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PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
BETWEEN ERYICA AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

General Report

Colloquy
Council of Europe/ERYICA

“The future of youth information in Europe”

26-27 November 2007
European Youth Centre Budapest

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1. Abstract and Summary of Main Results

In the days 26 and 27 November 2007, in the premises of the European Youth Centre in Budapest, the Council of Europe – ERYICA Colloquy on "The future of youth information in Europe" took place.

The Colloquy was organised in the framework of the "Partnership Agreement" between the Council of Europe and ERYICA, in force since 1997 with the purpose of promoting and developing European co-operation in youth information and counselling, in particular by organising training activities for persons involved in youth information and counselling.

The Joint Co-ordinating Committee of the Partnership Agreement had decided during 2006 that its joint activity for 2007 should be a reflection on youth information and its place within youth policy in the context of information society.

Main aim of the Colloquy was to develop inputs concerning policy and practice in the field of youth information and counselling, which could be integrated into the political and strategic document "Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020".

Thirty-nine participants, working in sixteen countries took part in the event. They were meant to represent all the actors concerned by youth information: providers, receivers, non-governmental and governmental parties, to debate the youth information-related key issues. The results of this reflection were also to serve as elements for clarifying the role and place of youth information policy and work within the overall Council of Europe policy in the youth field.

The main results of the Colloquy are bulleted below.

Recommendation N° R (90) 7

Although a visionary paper for the time it was written, it needs to be revised in light of the most recent developments in youth information.

White spots

It is recommendable that in the near future the Council will propose activities to its Member States for promoting youth information policies, structures and infrastructures in those countries that haven't explored this area of work yet. ERYICA is ready to make available its knowledge in the field to support this goal.

Recognition of youth information work

Over the past years, resources have been made available by national governments, local authorities and the Council in order to train workers in youth information field and to enhance their professionalism and the quality of the deliverables. More recognition could be put in place in order to acknowledge the reached level of quality in this field of work.

Generalist approach

The Council of Europe should provide support and refer to youth information in its generalist fashion, refraining from focussing excessively on specific campaigns but rather on spreading the founding values the Council is built upon. In this perspective, the existence of networks such as ERYICA could ensure a valuable dissemination channel.

Participation and human rights

By stressing that information is one of the main prerequisites for participation, hence crucial for the personal democratic development of young European citizens, participants in the Colloquy wished to witness the right to generalist, independent information elevated to a recognised human right, and as such strictly related to the very core of the work of the Council of Europe itself.

Partnership with the EU

As a direct consequence and for the purpose of the aforementioned grounds, youth information could be included as the fifth pillar of the cooperation between Council of Europe and European Union.

European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC).

ERYICA participants in the Colloquy were available and keen on contributing to gathering data, analysis and knowledge in the broad meaning about young people under the wish to be included in the designing- and projecting phase of the Centre whilst being enabled to utilise the analyses undertaken by and through the Centre for further developing their services.

Not a common European standard

It appeared clearly that there is neither common model nor standard in the way youth information is perceived and structured in all countries.

Critical selection

Face to face youth information stays as an essential, crucial mean of work in the field of youth policies.

A transversal tool

Youth information can be used as a pivot in the overarching policies concerning youth, since it involves all aspects of a youngster's life.

Information and Communication Technology

More cooperation might be sought and pursued with higher education and research institutions, on the positive example of the very much appreciated work undergone by M. Selwyn in the preparation of his working paper for this Colloquy.

Co-operation with the European Youth Forum

The European Youth forum should be looked at as a privileged partner in the youth information field.

2. Introduction

The present report is meant to present not only the outcomes of the Colloquy itself, but also the process that brought it to life and the means of its development during the days in Budapest.

For this purpose, the reader can find a historical digression at first, introducing the existing partnership between ERYICA and the Council of Europe as well as providing an overview of the main activities undertaken in the past in this framework.

Secondly, an "Executive Report" displays in a succinct fashion the *raison d'être* of the Colloquy: its background; its (indeed ambitious) goals; the participants, presented according to their organisation of reference; the forecasted working methods besides the actual ones, laying special attention to the two working documents prepared by the experts; the approximate schedule; finally, the expectations and the evaluations from participants collected at the end of the meeting.

Thirdly, the content-wise outcomes are presented by grouping the available material according to the specific objectives set for the Colloquy by the Joint Co-ordinating Committee of the Council of Europe – ERYICA partnership beforehand. Each group has been given a title to facilitate the reading.

In appendix, a detailed list of participant is attached to the document.

