

## *Update on the Youth Policy activities*

### **Expert workshop "The history of youth work in Europe and its relevance for today's youth work policy"**



This workshop took place in Blankenberge, Belgium, from 26 – 29 of May 2008. It was attended by researchers, policy-makers and youth work practitioners (trainers, representatives of NGOs, youth workers / leaders) from Belgium, Malta, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom, Norway and Serbia, in order to discuss the history of youth work and its relevance to contemporary youth policies. The workshop was co-organised by the Youth Partnership and the Belgian Flemish Community's Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults.

The workshop set out to combine the transnational perspective with a new, broader perspective on the history of youth work, with an eye to examining national youth work policies and pinpointing their inherent paradoxes. The seminar was not geared to elaborating a hard-and-fast youth work concept in isolation from the historical and cultural context. Its purpose was rather to identify the close links between the developments in youth work and the broader social, cultural and historical trends. What are the convictions and concepts underpinning youth work? How do they relate to the recurrent youth work paradox, viz that youth work endeavours to produce active and democratic citizens but

at the same time seems inaccessible to young people who are excluded from active citizenship? Tracing the roots of youth work and identifying different evolutions within and between countries help initiate a debate on the real issues of current youth work. A better understanding of historical developments and concepts enables policy-makers to define appropriate youth policies for today.

The key issues emerging from the discussions were the relationship between young people, youth work and youth policy and the inability of youth work genuinely to reach all young people. In most youth outreach concentrates on specific target groups and comes up against a number of dilemmas: young peoples' personal development vs. the expectations of society, intervention by the state / public authorities vs. autonomy, and control vs. emancipation. This of course impacts on policy-making and the conceptual development of youth work and youth policy.

The workshop showed that we need more knowledge and better understanding of the historical development of youth work in general and of its impact on policy formulation in particular if we want to base youth policy and the concepts of youth work more solidly on the actual facts.

The organisers agreed to hold a second workshop on the subject next year in May, inviting additional countries to present their historical developments and also to discuss the relationship between youth and social work. This will lead on to a conference on the same topic under Belgium's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2010.

The results of the workshop will be documented in a comprehensive report by Griet Verschelden, to be uploaded by the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. The basic input to the workshop by Filip Cousseé is available in the form of the booklet "A History of Youth Work", which is available in the EKCYP.

# "Continuing the Pathway towards Recognition". Expert workshop on the recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field



This expert workshop took place from 9 to 11/6/2008 in Prague, concentrating on the issue of recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field and taking stock of developments since the endorsement of the White Paper "A new impetus for European youth" adopted by the Commission in November 2001. It brought together participants from various backgrounds: practitioners, researchers and policy-makers such as representatives of the European institutions and of national governments, youth organisations, universities, the National Agencies for the "Youth in Action" Programme, etc.

They discussed the current situations in their respective countries, examples of good practice in enhancing the recognition of non-formal learning in the youth field and possibilities and needs for future initiatives and partnerships among the stakeholders present. The workshop was jointly organised by the Youth Partnership, the SALTO Training and Co-operation Resource Centre, the National Agency for the Youth in Action programme of the Czech Republic and the Czech Ministry for Education, Youth and Sports.

The aim of the workshop was to continue discussions on the strategies to improve the social and official recognition of non-formal learning, edu-

cation and training in youth work activities as published four years ago in the joint working paper by the youth departments of the European Commission and the Council of Europe and the CoE – EU Youth Partnership "Pathways towards Recognition".

The participants in the workshop comprehensively discussed developments over last few years in the field of recognition and validation of non-formal learning and suggested some future strategies and measures, particularly in the youth sector. It was essential to develop a com-

mon understanding of the subject and to analyse the needs of different groups and stakeholders in the practical aspects of youth work. The participants stressed the vital importance of close links with other sectors, such as labour market and employment, education and training, and civil society when discussing any future agenda and strategy in youth policy, youth research and youth work practice.

Despite all the progress made in the last years, the workshop highlighted the outstanding need to improve the formal and social recognition of non-formal learning. It also confirmed the enormous impact of the joint working paper "Pathways towards Recognition" in recent years and the need to update this paper from an institutional point of view. The workshop produced the material for such an update, which would result in an ambitious range of further initiatives for the coming years.

The discussions are to continue with a conference to be organised under the Czech Republic's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2009. The complete documentation and report will be provided on the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy in the Youth Partnership website ([www.youth-partnership.net](http://www.youth-partnership.net)).