

# ACCESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS TO SOCIAL RIGHTS



Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# ACCESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS TO SOCIAL RIGHTS

**Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3**  
adopted by the Committee of Ministers  
of the Council of Europe  
on 21 January 2015

French edition:  
*Accès des jeunes  
des quartiers défavorisés  
aux droits sociaux*

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In daily discourse the term “young people” is often used to describe people older than 12 or 13 years. For statistical purposes, the UN defines persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth, without prejudice to national definitions.

# Contents

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<b>RECOMMENDATION CM/REC(2015)3</b>	<b>5</b>
Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3	9
Glossary	22

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# Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3

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*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 January 2015  
at the 1217th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, in accordance with Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members, in particular by promoting a youth policy based on common principles;

Having regard to the European Social Charter, opened for signature in 1961 (ETS No. 35) and revised in 1996 (ETS No. 163), (hereafter “the European Social Charter”), in particular its Article 1 (The right to work), Article 7 (The right of children and young persons to protection), Article 9 (The right to vocational guidance), Article 10 (The right to vocational training), Article 11 (The right to protection of health), Article 15 (The rights of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community), Article 17 (The right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection), Article 19 (The rights of migrant workers and their families to protection and assistance), Article 21 (The right to information and consultation), Article 30 (The right to protection against poverty and social exclusion) and Article 31 (The right to housing), as well as the relevant conclusions and decisions of the European Committee of Social Rights and the reports of the Governmental Committee;

Recalling Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 of the Committee of Ministers on the youth policy of the Council of Europe;

Recalling the following recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to the member States:

- Recommendation Rec(2003)8 on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people;
- Recommendation Rec(2003)19 on improving access to social rights;
- Recommendation Rec(2004)13 on the participation of young people in local and regional life;
- Recommendation Rec(2006)5 on the Council of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society: improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe 2006-2015;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)13 on gender mainstreaming in education;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)12 on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)14 on the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life;

Recalling Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations 1437 (2000) on “Non-formal education” and 1978 (2011) on “Towards a European framework convention on youth rights” as well as the replies to them adopted by the Committee of Ministers;

Recalling the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe's Revised European Charter on the Participation of young people in Local and Regional life and Resolution 319 (2010) on the integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods;

Having further regard to:

- the final Declaration adopted by the 5th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth (Bucharest, 27-29 April 1998), in particular to the references pertaining to youth participation and active citizenship, non-formal education, integration into society and social cohesion;
- the final Declaration adopted by the 6th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth (Thessaloniki, 7-9 November 2002), in particular to the references pertaining to the access of young people, notably those

from disadvantaged groups, to information which concerns them and to encourage the development of national youth policies based on general common principles and involving young people and their organisations as much as possible in the drafting of these policies;

- the Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005) which stated that the Council of Europe would further develop its unique position in the youth field;
- the Declaration “Making gender equality a reality” of May 2009, whereby the Committee of Ministers urged member States to commit themselves fully to bridging the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality through effective gender mainstreaming;
- the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted by the Committee of Ministers (CM(2010)133) on 20 October 2010 in which the member States of the Council of Europe agreed to adopt and implement anti-discrimination legislation, in particular in the fields of employment, access to justice and the provision of goods and services, including access to housing and key public services, such as health care and education;
- the Declaration adopted at the 8th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth and the Agenda 2020 – Programme for the future of the Council of Europe youth policy;
- the General Policy Recommendation No. 13 (CRI(2011)37) of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma;

Bearing in mind the work carried out by the Council of Europe youth sector to promote human rights, social inclusion and the active participation of young people, particularly through the “Enter!” project, implemented since 2009;

Underlining that access to quality education, secure employment, decent living conditions, adequate transport, health care, technology and opportunities for social, cultural and economic participation is a prerequisite for the inclusion and active citizenship of all young people;

Aware that in their transition to full autonomy and adulthood, young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, especially those living in poverty, are more vulnerable to all kinds of risks, including poor physical and mental health, substance abuse, self-harm, violence, discrimination and exclusion;



