

# THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND YOUTH POLICY

Support, assistance and resources for  
youth policy development in member states



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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1 In this brochure, the term “states” is used for the member states of the Council of Europe and the 50 states parties to the European Cultural Convention, all of which are eligible for the support measures described herein.





## Introduction

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**T**his brochure is for representatives of national authorities responsible for youth issues who are interested in the standard-setting work of the Council of Europe youth sector in the field of youth policy. Readers will find information about the engagement of the Council of Europe in this sector, including its key principles, such as co-management which fosters youth participation in decision making, as well as about the Council of Europe's main activities in the area of youth policy. Furthermore, readers can learn about the package of support measures offered to governments interested in developing and/or evaluating their youth policies, in part or in their entirety, in view of international, specifically Council of Europe standards and about how to engage with those.





# 1. The Council of Europe and youth policy?<sup>2</sup>

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## The Council of Europe's youth policy credentials

Since 1972 the Council of Europe, its member states and young people have been working together to build more just, more democratic and safer societies all over Europe. The Council of Europe youth sector has been a pioneer in the youth policy field, giving youth organisations and governments an equal say in decision making on a range of programme priorities and activities. Popularising this approach, known as co-management, among co-operating governments and organisations since the 1970s, the Council of Europe youth sector has become a driving force behind youth policy development and youth work in Europe. Its committee for intergovernmental co-operation, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), and its non-governmental partners, represented in the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), have been at the forefront of these efforts. The CDEJ brings together ministries, public administrations and policymakers in charge of youth affairs in the 50 states parties to the European Cultural Convention.

One of the priority objectives of the CDEJ is to promote and support the development of state youth policies. It has developed a variety of principles and values that should underpin youth policies. The key ingredients of youth policy, as promoted by the CDEJ and the Council of Europe, include young people's access to human and social rights, learning, inclusion and social cohesion, citizenship and participation, safety, health and well-being.

It is suggested that public youth policies should have the following objectives:

- ▶ to invest purposefully in young people in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way, wherever possible through an opportunity-focused rather than problem-oriented approach, by elaborating, among other things, standards and instruments of youth policy where necessary;
- ▶ to involve young people in the strategic formulation of youth policies and to elicit their views about the operational effectiveness of policy implementation;

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<sup>2</sup> The Council of Europe's youth policy addresses children from the age of 10/12 and young people and young adults up to 30.





- ▶ to create the conditions for learning, opportunity and experience which ensure that young people are able to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in both the labour market and in civil society;
- ▶ to establish systems for robust data collections both to demonstrate the effectiveness of youth policies and to reveal the extent to which 'policy gaps' exist in relation to effective service delivery to young people from certain social groups, in certain areas or in certain conditions;
- ▶ to display a commitment to reducing such 'policy gaps' where they demonstrably exist.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe's youth policy aims to contribute to the effective mainstreaming of youth policies across the Council of Europe's programme of activities and to stimulate co-operation between governments.

We take a standard-setting approach, motivating states to adapt their policies to these standards, to base them on our shared values and to demonstrate political will. To this end, the youth sector organises periodically conferences of European ministers responsible for youth from the 50 states parties to the European Cultural Convention, providing ministers with an opportunity to meet to discuss topical policy issues and to develop political and strategic orientations for the youth work of the Council of Europe. Nine such conferences have been organised, the first in 1985 and the most recent in 2012.<sup>3</sup>

Ministries, public administrations and policymakers often require support to evaluate, develop and implement their national youth policies. To meet such needs, we have developed a programme of activities that can render such support through European exchange, co-operation and knowledge sharing.

## **A package of youth policy development support measures**

The CDEJ and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe jointly promote a programme of support measures for ministries, public administrations and policymakers wishing to adopt the Council of Europe's youth policy standards. This comprehensive mechanism aims to prompt mutual advice and support, as well as exchange, between governmental stakeholders in the European youth sector on key issues of youth policy development and evaluation. Thanks to this programme, it is now possible for governments, ministries and policymakers around Europe to receive specialised

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<sup>3</sup> Strasbourg (France) 1985; Oslo (Norway) 1988; Lisbon (Portugal) 1990; Vienna (Austria) 1993; Luxembourg, 1995 (informal conference); Bucharest (Romania) 1998; Thessaloniki (Greece) 2002; Budapest (Hungary) 2005; Kyiv (Ukraine) 2008; and St Petersburg (Russian Federation) 2012.



and targeted support to address their youth policy-related questions, dilemmas and challenges from both peers and experts who have relevant experience and expertise.

The package has three main components: multilateral support measures in which any state may participate; bilateral support measures specifically tailored to individual states' requirements on request; and standing resources that can be used by any stakeholder in the youth sector on their own initiative. Each of these categories includes several key activities which are developed in more detail in Part 2 of this brochure.

## The added value of working with us

What can interested states gain from engaging with the package of youth policy development support measures?

