



Strasbourg, 19 December 2018

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Restricted

**First meeting of the drafting group
for the development of a
Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030
(Strasbourg, 6-7 December 2018)**

Meeting report

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Executive Summary

The **Council of Europe** is currently developing a strategy for its **youth sector for 2020 to 2030**.

The first step in the strategy development process consisted in a consultative meeting with the Council of Europe youth sector's (hereinafter referred to as "the youth sector") main stakeholders (15-16 May 2018) who took stock of the current strategy (Agenda 2020), drew lessons from its achievements and shortcomings, and defined the added value of the youth sector in addressing key challenges that young people are facing. On this basis, the consultative meeting also identified some preliminary ideas for a possible strategic framework for the youth sector until 2030 (what to maintain, what to develop, where to innovate). The main conclusions and findings of the consultative meeting were presented to the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) (15-16 October 2018), which endorsed the parameters for the youth sector strategy 2030 and the next steps in the development process, as well as adopted the terms of reference of the **drafting group** responsible for developing the draft strategy.

At its **first meeting** (6-7 December 2018), the drafting group started to shape the contents of the future strategy 2030, based on the results of the consultative meeting and the guidance provided by the Joint Council on Youth. As a result, a draft **theory of change** was prepared (see its key elements in **Appendix IV**: vision; purpose and role of the youth sector; distinction; range of services proposed; draft thematic priorities). The theory of change is a visual model that explains how and why a desired change is expected to happen, and illustrates the role which the Council of Europe and its youth sector could play in this context. This theory of change should be accompanied by a narrative and a more political document (most likely a Committee of Ministers' Resolution), which would all together constitute the strategy. Throughout the meeting, the drafting group also kept in mind the necessity to ensure that the contents of the resulting strategy can be meaningfully **evaluated**.

As regards the **next steps**, a second meeting of the drafting group (22-23 January 2019) will continue developing the theory of change and start devising the draft contents and structure of the strategy. The preliminary outcomes of the drafting group's endeavours will be **examined by the statutory bodies**, first at the joint meeting of the CDEJ and CCJ Bureaux (24-25 January 2019) and then at the 40th CMJ meeting (19-20 March 2019).

Introduction

On 6-7 December 2018, the drafting group set up to develop a strategy for the Council of Europe youth sector (hereinafter “strategy 2030”) held its **first meeting**.

Following the first steps taken during the [consultative meeting on 15 and 16 May 2018](#), during which representatives of the youth sector’s major stakeholders debated and reflected on the possible content of a new strategy for 2020 to 2030, the drafting group **started to organise that content within a strategic structure**.

Members of the [European Steering Committee for Youth \(CDEJ\)](#), the [Advisory Council on Youth \(CCJ\)](#), the [European Youth Forum \(YFJ\)](#), as well as experts in youth policy and strategy development sat down with members of the [Youth Department](#)’s and the [Directorate of Internal Oversight](#)’s secretariats (see list of participants in **Appendix I**) in order to start elaborating a draft strategy 2030 for the youth sector.

The drafting group **built a theory of change for the youth sector**, reflecting its vision; its purpose and role; its distinction; the range of services proposed; and its draft thematic priorities, and encompassing the various parameters of the future strategy, while ensuring that the contents of the resulting strategy could be meaningfully evaluated.

1. Context

Background: from “Agenda 2020” to a Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030

“[Agenda 2020](#)” is the Council of Europe’s medium-term strategic document on youth policy. It was adopted at the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (Kyiv, October 2008), and set out the principles and priorities of the Council of Europe’s youth policy and programmes for the period until 2020.

Beyond that date, the youth sector will need a **new strategy** that will provide policy guidance and a mission statement for the period 2020-30. This strategy should be general enough so that its policy orientations do not become quickly outdated while providing the framework within which the next five biennial programmes can be implemented.

At its 36th meeting (March 2017), the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) took stock of the implementation of “Agenda 2020”, and adopted a [roadmap](#) for the development of a new strategy 2030.

