social pathology against which the purely repressive measures, taken in other countries, have not yielded the expected results.

The data show that the use of hard drugs (heroin, cocaine) has increased little; one can say it has stabilised. (11) The use of soft drugs is on the increase: about one fifth of the young people have tried soft drugs, most of them sporadically, 6 per cent – on a regular basis. (Repportage Jeugd 1997: 93-94) The interest of the world public in the results of this policy is understandable. Let this not sound pathetic: the Netherlands experiment is of historic significance. If it fails, only the Netherlands people will be the losers. If it succeeds, we all will be the winners. The time for the summing up is still far ahead.

5.8. Ethnic minorities

Youth policy in the Netherlands is well aware of ethnic differences and tensions in the multi-cultural society what the Netherlands is becoming increasingly. Using the wider definition of minorities, 17% of the population belong to this category. Most of them come from non-industrialised countries and again most of them, unlike the situation in Finland, are racially different. There is an expectation that ethnic problems will be reduced in the second generation of immigrants, with a 'new orientation to their parents' country of origin as well as to the Netherlands society they grew up in' (RNYP 1998: 3, 9.3).

Policy in the field is based upon analysis of qualitative and quantitative research evidence and it is interesting to note that quantitative data present a more positive picture than can be derived from qualitative sources. Research establishes an unfavourable labour market position of immigrant youth due mostly to the early school leaving without qualifications. Although the report mentions other factors for this situation, including discrimination, it does not elaborate on the problem, nor does it discuss research evidence about discrimination. Perhaps one reason for employers to prefer highly qualified young people for their low-skilled jobs is the desire to

eliminate ethnic minority youth. Young immigrants' vocational career is also hampered, with ethnic minority youth concentrated in the lowest rated and temporary jobs.

Ethnic minority policy in the Netherlands has somewhat long history of efforts to integrate immigrants into mainstream Netherlands society, starting with the first Minorities Memorandum (1983). Although this was an interdepartmental programme, its co-ordination was vested with the Ministry of Interior and this fact demonstrates traces of paternalistic policy striving to save society from problems caused by ethnic youth, rather than allow ethnic youth full development and participation in society.

A very heuristic policy approach in the field is developed in the Outlines of Ethnic Minority Integration Policy (1994) which implied a shift from target group policies towards area-based policies. Based on the concept of citizenship it applies an integrated approach to ethnic minority problems stressing integration and participation. Minority policy is closely linked to other policy areas such as settling-in, employment, education and culture, housing, health and welfare, etc. The area-based policy is characterised by the focus on local social policy and the implementation of the approach named '*quality of the neighbourhood*'. Various initiatives are aiming to improve the quality of life in areas where ethnic minorities and Netherlands-born citizens live together in deprived neighbourhoods.

A positive trend is that the latest measures and projects (1998) place the stress on youth as the key group for integration. We should also evaluate highly positively the efforts of this policy to involve self-organisations of ethnic minorities into provision. This approach seems much more effective, allowing the use of their social capital instead of destroying it. This is a route for their integration and participation in society which is still an unsolved problem if we take into consideration the low turnout of ethnic minorities in the 1998 local elections. An indicator of the high awareness of the persisting problems is the conclusion of the report that 'active policy on improvement of the position of these groups remains high on the agenda.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Challenges and response

There are three major elements of the problem situation which we would like to discuss at the end of this overview of youth policy in the Netherlands.

First of all, we are dealing here with a new type of youth maybe radically differing from the previous generations.

Second, there are new challenges rising from the needs of the new society – that of the 21st century.

Third, the new youth and the new challenges require a new youth policy with different accents and different approaches.

1. Characteristics of the new youth in contemporary Netherlands society:

Today's young people in the Netherlands are highly educated and well informed about developments not only in their immediate environment but also in the continent and the world. This is also due to the new high technology and the new media. Contemporary youth is a computerised youth dealing with and processing an enormous amount of information.