Thanks to this package, states have access to some specific benefits, including opportunities for staff and representatives of public authorities to acquire:

**COMPETENCE:** Interested parties stand to gain competence for the further implementation of their ongoing and future youth policy tasks. CDEJ and Youth Department activities in this package offer governmental stakeholders the opportunity to be exposed to new and innovative methodologies, approaches and concepts, as they are being developed in the international youth policy community of practice.

**EXPERTISE:** The Youth Department and the CDEJ have privileged access to a wide-ranging network of experts all over Europe who possess a variety of different youth policy-related knowledge and expertise. Participating in activities in this package brings specific governmental stakeholders into contact with this network and with experts they would otherwise unlikely be in a position to find by themselves.

**LEGITIMACY:** Working with the Council of Europe, through the CDEJ, underwrites activities of individual governments with international, institutional recognition and legitimation for their work on youth policy, given the Council of Europe's institutional relationships, its history of standard setting, and the moral authority of its rights-based philosophy of youth work and youth policy.

**QUALITY:** The Council of Europe's Youth Department is recognised as standing for quality in youth policy and youth work in the international youth sector, as well as in sectors of wider relevance to youth policy such as education, lifelong learning, and civil society development. Associating with it and the expertise it can mobilise adds value to the youth policy of individual states.





## 2. How can interested states engage?

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### Getting engaged

The different activities included in each of the categories of support measures outlined here will be interesting for different kinds of stakeholders in the governmental and non-governmental youth sectors around Europe. So, who is eligible? There are only two basic conditions for engaging with these offers:

- ▶ the request for support has to come through the representative of the respective government to the CDEJ, even when the request is for tailored measures to address needs at the local or other levels of governance in the country concerned. This is because the package of support measures is addressed to national governments with an interest in the strategic development of their national youth policy in the longer term, even though these usually reach beyond the national level. Furthermore, national authorities engaging with these measures commit to full participation irrespective of the level addressed by the measures;
- ▶ the requesting party has to be located in either a member state of the Council of Europe or in a state that has signed the European Cultural Convention.

### The package elements

The package is made up of three main categories of offer and support measure of which all member states of the Council of Europe and states parties to its European Cultural Convention may avail themselves depending on their interests and needs, and also to which they can contribute their specific expertise.

These are:

- ▶ Multilateral support measures prepared by the Youth Department and in which all member states and states parties to the European Cultural Convention may participate;
- ▶ Bilateral support measures specifically tailored to meet individual states' needs upon request;
- ▶ Standing resources that can be used by any states on their own initiative.



Each of these categories includes several key activities. Almost all have a peer-to-peer learning component and pursue the aim of learning across borders, as well as European exchange, knowledge production and transfer.

The different activities and the modalities of how states can engage with these measures are described below, including through first-hand testimony from previous users.

## 2.1. Multilateral support measures and activities

### What are they?

Multilateral support measures are activities prepared by the Youth Department and offered to interested representatives of public authorities, bodies and institutions in the states represented in the CDEJ. They are organised to foster peer learning and exchange in the youth sector. Usually, the CDEJ decides on the priority themes for these activities, individual states offer to host one (or more), and the costs are shared between the hosting state and the Youth Department. Multilateral activities are usually open to the participation of individuals and authorities based on interest through an application or registration procedure. Some are also organised following a request to the Youth Department from a specific state.

### A . CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Every year, the Youth Department is charged by the CDEJ with organising a series of capacity-building activities as part of the CDEJ's annual programme. The number and type of activities are decided upon by the CDEJ on the basis of the budget available and the offers/requests received from states. The nature of the activities is fairly constant with three main training formats being implemented, as follows:

#### The European University on Youth Policies (Summer University)

##### **Description:**

The European University on Youth Policies, otherwise known as the Summer University, aims to increase the motivation and develop the competences of CDEJ and Advisory Council members, as well as other civil servants with an interest in the thematic focus of the event; promote Council of Europe youth policy standards; and for those who participate in the co-management, help them to get to know better the system. Summer Universities are organised to improve participants' understanding of European approaches to youth policy; familiarise participants with the values, objectives, programmes and structures of the Council of Europe and its Youth Department, and of the European Union's youth policy and programmes; acquaint participants with the



reality of the young people, youth policy and youth work of the host country; exchange knowledge and views on youth policy issues relevant to the debates prevailing in the Council of Europe's youth sector, and to facilitate peer advice and networking.

Summer Universities are organised periodically, and often in summer (hence the name). These activities are hosted by individual states (sometimes linked to the chairmanships of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers), and have a thematic focus of relevance to both the host and the youth sector. Over the years, Summer Universities have been organised on Roma youth issues, youth participation, co-management, social inclusion of young people, mobility, to mention just a few themes. The programme usually alternates inputs with field visits and practical on-site meetings. This methodology helps participants to understand the practical implications of abstract concepts.

**Procedures:**

States interested in hosting a Summer University should contact the secretariat of the CDEJ ([cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)). Requests should come from the country's CDEJ representative and include a proposal for the theme and main programme priorities, a brief presentation of the proposed venue and three potential dates. In order to ensure proper preparation of the Summer University, states should submit their proposal no later than 12 months in advance of the activity.

