YOUTH SECTOR STRATEGY 2030
Engaging young people
with the Council of Europe's values

STRATÉGIE 2030 DU SECTEUR JEUNESSE
Permettre aux jeunes de s'engager
sur les valeurs du Conseil de l'Europe

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Background document[1]

to the

Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030

The Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030[2] was launched on 23 January 2020 by Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Ambassador Irakli Giviashvili, President of the Ministers' Deputies.

This accompanying background document introduces the Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030 and puts it into the context of young people's lives and of youth policy. It describes what the Council of Europe youth sector does and what it has to offer, in terms of its partners, instruments and methodologies, and reasserts the Council of Europe youth sector's distinction and its place in Europe today.

The document describes the theory of change model for the strategy, and sets out its vision, mission and thematic priorities. The strategy's expected outcomes illustrate the overall impact this work is designed to achieve in relation to each of its four thematic priorities.

---

[1] As endorsed by the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) during its 41st meeting (15-16 October 2019) in Strasbourg. English only.
[2] Resolution CM/Res(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030.

The Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 – Explanatory memorandum

Contents

***

Introduction

The wider social and political context in Europe is now very different from the one that prevailed when the last Council of Europe youth sector strategy was forged.

The lives of European young people are also, in some respects at least, very different. The youth 'field', within which the Council of Europe youth sector is located and positioned, is now more diverse and, arguably, both more competitive and more collaborative. Furthermore, in the wider context of changing approaches to multilateral co-operation, the Council of Europe itself has changed, on its 70th anniversary, as it seeks to re-position itself in contemporary Europe. Its values and its mission – of human rights, democracy and the rule of law – remain, however, as pertinent and paramount as ever, to be sustained, promoted and renewed through its impact on the next generation, through the work of the Council of Europe youth sector.

As the Secretary General of the Council of Europe observed in May 2018:

> "Democracy cannot be built on laws, institutions and mechanisms alone. These need to be underpinned by an understanding of and commitment to the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge required for anyone to be an informed and active participant in our societies. From this point of view, the activities in the areas of education, youth and culture constitute important examples of how a European institution can contribute to repairing the broken links between citizens and decision makers, providing viable alternatives to populist discourse".[3]

In 2008, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe.[4] The Resolution was supported in the context of:

> Considering the challenges young people face, both in terms of greater opportunities offered to them and an *increased* risk of precariousness, but convinced nevertheless of their considerable potential and therefore fundamental role in promoting the Council of Europe's core values;

As a result, it was:

> Convinced of the need for a dynamic youth policy in the Council of Europe.

Subsequently, 'The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020' (hereafter Agenda 2020), was adopted, setting out a vision for the Council of Europe youth sector for the following decade. That decade has witnessed significant *change* in the condition and circumstances of the lives of young people in Europe, in institutional policies and practices across the youth sector in Europe, and in the wider political and economic context. It has also been a time of significant *continuity*, with regard to many of the challenges facing young people, the issues that affect them and the distribution of opportunities and experiences available to them.

This changed and changing landscape demands careful re-appraisal of the vision and mission that informed Agenda 2020. It requires consideration of new tasks and pathways for the Council of Europe youth sector but, *equally,* it needs to reflect on existing activities that should be sustained, perhaps even strengthened and re-asserted, in new times. Agenda 2020 was framed, though with flexibility for innovation and development in response to emergent issues, by the themes of human rights and democracy, diversity and inclusion.[5]

The Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 continues to embrace a commitment to democracy and rights, as well as to diversity and inclusion. It is responsive to the challenge of change, particularly acknowledging the contribution to be made by youth work and the need to address developments in patterns of governance and youth participation. It is attentive to environmental threats and environmental degradation, new forms of employment and the erosion of social rights. It is alert to the impact of technology, artificial intelligence and the digital space.

---

[3] See Secretary General 2018 Report: Role of Institutions, Threats to Institutions.
[4] https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d2245.
[5] Agenda 2020 was enshrined in a Declaration by the 8th Conference of Ministers responsible for youth, held in Kyiv, Ukraine in 2008 – see https://rm.coe.int/1680702429. It has three governing strategic goals: human rights, democracy and the rule of law; living together in diverse societies; and the social inclusion of young people.

The Strategy is concerned with the *maintenance* of much existing and proven practice, its further *development* in some areas, and *innovation* in the face of new challenges and circumstances.

Beyond providing direction in priorities and practice to the Council of Europe youth sector, the Strategy will be a barometer for partners in the field, the basis for reaching out to those who need to understand it better and on which the work of the Council of Europe youth sector will ultimately be evaluated.

The Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 was formulated through an inclusive consultative process with representatives of all of its key stakeholders over a period of nearly three years (see Appendix One).

Context

The context of young people's lives

Young people's lives in contemporary Europe are characterised by multiple complex social challenges which affect their access to human rights. Amongst these are persistent poverty, health and wellbeing problems as well as barriers to accessing quality education, training and decent employment. Opportunities for nonformal education and youth work, the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable young people as well as ways of dealing with demographic pressures and related questions on the distribution of resources are amongst further concerns. Young people are also affected by major global issues such as dealing with newly emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, and creating pathways to sustainable development.

The climate crisis, environmental degradation, as well as peace and security challenges are furthermore having a great impact on young people.

At the same time, there are various challenges to democracy and the rule of law. There are sustaining concerns about young people's lack of trust in, and social exclusion from mainstream democratic structures and institutions of decision making.

The (re-)emergence of populism and nationalism, and the closing down of democratic spaces for expression and debate represent further major challenges to modern democracies.
At the same time, new forms and platforms of participation and expression have appeared which come with opportunities and risks.

These challenges to human rights, democracy and the rule of law are interdependent and have various effects on young people. Their manifestations depend on global, European, national and local institutions, policies and practices. Not all young people are affected equally, but vulnerable groups of young people including those from minorities often face particular risks.

Addressing these challenges requires effective youth policies, the democratic participation of young people in decision-making at all levels, as well as resources for quality youth work.

The 'youth policy' context

For many different reasons, young people's issues and issues affecting young people remain a significant focus of public policy attention. Most European countries have evolving national youth policies, either specifically enshrined in a 'youth policy' framework or dispersed through different policy domains. National, regional and local authorities vary in their commitment to advancing a framework for youth policy, including youth participation and youth work.

