

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



Shaping youth policy in practice 2023-2024

Report of the first seminar
Chisinau, Moldova
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Concept of the Shaping youth policy in practice project

Goals and background

This is the third edition of the capacity building project “Shaping youth policy in practice”. Two earlier editions were “Shaping youth policy in practice”: a capacity-building project for strengthening youth policy, 2019 – 2020¹ and Shaping European youth policies in theory and practice. Seminar on youth policy making, 2017-2018². These two editions grew out from less practically oriented courses on European youth policy: Strategies, triangles and coincidences – Taking European youth policies from concept to practice Be/come a youth policy change maker! 2013/14 pilot seminar on youth policy making based on evidence and participatory principles³ and 2015/2016 seminar on youth policy making based on evidence & participatory principles Strategies, triangles and coincidences – Shaping European youth policies in theory and practice⁴. The earlier editions were part of the broader efforts to strengthen and develop youth policy through building stakeholder capacity, facilitating inter-actor collaboration, sharing practices, and supporting implementation of new initiatives. Below are given the main foci of the editions:

- European youth policy frameworks: the editions aimed to enhance understanding and familiarity with these frameworks. This included the related principles, approaches, and stakeholders involved, as well as the resources available for their support.
- Interventions and strategies: a focus on developing and implementing strategies for intervention within the context of these frameworks. This extended from the local and regional to national and European levels.
- Capacity building: the editions aimed to build the capacities of youth policy actors. This involved not only understanding the policy frameworks but also knowing how to effectively implement and support them.
- Cooperation and collaboration: the editions stressed the importance of cooperation among different actors involved in youth policy. This was evident in the shared goal of creating a culture of cooperation and the shared outcome of developing the practice of intersectoral and consolidated work.
- Exchange and sharing of practices: both editions served as platforms for peer exchange on youth policy as they aimed to facilitate the collection, sharing, and exchange of practices across countries and sectors.
- Policy development and implementation: a key aim was to guide national delegations in developing and implementing youth policies within their respective contexts. Outcomes included the implementation of new projects on youth policy level.
- Networking: both earlier editions aimed to foster networking and continued collaboration among participants. Outcomes included developed personal and professional networks, and further work with project colleagues.

Similar goals underpin also the third edition of the Shaping Youth Policy in Practice capacity building project, which commenced in 2023.

¹ Homepage of the 2019-2020 edition, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/shaping-youth-policy-in-practice-2019-20>.

² Homepage of the 2017-2018 edition, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-policy-training-course>.

³ Report of the 2013/2014 seminar, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262040/Become+YP+Change+Maker+Final-Report.pdf>.

⁴ Report of the 2015/2016 seminar, https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261926/Report-TC-Youthpolicy+Seminar_20152016_.pdf.

Methodology

The initial two editions utilized a distinctive methodology designed to support national delegations in achieving their goals. This methodology comprises the following main features:

- A diverse group of participants, drawn from the public sector, research organizations, non-profit organizations, and youth organizations. National delegations were exclusively assembled by respective organizations within their countries. In the 2017-2018 edition, the project involved 40 participants from 13 countries, while in the 2019-2020 edition, it engaged 30 participants from 5 countries.
- The identification of broad problem areas, along with the creation of a list of potential goals and possible strategies to address these issues. Members of the national delegations were responsible for this identification process.
- The first residential seminar, during which delegations either continued or initiated work on their identified problem areas. Participants benefited from interaction with other delegations, mentors, organizers, and from keynote speeches.
- Following the first residential seminar, national delegations continued their work on identified problem areas within their real-life contexts at home. During the process, the delegations were supported by mentors. Additionally, residential seminar participants had access to youth policy development materials prepared by the Partnership and made available on its website. Mentoring and enhancing awareness of support materials was expected to empower the delegations in the pursuit of their goals. The 2019-2020 edition also featured a study trip to Ireland in the fall of 2019.
- After working individually, the delegations reconvened for the second seminar. The main objective of this seminar was to consolidate the learning from the previous phases of the project and to provide participants with opportunities for personal interaction and mutual learning about differing realities and contexts of youth policy. In the 2017-2018 edition, the second residential seminar took place in-person five months after the first. However, due to Covid-related restrictions, the second seminar of the 2019-2020 edition took place 1.5 years later and was conducted online.

Similar methodology is being employed also for the third edition of the Shaping Youth Policy in Practice capacity building project.

The third edition of the Shaping youth policy in practice project

Shaping youth policy in practice third edition, A capacity building project for strengthening youth policy 2023-2024⁵, has the aim to build capacities of those involved in youth policy in different countries and from different angles (governmental, non-governmental and research) with a vision to strengthen their youth policy work based on the know-how and principles promoted by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership and its two partner institutions.