**The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres**

**Description:**

The Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres is an opportunity for existing or planned youth centres in states to subscribe to the values and youth policy priorities of the Council of Europe. It offers them a means of encouraging quality development on the basis of the youth sector's established standards for educational and policy approaches, for international networking and exchange through a dedicated platform, a mechanism for the promotion of quality standards in non-formal education and international youth work, as well as access to specialised training.



Youth centres are awarded the Quality Label for promoting the Council of Europe's values, youth policy approaches and youth work standards; a qualitative assessment process involving governmental and non-governmental experts from other states is organised by the Youth Department to ensure this is the case. The criteria for this assessment have been established through an extensive process of intergovernmental consensus building in the CDEJ. The community of centres acquiring the Label is constantly growing. As a result, the Label has developed both social and political recognition around Europe as a sign of excellence in youth work. The costs involved



in the acquisition of the Label are shared by the Council of Europe Youth Department and the requesting authority and youth centre.

**Procedures:**

Youth Centres interested in acquiring the Label may consult the explanatory brochure or the dedicated webpage on the youth portal. These contain all relevant instructions on how to begin the process, and explain all administrative and financial procedures. A list of youth centres having been awarded the Label is available on the same webpage.

**”** *Being part of the Quality Label programme brought about changes in Timisoara Youth Centre (FITT) from the very beginning – starting with the internal changes made in order to be able to become one of the labelled centres. After we got the Label, we experienced changes in at least three important areas:*

*1 – Local/national co-operation – public authorities became more open for co-operation with us, with the result that we became part of the National Consultative Body to the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Romania. Trust in our organisation has increased, so it is easier to start co-operation with partners both in Timisoara and in Romania.*

*2 – International co-operation – we started to receive requests to act as partners in different projects, we noticed that we are selected to be partners in applications more often because our work is validated by an external body. We are now also asked to participate as experts in the field of youth and youth policies by universities or different bodies. We received requests from Athena and Bucharest to help them to develop their own municipal youth centres and have begun that process.*

*3 – Educational programme development – having this trust accorded by the Council of Europe we managed to persuade the West University of Timisoara to start a formal educational programme for youth workers together with the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Taking part in the Quality Label programme and facing the challenge to acquire the Label had a big impact on the activities of our youth centre and especially on our staff. We learned about our strengths, but more importantly how to improve our work. Since then, we have developed internal procedures and standards for the work of our Centre. This has not only increased the quality of our work, but also made us more efficient. Having the Label means prestige for us, but also a positive pressure to evolve. Now we are considered an example of how youth work should be done in Romania.*

*Mihai Adrian VILCEA, Vice President Timis County Youth Foundation /  
Fundația Județeană pentru Tineret Timiș*



## Seminars

### **Description:**

The Youth Department organises other multilateral activities of interest and use to representatives of public authorities working with young people and on youth policy in Europe. These are often 'one-off' seminars and activities to explore specific issues and priorities of the CDEJ in a given period. Sometimes, these activities are organised in or by states at the request of the CDEJ, with the programmatic and/or financial support of the Youth Department. Activities of this kind are advertised on a regular basis on the youth portal ([www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth)). They are generally organised according to the principle of open participation through an online application or registration procedure.

### **Procedures:**

States wishing to co-organise such an activity should contact the secretariat of the CDEJ ([cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)) with a proposal for the main theme and programme elements of the activity, providing a rationale for how it corresponds to the priorities of the requesting state's youth sector. Costs for such activities are usually shared between the Council of Europe and the host state.

## Secondments and traineeships

### **Description:**

Staff of governmental authorities can also develop their competences by taking up a period of service in the Council of Europe's Youth Department through a secondment or traineeship with the European Youth Foundation or the Youth Policy Division, which are located in Strasbourg (France) or in the Education and Training Division which is split over the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and in Budapest (Hungary).

*Secondments:* The Council of Europe regularly advertises positions to be filled by nationals of a given country, already employed in public service, often mid-career professionals. These are known as secondments. Seconded staff are fully integrated into the functioning of the Youth Department as members of staff. They have the opportunity to develop an understanding of the European perspective promoted by the Council of Europe.

*Traineeships:* For more junior professionals, the Youth Department offers the opportunity to apply for a traineeship, over a period of three to six months, in one of the European Youth Centres or with the European Youth Foundation. Trainees learn about the Council of Europe's approach to youth policy and youth work, benefitting from on-the-job training and supervision by an experienced member of staff.





### ***Procedures:***

To find out more about the benefits of secondments and traineeships and how to apply, consult the website of the Department for Human Resources ([www.coe.int/jobs](http://www.coe.int/jobs)).

## **B. OTHER MULTILATERAL ACTIVITIES**

### **The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card**

A partial agreement allows member states to join or abstain from a certain activity advocated by other member states. A partial agreement has its own budget and working methods which are determined by its members. The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card was set up in 1991 following the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for youth in Lisbon (Portugal), which advocated an increase in youth mobility. The aims of this Partial Agreement are to:

- ▶ facilitate youth mobility as well as young people's access to the various goods and services necessary for their personal and cultural development through a Youth Card scheme;
- ▶ foster the development of better youth policies with and for member governments.

