

"Think Youth", the monthly stakeholder newsletter of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe was launched last month. We thank you for the encouragement and the many suggestions we have received.

The March issue looks at:

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

### **(1) The big picture**

The Council of Europe's youth sector, with its unique co-management system, is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2012. Preparations are under way for a press event launching a number of publications during the June session of the Parliamentary Assembly (June 25-29). It now has also been confirmed that the European Youth Centre Strasbourg will organise this year's "Open Doors Day" of the Council of Europe (16 September 2012). The EYF will soon be sending out PR material linked to its 40th anniversary.

On 15-16 February the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe confirmed the new members of the Advisory Council on Youth [[link](#)]. 22 of the 30 members attended the training session organised at the EYCS on 16-18 February, to help prepare them for their first meeting in Budapest on 28-30 March.

At the same meeting, the Committee of Ministers adopted the "Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2012-2015)" and took note of the (non-exhaustive) list of activities contained in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy ([document CM\(2011\)171 final](#)). The Secretary General will provide a mid-term report to the Ministers' Deputies on its implementation by January 2014.

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 consideration; the next round of discussion is scheduled for 13 March 2012.

## **(2) Youth Department update**

The national hearing on the international youth policy review of Belgium was held in Brussels on 2 February. The review will be presented to the CMJ at their meeting in March.

In the Education and Training field, a "Training of Trainers" seminar on human rights education was held at the EYCB on 6-14 February. Study sessions were held 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).

The French Community of Belgium recently made a financial contribution towards the lighting system in the leisure area of the EYCS. We thank them for this gesture.

Important forthcoming events include a follow-up meeting on the preparation of the Roma Youth Action Plan (EYCB, 12-13 March), held at the invitation of the [Open Society Foundations](#) Roma Initiative; a training seminar of the "Youth Peace Ambassadors" programme (Group B) (EYCS, 19-25 March) [[link](#)] and an evaluation and follow-up meeting of the *Enter!* project (EYCS, 1-5 April).

In March, three study sessions will be held with:

- VYRE on "The role of media on the road to social inclusion of young refugees: Hearing the Voices of Young Refugees in Europe" (EYCS, 4-10 March)
- OBESSU on "Special Needs: education, participation and social inclusion" (EYCB, 4-11 March)
- YEE on "European Environmental Law and Youth Participation" (EYCS, 4-11 March).

The [EU-CoE Youth Partnership](#) is organising a second consultative meeting of the Pool of European Youth Researchers in Brussels on 5-6 March. A seminar on the empowerment of youth organisations in the South-Mediterranean framework will be held in Malta on 22-24 March.

### **(3) Council of Europe**

A proposed [recommendation](#) from the Committee of Ministers to the member states on the access of young people to social rights will be examined by the CMJ at the meeting in March.

Current youth-related topics discussed by the PACE Committee on Culture, Science and Education's Sub-Committee on Education, Youth and Sport include youth detention centres, youth employment, youth exchange schemes and youth violence.

The PACE Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development initiated a report entitled "Young Generation Sacrificed"; The Rapporteur, Mr Luca Volontè (Italy), has been invited to address the CMJ during its meeting in Budapest on 29 March. (<http://assembly.coe.int>)

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities ([CLRAE](#)) is also preparing a report on youth, looking specifically at the reasons for their political disengagement (Rapporteur: Ms Else Ampe, Belgium). The CMJ has been invited to comment on the report, which will provide the basis of a Congress Resolution to be adopted in October.

The [Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe](#) has appointed Mr Israël Mensah, Vice President of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee, to represent it on the Advisory Council on Youth.

On 21 February 2012, the Permanent Representative of Germany to the Council of Europe informed the Secretary General of the Council of Europe of the decision taken by the German Government to discontinue its membership in the [North-South Centre](#) as from 31 December 2012.

### **(4) Other news**

Addressing the UN General Assembly on 25 January on his Five-Year Action Agenda: “[The Future We Want](#)”, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recognised the rights being demanded by young people and promised to develop an action plan “across the full range of UN programmes, including employment... entrepreneurship... political participation... human rights... education and reproductive health.” He also announced that he will “appoint a new Special Representative for youth to develop and implement our agenda and spearhead a UN youth volunteers programme.”

During the Danish EU Presidency (January to June 2012), a [Youth Conference](#) will be organised 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.

Already in December 2011, the EU has called for immediate action to drive down youth unemployment [[link](#)]. A new 'Youth Opportunities Initiative' ([document COM\(2011\)933 final](#)) was proposed 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 Commission will address the youth dimension in its country-specific recommendations to member states in May 2012.

Among many other topics, the EuroDIG conference in Stockholm on 14-15 June 2012 will take up the theme “Youth taking action against hate speech in cyberspace”, following a proposal by the Council of Europe [[link](#)].

Following the OECD conference on youth employment, a publication “[Off to a good start? Jobs for Youth](#)” has now become available.

The British Council, the UK Department of Education and the Council of Europe are preparing a youth event under the title “Listen up: young voices for democracy”, highlighting the role of youth work and young people in innovative forms of democratic participation (date and place to be decided soon).

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  
CoE: Council of Europe  
DDCP: Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the  
Council of Europe  
DG: Directorate General  
EuroDIG: European Dialogue on Internet Governance  
EYCB: European Youth Centre Budapest  
EYCS: European Youth Centre Strasbourg  
EYF: European Youth Foundation  
GR-C: Rapporteur Group on Education, Culture, Sport, Youth and  
Environment of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe  
JECI-MIEC: International Young Catholic Students – International  
Movement of Catholics Students  
OBESSU: Organising Bureau for European School Student Unions  
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
PACE: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe  
VYRE: Voices of Young Refugees in Europe  
WOSM: World Organization of the Scout Movement  
YEE: Youth and Environment Europe

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