



Youth policy in the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

volume IV



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AdriGov

ADRIATIC GOVERNANCE OPERATIONAL PLAN



*OSSERVATORIO
Interregionale
sulla Cooperazione
allo Sviluppo*

YOUTH POLICY IN THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION.

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The aim of the report is to identify strategies and initiatives undertaken at European level in the field of youth, analyze the youth policies in the 8 countries belonging to the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region, examine programmes and strategies insisting on the area and detect if and what connections exist between EUSAIR and youth policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Europe’s future depends on its youth¹. Yet, life chances of many young people are blighted”. This is a conclusion of the Commission Communication on the ‘Renewed Social Agenda’² which seeks to create more opportunities for EU citizens, improve access to opportunities for all and demonstrate solidarity.

Youth are a priority of the European Union’s social vision, and the current crisis compounds the need to nurture young human capital. The EU communication responds by setting out a strategy for the future of policies for youth in Europe. It proposes a new, Open Method of Coordination that is flexible and simplified in its reporting and reinforces links with policy areas covered by the European Youth Pact in the Lisbon Strategy for Jobs and Growth. Adopting a cross-sectoral approach, it embeds short-term responses in a long-term effort to empower young people. The strategy would create favourable conditions for youth to develop their skills, fulfil their potential, work, actively participate in society, and engage more in the building of the EU project. Young people are not a burdensome responsibility but a critical resource to society which can be mobilised to achieve higher social goals.

Europeans are living longer, having children later and there are fewer young people. The 15- 29 age group is projected to represent 15.3 % of Europe’s population in 2050, whereas it is currently 19.3%³. These demographic changes affect families, intergenerational solidarity and economic growth. Globalisation can bring growth and jobs, but it can also bring about specific challenges for vulnerable workers such as youth, as demonstrated by the crisis⁴. Climate change and energy security issues call for adjustments in the behaviour and lifestyles of coming generations. Key competences flexible enough to develop appropriate skills throughout one’s life are vital, and early school leaving is still a key issue.

Young people value friendship, respect, tolerance and solidarity and this generation is perhaps the highest-educated, technically-advanced, and most mobile ever. However, like the rest of society, they face greater individualism and competitive pressures and do not necessarily share the same opportunities. Through extensive consultation across Europe, the following specific challenges have been identified as topping the list of young people’s concerns: education, employment, social inclusion, and health. Europe’s youth need to be equipped to take advantage of opportunities such as civic and political participation, volunteering, creativity, entrepreneurship, sport and global engagement.

Difficulties in education, employment, inclusion and health, further combined to problems in finance, housing or transport, make it difficult for young people to achieve autonomy, a situation where they have the resources and opportunities to manage their own lives, fully participate in society and decide independently.

2. YOUTH POLICY: A DEFINITION

Youth are defined by the United Nations as between the ages of 15 and 24. “Young people everywhere have aspirations and want to participate fully in the lives of their societies. Are key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. Should live under conditions that encourage their imagination, ideals, energy and vision to flourish to the benefit of their societies. Are confronted by a paradox: to seek to be integrated into the existing society and to serve as a force to transform it”⁵.

As a result, youth policies are the measures implemented in the territories (from local to global) with the aim to create a system of actions and interventions with public value, which aim to give young people the means, opportunities, tools and possibilities and paths to live to the full and positive transition to adult life, intended as a condition for greater autonomy and a status of full citizenship, with full enjoyment of rights and duties (and not only ownership of rights).

1 Meaning broadly speaking teenagers and young adults from 13 to 30 years old

2 COM (2008) 412

3 Source: Eurostat

4 COM (2009) 34

5 United Nations (2007), *Making Commitments Matter - Toolkit for young people to evaluate national youth policy*.

2.1 A EUROPEAN DEFINITION⁶

The aim of youth policy is to make easier the transition of young people to adult life, facilitating processes of autonomy (in terms of full usability and not just ownership of rights) and interdependence (and not just dependence).

Youth policy has two main objectives:

1. create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market;
2. promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

The guiding principle of youth policy is that young people must be involved in decisions relating to measures and actions that affect them, so both in the planning and evaluation stages, as well as in the implementation stage.

2.2 AN ITALIAN DEFINITION

The national literature in the youth field (and associated research)⁷ shows that youth policy (or public actions in the youth field) means a dual approach involving the development and promotion of two categories of measures:

1. actions that have young people as direct beneficiaries of the measures (i.e. persons belonging to a specific age group): these are actions specifically targeted at young people in non-formal learning environments, participation and volunteering, youth work, mobility and information;
2. intentional integration actions, based on a transversal approach, for short and long term, in all those areas which affect the lives of young people themselves, in particular education and training, work, right to education, university, research, home, young couples, equal opportunities, cultural diversity, transport, civil service, access to credit, employment and entrepreneurship, health and wellness, sports, youth tourism, civic participation, associations, youth organizations, volunteering, social inclusion, youth and the world, creativity, art and culture.

The cross-disciplinary approach allows to take into account the specific nature of the situation of young people in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages, in all these areas. If for these actions the recipients' age range is very wide (reaching even up to 40 years for certain measures, e.g. young couples), the specific interventions on young people generally focus on a range from 13/15 to 25 years.

The attention of the European Union on these matters is very high, but these measures fall under the competence of the Member State, which is organized according to its own laws, then in Italy according to the principle of shared responsibility of the Regions (under the Conference State, Regions and Local Authorities) and of horizontal subsidiarity (Article 118, Italian Constitution), that is, with the active involvement of the third sector, youth organizations and young people.

⁶ Source: Council of Ministers of the European Union (Youth Session), Resolution No 15131/09: A renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), Brussels, 17 November 2009.

⁷ Centro Studi Gruppo Abele, *Bibliografia su Giovani e politiche giovanili*. See <http://centrostudi.gruppoabele.org/>

3. THE EU YOUTH POLICY: THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The growing importance that the youth field has assumed within the European public policies is mainly due to the social importance that young people have had since the sixties. In recent years young people have gained a visible and strong presence on the social level and have stood as authoritative and credible interlocutors in respect of the school and political authorities. In the early seventies the interventions in favour of young people represented the social intervention instruments for the integration of areas in decline or disadvantaged sections of the population. These interventions were all characterized by a stage of development still in its early stage, whose target audience was defined in relation to their age or exposure to a particular risk or hardship. It is possible to date the first European measures to assist young people to 1972, when the Council of Europe established the *Foundation* and the *European Youth Centre* (based in Strasbourg), in order to promote and support national and international efforts towards young generations.

A time of significant awareness of the European Community and its Member States on the issue of youth is represented by the proclamation of 1985 as International Year of Youth by the General Assembly of the United Nations. With this act the UN awakened and stimulated the local and national interest in the field of youth policy. Following this event the Council of Europe promoted the first European Conference of Ministers responsible for youth during which it was drawn up a document where the Member States undertook to set up a *National Youth Council* as an autonomous and independent body. During this first conference for the first time the European youth policy were considered like the broader social policies of the various States; also youth associations has been given a great importance in the development and planning of activities at the local level. Indeed, in 1986, the first European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYCA) was established and in 1988 the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ - Comité directeur européen pour la jeunesse) was set up to promote intergovernmental cooperation in the implementation of policies affecting young people.

Since the end of the 80s and especially in the 90s, the Community action for young people has been intensified in the field of education, vocational training and mobility. In particular, in order to accelerate the construction of a European cultural area, the planned interventions were aimed, above all, to the promotion and harmonization of youth in society. In this regard, in 1989, the European Commission initiated the three-year programme *Youth for Europe*⁸, aimed precisely to encourage exchanges between young people from different EU countries. The positive experience of this programme has not only enabled the development of more and more specific Community actions in the field, but has also allowed youth policy to become one of the key priorities of the EU. In fact it has brought forward the legislation enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty which emphasizes the importance of cultural exchanges.

Another important moment in the development of European youth policy is represented by the approval, in 1990, of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (later revised in 2003). The Charter proposes to local authorities, as the authorities closest to young people, an articulated commitment with a view to facilitating their participation in the decision-making process, suggesting various operational tools including information and training. In this document, therefore, it is well-emphasized the role of local authorities; in particular, they have the task of ensuring that young people can integrate into society, and the duty to support not only those individuals most at risk of exclusion, but all young people without distinction, so that EU can better meet the challenges of society and contribute to the success of the various policies.

Only with the entry into force of the *Maastricht Treaty*⁹, in 1993, however, the interventions for young people begin to be jointly decided by the intergovernmental and supranational bodies. In the Treaty of Rome of 1957, with which the European Economic Community was established, youth policies were not in fact treated as an area of Community competence and interventions for young people were addressed in a transversal manner within the broader cultural policy. From the enlargement process of the Community's areas of intervention,

⁸ Official Journal of the European Communities, L 158, 25 June 1988.

⁹ Signed on 7 February 1992 in Maastricht by the twelve member countries of the then European Community and entered into force on 1 November 1993.

resulting from the Maastricht Treaty, the youth, therefore, has become an area of cross-border cooperation¹⁰. Although this Treaty does not have a specific rule to deal with the youth field, the Articles 149 and 150, respectively dedicated to education and vocational training, have constituted, in this area of policy, the legal basis for the development of Community actions concerning young people while the article 151 served as the legal basis for the promotion of European cultural cooperation.

With the Maastricht Treaty the young and the theme of youth begin to become important issues. However, two aspects should be taken into account: the first one concerns the relationship between youth, culture and integration; the second relates to the issue of jurisdiction. As regards the first aspect, it is observed that the process of European construction, since its origins, has set itself the task of contributing to the harmonious and supportive development between Member States. The development of a solidarity dimension has put a strong focus on the cultural sector and youth as determining factors of the integration process. However, with regard to the second aspect, it should be noted that the Union's intervention in the context of these policies remains limited. Although the European Commission play an important role as an intermediary between national governments, encouraging Member States to take more courageous and innovative policies in the field of youth, youth policy remain a responsibility of national governments. The provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, have conferred the primary responsibility for youth policies to the various levels of Member States' internal jurisdiction; it is evident, therefore, that youth policies remain an area where the EU can only take coordination, integration and support actions, having neither exclusive competence, nor shared competence. To date, the situation has not changed; despite these policies have assumed considerable importance on the European agenda, they still fall within the exclusive competence of national governments, which are responsible for deciding and implementing measures to support youth.

The Maastricht Treaty in 1993 introduced the theme of youth as one of the most important for the construction of the European Union, but the *Lisbon Strategy*, adopted in March 2000, definitively established the fundamental role that the European young generation play in the creation of the "knowledge economy"¹¹, as well as the responsibilities of Member States in the formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, programs and actions in favour of youth.

The adoption of the *White Paper 'A new impetus for European youth'*, by the European Commission in November 2001 (updated in 2003), marked a great turning point in European youth policy of the new millennium. It is recognised for having considered, for the first time, youth as a strong point in European construction and not as a problem, as well as for having given the "youth" dimension a higher profile in all policy areas. For this reason, the White Paper on youth, born of a thorough synthesis of all the views and reflections gathered in a long and well-structured consultation process (which lasted about a year) of youth representatives from all member countries, represents a planning document to address the youth policy at Community level.

Starting from the findings about the current European youth condition, such as extension of youth, political disaffection of young people and socio-cultural integration of youngsters, the Commission, on the one hand, stressed the need to apply, even in the context of European youth policy, the open coordination method as a tool for achieving greater convergence towards the main EU objectives and foster the exchange of best practices; on the other hand, the EC highlighted the need for "taking more account of youth in other policies"¹². Regarding youth policy as such, i.e. as measures designed and intended exclusively for young people, some priority areas of intervention have been identified: the renewal of the forms of youth participation in public life (spread of regional and national youth councils, European youth Forum), the improvement of information on European issues (creation of a portal dedicated to young people: https://europa.eu/youth/EU_en), the promotion of volunteering as an educational experience and a factor of integration, as well as an increased focus on issues concerning youth world.

The White Paper on youth heralded the dawn of a new era in the overall European policy making because it has not only identified the priority intervention areas for cooperation at European level in the field of youth

10 Irer (2006), *Rapporto finale: Unità di sintesi sulle politiche giovanili nelle regioni dell'Unione Europea*.

11 European Commission, 2003.

12 European Commission (2001), *White Paper 'A new impetus for European youth'*, Brussels, p. 14.

policy, but it has also defined the management method of the Community decision-making process. In particular, the European Commission through this act set the strategic goal of expanding new forms of governance of interventions in favour of young people within the Community area, by providing national and local institutions with the necessary guidelines in order to allow youth participation via governance processes based on an open and inclusive approach¹³.

The strategic approach given to youth policy with the adoption of the White Paper on youth ties in with another important and previous document: the *White Paper on Governance*, adopted by the Commission in July 2001. In this perspective, the White Paper on youth can be considered as the first application of the White Paper on the new European governance, in which is supported the need for more openness in the process of EU policies, to ensure a wider participation of citizens and organizations in the definition of public policies. So, also in the White Paper on youth, partnership between the various levels of government and the appropriate involvement of local authorities and civil society represent a key point in the development of these policies at European level.

Beyond the specific areas of intervention, the cornerstone of this document is its horizontal policy where integrated measures ensure consistent and coordinated efforts between the different political and administrative sectors. In this way youth policy becomes a cross-sectoral and integrated policy, which aims to improve and develop the living conditions and participation of young people, embracing all aspects concerning them. In other words, young people are not seen as one of the EU's social policy tool, but as the key to the renewal of European democracies on which European citizenship can be built.

On the basis of the principles set out in the White Paper on youth, in 2002 the Council of Europe established the *Framework for European cooperation*, which in November 2005 has been updated with the inclusion of the *European Youth Pact*. With this pact Youth Ministers have committed to incorporate youth policy in major national policies. Specifically, the document, in line with the White Paper identifies four principal issues: the vulnerability of young people, the need to develop solidarity across the generations, in an ageing society, the need to equip young people through their education and training and, finally, the need for better coherence across all policy areas that concern young people. Therefore, the Pact is the first port of call for the White Paper's strategy, since it recognises the importance of integrating young people into the working society as a precondition for achieving the objectives of growth and employment as set in the Lisbon summit, and before that in the Employment Guidelines of the Amsterdam Treaty, which further underline the need to implement policies to prevent long-term unemployment, the improvement of education and training systems, the development of youth entrepreneurship and the creation of new jobs.

Other two important references in the area of youth policy date back to 2009. In that year the European Commission presented 'An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address the youth challenges and opportunities'¹⁴. Also this document - as for the White Paper on Youth - is a summary of a consultation work between national authorities and youth organizations (the European Youth Forum, the National Youth Agencies), undertaken during 2008. The methodology used to involve young people shows, once again, the intent of promoting and favouring a permanent and structured dialogue with the new generations. By this communication the Commission asked the Member States for the period 2010 - 2018 to cooperate in the youth field through a renewed open method of coordination and a cross-sectoral approach, including both short- and long-term actions so as to embrace the key policy areas concerning young people.

Later in November 2009, the Council of Youth Ministers adopted a 'Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)', according to which in the period up to and including 2018, the overall objectives of EU youth policy should be to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market; and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people. The resolution stressed the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of

¹³ *European Commission (2001), White Paper on Governance, Brussels.*

¹⁴ *COM(2009) 200 final, Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities"*.

European cooperation in this area, also through the acquisition of certain and concrete data on youth. Particularly recommended is the acquisition of knowledge and a better understanding of the living conditions, values and attitudes of young people to be shared with other relevant policy areas in order to enable the timely adoption of appropriate measures, and promote cooperation between relevant authorities, researchers in the field of youth, young people and youth organizations.

4. THE EU YOUTH STRATEGY

While respecting Member States' overall responsibility for youth policy¹⁵, the EU Youth Strategy, agreed by EU Ministers, sets out a framework for cooperation covering the years 2010-2018.

