



European Commission and Council of Europe
Partnership on Youth

EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE CENTRE FOR YOUTH POLICY CORRESPONDENTS

3RD ANNUAL MEETING

*European Youth Centre Budapest
14-15th of February 2008*

Report

I. Participants

From the 18 correspondents participating in the meeting (see Pax list below) four had recently been nominated as EKCYP-correspondents: Angeliki Molschou for Greece (Ministry of National Education), Aurelija Reinikyte for Lithuania (Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Social Security and Labour), Marti Taru for Estonia, (Estonian Youth Institute) and Adam Spalensky for the Czech Republic (National Institute for Children and Youth).

Manfred von Hebel participated for the European Commission (15th of February) and the chair of the network of researchers, Howard Williamson, was welcomed to join the meeting for the first day.

From side of the Partnership were present: Hanjo Schild (Partnership coordinator), Marta Medlinska (Research Officer) and Philipp Boetzelen (EKCYP-coordinator).

II. Welcome & Adoption of the agenda

The participants were welcomed by the coordinator of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) and the agenda of the meeting was adopted.

III. Update

Following the introduction of participants, Philipp Boetzelen and Marta Medlinska gave an update about partnership activities in 2008 and specifically the EKCYP.

The main items of relevance for the EKCYP were:

A) Information on the last quality group meeting:

- In the last meeting of the quality group the amendment of of the questionnaires had been finalised. The questionnaires were already sent to the correspondents network.
- A discussion regarding the validation of county sheets and questionnaires which concluded that the validation by the national ministry of the relevant country was essential and could not be replaced by any other validation procedure; however additional forms of validation should be envisaged and discussed during this meeting (see also V).
- The quality group also discussed the knowledge provision on the so called transversal youth policy topics (employment, social inclusion, health and well being) in the EKCYP country information, which had already been announced at occasion of the 2nd meeting of EKCYP-correspondents. A provisional structure of country specific fact sheets on these issues was discussed and should be further reviewed in this 3rd meeting of EKCYP-correspondents.

B) General information and workplan 2008

At the time of the meeting, 35 correspondents were formally nominated; 19 country sheets and 12 sets of questionnaires for/on 2007 had already been received. They were at present checked by the Partnership; for those countries where there was no information regarding validation by the ministry, the country sheet was sent for information to the national representative of the European Steering Group Committee for Youth. The country sheets would be published on the website following this meeting at [http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/Country_2007].

Regarding the implementation of the new transversal topics, Marta Medlinska mentioned that a call for tender for a team of experts was being prepared and would be published shortly after this meeting. The role of the correspondents would be to support the selected expert team with regards to national sources of information and data in case this was necessary. (for the further discussion regarding this topic please see VII and VIII).

C) Role of the Partnership networks in the field of research

Following mentioning by Marta Medlinska of the last network meeting of the *network of experts on youth research and information or researchers network*, Howard Williamson, the chair of this network, addressed the difference regarding role and self-conception of both, the EKCYP- and the researchers network. Whereas the role of the EKCYP-network is very obvious and concrete (contributing to knowledge provision on the EKCYP), the role of the other network is not linked to a common task and therefore less obvious. For HW the researcher's network should contribute to the knowledge provision on the EKCYP but its *raison d'être* should not be limited to this contribution. He sees the need for a further discussion on the role and cooperation of both networks. The Partnership team proposed that this should be done at occasion of a joint session of both networks during the next annual meeting in October.

IV. Communication strategy for the revised EKCYP

Background: During the first correspondents meeting in September 2006 it had been agreed to wait with the implementation of a communication strategy until the EKCYP would become more userfriendly and comprehensive. Proposals that had been made at that time included leaflets, posters and web links on webpages with similar contents.

With the new partnership web-portal being online now, the awareness of potential users should be raised by any appropriate means.