The initial abstract provides a brief indication on the main points dealt with herethrough.

3. The Council of Europe/ERYICA partnership

On the basis of Recommendation N° R (90) 7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe and of the European Union Council Resolution of 31 March 1995 on co-operation in the field of youth information and studies concerning youth, on April 2nd, 1997 the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) and the Council of Europe have come to a Partnership agreement.

The purpose of the partnership agreement is to promote and develop European co-operation in youth information and counselling, in particular by organising training activities for persons involved in youth information and counselling.

Other wished goals of the Partnership agreement are

- To promote and develop European co-operation in the field of youth information and counselling;
- To promote the equality of access to information which young people require;
- To facilitate and organise training for the persons involved in youth information and counselling to ensure a high standard of service;
- To meet the demands in this field of all the member States of the Council of Europe and the Contracting Parties to the European Cultural Convention, particularly the countries of central and eastern Europe;

A Joint Co-ordinating Committee has been set in order to manage the partnership, especially by discussing and approving the annual activity plan, defining the relative budget and evaluating, year by year and thoroughly, the development of the partnership itself.

The main events and activities organised in the framework of the Partnership agreement have been, in the respective years:

- **1996** (pre-agreement) Training course "Different Approaches to Youth Information in Europe";
- **1997**, Training course "Different Approaches to Youth Information in Europe";
- **1998**, European Training Course on "Different Approaches to Youth Information in Europe";
- **1999**, European Training Course on "Minimum Standards, and Measures to Improve the Quality of Youth Information Services";
- **2000**, European Study Session for Youth Information Trainers;
- **2001**, Study Session on "Different Approaches to Youth Information in Europe";
- **2002**, Training Course for Youth Information Trainers;
- **2003**, Study Session on "Practical Ways of Involving Young People in Youth Information Work";
- **2004**, Working-Group of Trainers: Preparation of Training Modules;
- **2005**, Seminar "Quality matters in information for young people";
- **2006**, European seminar "Participation of young people in youth information work";
- **2007**, Colloquy on "The future of youth information in Europe".

The 2007 activity, which is object of the present report, consists also in a reflection moment on the partnership agreement itself, drawing its possible future perspectives of development and further fields, means and fashions of action.

4. The Colloquy – Executive Report

a. Preamble

At their 3rd summit in May 2005, the Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe reaffirmed their commitment to the core values of the Organisation. They agreed to enhance the role of the Council of Europe as an effective mechanism of pan-European co-operation in all relevant fields, to strengthen and streamline the activities, structures and working methods still further, and to enhance transparency and efficiency, thus ensuring the Council of Europe plays its due role in a changing Europe.

The Council of Europe youth sector is of course also concerned by these developments and has started work on the preparation of a political and strategic document "Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020" with a view to clarifying its mission and priorities, as well as to set out its political agenda for the next decade. The Joint Council on Youth Questions (the central statutory body of the youth sector) has set up a group to draft this document which will be submitted for adoption to the 8th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth to be held in Kyiv in 2008.

Youth information and counselling are important aspects of youth policy. The Council of Europe recognised this in 1990 when its Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation on information and counselling for young people in Europe which considered that "young people had a right to full, comprehensive and reliable information ... and to counselling on all problems concerning them in all sectors ... so they may have complete freedom of choice". This commitment to providing information and counselling was further reinforced in 1997 when the Council of Europe signed a Partnership Agreement with ERYICA to promote and develop European co-operation in the field of youth information and counselling.

The Joint Co-ordinating Committee of the Partnership Agreement between ERYICA and the Council of Europe has agreed that its joint activity for 2007 should be a reflection on youth information and its place within youth policy in the context of information society. As such, a colloquy on the Council of Europe strategy on youth information policy has been organised, bringing together all actors concerned by youth information: providers, receivers, non-governmental and governmental parties, to debate the youth information-related key issues. The results of this reflection will also serve as elements for clarifying the role and place of youth information policy and work within the overall Council of Europe policy in the youth field.

b. Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the colloquy was to develop inputs concerning policy and practice in the field of youth information and counselling, which could be integrated into the political and strategic document "Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020".

The specific objectives were

1. to review the developments of youth information in Europe and the future challenges it will face;
2. to examine the place and role of youth information work as part of youth policy at local, national and European levels;
3. to discuss the role and policy of the Council of Europe regarding youth information;
4. to discuss the ways and strategic tools for managing the Council of Europe's role in this area of work.

