

From youth to intergenerational programmes

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The EU youth programmes are a European civil society success story. No youth specific policy existed within what is now the EU before national and international youth NGOs started lobbying, arguing for active citizenship, equal opportunities and positive discrimination for girls, international youth exchanges, volunteering, intercultural and informal education schemes.

The first result was reached with the establishment, in 1972, of the Council of Europe's European Youth Foundation (EYF) - <http://www.eyf.coe.int/fej/>, a fund established in 1972 to provide financial support for European youth activities. It has now an annual budget of approximately 3 million €. Since 1972, more than 300,000 young people, aged between 15 and 30 and mostly from the Council's Member States, have benefited directly from EYF-supported activities. In 2007 the EYF supported some 300 projects involving more than 15,000 young people.

Youth NGOs managed to convince first the EC and then the EU institutions of the importance of investing in dedicated youth programmes and since the mid 80s things started to move and the so-called priority actions in the youth field were launched.

The inclusion of *Youth* as a policy concept took place with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993. The Treaty extended the scope of EU policies to include the youth 'field', thanks to Article 149 § 2, which states that the EU should ...*encourage the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors...*

Before 2001, the activities of the European Institutions in the youth field mainly focused on the consideration and implementation of specific programmes, like *Youth for Europe*, in 1988. However, a consensus remained that this action and cooperation needed to be strengthened and that young people themselves had to be more involved. Eventually, the European Commission considered the development of a more genuine cooperation for future decades.

The first tangible evidence of such renewed effort was *the White Paper on Youth* adopted in November 2001. The Paper contained a proposal to the EU's Member States to increase cooperation in four youth priority areas: participation, information, voluntary activities and a greater understanding and knowledge of youth. The White Paper also proposed to take the youth dimension more into account when making other relevant policies, such as education and training, employment and social inclusion, health and anti-discrimination. The Paper was a response to the apparent disaffection of young people with traditional forms of participation in public life, and called on young Europeans to become more active citizens. Taking the White Paper as a starting point, the EU Council, in June 2002, established a framework for

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European cooperation in the field of youth. In November 2005, the framework was updated to take into account the *European Youth Pact* and is now made up of three main strands:

Young people's active citizenship. The Member States have agreed on common objectives for each one of the four priorities of the White Paper. In order to reach these objectives, the *Open Method of Coordination* is applied. Other instruments to foster young people's active citizenship are the *Youth in Action programme*, the *European Youth portal* and the *European Knowledge Center on Youth Policy*. The structured dialogue aims at involving young people in policy shaping debates in relation to the European agenda.

Social and occupational integration of young people. *The European Youth Pact* aims at improving the education and training, the employability and social inclusion of young Europeans, while facilitating the reconciliation of career plans and family life.

A youth dimension in other EU policies. The European Commission actively works to take youth into account in a number of policies, of which anti-discrimination and health are the most prominent.

In addition to these three strands, the European Union also contributes to the development of the mobility of young people and recognition of their non-formal learning experiences.

Finally, in addition to a European Youth Forum - <http://www.youthforum.org/>, recognised by the Commission, a specific network for youth information, Eurodesk, www.eurodesk.org, and a set of programmes without precedents in other world regions, in fact used as models in other continents, today we have:

- a legal basis for youth initiatives in the EU Treaty
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12002E/htm/C_2002325EN.003301.html;
- the Charter of EU Fundamental Rights http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf - recognising the values for which also youth NGOs have been lobbying;
- a social, cultural and human charter, aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between youth and civil societies in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership - http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/index.htm and in the European Neighbourhood Policy - http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/welcome_en.htm.

Following enlargement, Europe has 75 million young people between the ages of 15 and 25 and the new generation of EU programmes for education and training, youth, culture and citizenship, covering the years from 2007 until 2013 - http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.html - includes:

Lifelong Learning

It replaces the *Socrates*, *Leonardo da Vinci*, and *eLearning* programmes which expired at the end of 2006. It comprises four sectoral programmes on school education (*Comenius*), higher education (*Erasmus*), vocational training (*Leonardo da Vinci*) and adult education (*Grundtvig*),

and is completed by a transversal programme focusing on policy cooperation, languages, information and communication technology, and the dissemination and exploitation of results. The final element to the new programme is the *Jean Monnet action*, which focuses on supporting the teaching of European integration as a subject at universities, and supports certain key institutions and associations active in the field.

The programme budget is €6,970 million for the period 2007-2013

The aim of the new programme is to contribute, by emphasising the need for lifelong learning, to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. It aims to foster interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community, so that they become a world quality reference.

As for what concerns the four sectoral programmes, quantified targets have been set in order to ensure a significant, identifiable and measurable impact for the programme. These targets are as follows:

For Comenius:

to involve at least 3,000,000 pupils in joint educational activities, over the period of the programme;

For Erasmus:

to have supported an overall total of 3,000,000 individual participants in student mobility by 2012;

For Leonardo da Vinci:

to increase placements in enterprises to 80,000 per year by the end of the programme;

For Grundtvig:

to support the mobility of 7,000 individuals involved in adult education per year, by 2013.