It is not only public authorities that focus some attention on young people. There is also a flourishing NGO sector composed both of self-governed youth organisations and NGOs working with young people. And there is now a burgeoning private sector in the youth field, providing consultancy, training, research and practice, producing both more competition and more collaboration. There are, as a result, what might be called 'permeable boundaries' where different institutions and organisations seek both to define and defend their unique character and contribution (their 'distinction') and yet simultaneously share with and adopt practice from the work of others.

At an international level, the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 must not only be distinguished from but also connect with its counterpart strategies at European and global levels, in particular:

- the European Union youth strategy 2019-2027[6] with its aims to 'engage', 'connect' and 'empower' and its aspirations around 11 youth goals;
- the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;[7]
- the United Nations youth strategy[8] with its five strategic priorities in the areas of youth voice and participation, education and health, economic empowerment and decent work, human rights and civic/political engagement, and peace and resilience building.

The strategic headlines of all three institutions may appear to be very similar. The methodologies by which more specific outcomes are likely to be achieved and sustained, however, are rather different (see **Distinction**, below). The Youth sector strategy 2030 acknowledges the need to avoid overlaps, seek synergies, address policy gaps and assert the Council of Europe's comparative advantage on youth matters where it has an established track record.

The Council of Europe youth sector

The youth sector, not the youth field

The Strategy is explicitly a strategy for the *Council of Europe youth sector*. It is not, it should be clear, a strategy focused directly on young people, however central they may be to its deliberations. It also falls short of embracing the *youth field* which, vertically, clearly drills down into local youth activity and stretches well beyond Europe (through to the United Nations) and, horizontally, includes work by the European Union and myriad foundations. Nevertheless, there are invariably many connections with this wider field. The Council of Europe youth sector comprises essentially the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and its instruments, its co-managed statutory bodies (governments and youth organisations), its formal partners, and its networks of trainers, researchers and policy experts (see Appendix Three).

The Council of Europe youth sector exists to support and develop the effectiveness of youth civil society, youth work, youth policy, youth research and youth-focused 'communities of practice' in their efforts to facilitate young people's active engagement in upholding and benefiting from the Council of Europe's core values. In terms of policy and practice within the Youth sector strategy 2030, this means attending to the trilogy of Rights, Knowledge and Participation.

The Council of Europe youth sector has been working since 1972. It brings to bear on the youth field an experientially developed and refined range of instruments that are marshalled and combined in multiple ways to establish a complementary programme of activities, from training courses to publications and from project development assistance to youth policy support measures for member States.

The instruments of the Council of Europe youth sector

The working methods of the youth sector that is shaped by the Council of Europe – through its Youth Department and its instruments, which are interconnected and interdependent: the European Youth Centres, the European Youth Foundation, the co-managed statutory bodies (the European Steering Committee for Youth and the Advisory Council on Youth) that constitute the Joint Council on Youth, and the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth (hereafter the Youth Partnership) – provide the collaborative context through which its work is done. Beyond these core collaborations, there is the Council of Europe's Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card and its work with the European Youth Card Association (EYCA). There is also the Partnership Agreement between the Council of Europe and the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA). The high-level co-management system, where decisions are made jointly by representatives of youth organisations and governments, is replicated in the equal representation of these partners in the preparation of events and training programmes and the production of materials and publications.

---

[6] The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027: https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en
[7] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300
[8] Youth 2030: Working with and for young people: https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf

What does the Council of Europe youth sector offer?

The Council of Europe youth sector comprises human, financial and physical resources, both *methodologies and instruments*. As well as the core staff teams of the Youth Department and the Youth Partnership, it benefits from the 'social capital' (networks and connections) emanating from the CDEJ (the European Steering Committee for Youth, comprising government officials) and the Advisory Council on Youth (composed of representatives of youth organisations), as well as from the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) and the correspondents for the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP) (both co-ordinated by the Youth Partnership), and the Trainers' Pool. All of these communities of practice provide the Council of Europe youth sector with an extensive body of experience and expertise from the youth field. It is also equipped to provide financial support for youth projects through the European Youth Foundation. Beyond that, in terms of physical resources, it has the two European Youth Centres, in Strasbourg and Budapest, as well as a network of other youth centres throughout Europe on which it has conferred its Quality Label for Youth Centres.

Such human, financial and physical resources have, to date, enabled the Council of Europe youth sector to provide, in an abstract and generic sense, the following:

- 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;
- practising and promoting participatory governance through co-management;
- a laboratory for innovation in youth work, youth policy and youth research;
- specialist expertise, tailored consulting and knowledge creation;
- quality development and standard setting;
- platforms 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;
- proactive outreach to and engagement of young people experiencing disadvantage;
- anticipation of future trends, challenges and opportunities.

In more concrete terms, this framework of practice has produced a striking professional legacy of achievement,[9] including:

- innovative standards (notably through a number of recommendations the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on issues relating to young people);
- instruments in the field of youth co-operation, such as: Framework Partnership Agreements in the youth field between the European Commission and the Council of Europe; Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card; Partnership with the European Youth Card Association (EYCA); Partnership with the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA); Partnership work through sub-regional co-operation;
- intergovernmental co-operation on youth policy (notably through reviews of national youth policy, advisory missions, making a 'youth dimension' contribution to national action plans, summer universities, seminars);
- landmark campaigns in the youth field, such as the *All Different All Equal*[10] campaign and the *No Hate Speech Movement*[11] campaign;
- specific educational approaches for intercultural learning and human rights education, empowering young people and youth workers to participate in society through the programmes of the European Youth Centres (including, for example, training courses, study sessions, expert groups and seminars, symposia, the Living Library methodology);

---

[9] Further elaboration of this catalogue of achievements may be found in the Secretariat Memorandum for the Joint Council on Youth 36th meeting, Budapest 27-29 March 2017, European Youth Centre: Item 8 on the agenda – State of Play "The future of the Council of Europe Youth Policy: AGENDA 2020" (Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe) Some key highlights and achievements.
[10] https://www.europewatchdog.info/en/instruments/campaigns/all_different_all_equal/.
[11] https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign.