While objective 1. was dealt with mainly by the two working papers prepared by the designated experts, papers that all participants were requested to read carefully, and by the relevant discussion upon them during the first day of work of the Colloquy, objectives 2., 3. and 4. were thoroughly analysed in the working groups and the following plenary debates.

Objective 2. and 3. being partially overlapping in their respective scopes, it was not an easy task to dedicate two different work sessions to their development, hence the merging, *de facto*, of the workgroup 2. and 3. into a unique, elongated one.

Nonetheless, the possibility of gathering a strong group of participants, including experienced professionals on youth information and in partner organisations and institutions, as well as the positive synergy between a core of ERYICA members and the representatives of the stakeholders invited, have consented goals and aim to be achieved satisfyingly.

c. Participants

Whereas ERYICA was in charge of selecting youth information workers and representatives of the Eurodesk and European Youth Card Association as well as one own representative and one member of its secretariat, the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe completed the list with those appointed by the respective organisations and bodies as well as redistributed the participants according to the actual interest manifested. The Directorate also prepared and issued invitations and was charged with a number of practical issues (accommodations, relations with the EYC Budapest).

On ERYICA side, great attention was laid upon respecting the broadest possible number of experiences, reaching youth information workers coming from "white spots" in this field of work, as well as with as different backgrounds as possible. As a result, youth information workers from non-EU countries such as Russian Federation, Montenegro and Bosnia – Herzegovina contributed significantly to the success of the event by adding their experiences to the discussion.

Similarly, representatives of Central Eastern European member organisations in ERYICA were encouraged to take part, which was the case eventually for youth information workers from Czech Republic and Slovenia.

Particular effort was also devoted to identify experienced as well as new-comer youth information workers.

The final list of participants was at last completed in the days preceding the beginning of the Colloquy, and consisted of the following persons, working in the indicated country and in representation of the highlighted institution or organisation:

- 19 youth information workers nominated by ERYICA;
 - Maite Benavides Castro, Spain;
 - Johan Bertels, Belgium;
 - Eliska Bucvanova, Czech Republic;
 - Julie Cakiova, Czech Republic;
 - Claire Conlon, France;
 - Jaana Fedotoff, Finland;
 - Rouzanna Ivanyan, Russian Federation;
 - Sanja Kavaz, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
 - Matjaž Medvešek, Slovenia;
 - Jelena Miljanic, Montenegro;
 - María José Monzó Almirall, Spain;
 - Jorge Orlando Queirós, Portugal;
 - Mika Pietila, Finland;
 - Reinhard Schwalbach, Germany;
 - Eduardo Urrestarazu Gordo, Spain;
 - Marjo Van den Meer, The Netherlands;
 - Gemma Villa, Spain;
 - Heike Voggenthaler, Germany;
 - Isgard Walla, Germany.
- 3 youth NGO representatives nominated by the Advisory Council on Youth (Council of Europe):
 - Jelena Brankovic, Serbia;
 - Stefanie Müller, Belgium;
 - Judith Verweijen, Belgium;
- 2 representatives of the European Youth Forum:
 - Angela Corbalan, Belgium;
 - Alix Masson, Belgium.
- 1 representative of the Liaison Committee of NGOs of the Council of Europe:
 - Lena Elise Morel, France.
- 1 representative of ERYICA:
 - Marc Boes, President.
- 2 representatives of EURODESK:
 - Bernard Charbonnel, France, President;
 - Bob Payne, Belgium, Director.
- 1 representative of the European Youth Card Association (EYCA):
 - Monika Pink, Austria.

- 4 members of the Joint Council on Youth:
 - Basak Saral, Turkey;
 - Kathrin Groth, Germany;
 - Alexis Ridde, France;
 - Bert Mellebeek, Belgium (appointed).

Out of the invited persons, have finally attended:

- Both authors of the working papers:
 - Alexandra Cangelosi, Austria;
 - Neil Selwyn (26/11), United Kingdom.
- 1 member of the Council of Europe Secretariat:
 - Michèle Bergdoll, France;
- 1 member of the EU-CoE Partnership Secretariat:
 - Philipp Boetzelen (27/11), France.
- 1 member of the ERYICA Secretariat:
 - Joelle Verriest, Austria.
- Serving as Rapporteur General:
 - Davide Capecchi, Luxembourg.

The final number of participants in the Colloquy being 39, they were working in 16 different countries, all bound in the European Cultural Convention.

When it comes to gender equilibrium in the Colloquy's participants, 24 female and 15 male individuals took part in the activity. The unbalance is unsurprising as it reflects the actual gender distribution in European youth information workers.

