

February 2012

Welcome to "Think Youth", the new monthly stakeholder newsletter of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. From now on we intend to provide the members and observers of the Joint Council on Youth and other interested partners, every first of the month, with a short update of events and developments in and around the youth sector. We hope you find this useful; feedback and suggestions will be very welcome. For return addresses and abbreviations see the end of this mail.

This first issue looks at:

- (1) The big picture: main developments
- (2) Youth Department update
- (3) Council of Europe
- (4) Other news
- (5) Publications and resources

(1) The big picture

Starting off into the year, the whole Council of Europe entered a new era: the beginning of the reformed two-year programme 2012-2013, a restructured secretariat and (for some parts, though not the youth sector) new governance bodies. In 2012 the reform of the Council of Europe will mainly proceed in areas that are probably less visible to the outside: the reform of the administration; the preparation of a new contractual policy; and staff cuts. As part of the reform drive, "our" Director of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Ms Olöf Olafsdottir, launched an internal reflection process on stronger synergies and co-operation between the Education and Youth Departments, the results of which will soon be presented to our statutory organs.

For the Youth Department, 2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the "youth sector" - which really is the 40th anniversary of the creation of the EYCS and the EYF, together with the introduction of the formalised co-management system, in 1972. Since there is no separate budget available (except for the EYF), anniversary-related

events and publications will use synergies wherever possible. This will for instance be the case for the 9th conference of youth ministers, where the achievements of the youth sector will be showcased in various formats.

On 1 February we learned that Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković will become the new Director General "Democracy" of the Council of Europe (the DDCP with the Education and Youth Departments is part of that DG). Ms Samardžić-Marković, currently Minister of Youth and Sports of Serbia, will start her new post on 1 April 2012.

At the level of the Committee of Ministers, a decision on the new composition of the Advisory Council is now expected for 15-16 February 2012. The draft CM Recommendation on the participation of children and young people, proposed by the CMJ (in co-operation with the Children's Programme), is still under review; at this stage, no estimate can be given as to the timetable of the decision-making.

On 17 January 2012, the Council of Europe and the EU signed a € 4.8 million joint programme to strengthen democratic reform in the Southern Mediterranean countries. The programme will aim to promote human rights and democratic values, working through government officials, future leaders, youth and civil society [\[link\]](#). The details are now negotiated with the governments concerned (primarily Morocco and Tunisia in the first phase). If everything goes according to plan, we will be able to inform the Joint Council in March about a substantial programme of youth-related activities, to be organised by the Youth Department in co-operation with local partners and financed mostly by the European Union. Similar options are appearing on the horizon for other countries covered by the "European Neighbourhood Policy" of the European Union, including Kazakhstan (where a meeting in December showed that the government has a strong interest to develop closer co-operation in the youth field).

(2) Youth Department update

2.1 The month of January 2012 in the Youth Department saw the meetings of the Bureaus of CDEJ and CCJ (EYCS), meeting for the last time in the "old" composition. The main item was the preparation

of the forthcoming meetings of CCJ, CDEJ and CMJ in Budapest on 28-30 March 2012. The CDEJ Bureau also discussed the preparation of the 9th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for youth (September 2012) and agreed on a shortlist of possible keynote speakers.

Other major events included an evaluation and planning meeting on the 2011 and 2012 action plans with the Russian Federation (EYCS, 21 January); the first training seminar for group C of the "Youth Peace Ambassadors" project (EYCS 21-29 January) with 25 participants; and the consultative meeting on the new project "Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line" (EYCS 30 January - 1 February), involving specialised NGOs, experts and other Council of Europe services.

The French-speaking Community of Belgium made a voluntary contribution of € 20 000 for the project "Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line". The Finnish authorities have announced a voluntary contribution of € 12 000 to the "Roma Youth Action Plan" and of € 8 000 to the project "Young People Combating Hate Speech On-line". We would like to express our gratitude to both governments.

2.2 Looking ahead, important forthcoming events include:

- the national hearing for the presentation of the youth policy review of Belgium (Brussels, 2 February), held in the presence of the three Belgian Ministers competent for youth affairs in their respective Community. The review will be presented to the CMJ at the meeting in March;
- the "Training of Trainers" seminar on human rights education (EYCB, 6-14 February), following the e-learning phase that started in October 2011;
- the training session of new AC members (EYCS 16-18 February);
- study sessions with the ALLIANCE of European Voluntary Service Organisations on the impact of voluntary programmes for the local communities (EYCS 19-26 February), with JECI-MIEC on

empowering students on human rights (EYCS 19-26 February), and with WOSM on advocacy for youth rights (EYCB 20-26 February).