Anyone under the age of 30 can become a youth card-holder – there is no need to be a student or a resident of a European country. Youth cards provide young people – residents or travellers – access to advice and benefits, as well as discounts on mobility offers, accommodation, cultural programmes, language courses, and also services and products both on- and offline. Youth cards are issued by national youth card organisations. The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) works to ensure that youth card organisations provide quality services to young people.

The second goal caters to the interests and needs of governments with regard to youth mobility and youth cards. The work programme aims to generate and mobilise knowledge on mobility issues, to share best practices and to develop improved policy solutions for this field. Best-practice publications and recommendations for specific action to member states and EYCA member organisations are the main outputs. The work programme is open to states both members of the Partial Agreement and non-members, although the latter participate at their own expense.

### ***Procedures:***

The procedures for joining the Partial Agreement differ according to whether a state is already a member of the Council of Europe or a state party to the European Cultural Convention or not.

For the former, they may join the Partial Agreement at any moment by simply making a declaration to this effect to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe by means



of an official letter or a note verbale from either the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Permanent Representative of the country.

For states neither members of the Council of Europe nor parties to the European Cultural Convention, the Committee of Ministers may invite any non-member state to join the Partial Agreement, following the consultation of any other non-member states already participating, on a proposal by the European Youth Card Association and the Partial Agreement's Board of Co-ordination.

For more information on applying for membership, please send a request to: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int).

**”** *The Partial Agreement has been very useful as it helped us get in touch with the Ministry of Youth and Sport. It brings us more visibility and credibility on the national level, as we act in the framework of this internationally recognised structure, which takes on board both youth-card and governmental representatives. Vice versa, it enables us to bring the issues of youth mobility from the local and national levels directly to the international level, providing space for knowledge exchange and networking leading to joint initiatives.*

*Gazela Pudar Draško, Evropski omladinski centar (EOC)  
EYCA member organisation in Serbia*

**”** *European Youth Card services are on the ground with young people and this proximity allows the youth card to respond to young people's needs, including on employment issues. This programme has created opportunities for meaningful experience and knowledge sharing between professionals and young people.*

*Gordon, Luxembourg*

**”** *The European Youth Card was an important tool for me from the beginning. Thanks to the card, I received discounts and was provided with insurance which made everyday life much easier since I had to travel a lot. I cannot imagine working without this card. I can use it almost anywhere!*

*Tytus, Poland*



## 2.2. Bilateral support measures and activities

### What are they?

Bilateral support measures are activities specifically tailored to the needs and requests for support with youth policy development by (mostly governmental) stakeholders in the youth sectors in individual states. They are offered to assist public institutions, especially governmental authorities with responsibility for youth issues, to address their youth policy tasks and challenges.<sup>4</sup> Usually, a state will contact the secretariat to initiate this kind of activity, some of which are quite involved and demand extensive time and financial commitment from both the requesting state and the Youth Department. They are designed specifically with certain target groups and categories of participant in mind, they consider both the local context and the needs of the requesting state.

### Which are they?

#### A . CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Seminars, trainings or study visits can be organised to meet the needs of the requesting state.

#### '50/50' trainings

##### **Description:**

Developed by the Youth Department, the '50/50' trainings are designed to develop the competences for co-operation and partnership in the service of youth policy implementation of youth sector professionals, ranging from civil servants responsible for youth policy implementation from national to local levels, to youth-led and other NGOs delivering youth work and services to young people.

The '50/50' concept is based on the understanding that effective youth policy needs to include all stakeholders, notably public authorities (national, regional and/or local) with competences in youth policy and youth organisations or other structures of youth representation and participation. As the name '50/50' suggests, the course concept requires the participation of 50% governmental and 50% non-governmental representatives.

The essential feature of '50/50' trainings is that every aspect of the programme should support dialogue, bringing to the table the multiple perspectives of all of the youth

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4 Here, 'governmental authorities' refers to members of the CDEJ, representatives of the ministry in charge of youth, representatives of the Permanent Representations of member states to the Council of Europe, or any other representatives of national authorities of member states or of state parties to the European Cultural Convention.



sector's stakeholders on youth issues and on the realities of youth policy implementation, including the challenges of democratic and inclusive decision making, responsibilities of public policymakers and authorities delivering policy and accountability mechanisms. The '50/50' concept can be applied to different activity formats, ranging from longer training courses with several phases to short or targeted capacity-building seminars.

### **Procedures:**

'50/50' trainings take place in the requesting country and are co-organised by the Youth Department and the national authorities responsible for youth. The national authorities commit to recruiting both governmental and non-governmental participants and to working with any recommendations resulting from the ensuing dialogue. The costs for '50/50' trainings are shared by the Council of Europe and the requesting country and depend on the desired format, duration and scale of the capacity building foreseen. Requests to organise a '50/50' training should be addressed to the secretariat (cdej@coe.int) no later than February of the year in which it is to be organised and, ideally, 12 full months beforehand. The request should include a strategic rationale for why specifically a '50/50' training would support youth policy development and implementation in the country concerned and how the course will assist the national authorities in implementing their youth policy as a result.