It is worth to mention that a significant number of representatives from international youth non-governmental organisations accepted the invitation to attend the Colloquy, which fact on the one hand sheds due optimism on the possibility to involve young people in the drafting process of youth policies at European level in the course of the current revision; on the other hand it endorses, with all evidences, the co-responsibility and co-decision, courageous policy of the Council in this field of work.

Particular attention has been paid to enabling representatives of the European Youth Forum to attend, which effort resulted in being successful given the final presence in Budapest of Angela Corbalan and Alix Masson, both employed by such organisation.

The outstanding and homogenous variety, richness, creativity, enthusiasm, interest in the topics discussed and professionalism of the group of partakers demonstrated to be the main asset and success factor for the Colloquy.

d. Working Methods

The colloquy has been organised over two days and included a mix of presentations and debate carried out in groups and in plenary.

The foundations for this reflection were provided in two working documents containing basic information on the development of youth information work in Europe.

The working languages were English and French, with simultaneous interpretation.

Most of the content of the Colloquy was produced during the working groups. The nine moderators, selected from amongst the participants, were duly instructed on how to involve all participants in the discussion, on how to ensure that as much outcome as possible could be produced.

A specific list of instructions has been provided to each of the moderators, including specific as well as generic questions to address, aims and objectives for each session.

e. Working Documents

At the beginning of the Colloquy, all participants had received the two main working papers that would serve as a basis for the discussion upon the developments of youth information in Europe and the future challenges it was to face.

Both documents had been made available to participants beforehand in English and French.

They included historical facts, described the environment in which youth information work had developed over the years and dealt with trends and the evolution of the work.

‘Young People and their Information Needs in the Context of the Information Society’ had been prepared by Neil Selwyn, London Knowledge Lab, UK, whilst Alexandra Cangelosi, from jugendinfo.cc – Austrian Youth Information Centres, is the author of the paper “The Development of Youth Information in Europe”.

Additionally, all invited participants had also received (in English only)

- the European Youth Information Charter (Bratislava, 19 November 2004);
- The Rainbow Paper on Participation in Youth Information (Vienna, 22 April 2006).

The two working papers had been written expressly for the Colloquy.

f. Programme and Schedule

Monday, 26 November 2007

09.30 – 11.00 Opening Session:

- Welcome by the Council of Europe Representative, Michèle Bergdoll;
- Opening of the Colloquy by the Vice-Chair of the Joint Co-ordinating Committee of the Partnership Agreement between ERYICA and the Council of Europe, Alexis Ridde;
- Welcome by and Presentation of Agenda 2020: Basak SARAL, who introduced the Strategy for the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth & Sport
- Welcome by the Chair of the meeting, Marc Boes, President of ERYICA
- Presentation of Colloquy’s Working Methods by the General Rapporteur, Davide Capecchi
- Presentation of the participants

11.20 – 13.00 Plenary presentations and discussion:

- **The Development of “Generalist” Youth Information in Europe**, Ms. Alexandra CANGELOSI (ERYICA)
- **Young People and Their Information Needs in the Context of the Information Society**, Mr. Neil SELWYN (United-Kingdom)

- 14.30 – 16.00 Three simultaneous working-groups discuss:
The place and role of youth information work as a part of youth policy, at the local, national and European level
- 16.20 – 17.45 Presentation of working-group conclusions and debate in plenary
- 17.45 – 18.00 Summary of the first day's discussions by the General Rapporteur, Davide Capecchi

Tuesday, 27 November 2007

- 09.00 – 09.30 Presentation of the working tools of the Council of Europe, Rui Gomez
- 09.30 – 10.00 Three simultaneous working-groups discuss:
The role and policy of the Council of Europe regarding youth information
- 11.20 – 13.00 Presentation of working-group conclusions and debate in plenary
- 14.30 – 15.00 Presentation of European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, Philipp BOETZELEN
- 15.00 – 16.00 Three simultaneous working-groups discuss:
The ways and strategic tools for managing the Council of Europe role in this area of work
- 16.20 – 17.45 Presentation of working-group conclusions and debate in plenary
- 17.45 – 18.30 **Closing Session:**
- Summary of the Colloquy presented by the General Rapporteur, Davide Capecchi;
 - Evaluation from Participants;
 - Closing words by Alexis Ridde, Basak Saral, Michèle Bergdoll
 - Closing words by the Chair of the Colloquy, Marc Boes.

g. Evaluations from Participants

At the very beginning of the meeting, participants were invited by Marc Boes to write their expectations on the Colloquy on the name tag staying in front of them during the plenary sessions.