The EU's strategic vision for young people is based on a dual approach:

- **Investing in Youth:** putting in place greater resources to develop policy areas that affect young people in their daily life and improve their well being;
- **Empowering Youth:** promoting the potential of young people for the renewal of society and to contribute to EU values and goals.

The strategy is based on three overarching and interconnected goals that closely link to those of the Renewed Social Agenda:

- Creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment;
- Improving access and full participation of all young people in society;
- Fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people.

The objectives are achieved through

- Specific youth initiatives, targeted at young people to encourage non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information;
- 'Mainstreaming' cross-sector initiatives that ensure youth issues are taken into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other fields with a significant impact on young people, such as education, employment or health and well-being.

The implementation of the youth strategy is based on two key principles: **cooperation with Member States** and **structured dialogue**.

Cooperation with Member States on youth policy is based on a system known as the **Open Method of Coordination** (OMC): the aim is to set a joint agenda, exchange best practices and improve the evidence base for policy-making.

Structured Dialogue with young people serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation, and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field. It involves regular consultations of young people and youth organisations at all levels in EU countries, as well as dialogue between youth representatives and policy makers.

Since 2010, year of initiation of the structured dialogue, young people and policy makers have debated various themes, organized in 18-month cycles (divided into 3 periods of 6 months, each under the supervision of the Country holding the presidency of the European Union) and made a number of important resolutions and conclusions, adopted by the Youth Ministers of the European Union.

¹⁵ Youth is a national policy area. At European level, youth policy is one area where the decision-making is done by the ordinary legislative procedure. Several European programmes encourage exchanges of young people within the EU and with third countries.

In Italy, as part of activities of the structured dialogue, the Department for Youth and national Civil Service¹⁶ entrusted the implementation of activities related to the semester of Italian Presidency of the European Council to the National Youth Forum. The National Youth Forum, recognized by Law No 311 of 30 December 2004, is an Association of associations having as its goals to carry out consultative and advisory activities at institutional level, with particular regard to the promotion of youth policies in Italy, to support and strengthen the work of youth organizations, to foster European citizenship and international dimension of youth organizations. The National Youth Forum has the statutory mandate to support the cooperation between the various Fora at local level, the Councils, the Youth Councils active on the Italian territory and similar structures located in other countries of the world.

4.1 FIELDS OF ACTION

The EU Youth Strategy proposes initiatives in eight areas:

1) Education and training

In order to reduce the current skills mismatch in Europe and ensure that the young are able to transition from education to employment, the EU is active in the following areas:

- ensuring that all young people have equal access to high quality education and training;
- developing youth work and other non-formal learning opportunities;
- providing links between formal education and non-formal learning;
- improving the transition between education and training and the job market;
- reducing early school leaving.

These objectives are being pursued through youth-specific programmes and more broadly through the EU's policies for growth and jobs.

The Erasmus+ programme, for example, supports projects designed for youth organisations or groups of young people, with a focus on non-formal learning, such as youth exchanges, opportunities for volunteering, training, and networking opportunities for youth workers, cooperation for innovation in youth work, as well as projects to engage young people in Structured Dialogue with policy makers.

2) Employment and entrepreneurship

To promote youth employment and entrepreneurship, the EU and its member countries work together to:

- Address the concerns of young people in employment strategies;
- Invest in the skills employers look for;
- Develop career guidance and counselling services;
- Promote opportunities to work and train abroad;
- Support quality internships/apprenticeships;
- Improve childcare and shared family responsibilities;
- Encourage entrepreneurship.

Increasing youth employment is central to the EU's employment policy, within the context of the Europe 2020 growth and jobs strategy. Specific steps taken by the Commission to help tackle youth unemployment include:

- **The Youth on the Move** flagship initiative (2010), a comprehensive package of education and

16 See section 7.2.4

employment measures for young people. It includes:

- The **Youth Opportunities Initiative** (2011), aimed at cutting youth unemployment;
- **Your first EURES Job**, a job mobility scheme which helps young people to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in other EU countries.
- The **Youth Employment Package** (2012), including the:
 - **Youth Guarantee** – adopted by the Council in April 2013 – which aims to ensure that all young people up to the age of 25 receive a quality job offer, the opportunity for further education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed;
 - **Quality Framework for Traineeships** – adopted by the Council in March 2014. Its objective is for trainees to acquire high-quality work experience in safe and fair conditions, and to encourage more transnational traineeships;
 - **European Alliance for Apprenticeships**, which brings together public authorities, businesses, social partners, VET providers, youth representatives, and other key actors to promote apprenticeship schemes and initiatives across Europe.
- The **Youth Employment Initiative** (2013) strengthens the Youth Employment Package. It emphasises support for young people not in education, employment or training in regions with a youth unemployment rate above 25%. A budget of €6 billion has been allocated to this for the period 2014-20;
- Working together for Europe’s young people – a call to action on youth unemployment (2013), a communication aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, boosting investment in young people, and developing EU-level tools to help EU countries and firms recruit young people.

3) Health and Well-Being

The EU Youth Strategy aims to support the health and well-being of young people with a focus on:

- Promoting mental and sexual health, sport, physical activity and healthy lifestyles;
- Preventing and treating injury, eating disorders, addictions and substance abuse;
- Education on nutrition;
- Promoting cooperation between schools, youth workers, health professionals and sport organisations;
- Making health facilities more accessible and attractive for young people;
- Raising awareness of how sport can promote teamwork, intercultural learning and responsibility.

In Europe today, 6 of the 7 biggest risk factors for premature death – blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, inadequate intake of fruit, obesity and being overweight – are rising across Europe. The European Commission advocates an integrated approach to address these problems, involving stakeholders at local, regional, national and European levels.

The Commission’s strategy on nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues aims to help reduce the risks associated with poor nutrition and limited physical activity.

This strategy is coordinated by a High Level Group – with representatives from all Member States’ governments – which shares knowledge and good practices regarding national initiatives. An EU platform for action on diet, physical activity and health provides a forum aimed at tackling overweight and obesity trends.

The Commission funds initiatives promoting nutrition and physical activity through its Public Health Programme. It also receives funding from the European Parliament for projects to improve action in these areas and to identify good practices that can be used in other European cities or regions.

4) Participation

The EU Youth Strategy seeks to encourage young people to participate in the democratic process and in society. Ways in which this is being achieved include:

- developing mechanisms for engaging in dialogue with young people and facilitating their participation in the shaping of national policies;
- supporting youth organisations, including local and national youth councils;
- promoting participation by under-represented groups of young people in politics, youth organisations, and other civil society organisations.

Specifically, the Commission pursues these objectives through:

- Structured dialogue – to involve young people in the process of making EU youth policy.
- The Erasmus+ programme – to support projects providing opportunities for young people to participate in cross-border projects and events.

5) Voluntary activities

Volunteering is an excellent example of non-formal learning for young people. The EU Youth Strategy promotes:

- Greater recognition of the value of voluntary activities and the skills it promotes;
- Good working conditions for young volunteers and opportunities for enriching work;
- Intergenerational solidarity;
- Transnational volunteering.

The Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU aims to create more cross-border volunteering opportunities. It encourages Member States to ensure that every young person who wishes to volunteer has the opportunity to do so. The Recommendation calls for Member States to:

- Raise more awareness about the benefits of volunteering abroad;
- Develop opportunities for volunteering abroad;
- Promote quality through the development of self-assessment tools;
- Recognise learning outcomes of voluntary activities through schemes such as Europass and Youthpass;
- Promote cross-border mobility of youth workers and young people in youth organisations;
- Pay particular attention to young people with fewer opportunities.

The European Commission supports Member States through the development of the European Youth Portal that includes a Volunteering Database where young people can find information about current volunteering opportunities, and promoting exchange of experiences through the Expert Group on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU.

The European Voluntary Service (EVS), part of Erasmus+, offers young people aged 17-30 the chance to volunteer in another Member State as well as outside the EU. The European Voluntary Service started in 1996.

The Commission also supports Member States wishing to enhance their civic services, through actions such

as Prospective Initiatives under Erasmus+.

6) Social inclusion

Social exclusion and poverty among young people has increased during the economic crisis. The EU Youth Strategy aims, in particular, to:

- Realise the full potential of youth work and youth centres as a means of inclusion;
- Encourage a cross-sector approach to address exclusion in areas such as education, employment and social inclusion;
- Support the development of intercultural awareness and combat prejudice;
- Support information and education for young people about their rights;
- Address the issues of homelessness, housing, and poverty;
- Promote access to quality services – e.g. transport, e-inclusion, health, and social services;
- Promote specific support for young families.

The Commission supports these objectives through:

- The European platform against poverty and social exclusion – launched in 2010, it proposes measures to reduce the number of people living in poverty or otherwise socially marginalised in the EU by at least 20 million by 2020.
- The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, run jointly with the Council of Europe, provides reliable information about the living conditions of young people.
- The Erasmus+ programme and the activities supported by it in the youth field.

The Inclusion and Diversity Strategy outlines the support and possibilities available in the Erasmus+ programme for the youth field when it comes to including young people with fewer opportunities. The strategy also sets the aims to be reached and defines the groups to be targeted.

7) Youth and the world

The EU aims to support young people to engage with regions outside Europe and to become more involved in global policy processes regarding issues such as climate change, the UN Millennium Development Goals, human rights, etc. In particular, this means:

- raising awareness of global issues among young people;
- providing opportunities for young people to exchange views with policy makers on global issues;
- fostering mutual understanding among young people from all over the world through dialogue;
- encouraging young people to volunteer for environmental projects (“green volunteering”) and to act green in their everyday life (recycling, saving energy, using hybrid vehicles, etc.);
- promoting entrepreneurship, employment, education, and volunteering opportunities outside Europe;
- promoting cooperation with and exchanges between youth workers on different continents;
- encouraging young people to volunteer in developing countries or to work on development issues in their own country.

Specifically, the Commission pursues these objectives through:

- Erasmus+ projects supporting the international mobility of young people and youth workers as

well as international cooperation of youth organisations. These projects help young people become active citizens and make them more employable through non-formal education and learning. They also contribute to both the quality and recognition of youth work help youth organisations and other stakeholders develop;

- Increased cooperation with partner countries neighbouring the EU such as: The “Eastern Partnership Youth Window”, which strengthens youth cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine and the “Western Balkans Youth Window” which fosters youth cooperation with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia.
- Bilateral events between the EU and non-EU countries which promote intercultural dialogue and understanding between young people.
- The “EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue” launched in 2012 has produced a number of joint partnership projects involving youth organisations, focusing on issues of common interest such as youth employability and entrepreneurship, youth involvement in society, and voluntary activities. In addition specific events took place in Europe and China on youth work development, on youth entrepreneurship and on youth social inclusion. As agreed at the second HPPD meeting in September 2014, these events should continue over the next few years.
- The EU-Council of Europe youth partnership – an annual symposium between youth policy-makers, youth researchers, youth workers, and young people in South-East Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, as well as the Southern Mediterranean.

8) Creativity and culture

The EU supports young people’s creativity and innovation through access to and participation in culture. In particular the EU Youth Strategy aims to:

- Support the development of creativity among young people;
- Increase access to culture and creative tools;
- Make new technologies available to empower young people’s creativity and innovation, and boost interest in culture, the arts and science;
- Provide access to places where young people can develop their creativity and interests;
- Facilitate long-term synergies between policies and programmes in culture, education, health, social inclusion, media, employment and youth to promote creativity and innovation;
- Promote specialised training in culture, new media and intercultural skills for youth workers;
- Promote partnerships between the cultural and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers;
- Facilitate and support young people’s talent and entrepreneurial skills;
- Promote knowledge about culture and cultural heritage.

The Commission supports these objectives through its funding programmes, policies and studies:

- Creative Europe: Supporting Europe’s Cultural and Creative Sectors;
- Erasmus+ supports creativity and innovation in youth projects.

5. THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY AND YOUTH

Young people are also a key target audience for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy¹⁷, articulated in three mutually reinforcing priorities:

- **Smart growth** – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
- **Sustainable growth** – promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- **Inclusive growth** – fostering a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Concretely, the European Union has set five ambitious objectives – on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy – to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted specific priorities through the National Reform Programmes, which present policies and measures that each country will take to support growth and employment.

The European Commission has identified seven flagship initiatives to catalyse progress under each priority theme, including one specifically addressed to young people: *Youth on the move*¹⁸.

Youth on the Move aims to improve young people's education and employability, to reduce high youth unemployment and to increase the youth-employment rate – in line with the wider EU target of achieving a 75% employment rate for the working-age population (20-64 years) – by:

- making education and training more relevant to young people's needs;
- encouraging more of them to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country;
- encouraging EU countries to take measures simplifying the transition from education to work.

The Youth on the Move Initiative is the framework for new key actions and the reinforcement of existing activities, by:

- ensuring their implementation at EU and national level, through the adoption of closer procedures for coordination between Member States and the financial support from the relevant EU programmes, as well as structural Funds, and
- providing for the implementation of specific actions aimed at young people, such as *Your first EU-RES job*, in support of labour mobility within the EU, and the Progress Microfinance Facility, also aimed at young entrepreneurs.

The EU's Youth on the Move also includes the *Youth Opportunities Initiative*¹⁹, which is a set of measures to drive down youth unemployment, whose ultimate purpose is to:

- help unemployed young people who left school or training before finishing upper-secondary level to get back to school or into a vocational training course that can give them the skills they need to get a job;
- give a first work experience to young people who have a diploma, but cannot find work.

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission of 3 March 2010 "EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" [COM(2010) 2020 final]. The EU2020 strategy was adopted by the European Council of Heads of State and Government on 17 June 2010.

¹⁸ European Commission, Brussels 15.9.2010, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Youth on the Move An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union", COM(2010) 477 final.

¹⁹ Brussels, 20.12.2011 COM(2011) 933 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - "Youth Opportunities Initiative".

The initiative builds on a strong partnership between Member States and the Commission and encourages concerted action between Member States' authorities, businesses, social partners and the EU. In addition to the strengthened review of national policies and performances as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, efforts should be stepped up to fully mobilise EU financial support and instruments, through the following measures:

- **Increased use of European Social Fund (ESF)** by national governments for youth employment measures, including the setting up of apprenticeship schemes and technical assistance for young business starters and social entrepreneurs;
- **Youth Guarantee**, an action to help EU countries get young people into employment, further education or (re)training within 4 months of leaving school
- **European quality framework on traineeships**, to improve information on what opportunities are available throughout the EU, how to get them and what they offer to trainees.
- **Your first EURES Job**, a "targeted mobility scheme" that aims to help young people up to 35 years old to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in another Member State, Norway and Iceland, and employers to find the skills they need for their hard-to-fill vacancies;
- **Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci**, introduced into the Erasmus+ programme from 2014;
- **Erasmus for entrepreneurs**, an action that promotes mobility of entrepreneurs through cross-border exchanges of experience by giving nascent or new entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced host entrepreneurs from other Member States. In return, the host entrepreneurs have the possibility to get a new fresh pair of eyes on their business and new business contacts abroad.
- **European Voluntary Service (EVS)**, part of Erasmus+, offers young people aged 17-30 the chance to volunteer in another Member State as well as outside the EU.

5.1 FOCUS ON YOUTH GUARANTEE

In April 2013, EU Member States made a commitment to ensure young people's successful transition into work by establishing **Youth Guarantee schemes**²⁰.

Under the Youth Guarantee Member States should ensure that, within four months of leaving school or losing a job, young people under 25 can either find a good-quality job suited to their education, skills and experience; or acquire the education, skills and experience required to find a job in the future through an apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education.

The Youth Guarantee is both a structural reform to drastically improve school-to-work transitions and a measure to immediately support jobs for young people.

Developing and delivering a Youth Guarantee scheme requires strong cooperation between all the key stakeholders: public authorities, employment services, career guidance providers, education & training institutions, youth support services, business, employers, trade unions, etc.

Early intervention and activation are key and, in many cases, reforms are needed, such as improving vocational education and training systems.