For this edition of Shaping youth policy in practice, the Youth Partnership started planning the work in 2022. After checking the availability of National Agencies of Erasmus+ Programme to partner in this

⁵ Homepage of the 2023-2024 edition, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/shaping-youth-policy-in-practice>.

edition of the project, it was decided to organise it as a Youth Partnership project with focus on Eastern and Southern European countries.

The project started in 2023 with assembling national delegations, followed by a two-day residential seminar, then followed by work by the country delegations on a national plan they have agreed, with guidance and an online meeting in the 2nd half of 2023. The Youth Partnership will propose a 2nd residential seminar in 2024, pending partner institutions agreement to the next biennial programme.

The process is visualized on the next page.

Shaping Youth Policy in Practice

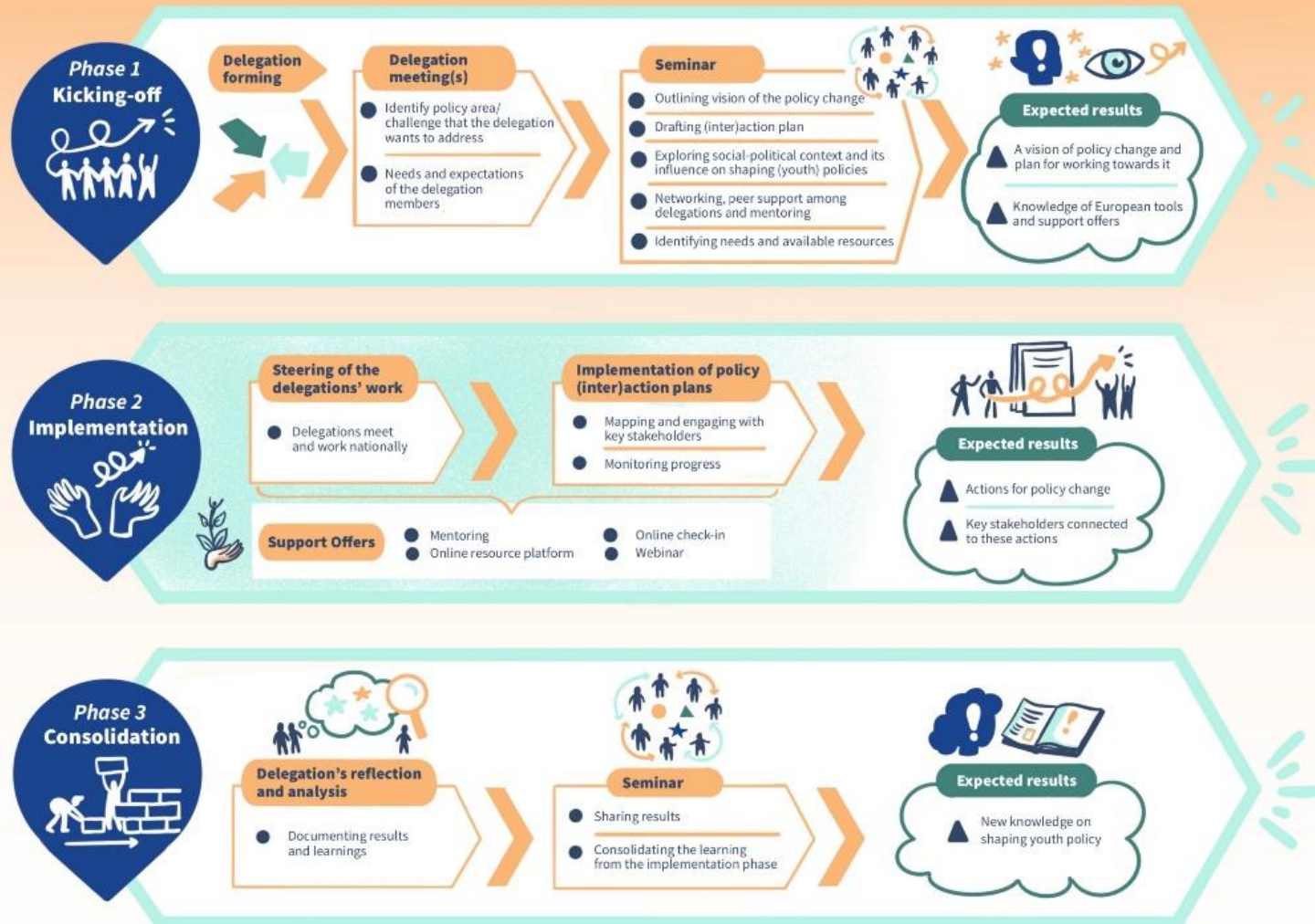


Figure 1. An overview of the SYP process. Image courtesy of Coline Robin.