These are young people who are a watching, rather than a reading audience, who rarely visit cinemas, theatres and museums, rarely read books and newspapers. There is a definite shift in the cultural sources toward TV, video, personal computer, Internet.

Contemporary youth demonstrates little interest in official parliamentary politics but is attracted toward extraparliamentary activities. There is a process of distancing not from politics in general but from the formal representative politics. Today's young people are less romantic and more realistic compared to the young people of 1968. They do not believe too much in the extra-parliamentary forms of pressure.

The proportion of non-believers among Netherlands youth is increasing. The tendency of secularisation of Netherlands society is realised predominantly by the cultural change in young people's views and forms of behaviour.

Young people in the Netherlands are in the forefront of a post-modern phenomenon – the plurality of youth styles and subcultures. A very important shift is the lost connection between style and ideology in youth sub-cultural activity.

A very important tendency is the de-ideologisation of youth which is manifested in the distancing of young people from the church without their turning toward new religious movements; young people's declining interest in the major traditional political party ideologies and their involvement in issue-oriented citizen politics; and the emptying of youth subcultures from ideological contents with young people quickly shifting ('surfing') from one to the other without strong obsessions in any of them.

Obviously, today's youth policy meets young people who have new, unknown in the past, informational resources at their disposal and greater freedom in their ways of thinking and behaviour. They are freed from religious, political, even cultural restrictions typical for the former generations. These are opportunities for young people to meet the new risks of contemporary life, of life over the year 2000 but they themselves are not guarantees of such smooth transition. This lack of restrictions can easily turn into anarchy and violence in everyday life contexts. Formerly the religious and ideological forms channelled individual behaviour in socially acceptable routes and saved the efforts of autonomous thinking. Currently independent thinking cannot be spared to young people. It is their responsibility to meet the new challenges.

2. The new challenges facing youth and youth policy in the Netherlands

There is a need to make a shift from the culture of violence to the culture of peace. Social development in the past years reveals

that even in the most advanced countries in the world, violence is on the rise. Aggressive potential is manifested from an earlier age – even among children below 12. Violence is interpreted here in a general sense, including auto-aggression as demonstrated in suicidal behaviour, alcoholism and drug addiction. The transition toward a peace culture is not an easy transition. The factors stimulating the widened scope of violence are still active and are becoming even stronger. Provocations towards violence are intensifying as a result of the mixing of race and ethnic groups in the old nation-states. Europe in the future and every country forming part of it will be multiethnic community. ‘It will probably also be necessary to make some more profound studies in order to find out whether some of the reasons behind the rise in violence cannot be found in the general development of present society and its lack of giving obvious openings and opportunities for the young - especially for those at risk, (see also chapters 4.6 and 4.7).

Consciousness of belonging to Europe and considering all of Europe as the natural, boundless arena for operations is a new development rising from the political and economic processes of integration. This development is not only the formation of a widening political unity or the introduction of the Euro but involves a cultural process as well which comprises a certain level of consciousness. This consciousness of belonging to Europe of Netherlands youth is not exhausted by the affiliation with the country situated in the heart of Europe and who have given to the world the master pieces of Rembrandt and van Gogh. The formation of such consciousness requires a process of overcoming of ethnic stereotypes, violent nationalism and chauvinism. The new attitude of acceptance of other countries and nations in Europe as your equals will inevitably influence internal relations toward accepting ethnic minorities in your own country as equals.

Social activeness of young people is a new prerequisite of the coming age. The challenges of the future can be met only by people with a high civic consciousness – active engagement in the solution of the major local, national and European problems. The feeling of responsibility for social problems and the readiness to involve in their combating are very important attitudes in view of the current

social transformation - an important area of work for the non-formal educational sector - including (voluntary, independent) youth organisations.

