

EUROPEAN YOUTH INFORMATION CHARTER



*Adopted in Bratislava (Slovak Republic) on 19 November 2004
by the 15th General Assembly of the
European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA)*

Preamble

In complex societies and in an integrated Europe that offers many challenges and opportunities, access to information and the ability to analyse and use information is increasingly important for young Europeans. Youth information work can help them to achieve their aspirations and can promote their participation as active members of society. Information should be provided in ways that enlarge the choices available to young people, and that promote their autonomy and empowerment.

Respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms implies the right of all young people to have access to complete, objective, understandable and reliable information on all their questions and needs. This right to information has been recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in the Recommendation N° (90) 7 of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe. This right is also the basis for youth information activities undertaken by the European Union.

Introduction

Generalist youth information work covers all topics that interest young people, and can include a spectrum of activities: informing, counselling, advising, guiding, supporting, befriending, coaching and training, networking, and referral to specialised services. These activities may be delivered by youth information centres, or through youth information services in other structures, or using electronic and other media. The principles of this Charter are intended to apply to all forms of generalist youth information work. They constitute a basis for minimum standards and quality measures which should be established in each country as elements of a comprehensive, coherent and co-ordinated approach to youth information work, which is a part of youth policy.

Principles

The following principles constitute guidelines for generalist youth information work, which seeks to guarantee the right of young people to information:

1. Youth information centres and services shall be open to all young people without exception.
2. Youth information centres and services seek to guarantee the equality of access to information for all young people, regardless of their situation, origin, gender, religion, or social category. Special attention should be paid to disadvantaged groups and to young people with specific needs.
3. Youth information centres and services should be easily accessible, without any appointment being required. They should be attractive for young people, with a friendly atmosphere. The operating hours should meet the needs of young people.

4. The information available shall be based on the requests of young people and on their perceived information needs. It should cover all topics that could interest young people, and should evolve in order to cover new topics.
5. Each user shall be respected as an individual and the response to each question shall be personalised. This shall be done in a way that empowers users, promotes the exercise of their autonomy, and develops their capacity to analyse and use information.
6. Youth information services shall be free of charge.
7. Information is given in a way that respects both the privacy of users and their right not to reveal their identity.
8. Information is provided in a professional manner by staff trained for this purpose.
9. The information offered is complete, up-to-date, accurate, practical and user-friendly.
10. Every effort is made to ensure the objectivity of the information provided through the pluralism and verification of the sources used.
11. The information offered shall be independent of any religious, political, ideological or commercial influence.
12. Youth information centres and services shall strive to reach the largest possible number of young people, in ways that are effective and appropriate to different groups and needs, and by being creative and innovative in their choice of strategies, methods and tools.
13. Young people shall have the opportunity to participate, in appropriate ways, in different stages of youth information work, at local, regional, national and international levels. These can include, among others: identifying information needs, the preparation and delivery of information, managing and evaluating information services and projects, and peer group activities.
14. Youth information centres and services shall co-operate with other youth services and structures, especially in their geographical area, and shall network with intermediaries and other bodies that work with young people.
15. Youth information centres and services shall help young people both to access information provided via modern information and communication technologies, and to develop their skills in using them.
16. Each source of funding for youth information work should not act in any way that prevents a youth information centre or service from applying all the principles of this Charter.