Recognising that many young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods are motivated to contribute to the improvement of their own situations and those of their communities; and recognising the positive role they and their organisations can play for social cohesion;

Mindful of ongoing demographic changes throughout Europe and of migration issues also involving youth;

Preoccupied by the continued deterioration of the social situation and life chances of young people in the context of the European economic crisis,

1. Recommends that the governments of the member States develop and implement sustainable, evidence-based public policies that take into consideration the specific situations and needs of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These policies should aim at preventing and eradicating the poverty, discrimination, violence and exclusion faced by such young people through efforts to:

- a. improve the living conditions of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods by providing accessible, affordable and youth-friendly public services and other measures in the fields of education and training, employment and occupation, health, housing, information and counselling, sports, leisure and culture;
- b. implement concrete measures to work towards abolition of the segregation and isolation that negatively affects disadvantaged neighbourhoods irrespective of their location;
- c. promote meaningful opportunities and programmes for consultation and participation of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in all matters related to the planning and management of their living environment;
- d. implement concrete measures to enable all young people to exercise their active role in society without discrimination;
- e. recognise the role of non-formal education and youth work, and those who deliver them, notably youth workers and youth organisations, for the prevention of discrimination, violence and exclusion and the promotion of active citizenship in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and provide support for their development;
- f. develop gender-sensitive approaches to the elaboration of youth policies in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and provide support for the capacity building and equal participation of young women and young men;

2. Recommends that the governments of the member States take into consideration the measures proposed in the appendix to this recommendation when formulating and implementing policies and programmes and encourage local and regional authorities to do the same;
3. Recommends that authorities responsible for youth in the member States ensure that this recommendation, including its appendix, is translated and disseminated as widely as possible, in particular among young people using youth-friendly means of communication;
4. Asks the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to bring this recommendation to the attention of the governments of the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18) that are not member States of the Council of Europe.

## **Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3**

### **Suggested measures on access to social rights for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

This appendix proposes a number of measures which can be taken by local, regional or national authorities within their respective competences and with due regard for national realities. They have been developed on the basis of “on the ground” youth work experiences through the “Enter!” project, which has been directed by the youth sector of the Council of Europe with inter-sectoral partners since 2009. They are grounded in the realities of the lives of the young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and experiences reported by youth workers, policy makers, researchers and all stakeholders of the youth sector of the Council of Europe. They offer a framework within which responsible governmental authorities, from national to local levels, can conceptualise their efforts to support young people who encounter challenges in accessing their social rights, especially those from disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

While helpful for all young people for accessing social rights, these proposals can have a greater impact on young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods as they are most likely to experience violence, exclusion and discrimination.

Member States’ authorities responsible for youth are encouraged to disseminate and implement this recommendation and its proposals, including incorporating them into national youth and social policies, informing local and regional authorities about them and supporting them in implementation

efforts and initiating cross-sectoral and inter-agency partnerships on access of young people to social rights. Representatives of young people, especially of those most concerned, should be involved in discussion and decision-making processes related to the recommendation.

The respective authorities are encouraged to engage in following up, recording and evaluating the progress of youth and social policy initiatives resulting from this recommendation, taking an inter-disciplinary approach, by gathering evidence of youth needs from as many relevant sources as possible, by involving the broadest possible range of social partners and by ensuring that those who are most concerned (such as young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, youth work and youth organisations supporting them) are included as equal partners in such efforts. The realities of young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so often determined by multiple discrimination, disenfranchisement and marginalisation, must be at the centre of concern throughout.