3. A new general youth policy meeting these new challenges and responsive to the new characteristics of youth is therefore a necessity. The new youth policy should place a stake on participation understood broadly as social and political practice realising youth innovation potential. This is a policy concerned with the self-realisation of youth and an appeal to the creative abilities of youth - both as individuals and as groups. Youth participation is a general change of the contents of youth policy which involves all young people and is directed towards all of them. It is no longer enough to direct youth policy only toward those 10 or 15 per cent of young people belonging to the so-called groups at risk. The computer unlocked new opportunities and allowed young people and even children to develop and realise their innovative abilities thus changing the relations between generations.

Only politics freed from paternalism can ease the formation of a developed common consciousness of civic responsibility among the new generation. Traces of paternalism are found not only in the traditional ideologies but also in many assumptions underlying youth policy.

6.2. Positive innovations

The innovations referred to represent innovations mainly in the Netherlands and in its youth policy.

Broad perspective of preventive youth policy

There is a clear understanding of policy institutions that 'to invest in young people is to invest in the stability of tomorrow's society' (Youth Deserves a Future: 1993).

Shift in preventive youth policy from paternalism to youth participation

The declaration of youth participation as a central issue of youth policy is a key factor for the effectiveness of this policy.

Youth information base

A very good relationship between youth research and youth policy. Most of the strands of youth policy are based upon surveys conducted every year, or every four years.

Differentiated approach

High awareness about the differentiation in youth – along ethnicity, gender, disability, urban/rural divisions. Programmes targeting these various groups. Sensitiveness of policy measures to such differences.

Social homogenisation

Special attention to social inequality and to the material problems of young people.

Decentralisation

This re-direction of preventive youth policy focus from central to local level of government generates a more integrated approach, more flexible and more responding to the needs of young people. It allows close integration between different strands of youth policy – education, leisure, care, crime, welfare, etc. Good examples: area based approach of ethnic minority policy, neighbourhood approach, 'Partner School', 'Coach' project.

Integration

Youth policy in the Netherlands promotes a collaboration between socialising institutions – family, school, libraries, music halls, sport clubs and youth centres, although mainly in the framework of preventive approach.

Multiculturalism

Led by the principle 'Everyone should be an Amsterdammer and should respect each other's culture', youth policy in the Netherlands reflects the multicultural nature of Netherlands society.

6.3. Problem situations

Standardisation

Youth policy in the Netherlands lacks a standardisation of variables concerning youth. In the national report youth is defined as the age group of 0 - 25. Statistics Netherlands differentiates groups 0 - 19; 20 - 44 and 15 - 19; 20 - 24. The national report in the chapter on leisure and youth culture differentiates children aged 4-11 from young people aged 12-24 and in the chapter on employment considers young people from 15 to 24. The Department of Youth Policy in the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport use the age range 0-19 ("Youth Policy in the Netherlands"). Other official booklet clarify that: "The age of 27 seems to become the new borderline between youth and maturity" ("Being Young in the Netherlands").

The basic definition unites two generations.

Institutional co-ordination

The wide ranged and multi-sided work in the youth field requires an institutional structure at ministerial level with functions of a basic co-ordinator of youth policy.

Partnership of youth

Governmental support for the establishment of one full National Youth Council would be welcome. By this youth organisations can become equal partners in decision making and implementation of youth policy.

Balance 15-85

Despite the focus on youth participation, it seems that in many cases youth policy in the Netherlands is addressing only the 15% youth at risk.

Funding

The diminishment of structural funding of youth activities in favour of project based funding does not seem the best solution; both have their specific (dis)advantages.

Students

The possibilities for students' participation in management of educational institutions could be wider.

Leisure

Leisure is a major factor in two aspects: first, as a striving of young people themselves, and second, as a chance for society to model young generations not into passive consumers, but into active participants. It is known that the reverse side of material welfare and social security can be passiveness and consumerism.

The value system of young generations plays the key role for social dynamism. This requires more attention to leisure and to the non-formal education.

European Co-operation

Greater attention to the process of increased European co-operation. What are the expected consequences of this process on youth education, employment, and leisure. How does it relate to the prospects of ethnic minority and low qualified youth for participation in society.(9)

Juvenilisation

If we have to express by one term the need of a further development of the youth policy in the Netherlands in the direction that has already been chosen, this term may be *juvenilisation* (12) of youth policy.