- dedicated human rights publications and training materials, including the ubiquitous *Compass* (and *Compasito*), education packs, the T-Kits (training kits/tickets), the youth work online magazine *Coyote*;
- the promotion and recognition of non-formal learning;
- the promotion and recognition of youth work, notably through active contributions to the European Youth Work Conventions, seminars and publications on the history of youth work, and the ad hoc High-Level Task Force on Youth Work;
- the promotion and recognition of youth policy at European and national levels, including through the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP),[12] research studies, youth 'knowledge' books, the journal *Perspectives on Youth* and the co-organisation of the First Global Forum on Youth Policies;[13]
- dedicated, timely and appropriate reactions to specific issues: Youth Peace Ambassadors,[14] Enter![15] the Roma Youth Action Plan;[16]
- contributions to Council of Europe action plans (for example, concerning Roma and Travellers,[17] Refugee and Migrant Children,[18] and Combating Terrorism[19]), and bilateral co-operation;
- the embedding of human rights education within the institutional practices of the Council of Europe, notably through the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE).[20]

Since Agenda 2020, the primary achievements in inter-institutional relations have been as follows:

- strengthened forms of communication and co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, notably but not only through the Youth Partnership;
- the stability of the Youth Partnership's agenda since 2014: knowledge development on youth participation, youth work and social inclusion;
- a greater identity for youth work, initially through the work of the Youth Partnership, but now more prominently within both of the institutions;
- the linking of the work of the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) during EU Presidencies, producing increased coherence and more synergies;
- a more consolidated approach to youth research, policy and practice across the Youth Partnership, the Council of Europe Youth Department and the European Commission Youth Unit.

Whether unilaterally or in partnership with others, however, there is clearly an imperative for the Council of Europe youth sector – its distinctive constituency – to *maintain* proven practice, *develop* promising work and address emergent issues through *innovation* as new challenges and circumstances for young people and youth policy present themselves.

This impressive range of activities (<u>outputs</u>) has addressed myriad *issues* and engaged a host of *stakeholders and participants*. The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, with their in-house educational staff, are pivotal for the implementation of many of the activities outlined above, providing the 'secure' and participative space for learning and development as well as the necessary educational support.

Furthermore, over the past ten years, from its mainstream budget, the European Youth Foundation has awarded around 2 000 grants to youth NGOs at local, national and European levels for a wide range of projects and initiatives. The European Youth Foundation continues to develop innovative ways of engaging with the 'field' (notably the recipients of its grants), including its methodology for recognising the time given by volunteers to implementing youth activities throughout Europe.

---

[12] https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/knowledge-/-ekcyp.
[13] https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/10/1st-global-forum-on-youth-policies/.
[14] https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-peace-dialogue/youth-peace-ambassadors.
[15] https://www.coe.int/en/web/enter/home?desktop=true.
[16] https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/home?desktop=true.
[17] https://rm.coe.int/1680684b5e.
[18] https://edoc.coe.int/en/children-s-rights/7362-council-of-europe-action-plan-on-protecting-refugee-and-migrant-children-in-europe-2017-2019.html.
[19] https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c3576.
[20] https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/charter-on-education-for-democratic-citizenship-and-human-rights-education.

The financial resources of the Council of Europe youth sector are, however, finite and, within the current economic and political climate across Europe, arguably more precarious. The Youth sector strategy 2030 will clearly need to adapt to prospectively changing budgetary circumstances.

Distinction: the Council of Europe youth sector's place in Europe today

Given the increasing number of actors within the youth sector throughout Europe, the distinctive place of the *Council of Europe youth sector* needs to be reasserted. Rather as, in 2017, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) crystallised the key 'youth policy' themes on which it had special expertise in supporting member States (see Appendix Five), the Youth sector strategy 2030 clarifies what is distinctive about the contribution of the Council of Europe youth sector in responding to youth issues in Europe.

The co-management structure of the youth statutory bodies – the shared responsibility for decision-making and setting the agenda between the representatives of governments and youth organisations – is often the most heralded as its mark of distinction. There is, however, much more that is considered distinctive in the work of the Council of Europe youth sector. The following concepts embrace that distinction (for more elaboration, see Appendix Six).

The work of the Council of Europe youth sector is, first and foremost, **principled**, anchored in clear values (of human rights, democracy and the rule of law). Its activities are trusted and transparent. Its work is driven through a 'trialogue' between youth research, policy and practice, engaging with governments and youth organisations and young people as partners in development. Such institutional co-operation is governed by clear **procedural** guidance, symbolised by collaborative long-term planning that provides a guarantee of quality, continuity and sustainability. Beyond governments and youth organisations, the communities of practice (trainers, researchers and policy experts) of the Council of Europe youth sector and grassroots movements are routinely involved. This is known as the sector's 'participatory build strategy'

The distinction of the Council of Europe youth sector is further strengthened by its **policy-oriented** commitment at different strategic levels. It provides support measures for member States, offers standard-setting benchmarks, promotes opportunity-focused policy frameworks and advocates for quality and user-friendly spaces for young people. At a more **practical** level, the Council of Europe youth sector uses a variety of tools and expertise (knowledge and skills) for the capacity building of individuals and organisations, and for the development and implementation of youth policy.

All these distinguishing features of the Council of Europe youth sector produce a cohesive and coherent whole that is considered to constitute a 'unique spirit' and a 'secure platform' for experiential and other forms of learning. This range of 'distinctions', cemented by the principles through which the missions are accomplished – mutual respect and trust; inclusiveness; sustained commitment; participation; equity; transparency; and collaboration – lies at the very heart of the Strategy.

The Council of Europe youth sector's theory of change

> "It is impossible to predict the future, but we can help guide and model the evolutionary process to create the future we want"[21]

A theory of change presents an illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It uses 'backwards mapping' requiring planners to think in backward steps from the long-term goal to the intermediate and then early-term changes that would be required to cause the desired change. This creates a set of connected outcomes known as a 'pathway of change', the skeleton around which the other elements of the theory are developed (see Figure 1 and Appendix Four).

---

[21] Costanza, R. (2013), 'A theory of socio-ecological system change', *Journal of Bioeconomics* DOI 10.1007/s 10818-013-9165-5.