## **A. Improving the living conditions of young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

### ***i. Education and training***

Young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods experience a wide range of barriers to their full enjoyment of the right to education and challenges to the fulfilment of their educational potential, ranging from lack of physical access to educational institutions through poor quality of education to educational failure. The following measures help young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods when accessing their right to education:

- investing in education and training for disadvantaged neighbourhoods from pre-school through the tertiary education;
- implementing gender-sensitive and other forms of beneficiary sensitive budgeting to promote equal access to and enjoyment of educational resources;
- updating educational curricula to make them more relevant to the needs of young people for their employability and the challenges facing young people entering the labour market;
- making vocational training more attractive and relevant to young people who are not used to academic methods;
- improving the status, recognition and resources of vocational guidance in the school system;

- providing additional support (to purchase books, clothes, meals, etc.) to those for whom the costs associated with participation in education above and beyond tuition are unaffordable to ensure that access to education is not dependent on financial resources of individuals and their families;
- creating mechanisms through which schools and educational staff can assess and identify learning and social problems and cultural or any other barriers to the successful completion of education as early as possible and implement specific measures to prevent students from dropping out of school;
- making available quality “second chance education” opportunities to young people who have left education early, including non-formal education and mobility programmes for increasing self-confidence and entrepreneurship and work-based training for the acquisition of skills and qualifications;
- promoting the development of non-formal educational partnerships between schools, youth workers and independent youth organisations as part of a holistic lifelong learning strategy at the centre of which is placed the learners’ needs and their active participation;
- including education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in school curricula, particularly at primary and lower-secondary levels, and creating partnerships between teachers and youth workers for mutual support in their delivery;
- implementing specific measures through mediation activities, among other things, to make schools safe and free from bullying as well as all manifestations of prejudice, discrimination, segregation, sexual harassment and all forms of violence;
- promoting comprehensive health, nutrition and sexual education and information for young people in order to support them in making informed decisions;
- developing participatory school communities through mechanisms for the inclusion of student-elected representatives in decision-making processes in schools;
- adapting teacher-training programmes to the challenges of working with young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods through the inclusion of new contents (such as social issues, social identity and concerns of young people) and new approaches (intercultural, gender equality and mediation, for example), and by developing partnerships

between professionals close to young people in the neighbourhoods (such as youth workers) and relevant training programmes;

- promoting and facilitating mobility for learners between different learning sectors, in other words, between school and non-formal education/learning programmes, through specific measures, including the possible recognition and certification of learning acquired through non-formal and informal education/learning;
- taking into account the special circumstances and barriers which complicate access to education experienced by young people whose families lead a nomadic lifestyle, are engaged in temporary migration (for example, labour migration) or who have refugee or asylum-seeker status in the development of education strategies and policies.

## *ii. Employment and occupation*

Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods face serious challenges in their transitions to the working life including a lack of qualifications, poor self-confidence, stigma or discrimination, and once in the labour market, often experience precarious working conditions. These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that the neighbourhoods in which they live are often peripheral, isolated and segregated. The following measures are effective in facilitating the transition of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to sustainable and secure employment:

- adapting apprenticeship, training and vocational programmes so that they are inclusive, linked to employment opportunities and have clearly defined paths of progression;
- developing all efforts (in particular through legislation) to ensure that apprenticeships are adequately remunerated, so as to be a viable option for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- ensuring (in particular through legislation) that internships are a secure and legal form of employment and a viable entry point into the labour market for young people starting out. Involving employers in the process can ensure better results;
- improving existing and developing new approaches to youth information and career counselling, taking into account the specific barriers experienced by young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in searching for and acquiring vocational training opportunities, apprenticeships and later employment;