Participants

In the 2023-2024 edition, the following six countries participate:

- Armenia,
- Bosnia-Herzegovina,
- Hungary,
- Moldova,
- Portugal,
- Ukraine.

The countries were selected based on a call for expression of interest among CDEJ members in the Council of Europe Youth Statutory Bodies, with the aim of ensuring a wide representation of countries and stronger focus on Eastern and Southeast Europe.

Partners of the project in each of the six countries are youth state bodies, who assigned delegation leaders to engage in the project and coordinate the work of the national delegations. The participating countries were expected to put together a diverse group consisting of representatives of public sector organisations, research organisations, not-for-profit organisations and youth organisations, representatives of bodies most relevant for the initial plans. The delegations are expected to work closely together for the whole project duration and also invite any other experts to support the delegations on the national level. Different countries employed different methods to accomplish this step. Some delegations involve a greater representation from academia and non-formal education, while other delegations have larger participation from young people and youth workers. In all cases, however, the delegations bring together individuals with different profiles and perspectives to work collectively.

Before the first residential seminar, national delegations also started identification of the broad themes and areas that they want to address within the framework of developing youth policy.

The first residential seminar

The first residential seminar took place in Chisinau, Moldova, from 29th to 30th of March 2023. Seminar aimed to strengthen competences on youth policy, enhancing cooperation in the national delegations and the preparation of their delegation plan, supporting networking and peer learning among delegations. The main goal was also to push further the first ideas about the aims of each delegation and formulate a clear goal, identify obstacles on the way, plan next steps and assign roles to members of national delegations.

The delegations started or continued working on the themes and topics that they had identified in the preparatory phase before the first residential seminar. During the residential seminar, delegations benefitted from face-to-face and on the spot access to mentors and representatives of the Youth Partnership, from the keynote speech as well as from consulting the youth policy materials prepared by the Partnership that were available on the spot and also online. During the seminar as well as after it when delegations worked in their home countries, national delegations were mentored by Marti Taru (Portugal), Heili Griffith (Ukraine, Moldova), Ajsa Hadzibegovic (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hungary), Zara Lavchyan (Armenia). The following table outlines outcomes of the work of national delegations before and during the Chisinau seminar, as identified by delegations from the six countries.



Figure 2. Residential seminar participants at the start of the event.

Table 1. Goals and hurdles identified by delegations before and during the seminar.

	Formulated goal(s)	Identified hurdles
Armenia	<p>The delegation seeks to design and development a comprehensive Youth Law This legislative proposal is intended to establish the framework and guidelines for youth policy, with the aim of enhancing the condition of young people in Armenia.</p> <p>Youth law should be comprehensive, systematic, standards-based, principles-based and should promote well-being and rights-based work for all young people without discrimination.</p> <p>The law will set goal of the state policy of youth development in the Republic of Armenia in order to create favorable conditions and guarantees for the comprehensive development, self-affirmation and self-expression of the young generation that subscribes to national and universal values, takes responsibility for the country and its own people. It will also facilitate and regulate youth policies implemented by the state administration and local self-government bodies, coordinating political, organizational and legal measures.</p>	<p>The delegation expresses concern that the document under development may risk remaining declarative in nature, an outcome they are keen to avoid. To mitigate this risk and navigate potential challenges, they have identified several strategic measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of a robust risk assessment process, ensuring that potential issues are identified and addressed in a timely and efficient manner. • The fostering of exchanges of best practices, promoting the dissemination of successful strategies and tactics from comparable contexts. • The organisation of expert meetings and visits to facilitate knowledge sharing and draw on a diverse range of expertise. • The procurement of legal advice to ensure the legal soundness and viability of the document. • The sourcing of sector-specific advice to reinforce the document's applicability and efficacy within its intended scope. • Comprehensive and participatory work towards the development of the law, public hearings, discussions, inter-sectoral and joint expert working groups. <p>These steps are anticipated to enhance the practical impact of the document being developed and prevent it from being merely declarative.</p>
Moldova	<p>For the Moldovan delegation, the primary objective is to effectively influence the formation of a training programme for youth workers, strategically situated within the broader framework of national labour market institutions (youth</p>	<p>The path towards establishing training programmes for youth workers is met with several obstacles, primarily due to gaps in understanding specific domains. A key hurdle lies in acquiring comprehensive knowledge and insights on how such professional</p>

