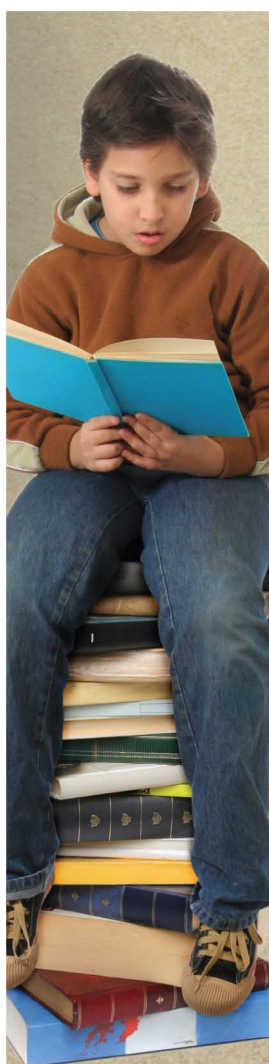


DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT
STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES **B**



Agriculture and Rural Development

Culture and Education

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Regional Development

Transport and Tourism

**THE FUTURE
ORIENTATION OF EU
YOUTH POLICY**

STUDY



DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT B: STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF EU YOUTH POLICY

STUDY

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education.

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DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT B: STRUCTURAL AND COHESION POLICIES

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF EU YOUTH POLICY

STUDY

Abstract

The EC Communication “A EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering”, published in April 2009, presents the Commission's strategy for the future of policies for youth in Europe. It anticipated the adoption of a new framework of cooperation in the field of youth by the Council in November 2009.

This study presents Deloitte's analysis of the EU Youth Policy and provides recommendations for the next steps of its development.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	3
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1. GENERAL BACKGROUND	11
2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU'S YOUTH POLICY	12
2.1. Legal basis	12
2.2. Latest policy developments	12
3. OVERALL APPROACH AND SPECIFIC PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES	15
3.1. Appropriateness of the cross-sector approach	15
3.2. Feasibility and challenges	16
3.3. Findings	17
3.3.1. Policy fields	17
3.3.2. Implementation tools and mechanisms	17
4. CLARITY OF THE FRAMEWORK AND FUNCTIONING OF THE OMC	19
4.1. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC)	19
4.2. Specificities and challenges of the OMC in the youth field	20
4.3. Our findings	21
4.3.1. Clarity of the objectives	21
4.3.2. Member States' contribution and transparency	21
5. PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EU POLICIES (THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE)	23
5.1. From Participation to Dialogue	23
5.2. Challenges of the Structured Dialogue	23
5.3. Our findings	24
5.3.1. Effectively reaching young people	24
5.3.2. Prioritise the Structured Dialogue	25
6. COMPARATIVE DATA AND RESEARCH ON YOUTH	27
6.1. Introduction and Background	27
6.2. Challenges and issues	28
6.3. Our findings	28

6.3.1. Good practice and dissemination of research results	28
6.3.2. Availability of data and indicators	29
6.3.3. Support to research	29
7. CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN THE LISBON TREATY	31
8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	33
ANNEX 1: Key events in Youth Policy development in Europe 1988-2009	35
ANNEX 2: Evolution of Youth-related articles in the Treaty establishing the European Community and subsequent Treaties	37

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSWD	Commission Staff Working Document
DG EAC	Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture
DG EMPL	Commission Directorate Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
DG ENTR	Commission Directorate Enterprise and Industry
DG INFO	Commission Directorate Information Society and Media
DG SANCO	Commission Directorate for Health and Consumers
DG RELEX	Commission Directorate External Relations
DG DEV	Commission Directorate Development
EEE	European Employment Strategy
EKCYP	European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy
EU	European Union
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
YFJ	Youth Forum Jeunesse

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Commission published the Communication “A EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” on 27 April 2009. The Communication presents the Commission’s strategy for the future of policies for youth in Europe. It aims to “create favourable conditions for youth to develop their skills, fulfil their potential, work, actively participate in society, and engage more in the building of the EU project”¹. The new framework of cooperation in the field of youth was adopted by the Council in November 2009.

The 2009 Communication encourages a cross-sector approach to addressing youth-related issues. This cross-sector approach implies mainstreaming youth concerns, i.e. taking account of the youth dimension in other policy initiatives. At European level, this approach has been developed in a number of fields, such as non-discrimination since 2002 and health since 2008. At national level, some Member States already display good examples of effective mainstreaming youth-related initiatives².

However, the Communication was criticised for its lack of practical concrete proposals on how this cross-sector approach should be implemented.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the cross-sector dimension of Youth policy, **several differentiated priority levels should be defined to set the objectives of the cross-sector approach.** The initiative regarding implementation tools and mechanisms should come from National Youth Councils, with the support of Member States. The role of the European Commission should be to ensure consistency and effectiveness of the tools, as well as monitoring and coordinating good practice.

In addition to the cross-sector approach, the framework of European cooperation in the youth aims to apply the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) to the specific priorities of the Youth field. The objectives of the current OMC in the field of Youth were agreed by Member States in the Youth Cooperation Framework of June 2002. The Member States agreed on 14 common objectives, committed to implement them at national level and to report to the Commission on progress made.

However, the impact of the OMC has been criticised, in particular for failing to set common targets and benchmarks and to coordinate national action plans at European level.

To be more effective, the OMC should **focus on a limited number of well-defined objectives.** Moreover, **peer learning should be further developed as a means to facilitate the exchange of good practice, encourage compliance with reporting requirements and contribute to consistency of the actions taken at national level.** **A common structure for the national reports should also be developed to provide Member States with a list of common indicators.**

¹ European Commission, Communication “A EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” of 27 April 2009, COM(2009)200.

² CSWD (Commission Staff Working Document) “Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth” of 27 April 2009, SEC(2009)548.