- facilitating access to work-based learning opportunities in both the public and private sectors for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, including through partnerships between relevant social partners;
- encouraging responsible authorities (local authorities, educational institutions, etc.) to work in partnership with other social partners (local businesses, large companies, trade unions, chambers of commerce) to develop work experience programmes for young people who have difficulties in acquiring such experience without additional support;
- studying the feasibility of creating and implementing a “youth guarantee”, including necessary measures to ensure that no young person is out of education, training or employment for longer than four months;
- recognising experiences gained through non-formal education and community work as relevant work experience for the labour market. This requires the exchange of good practice among relevant social partners (education and training providers, employers and their associations, youth organisations, youth work providers, etc.);
- investing in improving public access to information technologies through existing public services (youth centres, public libraries, media centres, youth information and counselling centres, etc.);
- including career counselling and support measures for job-seeking youth in the programmes of public youth work and community work providers and formal education establishments (workshops on seeking employment information, writing a CV, interview techniques, etc.);
- facilitating young people’s access to micro-finance and co-operative financing schemes, thereby improving conditions for youth entrepreneurship and social enterprise;
- proposing incentives, through relevant tax breaks and other forms of financial support, to private-sector stakeholders, especially local businesses, to provide quality employment;
- investing in affordable public childcare facilities that can be made compatible with working hours to facilitate young parents’ access to the labour market;
- providing incentives to public and private stakeholders for implementing measures sensitive to the challenges experienced by young families in harmonising their work and family lives (parental leave schemes for fathers, flexible working arrangements, childcare facilities, etc.);

- taking into account the specific barriers to entering employment that young people experience, when developing employment strategies and policies.

### *iii. Housing*

Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods experience serious barriers to independent living, including the acquisition of decent, affordable and secure housing. Actively discriminated against on the private market and often unable to access social housing, they can risk homelessness or poor living conditions that are detrimental to their health and well-being and prevent them from holding down a place in education or employment. The following measures have proven effective in helping young people to access housing:

- encouraging responsible authorities to implement measures to improve the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to adequate affordable housing;
- actively considering the special housing needs of the most vulnerable groups, including young people at risk of homelessness or already homeless, young families, young people, especially those belonging to minorities and victims of domestic violence, in housing strategy planning and implementation by considering the possibility of involving them in decision making;
- simplifying processes for acquiring housing assistance through intensive co-ordination between public housing and other relevant social services;
- facilitating the dissemination of up-to-date information on available housing and housing assistance through relevant youth-friendly means of communication and taking advantage of existing public infrastructure such as youth information centres and youth work locations;
- encouraging and helping the competent authorities to develop “mixed housing markets” offering the full range and diversity of housing forms from social housing through private rentals, adapted to the needs of young people beginning an independent life;
- supporting responsible authorities in rolling out “mixed housing schemes” so as to ensure the internal diversity of local communities, and prevent segregation and ghettoisation;
- putting in place mechanisms to ensure that minimum standards of safety, health and hygiene are respected across the mixed housing market (private and public), including the implementation of measures

for bringing non-respect of such standards to the attention of relevant authorities (spot inspections, complaint mechanisms) in co-operation with consumer protection or other relevant institutions. Information about such standards and mechanisms should be widely disseminated using youth-friendly means of communication;

- providing “halting sites”, with access to clean water, electricity and proper sanitation, for use by Traveller communities, complemented by relevant mediation support should such initiatives meet with community resistance.

#### ***iv. Health***

Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more vulnerable to specific health risks and are less likely to be able to access and make use of quality health services for prevention and care. The following approaches have proven to work well in supporting young people who are experiencing difficulties in exercising their right to health:

- facilitating access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to free quality health care through youth-friendly health and social services and health information through youth-friendly means of communication (especially Internet-based social media);
- paying special attention to the health needs of especially vulnerable groups of young people experiencing multiple forms of exclusion (including young Roma and migrant women, young people suffering from poor mental health, young people with disabilities, young people with HIV, etc.);
- addressing cultural, attitudinal or other barriers hindering young people’s access, including language barriers between patients and medical professionals, through appropriate measures (for instance provision of interpretation, cultural mediation, etc.), as necessary;
- investing in the development and implementation of youth health programmes and crisis counselling services through educational, awareness-raising and support programmes on healthy and responsible lifestyles (addressing in particular any substance misuse, addiction, sexual and reproductive health, early, unplanned or crisis pregnancy, mental health, sport, nutrition, family and work perspectives and overall well-being) through existing public youth work, education and community institutions. Youth workers, social workers and nurses could be effectively



engaged in promoting and updating such programmes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;