The European Commission has helped each EU country to develop its own national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan and start implementation. The Commission also supports awareness raising activities on the setting up of the Youth Guarantee, with a pilot running in 4 Member States (Latvia, Finland²¹, Portugal and

²⁰ COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01).

²¹ Finland has developed a comprehensive Youth Guarantee scheme. A Eurofound evaluation found that, in 2011, 83.5% of young job seekers received a successful offer within 3 months of registering as unemployed. The

Romania). The concept, products and visuals from this pilot have been put at the disposal of national, regional and local authorities who wish to use it further as an electronic toolkit.

Further, the Commission also facilitates the sharing of best practices between governments, in particular through the European Employment Strategy Mutual Learning Programme.

The EU will top-up national spending on these schemes through the European Social Fund and the € 6.4 billion of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)²² for the period 2014-20.

Italy has introduced, under the coordination of the Mission Structure set up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, its **Implementation Plan of the Youth Guarantee**, which also includes the planning of the resources made available by the European Union and the National Government (around 1.5 billion Euros). In the Plan, among other measures to ensure a job or a training course for young people who are turning to employment services, are also included civil service paths, complete with general and specific training, activated with national and regional calls. This measure, which is aimed at young people in the 18-28 age group, has a great formative value: in fact, it offers the opportunity to gain knowledge on the areas of intervention of the national civil service (assistance to persons, civil protection, environment, cultural heritage, education and cultural promotion) as well as transversal competences useful to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market. Management of this intervention measure will be through the Department of Youth of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

6. EU YOUTH REPORT

In order to ensure that the young are included in society and provided proper opportunities for work and participation, the EC regularly reviews its activities through the Youth Report. The 2015 EU Youth Report presents a full picture of the situation of young people in Europe and how policymakers have addressed it in the period 2013-2015. In particular, the report:

- evaluates overall progress towards the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy, as well as progress on the priorities defined for the latest work cycle;
- identifies good practices;
- serves as a basis for establishing priorities for the next work cycle.

The Joint EU Youth Report is prepared by the Commission and adopted by the Council, following discussion among the relevant national authorities. The report is based on responses from the EU countries to a Commission questionnaire covering all the 8 strategic fields of action. Young people are also consulted in their own countries, and different national ministries contribute to the process. National Youth Reports also provide information on how the EU Youth Strategy has been implemented at the national level during the current cycle.

In addition to the EU countries, all candidate countries and EFTA member countries are invited to participate in the reporting exercise on a voluntary basis.

The report, which relies on consultations with Member States and youth, as well as reliable evidence and

Finnish scheme has led to personalised plans for young people being drawn up more quickly, ultimately lowering unemployment

22 The Youth Employment Initiative is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes. The Youth Employment Initiative was launched to provide extra support to young people aged below 25 and living in regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25% in 2012. It will particularly support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), including long-term unemployed youngsters or those not registered as job-seekers. This will ensure that in parts of Europe where the challenges are most acute, young persons can receive targeted support. The YEI typically supports the provision of apprenticeships, traineeships, job placements and further education leading to a qualification.

indicators, also provides more detailed information on the implementation of the strategy in individual Member States.

The reported data provide a snapshot of the situation of youth aged 15-29. It is, in particular, noteworthy that:

1) *This generation of young people is better educated than any other ...*

Education indicators reveal positive trends. Although considerable divergences across the EU remain, early school leaving is now in decline²³.

Higher-education attainment rates improved from 33.8 % in 2010 to 37.9 % in 2014²⁴. Even if the EU unemployment rate increased for those with tertiary education, it is still much lower than for those with the lowest levels of education.

Many young people build social networks combining global connectivity with local roots: 82 % participated in online social networks in 2014. Young people engage in new forms of political participation, often using social media, but tend to vote less than older generations. Still, many remain active members of their local community; about one in two belonged to at least one organisation in 2014; one in four is a volunteer²⁵.

2) *... but the crisis has created new divisions*

Many young people struggle to find quality jobs which seriously hampers their path towards independence. In spite of a decrease in most Member States after its 2013 peak, youth unemployment remains a serious concern: 8.7 million young Europeans cannot find work and the proportion facing long-term unemployment or involuntary part-time work remains high.

In total, 13.7 million are neither in employment nor education or training (NEETs). Close to 27 million are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Poverty rates are higher for young people than for the overall population and involuntary part-time work or protracted temporary positions expose this generation to a risk of long-term poverty.

The gap is widening between young people who study, are confident of finding a job and engage in social, civic and cultural life, on the one hand, and those with little hope of leading a fulfilling life and who are at risk of exclusion and marginalisation, on the other hand.

These divides threaten to undermine the social fabric and sustainable long-term economic growth.

3) *No single policy has the solution, but all policies can help*

All young people deserve fair and equal opportunities, but this demands long-term investment. In their respective areas of competence, the EU and its Member States need to mobilise all policies that can help improve young people's prospects.

To convert recent signs of recovery into lasting and sustainable growth, the EU has taken action to boost job creation, growth and investment, including efforts to help the young back into quality jobs. The EU and the Member States can build their efforts on the **Youth Guarantee**²⁶, the **European Social Fund** and the **Investment Plan for Europe**.

Jobs are crucial but not always enough to ensure full inclusion. Education and training can provide young people with skills needed in the labour market and help overcome inequalities and promote upward social mobility.

²³ Eurostat indicator 'early leavers from education and training', from 13.9 % in 2010 to 11.1 % in 2014 for the age group 18-24 (high percentages persist notably in Spain, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Romania).

²⁴ Eurostat, population aged 30-34 with tertiary education attainment.

²⁵ Flash Eurobarometer survey 408, 2014.

²⁶ Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01).

The urgent challenge for education and training across the EU is to invest and modernise quickly enough to realise this potential²⁷. Youth policy, operating outside the classroom, can also help young people acquire the right mix of skills to prepare them for life and work.

4) Action across EU policy areas

Youth employment and employability remained top priorities throughout 2013-2015.

To improve educational outcomes, Member States took action under the European Semester to bring down early school leaving and promote higher-education attainment to reach the Europe 2020 headline targets. Their efforts were underpinned by the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training as well as the Erasmus+ programme. Since 2012, following the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, Member States are starting to introduce measures to allow young people make the most of what they learn outside formal education.

The EU and Member States undertook to reduce youth unemployment by easing transitions from education to work. In 2013, the Youth Guarantee was introduced as a structural framework to offer young people a job, an apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed. The ESF and the YEI set aside at least €12.7 billion for youth activation and employment. Around € 27 billion of ESF funding will be spent on education measures from 2014 to 2020. Young people will also benefit indirectly from around €11 billion of ESF funding for other initiatives such as modernising employment services or supporting self-employment. Actions under the YEI are expected to foster cooperation across different institutions and services to assist especially NEETs in an integrated way.

Since 2013, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships has drawn support from the private sector, while since 2014 the Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships¹⁸ aims to facilitate quality learning and fair working conditions. The Commission improved information for young jobseekers under the EURES system for information-sharing on job offers and launched 'Your first EURES job' to help young people find a job abroad.

5) Specific youth policy actions

EU cooperation focused on social inclusion and youth empowerment, including access to rights and political participation. The Council called for a greater contribution from youth policy to the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy and confirmed its intention to better include NEETs and promote youth entrepreneurship.

Youth work has been high on the EU youth agenda since 2013. A Commission study showed the value of youth work for young people in different aspects of their lives²⁸ and in 2015, the Second European Youth Work Convention identified the most urgent challenges and called for a European agenda for youth work²⁹.

6) From policy to change on the ground: Erasmus+

In 2014, the EU launched the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport. With a budget of €14.7 billion for the period to 2020, Erasmus+ supports the learning mobility of four million young people and educators, with 10 % of the budget reserved for youth activities, which fund an estimated 400 000 participants in youth exchanges and 100 000 in the European Voluntary Service (EVS). This represents an 80 % increase in funding as compared with the previous Youth in Action programme³⁰.

²⁷ *Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)*, COM(2015) 408.

²⁸ *Study on Value of youth work in the EU, 2014, Expert group reports on the creative and innovative potential of young people and quality approaches in youth work.*

²⁹ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8491-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

³⁰ *On 15 November 2006, Parliament and the Council adopted Decision No 1719/2006/EC, establishing the Youth in Action programme for the period 2007 to 2013. This document forms the legal basis of the programme for its entire duration. The programme concerns young people aged between 15 and 28 (in some cases between 13 and 30). It aims to inspire a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among Europeans from adolescence*

Erasmus+ better links policy and programme than before. It funds strategic partnerships between education providers, stimulating cross-sectoral cooperation. **Youthpass**³¹ continued to support the recognition of non-formal and informal learning: National Agencies for youth have delivered nearly 250 000 certificates since its inception. To widen the impact of Youthpass, the Council proposed to introduce in other sectors and to support the use of national recognition tools inspired by it.

7) Widening outreach

Using both online and offline tools, the Commission undertook to better inform young people about the opportunities offered by EU policies and programmes. More importantly, it sought to listen to their views and ideas. With 1.5 million unique visitors in 2014, the European Youth Portal has become the pillar of these activities, advertising opportunities for cross-border volunteering and connecting to **EURES** information on job and traineeship offers. In 2015, the Commission collected ideas from young people in 'Ideas Labs' during the European Youth Week, which overall reached 137 000 people in events and 1.2 million via social media.

The Commission will further improve the design and functionality of the European Youth Portal and other online platforms. It will work more closely with networks in direct contact with young people, such as the **Eurodesk** network with its 1 200 information specialists.

8) Action by Member States

Member States increasingly pursue transversal youth policies, with employment, social and civic inclusion as primary concerns. They have taken many measures to integrate young people into the labour market, often as part of Youth Guarantee schemes and backed by EU funds available under the ESF and the YEI. All Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans. Most Member States involved youth organisations, and two thirds involved youth services in the partnerships set up in the context of the Youth Guarantee.

In response to concerns about the growing social exclusion of young people, nearly all Member States took measures to enhance the inclusion of NEETs. Most undertook to improve young people's access to quality services and 80 % supported youth work and youth centres. However, youth work has suffered from budget cuts across Europe³², while the growing share of youth at risk of poverty and exclusion increases the demand for intervention.

9) Governance and implementation of the youth cooperation framework in 2013-2015

Member States' reports on the implementation of the cooperation framework provide a solid basis from which to continue EU youth cooperation. The framework helped advance national youth agendas and cross-sectoral cooperation in support of young people, backed by relevant evidence and exchanges of experience.

Nearly all Member States have introduced initiatives or tools in this field and have institutionalised mechanisms to ensure a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy, such as inter-departmental structures and regular inter-ministerial meetings.

to adulthood and to involve them in shaping the Union's future. The programme promotes mobility within and beyond EU borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. It helps young people acquire new skills, and provides them with opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension. Particular attention has been paid to the access of young people from Roma communities, through an annual priority focus in 2009 and 2010. Volunteering is a core part of several EU programmes that mainly promote the mobility of volunteers, such as the Youth in Action programme (notably through the European Voluntary Service), Erasmus+ and the Europe for Citizens programme.

31 Youthpass is a recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work; it is used for projects funded by the youth part in Erasmus+: <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>

32 Study on Value of Youth Work in the EU, 2014.

10) Evidence-based policy-making: quantitative and qualitative developments

The situation of young people in the EU is measured regularly on the basis of a dashboard of 41 indicators on conditions affecting young people³³. Member States are increasingly using these indicators, even if this has not yet produced systematic output-oriented youth policies.

The indicators and further evidence from Eurostat, Eurofound and the partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe help Member States and the Commission to discern new trends and adapt priorities accordingly.

The Commission and the Member States need to share this evidence - beyond the remit of youth policy - with others working with young people. At EU level, the new **Youth Monitor** provides user-friendly online access to data. As of 2016, a new youth wiki will provide up-to-date information on national policies, legislation and programmes in the youth field.

11) Mutual learning: exchange of experience

Member States have learned from each other, primarily through participating in expert groups. In 2013-2015, experts addressed ways of supporting the creative and innovative potential of young people, the contribution of youth work to young people's challenges in the crisis, and youth-work quality. The findings fed into discussions in the Education, Training and Youth Forum, as well as work in the Council³⁴. The 2015 report on quality youth work³⁵ informed Council conclusions on reinforcing youth work to ensure cohesive societies³⁶, which called for a reference and guidance tool on quality for national youth work organisations.

To make the most of the various mutual learning activities, the next work plan should include the development of a flexible framework to facilitate access to information and the outcomes of the activities. It should encourage uptake of findings and help **match partners with shared interests**.

12) Structured Dialogue: increasing outreach and anchoring dialogue in the policy agenda

The EU Structured Dialogue between policy-makers, young people and their representatives is widely seen as a promising tool for listening to young people. Its first 18-month cycle, which ended in 2011, helped to shape subsequent EU initiatives on youth unemployment. In 2013-2015, the Dialogue addressed social inclusion and youth empowerment and its recommendations have subsequently been addressed in the Council.

The Structured Dialogue has evolved since 2013 and is better anchored in the youth policy agenda. The number of participants has more than doubled and some 40 000 young people responded in the last cycle, many of them on behalf of larger groups. Also, national dialogue processes are taking inspiration and beginning to emerge.

The Structured Dialogue has yet to fulfil its full potential: It still fails to reach a wider group of young people with fewer resources and a weaker political voice. The Commission encourages greater outreach through Erasmus+ grants in support of national efforts and an online consultation tool launched in 2014. A further challenge is to monitor the uptake of the Dialogue's results in EU and national policy. Finally, in the interest of accountability and to motivate young people to stay engaged, policy-makers at all levels should provide better feedback on their responses through the European Youth Portal and national working groups.

33 SEC(2011) 401

34 Council resolution on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015, 20 May 2014.

35 Quality Youth Work - A common framework for the further development of youth work.

See http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf

36 May 2015.

7. NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY: THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION COUNTRIES³⁷

7.1 NON-EU COUNTRIES

7.1.1 Albania

An international review of the youth policy conducted in 2010 by the Council of Europe³⁸ says that young people in Albania are defined as the age group between 15 and 29 years. A study carried out by the National Institute of Statistics of Albania states that young people at 1 January 2016 constitute 22% of the population³⁹, while the average age is around 35 years old, making Albania one of the youngest country in Europe⁴⁰.

The Ministry of Youth and Social Welfare has responsibility for youth affairs and focuses on the protection of constitutional rights, access to education, vocational training, safe employment, inclusion, participation, interfaith understanding and tolerance. According to the Youth Section of the Ministry website, activities focus on employment, entrepreneurship and youth centres.

The Albanian Youth Council (AYC) was established in 1994 to serve as a nation-wide platform representing the interests of national youth organisations towards the state. Its mission is to support youth policy development as a means of improving democratic participation, empowerment and competence development of young people and of youth organisations. The AYC has 38 member organisations, and 2 organisations have observer status. While the AYC is not a member of the European Youth Forum, the Forum has supported its development.

The first National Youth Strategy (2007) was prepared by the Ministry for Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, which was previously responsible for youth policy. The Albanian youth strategy (2007) outlines a vision for young empowerment that “is resonant with the principles of sustainable development”, European integration and, “the construction of an open democratic society”⁴¹. The youth strategy focuses on youth participation, representation, the economy, health, social protection, leisure, free time and European citizenship. The development of the youth strategy, “reflects a keen interest in designing inter-sectorial policies that take a long-term view on the issue of youth development” and seeks “coordination among governmental agencies on the national and local levels, civil society organizations, international institutions and the business community”⁴².

The first youth strategy expired at the end of 2013 and was replaced by the new National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020⁴³. The Vision of the Action Plan is aligned with the National Strategy for Development and Integration and its mission is the improvement of youth quality of life and the enhancement of their status, through the creation of more opportunities for education, employment, health, culture and the increase of full youth participation in society and decision making.