	<p>worker occupational standard, inclusion of youth work in the National Nomenclature of Professions, curriculum for youth work). This endeavor seeks not only to enhance the competences and capacities of youth workers but also to situate their roles as integral components of the national labour market. Consequently, this would contribute towards the professionalisation and recognition of youth work on a wider scale.</p>	<p>training programmes could be integrated seamlessly with formal education initiatives and lifelong learning frameworks.</p> <p>More precisely, there is a need for greater understanding of critical aspects such as the structuring of the courses and the pivotal competences that youth workers would acquire during the training.</p> <p>Furthermore, there is a notable deficiency in resources, experiences, and insights concerning lobbying activities and advocacy for youth policies. This gap hampers the capacity to effectively champion youth worker training programs and to influence key stakeholders.</p> <p>Additionally, a broader spectrum of related resources, yet to be identified, could prove instrumental in overcoming these hurdles. Thus, the identification and utilisation of such resources is another challenge that needs to be addressed in the journey towards establishing efficient and effective youth worker training programmes.</p>
Portugal	<p>Portuguese delegation stated the objective to update the youth worker profile, introduce different professional levels and the need to consider the training and education pathways that the new profile(s) might require. This objective forms an integral component of the overarching youth strategy. The pursuit of this goal also encompasses the process of gaining professional recognition for the role of the youth worker, affirming the importance and value of this profession in society. Such advancements will serve to elevate the standard and impact of youth work, furthering the contributions this sector makes towards societal development.</p>	<p>The delegation perceives a number of challenges on the path to accomplishing their objectives. Firstly, understanding and integrating good practices at the European level pose an important challenge, as it requires comprehensive research and the capacity to adapt these practices to the Portuguese context. Secondly, the delegation is grappling with an understanding of the public policies in the youth field within Southern European countries. The intricacies of these policies and their applicability to the current situation can present significant challenges.</p> <p>Finally, a substantial hurdle lies in garnering support for the evolution of the professional profile of the youth worker and in navigating the process of professional recognition. Both aspects demand an in-depth understanding of the existing professional landscape, along with the capacity to effectively communicate and advocate for the necessary changes in this regard.</p>

Hungary	<p>For the Hungarian delegation, the goal is fostering and stimulating the involvement and active participation of young population, with particular attention directed towards the Roma youth. The intention is both to provide opportunities and empower young Roma people. This dual approach ascertains that young people are not only given access to prospects, but are also equipped with the skills and confidence needed to seize these opportunities, fostering a sense of self-sufficiency and personal development. The initiative is anticipated to materialize in “Roma Academy” ie an organization that would provide Roma youth these opportunities and skills.</p>	<p>The delegation recognises certain substantial obstacles in their quest to deliver equitable opportunities for Roma young people. It is evident that there are notable disparities in young people's access to various opportunities, with different degrees of possibilities available to different demographics. This challenge is particularly acute for marginalised and vulnerable Roma youth, who often encounter distinct and complex barriers. It is crucial to address these hurdles to foster inclusivity and equality of access. The specific domain of youth social inclusion, and the respective policies that can offer support, is likely to present a multitude of challenges. Tackling these issues is paramount to creating an environment where Roma young people have access to equal opportunities, thus promoting social inclusion and equity.</p>
Ukraine	<p>For the delegation from Ukraine aims to development educational standards for youth worker education that include both formal and non-formal pathways within the framework of national professional labour market institutions and processes. This initiative is aimed at fostering coherence, consistency, and legitimacy in the field of youth work, ensuring that it aligns with nationally recognised labor market standards. This process is envisaged to bring about improved professionalisation of the youth work sector, thereby enhancing the quality and impact of its services.</p>	<p>In pursuit of their goals, the delegation acknowledges a series of challenges that need to be addressed, both in terms of expanding their knowledge and in the practical aspects of program development.</p> <p>Firstly, there is a discernable need to deepen their understanding of existing training structures and career frameworks for youth workers within diverse European countries. This gap in understanding represents a considerable hurdle in the context of designing and implementing a similar system. Moreover, an increased comprehension of the principal challenges and key lessons learned from nations that have successfully established both formal and informal educational pathways for youth worker training is sought. Recognising these obstacles and insights could significantly influence the effectiveness of their own strategy and implementation.</p> <p>Lastly, the delegation identifies the need for expert assistance in the creation of an initial version of a potential mixed learning model that aligns with the established professional standards. This necessity points to the complexity of translating theoretical standards into an effective, comprehensive and adaptable</p>

		learning model. Meeting these challenges will require targeted effort, collaboration and resources.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<p>The ambition of the delegation is to foster heightened youth mobility and active participation among young individuals across all regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This aspiration underscores the need for a comprehensive, inclusive, and geographically widespread approach to youth engagement and mobility.</p> <p>To this end, all responsible youth ministries within both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District have adopted a Youth Mobility Plan. This Plan is committed to empowering young individuals to fully engage in all European youth mobility programmes, fostering both personal growth and intercultural understanding. This strategic action is a step forward in enhancing opportunities and inclusivity for the young population of Bosnia and Herzegovina.</p>	