The success of the OMC is closely linked to the participation and the existence of a Structured Dialogue in the Youth field. Dialogue implies that public institutions and policy makers (at all levels), discuss relevant topics with young people before taking decisions. The Structured Dialogue was initiated in 2006 as a forum for continuous joint reflection on European cooperation in the Youth field.

The Communication itself states that the Structured Dialogue could be improved, particularly with regard to support for youth organisations and promoting youth participation in representative democracy. A specific objective of the Communication is to attract unorganised or disadvantaged young people. Young people should be well informed about any policy decision that might affect them. **In order to increase information as well as participation in both qualitative and quantitative terms, young people should be provided with diverse opportunities to participate (including with the support of new technologies).**

The Structured Dialogue should focus on priority areas pre-identified through an open consultation. Priority areas should be agreed in the Framework of the Structured Dialogue on a regular basis, with the right of initiative available to all young people involved. Planning will also contribute to ensuring the continuity of the Dialogue. **The European and national parliaments should also play a more important role in linking to young people.**

Encouraging greater understanding and knowledge of youth issues is one of the four priorities of the current OMC. Research and data collection in the youth field is mainly carried out in the framework of the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

At the request of the Council, the Commission also published the “EU Youth Report” in 2009, compiling ten years of data and statistics about youth in Europe gathered by Eurostat. The report is more descriptive than analytical but, according to the Commission, future reports will combine provision of data and analysis leading to conclusions and recommendations for policymakers. In parallel, the Commission published an analysis of the national reports from the Member States concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth³.

However, the progress rate in research in the youth field is largely limited to European level and difficulties remain at national level in most Member States. This is an example of the way in which ***diversity of the situation in EU Member States remains a major obstacle to reaching the three common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth***⁴.

Good communication around youth research should be encouraged. Existing tools such as the EKCYP (European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy) portal and EUNYK (European Network of Youth Knowledge) are in a very good position to support the future of evidence-based policy-making. Compliance with reporting requirements and peer

³ CSWD “Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth

learning should be strongly encouraged. **The current research-oriented dynamic should be encouraged for Member States active in research and further developed in other, with the support of European programmes.**

The **Lisbon Treaty**, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, extends the scope of Community Action in the youth field to ***“encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe”***. Another important change included in the Treaty is the explicit competence for the EU to carry out ***supporting, coordinating or complementary action*** in the field of youth.

The Treaty also gives legal force to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which includes an article on the rights of children (Article 24) and on prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work (Article 32).

Additionally, the Lisbon Treaty envisages setting up a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps with the aim of structuring the involvement of young Europeans in the humanitarian aid operations of the Union; and extending Community competence to the sport field, with a special focus on “the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen.”

⁴ CSWD “Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth”, SEC(2004) 627 final.

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

In order to become and remain the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion", Europe should rely on tomorrow's labour force and decision makers. Although young people have greater opportunities today than in the past 20 years, they also face challenges, such as the current crisis, which has worsened the economic situation of many young people. The youth unemployment rate in the EU27 was 19.8% in August 2009, compared to 15.5% in August 2008⁵. Young people will also bear the consequences of an ageing population and today's economic and financial, geopolitical and environmental decisions.

The current framework for European co-operation in the field of youth (hereafter referred to as 'Youth Cooperation Framework') was established in June 2002 and complemented in 2005 by the European Youth Pact. The current Youth Cooperation Framework has three pillars:

- Open Method of Coordination (OMC);
- European Youth Pact;
- Mainstreaming activities.

The OMC's contribution to the implementation of the common objective for greater understanding and better knowledge of the situation of young people⁶, as well as the whole framework for cooperation in youth policy⁷ were evaluated this year on the basis of input presented by Member States in their national reports. **The current cycle of the OMC ends in 2009.**

The European Commission published the *Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering"* on 27 April 2009. The Communication presents the Commission's strategy for the future of policies for youth in Europe. It aims to "*create favourable conditions for youth to develop their skills, fulfil their potential, work, actively participate in society, and engage more in the building of the EU project*"⁸. **The new framework of cooperation in the field of youth was adopted by the Council in November 2009.**

In this context, this short study aims to provide the European Parliament with independent analysis and insight on the Youth Cooperation Framework.

⁵ Eurostat, October 2009 (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-01102009-AP/EN/3-01102009-AP-EN.PDF).

⁶ CSWD "Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth" of 27 April 2009, SEC(2009)548.

⁷ ECOTEC research and Consulting Ltd., "Evaluation of the European Commission framework for cooperation in youth policy – A Report to DG EAC under the Framework Contract on Evaluation, Impact Assessment and related Services", 2009.

⁸ European Commission, Communication "A EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering" of 27 April 2009, COM(2009)200.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU'S YOUTH POLICY

2.1. Legal basis

Youth was explicitly introduced as part of EU policy in the 1990s with the *Treaty of Maastricht*⁹. Youth policy falls under the subsidiarity principle and is the basic responsibility of the Member States. Consequently, the European Commission can invite or encourage Member States to follow specific directions. The majority of youth-related reference documents are Commission Communications, which are discussed and endorsed by the Council of Ministers representing the Member States.

2.2. Latest policy developments

The most important event launching the European debate in the youth field was the publication of the Commission's *White Paper "A new impetus for European Youth" in 2001*. The 2001 White Paper was published following a broad consultation of young people, youth organisations, researchers and public authorities. A clear objective of the White Paper was to **improve participation of young people in European public life and encourage them to become active citizens**. The White Paper aimed to promote a **new form of governance for youth**, as requested by the Commission White Paper on Governance, adopted in July 2001¹⁰. It proposed a new framework for cooperation based on two principles: **improving cooperation between Member States in support of active citizenship** (including participation, information, volunteering and understanding and knowledge of youth) **and better integrating of youth issues and concerns into other policies**. The Council later adopted a Resolution regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field¹¹.