Figure 1: the ecosystem theory of change model for the Council of Europe youth sector:
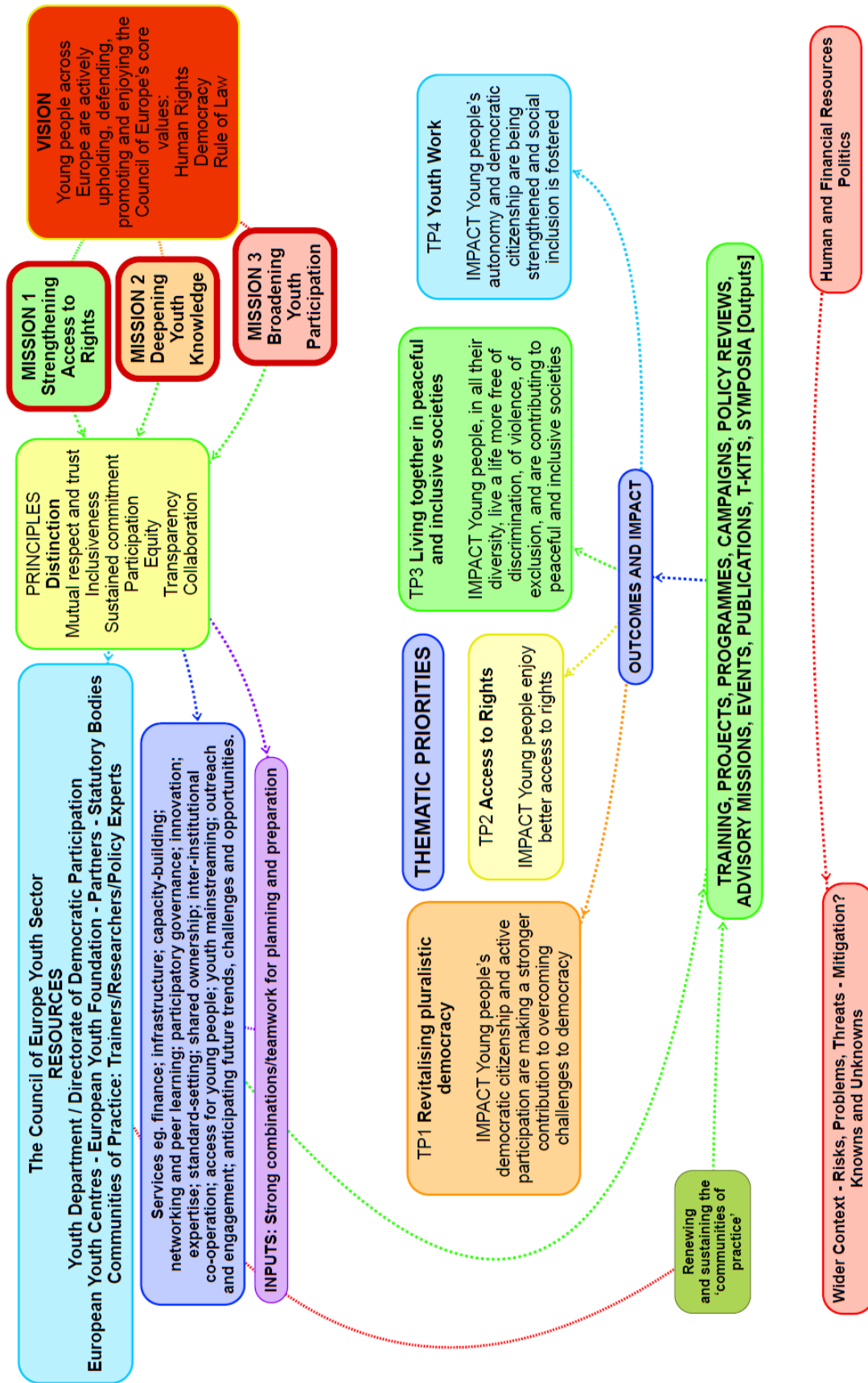
In the context of the Council of Europe youth sector, the application of an ecosystem theory of change maps backwards from *four* aspirational thematic priority impacts, and a number of expected outcomes attached to each of them, in order to achieve a vision that sees young people in Europe upholding, defending, promoting and enjoying the core values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe youth sector interprets these in *relation to young people* as core missions concerned with young people's access to rights, youth knowledge and youth participation. The 'missing middle' – between the vision/mission and desired impact – comprises a comprehensive range of activities (outputs) anchored in and developed by bespoke inputs (processes and practices) derived from an established mosaic of human, financial and physical resources and 'communities of practice' (trainers, researchers and policy experts), and informed by a distinctive set of principles.

These resources (a range of instruments, ideas, human and financial resources, and networks) constitute the inputs that produce the Council of Europe youth sector's range of activities (outputs) that, in turn, cluster together in different forms (learning, materials, project support, campaigns) to produce the desired outcomes and impact (see below).

Such outcomes are achieved *both* through the subsequent behaviour of direct beneficiaries of the work of the sector *and* through intermediaries, many of whom – as part of the Council of Europe youth sector – will have been involved, one way or another, in the process.

Vision

The vision for the work of Council of Europe youth sector is integrally tied to the central values and objectives of the Council of Europe:

> 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.

Mission

For the Council of Europe youth sector, this vision converts into three particular core missions.

First, the strengthening of young people's access to *rights*:

> Young people and all forms of youth civil society can rely on an enabling environment for the full exercise of all their human rights and freedoms, including concrete policies, mechanisms and resources

Second, the deepening of youth *knowledge*:

> Young people's democratic engagement is supported by communities of practice that are producing knowledge and expertise

Third, the broadening of youth *participation*:

> Young people are participating meaningfully in decision-making, on the basis of a broad social and political consensus in support of participatory governance and accountability

The role and purpose of the Council of Europe youth sector are to support and develop the effectiveness of youth civil society, youth work, youth policy and youth research in their efforts to facilitate young people's active engagement in upholding the core values of the Council of Europe.

Thematic priorities

Thematic priorities are those aspirations of the Council of Europe youth sector that can be achieved through the work of the Council of Europe Youth Department and the resources it is able to deploy.

The impact of a thematic priority is secured through a small cluster of expected outcomes (see below).

These thematic priorities are grounded in the Council of Europe's main acquis in the field of youth policy, including Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood, Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work, Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights, Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights, Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity[22]; CM/Rec(2006)14 on citizenship and participation of young people in public life, Recommendation Rec(2004)13 on the participation of young people in local and regional life, and Recommendation Rec(2003)8 on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people.

The Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 has four thematic priorities:

1. Revitalising pluralistic democracy
   This priority covers both the Council of Europe youth sector's established portfolio of work on youth participation in decision-making and active citizenship, as well as its plans for addressing the issue of the shrinking space for civil society and the democratic deficits currently presenting in contemporary Europe.

2. Access to rights
   This priority covers the Council of Europe youth sector's recognised portfolio of work on young people's access to civic, political, digital and social rights, including the right to human rights education,[23] as well as its plans for branching out into thus far little explored rights-related themes, notably collective rights, such as the right to a clean and heathy environment.

3. Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies
   This priority covers the Council of Europe youth sector's well-established work on appreciation of diversity, peace building, combating all forms of racism and intolerance, intercultural dialogue and learning, and specific work with communities of young people structurally and disproportionately affected by such phenomena (Roma, refugees, LGBTQI, young people disabled by society). It further covers the interest of the Council of Europe youth sector to develop a stronger profile regarding the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups, intersectionality, intergenerational dialogue, global solidarity, regional and neighbourhood co-operation and exchange with other regions of the world, attention to the challenges and consequences of climate change, environmental degradation and technological development, and inclusiveness across its programming.

4. Youth work
   This priority covers the Council of Europe youth sector's action to strengthen youth work development,[24] the quality and recognition of youth work (in the member States and at European level) and European co-operation on furthering youth work development through partnerships, such as the one with the European Commission. This priority further includes the promotion of specific non-formal education/learning approaches in the service of Council of Europe values, especially human rights education, education for democratic citizenship, digital citizenship education and intercultural education.

The Youth sector strategy 2030 sets out its 'expected *outcomes*' in relation to each of its four thematic priorities and the overall impact this work is designed to achieve. However, beyond immediate outcomes positioned closely to the outputs of the work of the Council of Europe youth sector, longer-term outcomes and impact are clearly dependent on and also vulnerable to social, political and economic circumstances beyond its control.

---

[22] With a dissenting opinion from the Russian Federation

[23] The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010) defines HRE as education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

[24] See Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work.

Expected outcomes

Thematic Priority 1: Revitalising pluralistic democracy

Impact: Young people's democratic citizenship and active participation are making a stronger contribution to overcoming challenges to democracy.

Expected outcome 1: Increased capacity of youth civil society to advance participatory democracy and democratic citizenship within and beyond their memberships.

Expected outcome 2: More policies and governance processes conducted in a meaningful participatory manner, involving young people and their representatives/organisations.

Expected outcome 3: Strengthened youth policy and youth work to remove barriers to youth participation.

Expected outcome 4: Improved institutional responses to new developments in democracy, such as the changing participation patterns of young people and digitalisation.

Thematic Priority 2: Access to rights

Impact: Young people enjoy better access to rights.

Expected outcome 1: Further progress achieved in the implementation of the Council of Europe's standards on young people's access to rights.

Expected outcome 2: Increased capacity building and resources for youth organisations and other relevant stakeholders to provide human rights education and advocate for access to rights.

Expected outcome 3: Improved institutional responses to newly emergent issues affecting young people's rights and transition to adulthood, such as but not limited to the effects of climate change, digital space, increased mobility and new forms of employment.

Thematic Priority 3: Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies

Impact: Young people, in all their diversity, live a life more free of discrimination, of violence, of exclusion, and are contributing to peaceful and inclusive societies

Expected outcome 1: Stakeholders are better equipped to tackle both the challenges of building inclusive societies through policies, programmes and projects that embrace diversity and of effectively monitoring and countering discrimination, violence and exclusion.

Expected outcome 2: Young people, including those experiencing discrimination and exclusion, are benefiting from opportunities that develop their commitment to and exercise of democratic citizenship.

Expected outcome 3: Key foundations, such as European unity, global solidarity, peace, intercultural diversity, intergenerational dialogue and environmental sustainability, are embedded more prominently in policy, practice and research within and beyond the youth sector.

Expected outcome 4: Young people's capacities, agency and leadership to prevent violence, transform conflict and to build a culture of peace are strengthened, through substantial funding support, network building and capacity strengthening, recognising the full diversity of youth and the way young people organise.

Thematic Priority 4: Youth work

Impact: Young people's autonomy and democratic citizenship are being strengthened
through youth work and non-formal education/learning and social inclusion is fostered.

Expected outcome 1: Youth work recognised and embedded within youth policy frameworks, notably through the common European youth work agenda.

Expected outcome 2: Improved quality of youth work practice delivered by both volunteer and paid youth workers.

Expected outcome 3: Extended access and attractiveness of youth work and non-formal education/learning for the benefit of wider populations of young people.

Conclusion: implementing the Strategy and demonstrating success

A Committee of Ministers' resolution will form the legal and political basis for the implementation of the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030.

The Strategy will be put into action and periodically assessed through the successive Programmes and Budgets of the Council of Europe up to 2030. The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) will then take stock of the implementation of the Strategy accordingly.

In order to assess implementation, the Council of Europe youth sector will list *outputs* from its work – such as feedback of individual participants, the number of training courses, study sessions, meetings and publications. It should also document *outcomes* and, to the extent possible, the wider *impact* of that work.

However, it should be recalled that the Council of Europe youth sector cannot reach every young person in Europe, certainly not directly. It is always reliant on intermediaries and interlocutors of different complexions: governmental officials, young politicians, youth workers, and (some) young people themselves. A balance in the attention to be given to those different stakeholders – in recognition of the *different* contribution to outcomes and impact they may make – needs to be determined before questions of 'accounting' and 'accountability' can be addressed.

***

Bibliography and source material

*Beyond the footnotes that make generic references to specific items referred to in the text of this Explanatory memorandum, the following source material informed more significantly the process of its development:

Costanza, R. (2013), 'A theory of socio-ecological system change', *Journal of Bioeconomics* DOI 10.1007/s 10818-013-9165-5.

Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (2008), *Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (2010), *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*, adopted in the framework of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe (2011), Combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity: Council of Europe Standards, Strasbourg: Council of Europe

Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (2017), *Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (2018): Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe

Council of Europe Ministers for Youth (2008), *The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020 – Declaration*, Kyiv: 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for youth.

European Commission (2018), *Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU youth strategy*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels: European Commission.