In the discussion round, the following proposals were made from side of the EKCYP-correspondents:

Manfred Zentner proposed that a Newsletter could be produced by the EKCYP-correspondents raising awareness on their duties and on the EKCYP. He added that in the case of Austria information on the EKCYP was mainly spread through personal communication. For Romania, Sorin Mitulesco mentioned a brochure translated into Romanian as a potential communication tool. A recommendation by the European Commission would be a necessary means to have the brochure translated by the national authorities.

Alexandra Moreira proposed that the EKCYP should be advertised on the national youth portals (in many cases the correspondent works for or in close connection to the national youth institute) or the national organisation of the correspondent. Also a fact sheet on the EKCYP explaining its potential was suggested as a potential resource for communication.

From side of the Partnership it was stated, that in case there was a version of the country sheet in the national language this should also be made available on the EKCYP. The correspondents were informed that a new leaflet on the EKCYP was produced in English; for the translation into other languages (except French and German) no financial means were allocated. Eventually the Partnership could support the national entities in terms of administration and propose experts for the translation.

V. Recognition of and support for the correspondents (working group results)

In order to improve the EKCYP correspondents working conditions and hence contribute to the enlargement of data in the section [country information](#) of the EKCYP, a number of proposals had already been made at the last correspondents meeting to support the recognition of the national EKCYP-correspondents and raise awareness on their duties. As a follow up, a correspondent's job description (i) has been drafted by the Partnership and an official letter, signed by the Youth directors of both Partnership institutions, is being finalised. Other issues related to the fulfilment of the correspondents task and their recognition are the cooperation on the national level (iii) and the validation of information (ii) provided by the correspondents. Working groups were set up to discuss further developments on these topics and came to the following conclusions:

Working group i): Feedback on the EKCYC-correspondent's job description:

Generally there was an agreement that this document would be useful for the recognition of the EKCYC-correspondents duties. Nevertheless there were some proposals for amendment of the current version of the document:

- a mentioning should be included regarding the responsibility of the nominating institution for the content of the submitted information
- examples should be given regarding the awareness raising on the EKCYC, which is mentioned as a correspondent duty (for example: via Newsletters, links, presentations etc.)
- validation of and responsibility for the quality of questionnaires and country sheets to be done/taken by the national ministries
- a time span should be given regarding updating of questionnaires (f.i. 4 times a year).
- the contribution to the new transversal topics should be further specified/clarified

Working group ii) Validation of questionnaires

The group concluded that a formal validation for the questionnaires should be given by the national Ministry as the correspondents could not bear responsibility for such a document being made available online and the Partnership was not in the position to judge the data from the national level. However other actors (practitioners, youth councils, youth NGO's, etc.) should have the possibility to give feedback on the information provided by the correspondents through the questionnaires. This information could be given by E-mail directly to the correspondents (a generic E-mail address for each correspondent would be useful and could be displayed on the questionnaire).

It was said, that distinction should be made between validation and evaluation: validation stands for the formal approval of the correspondent's contribution before this is put online, whereas evaluation implies a judgement on quality using established quality criteria. A further distinction could be made between validation from a political perspective and a scientific validation. These would not necessarily lead to the same results.

In the discussion following the input of the working group, it was agreed that, in so far as possible, the other tools of the EKCYC should be opened as much as possible for comments of the users. This could be done in case of the section Youth Policy (Background Knowledge) via a dedicated strand in the discussion forum. A link to the discussion forum would be displayed below the thematic chapter and users could comment on the revised Background Knowledge chapters. Other tools however, as the document library for example, have still to be validated by the Partnership upon a set of criteria established by the quality group, as any other form of validation (through interdisciplinary national expert groups or universities) would be too costly and time-consuming.

Working group iii): Cooperation on the national level

Cooperation on the national level varies from one country to another, starting from the actors involved and depending on the existence of already established networks in the field of youth research. Whereas in Iceland for example actors involved in youth policy and youth research do know each other and work closely together, the political administration in the UK (devolved administration – youth issues dealt with by the national administrations of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England) does complicate the information flow. Therefore it is rather difficult to give general recommendations regarding the enhancement of cooperation with relevant actors on the national level. The working group concluded that solutions for the cooperation on national level would need to be tailor-made.