In 2005, the European Commission published a Communication proposing the *European Youth Pact*¹². The main aim was to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans, while facilitating the reconciliation of family and working life. Overall, **the European Youth Pact linked with the Lisbon strategy priorities**. The Commission was also seeking **consistency of initiatives in these different areas**, and wanted the Member States to consult young people when developing and implementing relevant initiatives.

In the same spirit, the 2009 Communication *"An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering"*¹³ proposes a **new framework** for the policy developed following the 2001 White Paper¹⁴. The recent Communication was published together with four Commission

⁹ The Treaty on European Union (Treaty of Maastricht) was signed in Maastricht on 7 February 1992 and entered into force on 1 November 1993.

¹⁰ European Commission White Paper "European Governance – A White Paper" COM(2001) 428 of 25 July 2001

¹¹ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [Official Journal C 168 of 13.07.2002].

¹² Communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth "Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe - implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship" of 30 May 2005 (COM(2005) 206 final)

¹³ European Commission Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities" COM(2009) 200 final of 27 April 2009

¹⁴ European Commission White Paper "A new impetus for European Youth" COM(2001) 681 final of 21 November 2001.

Staff Working Documents, including an Impact Assessment, an analysis of national reports from the Member States concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth, and the European Youth Report, compiling ten years of data and statistics about the situation of young people in Europe.

Community support programmes

Youth actions have been supported by the EC funds since 1988 when the “Youth for Europe” Programme was launched. The programme supported actions such as Intra-Community activities directly involving young people (Youth exchanges and mobility), Youth workers, Co-operation between Member States’ structures, Third country exchanges, and Information for young people and youth research. The programme acquired an additional dimension with the launch of the **European Voluntary Service** in 1998. In 2000 the **“Youth” Community Action Programme** was established, bringing together the **Youth Programme** (2000-2006), successor of the Youth for Europe Programme, incorporating the **European Voluntary Service Programme** and a new programme (**Euro-Med Youth**) involving Euro-Mediterranean partner countries, taking forward actions that had been carried out at European level since 1992. The Youth Programme also includes Youth initiatives, Joint actions undertaken with other Community programmes and support measures.

Cooperation with the Council of Europe¹⁵

The basis for co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission is a **Joint Partnership Agreement between both institutions concluded in 1987**. The agreement covered the wider field of promoting a pluralist democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as well as co-operation in education and culture.

The first concrete manifestation of the Partnership was an agreement (Covenant) focusing on the qualification and further education of youth workers and youth leaders as well as quality assurance in youth services. This covenant “European Youth Worker and Youth Leader Training” was complemented in 2003 by two further covenants, addressing “Euro-Mediterranean youth co-operation” and “Youth Research”.

In 2005, a Single Partnership Agreement was signed with the aim of providing a lasting framework for the joint development of a coherent strategy in the field of youth worker training, youth policy and youth research. The objectives of the partnership were to foster co-operation, complementarity and synergies, enhance impact on youth related policies and activities in Europe and beyond. The current Partnership Agreement covers the period 1 January 2007 – 31 December 2009, and the Commission and Council of Europe intend to continue the partnership beyond this period. The virtual European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP), which aims to provide the youth field with an entry point to access knowledge and information on the realities of youth across Europe, was also created under the partnership.

A table in annex shows the key events in Youth Policy development in Europe 1988-2009.

¹⁵ Source: Youth Partnership website.

3. OVERALL APPROACH AND SPECIFIC PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The 2009 Communication encourages a **cross-sector approach** to addressing youth-related issues. This approach implies **mainstreaming youth concerns**, i.e. taking account of the youth dimension in other policy initiatives.

3.1. Appropriateness of the cross-sector approach

The cross-sector approach implies mainstreaming youth concerns across other policies both at EU and at national level. The 2001 White Paper on Youth proposed a mainstreaming approach for “taking better account of the ‘youth’ dimension in other policy initiatives”.

In the 2009 Communication, the Commission states “Youth policy cannot advance without effective coordination with other sectors”. This approach is central to the Communication. Youth issues are relevant for policies including research, education, training, Internet access and on-line business. They are also concerned by reform of Europe's social protection systems, which must be made sustainable so that their benefits can be enjoyed by future generations. The European Youth policy is also closely linked to culture, citizenship, sport, health and regional matters. The fields of action cover Commission Directorates General EAC, EMPL, ENTR, INFSO, SANCO, RELEX and DEV¹⁶. However, other DGs have also developed youth-related initiatives¹⁷.

The success of mainstreaming approaches often depends on the depth and quality of dialogue between units and DGs involved in charge of sectors that are relevant to youth policy activities. The Communication calls for more internal coordination within the Commission, through inter-service groups, and within the Council between different Council formations.

The Impact Assessment¹⁸ published together with the Communication shows the positive results of pilot mainstreaming activities organised at European level. The Commission states that mainstreaming activities related to the fight against discrimination have been characterised by a strong youth involvement in European campaigns (for instance ‘For Diversity-Against Discrimination’¹⁹ or ‘All different, all equal’²⁰) and that the growing youth dimension of health strategies is very promising.

¹⁶ Directorates General EAC (Education and Culture), EMPL (Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities), ENTR (Enterprise and Industry), INFSO (Information Society), SANCO (Health and Consumers), RELEX (External relations) and DEV (Development).

¹⁷ For example DG AGRI's investment aid for young farmers; DG ENVI's “Environment for young Europeans” initiative, aiming to raise young people's awareness about environmental issues (air, waste, water and nature); DG RTD's 2009 report “European research on Youth – Supporting young people to participate fully in society”.

¹⁸ European Commission, “Impact Assessment” - CSWD accompanying the Communication “A EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” of 27 April 2009, SEC(2009)545.

¹⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=451&furtherNews=yes>

²⁰ <http://alldifferent-allegal.info/>

At national level, some Member States display good examples of effective mainstreaming youth-related initiatives²¹. In most cases, actions are coordinated by a single reference point, which ensures both consistency and visibility of youth-related initiatives.