Jagland, T. (2018), *Role of Institutions, Threats to Institutions: Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe – An analysis of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe, based on the findings of the Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and bodies*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Secretariat Memorandum for the Joint Council on Youth 36th meeting, Budapest 27-29 March 2017, European Youth Centre: Item 8 on the agenda – State of Play "The future of the Council of Europe Youth Policy: AGENDA 2020" (Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe) *Some key highlights and achievements.*

United Nations (2015), *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, New York: United Nations.

United Nations (2018), *Youth 2030: Working with and for young people – The United Nations Youth Strategy*, New York: Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Williamson, H. (2017), *Supporting young people in Europe Volume III: Looking to the Future*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Appendix One

Description of the process to prepare the Strategy

Like all the work of the Council of Europe youth sector, the preparation of the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 was meticulous, self-critical and collaborative. Inevitably, this has taken some time. By the time of its completion, ratification by the Joint Council and possible adoption [by the Committee of Ministers], it will have been some three years in the making. Alert to the fact that the current Strategy, Agenda 2020, was coming to an end, the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) sought to establish a process for the development of a new strategy that would both build on previous achievements and allow for innovation and responsiveness to new challenges. This needed to be constructed within the context of the broader mission of the Council of Europe, the changing social and political landscape of Europe, and greater expectations for the systematic scrutiny of the youth sector's impact.

In March 2017, the Joint Council produced a **roadmap** in order to pave the way for a new mid-term strategy for the Council of Europe youth sector, for the decade 2020-2030. This was anchored within a thorough reflection and review of Agenda 2020 – its key achievements, shortcomings, challenges and lessons learned. The review produced an extensive list of initiatives, campaigns, trainings, study sessions, educational materials and other activities that comprised the output of the Council of Europe youth sector to date.

The Council of Europe Youth Department subsequently convened an **in-house staff 'retreat'** early in 2018, involving senior staff and facilitated and supported by two external experts, to digest and distil both the deliberations of the Joint Council and various 'theory of change' models, in preparation for a wider consultation with key stakeholders and beneficiaries from the Council of Europe youth sector.

The **Consultative meeting** in May 2018 took stock of the output produced within the parameters of Agenda 2020 and considered their continuing relevance and value in relation to the changing challenges facing young people in Europe and the wider institutional profile of the youth field within which the Council of Europe youth sector operated. The examination of this context and relationships culminated in the identification of some preliminary ideas for a possible strategy framework for the sector, in particular what to *maintain*, what to *develop*, and how and where to *innovate*.

Further discussions on the ideas emanating from this consultation took place in June 2018 during the meetings of the **Bureaux** of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe youth sector, in anticipation of further consideration by the Joint Council on Youth.

At the meeting of the **Joint Council on Youth** in October 2018, there was broad support for the ideas developed through the Consultative meeting. The Joint Council further emphasised the need for a new strategy to strike the right balance between continuity and change, to ensure synchronicity with other transnational institutional youth strategies (notably those of the EU and the UN), and to ensure that the comparative advantage of the Council of Europe's youth sector should be clearly visible.

The Joint Council approved the formation of a drafting group to develop the strategy document that would be a concise account of the Council of Europe youth sector's achievements and standards, laying the foundation for its vision and future operationalisation in response to priority issues affecting young people in contemporary Europe.

The **drafting group** met in December 2018 and in January 2019, incrementally embedding the Strategy within an 'ecosystem' theory of change that encapsulated the following:

- the vision (the values of the Council of Europe);
- the mission of the Council of Europe youth sector;
- the resources at its disposal;
- the unique constellations of resources that generate diverse activities and outputs;
- the provisional identification of four thematic priorities;
- some suggested anticipated impacts and expected outcomes in relation to each of the proposed priorities.

The progress of the work of the drafting group was considered once again by the **Bureaux** in January 2019 and given broad support ahead of full 'political' scrutiny by the Joint Council.

The **Joint Council on Youth** thoroughly reviewed the work of the drafting group in March 2019. The general framework and the preliminary contents were endorsed, subject to some suggested adaptation and amendments. In the light of the deliberations and suggestions of the Joint Council, the draft strategy document was further revised.

The **drafting group** met in June 2019 to confirm the final draft structure and content of the Strategy, to propose the accompanying CM resolution and to consider a possible 'flyer' that summarises the key elements of both the Strategy and the resolution, for wider consumption.

It is anticipated that a final text of the Strategy will be endorsed by the **Joint Council on Youth** in October 2019 and that 'the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030' will be formally adopted early in 2020.

Appendix Two: The context of young people's lives in Europe

1. **Technological** – Not only do various forms of the 'digital divide' affect opportunities and experience for young people, but technological evolution has had a major impact on the ways in which young people conduct their lives as well as the ways in which others seek to relate to the young. The role and impact of robotics and artificial intelligence, the potential for digital democracy, and the importance of digital literacy for full youth participation are but some of the challenges that need to be considered and confronted.

2. **Demographic** – The changing demographics of Europe, particularly on account of ageing societies, are having an impact on all social groups, but particularly the young, calling for new approaches to intergenerational relations and the distribution of resources.

3. **Personal** – Various forms of the 'youth divide' and issues around social exclusion have produced, as one consequence, the continued *vulnerability* of different groups of young people, whose circumstances are exacerbated by a *lack of support*. This has manifested itself starkly by increasing policy concerns about the *health and well-being* of young people, notably their mental (ill-)health arising from anxieties and uncertainties. Conceived more broadly, there is clearly a need to contribute to and build on young people's capabilities and confidence through ensuring, where possible, purposeful and positive opportunities and experiences – a bedrock of the Council of Europe's youth policy philosophy over many years.

4. **Social** – Within the social sphere, there remains a huge question about young people's access to rights, something already promoted through the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights[25] and the later Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights.[26] Though a great deal of other work has also been done by the Council of Europe youth sector in this area, there remains so much more to be done around *access to education, training and employment* (and addressing the situation of young people depicted as 'NEET' – Not in Education, Employment or Training), *opportunities for non-formal education/learning and youth work*, and *combating inequality, precarity and poverty*. Addressing social exclusion and discrimination and *promoting tolerance and social cohesion* lie at the very heart of the work of the youth sector in the Council of Europe, work that has become even more challenging in the context of *increasing diversity* in Europe, and *the migration and refugee 'crisis'*, in which the young are unsurprisingly over-represented. There is, further, the pervasive concern about *climate crisis and environmental degradation*, and the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that demand action and attention both for the young and by the young.