6.4. Summary

Youth policy in the Netherlands is faced with problems the majority of which are common to the European countries. The search for decisions through the orientation to multiculturalism, the positive approach and youth participation, is worth noting. The practical application shows the scale of the change, which is imperative in overcoming the residual paternalism and negative thinking, under the conditions of a genuine empowerment of young people.

Young people offer more opportunities than problems; focus, policy and funding has to be in balance with this reality. The trial and error method seems impossible to avoid. This emphasises the importance of exchange of experience and information.

Notes

1. Carl Nissen - Special Advisor of the Ministry of Education, Denmark; Annette Scerri - Youth for Exchange and Understanding, Malta; Nikos Gousgounis - Anthropologist, Researcher, Greece; Petar-Emil Mitev, PhD - Sociologist, Professor at Sofia University "St Kliment Ochridsky", Bulgaria; Catalin Ghenea - Programme Adviser, Youth Directorate at the Council of Europe.

2. In the 5th Conference of European ministers responsible for youth (Bucharest, 27 - 29 April 1998) it was declared: "5. To implement, from local to European level, an intersectoral, integrated and coherent youth policy, based on the principles of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter".

3. There is rich literature on pillarisation. Arend Lijphart study (Lijphart 1975) is particularly instructive. (See also *References*.) According to a compendious assessment: "Pillarization had received official confirmation in the Pacification of 1917 and removed most of the tinder from Dutch politics; but it also kept ordinary Dutchmen religiously separated from each other to a greater degree than in the most Western countries ... Some 25 years after the end of World War II, the system began to disintegrate." (Enc. Brit., Vol. 24. p. 895).

4. "The term consociationalism denotes the elite accommodation in segmented societies by means of four mechanisms: grand coalitions, segmented autonomy, proportionality and minority veto" according Lijphart (Pennings 1997 : 9).

5. The main opposition party (CDA), according to the party manifestos (1998), supports the integration of different cultures in the Netherlands, the co-sharing of responsibilities by high school and university students, which takes place in the respective schools and universities, and the combination of adequate assistance with political commitments which offer new chances. Probably the most rational proposal is for students under the age of 25 to be able to start their studies and to apply for financial assistance during the whole course of studies plus one more

year; this will eliminate the age limit of 27 years. CDA puts an emphasis on family values.

6. The young Christian democrats (CDJA) hope that the government is able to encourage and create a coherent youth policy in a way that the participation on the general elections and activities in society will increase. (Meeting with Vereniging 31, Final Statements).

7. According to Winter there is a contradiction between declared intentions and their implementation: "Although the appeal to young people's own competence is presented as a general policy vision (and therefore applicable to all young people), in the elaboration the accent is strongly with young people with problems." (Winter 1997: 36).

8. "With a more structural approach it was easier to see the similarities between Komsomol relationships and Western arrangements of State Youth Councils, both of them linking older youth (young adults) to paternalistic regimes and to altruistic duties or services within society." (Ola Stafseng 1992: 29).

9. It is not only governmental policy but also the documents of the political opposition that heavily underscore care and concern. CDA points out in its election manifesto that the care and concern for the young people have strongly increased.

10. For comparison: 24% of high school students in the USA say that "they seriously contemplated suicide, while 9% admit attempting suicide." (Braungart and Braungart 1997: 3-4).

11. In 1988 0.3% of the young people over 12 aged have taken heroine during the last four weeks before the survey; in 1996 - 5%. The cocaine addicts' per cent is increased from 0.4% in 1988 to 1.1% in 1996. The consumption of XTC and LSD has increased more visibly. (Rapportage Jeugd 1997: 95).

12. Juvenilisation (also *juventisation*) is a concept, which describes the change introduced by youth into social relations. It is by its content a

specific type of creativity resulting from the new access to the socio-political and value system of society. (Mitev 1978: 3)

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