Further ahead, the statutory bodies of the youth sector will meet in Budapest on 28-30 March. On 16-22 April, the expert team will make its first visit to Kyiv for the international review of the youth policy of Ukraine (the 19th such review carried out by the Council of Europe, [link](#)).

This year's "Summer University" for CDEJ and CCJ members will take place at the end of August and the beginning of September in Georgia; details will follow soon.

And of course a date to retain: the 9th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth in St Petersburg on 23-25 September 2012. Preparations are underway and will be discussed at the CDEJ, CCJ and CMJ meetings in Budapest.

2.3 On staff, you may be interested to hear that two new colleagues recently joined the team of the Youth Department: Anna Trigona, who in January took over the secretariat of the CCJ and other central tasks in the Youth Department including the youth policy reviews (incidentally, Anna was a staff member of the EYCS already back in 1980-1982), and Emma Hellyer, since February working mainly on publications and information. Natacha Turenne, on maternity leave, is currently replaced by Severina Spassova. In Budapest, Zsuzsanna Molnár, Erszébet Bánki and Gabriella Tisza are on maternity leave too, replaced by Anna Alexi, Péter Zelenka and Zita Hasenauer.

(3) Council of Europe

At its 1130th meeting on 11 January 2012, the CM gave its formal approval to the new operational regulations [\[link\]](#) of the European Youth Foundation, which integrate the changes endorsed by the CMJ at its meeting in October 2011. At the same meeting, the CM adopted a reply [\[link\]](#) to PACE Recommendation 1965 (2011) on “Education against violence at school”.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held its regular part-session on 23-27 January 2012. Mr Jean-Claude Mignon

(EPP/CD) from France was elected PACE President, taking over from Mr Mevlüt Çavusoglu (Turkey). The Assembly adopted a number of interesting resolutions and recommendations, including Recommendation 1990 (2012) [[link](#)] on "The right of everyone to take part in cultural life" which in March will be on the CMJ agenda for comments (Doc [12815](#)). Other themes discussed during this part session and relevant to the youth sector included "Demographic trends in Europe: turning challenges into opportunities" (Doc [12817](#)), "Advancing women's rights worldwide" (Doc [12812](#)), youth detention centres, youth employment, exchange schemes, youth policy, youth unemployment and youth violence (documents are available on <http://assembly.coe.int>).

The PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, which also deals with youth questions, elected Mr Gvozden Srećko Flego (Croatia) as its chair. Michael Connarty (UK) chairs the Sub-Committee on Youth and Sport.

(4) Other news

On 1 January 2012, Denmark took over the Presidency of the EU. A [Youth Conference](#) will be organised in Denmark on 18 – 21 March 2012, looking at how to foster young people's creativity, innovative capabilities and talents as means of increasing their active participation in society and their transition to employment. In her [priorities speech](#) addressed to the European Parliament on 18 January, the Danish Prime Minister said, "*What our youth demand of us is only fair: access to the same education and job opportunities that previous generations have enjoyed. A chance to contribute to their societies and to build a secure future.*"

Last December the European Commission called for immediate action to drive down youth unemployment. [[link](#)] A new 'Youth Opportunities Initiative' was adopted by the Commission, calling on member states to work on preventing early school leaving; helping youngsters develop skills relevant to the labour market; ensuring work experience and on-the-job training and helping young people find a first good job.

The OECD held a conference on youth employment (Paris, 13-14 December 2011), which was opened by OECD Secretary-General with “A Call for Change”. [\[link\]](#)

The theme “Youth taking action against hate speech in cyberspace”, proposed by the Council of Europe, was taken up for a training session during the EuroDIG meeting held in Stockholm on 18-19 January 2012. [\[link\]](#)

In the European Youth Forum, Giorgio Zecca was appointed new Policy and Advocacy Coordinator in charge of relations with the Council of Europe. [\[link\]](#)

(5) Publications and resources

"Gender matters", our manual on addressing gender-based violence affecting young people, has now been published in Russian and Spanish. [\[link\]](#)

Other useful links: <http://eycb.coe.int/compass/en/contents.html>
and
www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Publications/Publications_en.asp

Best regards

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Abbreviations:

CCJ: Advisory Council on Youth

CDEJ: European Steering Committee on Youth

CM: Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

CMJ: Joint Council on Youth

DDCP: Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the Council of Europe

DG: Directorate General

EPP: European People's Party

EuroDIG: European Dialogue on Internet Governance

EYCB: European Youth Centre Budapest

EYCS: European Youth Centre Strasbourg

EYF: European Youth Foundation

JECI-MIEC: International Young Catholic Students – International Movement of Catholics Students

PACE: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

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