Youth in Action

It aims at developing among young people a sense of personal responsibility, initiative, concern for others, civic participation and active involvement at local, national and European level. *The budget for the 2007 - 2013 period is €885 million.* The Youth in Action programme will give funding support to projects under five headings:

Youth for Europe: to reinforce the active civic participation of young people by supporting appropriate exchanges, mobility and initiatives for young people and their projects.

European Voluntary Service: to develop young people's solidarity, active engagement and mutual understanding, all in the framework of a charitable or not-for-profit activity. It can take the form of either individual or collective projects to enable young people to express their personal commitments, but also to involve them in the EU's solidarity actions.

Youth of the world: to foster young people's mutual understanding and active engage-

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ment through an open-minded approach to the world. It opens up the programme to projects with the neighbouring countries of the enlarged Europe.

Youth workers and support systems: to help youth organisations that are active at the European level to promote the development of exchange, training and information schemes for youth workers; and projects to stimulate innovation and quality and partnerships with regional or local entities.

Support for policy cooperation in the field of youth: to promote co-operation among decision-makers on youth policy, preparing the participation of young people in democratic life. It also develops representative structures for young people throughout Europe. Furthermore, this action gives assistance to encourage structured dialogue between young people and those responsible for youth policy, and helps co-operation with international organisations, thus promoting discussion and reflection on the EU's work for young people.

Culture

With a budget of €408 million, for 2007-2013, the project aims at enhancing the European cultural area. This will be done by developing cultural cooperation between the creators, cultural players and cultural institutions of the countries taking part in the programme. It shall be open to the participation of non-audiovisual cultural industries, in particular small cultural enterprises, where such industries are acting in a non-profit-making cultural capacity.

The specific objectives are:

- to promote the transnational mobility of people working in the cultural sector;
- to encourage the transnational circulation of works and cultural and artistic products;
- to encourage intercultural dialogue.

Europe for citizens

Its overall aim is to help bridge the perceived gap between the general public and the EU institutions. With a total budget, for 2007 - 2013, €215 million, it provides the Union with instruments to promote active European citizenship. It puts citizens in the spotlight and offers them the opportunity to fully assume their responsibility as European citizens. It responds to the need to improve citizens' participation in the construction of Europe. It also encourages cooperation among citizens and their organisations from different countries in order to meet, act together and develop their own ideas in a European environment which goes beyond a national vision, while nonetheless respecting their diversity.

Intercultural exchanges contribute to improving the mutual knowledge of the culture and history of the European peoples. It will bring our common heritage to the fore and strengthen the basis of our common future. Mutual understanding, solidarity and the feeling of belonging to Europe are indeed the building blocks for citizens' involvement. They are reflected by the four different programme's actions:

Action I: *Active citizens for Europe* involves citizens directly, either through activities linked to town-twinning or through other kinds of citizens' projects.

Action II: *Active civil society for Europe* is targeted to Europe-wide civil society organisations, receiving either structural support on the basis of their work programme or support trans-national projects.

Action III: *Together for Europe* supports high visibility events, studies and information tools, addressing the widest possible audience across frontiers and making Europe more tangible for its citizens.

Action IV: *Active European Remembrance* supports the preservation of the main sites and archives associated with the deportations and the commemoration of the victims of Nazism and Stalinism.

So far this is the half-full glass. The half-empty being outlined by our proposals:

1. the 2008 EU budget amounts to € 129.149 billion⁸⁵ - for all the youth and citizenship programmes indicated earlier the yearly average totals € 1.211 billion, which equals to only 0.94 % - substantial increases in funding are urgent for youth - otherwise no alibi may be credible for the EU democratic gap and lack of trust in the EU institutions by young people.
2. the same is even more urgent for cooperation with the southern-shore Mediterranean countries and those partners in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) where the percentage of youth in the total population is often above 40%. The case of Turkey is particularly crucial for the pre-accession negotiations process.
3. why should *Erasmus* be still limited to universities? Such a programme should involve all the EU, Euromed and ENP high school students, both as individuals and classes.
4. volunteering, participation and active citizenship should be fostered well beyond young people. *Lunaria*, together with other European NGOs and local authorities, and the support of the European Commission, has developed pilot schemes of transnational volunteering for citizens over 55 years of age⁸⁶. Why not launch a mass European Voluntary Service with and for senior citizens?
5. and why not developing intergenerational volunteering, exchanges, participatory citizenship projects? Lifelong learning has become part of the EU quality of life approach, but much more interaction among different generations is needed to contribute to the making of an EU identity and to avoid the risk of wasting huge human potentials accumulated during the various phases of our lifetime.

⁸⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/publications/budget_in_fig/syntchif_2008_en.pdf.

⁸⁶ http://www.lunaria.org/senior/fiftyfifty/5.nessuno_escluso_eng.pdf.