This document is composed of six (6) general objectives:

1. Youth promotion and participation in democratic processes / decision making: the objective aims not only to establishing the relevant infrastructure for supporting young people in being active participants in the

³⁷ *The present report examines the youth policy in the countries belonging to the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region.*

³⁸ Council of Europe (2010), *Youth Policy in Albania - Conclusions of Council of Europe International Review Team.*

³⁹ http://www.instat.gov.al/media/322941/press_release_population_of_albania_1_january_2016.pdf

⁴⁰ Source: Eurostat, Figure 2: Median age of population, 2004-2014.

See http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing

⁴¹ *National Youth Strategy 2007-2013*, p. 9.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 9

⁴³ *National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020*, approved by Decision of Council of Ministers No. 383, dated 6 May 2015.

democratic processes and decision making, but also at strengthening the structures and capacities of youth organizations and groups.

2. Youth employment promotion through effective labour market policy: the goal of this objective is to increase youth employment through effective labour market policy, to improve the regulatory framework, to support start up programmes focused on youth entrepreneurship, to extend courses provided in Vocational Education schools, and to establish competitions that promote innovative ideas.

3. Health, sport and environment: the aim of this objective is to ensure and protect the health of young people through integrated health policies, coupled with the dissemination of a sports culture as an important element for the training of the physical body and the protection of the environment, which are the main factors protecting the population from various chronic and fatal diseases.

4. Youth education: to achieve the objective, an improvement of curriculums has been envisaged as related to life skills, which are a key element in the education of the young generation and decrease in engaging in antisocial behaviour; at the same time this objective foresees a series of measures for the improvement and enhancement of the education system chain.

5. Social protection: activities under this objective aim to prevent child and young people's violence and trafficking and to provide services for vulnerable and difficult to reach groups.

6. Culture and volunteerism: the aim of this objective is to improve opportunities for young people to spend free time more qualitatively - in the framework of the right to a quality living - and to participate in voluntary activities.

The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY), in order to improve communication in the youth sector, and encourage a better exchange of information by and for young people created the RINIA-AL Portal: <http://rinia.forums.fm>. The website serves as an online communication space for young people and youth organizations that can also create part of the contents and send information about their work and activities. The portal also contains news and alerts on the opportunities of scholarships, training courses and workshops for young people and youth organizations, as well as on cultural and social events relating to the world of youth.

In the context of the operation of the National Youth Service, as the responsible institution for the implementation of youth policy and programmes approved by the MSWY, some Regional Youth Centres were established throughout Albania in March 2015. These Youth Centres are directly responsible for the organization of social, cultural and sporting activities and the strengthening of social or voluntary work, in accordance with the National Youth Action Plan.

7.1.2 Montenegro

Transitional processes after the conflict in Yugoslavia during 1990s brought various social and political challenges in ex Yugoslavian countries, including Montenegro. While young people had an important role in former Yugoslavia, the collapse of the communist system and its corresponding youth programmes created a policy vacuum regarding young people in newly formed states. Consequently, young people in the region became marginalized – socially, economically and politically. While realising that youth capacities are crucial for building more stable and cohesive societies and while being influenced by different national and international stakeholders, decision makers in these countries re-established youth policy mechanisms by adopting relevant policy documents and establishing bodies responsible for youth related issues.

Accordingly, development of The National Youth Action Plan in Montenegro (NYAP, 2006-2011), represented a multifunctional common framework of the existing and new, previously missing, social measures in all areas important for the healthy development of youth and their active social participation. According to the NYAP, young people between 15 and 29 years of age make up more than 20% of the citizens of Montenegro. Therefore youth should represent, taking into consideration its size, if not the most important, then one of the most important segments in creating general social reality. Youth should have a special influence in the areas directly dealing with their lives, and also dealing with the overall social reality, considering that they should

be creating their own future⁴⁴.

Montenegro's Directorate for Youth and Sports (DYS), an independent administrative body under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Sports, is in charge of youth policy at a national level. It has the mandate to develop and coordinate implementation of youth policy and legislation, coordinate cross-sectoral cooperation, support local youth policy development, develop cooperation with NGOs, and international partners. Other relevant governmental institutions (other ministries, agencies, bureaus) develop and implement sectoral policies related to youth, cooperating with and reporting to Ministry of Education⁴⁵.

Ministry of Education is advised by the National Youth Steering Committee (NYSC), which was established by the Government, on 2 July 2007, with the mandate of monitoring, evaluation and improvement of national youth policy, as defined in NYAP. The NYAP has been developed through extensive cooperation, coordination and consultations with relevant governmental institutions, non-governmental organisations and young people. This strategy has defined aims, measures and activities in 9 priority areas: employment, education, health, human rights, participation, culture, leisure time, family, information and mobility.

In terms of administrative division, Montenegro has 22 municipalities and has no regions. Through funding local youth policy development projects, the Directorate and national and international NGO partners supported the establishment of Local Youth Councils (3), Local Youth Offices (3) and development of Local Youth Policy Plans (11).

The DYS, together with NYSC, financially and politically supported the creation of the National Youth Council (NYC), initiated in October 2010 and completed in 2012⁴⁶. The NYC, which brings together youth organizations and other youth structures at local and national level, and the NYSC represent and create conditions for the active participation of young people through youth development policy, international cooperation and participation in national structures dealing with youth issues.

A draft law on youth is currently under parliamentary discussion. The Youth Law will define method of adoption, implementation and evaluation of youth policy at national and local level, inter-sectoral cooperation, youth participation in decision-making, youth work, youth information, non-formal education of young people, youth organizations, funding for youth initiatives. The law, identifying equality as key principle underpinning the effectiveness of youth policy, will ensure equal rights for young people, regardless of their nationality, race, sex, language, religion, class, political opinion, disability status, sexual orientation, and other personal choices⁴⁷.

Montenegro's youth policy is already largely in line with the common objectives established at EU level following the Commission's White Paper on Youth. The future adoption of the Law on youth is intended to lay a solid foundation for further developments in this field. The objectives of stimulating active youth participation in society and the cross-sector policy approach are meant to reinforce other education policy objectives such as critical thinking and self-determination. Youth Law and the New National Youth Policy Plan, which will provide an overview of needs and situation of young people in Montenegro, are envisaged to be aligned with EU Youth Strategy and EU Acquis⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ Government of Montenegro (2007), *National Youth Action Plan*.

See http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Montenegro_2007_National_Youth_Action_Plan.pdf

⁴⁵ *Youth Partnership – Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth* (2013), *Country sheet on youth policy in Montenegro*: http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Montenegro_2013_Youth_Policy_Briefing.pdf

⁴⁶ See <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/montenegro/>

⁴⁷ UN System in Montenegro (2013), *Analysis of strategic, legal and institutional framework related to youth employment and participation*.

⁴⁸ European Commission (2013), *Screening Report Montenegro: Chapter 26 – Education and Culture*. See http://www.youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/library/Montenegro_2013_EU_Screening_Report.pdf

7.1.3 Serbia

In Serbia, youth policy is referring to young people between fifteen and twenty-nine years of age⁴⁹. The foundations of Serbia's national youth policy are found in three core documents: the National Youth Strategy, the National Action Plan, and the Law on Youth adopted in 2011⁵⁰.

The adoption of Serbia's National Youth Strategy in May 2008 was heralded by the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MoYS) as "the first step towards a systematic solution to the problem of youth status"⁵¹. It was designed as a means to clarify the state's attitude toward young people, the role of youth in society, and methods by which a partnership between youth and the government could be established. In other words, the strategy was an important first step in putting young people back on the government agenda.

The National Youth Strategy explicitly recognizes young people as a source of potential. Along with this, the strategy identifies 10 key principles (respect for human rights, equality, responsibility, availability, solidarity, cooperation, active participation of young people, inter-culturalism, lifelong learning, evidence-based) that it draws from the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, as well as from international documents, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Council of Europe's Conventions on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Following these principles, the National Youth Strategy seeks to achieve a total of 11 objectives⁵²:

- Active Participation: To encourage young people to participate actively in society.
- Youth Cooperation: To develop youth cooperation and to provide conditions for participation in decision-making processes through a sustainable institutional framework, based on the needs of young people and in cooperation with youth.
- Youth Information: To establish a system of youth information on all levels and in all areas.
- Equal Life Chances: To achieve the right to equality of opportunity for all young people in society and especially for those who live under difficult conditions.
- Encourage Extraordinary Results: To encourage and evaluate the extraordinary results and achievements of young people in different areas.
- Quality Leisure Time: To improve possibilities for youth to spend quality leisure time.
- Effective Education: To develop an open, effectual, efficient, and justifiable system of formal and non-formal education available to all young people that is in line with world educational trends and the educational context in the Republic of Serbia.
- Encourage Employment: To encourage and stimulate all forms of employment, self-employment, and youth entrepreneurship.
- Improve Conditions: To improve conditions for a secure life for young people.
- Improve Health: To protect and improve health, to decrease health risks, and to develop a youth-friendly health protection system.
- Empower: To empower young people for initiatives and activities in line with the basic goals of sustainable development and a healthy environment.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy was adopted in January 2009. The

49 See <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/serbia/>

50 T. Azanjac et al. (2012), *Youth and Public Policy in Serbia*, p. 63.

See http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia_2012_Youth_Policy_Review.pdf

51 Government of Serbia (2008), *National Youth Strategy*, p. 1.

See http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia_2008_National_Youth_Strategy.pdf

52 *Ibidem*, p. 7

Action Plan lays out the implementation strategy for Serbia's youth policy over the course of 2009 through 2014. Its purpose is to support the Youth Strategy by providing the road map by which the objectives and goals of the strategy can be accomplished, laying out the activities to be carried out and offering a detailed plan of the funding and resources that will be dedicated to each of these activities.

For each of the specific objectives, the Action Plan provides a set of indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) in order to monitor and evaluate achieved outcomes.

Significantly, the Action Plan provided one short-term goal: the adoption of a National Law on Youth⁵³.

The Law on Youth was adopted by the Serbian parliament on July 5, 2011. This Law regulates measures and activities undertaken by the Republic of Serbia, autonomous province and local government units aimed at improving the social status and position of youth and at creating conditions for addressing young people's needs and interests in all the areas of interest for young people. The purpose of the Law is to create conditions for supporting young people in organisation, social activism, development and fulfilment of their potential for their own and for the benefit of the society⁵⁴.

The Law on Youth stipulates that the autonomous province and local self-government units will develop individual Action Plans for Strategy Implementation within their territories. These Local Youth Action Plans are responsible for outlining the use of funds for the implementation of such plans within their budgets⁵⁵.

The MoYS is the primary institutional body charged with leading the process of policy reform, enactment, and implementation at the national level. In addition to the MoYS, however, a number of other institutions play active and important roles in a field of youth policy⁵⁶:

- *National Youth Council*, an advisory body initiating and harmonising activities related to the development and implementation of Youth Policy and proposing measures for its improvement. It consists of representatives of the government body dealing with areas of interest for young people within their portfolios, provincial government body responsible for youth affairs, federations and associations, youth offices, joint representative of national councils of minorities, renowned experts and representatives of young people.

- *Local Youth Councils*, intersectoral coordination bodies with the task of harmonizing activities related to the implementation of local youth policy, ensuring that provisions of the Local Action Plans do not conflict with local laws or statutes.

- *Local Youth Offices*, mandated to initiate and administer the development and implementation of local youth policy, as well as to coordinate the activities of local offices. In so doing, such offices often serve as a public space for young people dedicated exclusively to serving their needs, concerns, and interests.

- *Agency for Youth*, established after Serbia has achieved EU candidacy, for the purpose of implementing EU youth programmes and other programmes relating to young people.

Following European trends, in the last years in Serbia great attention was paid to the development and improvement of youth policy, encouraging young people to organize, join and participate in social processes. In order to achieve this, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has developed the portal for young "Youth Rule" (<http://www.mos.gov.rs/mladisuzakon/>). Using the portal, young people may be familiar with current events, invitations to participate in conferences, trainings, seminars, workshops, public hearings and calls for the implementation of the projects from the field of youth policy.

In the process of drafting new National Youth Strategy, Ministry of Youth and Sports has paid a great attention to the EU Youth Strategy and European trends in the field of youth policy. The new Serbian strategy for the period 2015-2025⁵⁷ is in fact based on the EU Strategy for Youth by covering all fields of action (employ-

53 *Government of Serbia (2011), Youth Law.*

54 *T. Azanjac et al. (2012), op. cit., p. 70.*

55 *Ibidem, p. 71*

56 *Ibidem, pp. 73-77*

57 *Government of Serbia (2015), National Youth Strategy for the period 2015 -2025.*

ment and entrepreneurship, education and training, health and welfare, youth activism and active participation, mobility, information, social integration, creativity and culture, security), although some of them are not properly identified as distinct fields of action (e.g. volunteering is part of youth activism).

7.1.4 Bosnia and Herzegovina

The 1995 Dayton Peace Accords put an end to the civil war between Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats erupted after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. A new Bosnian constitution, called *Dayton Constitution*, was included in the peace agreement. The Constitution recognized and formalized the territorial division that had arisen between the three warring parties. Born to end the war, the Dayton Constitution only responds to the need to ensure the safety of the three parties (defined in the Constitution “constituent peoples”). For this reason, the institutional framework defined in Dayton is characterized by high decentralization and a divisions based on ethnic identity of almost all the central state institutions. The Constitution recognizes the existence of two macro-regions, defined ‘entities’: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), with a Muslim-Croat majority, and Republika Srpska (RS) with a Serb majority. In addition there exists the district of Brcko, a self-governing administrative unit established as a neutral area placed under joint Serb, Croat and Bosniak authority⁵⁸.

BiH has a tri-partite Presidency with one member from constituent people. The three members, exercising the rotating presidency, are directly elected, but each from their own constituent people; the Serb member is elected by the citizens of the RS, while the Bosniak and Croat members are elected in FBiH⁵⁹.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) - along with other Western Balkans countries - was identified as a potential candidate for EU membership during the Thessaloniki European Council summit in June 2003⁶⁰.

In December 2007, the BiH signed with the European Union the Stabilization and Association Agreement, the first step towards integration into the EU. In April 2008, the Bosnian Parliament adopted the reform of the police, condition laid down by the EU for Bosnia and Herzegovina to sign the pre-accession agreement. The Stabilization and Association Agreement was signed on 16 June 2008. But following the failure of the constitutional reform to align the Bosnian constitution to the European Convention on Human Rights, with regard to minorities’ right to stand as a candidate eligibility for public senior posts (Sejdic-Finci case), the EU changed its conditionality, indicating the adoption of an agenda of economic reforms as a condition for the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. The agreement is then entered into force only on 1 June 2015⁶¹.

On 15 February 2016, the Bosnia and Herzegovina officially presented to the European Council in Brussels, its application for EU membership. A symbolic but important step to be read in the context of the new dynamism sought after by both parties in the relations between Sarajevo and Brussels, which were too long left at the starting post. Now, according to the usual procedure, the EU Council will ask the Commission to give its own opinion, and the Commission will send a questionnaire to Sarajevo on the progress of the country and, after having received back the document, will decide whether to recommend to the Council to grant the status of candidate country and, later, to open accession negotiations⁶².

This introductory framework helps us better understand the functioning of youth policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina where there are two definitions of who the youth are. Basically, both definitions are similar and they can be found in two laws that treat this area: “The Law on the Youth of the Federation of BiH” and the “RS Law on Youth Organization”. It has been stated that in FBiH ‘Young people’ or ‘youth’ means persons aged 15 to 30 years; and in RS youth are aged from 16 to 30⁶³.