Keynote speech

The keynote speech titled “**Current social-political context and its influence on shaping (youth) policies**” was delivered by Maria-Carmen Pantea, PEYR Advisory Group, Professor, Universitatea ‘Babeş-Bolyai’ (link to the recording <https://youtu.be/2qb0MSfM1mg?si=BvSOOZ9aHWfqm0j6>).

The speech included the following themes: the dynamic nature of youth policy, political and social tensions, conservative tendencies, the impact of Covid-19, war, and AI and new technologies.

The speech began by discussing youth policy as a dynamic process, highlighting the complexities of defining who constitutes 'young people' and considering diverse factors like age, gender, location, ethnicity, and education. The speaker emphasized the role of youth in policy-making, defining them not as 'problems to be fixed,' but rather as a resource and an integral social group. The aim was presented as creating conditions for learning, opportunities, and experiences, despite various challenges like tax revenue losses and short institutional memory in youth organizations.

The discussion on political and social tensions focused on the World Economic Forum's declaration of 2023 as "the year of the polycrisis." The speech pointed out that youth in Central and Eastern Europe and the Eastern Partnership countries might have different priorities, highlighting their increasing concern for political integrity and transparency.

The segment on conservative tendencies examined how each country has its blend of conservatism, from misogyny and racism to other forms of intolerance. The Covid-19 pandemic was noted for having strengthened conservative values, impacting gender norms, and widening social class inequalities.

Covid-19's impact on youth was also a major topic, considering not only the educational but also societal losses. The speaker discussed the pandemic's effect on youth sector orientations, noting increased focus on Covid-related topics and a diluted notion of disadvantage.

The speech then turned to the subject of war, emphasizing the complexity of young people's relationships with war as victims, fighters, survivors, refugees, and activists. There was a call for youth policies to integrate young refugees, even in countries without such experiences.

Finally, the speech touched on AI and new technologies, arguing against a deterministic approach and suggesting that AI and tech can be policy enablers. There was a call for policies holding big tech companies accountable, with an emphasis on increased transparency and ethics. The speech warned of the dangers for democracies if physical interactions are completely substituted with online ones and cautioned against tech-solutionism.

Graphical depiction of the main ideas covered in the keynote speech is presented on the next page.