The need for more recognition of the cross-sector nature of youth policy was also illustrated in the Parliament's 2008 Written Declaration on devoting more attention to youth empowerment in EU policies²². In this document, the Parliament *"calls on the Member States to focus on youth when implementing the Lisbon Strategy and to take youth into account in the relevant policy fields"*. This written declaration was strongly influenced by YFJ (Youth Forum Jeunesse), which reiterated the position in its reaction to the 2009 Communication. In this document, YFJ welcomed the importance given to the cross-sector approach in the new framework, qualifying it as *"the only sustainable way to answer the needs of young people and give them the means to be active citizens and ensure their autonomy"*.

3.2. Feasibility and challenges

Apart from needing stakeholders' support, the feasibility of the cross-sector and mainstreaming approach depends on the capacity of the framework to ensure sufficient coordination, visibility and recognition of the actions taken. **How to achieve the objectives set remains a challenge, and the Commissions' communication has been criticised for its lack of practical concrete proposals on how this cross-sector approach should be implemented.** In its "Reaction to the Commission Communication"²³, the YFJ criticised the Communication's failure to propose structural reforms to support the cross-sector approach.

The Commission responded by saying that the Communication was intentionally open to concrete proposals from the Youth organisations and invited them to propose specific tools.

The YFJ intervened further with its call in its statement "Strengthening Civil Society Dialogue with the European Union - European Civil Society Call for a Strong Youth Agenda"²⁴. The YFJ recognises that the Communication met some expectations, in particular by introducing the principle of a cross-sector approach, but still calls for a ***"true cross-sector strategy accompanied by adequate co-operation and implementation mechanisms"*** and proposes concrete actions.

The YFJ document includes the following recommendations:

- Setting specific objectives and applying implementation tools to each field of action identified with a focus on the needs of young people;

²¹ CSWD "Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth" of 27 April 2009, SEC(2009)548

²² European Parliament Declaration on devoting more attention to youth empowerment in EU policies, 24 July 2008

²³ http://www.youthforum.org/en/system/files/yfj_public/strategic_priorities/en/0483-09_YFJ_Reaction_to_the_EU_Strategy_for_Youth.pdf

²⁴ http://www.youthforum.org/en/system/files/yfj_public/institutional_relations/en/0707-09%20CSO%20Statement%20New%20EU%20Youth%20Strategy.pdf

- **Providing youth policies with the means for a cross-sector approach** at all levels and encouraging the institutions to create effective institutional mechanisms to tackle the cross-sector dimension of youth policies.

At national level, mainstreaming not only depends on the goodwill of the National Youth Councils, but also on the level of governmental support to the Ministry in charge of Youth. This clearly influences the chances for Youth stakeholders, including policy-makers, to secure the attention of the other key line ministries.

3.3. Findings

3.3.1. Policy fields

As explained above, the cross-sector approach focuses on eight policy fields identified as particularly relevant to Youth policy. Selecting a limited number of priority policy fields is appropriate in the sense that a more extensive approach would limit the effectiveness of the cross-sector approach. However, limiting the cross-sector approach to eight policy fields tends to **exclude other policies that are also closely linked to youth policies**. Furthermore, it is not clear how the approach can even effectively cover eight policy fields, let alone more.

Therefore, we recommend the definition of several priority levels. The first priority level should focus on a very limited number of specific sub-areas that are of particular importance to Youth (and should be specific sub-areas of education and employment policy). The second priority area would include the current priority policy fields (education, research, employment, etc.). The third priority level should include all other policies, where monitoring of activities should take place to ensure that Youth-relevant needs and concerns do not remain unnoticed.

3.3.2. Implementation tools and mechanisms

We acknowledge the need for both specific objectives and implementation means. However, the Commission's area for action here is limited by the subsidiarity principle. The necessary actions cannot be taken at Community level without strong commitment by Member States.

Additionally, to take into account the specificities of each Member State and promote active citizenship and participation, National Youth Councils should be invited to take the initiative and propose tools and mechanisms which they believe to be appropriate.

The European Commission should provide support to Member States and in particular National Youth Councils in the whole process, and ensure consistency and effectiveness of the tools, as well as monitoring and coordinating good practice.

4. CLARITY OF THE FRAMEWORK AND FUNCTIONING OF THE OMC

4.1. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC)

The framework of European cooperation in the youth field has two complementary pillars:

- applying the OMC to the specific priorities of the youth field;
- taking better account of the youth dimension in other policies.

The OMC in the youth field is inspired by the Employment policy, as described below.

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC)

The OMC was created as part of the so-called Luxembourg process in November 1997 in the context of the European Employment Strategy (EES).

The 2001 White Paper on Governance²⁵ underlines that the OMC offers ways of encouraging cooperation, the exchange of best practice and agreeing common targets and guidelines for Member States. It relies on regular monitoring of progress to meet those targets, allowing Member States to compare their efforts and learn from the experience of others”.

The OMC aims to create a balance between the responsibility of the Community and that of the Member States. It establishes quantified common targets to be achieved at Community level, and puts into place Community-level surveillance encouraged by pooling experience.

According to the Europa Glossary, “the OMC provides a new framework for cooperation between the Member States, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives. Under this intergovernmental method, the Member States are evaluated by one another (peer pressure), with the Commission's role being limited to surveillance.”²⁶

The OMC is currently applied in areas where it is seen as an effective complement to or a substitute for Community legislation, such as employment, social protection, social inclusion, education, youth and training.²⁷

The 2001 Youth White Paper introduced the concept of OMC as a means to improve cooperation between Member States. The objectives of the current OMC in the field of Youth were agreed by Member States in the Youth Cooperation Framework of June 2002. The framework included the four priority themes for cooperation proposed in the 2001 White Paper (participation, information, volunteering and understanding and knowledge), complemented by a set of common objectives per priority. The Member States agreed on

²⁵ “European Governance – A White Paper” of 25 July 2001, COM(2001) 428.

