



## The European Youth Policy Context

For both the Council of Europe and the European Commission evaluation plays a very important role in verifying the effects of their policies and programmes related to young people and for planning further strategies and priorities.

In the past decade in the youth field, both institutions have put also significant emphasis on developing educational activities in which evaluation and its methodology is a primary tool for improving and refining the quality of youth work.

- Since adoption of *the White Paper: A new impetus for European Youth*<sup>17</sup>, the **European Commission** promotes the elaboration of evidence-based youth policies in the member states and is committed to planning its policies through a consultative process involving several evaluation methods. It is called the open method of co-ordination. *The European Youth Pact*<sup>18</sup>, which highlights youth issues in core areas of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, invites Member States to ensure effective implementation and follow-up by setting measurable objectives and developing a structured dialogue. Both Member States and the European Commission are invited to evaluate the framework for European co-operation in the youth field in 2009.

The *Youth in Action programme* for the period 2007 – 2013 was developed on the basis of a comprehensive evaluation process: the results of a public consultation, the results of national and European level mid-term evaluations established to reflect on the YOUTH programme<sup>19</sup> 2000 – 2006 and leading to an interim evaluation report and an ex-ante evaluation of the future instrument. The interim evaluation of the YOUTH programme also included a number of recommendations based on the expectations and requests for simplification expressed by stakeholders and young people.

In the European Commission's *YOUTH Programme* reflective evaluation is considered to be an essential criteria for implementing quality youth projects. The programme expects youth workers and project promoters to use evaluation techniques in order to make sure that the objectives they set are realistic, achievable and serve the needs of the young people involved, keeping in mind the community context in which the project takes place.

17 The White Paper on Youth was launched in November 2001, after a one and half year long consultation process involving young people, experts in the youth-field, national authorities and NGOs. It is a document containing proposals for Community action in the youth field. It presents a detailed and well-argued policy for discussion and for decision. The White Paper is available at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/whitepaper/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/whitepaper/index_en.html)

18 The European Youth Pact was adopted by the Spring European Council in March 2005 as one of the instruments contributing to the achievements of the Lisbon objectives of growth and jobs. The Pact focuses on three areas: employment, integration and social advancement; education training and mobility; reconciliation of working life and family life. The European Youth Pact is available at PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS - Annex I: European Youth Pact at [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/84335.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/84335.pdf)

19 The Youth in Action programme is the EU's mobility and non-formal education programme targeting young people. The programme is open to youth in 31 European countries. The programme offers possibilities to young people in the form of group exchanges and individual voluntary work, as well as support activities. More information at [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)



In order to foster recognition and visibility of youth work activities, particularly in the framework of the YOUTH programme, the European Commission is going to establish a *YOUTH-PASS*, a tool for assessing non-formal learning progresses.

- **The Council of Europe** and its **Directorate of Youth and Sport** have been pioneers in initiating the discussion on evidence-based youth policies as well as the quality of youth work in Europe.

The European Ministers responsible for Youth of the 46 Member States of the Council of Europe identified four key items as *priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector for 2006-2008*<sup>20</sup>: developing and promoting standards for youth policies, fostering the recognition of youth work and non-formal education competences, developing and sharing knowledge on the situation of young people and supporting the quality and sustainability of European youth work training and policy.

Accordingly the Directorate of Youth and Sport is running a long-term project for the *evaluation of national youth policies* in a range of the Member States. On the basis of an extensive national evaluation report and study visits in the countries concerned, an expert team drafts an international evaluation report ("review"), which is presented to the Minister responsible for youth issues at a public hearing. The compilation of youth policy indicators provides Member States with a frame of reference and guidelines for undertaking a thorough evaluation of their youth policies, in terms of consistency, co-ordination between relevant domains and practical implementation.

With regard to quality standards in education and training activities the Directorate for Youth and Sport has elaborated *reference criteria* for all those involved and concerned by these kind of activities of the organisation, including staff, trainers, consultants, participants and partner organisations. The criteria serve as a benchmark for the evaluation of education and training activities and are understood as minimum standards. A thorough and open process of evaluation is defined as one of the relevant quality criteria in order to secure, among others, stock-taking of the results, the evaluation of the quality of the learning process and the follow-up to be given.

In the same framework the Council of Europe promotes the recognition of non-formal education and youth work by investing in the description of what constitutes quality youth work. The Directorate of Youth and Sport is now going to complete the long process of producing a new quality assessment tool: *the European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers*<sup>21</sup>, which after a public testing phase will be published in early 2007.

- Also in **the Partnership Programme in the Youth field between the Council of Europe and the European Commission**<sup>22</sup>, evaluation plays a crucial role in all of its strands: training, research and Euro-Med. All activities are developed with the support of appropriate evaluation approaches. The Training strand of the Partnership itself was as well subject to an external evaluation assessing the relevance, the impact, the efficiency and effectiveness of activities. As one of the results the three separate pillars of the Partnership that existed earlier were merged to one single partnership agreement under a joint management.



<sup>20</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural\\_co-operation/youth/2.\\_Priorities/policy.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/youth/2._Priorities/policy.asp)

<sup>21</sup> The European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers can be accessed at [www.coe.int/youthportfolio](http://www.coe.int/youthportfolio)

<sup>22</sup> More information on the Partnership Programme: [www.youth-partnership.net](http://www.youth-partnership.net)