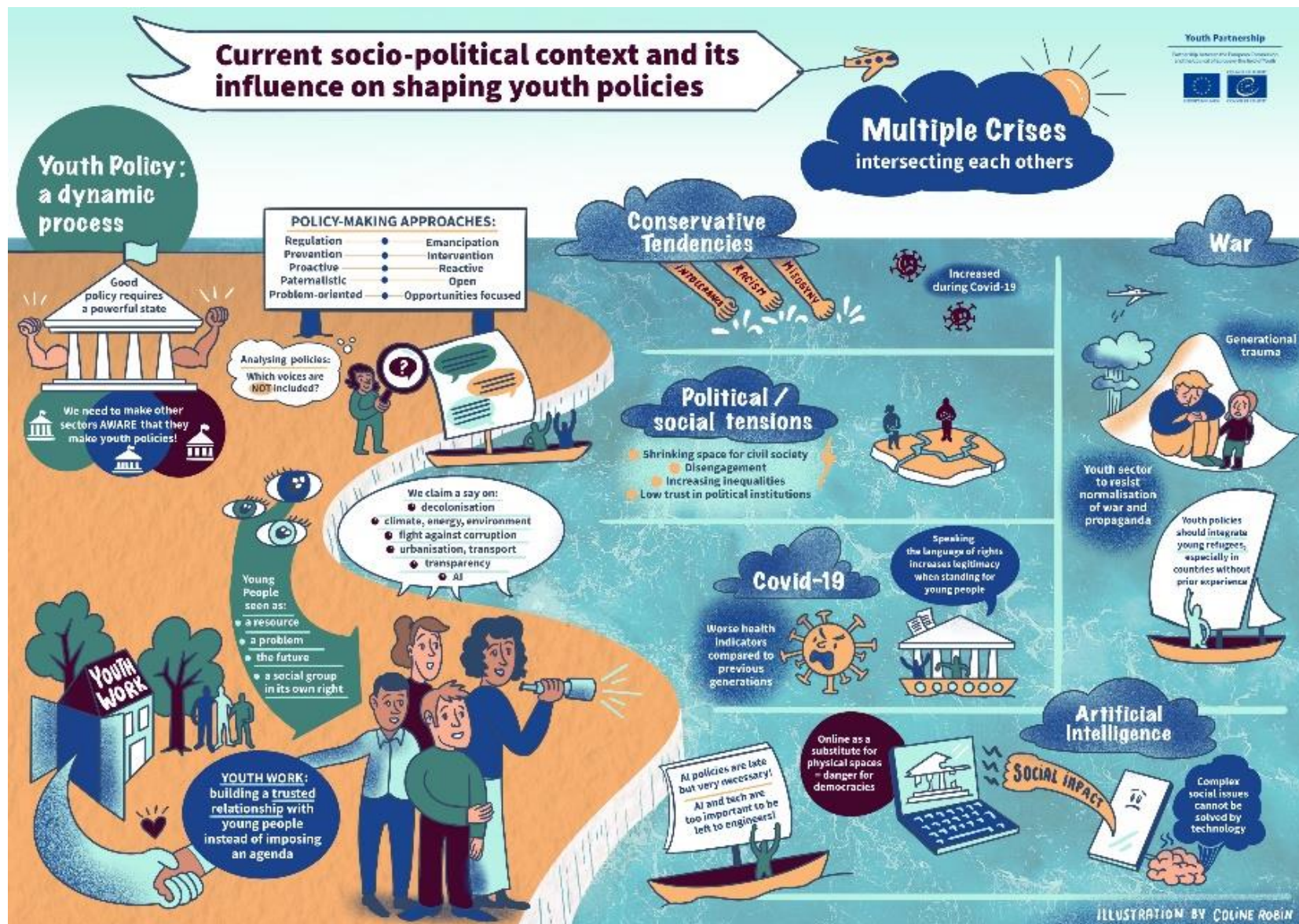


Figure 3. Graphical depiction of the keynote speech. Image courtesy of Coline Robin.

Support materials

National delegations' work on their selected issues is supported by resources developed by the Youth Partnership; below is a list of the materials:

- 11 indicators of a (national) youth policy, https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/CoE_indicators.pdf.
- A Toolkit on Quality Standards for Youth Policy, <https://www.youthforum.org/news/toolkit-on-quality-standards-for-youth-policy>.
- ABOUT TIME! A reference manual for youth policy from a European perspective, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-policy-manual-2021>.
- Background materials and report of the 2017-2018 edition of the SYP, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-policy-training-course>.
- Background materials and report of the 2019-2020 edition of the SYP, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/shaping-youth-policy-in-practice-2019-20>.
- Council of Europe Youth sector strategy 2030, <https://coe.int/en/web/youth/youth-strategy-2030>.
- E-library of youth sector evaluation, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/e-library-youth-sector-evaluation>.
- EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en.
- Insights into developing the youth work environment. A thinking and action kit, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/105305579/014722+Insights+YW+environment+EN.pdf>.
- MOOC on Essentials of youth policy, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/online-course-on-youth-policy>.
- MOOC on Essentials of youth work, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/mooc-on-youth-work>.
- Peer learning activity on Higher Education of Youth Workers seminar background materials and report, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/peer-learning-activity-on-education-of-youth-workers>.
- Self-assessment tool for youth policy, <https://rm.coe.int/self-assessment-tool-for-youth-policy-english/16808d76c5>.
- Visible Value e-library on recognition of youth work materials, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/recognition-resources>.
- Youth Participation Toolkit, <https://participationpool.eu/toolkit/>.
- Youth research: the essentials, Youth policy: the essentials and Youth work: the essentials, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/essentials>.
- Youth worker education in Europe. Policies, structures, practices, Youth Knowledge books #26, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-worker-education-in-europe>.

Progress in two months

Following the seminar, national delegations returned home and started implementing the steps they had planned during the seminar. This processes also reshaped their initial goals and tuned them to more closely meet the national realities. Delegations devoted nearly two months on that phase, until the 25th of May 2023 when an online meeting took place. In that meeting, national delegations gave an overview of progress and challenges. Their feedback about the activities they had been carrying out and progress they had made was structured by the following themes and questions:

- Thematic focus in its final shape,
- Plan and implementation milestones,

- Challenges encountered and solutions in place,
- Results so far,
- Support still needed at this point.

The next section gives an overview of where the delegations had reached by the time of the online meeting.