VI. Recognition of and support for the correspondents - country visits

Hanjo Schild gave an update on another element of the support measures for correspondents: During the last meeting of correspondents the Partnership had proposed to support the work of the correspondents and their recognition through bilateral meetings with the ministries and other relevant actors from the national level. This measure was foreseen

for countries which did not provide any or only a few data to the EKCYP. Such a country visit would only be organised upon request of a given country.

For the moment the Partnership did not receive any request for a country visit. Therefore this offer was again communicated to the participants of the meeting. Philipp Boetzelen added that this measure might be especially helpful for the countries which were not represented by an active correspondent in this meeting.

In the following discussion it was stated that the country visits tend to be perceived as sanctions and would therefore not be embraced by many correspondents. Carolyn Oldfield raised another doubt about this support measure: very often obstacles to the knowledge provision of correspondents, such as availability of data for example, could not be overcome by short term interventions. Hanjo Schild emphasized the positive aspects of the country visits: they are a useful instrument to unravel the situation, identify existing obstacles and discuss criteria for a successful knowledge provision.

A variant could be the organisation of regional workshops in a country where the conditions for knowledge provision through the national correspondent are working well. It would have the advantage that it would not be identified as a sanction but rather as a training offer for enhancement of skills.

Friday, February 15th

VII. Reporting on youth: the political context for the European Commission (Manfred von Hebel)

Manfred von Hebel gave an outline of the political context on the level of the European Union and explained the interest regarding the knowledge provision on transversal topics as health, social inclusion and employment.

With the [Youth Pact](#) adopted in 2005, the relevance of Youth Policy was for the first time perceived at all levels and gained in visibility, also beyond the youth ministries.

Taking advantage of the favourable conditions generated by the Youth Pact and the report of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers [[Investing in Youth: an empowerment strategy](#)], the DG EAC and DG Employment worked together on a new communication targeting the [Promotion of young people's full participation in education, employment and society](#) and taking up relevant points that had been raised in the BEPA report.

Whereas these policy papers explain the Commission's focus on the transversal topics, the reason for the urgency concerning the provision of information on the EKCYP goes back to a proposal regarding the delivery of triannual European Youth Report which was formulated under the German Presidency. This proposal resulted from a growing need to make youth policy more visible on the European level. An evaluation of the European Youth Policy is underway, focussing on the four priority topics of the White Paper and the methodology used for their implementation.

Based on the Member States reports the Commission will provide a summary of the evaluation of the OMC, a communication on the implementation of the objectives on better knowledge of youth and a first European Youth Report in 2009.

Manfred von Hebel concluded that the correspondents are concerned when it comes to the reporting on special themes and might be consulted in the process of reporting. As a first step regarding the provision of knowledge on the transversal topics he would recommend to put together a pool of sources (from national and European level).

In the discussion following Manfred von Hebel's intervention, Howard Williamson objected, that from a conceptual point of view employment was not a transversal topic. Manfred Zentner argued that the time frame foreseen for the knowledge provision on the transversal issues was not at all sufficient and that the decision regarding the EKCYP-correspondent's

involvement in this exercise would need to be taken by the nominating institution of the correspondent.

Sorin Mitulesco required a further precision regarding the role of the correspondents. In his reply, Manfred von Hebel acknowledged that the time frame was very tight but insisted that some data on the transversal issues had to be provided in the EKCYP before the end of November. With regard to the Council of Europe member states, Hanjo Schild emphasized that the themes social inclusion, employment and well-being were of equal importance for them as also for other countries outside Europe; this is confirmed by the focus of the recent UN-report on youth. It can therefore be seen as a progress that the EU youth policy does shift emphasis from soft topics (e.g. voluntary activities and information) to stronger topics like employment or health.

VIII. Working groups on the transversal topics and the new partnership web-portal

Three rotating working groups were built to discuss the proposed draft structure for the collection of data on the transversal topics (groups 1 and 2) and to get an introduction about the new partnership webportal and to register as a user of the web-portal (3).