5. **Civic** – For many young people, especially those considered by others or who perceive themselves as more 'marginalised', their *sense of social exclusion* produces a *lack of trust* in many institutions and results in *disconnection* from civil society. This can be compounded by an absence of civic education and limited opportunities for participation. In terms of mainstream civic structures, young people can feel that they *lack voice*, though increasingly there are +to as 'digital citizenship') which need to be better understood, prospectively promoted to ensure their reach and relevance to all groups of young people. Restoring trust, maintaining connection or re-connecting young people to civil society, enabling young people to build civil society for themselves, and strengthening commitment to youth participation in civic and social life remains a central challenge for the Council of Europe youth sector.

6. **Political** – The political context in Europe has changed dramatically since the composition of Agenda 2020. There has been the greater frequency of episodes of *terror* and increasing concern over the *radicalisation* of some groups of young people. Europe has witnessed *the rise of the far right*, the (re-)emergence of *populism and nationalism* and the start of what has come to be known as the *post-truth era*. Some have argued that *democracy is failing* in many parts of Europe and that – for a variety of reasons – there has been a *closing down of space for expression and debate*. This calls for renewed and indeed new efforts to advance the

---

[25] https://rm.coe.int/168066671e.
[26] https://rm.coe.int/1680702b6e.

democratic imperative and to challenge racism, discrimination and other activity that jeopardises and undermines fundamental human rights. Young people are reported to routinely lack confidence in established party-political systems and often do not participate in elections (though there are exceptions). On a broad front, there is a need to strengthen young people's readiness to be (and become) more politically active and to equalise the place of under-represented groups of young people – notably young women and young people from minority ethnic groups – in political decision-making and governance.

Appendix Three: Communities of practice of/for the Council of Europe youth sector

The Council of Europe youth sector not only accommodates a number of extraneous 'communities of practice' (trainers, researchers and policy experts in the youth field) but arguably constitutes a 'community of practice' in itself. Communities of practice have been defined as a process of social learning when:

> *People who have a common interest in a subject or area collaborate over an extended period of time, sharing ideas and strategies, determine solutions, and build innovations.*

For the Council of Europe youth sector, there is certainly a shared *domain* of interest: a framework of policy and practice that provides opportunity and positive experience for young people. There is a *community*: stakeholders in the Council of Europe youth sector interact and engage in shared activities, support each other, exchange information, and learn from one another. And there is a *practice*: the Council of Europe youth sector has developed a shared repertoire of knowledge, methods and resources for conducting its work.

These ideas are all very relevant to defining the work of the Council of Europe youth sector. The trilogy alluded to above (domain, community and practice) bears powerfully on its internal structures and relationships which are extensive, inclusive and wide-ranging – from the biannual meetings of the Joint Council on Youth, the annual meetings of the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) and the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP) correspondents, meetings of the Youth Department's Trainers' Pool, preparatory meetings for training courses, expert meetings, seminars, anticipated publications and other events. All routinely engage representatives of governments, youth organisations and youth research – the so-called 'magic triangle' that has strengthened the youth sector significantly in recent years.

Indeed, over time, the Council of Europe youth sector has steadily developed and consolidated its community of practice, expanding its networks and repertoire professionally, geographically and intellectually. It has promoted its 'co-management' approach through the shared decision-making of its statutory bodies (governmental representatives and youth organisations), brought youth research and 'knowledge-based' practice firmly into its orbit, associated youth centres in member states through its Quality Label, and developed innovative methodologies in pursuit of its core agendas.

The Youth sector strategy 2030 seeks both to celebrate its particular 'community of practice' and acknowledge that an even more outward-looking, promotional position may need to be adopted if the 'community of practice' of the Council of Europe youth sector is to be further strengthened. In particular, this would include, for example, working more closely with municipalities (local authorities) and being as attentive to new institutional players in the youth field as it has always been in relation to emergent issues facing young people in Europe. It should not be forgotten that the Council of Europe youth sector was the first European institution working with (rather than about), *inter alia* young Roma, LGBTI young people, young refugees and young people from minorities. The Council of Europe youth sector must not lose sight of this powerful fact but, with the changing institutional landscape for youth work and youth policy, it may also need to cast its professional net even more widely than it has done in the past.

Appendix Four: What is a 'theory of change'?[27]

Theory of change (TOC) maps out an initiative through six stages:
1. identifying long-term goals;
2. backwards mapping and connecting the preconditions or requirements necessary to achieve that goal and explaining why these preconditions are necessary and sufficient;
3. identifying your basic assumptions about the context;
4. identifying the interventions that your initiative will perform to create your desired change;
5. developing indicators to measure your outcomes to assess the performance of your initiative;
6. writing a narrative to explain the logic of your initiative.

The TOC process hinges upon defining all of the necessary and sufficient conditions required to bring about a given long-term outcome. TOC uses backwards mapping requiring planners to think in backwards steps from the long-term goal to the intermediate and then early-term changes that would be required to cause the desired change. This creates a set of connected outcomes known as a "pathway of change". A "pathway of change" graphically represents the change process as it is understood by the initiative planners and is the skeleton around which the other elements of the theory are developed.

During the process of creating the pathway of change, participants are required to articulate as many of their assumptions about the change process as they can so that they can be examined and even tested to determine if any key assumptions are hard to support (or even false). There are typically three important types of assumptions to consider: (a) assertions about the connections between long-term, intermediate and early outcomes on the map; (b) substantiation for the claim that all of the important preconditions for success have been identified; and (c) justifications supporting the links between programme activities and the outcomes they are expected to produce. A fourth type of assumption which outlines the contextual or environmental factors that will support or hinder progress toward the realization of outcomes in the pathway of change is often an additional important factor in illustrating the complete theory of change.

The TOC approach to planning is designed to encourage very clearly defined outcomes at every step of the change process. Users are required to specify a number of details about the nature of the desired change — including specifics about the target population, the amount of change required to signal success, and the timeframe over which such change is expected to occur. This attention to detail often helps both funders and grantees to reassess the feasibility of reaching goals that may have initially been vaguely defined, and in the end, promotes the development of reasonable long-term outcome targets that are acceptable to all parties.