- creating programmes to encourage medical practitioners, nurses and community health workers to update their competence in areas such as intercultural aspects of patient-medical professional relations, gender sensitivity, reluctance to discuss medical issues, youth-friendly approaches in health care, etc., through a variety of measures (including lifelong learning opportunities, exchange of practice and expertise with other professionals working in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, etc.);
- elaborating health strategies taking into account the needs of the young people concerned, by involving young people and youth workers from disadvantaged neighbourhoods directly in development and decision-making processes;
- promoting sport as a way of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and for the prevention of future health problems, inside and outside school, with measures to ensure full and equal access to public sports amenities, including investing in their provision or improvement.

#### **v. Information and counselling**

Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods have limited access to information and counselling because of their location and lack of resources. However, they are among those who need such services the most. The following approaches improve access to information and counselling for these young people:

- investing in improving and, where they do not exist, considering the feasibility of creating comprehensive and fully accessible youth information systems that provide up-to-date and youth-friendly information on, *inter alia*, social rights, civic and social participation and international mobility, taking full advantage of new information and communication technologies (ICTs);
- making training on intercultural and gender-sensitivity available to counselling staff and other professionals working directly with young people;
- making youth-friendly information and counselling services available through existing community infrastructure in the neighbourhood (health centres, youth centres, schools, youth organisations, etc.);

- implementing measures to follow up and assure the quality and effectiveness of youth information and counselling services on the basis of recognised standards.

#### **vi. *Sport, leisure and culture***

Sport, leisure and culture have become increasingly commodity goods across Europe, access to which often requires substantial financial outlay that young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods cannot afford. Other barriers, such as limited awareness, a poor level of information, physical distance, or poor accessibility, further challenge young people's access to sport, leisure and culture, which paradoxically are recognised as excellent channels for participation and active citizenship. The following measures have proven useful in improving access to culture, leisure and sport among young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods:

- equipping disadvantaged neighbourhoods with fully accessible and affordable sports and leisure facilities and improving those that already exist with the full participation of the communities concerned about the choice;
- integrating community development and participation strategies so as to make the best possible use of existing provisions (youth work, education, community services, information and counselling services, cultural institutions, etc.);
- recognising the potential of both sport and culture to promote active youth participation and citizenship, social cohesion, inclusion and well-being, and giving these more prominence in community development schemes;
- recognising the specific challenges young people can face when trying to participate in sport, youth work and other activities outside of their families' control and implementing gender and culturally sensitive measures to ensure the access to and inclusion of young people of both sexes in such activities;
- improving the accessibility and affordability of cultural opportunities including theatre, concerts or exhibitions for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- providing young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods guidance and opportunities to actively contribute to the improvement of their communities through effective use of their talents and cultural creativity.

## **B. Breaking down segregation and the promotion of social inclusion**

Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods often experience isolation and segregation, whether by intent or by neglect. This serves to further stigmatise them and exacerbate the discrimination they experience when they venture outside their neighbourhoods, often resulting in a vicious cycle of exclusion and a sense of being trapped. The following measures are effective in promoting social inclusion as they address the causes and symptoms of segregation and isolation:

- acknowledging that all young people should have equal access to public amenities. Where access to essential public services (including post offices, community centres, youth work centres, employment services, and information and communication technologies) cannot be ensured by the responsible authorities, investing in convenient and affordable transport services;
- reaching out to the most isolated and disenfranchised young people in peripheral and segregated disadvantaged communities with information, non-formal education and other opportunities for participation, through for example, “mobile youth work”;
- addressing the specific needs of segregated and isolated disadvantaged communities through co-operation across sectors and levels of government and developing community improvement strategies, with the direct involvement of young people from the communities concerned.

