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**Consultative meeting**  
**for the development of a**  
**Council of Europe mid-term youth sector strategy from 2020 to 2030**  
**(Strasbourg, 15-16 May 2018)**

**Concept Note**

# Consultative meeting on a Council of Europe mid-term youth sector strategy from 2020 to 2030

## Introduction

The “[Agenda 2020](#)” is the Council of Europe’s medium-term strategic document on youth policy. It was adopted at the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (Kyiv, 10-11 October 2008), and set out the principles and priorities of the Council of Europe’s youth policy and programmes for the period until 2020.

At its 36th meeting (Budapest, 27-29 March 2017), the Joint Council on Youth took stock of the state of play of the implementation of “Agenda 2020”, and adopted a [roadmap](#) for the development of a new Council of Europe youth sector strategy from 2020 to 2030.

## Aim of the consultative meeting

*To explore parameters and provide key content inputs for the development of a new Council of Europe youth sector strategy from 2020 to 2030.*

## Objectives

In accordance with the roadmap and preparatory activities conducted by the secretariat, the main objectives of the consultative meeting will be:

- to take stock of the experience of “Agenda 2020” and identify lessons learned relevant to the development of the new strategy;
- to examine the context within which the new strategy will operate;
- to identify the added value of the Council of Europe’s action in the European youth sector and beyond;
- to collect perspectives from the field regarding the most relevant purposes and tasks for a new Council of Europe youth sector strategy;
- to collect perspectives on key challenges and gaps that could/should be addressed by the new strategy;
- to develop ownership among key stakeholders for the process of strategy development and its prospective outcome (i.e. the strategy itself);
- to clarify the main steps and roles in the process of strategy development and drafting.

## Expected outcomes

It is expected that the consultative meeting will make recommendations to the Joint Council on Youth on the key parameters that should inform the contents and intervention logic of the Council of Europe’s future youth strategy. It shall generate input for the drafting process.

## Participants of the consultative meeting

Approximately 50 participants representing the following **stakeholder groups** will participate in the consultative meeting: European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), beneficiaries of the Youth Department’s programmes within each of the main thematic priorities of Agenda 2020 (“Human rights and democracy”; “Living together in diverse societies” and “Social inclusion of young people”), beneficiaries of the European Youth Foundation, Trainers Pool of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR), European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP), Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres (labelled youth centre), European Youth Forum, European Youth Card Association (EYCA), European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA), Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, secretariat of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

The consultative meeting shall be facilitated by Yael Ohana, Frankly Speaking - Training, Research & Development.

The General Rapporteur is Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of South Wales in Cardiff.

## From Agenda 2020 to Agenda 2030 - A new Council of Europe youth sector strategy

Working from the extensive list of initiatives, campaigns, training courses, study sessions, educational materials and other activities undertaken under its auspices, a stocktaking of achievements and shortcomings, challenges and lessons learned from the experience of 'Agenda 2020' revealed relevant background to inform deliberations at the consultative meeting on key parameters for the new strategy.<sup>1</sup>

Every strategy needs to **relate political vision to a range of thematic priorities and 'action points' while also retaining room for the identification of new issues and the possibility of appropriate responses to new challenges**. While Agenda 2020 allowed for this, its significant focus was outputs, rather than outcomes or impacts. Its operationalisation fell short with regard to systematic evaluation: indicators/benchmarks for the evaluation and monitoring of the daily work on an ongoing basis were not sufficiently specified as part of the development of Agenda 2020 for it to be subjected to the kind of evaluation that is now expected of any strategy in the Council of Europe. In view of this, it is concluded that **any future strategy must serve:**

- strengthening the **visibility** of the work done (clear, focused, communicable);
- permitting more plausible **advocacy** of work to be done (convincing, evidence-based);
- providing **accountability** for the work that has been done (demonstrating impact and added value).

Agenda 2020 was a 10-year framework. In the context of the Council of Europe youth sector, ten years is both an eternity and a relatively short time. On the one hand, many of the current circumstances of young people in Europe were not predicted in 2008 (when Agenda 2020 was adopted). On the other, 10 years represent just five biennial work programmes of the Council of Europe. Agenda 2020 was very flexible, accommodating many new and diverse developments as time went by. Arguably, however, some stakeholders might have perceived it as not sufficiently focused or 'lacking structure'. For the new strategy, a balance between **long-term strategic flexibility and short-term operational focus** needs to be struck.

Experience of Agenda 2020 shows that the **political challenge for any Council of Europe youth strategy is both resource mobilisation and political championship**. Active stakeholders of the youth sector (e.g. statutory bodies, Secretariat, youth organisations, communities of practice involved in the activities) are better informed and understand implicitly what the Council of Europe youth sector does, why, how and with which impacts. External partners, less so. The new strategy would have to **translate normative objectives into relevant activities, at the same time as making clear why and how these activities have achieved impacts which are relevant to political decision makers, notably those representing the member states (i.e. the Committee of Ministers)**.