²⁶ Europa Glossary (www.europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/open_method_coordination_en.htm)

²⁷ Europa Glossary:

(www.europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/community_employment_policies/c113_18_en.htm)

14 common objectives, committed to implement them at national level and to report to the Commission on progress made.

While the formal Communication itself remains evasive on how to improve the OMC, **the Impact Assessment published to accompany the Communication further develops the policy option of reinforcing the OMC**, giving priority to improving the active citizenship of young people in Europe and keeping the mechanisms for mainstreaming youth issues in other policies as they are now. It proposes concrete tools including a reinforced structured dialogue (see Section 5), Additional data and research, and youth researchers' networking (see section 6). In addition, the Impact Assessment proposes:

- Further developed **peer learning processes**: The Communication proposes to develop peer learning, possibly through clusters of Member States (e.g. meetings of experts at technical level) or high-level seminars. Activities are proposed in the fields of 'Cross-sectoral Cooperation' (2010), 'Youth Work' (2011), 'Youth Volunteering' (2012), 'Youth Health' and 'Creativity' (2012); and
- **Development of indicators** to underpin monitoring tools, triennial presentation and discussion of Commission/Council joint reports, based on national reports, to feed the triennial evaluation of the Framework and adjustments if necessary.

4.2. Specificities and challenges of the OMC in the youth field

Even if there is a consensus about the general benefits of the OMC for Youth policies in Europe, many deficiencies have been highlighted in the last years. According to stakeholders, the OMC initially put in place in 2001 **failed to set common targets and benchmarks and to coordinate national action plans at European level**.

The Evaluation of the framework for cooperation in youth policy²⁸, based on views and findings presented by Member States in their national reports, and published in February 2009, shows that weaknesses of the OMC include a risk of weakening the policy (by adopting the "lowest common denominator"), **lack of transparency and lack of clarity of the objectives**.

The evaluation recommended that the **OMC questionnaires and reports should be more transparent and comparable**. This recommendation is in line with the YFJ's 'Reaction to the Commission Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering"'²⁹, in which the YFJ deplored the fact that the renewed OMC failed to explicitly address concerns about youth challenges and opportunities identified earlier by the YFJ. A study carried out in 2006³⁰ criticised the fact that **Member States do not fully implement the common objectives and contribute to monitoring activities**. In particular, even if Member States agreed to comply with reporting requirements which

²⁸ ECOTEC research and Consulting Ltd., "Evaluation of the European Commission framework for cooperation in youth policy – A Report to DG EAC under the Framework Contract on Evaluation, Impact Assessment and related Services", 2009.

²⁹ European Youth Forum, 8 May 2009 (http://www.youthforum.org/en/system/files/yfj_public/strategic_priorities/en/0483-09_YFJ_Reaction_to_the_EU_Strategy_for_Youth.pdf)

³⁰ Nina Rahja and Anna Sell. Evaluation Study of Open Method of Coordination in the Youth Field, European Youth Forum, 2006 (http://www.youthforum.org/Downloads/Press_publications/reports/OMC_final.pdf)

regard national reports, in reality only a minority of reports are submitted on time³¹, which hampers the Commission's capacity to evaluate the progress made by Member States.

4.3. Our findings

4.3.1. Clarity of the objectives

As regards the clarity of objectives, securing a real consensus among Member States seems to be the best way to improve the OMC. These objectives have to be better selected (a limited number of achievable objectives) and further specified (more explicit objectives). **Focusing on a limited number of well-defined objectives would improve the effectiveness of the OMC.**

4.3.2. Member States' contribution and transparency

As regards the disparities in participation between Member States, peer learning would facilitate the exchange of good practice, encourage compliance with reporting requirements and contribute to consistency of the actions taken at national level. The proposed thematic cluster meetings and high-level seminars should be complemented by continuous peer learning and training, which could fall under the activities of the Youth Partnership with the Council of Europe. In order to ensure dissemination of the cluster meetings' results, an online tool could be developed, on the model of the Knowledge System for LifeLong Learning³² in the field of education and training.

With a view to facilitating evidence-based policy-making, **the Communication's proposals for:**

- **the design of a dashboard monitoring and revising existing indicators and benchmarks concerning youth in education, employment, inclusion and health; and**
- the opportunity to set up **realistic indicators** (taking into account their relevance for the analysis and the data collection process, which should not be too burdensome) for the selected priority areas should be supported, as they would also impact on monitoring progress made by Member States.

In order to encourage compliance with the reporting requirements, a clear role for National Youth Councils could be built in to the process. They are likely to exert pressure on Member States to compile and submit reports, as well as contributing to the content themselves.

A common structure for the national reports should be further developed in order to provide Member States with a list of common indicators. The use of common indicators would facilitate reporting at national level and provide the European Commission with comparable data, allowing analysis, conclusion and recommendations from national reports. With such indicators, the activities covered by the OMC would also gain in precision.

³¹ ECOTEC, Final External Evaluation of the YOUTH Community Action Programme 2000-2006, Annex C about Timing and availability of the national reports: "In practice, at time of the deadline, only one-third of the national reports were received by the EC".

³² <http://www.kslll.net/>

5. PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EU POLICIES (THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE)

5.1. From Participation to Dialogue

Encouraging participation of young people in the political process and in civil society has been an objective of EU cooperation in the youth field since the 2001 White Paper. **Encouraging participation means creating incentives for young people to feel involved and to become actors of the world they live in.**

The Glossary of the Youth Partnership refers to participation as "power based on the possibility of exerting influence on the economic and social aspects of life in the broad community". This broad definition does not identify what is included in this concept in the context of European Youth policy. Voting in an election is considered participation, but abstention, which can be seen as an alternative way of participating, is often viewed as non-participation.