Strategy development process

One of the keys steps in developing the new strategy was the **consultative meeting** in May 2018, during which more than fifty stakeholders closely involved in the implementation of the youth sector’s programme took stock of the current strategy, drew lessons from its achievements and shortcomings, and defined the added value of the youth sector in addressing the key challenges that young people are facing. The input was also key in examining the context and identifying some preliminary ideas for a possible future strategic framework for the youth sector (what to maintain, what to develop, how and where to innovate).

Parameters of the future youth sector strategy 2030

At its 39th meeting (October 2018), the CMJ examined the report (document CMJ(2018)24) and the [main outcomes](#) of the consultative meeting, concluding that the meeting had been extremely useful in helping to set the main parameters for the new strategy and in defining the next steps in the strategy development process.

The CMJ also agreed that “the new strategy would need to find a balance between continuity and change, and that it should take into account the recently adopted EU and UN youth strategies. In this context, the need to avoid overlaps, to seek synergies, to address policy gaps and to underline the Council of Europe’s comparative advantage was also underlined. (...) The difficulty would be to find a balance between a vision (broad goals that could inspire all stakeholders) and its operationalisation (link to operational programmes and evaluation). Another challenge would be to try and design a strategy that could be bold and innovative (addressing some important issues affecting youth in the current context: e.g. security, climate change, refugees), but realistic at the same time (the youth sector cannot tackle all of the challenges that young people are facing). The need to use the achievements and standards of the youth sector as foundations for the new strategy was also emphasized” (document CMJ(2018)PV39, part 9).

On the basis of this discussion, the CMJ adopted the **parameters for the strategy 2030** (document CMJ(2018)25), according to which the new strategy should aim to:

- build on previous achievements of the youth sector;
- seek continuity with Agenda 2020 and learn from any identified shortcomings;
- take into account the broader mission of the Council of Europe, its objectives and its values, the track record of the Youth Department and the standards developed by the Joint Council on Youth;
- consider the latest political context of the Council of Europe, the interests of its member states and traditional stakeholders, and the changing profile of the youth sector and its stakeholders;
- consider the need for more systematic monitoring and evaluation of the youth sector's impact.

Drafting group: terms of reference

At the same meeting (October 2018), the CMJ also decided to **set up a drafting group** to further develop the strategy, as the next step in the development process.

According to its **terms of reference** (document CMJ(2018)25: see below), the drafting group would meet up to three times. It would consult relevant stakeholders and decision makers as necessary on the draft final document, which would then be presented to the CMJ for examination, guidance and final endorsement. It was also agreed that additional participants may be invited to enlarged meetings of the drafting group (e.g. representatives of the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO), other stakeholders, etc.).



CMJ(2018)25 terms of reference.docx

2. Aim and objectives of the first meeting of the drafting group (6-7 December 2018)

In accordance with the roadmap for the development of a strategy 2030 and with the terms of reference of the drafting group, the **aim of the first meeting** was to **start elaborating a draft strategy 2030** for the youth sector, notably on the basis of:

- the main outcomes of the consultative meeting (May 2018);
- the parameters agreed by the Joint Council on Youth (October 2018).

Some of the specific **objectives** of this first meeting were to:

- start building a theory of change for the youth sector (vision, mission, inputs and resources, thematic priorities, etc.);
- try to encompass the various parameters of the future strategy in the theory of change, while ensuring that it could be meaningfully evaluated.

The programme of the first meeting (as implemented) is set out in **Appendix II**.

3. Agreeing on a model theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector

After a brief overview of their mandate and of the parameters of the future strategy 2030, the drafting group members shared their expectations for the strategy itself in general, and the strategy development process (including the first meeting of the drafting group) in particular.

The drafting group then received a detailed presentation of the **concept of “theory of change”** and its possible use by the youth sector.

“[A] theory of change is a comprehensive description and illustration of **how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context**. It is focused in particular on mapping out or “filling in” what has been described as the **“missing middle” between what a programme (...) does** (its activities or interventions) **and how this leads to desired goals being achieved**. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur. They provide useful information to inform planning, and to inform evaluation and monitoring. In the planning phase, theory of change is useful for developing a clear understanding of how an organisation of works towards the achievement of its vision over the long term, and therefore, is a useful vehicle for strategy development”.