**”** *The '50/50' seminar helped to build bridges between the Albanian stakeholders in the youth field. In particular, it improved the collaboration between NGO youth leaders and public authorities dealing with youth policies. The National Youth Action Plan 2015–20 marks an important turning point in Albanian youth policy and the '50/50' seminar undoubtedly provided an opportunity for mutual learning and dialogue among participants to develop a coherent approach to its implementation. It also showed new ways of involving young people from across the country in activities and programmes of the National Youth Service, how to increase their capacities, and mobilise them as real agents of change.*

*Brisida Sula, Programme Specialist, National Youth Service, Albania.*

**”** *When selected for the long-term training course for trainers I already thought of myself as an experienced trainer and youth worker, but at the start of the course, we participants felt alien! We couldn't find any common language to discuss what we had been doing, let alone on how to measure the impact of our work. We went through this training for trainers in non-formal education and it was like magic, like a childhood birthday party when you get presents all day long. But, for us it was a whole year of personal attainment through self-development, doubt and hard work. We received the gifts of knowledge, skills, evaluation, mentorship and team support. The training changed our work*



*and, moreover, provided us with a lot of very important networking connections, institutional support, a very important feeling that we are not alone in the work we do. It changed my life crucially.*

*Polina Dubina, Head of the International Programme for Children and Youth 'Jey Camp', Moscow, Russian Federation.*

**”** *I was honoured to be accepted for the training for specialists from state, regional and local authorities and representatives of non-governmental organisations working with young people in the Russian Federation ('50/50 training') on the access of young people to social rights in the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg. The training was organised by the Council of Europe's Youth Department and the National Youth Council of Russia. First of all, I should say that this project was an eye-opener for me. I found out about social rights and how different NGOs and policymakers approach them in their work. I learned that there is an agenda for the achievement of social rights, but as a result of the lack of dialogue between NGOs and policymakers, activities are not co-ordinated. The '50/50' training became a unique platform for establishing communication and co-operation. I also discovered human rights education. It is an approach that I will certainly promote through my youth work and in the youth policy development in my region.*

*Yulia Koroleva, Head of 'Youth Centre Motherland' (municipal organisation) and of the Tula Regional Branch of the 'Russian Youth Union', Russian Federation.*

## **B . RAPID RESPONSE**

### **Description:**

As the name suggests, this support measure is intended as a 'quick and easy fix' to a specific question or set of questions. Governmental authorities and other youth sector stakeholders often have questions on youth policy for which they find it challenging to obtain an answer. They might be in the process of establishing new programmes, procedures, legislative measures or other youth policy-related activity, for example establishing a new financing system for youth NGOs, revising the country's youth law, or establishing a qualification process for youth workers, to name just a few. Sometimes they need support to find partners who can offer them advice and expertise. Stakeholders in the youth sector can and do benefit from the experiences of other countries represented in the CDEJ that have already been successful in developing similar initiatives. As a response to any such request for assistance or advice, the Youth Department sends the request to the CDEJ members and relevant specialised networks



for information and examples of good practice. The secretariat then collates all of the responses received or provides its own answer as appropriate.

**Procedures:**

Requests of this kind should be sent to the secretariat ([cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)) who will deal with them as soon as possible. Requesting parties can usually expect a response within a month.

### C. PEER ADVICE AND PEER COACHING

**Description:**

Governments often need more than a rapid response to the youth policy challenges they face, especially in the phases of development and evaluation, or when designing specific programmes. The Youth Department will accept requests for advice and expertise in a specific youth policy field over a longer period of time (12 months or more) and help the country to develop a support process involving two or three other countries that can provide relevant advice on the specific issue over a longer period of time. Depending on the advice needed, the assistance may be provided by CDEJ members or by national experts nominated by the CDEJ members involved in the process. The Youth Department identifies those countries that are best placed to support the requesting party to set up and co-ordinate the process.

In principle, the requesting country is responsible for all costs incurred for the peer-advice/coaching process, i.e. any sending or receiving costs. As a rule, experts involved in this sort of process will be civil servants/national governmental experts, and therefore fees for their involvement are not foreseen. Upon request, the Youth Department can assist financially with international travel costs and insurance for national experts who travel to the requesting country for these processes.

**Procedures:**

Requests for peer-advice/coaching processes should be addressed to the secretariat ([cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)) and include a rationale for the process, the thematic field and description of the issue(s) of concern to the authorities making the request. Should financial support be required, a detailed budget of the expected costs should accompany the request. Requests may be presented at any time, there is no specific deadline, all requests will receive feedback, including follow-up steps, within one month. In the case of requests requiring financial support, the CDEJ Bureau will assess them and take decisions on a rolling basis. Requesting parties should be aware that it can take up to six weeks to set up peer-advice/coaching processes, and up to three months for processes which require financial support.