In the context of Youth policy, participation is closely linked to the existence of a Structured Dialogue with young people and their organisations. **Dialogue implies that public institutions and policy makers (at all levels), discuss relevant topics with young people before taking decisions.** The Structured Dialogue takes place both at European level (through Youth events organised by the EU Presidencies, European Youth Weeks, so-called "Informal Fora" involving Presidencies, European Commission, European Parliament and young people) and in Member States.

5.2. Challenges of the Structured Dialogue

The Communication itself states that the Structured Dialogue could be improved, particularly regarding support for youth organisations, participation in representative democracy and providing an opportunity for youth to 'learn to participate'. The Communication also encourages policy-makers to adapt the way they communicate to young people in line with the **specific objective of the Communication to attract unorganised or disadvantaged young people.** However, the Communication does not propose any specific actions on how to reach young people more effectively.

In its reaction to the 2009 Communication³³, the Youth Forum states that it does not fully address the main concerns expressed by the YFJ throughout the past years. On top of the formal acknowledgement of the role of young people in the public and private spheres, **YFJ would like the principle of participation to underpin the entire cooperation Framework.** The YFJ³⁴ follows the **call for openness and diversity** by inviting Youth organisations at all levels to *"take the responsibility to reach out to more, and more diverse, young people in the dialogue and to play an important role in empowering young*

³³ http://www.youthforum.org/en/system/files/yfj_public/strategic_priorities/en/0483-09_YFJ_Reaction_to_the_EU_Strategy_for_Youth.pdf

³⁴ YFJ contribution to the Council Resolution on an EU Strategy for Youth - *Presentation to the Youth Working Party on 13 July 2009.*

*people **with fewer opportunities** to take part in the dialogue, thus ensuring a broad bottom-up approach."*

More recently, in its contribution to the Council's resolution³⁵ and a speech at the Swedish Presidency Conference on the Future of Youth Policy in Europe, the YFJ focused on continuity of the Dialogue, proposing a set of main principles and guidelines. The YFS proposal foresees a **solid structure to monitor progress in participation and evaluate actions taken to improve participation. Planning (priorities and timing) should be decided jointly and sufficiently in advance to enable the gathering of input from the local up to European level.**

5.3. Our findings

5.3.1. Effectively reaching young people

Apart from securing more input from the field, **reaching out to more young people will have an impact on the representativeness and legitimacy of the decisions taken.** The success of the Dialogue depends largely on the input collected at local level which is in turn dependent on **the local level receiving the information required to take full benefit of the participation opportunity.** However, the local dimension of Youth Policy was largely left out of both the 2009 Communication and the debate that followed its publication.

Information is a key element of participation. In order to make sure that young people have the opportunity to participate, they should be well informed about any policy decision that might affect them. The Commission has established information and communication networks, whose objective is to act as an interface between the EU and its citizens at local level (Europe Direct Relays) and to provide high quality information and advice concerning Europe to young people and those who work with them (Eurodesk). In order to ensure that information reaches young people and thus contribute to encouraging participation, youth organisations should work closely with these information networks.

The European and national parliaments are also natural agents for linking to young people. It is likely that an intergroup on Youth will be established by the newly elected EP. However, given that the purpose of the Structured Dialogue is to link the implementers of youth policies to young people, it is normal that parliamentarians should play a role of independent and critical observers, particularly of the Commission and Member State authorities, rather than that they be included in the formal Dialogue as such. It would be entirely natural for the parliaments to hold their respective ministers/Commissioners and officials to account for the work they are doing for young people – and for the parliaments to have separate frameworks for discussing and consulting with young people's representatives.

Moreover, diversity in the opportunities to participate will contribute to increase participation in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Prior to the publication of the 2009 Communication, there was little compiled data about the numbers of young people participating in civic and public life. However, the EU Youth Report accompanying the

³⁵ YFJ contribution to the Council Resolution on an EU Strategy for Youth - *Presentation to the Youth Working Party on 13 July 2009.*

Communication³⁶ sheds some light on the subject. Youth policies should also bear in mind that participation can be enhanced by other means besides the structured dialogue.

5.3.2. Prioritise the Structured Dialogue

One could be tempted to encourage the Structured Dialogue in all policy areas. This is one of the key messages from the Stockholm Conference on Future EU Cooperation in the Youth field³⁷: *“A Youth perspective has to be mainstreamed into all political and civic processes. We call for structured dialogue with young people on all levels and dimensions”*.

The Structured Dialogue should focus on priority areas pre-identified through an open consultation. Focusing on priority areas of intervention will also ensure that youth participation is well targeted and well prepared. Priority areas should be agreed in the Framework of the Structured Dialogue on a regular basis, with the right of initiative available to all young people involved.

An effective Structured Dialogue implies permanent and regular dialogue with young people. Planning will contribute to ensuring the continuity of the Dialogue. Initiatives such as common policy themes for Presidency Teams should be generalised.

³⁶ European Commission, “EU Youth Report”, CSWD accompanying the Communication “A EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” of 27 April 2009.

³⁷ Key messages of the Conference on the Future EU Cooperation in the Youth Field, 12-14 September 2009 in Stockholm, Sweden:
http://www.se2009.eu/polopoly_fs/1.14974!menu/standard/file/Outcome%20from%20workshop.pdf

6. COMPARATIVE DATA AND RESEARCH ON YOUTH

6.1. Introduction and Background

Encouraging greater understanding and knowledge of youth issues is one of the four priorities of the current OMC in the field of youth. This area covers four activities, including stocktaking of existing knowledge in current and potential priority areas of the youth field; facilitating data collection, analysis, update and access to it; ensuring quality, comparability and relevance of knowledge; and facilitating exchange, dialogue and networks³⁸.