In light of this definition, the **drafting group agreed** that a **theory of change** should provide the **necessary basis** for the **strategy 2030** as it might serve the **double purpose** assigned to the strategy: to be a **permanent** (or long-term) **statement of purpose**, but also a **practical framework** for the biennial programmes of the youth sector over the next ten years. The theory of change should be **informed by the youth sector's vision and spirit**, but also **inform monitoring and evaluation**, notably by establishing causal relationships between Council of Europe interventions and their desired outcomes and impact. This theory of change should be accompanied by a **narrative** and a **more political document** (most likely a Committee of Ministers' Resolution), which would all together constitute the strategy.

The drafting group also agreed that some **tolerance of ambiguity** would be needed with regard to the **evaluability of the strategy**. As evaluation was one of the parameters provided by the CMJ, the future evaluation process of the strategy would need to be discussed in detail. However, the lessons learned from "Agenda 2020" provided ground for some potential changes in the evaluation process, questioning for instance whether some outputs that can easily be counted (number of study sessions, participants, etc.) could really show the impact or not. In this context, the drafting group was aware that the question of what counted as evidence of outcomes and impact may constitute a challenge.

The drafting group then examined several **possible models** for a theory of change which could be used for the youth sector which were presented as follows:

- The **"logframe model"** (see **Appendix III**): this approach "is linear and schematic; it is commonly used (...) where quantitative measurement of progress towards targets is possible and desirable. It is useful for planning in systems in which the inputs obviously lead to outputs without too many unknowns". This sort of logframe model was used for the Council of Europe biennial Programme and Budget. The drafting group found that this model clearly demonstrated the link between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. However, the drafting group also thought that it did not cater for the need to sum up the vision, aims, role and actual work of the youth sector in a way that reflected its unique character and which could also be translated into programming or evaluation mechanisms.
- The **"mixed model"** (see **Appendix III**): this approach "can account for aspects that are less tangible than 'resource inputs' (...) and for the ethical framing of the organisation with more typical institutional objectives – achieving mandate aims, etc. It is also interesting because it offers not only the big-picture vision, but is also a way to (...) translate that picture into an operational framework." The drafting group felt that this model might be appropriate for certain specific priority work areas of the youth sector as it could help establish causal relationships between the interventions and their desired outcomes in a specific field. However, it could not encompass all parameters of the strategy.
- The **"ecosystem model"** (see **Appendix III**): this approach "clearly demonstrates the organic impact of the organisation's work, how it is part of and contributes to it, without taking all the credit. Through its inputs, the field flourishes and grows, contributing to the development of a multitude of results that interact with each other: the further inputs of the organisation; other factors – positive and negative – to 'change' situations and conditions – not all of which can be foreseen considering the inputs made. The whole organic system contributes to the emergence of the vision, which in turn is a contribution or impetus to the rest of the system to grow and further develop. It is a virtuous cycle of life and growth."

After a thorough discussion, the drafting group agreed that the **"ecosystem model"** seemed to be the **most suitable for the youth sector**. It also agreed that, as the ecosystem model was a ready-made model, it needed to be adapted to the situation of the Council of Europe, implying that various parameters might be changed or further adapted in order to reflect the particular ecosystem of its youth sector.

The drafting group felt that the youth sector **did indeed function 'organically'** and could plausibly be **compared to an ecosystem** (where the outcomes are the result of the **combined efforts** of all of its components or stakeholders even though the Youth Department usually initiates and co-ordinates the process). As recalled in the presentation, "the interventions of the Council of Europe are limited in financial and operational scope, and function on the principle of multiplication across a geographically widespread, diverse and inter-disciplinary field. There is no linear relationship between the financial, intellectual and political resources that the Council of Europe is putting into its field of intervention. Nevertheless, there are a huge number of outputs and there is testimony to impact from the field and the policy community. This impact develops organically in response not only to the inputs of the Council of Europe but to a significant number of unknown factors, including the dynamics of the European field, as well as in each country, over which the Council of Europe has practically no control."