## D. YOUTH POLICY ADVISORY MISSIONS

### **Description:**

Sometimes the Council of Europe and its international experts are best placed to provide the expertise and advice on youth policy that a government requires. In such cases, the Youth Department can organise a youth policy advisory mission which provides the requesting country with an assessment of a particular aspect in the development of their youth policy or issue of concern. The Youth Department establishes a team of up to a maximum of five independent experts with special expertise in relevant issues, and organises one or a maximum of two short visits to the country to conduct the assessment and prepare recommendations in line with the accepted norms and standards prevailing in the Council of Europe youth sector. The individual expert or team is always accompanied and supported by at least one representative of the requesting national authority with relevant linguistic and thematic expertise. This would usually be the civil servant with responsibility for following up the youth policy advisory mission's recommendations. A concise report is produced, in English or French, containing concrete and practical recommendations pertinent to the youth policy development issues under examination, to be followed up by the authorities in the immediate and medium terms. The report can be made public or remain confidential according to the wish of the requesting authority. The CDEJ might request a report on the progress made in implementing the advisory mission's recommendations approximately 12 months after its completion.

### **Procedures:**

Requests for youth policy advisory missions should be addressed to the secretariat ([cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)), including a rationale for the request, the specific thematic field and a description of the issue(s) of concern to the authorities. There is no specific deadline for such requests, the CDEJ Bureau will examine them on a rolling basis. Requesting parties should be aware that it can take up to three months to set up a youth policy advisory mission. The costs are shared between the Youth Department and the requesting state: the Youth Department covers all international costs (international experts, fees, insurance and travel expenses, etc.), while the requesting state covers all 'local' costs (board and lodging for the international team, travel within the country, translation for meetings and documents, etc.).

**”** *I had the possibility to invite a Council of Europe international team to visit Helsinki for a youth policy advisory mission. The aim of the visit was to contribute to the revision of the Finnish Youth Act. The process was flexible and designed to meet our needs and wishes. The two intensive days that we worked together with the team gave us a valuable external view on some of the topics and helped us*



*to identify some areas that needed further consideration. The process was very open, very constructive and cost-effective. I would warmly recommend other member states to use this instrument and the expertise of the Council of Europe.*

*Seija Astala, Member of the CDEJ, Finland*

## E. INDEPENDENT EXPERTISE OR ASSESSMENT

### **Description:**

Sometimes a government or governmental institution requires specific advice in the development of a new programmatic document, strategy or youth-related piece of legislation. To respond to such needs, the Youth Department can commission an assessment by an independent expert of the document at an early stage in its development to ensure that international perspectives and standards are taken effectively into account. In such cases, the Youth Department identifies a suitably qualified independent international expert to assess the document in line with a mutually agreed framework for analysis taking into consideration the international standards and perspectives prevailing in the Council of Europe youth sector. The expert develops the assessment based on a textual analysis, and if necessary, may be requested to meet with key stakeholders to gain additional understanding of context. The expertise is in either English or French. The requesting state ensures the expert receives all relevant documentation and that all discussions with stakeholders are conducted in one of the two official languages. Requesting states are encouraged to publish the expertise, to discuss its contents in a public hearing with key local youth sector stakeholders and to make any relevant amendments to the document before its adoption. The CDEJ will request a report on how the recommendations have influenced the evolution of the document.

### **Procedures:**

Requests should be submitted in writing by CDEJ members to the secretariat ([cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)) including a rationale, a description of the stage of development of the document concerned, and of the issue(s) of concern to the requesting authorities. Any representative of a governmental body or agency that requires assistance with a policy document, strategy or legislation may submit a request through their representative in the CDEJ. Requests should be made in the earliest stages of development of the document (for example, once the first draft has been completed), this is a basic requirement for the commissioning of the expertise. Documents that are to be adopted imminently or have already been adopted are not eligible for this kind of support. The Council of Europe will cover all costs related to the commissioning of the expertise (usually the expert's fees). The CDEJ Bureau will examine requests on a rolling basis and decide which can be accepted and financed. The number of requests that can be financed in any given year will depend on the budgetary resources available. Requesting parties should be





aware that it can take up to four weeks to organise an expertise, the secretariat will provide a timetable as soon as possible.

## F. INTERNATIONAL REVIEWS OF NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES

International reviews of national youth policy are the most complex and comprehensive of measures available in this package; they require wide-ranging commitment – from political to financial – from both the requesting country and the Council of Europe.

The main milestones include the preparation of a national report on the youth policy and the situation of young people in the country; an expert assessment of the report followed by up to two intensive field visits to the country to study particular perspectives; finalisation of the international report including input from the requesting government; and its presentation at a public hearing.

International reviews are requested by states who wish to:

- ▶ receive advice on their national youth policy;
- ▶ understand ways in which they can meet the Council of Europe's youth policy standards;
- ▶ gain an impartial, international and comparative view of how their youth policy functions within a wider European perspective.

The requesting country is expected to implement part or all of the recommendations contained in the review and submit a progress report to the CDEJ three years after its completion. In addition, further support measures to help the country to implement the review team's recommendations can be considered, including post-review expert visits, the development of youth policy strategies and action plans or capacity-building and training activities.

Thanks to these comprehensive studies, the Council of Europe has been able to identify components that contribute to the development of a harmonised approach to youth policy across Europe and to gain knowledge and expertise for the development and implementation of its own youth policy and programmes.