Armenia

The delegation of Armenia has been diligently advocating for the adoption of the Youth Law across various ministries. They have been highlighting the potential benefits of having such a law in place, and have laid out an action plan to achieve its endorsement. To garner broader perspectives and enhance diversity in the initiative, an open call will be published by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport for the formation of a working group. This group will comprise members from different sectors, including ministries, youth policy experts, youth workers, researchers, young people, youth work trainers, and public officials.

Delegation members have been engaging in both face-to-face and online meetings to discuss progress and refine strategies. In pursuit of a comprehensive and robust foundation for the proposed law, the delegation has prioritized the construction of a substantial evidence base and is seeking possibilities and resources for conducting a youth related study. This includes the development of a research-based youth index. The index, covering various aspects relevant to the youth, could serve as persuasive evidence during the lobbying process.

One major challenge faced by the delegation is the lack of unanimous support in parliament. There is an ongoing debate on the necessity of the Youth Law in Armenia and the question What are the specific issues it should address? has no definitive answer. A parliamentary committee is currently examining what the proposed law should cover.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport has expressed its recognition of the need for the Youth Law and has been discussing related strategies. Simultaneously, there is a push for a youth information strategy. It remains to be determined whether this topic will be included in the Youth Law or treated separately.

The delegation has learned from the experiences of Moldova, North Macedonia with their Youth Law and secured support from UNDP to map best practices in different countries. They have also arranged study visits to Latvia and Lithuania with the support of UNICEF and UNFPA, to further understand the implementation of youth law in these countries.

Despite the challenges, the delegation views the diversity of voices and opinions within the delegation as a strength, fostering robust arguments to lobby for the Law. The process is in progress, with the overarching objective to create a comprehensive Youth Law that effectively caters to the needs and aspirations of the youth in Armenia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a recent delegation meeting brought forth key plans of action aimed at increasing youth participation in mobility programmes and fortifying inter-institutional cooperation within the country. This is to be achieved notably through enhanced promotion, improved information coordination, and exchange. The delegation is also eager to boost youth participation and cooperation in the broader field of youth affairs. They intend to launch initiatives to gain full access to the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, as well as for the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency and the European youth card. The latter is accredited but currently lacks ministerial support.

Unfortunately, the complex political landscape in the country presents significant challenges. An intergovernmental body known as the "Commission for Youth Issues" was established at the state level in 2015 but has been non-operational since 2016 due to political reasons. The delegation has expressed a keen interest in reactivating this body and lobbying within the system to achieve its objectives. Recognizing the ambitious nature of these plans and the potential political obstacles, the delegation maintains a pragmatic approach. They acknowledge that end results cannot be guaranteed but are hopeful for progress.

To aid their efforts, the delegation has considered initiating a dialogue with DG EAC, Salto Southeast Europe, and potentially with new Erasmus+ National Agencies on youth from Albania or North Macedonia. This interaction aims to gather insights on the processes of establishing similar bodies, without committing them politically to any decisions.

Hungary

The delegation has made commendable progress with the Roma Youth Academy initiative. The objective of this project is to boost the participation of Roma youth in Hungarian society. It is expected that the academy will enhance opportunities for Roma youth by reducing early school leaving rates and fostering a better understanding of their career possibilities. The delegation believes that exposure to positive role models and information on non-formal education opportunities will consequently lead to improved school attendance and attainment of formal education.

An initial kick-off meeting is planned soon. In preparation, the delegation has established contact and collaboration relationships with local partners and municipalities, especially focusing on Roma youth from rural areas. A draft questionnaire has been created to collect detailed information about the specific needs of this target group.

The main challenge lies in securing sufficient financial resources to achieve the intended outcomes. The delegation is exploring potential funding opportunities through the Erasmus+ National Agency and the European Youth Foundation. One key challenge in this respect is the identification or creation of a Roma youth organisation that could formally apply for these grants. The challenge remains to maintain close relationships with Roma youth in remote areas as for instance travel to Budapest might for some be too expensive. This becomes even more difficult as financial support often requires the youth to belong to an organisation that can apply for grants. However, the delegation remains optimistic and committed to overcoming these challenges to ensure the project's success.

Moldova

The Moldovan delegation has had a meeting of the entire delegation and they have also spotted several other processes that favorably contribute to the project. A National Youth Worker Forum was held from 2nd to 5th May, which gathered not only youth workers but also teachers. The forum featured also a working group devoted to youth worker continuous professional development and education, and youth work curriculum which resulted in an outcome document. In mid-May, the delegation also had a meeting with a resource person to further their progress.