Moreover, the drafting group agreed that the "ecosystem model" offered a **visually engaging approach**, which could **meet the main criteria** outlined for the elaboration of the strategy 2030. It therefore decided to explore the possibility of building a theory of change for the youth sector on the basis of this model.

4. Building the theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector

Based on a preliminary attempt to formulate some elements of the model for the youth sector (which had been distributed before the meeting), the drafting group **started to develop the theory of change**. The **key elements, as agreed by the drafting group**, are summarised hereafter. The corresponding graphic representation is set out in **Appendix IV**.

- **Vision**

The drafting group agreed that the **core vision** (overarching framework) of the strategy should be the following:

- *“Young people across Europe are actively upholding, defending, promoting and enjoying the Council of Europe’s core values: Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law”.*

The corresponding **aspirations** of the strategy would be as follows:

- *“Young people and all forms of youth civil society across Europe can rely on an enabling environment to exercise their rights, including concrete policies, mechanisms and resources, for engaging with and acting on Council of Europe values”.*
- *“Communities of practice are actively producing knowledge and expertise that contribute to the effectiveness of mechanisms for supporting young people’s engagement with the Council of Europe values, and are actively learning from each other”.*
- *“Young people across Europe are participating meaningfully in decision making at all levels, on the basis of a broad social and political consensus, in support of participatory governance and accountability”.*

- **Distinction (approach, methodologies)**

The drafting group agreed that the youth sector was characterised by a unique spirit, notably based on:

- *Mutual respect and trust*
- *Inclusiveness*
- *Sustained commitment*
- *Participation*
- *Equity*
- *Transparency*
- *Collaboration*

- **Purpose and role of the Council of Europe youth sector**

The drafting group agreed that the **purpose and role** of the **youth sector** (and not solely of the Youth Department) were *“to support and develop the quality of youth civil society, youth work, youth policy and youth research in their efforts to facilitate young people’s active engagement with the Council of Europe’s core values”.*

It was also mentioned that *“the Council of Europe youth sector could be seen as a cloud, with its constituents coming together in different ways to form raindrops directed at different elements of its ground – for watering perennials (maintenance), for fertilising and adding nutrients to new plants (development), and for seeding successfully (innovation)”.* In this spirit, the drafting group then defined the inputs and resources of the youth sector (combination of instruments, ideas, human and financial resources, networks) and their functions, in order to achieve particular objectives and outcomes in the field (see next section).

- **Range of services proposed: what the Council of Europe youth sector offers (inputs, resources, functions of main instruments to achieve particular objectives and outcomes in the field)**

The drafting group agreed that, in order to achieve its desired objectives and outcomes, the Council of Europe **offered** the following to the youth field:

- *Financial support to youth civil society development*
- *Quality infrastructure for capacity building of communities of practice*
- *Capacity building for stakeholder communities*
- *Networking and peer learning between and among the different communities of practice and stakeholder groups*
- *Practicing and promoting participatory governance through co-management*
- *Laboratory for innovation in youth work, youth policy and youth research*
- *Specialist expertise, tailored consulting and knowledge creation*
- *Quality development and standard setting*

- Platform for the development of Europe-wide consensus, legitimacy and multilateral ownership
- Space for political and inter-institutional co-operation
- Direct access for young people to the institution and political decision makers
- Youth mainstreaming and cross-departmental co-operation inside the institution
- Pro-active outreach to and engagement of young people experiencing disadvantage
- Anticipating future trends, challenges and opportunities

- **Draft thematic priorities**

Last but not least, the drafting group defined some **possible thematic priorities** for the future strategy (to be reviewed and further developed in the next stages of the strategy development process):

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Revitalising democracy</p> <p>Participation Active citizenship Shrinking space for civil society Human Rights Education</p> | <p>Access to rights</p> <p>Gender equality Young people in vulnerable situations Right to a clean environment (climate change, etc.) Right to youth information Anti-discrimination Digitalisation (ICT and democracy) Human Rights Education</p> |
| <p>Living together in diverse societies [or: building inclusive societies]</p> <p>Appreciation of diversity Flight and migration Peace building Intercultural learning Intersectionality Anti-discrimination on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national/ethnic origin or sexual orientation Intergenerational dialogue Global solidarity Human Rights Education</p> | <p>Youth work</p> <p>Common European Youth Work Agenda Non-Formal Education</p> |

5. **Conclusion and next steps**

To conclude, at its first meeting, the drafting group made **good progress** with the proposed **structure and content** of the **strategy 2030**.