At the end of the Colloquy, in turn, they were requested to evaluate the Colloquy on the basis of the previously stated expectations.

Expectations

The great majority of participants had come at the Colloquy with the clear intention to produce concrete proposals that could eventually become opportunities for policy enhancements at a European as well as on national level.

Many of them also declared not to have a clear idea on what to expect in concrete, but in general expressed the hope to be enabled to give their contribution, be it personal or in representation of their organisation of reference or of belongingness.

Evaluations

Most of participants expressed their appreciation for the outcomes of the event, by terms of matching of their expectations and in general for the results – provided that they were looking forward to receiving the final report in order to overview at once the product of their work that was not clear at that stage.

A shared wish was manifested to have on the one hand the possibility to organise regularly events of this kind, and on the other hand that the proposals put forward could become policy in the future.

5. The Colloquy – Outcome and Recommendations

1. To review the developments of youth information in Europe and the future challenges it will face.

Upon and besides the content of the working papers, that is not repeated hereafter, some more elements emerged during the Colloquy with respect to the first objective.

Not a common European standard

First and foremost, it appeared clearly that there is not a common model or standard in the way youth information is perceived in all countries. There are countries where youth information is assumed as a priority by national governments who make appropriate investments on that regard, by creating, supporting and fostering national networks and co-ordinating bodies. In other cases, the government acknowledges and understands the importance of youth information yet fails in the due financial investment. On the other hand, there are cases where national youth information is lead by NGOs that face difficulties in liaising with the respective national governments and, therefore, do not have the means to effectively networking at national level, hence to complying with their mission.

Critical selection

Granted that a significant (although not complete) number of young people is gaining access to information, nowadays, via internet, there is still a need for a steering role for face-to-face youth information workers, namely in showing to young people how to be critical with information that they receive as well as in helping and supporting youngsters to explore, to get acquainted and to learn to use different online and "offline" tools as source of information.

Information is the basis for participation

Professionally-led, youth information of quality may lie at the very core of one's maturation process. If properly elaborated, information as an input may contribute to creating an active, mature, critical citizen. In a scheme:

Input - Information -> Young Person -> Output – Active, Mature Citizen

In this respect, youth information can be an excellent tool for reaching out and involving in the society as active citizens young people from different backgrounds and social yet geographical provenience. Even farther, one may say that youth information represents a way to stimulating participation in youngsters, which in turn leads to a – say – peculiarly democratic (since independent from formal education) way to knowledge.

A transversal tool

In the general scope of youth policy, the role of youth information in the present and in the future is yet to be fulfilled, in that it can be used as a pivot in the overarching policies concerning youth. In fact, information does involve all aspects of a youngster's life, from education to health, from social inclusion to leisure, from entering in the work world to vocational training *etc.*

Furthermore, as a consequence of its transversal nature, youth information can be exploited as a channel for communication (input and feedback) amongst different local, regional, national structures concerned with youth policy, and as a *trendwatch* for monitoring the evolution of the young part of the society.

Information and Communication Technology

Two main questions are at stake when it comes to the use and reality of ICT applied to youth information:

- How can we, as information providers, use ICT in a better way?
- What are the threats of the use of ICT in youth information?

For answering these questions, more cooperation might be sought and pursued with higher education and research institutions, on the positive example of the very much appreciated work undergone by M. Selwyn in the preparation of his working paper for this Colloquy.

Co-operation with the European Youth Forum

The future of youth information passes also through a more coordinated, focussed and structured cooperation between existing actors in the field of youth policy, the most representative of them being the European Youth Forum, that should be looked at as a privileged partner in the youth information field. The cooperation should lead to more and deeper discussions regarding youth information as well as to joint activities such as study sessions and trainings.

2. To examine the place and role of youth information work as part of youth policy at local, national and European levels.

The approach to youth information should be, at all times, assumed as multi-level, due to the synergies that this kind of approach can result on. Nowadays there is no point on thinking about youth information at local level, without bearing in mind its European dimension, and the other way round. This fact raises the need for organisations with the ability to act nationally, either on their own or as part of a national network with good communication links between them.

Communication in the difference of roles

Though each level of youth information work, be it local, regional, national or European is different by terms of groups targeted, scope of action, resources available, core competences, and therefore should keep its own specificities as an asset, we have the responsibility to ensure communication amongst all levels, and consequently to envisage tools for enabling such a "vertical" channel to function in the best possible conditions, too.