Agenda 2020 was a good example of the challenge for any youth strategy to address and respond to a range of objectives, when only some are 'ascendant'. Agenda 2020 proved effective in this relation, because many 'important issues' could be tackled under it, excluding neither the implicit value positions of the communities of practice associated with the Council of Europe youth sector, nor the priorities of the institution and governments. At the same time, this responsiveness was sometimes achieved at the expense of ongoing or perennial priorities, giving internal stakeholders especially the sense of constantly being in the position of the 'fire brigade'. **Finding a balance between normative objectives, observed needs and diverse hopes, between current demands and aspirations for the future will be crucial to the success of the new strategy.**

Agenda 2020 has also shown the **necessity of proving and improving impact, and how it has been achieved, for continuity, preservation and opportunity to innovate in the youth sector**. Although the youth sector has a track record of conducting in depth educational evaluations, monitoring and benchmarking progress towards stated objectives might not have been conducted in a sufficiently systematic manner, nor have they been associated directly with the operationalisation of Agenda 2020. This has made it challenging to articulate the added value of unique youth sector instruments (notably those that demand permanent investment and financial commitments such as the European Youth Centres, the European Youth Foundation, even its unique system of co-managed decision making involving young people and governments as equals) in a manner sufficiently clear and convincing for decision makers in charge of budgets to commit to adequate investment. While from a values perspective it may be difficult for some communities of practice associated to the Council of Europe youth sector to accept that it must prove that it also delivers results governments are keen on, it has become an existential necessity. **Therefore, the new strategy will have to ensure a more systematised approach to evaluation and monitoring, that at one and the same time provides evidence of impact (including of 'change achieved over time'), and which is manageable from an overall resources point of view (time, human resources, financial feasibility).**

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<sup>1</sup> This stocktaking was conducted through a variety of activities including a series of internal evaluative discussions, a debate in the Joint Council and a retreat style reflection among executive level members of the Secretariat, assisted by Council of Europe Department for Internal Oversight (DIO), which provides guidance to services of the Council of Europe about alignment of their strategy processes and documents with overall policy, and by two external consultants with experience of the youth sector.

Furthermore, Agenda 2020 has shown the extent to which expectations about what an institution like the Youth Department of the Council of Europe can achieve with its budgetary and human resource constraints among different internal and external stakeholders can be unrealistic. Many stakeholders are not sufficiently aware of the nature of the work of the Youth Department, nor of its implicit and explicit added value for the institution, for the sector or for young people. ***The new strategy will, therefore, also have to be a tool for communication, explaining not only what the Youth Department exists for, but what it does also to contribute to the youth developmental agenda and in which ways.***

Going forward, it is felt that there needs not only to be a new strategy, but one that addresses Agenda 2020's possible strategic shortcomings and supports more tangible impact.

## **The strategy development process**

In view of the above, the process of developing the new strategy should fulfill the following general purposes:

- reflect on the appropriateness of the priorities and programmatic directions set by Agenda 2020;
- establish 'convincing visibility' (inspiration and conviction) for the Council of Europe youth sector;
- sustain existing work of the Youth Department, ensuring continuity in succession to Agenda 2020;
- provide a platform for development, experimentation and innovation;
- contribute to the development of more systematic monitoring and evaluation of youth sector impact;
- and based on all of the above, build a common vision for the Council of Europe youth sector.

The roadmap identifies the consultative meeting as one of the key steps in developing the strategy. In the run up to the consultative meeting, and as preparation for it, several activities have been undertaken to stocktake Agenda 2020, and to develop initial perspectives on an appropriate process for developing the strategy.

In terms of approach, the strategy development process should try to:

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

Subject to any future decisions to be taken by the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) in this respect, the main milestones in the strategy development process after the consultative meeting could be:

- preparation of a first draft summation paper of conclusions from the various steps undertaken hitherto, especially the consultative meeting, focusing on aims, scope and key parameters for the new strategy;
- further developmental discussions especially regarding the conclusions/recommendations of the consultative meeting during the respective meetings of the Bureaux of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) in June 2018, and at the next meeting of the Joint Council on Youth (October 2018) on the basis of the paper;
- Formation of a drafting group and further development of the strategy document;
- Remote and face to face consultations of relevant stakeholders and decision makers on the draft final document;
- Finalisation of the document for adoption by the drafting group;
- Relevant decision making procedures in the Joint Council on Youth and the Committee of Ministers to adopt the document.

## **Concept and programme of the consultative meeting**

In view of the above, it has been decided that an important step in the strategy development process shall be a consultative meeting with key stakeholders of the Council of Europe youth sector.

As mentioned above, the aim of the consultative meeting is ***to explore parameters and provide key content inputs for the development of a new Council of Europe youth sector strategy from 2020 to 2030.***

As such, this consultative meeting will be the opportunity for stakeholders and members of the communities of practice associated with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe to:

- identify the achievements and added value of Council of Europe Youth Department interventions in comparison to other sectoral actors;
- identify opportunities in the landscape for cross-sectoral and inter institutional cooperation around key priorities;
- begin the process of identifying indicators for systematic evaluation and monitoring;

- clarify and make expectations of different stakeholder groups towards the strategy;
- explore core assumptions regarding how the Youth Department's key strategic instruments achieve change (i.e. youth sector strategic intervention logic);
- generate inputs for strategy document drafting process regarding the vision, mission, priorities, objectives, etc.

The consultative meeting will take a forward-looking approach. The main idea is to draw key lessons from past experiences, rather than to specifically evaluate what happened in significant detail. The current and potential future context within which the Council of Europe shall be operating will provide a basis for analysing the specific ways in which its Youth Department could contribute with maximum added value to addressing youth and youth sector needs and challenges going forward.

An important dimension of the consultative meeting will be to generate input for the development of a 'theory of change' for the Council of Europe's Youth Sector Strategy. This concept, which essentially describes the intervention logic of an institutional strategy, sums up the aims, objectives and ideas a given community of practice/stakeholders has about how it achieves its goals. A theory of change makes the assumptions held in that regard explicit and, therefore, evaluable (testable). For the Youth Department, this will be something of an experimental undertaking. The hoped for outcome of building a theory of change is a strategy that allows for more systematic monitoring and evaluation of youth sector impact for more convincing communication about the sector's added value.

### **Preparation for the consultative meeting**

Participants of the consultative meeting are asked to prepare for the meeting by familiarising themselves with the following documentation:

- [Agenda 2020](#);
- [Roadmap](#) for the development of a new Council of Europe youth sector strategy from 2020 to 2030.