The group notably agreed that a **theory of change** should provide the **necessary basis** for the strategy development process. After having chosen a model offering a visually engaging approach which could also meet the main criteria outlined for the elaboration of the strategy (so-called “ecosystem model”), the drafting group started to build the theory of change for the youth sector. In this context, the drafting group also defined several **key elements of the future strategy**: vision; distinction (approach, methodologies); purpose and role of the youth sector; range of services proposed; draft thematic priorities.

These elements would obviously need to be reviewed and **further developed** by the drafting group, which therefore agreed to meet a second time in January 2019, in order to be able to present a fuller picture of its work to the **Joint Council on Youth** at its 40th meeting in March 2019. The feedback received on this occasion will then be taken into account in the next stages of the drafting process.

Appendix I: List of participants

- **European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ):**

Katrin OLT, Estonia CDEJ member

Miriam TEUMA, Malta Chair of the CDEJ, chair of the CMJ (chair of the drafting group)

- **Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)**

Georgios CHATZIGEORGIOU Vice-chair of the CCJ

Natascha SKJALDGAARD CCJ member

- **European Youth Forum**

Liva VIKMANE Policy officer

- **Experts in youth policy and strategy development**

Yael OHANA Frankly Speaking - Training, Research & Development

Howard WILLIAMSON Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of South Wales

- **Secretariat**

Antje ROTHEMUND Head of the Youth Department

Florian CESCO Head of the Youth Policy Division

Joanne HUNTING Secretary to the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)

Rica TERBECK Evaluator, Evaluation Division, Directorate of Internal Oversight

- **Resource person**

Giovanna MONTAGNA Administrative Assistant, Youth Policy Division

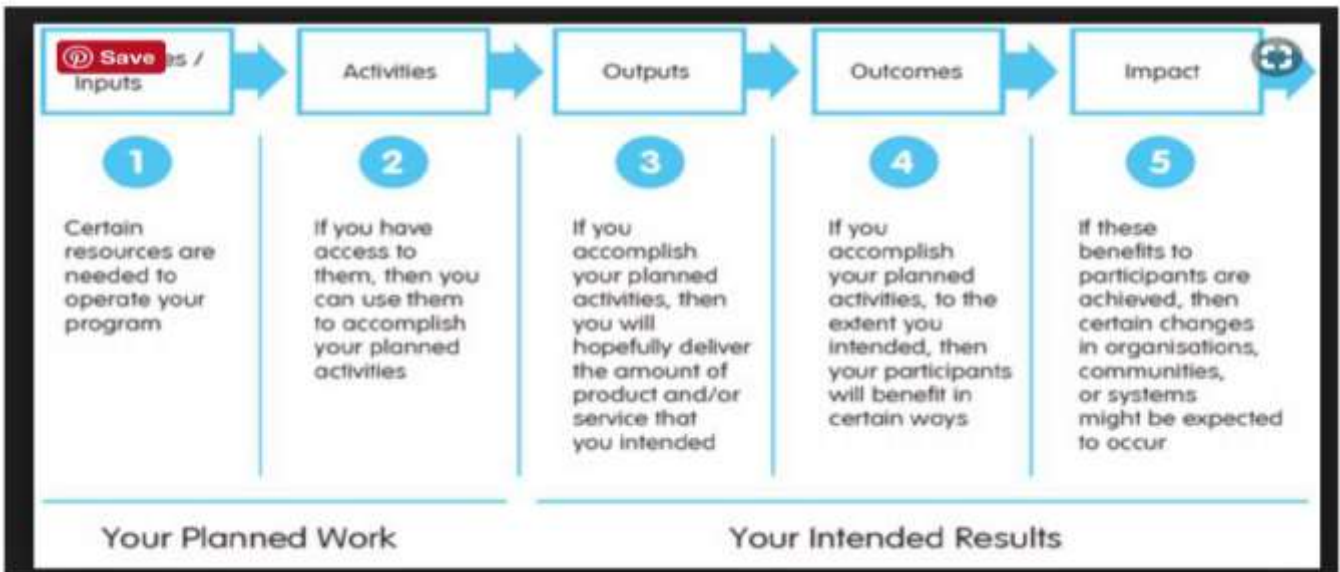
Appendix II: Programme of the first meeting