The next significant event is a brainstorming session scheduled for the 6th of June, dedicated to youth worker curriculum development. The document that was produced on youth worker education and curriculum at the Youth Worker Forum will serve as a foundation for this workshop. This gathering is anticipated to be a substantial event with diverse participation. Importantly, it aims to address and discuss the competences and tasks, as well as the terms of reference, of a smaller working group that is charged with developing a roadmap for this curriculum.

This smaller working group is expected to produce proposals and draft ideas on the topic, which will be reviewed and discussed by a broader range of organisations and stakeholders. The challenge they face currently lies in determining whether the curriculum will target individuals entering the youth work field without prior education and work experience, or those with education in other areas for re-training. The 6th of June event should provide clarity on these objectives. A draft of the roadmap should be ready by the end of June so the working group will have to work on it throughout the month. The delegation also envisages that the roadmap could be shared with colleagues in Europe for a sort of "peer review" with the aim of having it ready before July. The National Agency (NA) will then establish the working group and organise consultations with all stakeholders regarding the outcomes of the working group.

Portugal

In Portugal, the delegation has been diligently engaged in several meetings, contributing to their objective of developing national youth worker occupational and educational competences' profiles. This ongoing project aligns neatly with the broader youth strategy as it primarily focuses on promoting the youth worker occupation and education, an important aspect of the broader strategy.

Before the online meeting, there were discussions within the working group concerning the need to review and potentially revise the current youth worker occupational profiles. These considerations will be recorded in a background paper to ensure a thorough analysis of the current situation. To aid in this review, the delegation intends to establish contacts with established researchers in the field. The hope is that these experts will contribute to building a more comprehensive picture of the youth worker profile, providing models from across Europe that could be adapted to fit the Portuguese context.

The next step in this process is an exchange of ideas with the researchers and an analysis of European youth worker occupational and educational competence models. This will inform the development of a unique competence model for Portugal, and it is expected that the outcomes of these activities will enable the group to create their own framework of competences and two or three distinct youth worker occupational and educational profiles.

Running parallel to this is another critical process: the recognition of current youth worker competences. This is another facet that the delegation intends to integrate into the development process for the youth worker curriculum and occupational competence profile. By July, the working group aims to present some tangible results from these combined efforts.

Regarding challenges, nothing unexpected has arisen so far. The most challenging aspect, as is often the case, revolves around the diversity of perspectives. It's not straightforward to determine the best youth worker model that will respond appropriately to Portugal's unique needs and context. However, this is just a normal process focusing on establishing what should be the most suitable youth worker model for Portugal.

Ukraine

In Ukraine, the youth worker professional standard was adopted two months ago, hence it now officially is recognized as an occupation. However, the occupational standard is still in development. The final stage of the roadmap for the recognition of youth workers is currently in progress. The Ministry of Youth and Sport, which holds central place in this matter, is expected to hold a meeting of a working group on youth work standards by mid-June. The composition of this working group is anticipated to remain largely the same as it has been and be comprised of individuals from a variety of different sectors. The diversity of this group brings with it an array of professional and organizational backgrounds, including formal education and non-formal learning organizations, as well as the public, not-for-profit, and business sectors.

The key challenge faced by the group involves developing a model for educational processes and standards that would effectively combine formal and non-formal education, both in terms of activities and practices, and organizational structures. Designing such a model has proven complex due to the varying understandings and expectations of the individuals involved in the process because people from different sectors and organisations carry different expectations and understandings.

Despite these challenges, there has been a significant shift in the perception of youth work in Ukraine over the past decade. From a concept that was largely misunderstood, youth work has now become rather “trendy”. Today, many universities are keen on establishing youth worker education programs at both the bachelor and master's levels. It is expected that a youth worker educational standard will be approved by the end of the year. To facilitate the establishment of these study programs, the delegation considers it beneficial to seek guidance from countries with a long history of youth worker training. Here, Estonia's experience is perceived to be of great value. The working group is looking forward to mentoring support to help navigate the different working modalities between higher education and non-formal education.

Instead of summary and conclusions

The third edition of the Shaping youth policy in practice project is currently underway. While some phases have been completed, there is still work ahead. National delegations continue making progress towards the defined goals. Mentors provide ongoing support to the delegations. Hopefully, a second seminar will

take place toward the end of the year, which will allow for reviewing outcomes and consolidating knowledge created thus far.

Given the project is still actively in progress, this report does not provide any summary or conclusions at this time. Rather, it invites the reader to stay tuned as the initiative continues unfolding. For now, we look forward to the delegations and mentors driving towards the project objectives. The story is still being written, so stay tuned!



Figure 4. Members of national delegations, the Youth Partnership representatives and mentors.