## **C. Promoting meaningful participation opportunities in the planning and management of their living environment**

In political terms, young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods are among the most disenfranchised groups in the wider community, even in decision-making processes that have a direct impact on their lives. Participation in such processes is an important mechanism for the exercise of citizenship. Consulting young people on matters related to urban planning and the management of their living environment provides evidence of real needs and concerns that should be addressed through policy. The following measures contribute to improving the consultation and participation of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in decision making about their living environment and other issues of concern to them and the wider community:

- developing inclusive and transparent processes which allow young people and their representatives to participate in the planning of their

living environment (at urban, community and neighbourhood level) and in which the needs of young people, the accessibility of essential public services and community amenities are at the centre of planning duly recognised. Examples of good practice include the establishment, at local and regional level, for example, of youth consultative bodies such as municipal youth councils, youth parliaments or forums, allowing all young people, whether or not they belong to organisations or associations, to express their opinions and present proposals on the formulation and implementation of policies affecting them, as well as the principles of co-management in place in the youth sector of the Council of Europe;

- using locations and media that are popular with young people (social media, youth organisations and centres, sport clubs, public spaces they frequent) for the purpose of informing and consulting young people on planning processes relevant to them;
- providing youth organisations active in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with sustainable support and resources for reaching out to the least enfranchised young people and for facilitating their participation in relevant debates.

#### **D. Ensuring that all young people are fully able to exercise their role as active citizens without discrimination**

Discrimination further exacerbates the barriers to active citizenship that many young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods experience because of social prejudice, isolation, etc. Measures, through youth work, which promote cohesion and positive relations between people from different backgrounds, have been effective in preventing and redressing discrimination. The following measures can encourage the active citizenship of young people:

- actively supporting initiatives of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and their organisations that aim at community cohesion, mutual understanding between community residents, combating negative attitudes towards people from different social and cultural backgrounds, reducing stigma and prejudice, and the promotion of access to social rights, human rights, inclusion, etc., through a variety of measures including the provision of funding, project development and management support, facilities and/or capacity building;
- supporting projects that promote inclusive accessibility, for example, by making information and activities available to community members in traditional and alternative formats;

- increasing investment in youth work (including mobile youth work), community amenities and youth organisations that engage young people in activities promoting active citizenship, social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and other activities that bring together young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods with their wider peer group, from minority and majority communities;
- implementing measures to ensure accessibility to all buildings open to the public for young people with disabilities in accordance with the principles of Universal Design accepted as the standard for accessibility in the built environment;
- acknowledging the specific vulnerability of specific groups of young people in relation to all sorts of discrimination and stigmatisation and develop, where appropriate, specific measures to address this problem.

#### **E. Recognising and supporting non-formal education, youth work, youth organisation and youth workers in disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

Non-formal education/learning and youth work have again and again proven effective in helping young people to find approaches and solutions to overcome the disadvantage they experience and to become active and constructive contributors to the development of their communities and society as a whole. Yet, youth work and non-formal education/learning as well as their providers, youth organisations and more generally youth workers tend to suffer from poor social and political recognition, and are often considered low-status professions. The following measures increase the value of youth work and non-formal education/learning and contribute to community development across Europe:

- encouraging responsible authorities to recognise and value youth work as an important measure in supporting community cohesion, through a variety of measures including consultation of youth work professionals in strategy and policy development and implementation processes concerning disadvantaged young people; providing funding for youth workers and youth organisations, in particular simplifying funding procedures; facilitating lifelong learning among youth workers; encouraging the exchange of expertise between youth workers and other professionals working with young people; improving working conditions for and the status of youth work, etc.;

- supporting youth work professionals and youth organisations that provide non-formal education/learning in the promotion of best practices, through a variety of measures, including relevant legislative and policy measures;
- taking measures to ensure that the environment is empowering youth organisations that are active in youth work and non-formal education/learning in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, including through the provision of sustainable funding and other forms of structural support.