(as implemented)

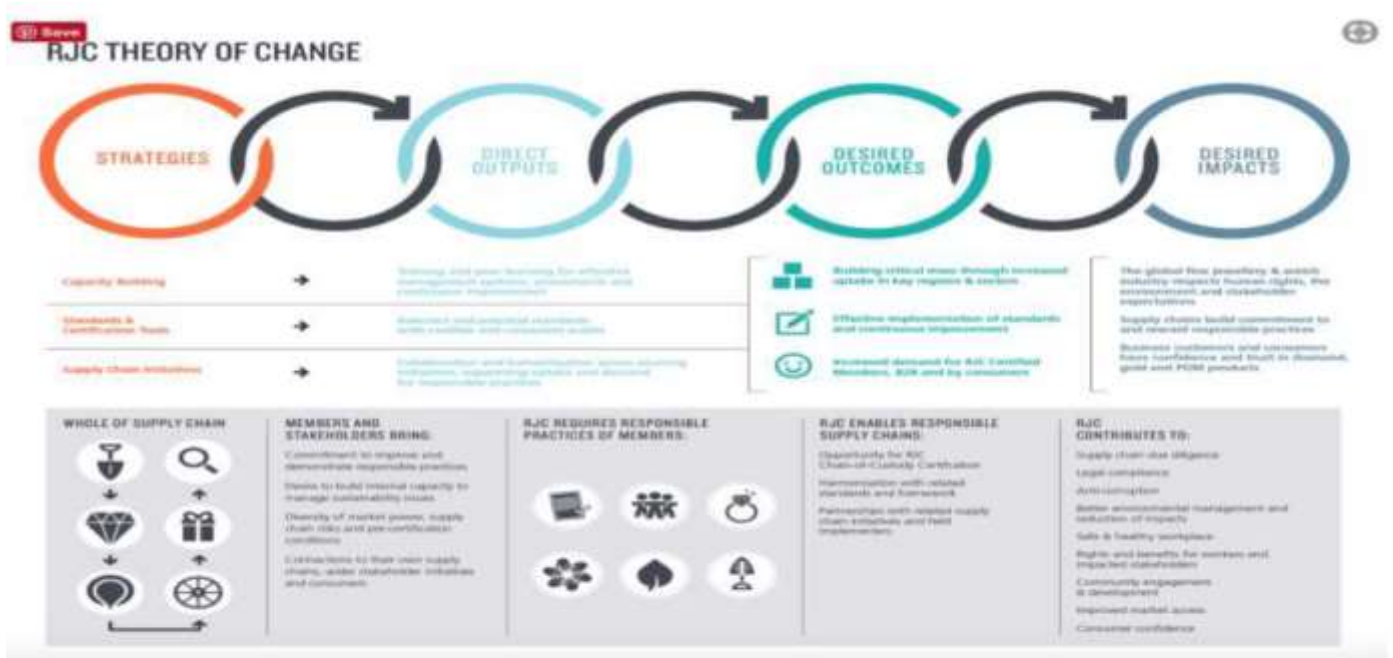
| Thursday 6 December 2018 | Friday 7 December 2018 |
|--|---|
| Breakfast | Breakfast |
| <p>Introduction to the meeting's aim, objectives, participants and programme</p> <p>Overview of the mandate of the drafting group (specific tasks) and parameters of the future youth sector strategy 2030 (as approved by the CMJ)</p> | <p>Building a theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector [continued]</p> |
| Coffee break | Coffee break |
| <p>Introduction to the theory of change (possible models):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to encompass the various parameters of the future strategy • How to make it evaluable? | <p>Building a theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector [continued]</p> |
| Lunch break | Lunch break |
| <p>Building a theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Mission/ Purpose and role • Inputs and resources / functions of the youth sector's instruments • Thematic priorities | <p>Building a theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector [continued]</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Closing</p> |
| Coffee break | 16.00: end of meeting |
| <p>Building a theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector [continued]</p> | Possible departure of participants |
| <p>19.30: dinner at "S'Wacke Hiesel » restaurant hosted by the Head of the Youth Policy Division</p> | Dinner to be arranged by participants |

