

Cooperation in the youth field: youth work, policy and research

I. In brief

Since 1998, the subsequent joint agreements between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the youth field created an added value to their respective actions, strengthening synergies between them. The main efforts of the current Framework Partnership Agreement concentrate on evidence-based and participatory youth policy, as well as the further development and recognition of youth work and non-formal learning. A special geographical focus lies on the regions of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, South-East Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. Thematic events, expert studies, publications and the build-up of the virtual “European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy” (EKCYC) constitute the main body of the EU-CoE youth partnership activities. The active involvement of both partners ensures a close link to their respective objectives, activities and expertise.

Building on the experience of the youth partnership, cooperation in the youth field is currently in the process of being extended to activities that are part of the country-specific cooperation programmes of the Council of Europe, partly funded by the European Commission (EEAS, DG DEVCO) as part of the “South Programme”.

II. Background

Young people are important actors of social and political development in every society. Aware of this, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe decided that a European Youth Centre be created, thus paving the way for the creation of the first youth institutions at European level in 1972.

The experience, expertise and networks built up over the last 40 years are a unique resource for understanding and addressing the needs of young people throughout Europe. The Council of Europe youth sector is the only place where young people decide jointly, and on an equal footing, with governmental representatives on priorities and activities to be carried out.

Capacity-building of youth workers, trainers and civil society youth organisations, based on the extensive expertise of the Council of Europe youth sector—perhaps its strongest competitive advantage—were at

the origin of the partnership between the two institutions. Later on, cooperation was enlarged to encompass youth policy, youth research and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. This development reflected the fact that youth-policy development based on research, practice-generated knowledge and participation of young people, is another essential part of the Council of Europe’s work within its intergovernmental cooperation and national training courses for youth-policy stakeholders. Since 1997, the Council of Europe completed international reviews of the national youth policies of 18 member states. The concept of participative and knowledge-based policy-making involving young people, youth workers, researchers and authorities have become a European standard. This model is promoted and strengthened by the EU-CoE youth partnership in its activities, where the dialogue among all the youth field stakeholders is encouraged and supported.

II. Comparative advantages and added value

The EU-CoE youth partnership is embedded in the culture of the Council of Europe youth policy. However, its own priorities and work results are helping to monitor the fast-changing socio-political context of young people and the European youth field.

It concentrates on the dimensions identified by both partner institutions as joint priority areas, in particular: social inclusion; democracy and human rights, democratic citizenship and youth participation; intercultural dialogue and diversity. It refers to the policies and implementation tools developed and applied by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, presenting a coherent picture to the beneficiaries.

Through its activities the EU-CoE youth partnership stimulates exchange and better understanding among the partners coming from EU and non-EU member states of the Council of Europe. It also contributes to the youth policy and youth field developments in the CoE neighbourhood area of South Mediterranean. In all these regions it has established cooperation partnerships.

The EU-CoE youth partnership serves as a suitable ground for developing innovative approaches put at the disposal of stakeholders across Europe. Training courses on European citizenship and evidence-based policy cooperation may serve as examples.

The EU-CoE youth partnership disposes of unique tools useful to both institutions for collecting, systematising and applying existing knowledge about the situations of young people and youth policy, namely the “Pool of European Youth Researchers” and EKCYP with its network of correspondents covering almost the entire continent, nominated and supported by the national authorities.

It also produces publications reaching out to a very wide readership: “Coyote” magazine on youth work, knowledge and policy; training manuals on topics relevant for youth workers, youth leaders and trainers in Europe; the “Youth Knowledge Books”, presenting research findings and policy analysis on priority topics identified by experts and both partner institutions. A new series entitled “Perspectives on Youth” will provide critical insights to youth policy and research issues.

III. Geographic contextualisation

The EU-CoE youth partnership covers the geographic scope of all member states of both the European Union and the Council of Europe, other signatory countries of the European Cultural Convention as well as the South Mediterranean region and sub-Saharan Africa (the latter currently phasing out).

Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, South-East Europe and South Mediterranean are the areas of special interest of the EU-CoE youth partnership. A close cooperation with the national authorities, research communities and civil society has been developed and maintained throughout the years.

Thematic events organised in each of the regions focus mainly on knowledge-based participatory youth policy development. By providing a platform of presenting the European policies and standards, networking and peer learning among the participants they contribute to furthering development of youth policies on national and local level. A symposium on health and well-being of young people in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, organised in Tbilisi in June 2012 is a recent example of such an event.

All work results—research findings, examples of good practice, project conclusions and policy recommendations—are made available on-line to a wide and diverse public. In-depth studies on the situation of young people and youth policy have been conducted in most countries of Eastern and

Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus, contributing their better understanding.

The Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, initiated in 2003 and continuing after the emergence of the “Arab Spring”, is highly valued by stakeholders in the region, including the League of Arab States and relevant UN Agencies. The symposium entitled “Arab Spring: Youth participation for the promotion of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms”, held in Tunis in August 2012, may serve as a good example.

All activities are run in close cooperation with the DG EAC and other major parts of the European Commission: DG RELEX, DG DEVCO and EU Delegations.

IV. Contacts

Ms Marta Mędlińska
Coordinator of the EU-CoE youth partnership
Youth Department
Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation

Agora - 1, quai Jacoutot
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel. +33 (0) 3 90 21 49 16
Fax. +33 (0) 3 88 41 27 78

e-mail : marta.medlinska@partnership-eu.coe.int