#### **F. Improving gender equality of young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

Young women living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods tend to be more vulnerable to risks of social exclusion and, therefore, require additional support for the exercise of their social rights. The following measures contribute effectively to promoting gender equality and improving the access to social rights of young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods:

- encouraging young parents (especially young mothers) from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to continue or return to education or training, or to pursue employment through a variety of measures including appropriate benefit systems and childcare support services;
- providing specific support measures for young women and men living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods to voice issues of concern to them in the public sphere, through dedicated platforms for their participation in youth organisations political life and in society;
- supporting young people's leadership in the community through a variety of measures, including supporting gender-specific youth organisations, co-educational youth work and gender-sensitive boys/young men's initiatives.

#### **G. Preventing all forms of violence in disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

Disadvantaged neighbourhoods are often plagued by violence, inside and outside the home, in which young people are both victims and perpetrators. The very diverse forms of violence that can be observed create a climate of fear and further fuel prejudice and discrimination against young people from

such neighbourhoods. The following approaches can help prevent and stop violence:

- creating platforms for dialogue between the various responsible authorities at local, regional and national levels (including police, youth justice and probation services, health and social services and youth workers) and young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and their representatives (youth organisations, youth work providers, etc.) to identify causes of and strategies for effectively combating all forms of violence in the neighbourhood;
- creating and implementing formal and non-formal education programmes that address bullying, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and all other forms of violence prevalent in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- making available support measures for the recovery process of young victims of violence and disseminating information widely about these measures in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, using youth-friendly means of communication;
- encouraging young victims to report gender-based violence to the police, while ensuring that they have access to services to ensure their safety, including the availability of places in alternative accommodation for them and their children, relevant counselling and financial support;
- implementing gender-sensitive human rights training for police, legal professionals and representatives of other responsible authorities involved in addressing violence in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- encouraging police officers to protect young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods from violence including through clear and effective sanctions for not doing so;
- facilitating initiatives that aim at supporting the recovery process of perpetrators of violence, the social re-integration of young offenders and the prevention of hate speech and hate crimes.

## Glossary

**Active citizenship:** The capacity for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. Young people learn about active citizenship through introduction to the concepts and values underpinning citizenship in a democracy (usually through some form of education, formal or non-formal), by being active and responsible members of their community

(through the activities of civil society) and, once they have reached the relevant age, by practicing the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy (voting, standing for elected office, etc.). It is at one and the same time a human right and a responsibility. Active citizenship requires both opportunity and competence. Young people experiencing barriers to accessing social rights are also more likely to experience barriers to exercising active citizenship and participating responsibly in society.

**Co-management:** The model of partnership between public authorities (governmental representatives in charge of youth) and civil society (representatives of non-governmental youth organisations and networks) in place in the youth sector of the Council of Europe since the 1960s. Partners in the co-management system decide together on an equal basis about the policies and programmes of the Council of Europe's youth sector and determine how they shall be financed.

**Disadvantage (social):** A lack of access to the instruments required by every person for self-sufficiency and sustainable autonomy. In the context of the "Enter!" project, disadvantage is viewed as the process through which some groups of young people or other individuals are systematically denied (whether by design or neglect) the opportunity and/or means to fully enjoy social rights (as defined by the European Social Charter), which in effect represents a violation of their human rights. The experience of disadvantage may include a lack of independence; incentive; responsibility; self-respect and respect from others; health; education; information; employment; adequate financial support; social, cultural and financial capital; responsive support systems and participation.

**Disadvantaged neighbourhoods:** Areas or communities in which residents, including young people, experience poverty, deprivation, violence, exclusion, marginalisation, a lack of opportunities, poor living conditions, a degraded environment and vulnerability to a higher degree than the majority of the population. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods lack important infrastructure and services for young people, which has negative impacts on their life chances and future development. Such infrastructure and services include youth centres, schools and other education amenities, sport and cultural facilities, public meeting spaces, health centres, employment and training agencies, as well as local businesses and community initiatives.