58 See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17211937>

59 *Ibidem*

60 See http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/bosnia-herzegovina/index_en.htm

61 Source: <http://europa.ba>, website of the European Union Delegation Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

62 Source: <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Bosnia-Erzegovina/La-Bosnia-Erzegovina-consegna-la-propria-candidatura-all-UE>

63 Council of Europe (2011), *Reviews on youth policies and youth work in the countries of South East Europe*,

At the state level, within the BiH Council of Ministers, the youth issues are addressed by the *Commission for Coordination of the Youth issues in BiH* (CCYI BiH) in terms of their coordination within the country, with the international community and with the non-governmental sector. Following the 2009 decision of the BiH Council of Ministers, the CCYI BiH became a standing body within the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH (BiH Council of Ministers). Except for the CCYI BiH, there are no significant youth-related capacities within the BiH Council of Ministers.

The CCYI BiH is in charge of determining the main principles in creation of the national youth policy, and coordinating activities of all actors which are significant for the promotion and protection of young people role and position in BiH, while focusing on improving youth life conditions, and international representation of the youth-related issues in BiH.

The Department for Youth within the Ministry of Family, Youth & Sports has responsibility for youth in RS. The department is responsible for the implementation of the youth policy, youth participation, volunteering and cooperation between youth NGOs⁶⁴.

The Division for Youth within the Ministry of Culture and Sports has responsibility for youth with the FBiH and is responsible for the youth law (2010), coordination of federal and international youth programmes, participation, identifying youth needs and supporting the development of the federal youth strategy⁶⁵.

No Youth Council at the BiH level exists, or at Federation level within the FBiH. However a number of municipal and local youth councils have been developed.

On the other hand, a youth council exists at RS level, serving as an umbrella youth organisation across the region. However, it has no online presence.

The FBiH has a youth law (2010) that outlines legal protections and provisions for youth rights, youth work, and youth councils. The youth briefing carried out by the Council of Europe (2011) notes that little action has resulted from the law in terms of a youth policy.

The RS has a youth policy 2010-2015 focusing on employment, housing, education, society, information, youth work, leisure, participation and culture. Laws on Volunteering and Youth Organization also exist.

The youth briefing notes that guidelines for a state level youth policy have been agreed, and according to the youth policy project report⁶⁶, is being supported and coordinated by the European Union.

Indeed, youth policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the form of systematic and institutional involvement of the state in caring for young people with special mid-term and long-term strategy and action plan that is based on European standards and practices, is in development stage as well as some other sector policies for youth such as education.

7.2 EU MEMBER STATES

7.2.1 Slovenia

Youth policy in Slovenia are based on the definition of youth that includes the 15-29 age group⁶⁷.

Eastern Europe & Caucasus - Bosnia and Herzegovina

⁶⁴ See <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/bosnia-herzegovina/>

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*

⁶⁶ *European Union - IPA Programme (2012), IPA-EU Support to the coordination and implementation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's National Youth Policy, Inception Report.*

⁶⁷ *Government of Slovenia - Office of Youth (2010), Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector, art. 3.*
See http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Slovenia_2010_Youth_Sector_Act.pdf

Statistical analyses on youth, especially those concerning education and employment, also distinguished between two age groups: 15-24 (young) and 25-29 (young adults). The 15-year age limit sets the minimum age so that a guy can start to work on a regular basis, while the limit of 24 years refers to the age at which it should be achieved the highest level of education⁶⁸.

Several public and private actors share responsibility for the development and implementation of youth policy in Slovenia.

The public authority responsible for the field of youth and realisation of the public interest in the youth sector at the national level is The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth. It is an independent body within the Ministry for education, science, culture and sport since 1991. Its main activities and responsibilities include: planning and implementation of measures in the area of youth policy; monitoring of rules that apply to young people; formulation and supervision of programmes for young people; improvement of conditions for the organized activities and youth organizations⁶⁹.

The National Youth Council of Slovenia (Mladinski svet Slovenije - MSS) is a voluntary association of Slovenian national youth organizations and represents the interests of organizations in the political sphere. Established in 1990, it acts as a non-partisan umbrella supporting national youth organisations to promote youth autonomy and integration into democratic society⁷⁰. It conducts educational, promotional and cultural activities, issues publications and policy papers, promotes international cooperation (it is a member of the European Youth Forum and takes part in its international youth actions), voluntary work and the development of organizations and local youth councils. According to the Youth Councils Act, the Government, ministries and other national authorities, as well as local authorities, are obliged to inform the National Youth Council of Slovenia on policies relating to young people and their condition⁷¹.

The *Act on the Public Interest in the Youth Sector (Zakon o javnem interesu v mladinskem sektorju - ZJIMS)* adopted in 2010. It is the first law which systematically regulates the youth sector. The implementation of this Act is based on the principles of democracy, plurality, integrity, intergenerational solidarity, equality, non-discrimination and justice, multiculturalism, intercultural dialogue, volunteering, promoting a healthy lifestyle, respecting life and the environment, and the participation of non-governmental organisations in the management of public affairs⁷². The Act defines 'youth policy' as a harmonised set of measures of various sectoral public policies with the purpose of promoting and facilitating the integration of youth in the economic, cultural and political life of the community and appropriate support mechanisms for developing youth work and operation of youth organisations, which is carried out in cooperation with autonomous and democratic representatives of youth organisations and professional and other organisations. 'Youth work' is instead defined as an organised and target-oriented form of youth action and is for the youth, within which the youth, based on their own efforts, contribute to their own inclusion in society, strengthen their competences and contribute to the development of the community⁷³. The Act defines the areas of the youth sector and provides for measures for the public financing of youth work as well as national awards for excellent results achieved in the field.

The Act has also served as the basis for the adoption of the 'National Youth Programme'⁷⁴, important strategic document adopted in 2013, which details extensively the development of public policies aimed at young people up to 2022. The overall objective of the national youth programme 2013-2022 is to ensure the harmonized implementation of a uniform, orderly and transparent system of priorities and actions to aimed at

68 A. Bazzanella et al. (2010), *Investire nelle nuove generazioni: modelli di politiche giovanili in Italia e in Europa*, p. 388.

69 *Ibidem*, p. 388.

70 See <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/slovenia/>

71 A. Bazzanella et al., *op. cit.*, p. 392

72 Government of Slovenia - Office of Youth (2010), *Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector*, art. 2.

73 *Ibidem*, art. 3.

74 Government of Slovenia (2013), *Resolution on a National Youth Programme 2013-2022*.

See http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Slovenia_Youth_Programme_2013_2022.pdf

improving the situation and offering solutions to the problems of youth sector. An important feature is that this so-called horizontal programme combines measures in areas that fall under the jurisdiction of different ministries in order to deliver better quality services and ensure their consistency and visibility⁷⁵.

The basic principles underpinning the programme are:

- providing more opportunities for young people in education and training, both formal and informal;
- developing an employment policy that ensures the economic and social security, as well as the autonomy of young people;
- ensuring youth participation and influence on decision-making for policies that affect them;
- ensuring equal opportunities between men and women and the prevention of discrimination;
- avoiding the risk factors that cause poverty and social exclusion of young people;
- following the principles of sustainable development;
- following the principle of intergenerational cooperation and ensuring greater solidarity between generations;
- paying particular attention to the health and wellbeing of young people and health inequalities;
- guiding young people in the early stages of their careers.

7.2.2 Greece

Youth policy in Greece is targeted at young people aged 15 – 35 years⁷⁶. The Ministry in charge of youth policy is the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs that works for the integration of the youth dimension in other government policies.

The legal foundations of national youth policies can be found in 2 articles of the Greek Constitution concerning youth explicitly. Article 16, par.2, states that: “Education constitutes a basic mission for the State and shall aim at the moral, intellectual, professional and physical training of Greeks, the development of national and religious consciousness and at their formation as free and responsible citizens” and Article 21, par.3, stipulates that: “The State shall care for the health of citizens and shall adopt special measures for the protection of youth, old age, disability and for the relief of the needy”⁷⁷.

The General Secretariat for Youth, within the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs, is the only state organisation responsible for planning, developing and implementing the youth policy in Greece⁷⁸. It works for the mainstreaming of the youth dimension in other governmental policies, given that all governmental organisations may develop policies that ultimately touch upon some needs of the younger generation. In this respect, the General Secretariat for Youth comprises departments covering employment and development, culture and leisure, education and social participation, international cooperation and information.

Its main role is to promote a cross-sectoral youth policy taking also into consideration all the relevant developments in the youth sector at European and International level. The Secretariat implements programmes and projects according to its three main policy areas: 1. unemployment, employment and labour relation-

75 See www.ursm.gov.si/si/zakonodaja_in_dokumentil/temeljni_dokumenti_na_podrocju_mladinske_politike_v_republiki_sloveniji/

76 See <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/greece/>

77 *The Constitution of Greece, Hellenic Parliament (As revised by the parliamentary resolution of May 27th 2008)*. See <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/f3c70a23-7696-49db-9148-f24dce6a27c8/001-156%20agliko.pdf>

78 See <http://www.neagenia.gr>

ships; 2. social inclusion (e.g. targeted at young people living in remote areas), youth rights and participation; 3. environment, climate change and green development. These programmes and projects are in close relation to the main fields of action of the EU Council Resolution on the Renewed Framework of Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018) and the EU Youth Strategy, as well as to the priorities of the Council of Europe as being highlighted in AGENDA 2020⁷⁹. In addition, the General Secretariat's policies targeting youth are based on the philosophy of intergenerational solidarity⁸⁰.

Youth policy is a horizontal one, as it reaches many fields that lie in the responsibility of different Ministries and as a result is exercised by all Ministries according to their thematic responsibilities. This is the reason why, there is a Interministerial Committee headed by the General Secretariat for Youth whose role is to coordinate actions targeted at young people⁸¹.

Other non-public actors, who are involved in youth policies and have influence in the policy-making process, are:

- The *Youth Committee*, which has to cooperate with non-governmental organisations, social and scientific bodies before making and implementing the youth policy.

- The *National Youth Council of Greece* (ESYN), an umbrella organisation with 59 affiliated members. It was established in July 1998, as a "platform" of NGYOs and is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit federation of Greek youth organisations. The role of the ESYN is to be the official representative of Greek youth abroad and the main interlocutor of the Hellenic Government on youth issues at the national level, to participate in the Organisational committee for the Youth Parliament, to be member of the European Youth Forum, the Mediterranean Youth Forum, the UNESCO Youth Council and the relevant U.N. Youth Bodies⁸².

Several youth laws concerning different fields of action (education, employment, sports, health, culture, family, local youth councils) were drawn up and incorporated in the legislation of various Ministries. Among the most important⁸³:

- Law on intercultural education (Law 2413/1996);
- Law instituting the Local Youth Councils (Law 3443/2006), which are committed in the promotion and monitoring of measures for active and effective participation of young people in the local community;
- Law 2672/2009 on Entrepreneurship Support Structures that support and promote youth entrepreneurship innovative ideas mainly concerning young people with disabilities and green entrepreneurship;
- Law 3748/2009 on "performance incentives" that regulates the structure and function of the educational system including the participation of students in the governing bodies of state Universities in order to promote their involvement in the scholastic and academic environment. Moreover, as far as performance incentives are concerned, it establishes special measures for young athletes and other young people with outstanding performance, such as easier entrance to state Universities.
- In the "Kallikratis" law (2010), young people participate by the age of 18, with the right to vote and be voted in the elections for municipal and regional councillors.
- Law 4115/2013 concerning the organisation and functioning of the Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation and the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance, whose main objectives and activities are: i) to systematize and coordinate the investigation of the educational and training needs of adults in relation to the needs of the labour market and social

79 EU Youth Report 2015: Greece.

80 Government of Greece (2012), *National report: First cooperation cycle of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012*.

81 See <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/greece/>

82 European Union & Council of Europe (2012), *Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Greece*.

83 See EU Youth Report 2015: Greece.

development; ii) to plan and decentralize lifelong learning activities; systematically support the institutions in the National Network for Lifelong Learning; and to plan the cooperation of the institutions in the Network with lifelong learning service providers; iii) to promote vocational training and adult education in general as two equal pillars of lifelong learning; iv) to establish the standards and tools for the development and qualitative improvement to lifelong learning; v) to ensure the accessibility by people and particularly by the members of vulnerable and socially vulnerable groups to all the training activities and general adult education; vi) to continually educate and evaluate adult educators; vii) to establish a coherent national framework for the evaluation and certification for all forms of training and general adult education; and viii) to create a uniform national framework for the recognition of qualifications and the certification of knowledge, skills and abilities.

- Law 4251/2014 on Immigration and Social Inclusion Code that regulates issues concerning citizenship and political participation of expatriates and legally residing migrants, establishing an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service.

The need to tackle the problem of high youth unemployment in Greece requires immediate coordinated actions and initiatives, capitalizing on young people's creativity and innovative ideas.

Taking into consideration the European Union's 'Youth Opportunities Initiative' and the current adverse socio-economic conditions in our country, an operational *Action Plan* has been elaborated aiming at strengthening youth employment and entrepreneurship⁸⁴. This Action Plan constitutes the first cohesive, mutually complementary and integrated effort by the State to support young people, as it integrates into a single plan the actions of all NSRF Operational Programmes addressed to youth and financed both by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The central objective is to put forward targeted development policies and measures for employment and entrepreneurship aimed at young people in the two age groups of 15-24 and 25-35, placing emphasis on young people with low formal qualifications and creating Liaison Offices in all institutes of Higher Education aiming to a better connection with the labour market. The basic categories of interventions regard the reinforcement of apprenticeship and traineeship systems, the establishment of systematic transition programs from education to employment, in order to support the acquisition of first working experience and to promote entrepreneurship. Counselling and mentoring services are the basic tools for supporting young people in their transition to the working or business environment⁸⁵.

7.2.3 Croatia

On 16 January 2003, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the National Youth Action Programme⁸⁶ aimed at clear and long-term designation in creating social, educational, upbringing, cultural, material and other conditions for the permanent benefit of young people and their active, complete and responsible participation in the social community. The purpose of the National Programme was comprehensive promotion of the development and well-being of youth, which is in accordance with Article 62 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, in which the state commits to protect young people and to create the abovementioned conditions for their decent life.

This National Programme set strategic goals (including: improving legislation relating to the needs and problems of youth; defining tasks of individual departments, authorized bodies of state administration and public institutions in fulfilling international, constitutional and legal obligations of the Republic of Croatia in relation to youth; including as many young people as possible into decision-making processes, especially regarding needs and problems of youth; creating conditions for recognition of youth in Croatia, reducing

⁸⁴ Hellenic Republic - Ministry of labour, social security and welfare - General Secretariat for the management of European funds (2012), *Action Plan* of targeted interventions to strengthen youth employment and entrepreneurship.

⁸⁵ See <http://www.esfhellas.gr/en/Pages/YouthActionPlan.aspx>

⁸⁶ Nacionalni program djelovanja za mlade (National Youth Action Program) (2003)

their emigration and stimulating the return and integration of emigrants into the Croatian society), plan for their implementation, financing of the proposed measures, and it also gave recommendations to local self-administration units and civil society organizations. Local and regional self-administration units, civil society organizations and other factors in social community, such as religious communities and political parties, and university and scientific institutions, are invited to contribute to achieving mutual goals for the benefit of youth by their mutual encouragement and common action⁸⁷.

Concerning youth, one should take into account that they are, as a separate social group, socially heterogeneous in accordance with the stratification of society of which they are an integral part. On the other hand, young persons share some common characteristics, among which is the basic belonging to a certain age group. This is the population from 15 to 30 years of age, which means that within the group of young people exist several age cohorts, which differ by the degree of maturity, and even formal rights recognized by the society. Here it is important to know that the stated age designation is not generally accepted, especially in official statistics, in which the population up to 25 years of age is most commonly perceived as the group of young people. However, findings of numerous researches in the world and in Croatia have shown that it is much more fruitful to perceive as young people the population up to 30 (and in some cases even up to 35) years of age, especially when various forms of social intervention aimed at improving the overall social position of young people are being considered⁸⁸.

