



## **Youth Employment and the Future of Work**

**A seminar organised in the framework of the Partnership in the Youth Field  
between the Council of Europe and the European Commission**

**European Youth Centre, Strasbourg  
21- 24 May, 2007**

### **Call for applicants**

**Deadline – April 15, 2007**

#### **Introduction and Background**

The Partnership in the Youth Field between the Council of Europe and the European Commission is organised around the triangle of youth work practice / training, youth research and youth policy as well as those horizontal activities with a regional focus (e.g., the Euro-Med; South East Europe; and Eastern Europe and Caucasus). The Partnership's commitment to research includes a programme of seminars, the facilitation of research networking and knowledge production through the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy ([www.youth-knowledge.net](http://www.youth-knowledge.net)). Such events and activities promote dialogue between young people, youth organisations, researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The youth research seminars are typically organised around key themes of relevance to young people in Europe that have been identified by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. It is against this background that the forthcoming research seminar on Youth Employment and the Future of Work is being staged. For information on previous seminars and accompanying publications, please consult:

<http://www.youth-partnership.net/INTEGRATION/EKC/Research/seminar.html>

## Context of Seminar

Participation of young people in the labour market has traditionally been regarded as a positive indicator of longer-term employment prospects as well as being associated with the successful accomplishment of related social transitions to independent living. However, it has long been recognised that for many young people the route from formal education to the labour market is far from being straightforward: it now tends to be delayed, complicated and – in some cases – fractured. Moreover, some groups of young people are particularly disadvantaged in these increasingly protracted and risk-filled journeys. It is also widely acknowledged that young people are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in economic trends. The subject of youth unemployment has received especially close attention because of its close correlation with social exclusion and the destabilising effect this can have on society at large. It has been noted that there have been diverse policy responses across Europe to this common concern with youth unemployment (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007: 42): initiatives based on guarantees of employment, education or training; incentives and subsidies offered to companies employing young people; ‘relaxation’ of minimum wage requirements and other conditions of employment; programmes of socially useful work; the extension of vocational education; extended provision of apprenticeships and pre-vocational courses; and various internships and apprenticeships. In some cases ‘youth activation’ programmes have also been accompanied by a move away from automatic *entitlement* to social protection benefits. Income is thus only typically available to young people as a *condition* of their participation in such schemes. The rise of ‘workfare’, ‘learnfare’ and ‘trainfare’ programmes in some countries perhaps reflects a trend towards linking ‘rights’ with ‘responsibilities’.

Whilst youth-targeted employment policies tend to combine both demand-side and supply-side approaches, it is also important to recognise that traditional notions of ‘work’ have been challenged and continue to be the subject of contested re-conceptualisations. The old assumptions of ‘job security’ and ‘planned careers’ have been disrupted by the profound economic and social changes of recent decades. This was demonstrated in spring 2006 by the massive protests and public discussions related to the new “flexible” youth employment contracts in France. To a great extent the old beliefs and orthodoxies concerning the labour market have been replaced by such concepts as ‘lifelong learning’, ‘re-skilling’ and ‘flexibility’. The latter concept can, moreover, be considered in terms of the multiple ‘flexibilities’ required in a variety of key areas: skills; attitudes; time/working hours; conditions of employment; work-life balance; and the corresponding commitments of domestic labour and caring responsibilities. The current policy discourse concerning ‘flexicurity’ is also closely related to these afore-mentioned concerns. Meanwhile, the need to simultaneously ‘learn, earn and live’ has been noted as a particularly vital issue in the case of young people (Williamson, 2006: 14-15). Whilst all of these ‘flexibilities’ are subject to ongoing negotiation, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that most young people are likely to find themselves in comparatively weak negotiating positions in these labour market transactions. The issue of youth empowerment and agency are therefore central to any discussion of youth employment and the future of work.

## Key Themes of the Seminar

It is envisaged that the seminar will group papers within broad, but coherently themed, Panels. As the organisers are anxious to avoid being overly prescriptive, those Panels have not yet been assigned working titles. The subject headings for the Panels will therefore emerge from the strongest papers received.