Research and data collection in the youth field is mainly carried out in the framework of the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. In the last 20 years, the Council of Europe and the European Commission have established and consolidated a partnership with the aim to structure the joint development of a coherent strategy in the field of youth worker training, youth policy and youth research. In the framework of the Youth Partnership, the virtual European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) provides a single access point to knowledge and information on the youth in Europe. The EKCYP promotes evidence-based policymaking and practice and enhances the exchange of information and dialogue in the youth field. The added value of the partnership is the link created between policy, research and training, communication, including sharing good practice and networking, and the overall consistency.

At the request of the Council, the Commission also published the “EU Youth Report”, in which compiles ten years of data and statistics about youth in Europe gathered by Eurostat. This report provides an overview of the situation of young people in Europe and is seen as the first step of a continuous process that will feature a triennial statistical report on youth in the European Union. The 2009 report is more descriptive than analytical but, according to the Commission, future reports will combine provision of data and analysis leading to conclusions and recommendations for policy-makers.

In parallel, the Commission published an analysis of the national reports from the Member States concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth³⁹. The report showed that Member States blame the difficulties to reach these common objectives on the absence of adequate cross-sector cooperation on youth issues (see section 3) and on the lack of reliable and comparable data. Concerning this last point, the situation has evolved since the Communication was published, as two major publications have added to the stock of relevant research.

DG Research’s “European research on Youth – Supporting young people to participate fully in society”⁴⁰, funded under the Seventh Research Framework Programme, contributes to improve comparative data and research on youth in several ways. First, it takes stock of 25 relevant projects funded under the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Framework Programmes that focus on young people’s participation in society. Through publicising

³⁸ European Commission, “Impact Assessment” - CSWD accompanying the Communication “A EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering” of 27 April 2009, SEC(2009)545.

³⁹ CSWD “Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth.

⁴⁰ DG research “European research on Youth – Supporting young people to participate fully in society”, 2009.

these projects, the report increases the chances of exploitation of the research outcomes and their use for further research and at the same time diminishes the risks of “reinventing the wheel”. Second, it provides policy makers with recommendations on how to use the research, and thus promotes the use of scientific evidence in policymaking.

6.2. Challenges and issues

Some of the key requirements for ensuring effective **evidence-based policy-making** have been addressed by the Commission through its analysis of the state of the art of youth research in Europe and its committing to collecting data at European level on a triennial basis.

The activities described above show that **significant research work has been carried out in the youth field in the past 20 years**, and that recent efforts to make the existing data and statistics consistent will influence positively on the quality of research itself and its value for policy-making in the future. **However, this relative success of research in the youth field is limited to European level and difficulties remain at national level in most Member States.**

The analysis of the national reports from the Member States concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth show **that diversity of the situation in EU Member States remains a major obstacle to reaching the three common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth**⁴¹. Recommendations include focusing on the identification of priority topics for youth research, the creation of networks, dissemination of research results, setting priorities for research funding, establishing common indicators at European level and greater use of existing tools such as EKCYP and Eurydice.

6.3. Our findings

6.3.1. Good practice and dissemination of research results

Based on our conclusions about transparency of the OMC, we believe that sharing and promoting research results would contribute to further developing research in Member States. This would also ensure consistency and non-duplication of research projects. Dissemination of good practice should be complemented by researcher networking and peer learning.

Moreover, we believe that the European Commission should ensure good communication around youth research with the help of existing tools. The existing EKCYP portal and the EUNYK Network are in a very good position to support the future of evidence-based policy-making.

⁴¹ CSWD “Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth”, SEC(2004) 627 final

6.3.2. Availability of data and indicators

Encouraging compliance with reporting requirements would also contribute to developing research on youth. Peer learning would contribute to improving compliance with reporting requirements.

With a view to ease evidence-based policy-making, the Communication's proposal for a dashboard taking stock of and revising existing indicators and benchmarks and the opportunity to set up indicators for the priority areas should be supported. It would also contribute to monitoring the progress made by Member States. Commission should define these common indicators in consultation with Member States and with the support of experts in order to ensure consistency with OECD and UN statistical activities.

A common structure for the national reports would facilitate reporting at national level and provide the European Commission with comparable data, allowing for analysis, conclusions and recommendations from national reports.

6.3.3. Support to research

The current research-oriented dynamic should be encouraged for Member States active in research and further developed in others, with the support of European programmes.

7. CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN THE LISBON TREATY

As explained above, Youth as a concept was introduced into EU law with the **Treaty of Maastricht** and is strongly influenced by subsidiarity considerations.

Annex 1 presents the evolution of Youth-related articles in the Treaty establishing the European Community, and subsequent Treaties.

Since the Treaty of Maastricht, encouraging the mobility of young people, including young trainees, youth workers and young workers has been an explicit objective of Community action. In practice, the European Commission has been active with the publication of the White Paper and subsequent Communications and in the design and implementation of youth related programmes.

The **Lisbon Treaty** extends the scope of Community Action in the youth field to “**encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe**”. This extension is in line with the policy developments that occurred since the 2001 White Paper and reflects the inclusion of participation as a priority within youth policy. However, encouraging participation is not limited to the youth field. The Treaty introduces in Article 15 (ex Article 255 TEC) that the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible “**in order to promote good governance and ensure the participation of civil society**”. Therefore, the aim is to develop participation of young people and of civil society as a whole.

Another important change included in the Treaty is the explicit competence for the EU to carry out supporting, coordinating or complementary action in the field of youth.

The Treaty also gives legal force to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Treaty explicitly recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter and grants it the same legal value as the Treaties. **The Charter includes an article on the rights of children (Article 24) and an article on prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work (Article 32).**

Additionally, the Treaty envisages setting up a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps with the aim to structure the involvement of young Europeans in the humanitarian aid operations of the Union.