In conceiving any national policy it is certainly important to respect the fact that young people are not a homogenous social group. Croatian youth mutually significantly differs by social background, conditions of family and wider socialization, educational accomplishments, socio-professional status, lifestyles, life aspirations, political views, behaviour patterns, etc. The existing differentiations therefore require a national policy that will encompass the interests and needs of different (sub-)groups of young people and that will ensure equally good life prospects for everyone⁸⁹.

The Department of Youth within Ministry of Social Policy and Youth is responsible for youth in Croatia, previously belonging to the Ministry of Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity, the authors of the 2003 National Youth Action Program. The deputy minister is also the deputy chair for the Youth Council of the Croatian Government, an interdepartmental advisory body on public policies for youth. It is comprised of 24 members, with 14 representing government departments, 7 from youth organisations and 3 from scientific and educational institutions.

The Croatian Youth Network (Mreže mladih Hrvatske - MMH) represents 73 non-governmental youth organisations in Croatia. Its main goals are to raise awareness about young people, co-create and advocate for quality youth policies, and contribute to the development of civil society. It is coordinated by a Managing Board of elected representatives from member organisations, led by a Secretary General that is elected by the Board, and makes decisions via a yearly General Assembly. It participates in the Youth Council of the Croatian Government and is a member of the European Youth Forum⁹⁰.

Croatia recognized young people's participation in decision-making at institutional level, forming advisory boards perfectly in line with European standards. In February 2007, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Law on Youth Advisory Boards. Youth advisory boards are established as advisory bodies of local and regional self-government units which promote and advocate the rights, needs and interests of young people on the local and regional level and their active participation in public life.

The National Youth Action Programme 2003-2008 was replaced by the National Youth Program from 2009 till 2013, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia with the general goal of improving the activities of the state administration bodies and public institutions which contribute to improving the quality of the

87 *European Youth Partnership (2011), Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Croatia*, p. 2.

See http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/2011_Country_Sheet_Croatia_Eng.pdf

88 *Republic of Croatia - Ministry of Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity (2009), National Youth Program from 2009 till 2013*, p. 119.

89 *European Youth Partnership (2011), Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Croatia*, p. 5.

90 See <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/croatia/>

lives of young people. There are 7 areas of action determined (education and informatisation, employment and entrepreneurship, social policy, healthcare and reproductive health, active participation of young people in society, youth culture and leisure time, mobility, informing and counselling), with specified goals which should be achieved through the implementation of specific measures and activities, relating to young people aged 15 to 30⁹¹.

Later, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted in October 2014 the National Programme for Youth 2014-2017, strategic document aimed at improving the activities of state administration bodies and public institutions which, through their scope of work and competences, contribute to meeting the needs of youth and to raising the quality of their lives in order to achieve their optimal social integration. The National Programme represents a strategic framework for raising the awareness of all stakeholders in society on the necessity of their action on all levels in order to accomplish the mentioned objectives. The National Programme also contains Recommendations for local and regional self-government units that are asked to participate in the partnership with the state and non-governmental organisations in accomplishing objectives and carrying out activities for the benefit of young people.

For the purpose of preparing the National Programme, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth organised a Working Group of a total of 40 members, made up of representatives of state administration bodies, scientific and/or professional institutions and organisations of young people and for young people. It is important to point out that this document makes significant steps forward compared to previous documents, both in the contents and in the process of its preparation. The first is seen in the fact that the document for the first time completely and directly relies on the results of the research project on the needs, potentials and problems of young people in today's Croatian society. The data is gathered on a representative sample of 2000 young people from all over Croatia. In other words, the new National Programme significantly better reflects the direct needs and interests of young people than earlier programmes. Another important step forward is the active participation of young people in the process of preparing the National Programme.

Measures and activities of the national programme develop synergies aimed at promoting youth as a priority area, and create a positive environment for the progress of young people's rights. The document contains a total of seven priority areas (1. Education, training and professional development in the context of lifelong learning; 2. Employment and entrepreneurship; 3. Social protection and inclusion; 4. Health and health protection; 5. Involvement of young people in society; 6. Youth and culture 7. Youth and European and global context) with 40 measures and 118 activities.

Croatia is in the process of building capacity and clearing the path for introduction of the 'Youth Guarantee' by combating existing high long-term youth unemployment, for activation of which funds are planned through the ESF⁹². Following the recommendation of the Council, Croatia submitted its Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan to the Commission in December 2013. The Plan sets out how the Youth Guarantee will be implemented at national level, the respective roles of public authorities and other organisations, how it will be financed, the measures to be put in place, how progress will be assessed and the timetable.

The full roll-out of the Croatian Youth Guarantee is expected in 2017 and will guarantee that "Every young person under 25 and person under 30 will be given a quality offer of a job, a traineeship, on-the-job training, apprenticeship or a continuation of education within 4 months of becoming unemployed"⁹³.

The implementation plan carries out a detailed diagnosis of the situation and highlights some very important issues regarding youth employment, noting the intervention needs. Apart from the need for a general

⁹¹ See *European Youth Partnership (2011), Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Croatia*, p. 4.

⁹² In the 2016 national report on Croatia, the Commission noted that the youth unemployment rate (45.5 %), the Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) rate (19.3 %) and the long-term youth unemployment rate (22.6 %) have all started slightly decreasing, after the peak reached in 2013. Nevertheless, all indicators are still among the highest in the EU and well above their pre-crisis levels. See: SWD(2016) 80 final/2, *Country Report Croatia 2016*.

⁹³ Republic of Croatia - Ministry of Labour and Pension System (2014), *Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans (YGIP)*, p. 7.

economic recovery which would allow faster inclusion in the labour market, there is a crucial need for a different approach in education / training in order to: facilitate the transition from education to the labour market; increase employability of young people through their stronger inclusion in workplace learning; strengthen vocational education and training and modernize the qualification system current status; match skills to labour market needs and enable good anticipation of labour market needs; support self-entrepreneurship and self-employment; ensure cooperation with employers in providing high-quality action learning schemes and in providing the development of apprenticeships.

The National Youth Programme is a key youth strategy. However, it should be pointed out that there are also other strategic documents which create a framework which also affects youth policy to a certain extent. For example: the National Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for the Development of Civil Society 2012 - 2016, the National Addiction Prevention Programme for Children and Youth in the Educational System and Children and Youth in the Social Welfare System 2010-2014, the National Strategy for the Prevention of Behavioural Disorders of Children and Youth 2009-2012, the National Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Abuse in the Republic of Croatia 2012 -2017, the Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2014 – 2020), the National Human Rights Protection and Promotion Programme 2013-2016, the 'Plan for the Deinstitutionalization and Transformation of Social Welfare Homes and Other Legal Entities Performing Social Welfare Activities in the Republic of Croatia 2011-2016/18.⁹⁴

7.2.4 Italy

With regard to the formulation and implementation of EU youth policy, Italy appears as a special case. In the Italian legal system, in the absence of a national framework law, the most important legal reference is to Article 31 paragraph 2 of the Constitution, according to which the Republic “protects mothers, children and the young by adopting the necessary provisions”⁹⁵.

In Italy, the first institution of a Ministry specifically responsible for youth policy management dates back to May 2006. That Ministry had a specific mandate for “Youth Policies and sports”⁹⁶, whilst previously responsibility for matters of youth were assigned to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The allocation of responsibility for youth policy to a dedicated Minister allowed Italy to align the national situation to the situation of other EU countries, by enabling it to have “a dialogue between equals in Community fora where youth policy is being discussed”⁹⁷.

Policy and coordination functions of all measures, including regulatory initiatives, concerning youth policies were assigned to the Minister for Youth Policies and Sports Activities (Minister Giovanna Melandri), supported in her work by a Department set up under Presidency of the Council of Ministers, responsible for managing the *Fund for youth policy*⁹⁸ and coordinating organizational, legal and administrative activities that promote the rights of young people to cultural and vocational education and participation in public life and facilitate access to first house, technological innovation, youth entrepreneurship, international and community programmes.

The Department engaged in a serious effort in supporting young people and implemented projects through the conclusion of agreements with regional authorities and representations of municipalities and provinces (ANCI - National association of Italian Municipalities and UPI - Union of Italian Provinces), helping to put in place integrated interventions such as a *National Youth Plan* in 2007, the *Framework Programme Agreements*

94 See EU Youth Report 2015: Republic of Croatia.

95 Government of Italy (2012), *National report: First cooperation cycle of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012*.

See http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Italy_2012_Youth_Policy_Briefing.pdf

96 Ministry for Youth policy and Sports activities (in Italian: Ministero per le Politiche giovanili e le attività sportive - “Pogas”)

97 Progetto Operativo di Assistenza Tecnica (POAT) “Per la Gioventù” 2013-2015, *Il Quadro di riferimento per le Politiche giovanili, Formez PA, Version 2.0 - March 2014*.

98 Fund established under the second subparagraph of Article 19 of Decree Law No 223 of 2006.

concluded with all regions and *Local Youth Plans* stipulated with local authorities.

In 2008, the youth policy machine is redrawn, with the establishment of the Ministry of Youth. Removed only delegation to sports, tasks allocated to the responsible Minister (Minister Giorgia Meloni) are guidance and coordination of youth policy⁹⁹, including the economic, fiscal, labour, human and social development, education, training and culture areas. Within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, it is also established the 'Department of Youth'¹⁰⁰, which became permanent structure¹⁰¹, in place of the pre-existing mission structure.

During 2010, the Department launched the 'Right to the Future', a package of initiatives aimed at the younger generation, which constitutes an integral part of a wider work carried out by the Government in favour of young people. The initiative consists of five main actions:

- **Fund for housing**¹⁰²: enables young couples with sufficient income, deriving more than half of non-standard employment contracts, to get a mortgage to buy their first home, although without any guarantees normally required.
- **Fund for studying**: allows deserving young people, who may lack the necessary financial means, to undertake a course of study or complete their training with a loan guaranteed by the State.
- **Fund for precarious parents**: grants a subsidy to the young unemployed or precarious parents transferable to employers who hire them with a permanent contract, including part-time work.
- **Campus Mentis**: a systematic action of job placement dedicated to the best Italian graduates.
- **Mecenati Fund**: a fund that can be accessed by large private institutions wishing to invest their own resources on professional, work or entrepreneurial advancement of deserving youth.

Over the next few years, the functions and tasks in the field of youth policy have been allocated, for the period December 2011 - February 2013, to the Minister for International Cooperation and Integration¹⁰³ (Minister Andrea Riccardi) and subsequently to the Minister for Integration¹⁰⁴ (Minister Cécile Kyenge). Also the support structure to the Minister responsible for youth policy was renewed: in 2012, a new Department¹⁰⁵ consolidating the expertise in youth policies and those relating to the National Civil Service¹⁰⁶ was established.

More specifically, the Department of Youth and National Civil Service:

- takes appropriate legal or administrative measures, studies and examines the acts concerning the exercise of the functions in the youth field, with particular regard to the affirmation of the rights of young people to express, also as part of a group or association, their requests and interests and the right to participate in public life;
- promotes the right of young people to housing, knowledge and technological innovation;
- promotes and supports youth work and youth entrepreneurship;
- promotes and supports creative activities, cultural events and entertainment for young people, initiatives related to leisure activities, cultural trips and study tours;

⁹⁹ Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 13 June 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Decree of the Council of Ministers of 20 June 2008.

¹⁰¹ Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 29 October 2009.

¹⁰² The initiative ceased to apply as from 29 September 2014. The assets and liabilities of the 'Fund for housing' were merged into the new 'Guarantee Fund for the first house', established at the Ministry of Economy and Finance - Treasury Department, as implementing body.

¹⁰³ Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 13 December 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 10 July 2013.

¹⁰⁵ Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 21 June 2012.

¹⁰⁶ The Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers of 1 October 2012 regulates the organizational structure of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the Department.

- promotes and supports youth access to projects, programmes and international and European funding;
- manages the Fund for Youth Policy;
- manages European resources for carrying out projects allocated to the Department, within the framework of the applicable Community and national legislation, in its fields of competence;
- represents the Government in international and European organizations established in the field of youth policy¹⁰⁷.

The Department of Youth and Civil Service also supports the Minister Delegate in carrying out its guidance and supervisory functions on the National Youth Agency (Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani - ANG), which implemented the Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013 with the important function of integrating the European Commission, project promoters at national, regional and local level and young people themselves. Starting from 1 January 2014, the ANG is responsible for implementing in Italy the youth chapter of the new Erasmus + Programme for the period 2014-2020.

With the Decree Law No 76 of 2013 (converted into Law No 99 of 2013) was also set up a Mission Structure, coordinated by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, with the involvement of the central government (including the Department of Youth and National Civil Service), Regions, Autonomous Provinces and representatives of local authorities, with the task of developing the 'Youth Guarantee Plan'.

Of particular importance in the current context is the future definition of the new National Youth Plan, a uniform strategic document with which Italy will give new impetus to the governance of youth policy, focusing on coordination of policies in favour of young people in diverse sectors, such as agriculture, culture and education. This document will cover policies aiming to support employment creation and increase and consolidate knowledge, as well as policies for empowering youth, planning their future and promoting active and inclusive citizenship. The National Youth Plan intersects its objectives within the framework set by Decree Law No 76 of 2013 (converted into Law No 99 of 2013), containing urgent measures to boost employment, particularly among young people, such as incentives for fixed-term hiring, initiatives in favour of NEEETs, as internship and apprenticeship, and youth entrepreneurship.

All these interventions are taking place in a particularly difficult socio-economic context, which has had a major impact on the living conditions and prospects of young people, who have found themselves unwilling protagonists of a historical phase in which globalization is a source for growth and jobs but it is also their exact opposite. In Italy, in particular, the younger generation found itself in a particularly difficult situation, which is compounded by the lack of appropriate social shock absorbers. The situation in the country is characterized by strong difficulties faced by young people in finding secure employment with reasonable career prospects, and is accompanied by a substantial modification of the social context in which the levels of 'early leavers from education and training, and 'tertiary educational attainment', including vocational training, are far below the average of other EU countries¹⁰⁸, without forgetting the high and still growing number of NEEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) in the context of the risks of marginalization and social exclusion of young people.

To tackle youth unemployment, the Government has launched the national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, in accordance with the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, which was transmitted to the European Commission in December 2013. Recipients of the Plan's interventions are young NEEETs aged between 15 and 29. The Plan is a way of enhancing employability and involvement of this target group. This strategic document provides for the implementation of the *Youth Employment Initiative* (YEI) by the adoption of a *National Operational Plan* (NOP).

The NOP YEI under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy¹⁰⁹ adopted by Commission Decision C(2014) 4969 of 11 July 2014 intends to address one of the most serious national emergencies in an integrated and

¹⁰⁷ See <http://www.gioventuserviziocivilenazionale.gov.it/sx/dipartimento/competenze.aspx>

¹⁰⁸ Eurostat data

¹⁰⁹ In 2014, the Government Renzi, the delegation in the field of youth policy was again allocated to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy (Minister Giuliano Poletti, still in office).

holistic manner: inactivity and youth unemployment. With reference to the provisions of the Partnership Agreement¹¹⁰, the NOP is implemented as part of the Thematic Objective 8 ‘Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility’, under the ESF priority ‘Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee’ and is structured in a single axis, the priority axis: ‘Employment’.

The programme applies to the whole national territory and identifies the Regions as intermediary bodies. Active policies measures that can be activated with the resources of Youth Employment Initiative are: Welcome, Taking Charge, Orientation, Training, Job-coaching, Apprenticeship, Internship, Civil Service, Support to self-entrepreneurship and self-employment, Territorial and transnational mobility, Employment bonus in favour of the hiring company.

7.2.4.1 Youth policy at regional level

As noted above, in Italy there is not, at present, a framework law that regulates and promotes youth policy at national level. However, that omission has been filled by the individual regional laws for the promotion of youth policy that some Italian regions have approved over the years.