Bottom – Up

One example of a best practise in this field is the online magazine "Café Babel", managed by an international NGO that receives funds, amongst the others, by the European Commission. In their structure, online *blogs*, or systems meant to gather information on a local level, subsume their content into the main European website. Other instances of online tools of this kind are available on the market and might be taken into consideration for application onto the youth information field. Anyway, provided that normally the flow of information going from the European level to the local level worked better than from local level to European level, participants highlighted two other best practices: national youth information seminars for youth information workers and Eurodesk local relays seminars.

Youth participation in online tools at national level: the German case

When it comes to sharing of successful tools on inter-national level, a notable example was brought to the participants' attention: IJAB (German national member organisation in ERYICA) was conducting a research on how young people were using their online portal. Reportedly, they had also created a steering group composed exclusively by young people for the evaluation and a better use of this online portal. Such an example can shed light on how a successful and strategically remarkable activity can create a precedent and lead to a trust relationship with national authorities.

Networking: an evergreen keyword

In youth information field the best envisaged way to create and foster cooperation on a European level was yet considered networking. By that, it was meant the creation of personal contacts and the interaction amongst youth information workers from different parts of Europe, under the example of ERYICA. In this framework, trainings as well as documentation on best practises were welcomed by participants, bearing in mind the admonition that often and unfortunately a European dimension in youth information still existed because of the personal devotion and enlightenment of individuals and organisations independent from public institutions.

Finally, the identification and adoption of effective communication tools between network members was encouraged.

Advantages of an integrated multi-level approach of youth information

Face-to-face, professional-led youth information ought to stay at the centre of the attention, and shall not be replaced at once. At the same time, many positive elements of a vertical (local, regional, national and European) coordinated action in youth information were pointed out. Such an approach would ensure

- more coherence and efficiency;
- local experience and expertise to be taken into account for designing and implementing national policies;
- a more effective and focussed information flow.

European policy does matter...

European-wide youth policy papers such as the Council of Europe Recommendation Nr. 90, the European Commission-drawn White Paper and the Common Objectives had a very positive and enticing impact at national level. In a number of countries, a series of priorities and projects were implemented: training for professionals, quality catalogue of minimum standards in youth information and publication of a manual on youth participation in youth information, the establishment of a national coordinating body; in Spain: youth information workers' seminar on good practises in youth information, participation of young people to youth information work at local level and research undertaken throughout the national network). Thus, the Council was encouraged to envisage further preparation and diffusion of European-wide documents of such a kind.

... yet local youth information centres too.

Local youth information centres still play a key role in collecting information on young people's changing needs and interests. It was considered important, therefore, to make sure that such valuable information would be disseminated to the regional, national and European level. The youth information networks could be considered as a permanent tool available to decision makers to keep contact with the reality in the society.

Debates at a local level

A further tool for fostering an effective communication in between the different levels has been thought to be promoting local debates upon youth information.

3. To discuss the role and policy of the Council of Europe regarding youth information;

As already mentioned above, the scope of the third specific objective of the Colloquy was considered as overlapping with the fourth one. Most of the content produced in these two areas of analysis has been allocated to the latter.

Recognition of youth information work

Participants agreed that youth information work should be more recognised by youngsters and governments, and that the Council of Europe could play a significant role in such a process, by implementing some of the actions indicated in this report as well as fostering promotion of youth information by member governments and partner institutions, by supporting trainings of youth information workers and putting pressure on member states to adopt youth information policies as a matter of priority in their political agendas.

More than Europe

Youth information has developed, in the last twenty years, as a policy area of excellence in Europe (even though plenty of work is yet to be done to close gaps and white spots). It is one of the challenges for the immediate future to be ready to export and share all the successes in this field of work with other world actors, be them institutional, governments or non-governmental organisations. Much is there to be learnt by and together with extra-European current and perspective professionals in this field of work. The Council of Europe and ERYICA might play a major joint role in such a process.

Youth information – a generalist approach

If, e.g., for the European Commission youth information is about informing youngsters of the existing opportunities for them as European citizens, participants suggested that the main concern of the Council of Europe should be to provide and support, eventually to refer to youth information in its

generalist fashion, refraining from focussing excessively on specific campaigns but rather on spreading the founding values the Council was built upon. In this perspective, the existence of networks such as ERYICA could ensure a valuable dissemination channel.