Whilst the organisers are keen to attract participants from a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds, it is important to offer the following guidance. Firstly, the European political context within which this research seminar is taking place should be noted. The *White Paper - A New Impetus for European Youth* (2001) and the *European Youth Pact* (2005) are key documents of the European Union. Young people in Europe are an integral part of the ambitious Lisbon Strategy. The European Commission (2005) clearly recognises that the Strategy depends upon “the support of young people to succeed”. The communication to the Spring European Council (2005) expressed the view that “young people should be targeted within the framework of certain key areas such as employment, the conciliation of family and professional life, investment in human capital and research and development.” The Commission indicated that the Strategy must “ensure that the reforms proposed help to give young people a first chance in life and equip them with the skills needed throughout their lives.” It is also important to acknowledge that the Council of Europe’s programme of International Reviews of National Youth Policy represents a significant body of work in respect of the analysis of youth employment and the related fields of education and training. (Williamson, 2002; 2006). These fields are also addressed by the Treaty of the Council of Europe and the European Social Charter (1961 and 1996), which guarantee fundamental social and economic rights for all citizens. These substantial and politically influential documents represent important reference points that go well beyond the borders of the European Union. Despite their significance, however, it is not implied that they should be accepted uncritically. It is recognised that part of the rationale of such an event is to challenge intellectual orthodoxies and explore new ground.

Secondly, given the nature of the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the organisers are particularly interested in those papers that will contribute to policy development in the field. The Seminar provides an important opportunity to share ideas, strategies, policies and practices that have been developed in diverse national and regional settings. Therefore papers of varied geographical focus as well as theoretical, youth work practice and youth policy orientation will be welcome.

Finally, it may be helpful to identify some of the themes and subjects likely to be considered at the Seminar:

- Youth Employment: macro-economic policies; micro-economic policies (including those that target particular groups of young people); social and environmental impact assessments of different economic policies; analysis of careers and trajectories; part-time work; ‘secure’ and ‘insecure’ employment; casualised labour; low income; gender; minority ethnic communities; migrant labour; young people with disabilities;

the role of trade unions; young entrepreneurs; co-operative enterprises; the public sector; personal and career development opportunities in the workplace; regional disparities (economic ‘hotspots’ and depressed areas); flexicurity; ‘learning and earning’; work-life balance; work and family commitments; mobility; and ethical employment practices.

- Youth Unemployment: analysis of causes of unemployment amongst young people; differentiated experiences of unemployment; social exclusion; social security and social protection; activation programmes; individualised advisory services on employment, education and training; social inclusion strategies; groups vulnerable to unemployment; voluntary work; regional disparities; gender; minority ethnic communities; young people with disabilities; vulnerable young people; and the shadow economy.
- Education, Training and Youth Access to the Labour Market: formal education; non-formal education; informal education; vocational education; higher education; strategies to reduce school exclusion and truancy; youth work; lifelong learning; mismatches between employment opportunities and skills; individualised advisory services on education, training and employment; widening access to high quality education and training; tackling discriminatory mechanisms and processes within educational institutions and training agencies; and voluntary work.
- Youth Mobility and Inter-Generational Solidarity: relationship between social policy domains concerned with youth and older people; economic ‘hotspots’ and depressed areas; accommodation and health needs of mobile youth labour; new opportunities and old responsibilities; youth ‘flight’ and ageing populations; and migration and the emergence of social tensions with host communities.
- Youth Participation: the contribution of young people to policy formation; political engagement; and social movements, protest and other expressions of civic involvement.

The above guidance is not intended to be exhaustive. There may well be other important areas that have not been mentioned. The principal aim of this guidance is to assist prospective participants frame their proposals. It should, though, be emphasised that applicants may select for analysis either a highly specific subject or a combination of different themes and issues. Anyone seeking further **guidance** should contact:

Dr. Jonathan Evans ([jwevans@glam.ac.uk](mailto:jwevans@glam.ac.uk)) and/or  
Wei Shen ([w.shen@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:w.shen@lboro.ac.uk)).