From a legal point of view, in fact, local and regional youth policies are built on the reform of the provisions governing local authorities¹¹¹ and on the administrative federalism based on the principle of subsidiarity, which attributes to Regions and Local Authorities responsibilities for the provision of services to individuals and communities as authorities territorially and functionally closer to the citizen concerned¹¹². The so-called principle of vertical subsidiarity, which concerns the relationship between public bodies, is accompanied by the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, which concerns the relationship between public authorities and citizens, as explained in Article 118 of the Constitution, according to which “The State, regions, metropolitan cities, provinces and municipalities shall promote the autonomous initiatives of citizens, both as individuals and as members of associations, relating to activities of general interest, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity”.

In the absence of a general approach by the central State, a leading role was played by the regions that have defined and addressed youth policies in Italy through the development and implementation of regional laws on youth, enacted almost all between the end of 1980s and early 2000s.

REGIONAL (R.L.) OR PROVINCIAL LAWS (P.L.) CONCERNING YOUTH POLICY¹¹³			
Region	Law	Original Italian title	Scope
Abruzzo	R.L. No 77/2001	Disposizioni in materia di Comunità giovanili e istituzioni della Consulta regionale dei giovani	Youth communities, youth participation in regional administrative life
Basilicata	R.L. No 11/2000	Riconoscimento e promozione del ruolo delle giovani generazioni nella società regionale	Associations, active participation, national and transnational cooperation, information, work, volunteering, training

¹¹⁰ Partnership Agreement with Italy approved by Commission Decision C(2014) 8021 final of 29 October 2014.

¹¹¹ Law No 142 of 1990 and Legislative Decree No 267 of 2000.

¹¹² Law No 59 of 1997 and Constitutional Law No 3 of 2001.

REGIONAL (R.L.) OR PROVINCIAL LAWS (P.L.) CONCERNING YOUTH POLICY¹¹³

Region	Law	Original Italian title	Scope
Calabria	R.L. No 8/1988	Istituzione dei centri polivalenti per i giovani	Participation, social and cultural exchanges, associations
	R.L. No 2/2000	Progetto Giovani	Youth associations
Campania	R.L. No 14/1989	Istituzione del servizio per le politiche giovanili e del forum regionale della gioventù	Youth Information centres
	R.L. No 14/2000	Promozione ed incentivazione dei Servizi Informagiovani e istituzione della rete territoriale delle strutture	Youth Information centres
Emilia Romagna	R.L. No 14/2008	Norme in materia di politiche per le giovani generazioni	Learning, work, access to housing, cultural promotion and health, European mobility, associations, active citizenship
Friuli Venezia Giulia	L.R. 12/2007 (supplements with R.L. No 5/2012)	Promozione della Rappresentanza giovanile, coordinamento e sostegno delle iniziative a favore dei giovani	Active citizenship and participation, association, information (youth information centres)
Lazio	R.L. No 29/2001	Promozione e coordinamento delle politiche in favore dei giovani	Active participation (social and political), work, exclusion, associations, training, cultural exchanges
	R.L. No 20/2007	Promozione degli strumenti di Partecipazione istituzionale delle giovani generazioni alla vita politica e amministrativa locale	Institutional participation of young people, children and kids in the political and administrative life of local communities
Liguria	R.L. No 6/2009	Promozione delle politiche per minori e giovani	Social interventions, youth associations
Lombardy	R.L. No 45/1986	Interventi regionali per la promozione degli scambi socio-culturali giovanili	Socio-cultural exchanges, twinning with other bodies, information
Marche	R.L. No 24/11	Norme in materia di politiche giovanili	Adolescence and youth information
Molise	R.L. No 21/1980	Istituzione della consulta regionale giovanile	Youth participation, associations
Autonomous Province of Bolzano	P.L. No 13/1983	Promozione del servizio giovani nella Provincia di Bolzano	Regulation of youth service

REGIONAL (R.L.) OR PROVINCIAL LAWS (P.L.) CONCERNING YOUTH POLICY¹¹³

Region	Law	Original Italian title	Scope
Autonomous Province of Trento	P.L. No 5/2007	Sviluppo, coordinamento e promozione delle politiche giovanili, disciplina del servizio civile provinciale	Youth participation, associations, information, social inclusion
	P.L. No 7/2009	Istituzione del consiglio provinciale dei giovani	Provincial Youth Council
Piedmont	R.L. No 16/1995 (supplements with R.L. No 5/2001)	Coordinamento e sostegno delle attività a favore dei giovani	Information, associations, social inclusion, culture, sports and leisure
Apulia	-	-	-
Sardinia	R.L. No 11/1999	Iniziativa e coordinamento delle attività a favore dei giovani	Associations, information, work and entrepreneurship, social inclusion, socio-cultural exchanges
Sicily	Draft Law presented on 3.8.2010	Disegno di Legge sulle "Politiche Giovanili"	Information, education, employment, social inclusion, active participation, rule of law, multiculturalism
Tuscany	R.L. No 32/2002	Testo unico della normativa della Regione Toscana in materia di educazione, istruzione, orientamento, formazione professionale e lavoro	Education, training, guidance, educational interventions for young children
Umbria	R.L. No 27/1995	Istituzione del Forum della Gioventù e dell'Osservatorio regionale giovani	Active citizenship, volunteering, education, training, information (youth information centres), work, social integration, associations
Valle d'Aosta	R.L. No 12/2013	Promozione e coordinamento delle politiche a favore dei giovani	Promotion of social, educational and cultural initiatives in favour of youth
Veneto	R.L. No 29/1988 (amendments with R.L. No 37/1994)	Iniziativa e coordinamento delle attività a favore dei giovani	Information, social inclusion, active participation, promotion of socio-cultural exchanges, associations
	R.L. No 17/2008	Promozione del protagonismo giovanile e della partecipazione alla vita sociale	Information, inclusion, social participation, socio-cultural exchanges

Subsequently, between 2007 and 2008 all the Italian Regions signed with the then Department of Youth a *Framework Programme Agreement for the development of youth policies* on their territories. The contents of these agreements refer to European directives on youth policy, and, in particular, the White Paper of the European Commission "A new impetus for European youth", the European Youth Pact, the Lisbon Strategy, and various action programmes for young people, such as Youth in Action Programme, the Lifelong Learning Programme, Progress, eEurope and iStrategy 2010.

The regions thus become effective policy makers in the field, with great opportunities to experience a regionalist system under these new youth policy projects¹¹⁴. The issues at the heart of the youth field programming are common to all regions, though differently customized, and concern themes of high social interest, such as the training system and its links with labour policy, employment, the support for youth entrepreneurship, social inclusion and the fight to illegal activities, internationalization of skills and the enhancement of services in favour of youth.

The contents of these youth programmes indicate that the objective of youth policy is to produce a more clear-cut definition of citizenship, guaranteeing all young people the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms, as set down in the Constitution (work, substantial equality, participation, protection of rights, etc.)¹¹⁵.

In order to ensure greater effectiveness of the actions undertaken, the regions should implement appropriate institutional communication activities, targeted to the younger generations. In fact, it is possible to assess the impact and the success of the actions undertaken within regional territory according to the level of effective participation of young people and, therefore, according to the results achieved. To ensure high standards, it is clear that reaching the highest number of young people is essential. To this end, the new communication tools play a key role and it is no coincidence that almost all the regions have web pages dedicated to youth policy.

The effectiveness of youth policy is also closely connected with the activation of strong synergies between the different regional sectors involved in order to achieve successful integration of the interventions, so as to maximize the leverage effect and avoid overlaps.

7.3 MOLISE REGION

Molise Region for 2010-2012 has an employment rate for the 20-64 age group at 54.7%, giving it 16th place among Italian regions and 1st place among southern regions and Islands (average of 47.8%). The figure, however, is lower than the national average (61%), and, in particular, lower than the EU-27 average (68.5%).¹¹⁶

Moreover, the youth unemployment rate (for those aged 15-24) in the period 2011-2012 increased from 28.6% to 41.9%, compared to the value of the South passed from 40.4% to 46.9%, while the national average rose from 29.1% to 35.3%. The region, then, whilst following the national trend, is moving to a scenario of serious unemployment crisis.¹¹⁷

The regional strategy gives the European Social Fund (ESF) a key role in boosting the deployment of policies for employment, training, education and social cohesion, with special attention to ensure the improvement of access opportunities to the labour market for young people and women.

With particular reference to interventions aimed at young people, the Regional Operational Plan (ROP) operates both by direct intervention under Thematic Objective 8 'Promoting sustainable and quality employ-

¹¹³ As the table shows, to date, Apulia and Sicily are the only regions without a regional legislation concerning youth policies, and of the two, only the Sicilian Region has already approved a draft law on the matter.

¹¹⁴ A. Bazzanella et al., *op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

¹¹⁶ POR Molise FESR FSE 2014-2020, p. 9

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 9

ment and supporting labour mobility' and in complementarity and continuity with what had already been implemented in the region under the National Operative Programme (NOP) Youth Employment Initiative (YÉI), through a set of activities ranging from orientation to mentoring, and from training to extracurricular internship and apprenticeship as required by national regulations in the field. The Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, as well as target the PON, is an important reference for the implementation of the ROP ESF.

In line with the provisions of TO 8, the selected specific priority is the following:

Sii - Sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

It is therefore necessary to focus interventions towards the population with low employment rates, that is a population with a very wide range of potential recipients (inactive/unemployed), among which young people between 15-24 years of age and those aged 25-35 are the biggest component and women represent a particularly problematic target. It is also necessary to take action in support of participation and permanence in the labour market of workers affected by sectoral and company crises; consolidate and improve active policy actions in support of the entry or re-entry into the labour market, also acting on employment services; improve the service standards and facilitate the matching between demand and supply of labour¹¹⁸.

Molise Region's strategic objective is to train young people with specialist expertise and marketable skills, in order to better meet current needs at regional and national level. The action, for its proper implementation, requires the setting of a structured and continuous monitoring activity, so as to have information on the evolution of training needs of the territory.

As regards the training courses for professional qualification, addressed to young people in the age range 15-17, who have both the right and obligation to attend compulsory education, the action confirms public support for VET pathways, according to a preventive perspective that can help achieve the aim of curbing early school leaving, and makes an effective contribution to fighting youth unemployment, in rising the completion rate for secondary education and promoting employment. The regional VET provision will be more ambitious in response to the demand for specialised vocational training and ensure the successful completion of compulsory schooling.

As for vocational guidance and training, targeting young people in the 18-29 age range, as required by the Guidelines on Traineeships annexed to the Agreement between State Government, Regions and Autonomous Provinces of 24 January 2013, they are finalized at facilitating professional choices and employability of young people, particularly during the transition period from school to labour, through training with direct contact with the world of work. As for the integration and reintegration traineeships, they are aimed at all inactive and unemployed young from Molise region, while summer traineeships are designed for students of secondary schools and universities (in the 15 to 25 age bracket).

With respect to professional apprenticeships, targeting young people in the 18-29 age group, it aims to strengthen regional action regarding youth employment, by complementing the actions envisaged at regional level through the National Youth Employment Initiative, in order to allow companies who have the possibility to recruit new employees also through this type of contract.

As for hiring bonus, Molise Region will ensure the necessary coordination and integration with the NOP Youth Employment Initiative for the 18 to 29 year-old target, giving continuity to the measures provided for at regional level.

Measures provided for in the regional operational programme, therefore, support and supplement the activities implemented at regional level through the NOP Youth Employment Initiative, expanding the target audiences of the action.

8. TRANSNATIONAL AND CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMMES IN THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN AREA

8.1 THE 2007-2013 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

8.1.1 Operational Programme ‘South East Europe’ (SEE)

On 20 December 2007 the European Commission approved the Transnational Co-operation Programme “South-East Europe” for the period 2007-2013. This programme involves Community support for regions in 16 countries- Member States, candidate, potential candidate countries and third countries.

For 14 countries the eligible area is the whole territory of the country, namely for Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Moldova.

In 2 countries only certain regions are eligible: in Italy these eligible regions are: Lombardia, Bolzano/Bozen, Trento, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Marche, Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia Basilicata, and in Ukraine: Cjermovestka Oblast, Ivano-Frankiviska Oblast, Zakarpatska Oblast and Odessa Oblast.

This represents a total population of 200 million people. The total budget of the programme is € 245 million and the Community assistance through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) amounts to € 206 million.

The overall strategic goal of the programme is to improve “the territorial, economic and social integration process and contribute to cohesion, stability and competitiveness” through the development of trans-national partnerships. The programme focuses on four thematic priorities: Innovation, Environment, Accessibility, and Sustainable urban development. This will be a concrete opportunity for Western Balkans to move towards the European Union and will deepen relations with the EU neighbouring countries.

The South-East Europe area is the most diverse, heterogeneous and complex trans-national co-operation area in Europe, made up of a broad mix of countries. The emergence of new countries and with it the establishment of new frontiers has changed the patterns of political, economic, social and cultural relationships.

The area has undergone a fundamental change in economic and production patterns after the 1990 changes. While some regions, especially the capital cities, are adapting well to the new challenges, others are trying to re-orientate themselves. Significant for the programme area are regional disparities in terms of economic power, innovation, competitiveness and accessibility between urban areas and rural areas.

In the European transportation network, South-East Europe is acting as a bridge between North, South, East and West Europe. The existing networks however cannot keep pace with the rise in demand and the increasingly demanding standards specifications. A large number of instruments and concepts like the Trans-European Networks (TENs) and the Pan-European Transport Corridors cross the area, but need to be further developed.

There are rivers suitable for freight transportation, maritime borders and the Danube, an important international inland waterway and integrating factor in many fields, such as transport, trade and environment. South-East Europe is characterised by broad biodiversity and natural resources of high environmental value. The potential for the use of environmentally-friendly technologies and the assets for future economic and social development are the strong points of the area, but inherited environmental damage has to be addressed as well.

The programme shall facilitate innovation, entrepreneurship, knowledge, the economy and information society by concrete co-operation action and visible results. It is also aimed at improving the attractiveness of regions and cities taking into account sustainable development, physical and knowledge accessibility and environmental quality by integrated approaches and concrete co-operation action and visible results. Finally, it will foster integration by supporting balanced capacities for trans-national territorial co-operation at all levels.

Priority 1: Facilitation of innovation and entrepreneurship aims to contribute specifically to the future development of South-East Europe as a place of innovation, to facilitate innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy and to enhance integration and economic relations in the co-operation area. These objectives can be achieved through the development of technology & innovation networks, the promotion of an enabling environment for innovative entrepreneurship and the enhancement of the framework conditions for innovation. Examples of projects which could be supported include: feasibility studies, joint training courses connected to innovation and technology, creating networks of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) etc.

Priority 2: Protection and improvement of the environment aims to contribute to the improvement of environmental conditions and better management of protected and other natural/semi natural areas, to override the constraints imposed by national barriers, to foresee future environmental threats and opportunities and to develop common trans-national action for the protection of nature and humans. This can be achieved through integrated water management and flood prevention and management, the prevention of environmental risks, the management of natural resources and the promotion of resources and energy efficiency. Examples of projects would include: common civil protection systems, common alert mechanisms, strategies for rural and maritime tourism, developing networks on “green industries” etc.

Priority 3: Improvement of accessibility is aimed at connecting local and regional actors to the European Networks (including road, rail, inland and sea transport). This includes physical infrastructure as well as access to the Information Society. It also promotes co-ordinated preparation for the development of accessibility networks and the support of multi-modality. This objective can be achieved through co-ordinating the promotion, planning and operating of primary and secondary transportation networks, the development of strategies tackling the “digital divide” and the improvement of framework conditions for multi-modal platforms.

Priority 4: Development of trans-national synergies for sustainable growth areas.

It aims to address the increasing disparities between certain regions and cities in South-East Europe and to lead to a “polycentric” type of development. The objective can be accomplished by referring to the challenges of crucial problems affecting metropolitan areas and regional systems of settlement, the promotion of a balanced pattern of attractive and accessible growth areas and the promotion of cultural values as a development asset. Examples of actions would include: developing cooperation in the field of public infrastructure and public services, cooperative solutions for urban renewal, plans for the restructuring of former military camps, for better management of archaeological sites etc.