Participation and human rights

By stressing that information is one of the main prerequisites for participation, hence crucial for the personal democratic development of young European citizens, participants in the Colloquy wished to witness the right to generalist, independent information elevated to a recognised human right, and as such strictly related to the very core of the work of the Council of Europe itself.

Bearing this in mind, they recommended that youth information structures should be enabled to continue to develop their role in involving young people directly, the Council of Europe fostering this process by supporting, e.g., the development and implementation of training courses and study sessions specifically on the issue. A budget line for supporting specifically participation activities could be open consequently.

Participation of young people shouldn't be narrow down to their participation in the delivery of the information but also in the design of the policy addressing them.

Partnership with the EU

As a direct consequence and for the purports of the aforementioned grounds, youth information could be included as the fifth pillar of the cooperation between Council of Europe and European Union.

4. To discuss the ways and strategic tools for managing the Council of Europe's role in this area of work.

Cooperation with Higher Education and research Institutions

In the last years much research has been undergone on issues related to youth information, peculiarly focussing on novelties in the field after the spreading of internet and online participation tools – such as “Web 2.0” applications.

It was indicated that a more structured and continued cooperation in this field could be strategically pursued, by supporting the production of studies and publications, by regularly inviting academics and professionals to reflection events on the example of M. Selwyn's participation in the Colloquy, by involving researchers not solely in training events yet in designing training and educational curricula and overarching strategies – at Council of Europe level and in ERYICA. E-learning and IT topics should stay at the very top of the agenda for analysis.

Revision of Recommendation N° R (90) 7

Although a visionary paper for the time it was written, it needs to be revised in light of the most recent developments in youth information. Thus it was suggested to have, within the framework of the preparation of Agenda 2020, a decision for a revision of Recommendation N° R (90) 7 in view of its eventual re-approval.

In order to reach this result, a reflection group was suggested to be created, perhaps consisting in the Joint Co-ordinating Committee of the Council of Europe – ERYICA partnership itself, duly integrated by *ad hoc* additional invited participants, as well as European stakeholders in this field of work. During their meeting in Kiev in 2008, the Council of Ministers could decide to establish this group, whose mandate would be the drafting of the text for a renewed recommendation, based on the text of the cited “R (90) 7”.

A mention to the “European Youth Information Charter”, adopted in Bratislava (Slovak Republic) on 19 November 2004 by the 15th General Assembly of the ERYICA, was auspicated to be included there, seen that this document has become an absolute point of reference in youth information policies throughout Europe.

Furthermore, a link to the “Rainbow Paper” on youth participation in youth information was recommended.

White spots

Provided that one of the main strengths of the Council of Europe is the fact that its scope of action reaches far beyond the borders of the European Union, it is recommendable that in the near future the Council will propose activities to its Member States for promoting youth information policy, structures

and infrastructures in those countries that haven't explored this area of work yet, that participants in the Colloquy deemed crucial for the strengthening of democratic citizenship. Tools envisaged for reaching such a goal were:

- inviting experts from the ERYICA network in advisory missions in the youth field;
- supporting the possibility for NGOs operating in the youth field to have study visits by ERYICA partners;
- issuing *ad-hoc* documents that could provide political endorsement and legitimacy to starting networks in the field of youth information in the “white spot” countries;
- producing of a Tool-Kit on youth information existing and perspective workers in this field;
- recommending, e.g. in Agenda 2020, that member states develop youth information-structures and policies under the instance of best practises in the field and in literature;
- developing further and running the existing training activities for...maybe aiming specifically to workers at their first steps in youth information.
- develop cooperation with CLRAE (congress for local and regional authorities in Europe).

Survey on national youth information

Always in terms of future actions, a survey could be conducted in order to characterise and to identify the specific situation in each country and therefore to promote the resulting, needed intervention and co-operation, that could be limited, for example, to pressure the respective national governments. This survey could be conducted by the Council of Europe in co-operation with other partners, namely with the national and European actors, e.g. with the European Youth Forum, and with youth information networks such as ERYICA, Eurodesk and the European Youth Card Association

Young people satisfaction

Moreover, it was considered as crucial to conduct regular evaluation activities of the degree of satisfaction of young people regarding the youth information services and campaigns that are provided in the different countries. These evaluations could take the form of online and hard-paper surveys, as well as interviews and peer-to-peer activities. It would be interesting to organise, for this purpose, national or European seminars for young people who participate to youth information work (European Parliament of Youth Information). This would help get direct feedback from young people to decision makers.

Need for supporting documents

The Council could become proactive in encouraging the preparation and diffusion of political papers in their broad extent, which participants deemed yet as necessary to support and provide legitimacy to their day-to-day work on a national, regional and local level towards their political interlocutors as well as before decision makers.