The experience and methodology of the international youth policy reviews can be adapted to other contexts, for example:

### ***International reviews on a specific youth policy issue***

A policy review process on child and youth participation was developed in 2009 which elaborated on a methodology allowing for a high degree of involvement/commitment of key stakeholders at national level.



### **International reviews of federal youth policies**

A federal country, Belgium, was the subject of an international review in 2010-11, in view of the specific situation regarding the division of responsibilities for youth policy between the Communities, the methodology had to be significantly adapted. The model developed for the Belgian evaluation could be used as a basis for reviewing the youth policies of other federal countries.

### **International reviews at sub-regional level**

Some form of international review at sub-regional level (e.g. the Baltic states, the Caucasus region, the Benelux or Nordic countries, etc.) could be another possibility. The methodology of the review would need further thought but could be envisaged if there was a clear interest from such a group of countries and if it was of relevance to the Council of Europe and its youth policy.

### **Procedures:**

International reviews require a significant commitment in terms of time and resources for both the requesting country and the Council of Europe. As such, requests should be addressed by the minister responsible for youth affairs to the secretariat (cdej@coe.int) and approved by the CDEJ. Given the commitment required (in terms of planning, organisation and budget), requests – including a rationale for the exercise – should be received no later than 1 February of the year preceding the international review. This time frame allows the requesting country sufficient time to prepare the national report as well as to ensure there is a political commitment to follow up any recommendations. The requesting party is responsible for covering the costs of the national review; the costs of the international review are shared by the requesting country and the Council of Europe (e.g. local costs for the international team's field visits are covered by the country, the Council of Europe covers fees and international travel costs).

**”** *In the framework of the review of youth policy in Belgium and the three Communities by an international team of the Council of Europe, experts visited youth policy institutions and youth work projects around the country. The report ‘C'est plus compliqué que ça’ (It's more complicated than it might appear), which was adopted in 2012 by the Joint Council on Youth, reflected very well youth work and youth policy in Belgium and its three Communities. It also provided meaningful suggestions for the improvement of youth policy. The international expert team demonstrated genuine interest in the topic and the different perspectives of researchers, youth policymakers and youth work institutions were of added value to the process. The Flemish, the French and the German-speaking Communities welcome(d) very much this outside view on their policies.*

*Laurence Hermand, Armand Meys & Jan Vanhee,  
members of the CDEJ for the three Communities of Belgium*



**”** To reform youth policy in Ukraine we have to develop, create and implement new mechanisms for youth participation and youth mobility, education for human rights and non-discrimination. The Council of Europe youth sector provided us with best practices and practical tools in those areas. The most important thing we have gained from the co-operation with the Council of Europe youth sector is experience, knowledge and understanding of youth involvement in the decision-making process. Council of Europe instruments facilitate our work and make the learning process an easier and more pleasurable process.

*Irina Belyaeva, Member of the CDEJ for Ukraine*

## G. STUDY VISITS

### **Description:**

Study visits to explore and get to know the Council of Europe institutions can be organised for small groups of youth experts and youth workers. They provide the opportunity to learn about the youth sector's instruments, policies and programmes and other relevant Council of Europe activities. Visits are usually organised over two to three working days, depending on the theme and the intensity of the programme proposed which can be agreed upon with the secretariat of the Youth Department. The programme is discussed with the CDEJ member of the country organising the study visit. Usually, study visits include such activities as meetings and consultations with staff and political representatives of the Council of Europe, visits to the European Youth Centre and the European Court on Human Rights.

### **Procedure:**

CDEJ members wishing to organise a study visit to the Council of Europe should contact the secretariat ([cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)), preferably well in advance. The sharing of costs for study visits is negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

## 2.3. Standing resources

### **What are standing resources?**

The Council of Europe Youth Department and the CDEJ have developed a series of permanent open-access resources on and around youth policy issues, of which any interested party, from individuals to institutions, can avail free of charge.



## The Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth



The EU-CoE youth partnership is a co-operation programme that was launched in 1998. The overall goal is to foster synergies between the youth-oriented activities of the two institutions by working on themes of interest for both and on issues that justify a common European approach. The activities address the needs of young people and the wider youth field. The priorities are participation/citizenship, social inclusion; and the quality development of youth work. The partnership has two main objectives:

- ▶ “Better knowledge” – establishing a clear picture of current and upcoming challenges and trends in participation for all young people, based on research evidence, sociological and statistical analysis and input from within and beyond the youth sector;
- ▶ “Promotion of youth work” – advocacy regarding the contribution of youth work to youth participation, including innovative youth work, partnerships, outreach, learning mobility and recognition of youth work.

Priority is given to ‘co-operation with a regional focus’ specifically the regions of Eastern Europe and Caucasus, South-East Europe (Western Balkans), South Mediterranean and also to ‘communication and information’, to ensure results reach as wide an audience as possible.