The rationale for an 'ecosystem' model[28]

During the preparatory thinking for Youth sector strategy 2030, it became clear that the work of the Council of Europe youth sector functions 'organically'. This informed the choice of the ecosystem model:
- the interventions of the Council of Europe youth sector are relatively limited in financial and operational terms;
- the activities of the Council of Europe function on the principle of multiplication ('multiplier effects'), across a geographically widespread, diverse and interdisciplinary landscape;
- there is no linear relationship between the financial, intellectual and political resources invested by the Council of Europe youth sector into its 'field' of intervention;
- nevertheless, there is a broad mosaic of outputs and subsequently testimony to outcomes and impact from the youth field, in relation to research, policy and practice;
- these outcomes and impact develop organically and at different speeds, in response not only to the inputs and outputs of the Council of Europe youth sector but also to a significant number of wider influences, known and unknown, within and beyond the youth field, at both European and national levels, over which the Council of Europe has practically no control;
- the more familiar and established log-frame model of theory of change (one with clear linear connections between input, activities, output, outcomes and impact) cannot usefully account for this kind of organic development.
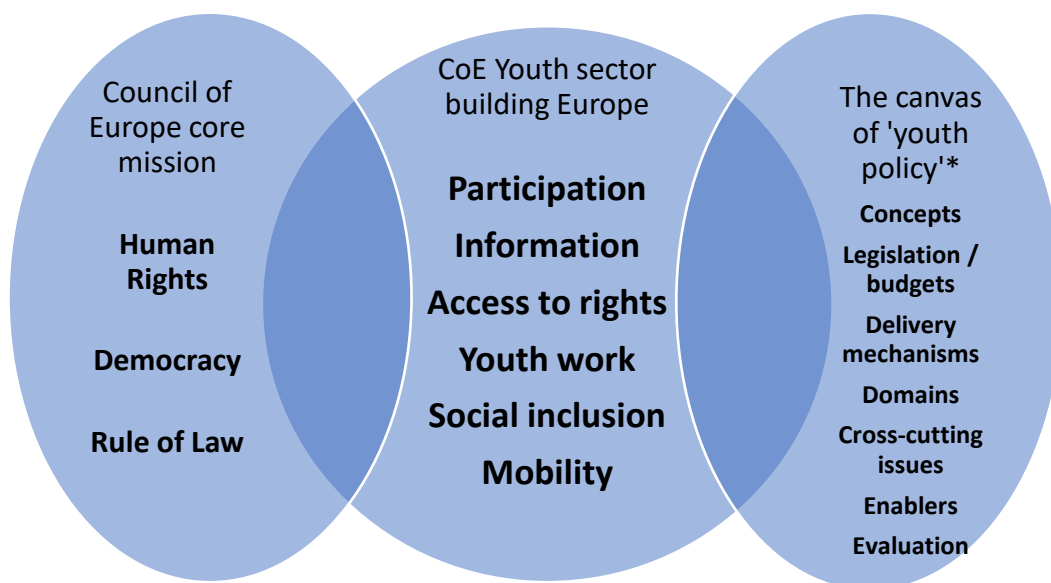
---

[27] source: https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/how-does-theory-of-change-work/.
[28] Cf. figure 1: the Council of Europe youth sector functions 'organically' and can 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 Council of Europe Youth Department usually initiates and co-ordinates the process.

Appendix Five: The distinctive contribution of the Council of Europe youth sector to youth policy development in Europe

In 2017, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) crystallised the key 'youth policy' themes on which it had special expertise in supporting member States.

The distinctive contribution of the Council of Europe Youth Department and its partners to supporting youth policy development and implementation in member States – the Council of Europe youth sector building Europe

Council of Europe core mission

Human Rights

Democracy

Rule of Law

CoE Youth sector building Europe

Participation

Information

Access to rights

Youth work

Social inclusion

Mobility

The canvas of 'youth policy'*

Concepts

Legislation / budgets

Delivery mechanisms

Domains

Cross-cutting issues

Enablers

Evaluation

* see Williamson (2002), *Supporting young people in Europe: principles, policy and practice*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Appendix Six: Distinction – the comparative advantage of the Council of Europe youth sector

Flowing from the process that produced the Youth sector strategy 2030, the following concepts were identified as the most significant in cementing the 'comparative advantage' or 'distinctive character' of the Council of Europe youth sector:

- **Principled** – The work of the Council of Europe youth sector is grounded in clear *values* (of human rights, democracy and the rule of law). Its work is *trusted* and *transparent*, anchored in a commitment to equalities. For governments, it is *responsive* to requests for support and assistance while simultaneously *respectful* of national traditions and specificities. For youth organisations and young people, it recognises them as *partner agents* and drivers for social change. The work conducted is developed through a 'trialogue' of youth research, policy and practice.

- **Procedural** – Beyond the exercise of co-management, the Council of Europe youth sector promotes *institutional co-operation*, and the collaborative development of training courses, study sessions and other events. The *long-term planning* that distinguishes its work provides a guarantee of quality, continuity and sustainability. The Council of Europe youth sector also courageously engages in *innovation* and undertakes *pilot projects* on issues and trends that are often not yet visible or priorities within member States (the No Hate Speech Movement campaign is an exemplar, par excellence, in this regard). Grassroots movements are closely involved in its work, and its initiatives routinely accommodate 'excluded' groups such as young Roma, refugees and asylum seekers. These procedural qualities have been referred to as the Council of Europe youth sector's "participatory build strategy".

- **Policy-oriented** – The Council of Europe youth sector offers an *external view* on, and *support measures* for, national youth policies (through, for example, international reviews of national youth policy, advisory missions, 50/50 training courses). It is also 'standard-setting' not solely in relation to principles but also to practical action for, with and by young people, in terms of being '*opportunity-focused*' (rather than 'problem-oriented') and advocating *quality* and *user-friendly spaces* for young people.

- **Practical** – The Council of Europe youth sector possesses a variety of *tools* and *expertise* for both the *capacity building* of individuals and organisations within the sector, and the development and implementation of youth policy. It has a network of *knowledge and skills* that extends well beyond the personnel and infrastructure of the Council of Europe Youth Department but is supported and connected by them, producing a *cohesive and coherent* whole.