Appendix III: Various models of theory of change

Example of a “**logframe model**” (as presented to the drafting group during its first meeting)



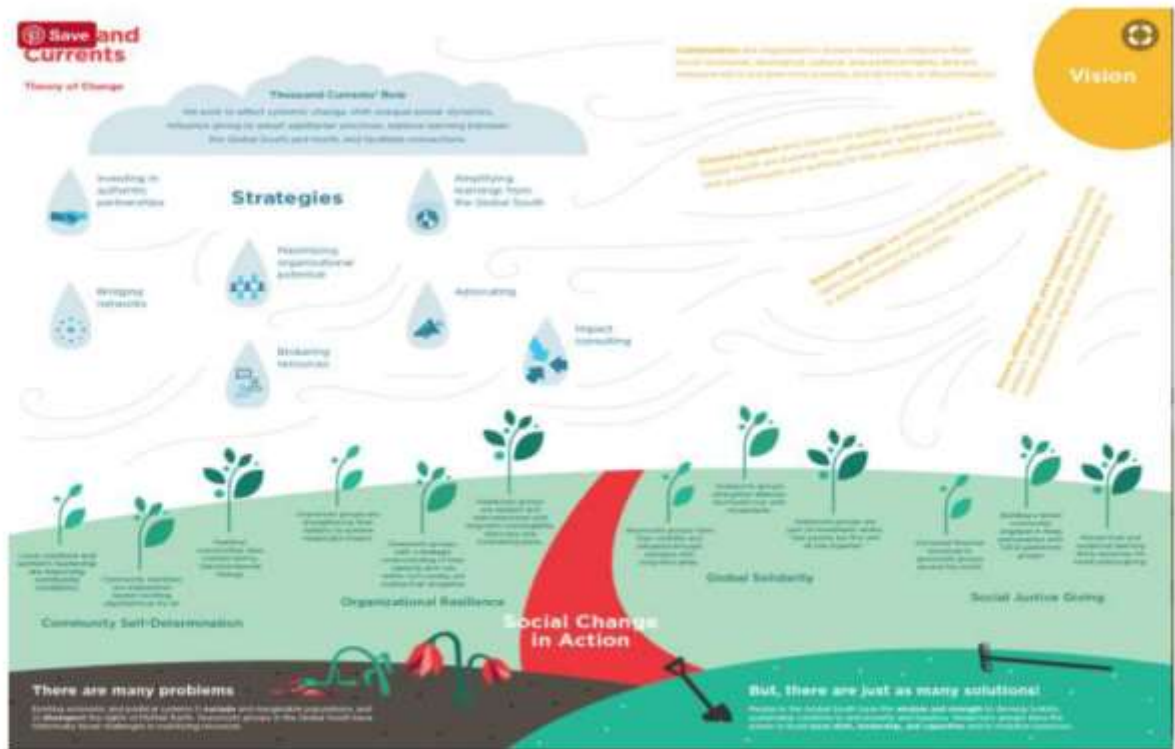
Example of a “**mixed model**” (as presented to the drafting group during its first meeting)



Example of an “ecosystem model” (as presented to the drafting group during its first meeting)