Besides, although documents are available, at European level, on youth-information issues (e.g. White paper, Common objectives *etc.*) the Council could ask member states to update regularly their reports – whilst for their dissemination ERYICA and other European networks could be used.

Enforced and enhanced partnership

In order to strengthen the Council of Europe – ERYICA cooperation, some tools were envisaged. First of all, it was recommended to re-establish the habit (however foreseen in the internal regulations of the Joint Co-operation Committee) to have two meetings a year of the Committee itself. Secondly, representatives from ERYICA could be invited again, as it happened to be the case, to meetings of the Advisory Council of Youth, paying particular attention to the preparation of the document “Agenda 2020”. Furthermore, a stronger cooperation with CLRAE (congress for local and regional authorities in Europe) should be sought at the level of Joint Co-ordination Committee of the partnership.

ERYICA could participate, as an observer, in the common spaces that have been created between the European Union and the Council, not only by offering co-operation in all fields involving youth information, such as the EKCYP (European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy), but also by suggesting areas of research and investigation.

More Colloquies could be foreseen for the future, e.g. every second year, to monitor and steer regularly the evolution of youth information policies in Europe.

Finally, it was suggested to creating a newsletter, or a system of mutual information exchange between the Directorate of Youth and Sport and ERYICA to keep the other side more regularly informed about what's going on in European Youth Policy or Youth Information Work.

Training, training and training again

In addition to the aforementioned envisaged activities, some more ideas for modules that could be strategically supported by the Council and by ERYICA were imagined:

- basic quality system training;
- online training for starters and advanced youth information workers;
- invite youth organisations, possibly through the European Youth Forum, to youth information trainings offered by ERYICA or organised at national level.
- training for multipliers of the “Participation Charter”

In this regard, the framework of the partnership agreement could be exploited further.

Portfolio on “Youth Information Work”

The existing documents, such as those on indicators for Youth information policies, principles and guidelines, strategic approach to youth information could be updated and promoted, yet disseminated via the Council of Europe and ERYICA structures, after taking care that a translation is undertaken in all languages of the Council of Europe Member States interested in supporting youth information establishment or strengthening. Additionally, a regular review should be considered each – say – two or three years.

Youth information in the virtual world

In some experimental realities, a virtual, online European Youth (information) Centre could be created, providing, on the basis of successful experiences from some ERYICA partners, dedicated professional online support and information to youngsters as well as opportunities of peer-to-peer activities. Participants suggested as well the creation of a mixed reflection group in the framework of the conference planned to take place in Berlin, during February 2008, promoted by IJAB (German member organisation in ERYICA).

European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC).

ERYICA participants in the Colloquy were available and keen on contributing to gathering data, analysis and knowledge in the broad meaning about young people, levying on their day-to-day contact with these latter and provided it was in ERYICA members' organisation *raison d'être* not only to supply information to young people but also to cooperate with policymakers in identifying the current needs and trends. They were ready to collect and to shape the data in their possession, as well as to reflect on possible further means of cooperation with EKCYC under the wish to be included in the design- and projecting phase of the Centre whilst being enabled to utilise the analyses undertaken by and through the Centre for further developing their services.

6. Conclusion

Although very ambitiously conceived, the Council of Europe – ERYICA Colloquy on “The future of youth information in Europe” has reached its aim that was to elaborate, on the basis of the contributions of the main actors in the field of youth information (and policies) in Europe, significant material that could serve as an input for the document “Agenda 2020”.

Particularly worthy to be mentioned, the results of the Colloquy do not represent only the views and perspectives for the future of a limited though highly representative group of professionals, yet rather a shared whole of hopes and suggestions from a broad group of social actors in this field of work, and through this it acquires more importance and weight. Consequently and unsurprisingly, once the meeting is over expectations for a reception of the results in “Agenda 2020” are high, for the call for participants was clear in displaying the aim of the Colloquy: i.e. to develop inputs concerning policy and practice in the field of youth information and counselling, which could be integrated into the political and strategic document “Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020”.

It is a given that the participants in the Colloquy, be them representatives of ERYICA, its member organisations, its or the Council of Europe's stakeholders yet employees, have contributed (and with all evidences are available to do so in the future) at the best of their possibilities and capabilities to the success of the event, in the wish, in turn, to contribute effectively to the enhancement of the policies concerning youth information in Europe.

7. Appendix 1 – Final List of Participants

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