For the discussion of the proposed draft structure, the following central questions were formulated by Marta Medlinska:

- Adequacy of the structure proposed (for the structure see Annex 1)
- Availability of resources for the topics proposed in the structure
- Proposals for organising the cooperation between the correspondents and the contracted experts

The outcomes of the working groups can be resumed as follows:

- adoption of a pragmatic approach in the short run in order to fulfill the tight schedule set by the Commission, i.e. easily accessible data should given the priority in the short term, a further extension of the knowledge provision should be envisaged in the mid- and long-term.
- as a tool for policy development the information on transversal topics should be balanced between statistical data and qualitative information
- an intermediary approach between availability and usefulness of data is required
- the three topics given in the structure so far (see Annex 1) cannot be clearly separated one from another (e.g. employment is connected to immigration and equal opportunities)
- hard figures concerning equal opportunities (gender, religion or believe) are hardly available

In the following discussion many participants agreed that further comparative studies on the reality of young people in Europe were needed. Such cross country studies would need to be based on translated questionnaires in order to avoid misunderstandings. Jon Sigfussón referred to a project carried out in Iceland consisting of a comparative study that covers 10 European cities. All participants agreed on the importance of making already existing studies visible, not least in the EKCYP.

IX. Conclusions

In his conclusion Hanjo Schild recalled the main results of the meeting (communication strategy, recognition and support of correspondents, data collection on transversal topics) and thanked the correspondents for their active participation.

Manfred von Hebel thanked the correspondents for their engagement and willingness to cooperate regarding the provision of data through the EKCYP and recalled the importance of providing further information on the transversal topics as discussed during the meeting.

Proposal for a structure

Employment

1.1. Employment/Unemployment rate

1.2. Types of unemployment

1.2.1. Short-term (>6 months)

1.2.2. Mid-term (>12 months)

1.2.3. long-term (12 Months >)

1.3. Types of employment

1.3.1 full-time employment

1.3.2 part-time employment

1.3.3 type of contract (unlimited, limited)

1.3.4 internship/traineeship/apprenticeship

1.3.5 temporary staffing (“Interim”)

1.3.6 self-employed/free lance

1.4 Support structures/measures

1.4.1 Career Guidance and job information services (career adviser, career centre)

1.5 Transition education system to labour market (qualitative) (existing schemes, structures, measures to create or support opportunities for young people to find a job)

2. Well-being

2.1 Standard of living / poverty (including child poverty)

2.1.1 Housing

2.1.2 Leisure Time

2.2 Family life

2.3 Health

3. Social inclusion / equal opportunities

3.1 gender, religion or belief, racial or ethnic origin, age or sexual orientation, disability

3.2 poverty

3.3 social subsistence/protection

3.4 geographical aspects



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Programme

*Organised within the Partnership Programme on Youth run by the European Commission and the Council
of Europe*

Thursday, February 14th

09.30 **Welcome & introduction round**
Updates about the Partnership activities in 2008
State of play of the questionnaires and country sheets 2007

11.00 *Coffee/tea break*

11.30 **Presentation of the workplan 2008**

- Questionnaires
- Transversal topics

12.15 **Discussion on communication strategies for the revised EKCYP**

13.00 *Lunch*

14.30 **Recognition of & support for the correspondents**

- Introduction
- Discussion groups on:
 - correspondents' job description
 - communication on the national level
 - validation of questionnaires

16.00 *Coffee/tea break*

16.30 **Recognition of & support for the correspondents cont.**

- Presentation of discussion group results in the plenary
- Country visits: proposals for countries to be visited; discussion on implementation

19.30 *Dinner out*

Friday, February 15th

09.00 **Reporting on youth: the political context for the European Commission**
(Manfred von Hebel – European Commission)

09.30 **Transversal topics**

Clarifications, feedback on the structure, suggestions for sources of information – working groups

Training on the new Partnership Website – working groups

(Coffee/tea break is foreseen in between the working groups)

13.00 *Lunch*

14.00 **AOB**
Conclusions

15.00 **Closing** and coffee/tea break

15.30 Further planning of country visits



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