An Ecosystem Model - Theory of Change for a sector or institution or organisation (long-term)

<https://thousandcurrents.org/about/#toc>

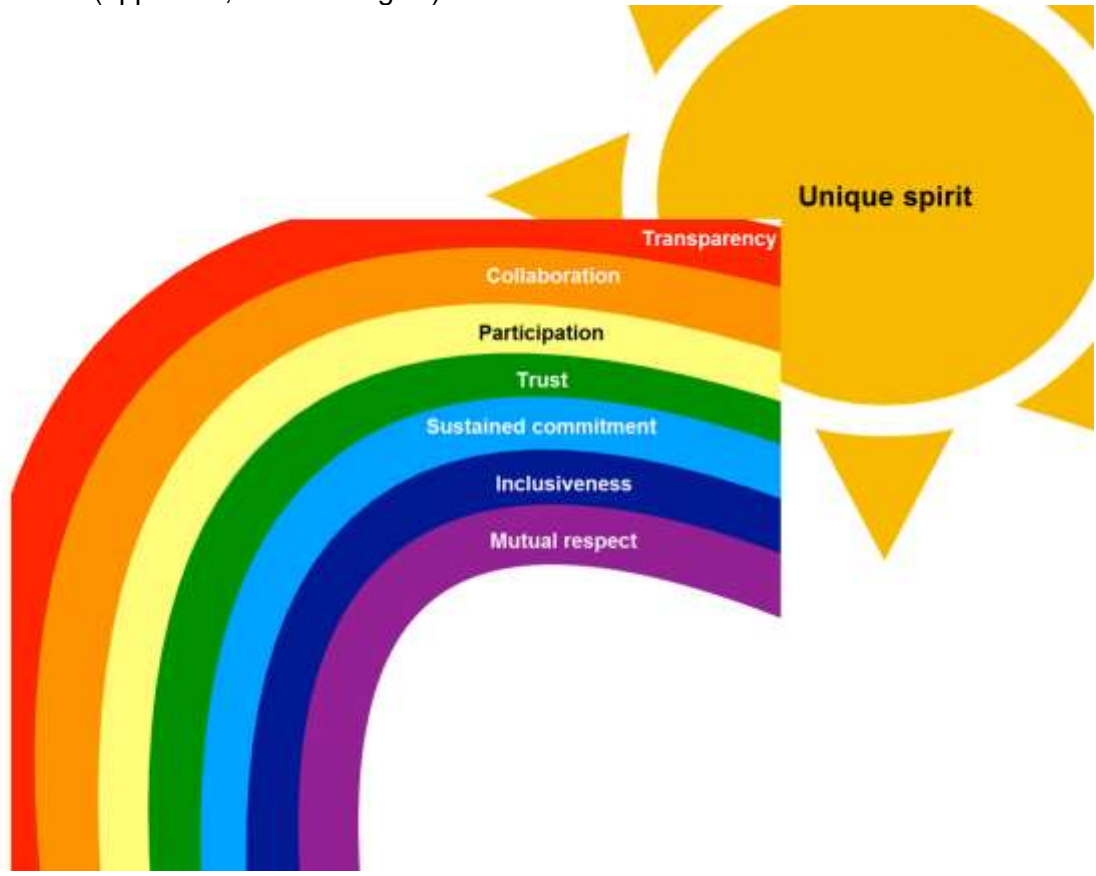


Appendix IV: Key elements of the theory of change for the Council of Europe youth sector (preliminary list approved by the drafting group – to be completed)

- **Vision**



- **Distinction** (approach, methodologies)



- **Purpose and role** of the Council of Europe youth sector



The purpose and role of the Council of Europe Youth Sector are to support and develop the quality of youth civil society, youth work, youth policy and youth research in their efforts to facilitate young people's active engagement with the Council of Europe's core values

- **Range of services proposed:** what the Council of Europe youth sector offers (some inputs, resources, functions of main instruments to achieve particular objectives and outcomes in the field)

To be completed: the intention of the drafting group is to place the range of services proposed in raindrops (as in the picture of the ecosystem model).