8.1.2 Adriatic IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme

On 25 March 2008 the European Commission approved a Cross-border Co-operation Programme between three EU Member States (Greece, Italy, Slovenia), and four candidate/potential candidate countries (Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro) for the period 2007-2013. The Programme was adopted under and co-financed by the cross-border co-operation component of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Serbia participates in the programme at the phasing-out stage and co-operation focuses on institutional capacity-building.

Community funding for the programme over the period 2007-2011 is worth around EUR 245.6 million, supplemented in turn by about EUR 43.3 million of national funding from the participating countries. The programme’s total value therefore is approximately EUR 298 million.

The Cross-border Co-operation Programme is a continuation and extension of the two previous Neighbourhood Programmes 2004-2006: ‘Italy-Adriatic’ and ‘Italy-Albania’.

The overall aim remains largely unchanged: strengthening sustainable development capabilities in the Adriatic region through a concerted strategy of action between the partners of the eligible territories. This overall aim has been broken down into three specific objectives by the participating countries. These are:

- To foster sustainable economic growth: providing support for economic development through support for innovation and new technologies, strengthening research and innovation in order to boost compe-

tiveness, and increasing the development of the Adriatic region through economic, social and institutional co-operation.

- To further develop the attractiveness and quality of life in maritime border regions: protecting and jointly managing valuable natural and cultural resources, preventing technological and natural risks, safeguarding biodiversity, and expanding sustainable tourism.
- To promote social cohesion and co-operation: fostering a real sense of sharing through support for human resources and labour market development, cultural exchanges and cross-border networks to promote and develop transport and information and communication services.

In order to achieve its specific and global objectives, the programme proposes to work on three main thematic priorities, with a fourth priority dedicated to the management of the programme ('technical assistance' priority). The Adriatic IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007-13 is subdivided into the following priorities:

Priority 1: Economic, social and institutional co-operation resources [approximately 30% of total funding]

This priority focuses largely on business and employment issues. The aim is to create better conditions in which fledgling enterprises can grow and to improve conditions for employment and social integration. Research, innovation, entrepreneurship, clustering and marketing activities will be encouraged and supported while the human dimension will also feature strongly in activities and networks focussing on health, education, training, social integration, vulnerable groups, etc. In terms of institutional co-operation, this priority promotes innovative services to the population at large through exchanges of best practices between local government authorities. Interventions in this field privilege the involvement of Serbian partners.

Priority 2: Natural and cultural resources and risk prevention [approximately 30% of total funding]

This second priority is targeted at promoting, improving and protecting natural and cultural resources that will prevent technological and natural risks. Support is provided for activities that concern environmental protection (e.g. safeguarding existing biodiversity, joint management of natural sites) and the prevention of natural disasters. There are also a number of activities related to awareness-raising and education within the local population. This priority is also addressing cultural resources and offers financial support to projects aiming to preserve and promote the region's many valuable cultural sites. Co-operation receives firm encouragement through the joint development of cultural tourist interventions and exchanges of experiences and best practices.

Priority 3: Accessibility and networks [approximately 30% of total funding]

This third priority is targeted at promoting, improving and developing transport, information and communication services. Support is aimed at modernising and strengthening port and airport facilities in order to optimise existing potential through service improvements, better security and the upgrading of existing facilities. The programme seeks to provide an efficient, safe and sustainable transportation system with a view to achieving integrated development in the Adriatic region and creating access to neighbouring territories. Information and communication networks, as tools for exchanges of good practices, will be enhanced and developed further.

8.1.2.1 YOUTH ADRINET: A project specifically focused on youth policy

The project *YOUTH ADRINET- Sharing experiences and developing joint tools in order to increase the participation of the YOUTH ADRIatic population in the civil society and create a NETWORK*, funded under the Adriatic IPA CBC programme (Axis I – Economic, institutional and social cooperation, Measure 1.4 – Institutional cooperation), was aimed at promoting the active participation in the social life of young people, by fostering their mutual acquaintance, the development of joined methodologies and the setting up of new job opportunities in the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic framework of the Adriatic area.

The partnership of the project consists mainly of public bodies (Province of Gorizia, Apulia Region, Province of Campobasso, Province of Pesaro and Urbino, Municipality of Rimini, Municipality of Novigrad -

Canton of Sarajevo, Municipality of Gorizia, Regional Council of Shkoder, City of Pula, City of Dubrovnik, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Municipality of Izola), a non-profit private organisation, called ForSer (VET centre founded also by the Italian Association of Municipalities) and Informest, Agency for International Cooperation and Development with sound experience in the Adriatic Basin, thus the partnership covers almost all the possible eligible areas and puts together different institutional levels and social entities, in order to set up a project structure whose characteristics will be the right ones to better achieve the expected results.

The project main objectives were thus the setting up in the Adriatic basin area of: institutional cooperation actions among political actors in charge for the management of Youth Policies; a model where the principle of an active citizenship for young people finds the right place where to develop and where some concrete actions of social integration can take place; an advanced methodological approach that includes both a local and a transnational dimension; a professional coaching and training process focused on the creation of new possibilities for the employment of the young.

The ultimate goal was to establish, within the Adriatic Euroregion, a cross-cutting Commission, which worked alongside Thematic Commissions on youth policies and promoted the adoption of a *Youth Mainstreaming approach* aimed at evaluating the impact of the measures adopted for the young population and the effects they produce¹¹⁹.

As is widely acknowledged, the Youth AdriNet project has been the decisive instrument to have youth policies and young people at the core of the matter or to confirm the priority of this sector of social work. Youth AdriNet has contributed to listening to young people and focusing attention which was weak if not absent on certain contexts. The suitable knowledge and perception of their instances, rights, and problems was not present. In other contexts, Youth AdriNet was the pre-requisite to re-analyse the issues from “the outside” and give estimates and advice. For all the partners this has meant starting a network of relationships which has never existed before in the Adriatic area, an international network which:

- implements a permanent exchange of information and ideas,
- widens and strengthens common relationships,
- supports the comparison with different experiences,
- helps to understand being part of a wider reality,
- helps to think and stay together,
- urges to collaborate (to learn to collaborate) among different people,
- increases the attention towards Europe.

Youth AdriNet was based, methodologically, on the Integrated Education System, which, in short, consists in creating empowered alliances among the actors of a Community:

1. policy makers, who take the strategic role to initiate the processes and then promote and support them;
2. young people, who congregate in places / spaces for meeting and debate (the Fora);
3. civil society, in its articulated components:
 - services, i.e. operators who professionally deal with the world of youth, their welfare, their discomfort;
 - intentionally educational agencies, such as schools, training agencies, parishes;
 - associations and voluntary organisations, where young people find often the first expression of

119 Youth AdriNet generated a Memorandum of Understanding committing project’s policy-makers and the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion to use the experiences gained from the project to develop their own future strategies in the field of youth policy.

socialization organized in a community;

- the world of economy, with which young people are interfaced to find their working dimension.

The project has also promoted the launch of forms of coordination and the creation of partnerships among Municipalities and has simultaneously pushed the district entities (like the Italian Provinces) to take on this role in promoting greater awareness of youth policies and coordinating interventions at local level. As for the young, those who have been involved in the project have had the opportunity to know different worlds, to compare ways of thinking and living “apparently” distant than their own. Apparently because, in the continuing contacts, young people have found that many needs and many problems are common and that the priorities are the same.

Finally, the project has operated in coordination with the *AdriGov* project, promoted by Molise Region, which is the follow up of the *AdriEurOP* project, to build operationally the Adriatic Euroregion (now Adriatic Ionian Euroregion).

8.2 THE 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

8.2.1 The Adriatic-Ionian Cooperation Programme

The overall objective of the Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian 2014-2020 programme (hereinafter ADRION) is to act as a policy driver and governance innovator fostering the European integration among Partner States (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia), taking advantage from the rich natural, cultural and human resources surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian seas and enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Programme area.

For the ADRION programme the following four Priority Axis (PA) and five Specific Objective (SO) have been selected:

- Innovative and smart region (PA 1): Support the development of a regional Innovation system for the Adriatic-Ionian area (SO 1.1);
- Sustainable region (PA 2): promote the sustainable valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural assets as growth assets in the Adriatic-Ionian area (SO 2.1) and enhance the capacity in transnationally tackling environmental vulnerability, fragmentation and the safeguarding of ecosystem services in the Adriatic-Ionian area (SO 2.2);
- Connected region (PA 3): enhance capacity for integrated transport and mobility services and multimodality in the ADRION area (SO 3.1);
- Supporting the governance of the EUSAIR (PA 4): facilitate the coordination and implementation of the EUSAIR by enhancing institutional capacity of public administrations and key stakeholders and by assisting the progress of implementation of joint priorities (SO 4.1).

As a transnational cooperation programme, its main contribution will be to exchange and transfer experiences between regions, support transnational interventions and capacity building, and ensure that results are disseminated and used beyond project partners reaching a large number of end-users.

The programme will especially support the constitution of multilevel and intersectoral working teams and partnerships to overcome administrative and sectoral bottlenecks, with the involvement of citizens, and local/regional/ national/international bodies. At territorial level, a key issue will be to reduce conflicts of land use that constitute one main aspect of sustainable development strategies.

9. EUSAIR: A STRATEGY FOR A PROSPEROUS AND INTEGRATED ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Home to more than 70 million people and key for Europe's geographical continuity, the Adriatic and Ionian Region is a functional area primarily defined by the Adriatic and Ionian Sea basins.

In order to address a number of pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges facing the Region, the European Council of 13- 14 December 2012 requested the European Commission to present a new macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region before the end of 2014.

Building on previous strategies for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and the Danube Region (EUSDR), the Commission adopted on 18 June 2014 a Communication and Action Plan for the EU Strategy focusing on the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

The Strategy, jointly developed by the Commission, together with the Adriatic-Ionian Region countries and stakeholders, in order to address common challenges together, was endorsed by the European Council on 23-24 October 2014.

The EU's Strategy builds on the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative¹²⁰, which was launched in 2000 and involved eight countries: four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia) and four non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia).

The general objective of the Strategy is to promote sustainable economic and social prosperity in the Region through growth and jobs creation, and by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity, while preserving the environment and ensuring healthy and balanced marine and coastal ecosystems. This will be achieved through cooperation between countries with much shared history and geography.

By reinforcing implementation of existing EU policies in the Region, the Strategy brings a clear EU added value, while offering a golden opportunity for all participating countries to align their policies with the EU-2020 overall vision. It will thereby also contribute to bringing Western Balkan countries closer to the EU by offering them opportunities for working closely with Member States, to address common challenges and opportunities specific to the Region.

A pair of countries - one EU country and one non-EU country- coordinated the development of each element of the Action Plan:

1. Blue growth: The objective of this pillar, coordinated by Greece and Montenegro, is to drive innovative maritime and marine growth in the Region by promoting sustainable economic development and jobs and business opportunities in the Blue economy, including fisheries and aquaculture. To this end, clusters involving research centres, public agencies and private companies must be promoted. Coordinated fishery management will improve data collection, monitoring and control. Joint planning efforts and increased administrative and cooperation capacity will improve use of existing resources and maritime governance at sea basin level.

2. Connecting the region: The objective of this pillar, coordinated by Italy and Serbia, is to improve transport and energy connectivity in the Region and with the rest of Europe. Inter-linked and sustainable transport and energy networks are needed to develop the Region. Cooperation is needed to reduce bottlenecks, and develop infrastructure networks and regulatory frameworks. Coordinated monitoring of maritime traffic and multi-modal transport will increase competitiveness.

3. Environmental quality: The objective of this pillar, coordinated by Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, is to address environmental quality through cooperation at the level of the Region. It will contribute to good environmental status for marine and coastal ecosystems, reducing pollution of the sea, limiting, mitigating and compensating soil sealing, reducing air pollution and halting loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems. Joint action to preserve eco-regions spanning several countries is beneficial to Europe's natural

120 The intergovernmental Adriatic-Ionian Initiative was initiated in 2000 with the aim to strengthening regional cooperation, to promote political and economic stability thus creating a solid base for the European integration process.

heritage: it also ensures that infrastructure investments neither deteriorate the environment and landscapes nor increase pollution

4. Sustainable tourism: The objective of this pillar, coordinated by Croatia and Albania, is to develop the full potential of the Region in terms of innovative, sustainable, responsible quality tourism. Diversification of tourism products and services, along with tackling seasonality, will boost business and create jobs. World-wide marketing of an Adriatic-Ionian “brand” of tourism products and services will increase demand.

Moreover, ‘Strengthening R&D, Innovation and SMEs’ and ‘Capacity building, including communication’ are two cross-cutting aspects across each pillar. Furthermore, climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as disaster risk management are horizontal principles for all four pillars.

10. A NEW DEAL OF YOUTH POLICY IN THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN AREA

The Commission Communication¹²¹ and the related Action Plan¹²², which present the EUSAIR strategy, do not contain a direct reference to youth policy.

Certain references emerge from the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the strategy¹²³, where the EU assembly of regional and local representatives:

- asks for a stronger focus on territorial and social cohesion and on major concerns which cannot be dealt with efficiently by single countries, such as health, active ageing, disparities in demographic and economic conditions between and within the countries of the Region, as well as problems related to security/organised crime /illegal migration, business relocation, and **youth unemployment**. These issues should be tackled in all four pillars with a view to achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in line with Europe 2020 policies and objectives, and increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the EUSAIR region;

- suggests taking stock of Baltic and Danube Strategy experiences and holding an annual EUSAIR forum to facilitate economic-social dialogue and broad ownership of the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy through the effective involvement of social and economic stakeholders (trade unions, employers’ organisations, NGOs, **youth organisations**, civil society associations, etc.);

- considers that the construction of a long lasting Adriatic Ionian area for peaceful dialogue and effective cooperation, cannot be built without involving, in a consistent way, **the youth of the concerned regions**. Therefore, invites the Member States and the European Commission to promote, facilitate and improve the implementation of the existing youth mobility programmes in the framework of the EUSAIR area.

11. CONCLUSIONS: YOUTH POLICY IN THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN AREA WITHIN A BROADER EU PROGRAMME

The above leads, therefore, to the conclusion that youth policy cannot work in isolation and only at national level.

Cooperation and complementarity with policies such as employment, education, training, health, culture, digital media, sustainable development, citizenship and sport is essential.

The cooperation framework can underpin such cooperation through its mechanisms. Through the EU Work Plan, the Commission and AI Macro-Region Countries can further implement and refine cross-sectoral structures and working methods. This contributes to reaching the overall objectives in the youth field: to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market and promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

121 COM(2014) 357 final

122 SWD(2014) 190 final

123 COR-2014-00023-00-00-DT-TRA

European cooperation in the youth field should be part of a broader political agenda for young people. To have real impact, policy-makers at EU and national level must work together with practitioners, service providers, educators and businesses on the ground to mobilise resources and funds to reach a critical mass of young people. They should aim to deliver innovative solutions to the complex phenomena that are marginalisation, exclusion and lack of participation.

The EU Structured Dialogue with youth should promote the inclusion of all young people in tolerant, diverse and democratic societies. The next Dialogue must reach a much wider audience of youth groups, especially those that have not engaged in the Dialogue so far, among others by using lighter engagement tools tailored to the needs and habits of young people.

Ultimately, there is an urgent need to scale up efforts. To offer more young people the genuine prospect of becoming full and engaged members of their communities, we need a comprehensive approach to match the challenge ahead. This requires a coherent policy agenda, backed by National and regional resources, which contribute to support these efforts where possible, but above all by funding instruments with greater outreach, such as the ESF or the YEL, by the Youth Guarantee and perhaps even by an **Erasmus+ Programme expressly dedicated to the new Adriatic and Ionian Region**.

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ADRIATIC GOVERNANCE OPERATIONAL PLAN



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