## **Participants**

Participants should fall into at least one of the following categories:

- Established academic researchers in the field;
- Researchers with or about to complete Masters or PhD studies on relevant topics;
- Researchers interested to contribute to the development of thinking in the specific field of youth with regards to the seminar themes;
- Practitioners with a theoretically informed and analytical approach to the subject;
- Policy makers actively involved in addressing the issues relevant to the topic.

Participants shall present the following types of papers during the seminar:

- research papers
- papers describing conceptualised practical experience of concrete projects/activities
- papers describing youth policy initiatives
- “tandem papers” presenting projects involving cooperation between the researchers and practitioners and/or policy makers

### **Applying**

Applicants should submit:

- a 500 word abstract in English explaining their potential contribution to the seminar and its outcomes,
- a succinct CV.

The requested documents should be sent **by 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007** to the following **e-mail address: [marta.medlinska@coe.int](mailto:marta.medlinska@coe.int)**. Applications sent by post, fax or other e-mail addresses **will not be accepted!**

### **Selection**

Selection of presenters will be made on the basis of quality and relevance to the seminar themes. All participants must be able to work in English. The final selection will also take into account gender and regional balance amongst participants.

### **Logistics**

The seminar will take place in the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg on May 21-24. Board and lodging will be provided and travel costs reimbursed. Further information will be provided for the participants of the seminar at a later stage. The working language of the seminar will be English.

### **Timeframe**

After submitting their proposals by April 15<sup>th</sup> the candidates will be informed about the selection results by April 18<sup>th</sup>.

The successful applicants will then be provided with further guidance and requested to present a draft version of their completed papers by May 9<sup>th</sup> for circulation to all participants. Following the event the authors will be invited to revise their papers, taking into account the discussions that took place with fellow experts during the course of the seminar. The final versions of their papers will then be uploaded to the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy:

(<http://www.youth-partnership.net/INTEGRATION/EKC/Intro/index.html>).

## **Presentation of papers for publication**

The main outcome of the seminar will be the publication of an edited collection. Papers presented at the seminar may be selected by organisers for inclusion (as one of approximately 15 chapters). Paper presenters invited to publish their contribution in the collection should expect to revise and edit their manuscript to publication standard and in accordance with the editor's recommendations.

## **Coordination**

For clarification and further information on the seminar please contact:

**Marta Medlinska**

email: [marta.medlinska@coe.int](mailto:marta.medlinska@coe.int)

phone number: +33 (0)3 9021 4916

## **References and Resources:**

Council of Europe, Directorate General of Social Cohesion (DG III) of the website

[http://www.coe.int/t/e/social\\_cohesion/social\\_policies/04.activities/1\\_access\\_to\\_social\\_rights/3\\_Access\\_to\\_Employment/](http://www.coe.int/t/e/social_cohesion/social_policies/04.activities/1_access_to_social_rights/3_Access_to_Employment/)

Council of Europe (1961 and 1996) *European Social Charter*

[http://www.coe.int/t/e/human\\_rights/esc/1\\_general\\_presentation/treaties.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/esc/1_general_presentation/treaties.asp)

European Commission (2005) *Conclusions by the Council (Education/Youth/Culture) on Youth in the Framework of the Mid-term Review of the Lisbon Strategy*

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/download/st06609-re01\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/download/st06609-re01_en.pdf)

European Commission (2005) *European Youth Pact*

<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11081.htm> and

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005\\_0206en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005_0206en01.pdf)

European Commission (2001) *The White Paper on Youth - A New Impetus for European Youth*

(2001), [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/index_en.html)

Furlong, A & Cartmel, F (2007) *Young People and Social Change – new perspectives*,

Maidenhead: Open University Press

Youth Employment Network of the International Labour Organisation website

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/yen/resource/index.htm>

Williamson, H (2002), *Supporting Young People in Europe: principles, policy and practice – the Council of Europe's international reviews of national youth policy 1997-2001 – a synthesis report*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing

Williamson, H (2006) *Supporting Young People in Europe – Lessons from the 'second seven' Council of Europe International Reviews of National Youth Policy*, Council of Europe, CDEJ (2006) 10