The Treaty also explicitly extends Community competence to the **sport** field, with a special focus on “**the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen.**”

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Cross-sector approach and mainstreaming**
- Several differentiated priority levels should be defined to set the objectives of the cross-sector approach.
- The initiative regarding implementation tools and mechanisms should come from National Youth Councils, with the support of Member States. The role of the European Commission should be to ensure consistency and effectiveness of the tools, as well as monitoring and coordinating good practice.
- **OMC**
- The OMC should focus on a limited number of well-defined objectives.
- Peer learning should be further developed as a means to facilitate the exchange of good practice, encourage compliance with reporting requirements and contribute to consistency of the actions taken at national level.
- Monitoring should be facilitated by taking stock of and revising existing indicators and benchmarks concerning youth in education, employment, inclusion and health and the opportunity to set up realistic indicators for the priorities areas should be supported.
- A common structure for the national reports should be developed and provide Member States with a list of common indicators.
- **Participation and Structured Dialogue**
- In order to increase information as well as participation in both qualitative and quantitative terms, young people should be provided with diverse opportunities to participate (including with the support of new technologies).
- The European and national parliaments should play a more important role in linking to young people.
- The Structured Dialogue should focus on priority areas pre-identified through an open consultation. Priority areas should be agreed in the Framework of the Structured Dialogue on a regular basis, with the right of initiative available to all young people involved. Planning will also contribute to ensuring the continuity of the Dialogue.
- **Data availability and research**
- Good communication around youth research should be encouraged. Existing tools such as the EKCYP portal and the EUNYK Network are in a very good position to support the future of evidence-based policy-making.
- Compliance with reporting requirements and peer learning should be strongly encouraged.

- The current research-oriented dynamic should be encouraged for Member States active in research and further developed in others, with the support of European programmes.
- Need for structured, regular, solid youth statistics and research.

ANNEX 1: KEY EVENTS IN YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE 1988-2009

Year	Policy level	Programme level	Links with Council of Europe
1987			Joint Partnership Agreement
1988		Youth for Europe I	
1991	Treaty of Maastricht	Youth for Europe II	
1995		Youth for Europe III	
1998		Youth for Europe III European Voluntary Service Programme	
1999	Treaty of Amsterdam	Youth for Europe III	
2000		Youth Community Action (Youth, SVE and EuroMed Youth)	
2001	EC White Paper Treaty of Nice	Youth Community Action	
2002	Council Resolution regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field	Youth Community Action	
2005	European Youth Pact	Youth Community Action	Single Partnership Agreement
2007	EU Convention	Youth in Action	
2008	Treaty of Lisbon	Youth in Action	
2009	EC 2009 Communication Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)	Youth in Action	

Source: Deloitte (2009)

ANNEX 2: EVOLUTION OF YOUTH-RELATED ARTICLES IN THE TREATY ESTABLISHING THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND SUBSEQUENT TREATIES

Treaty	Aim of the Community Action / Youth	Aim of the Community Action / Training	Youth Work	Youth rights	Competences	Volunteering
Treaty of Maastricht	TCE, Article 126, 2) "Community action shall be aimed at: (...) - encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors; (...)"	TCE, Article 127, 2) "Community action shall aim to: (...) - facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people; (...)"	TCE, Article 50 "Member States shall, within the framework of a joint programme, encourage the exchange of young workers."		TCE, Article 118 a (youth not included)	

Treaty	Aim of the Community Action / Youth	Aim of the Community Action / Training	Youth Work	Youth rights	Competences	Volunteering
Treaty of Amsterdam	TCE, Article 149, 2) "Community action shall be aimed at: (...) - encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors; (...)"	TCE, Article 150, 2) "Community action shall aim to: (...) - facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people; (...)"	TCE, Article 41 "Member States shall, within the framework of a joint programme, encourage the exchange of young workers."		TCE, Article 137 (youth not included)	
Treaty of Nice (NA)	TCE, Article 149, 2) "Community action shall be aimed at: (...) - encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors; (...)"	TCE, Article 150, 2) "Community action shall aim to: (...) - facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people; (...)"	TCE, Article 41 "Member States shall, within the framework of a joint programme, encourage the exchange of young workers."		TCE, Article 137 (youth not included)	

Treaty	Aim of the Community Action / Youth	Aim of the Community Action / Training	Youth Work	Youth rights	Competences	Volunteering
EU Convention (not ratified)	TCE, Article III- 282, 1) e) (...) Union action shall be aimed at: (...) (e) encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe; (...)"		TCE, Article II-92 Prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work The employment of children is prohibited. The minimum age of admission to employment may not be lower than the minimum school-leaving age, without prejudice to such rules as may be more favourable to young people and except for limited derogations. Young people admitted to work must have working conditions appropriate to their age and be protected against economic exploitation and any work likely to harm their safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social development or to interfere with their education."		Article I-17 TECE "The Union shall have competence to carry out supporting, coordinating or complementary action. The areas of such action shall, at European level, be: (...) (e) education, youth, sport and vocational training; (...)"	

Treaty	Aim of the Community Action / Youth	Aim of the Community Action / Training	Youth Work	Youth rights	Competences	Volunteering
Lisbon Treaty	TFEU, Article 165, 2 "Union action shall be aimed at: (...) — encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe, (...)" — developing the European dimension in sport, by promoting fairness and openness in sporting competitions and cooperation between bodies responsible for sports, and by protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen."	TFEU, Article 165, 2 "Union action shall aim to: (...) — facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people, (...)"	TFEU, Article 47 "Member States shall, within the framework of a joint programme, encourage the exchange of young workers." Reference to the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, Article 32 on the "Prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work"	Reference to the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, Art 24 "The rights of the child"	TFEU, Article 6 "The Union shall have competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States. The areas of such action shall, at European level, be: (...) (e) education, vocational training, youth and sport; (...)"	TFEU, Article 214, 5 "In order to establish a framework for joint contributions from young Europeans to the humanitarian aid operations of the Union, a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps shall be set up. The European Parliament and the Council, acting by means of regulations in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall determine the rules and procedures for the operation of the Corps."

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