These neighbourhoods are often denied or overlooked in terms of funding from national, regional and local authorities and the private sector. Furthermore,



they are often at a distance from city centres without adequate transport systems, leading to isolation and segregation.<sup>1</sup> In this recommendation, the terms “disadvantaged neighbourhoods” refer essentially to urban areas but also to the rural areas where Roma<sup>2</sup> communities are settled and generally live in poor conditions.

**Disadvantaged young people:** Young people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (as defined above) experience various and multiple forms of (social) disadvantage (as defined above), including a lack of economic, cultural, and social capital and/or resources; a lack of access to or success in education; a lack of training or employment; a lack of perspectives for the future; a greater risk of homelessness, conflict with the law, sexual exploitation and/or violence and substance abuse, etc. Furthermore, some young people from certain categories could become disadvantaged young people, including young people growing up in care or without their families; young people from migrant backgrounds or from ethnic minorities; Roma young people; young people with disabilities, mental health problems or living with illness and young people living in segregated or isolated communities are much more likely to experience social disadvantages than other young people. Disadvantaged young people are among the most marginalised in society and require special support measures to access the same opportunities as their peers.

**Discrimination:** The term “discrimination” shall be understood to include all forms of discrimination, irrespective of grounds, as explicitly outlined in Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights or any other form established by the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

**Mobile youth work:** A flexible and “outreaching” form of youth work that goes to the young people with which it tries to engage, rather than grouping them together in a centralised point such as a youth centre or office. Mobile youth work takes a variety of forms and includes street work, individual assistance or counselling, group work and community work and takes place outdoors as much as indoors, in private as much as in public spaces.

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1. Inspired by the definition of vulnerable regions provided by Mary Daly, *Access to social rights in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, October 2002.
  2. The term “Roma” used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsy.

**Non-formal education:** “Non-formal education” means any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting.<sup>3</sup>

**Informal education:** “Informal education” means the lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (family, peer group, neighbours, encounters, library, mass media, work, play, etc).

**Social rights:** The rights contained in the European Social Charter and in the revised European Social Charter.

**Youth policy:** A strategy implemented by public authorities with a view to providing young people with opportunities and experiences that support their successful integration into society and enable them to be active and responsible members of their societies, as well as agents of change. It involves four dimensions referring to all aspects of young people’s lives: *a.* being in a good shape (physically and mentally); *b.* learning (informal, non-formal and formal); *c.* participation; and *d.* inclusion. Youth policy may combine different means of intervention (legislation, specific programmes, etc.) and integrates a long-term educational perspective. Youth policy targets all young people but should pay special attention to those who are socially, economically or culturally vulnerable.

**Youth workers:** People involved in work or activities with and for young people, either on a voluntary basis or professionally and in several contexts, including youth organisations, youth services, youth centres, youth/social work training institutions, or any other structure operating in the area of non-formal education with young people.

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3. Cf. Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.







Social cohesion is important for the sustainability of democracy and human rights (as codified in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Revised European Social Charter); it implies an acceptance of shared responsibility for the welfare of all members of society, especially those who are at risk of poverty or exclusion. In line with this, the youth policy of the Council of Europe aims at providing young people with "equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society". The Council of Europe's youth sector is running the *Enter!* project aiming at the development of youth policy and youth work responses to exclusion, discrimination and violence affecting young people, particularly in multicultural disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The project was set in response to the growing concern and attention of the European Steering Committee for Youth and the Advisory Council on Youth, the governmental and non-governmental partners of the youth sector of the Council of Europe, to matters of social cohesion and inclusion of young people.

The experiences of the *Enter!* project are at the origin of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to the member States of the Council of Europe on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights adopted in January 2015. In this recommendation, the Committee of Ministers recognises that young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, especially those living in poverty, are more vulnerable to all kinds of risks, including poor physical and mental health, substance abuse, self-harm, violence, discrimination and exclusion.

The Recommendation proposes measures in various fields of youth, education and social policy. Furthermore, the text is accompanied by guidelines for its implementation by public authorities, including local or regional providers of youth work and social policies, which should help making it a truly useful instrument for the social inclusion of all young people.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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