### The European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKYP)



Part of the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKYP) has developed an online database to provide the youth sector with a single access point to reliable knowledge and information about the situation of young people across Europe. EKYP aims to enhance knowledge transfers between the fields of research, policy and practice through the collection and dissemination of information about youth policy, research and practice in Europe and beyond. It includes sections on the situation of young people and youth policies in individual countries, specific youth policy topics of interest to both the Council of Europe and the European Commission, a searchable online library of documents relevant to youth policy, a database of good practices and a glossary of youth and youth policy definitions. A network of national correspondents, who are youth policy specialists, is responsible for collecting national data.



## The Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR)



PEYR is a unique initiative at European level and is a contribution of both the Council of Europe and the European Commission to evidence-based policymaking in the field of youth. The PEYR network consists of researchers and experts from across Europe who possess a wide range of expertise in different policy areas connected to youth.

PEYR members are selected on the basis of periodic open calls. It is used by both the European Commission and the Council of Europe, supporting the work of their partnership on youth, but is also open to any other interested stakeholder as a source of expertise and knowledge on youth. Besides providing expertise on demand, PEYR members also meet once a year to discuss broader issues connected to youth research and provide input to the two partner institutions.

## Youth information and counselling

The delivery of youth information is a central function of youth work and shares its key values: it is open to all young people and acts in their interest by covering issues that matter to them and by providing a large spectrum of activities. Youth information builds on the fact that it is not possible to make a sound decision without being informed about one's options and opportunities. In this context, youth information and counselling services provide young people with guidance and support, which will help them to make their choices constructively, develop critical thinking and enhance their autonomous decision making.

The Partnership Agreement between the Council of Europe and the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA) is an instrument to support member states in setting up and running quality youth information services. ERYICA organises regular training activities for professionals and organisations involved in the delivery of youth information and youth work. Since 1997, many activities, studies and manuals have been implemented and produced in the framework of the Council of Europe's co-operation with ERYICA.



## 3. Useful contacts

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### **Council of Europe Youth Department**

[www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth)  
Email: [youth@coe.int](mailto:youth@coe.int)

### **Youth Policy Division**

Agora  
1, Quai Jacoutot  
F- 67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
Email: [cdej@coe.int](mailto:cdej@coe.int)  
Tel + 33 3 90 21 52 54

### **European Youth Centre Strasbourg**

30, rue Pierre de Coubertin  
F-67000 Strasbourg  
Email: [reception.eycs@coe.int](mailto:reception.eycs@coe.int)  
Tel + 33 3 88 41 23 00

### **European Youth Centre Budapest**

Zivatar utca 1-3  
H-1024 Budapest  
Email: [eycb.secretariat@coe.int](mailto:eycb.secretariat@coe.int)  
Tel + 36 1 212 40 78

### **European Youth Foundation**

30, rue Pierre de Coubertin  
F-67000 Strasbourg  
Email: [eyf@coe.int](mailto:eyf@coe.int)  
Tel + 33 3 88 41 20 19





## 4. Glossary of structures referred to in this brochure



The aim of the European Cultural Convention is to develop mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity, to safeguard European culture, to promote national contributions to Europe's common cultural heritage respecting the same fundamental values and to encourage in particular the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the Parties to the Convention. The Convention contributes to concerted action by encouraging cultural activities of European interest. For more information please use the QR-code.



The **Advisory Council on Youth** is the non-governmental partner in the co-management structure. It is made up of 30 representatives from youth NGOs and networks in Europe and its main task is to advise the Committee of Ministers on all questions relating to youth. Specifically, the Advisory Council helps to ensure youth policies are mainstreamed into the Council of Europe's programme of activities by providing opinions and proposals to all of the Organisation's bodies. It also ensures that young people are involved in other activities of the Council of Europe and promotes the policies beyond the Organisation. The Advisory Council on Youth promotes the co-management system in decision-making processes at all levels as a good practice for youth participation, democracy and inclusion, whilst preparing and encouraging young generations to take responsibility for building their desired society.





The European Youth Card Association (EYCA) is a non-profit organisation representing youth card organisations across Europe. Its members are committed to promoting youth mobility and active citizenship to its cardholders. EYCA has one member organisation in every country/territory where it is represented; this member develops the youth card and provides young people access to discounts and benefits in the fields of mobility, accommodation, culture, services and products. EYCA member organisations are NGOs and private foundations, as well as state and public institutions and social benefit enterprises. The highest governing body is the General Assembly, which elects ten members of the Board and the president. For more information please use the QR-code.



ERYICA was established to implement Council of Europe Recommendation No. R (90)7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe. It has member organisations in many Council of Europe countries. For more information please use the QR-code.

## Council of Europe and youth policy

### Support, assistance and resources for youth policy development in member states

This brochure is for representatives of national authorities responsible for youth issues who are interested in the standard-setting work of the Council of Europe youth sector in the field of youth policy. Readers will find information about the engagement of the Council of Europe in this sector, including its key principles, such as co-management which fosters youth participation in decision making, as well as about the Council of Europe's main activities in the area of youth policy. Furthermore, readers can learn about the package of support measures offered to governments interested in developing and/or evaluating their youth policies, in part or in their entirety, in view of international, specifically Council of Europe standards and about how to engage with those.

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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