



5 September 2019

RESTRICTED

Council of Europe youth policy advisory mission to Armenia

July 2019



REPORT OF THE ADVISORY MISSION DELEGATION¹

¹ The opinions expressed in this report are the responsibility of the advisory mission delegation and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe or its member states.

Acknowledgements

The advisory mission delegation would like to thank the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia for requesting and organising this youth policy advisory mission. We give particular thanks to Gevorg Loretsyan, Deputy Minister and to Tamara Torosyan, Head of the Youth Department, as well as their colleagues for their support, guidance, openness and warm hospitality during the mission.

The delegation also thanks the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia for their active involvement in the youth policy advisory mission, as well all international organisations and agencies, national organisations, associations, and NGOs which participated in the meetings organised as a part of the mission, for their valuable input during this process.

Finally, the delegation is grateful to the authorities of the city of Gyumri and of the Shirak Province, to the Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre and to the Gyumri “Youth House” Open Youth Centre for the field visit.

Executive summary

From 16 to 18 July 2019, a Council of Europe delegation composed of representatives of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), the European Youth Forum (YFJ), a youth policy expert/rapporteur and the head of the Council of Europe Youth Policy Division visited Armenia (Yerevan and Gyumri) to advise the authorities on how to further develop and implement the national youth strategy.

The delegation met several key stakeholders and representatives of organisations involved in the national youth strategy. It also met some high-level representatives, including: Gevorg Loretsyan (Deputy Minister responsible for youth matters at the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic Armenia); Arman Udumyan (Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia); Samvel Balasanyan (mayor of the city of Gyumri); Tigran Petrosyan (governor of the Shirak province). A field visit was also organised to the Youth Initiative Centre of Gyumri and the Gyumri Open Youth Centre.

During the mission, the delegation provided practical advice to the national authorities of Armenia on the revision of the national youth strategy, in line with the Council of Europe's standards in the field of youth.

This advisory mission was part of the package of intergovernmental assistance measures to member states in the field of youth, carried out under the aegis of the CDEJ. This mission was organised at a crucial juncture in the national political context, which might entail significant changes in the national youth policy of Armenia.

The main findings of the advisory mission are contained in the current report, for the attention of the national authorities. The main recommendations of the advisory mission delegation to the Armenian authorities are also summarised below.

Main recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the youth policy advisory mission, the delegation puts forward the following recommendations to the Armenian authorities.

- **General recommendations** on the approach taken in the strategy (concepts and context)
 1. Ensure that the language used to depict young people, their perspectives and circumstances, are anchored in a rights-based and opportunity-focused orientation
 2. Add references to appropriate transnational documentation (in particular relevant Council of Europe standards in the field of youth) to guide the thinking and action points within the strategy
 3. Ensure that the active involvement of young people and youth-led organisations, as stated as a priority within the strategy, is put into practice *at all levels* within Armenian society, by putting them at the forefront of the development, monitoring and implementation of the strategy
 4. Strengthen the strategic coherence of evidence and action within the strategy
 5. Consider the principal ‘quick wins’ within the strategy that can best be achieved through an action plan within a realistic time scale
- **Specific recommendations** on the key themes and issues to be considered in the strategy
 - *With regard to alliances and partnerships (structures and frameworks for collaboration)*
 - 6. Consider the need for a cross-governmental/inter-ministerial body to oversee and co-ordinate the delivery of the strategy
 - 7. (Re)establish a National Youth Policy Council to ensure stakeholder representation in the development and delivery of the strategy
 - 8. Ensure effective and meaningful participation and representation of young people at all levels of governance in the delivery of the strategy
 - 9. Secure and sustain appropriate resources to maintain a knowledge and evidence base about young people’s lives and the effectiveness of the strategy (in particular following the discontinuation of the Institute for Youth Studies)
 - *With regard to the structures for delivery*
 - 10. Regional authorities need a strengthened place within the national youth strategy, to serve as a bridge between national and local levels, and as a platform for horizontal stakeholder collaboration

11. Regional authorities need the capacity to determine their own regional youth strategies, within the national framework but ensuring responsiveness to regional specificities and, in turn, providing a framework within which local youth action plans can be developed
12. Local youth action plans should be formulated, within the framework of regional youth strategies
 - *With regard to capacity (resources and distribution)*
13. There should be transparent stakeholder representation in the oversight and decision-making with regard to the distribution of financial resources for structural support and programme development, in line with the goals of the strategy
14. Any grant scheme, for structural support or programme development, should have a streamlined application and allocation process, ideally online
 - *With regard to inclusion and equality (vulnerable and excluded groups of young people)*
15. Vulnerable and excluded groups of young people should be carefully and consistently named
16. Where research evidence points to vulnerability and exclusion of certain groups of young people, this should be reflected in the goals and actions of the strategy
17. Inclusion should be a central aspiration of all aspects of the strategy
18. The strategy should serve to enhance the autonomy of all young people in Armenia
 - *With regard to youth work*
19. The strategy should ensure the dissemination of diverse models of youth work practice throughout the country
20. Youth work should be acknowledged as a key site for the strategic achievement of self-expression and self-organisation by young people
 - *With regard to the implementation of the strategy*
21. Clear stepping stones should be outlined so that the strategy can be rolled out efficiently
22. Action plans, with provision for review and adaptation, should be developed at national, regional and local levels

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction - background of the mission	6
1.1	<i>Council of Europe’s youth policy advisory missions</i>	
1.2	<i>National context</i>	
1.3	<i>Council of Europe’s Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022</i>	
1.4	<i>Strong commitment of all parties involved in the youth agenda within Armenia</i>	
1.5	<i>The National Youth Strategy</i>	
2.	Perspectives from the advisory mission delegation	12
	Part One - the approach taken in the strategy document: concepts and context	12
2.1	<i>Depicting young people</i>	
2.2	<i>Link to relevant international and Council of Europe standards</i>	
2.3	<i>The role of young people and youth organisations</i>	
2.4	<i>Evidence and action</i>	
2.5	<i>The challenge of implementation</i>	
	Part Two - key themes and issues to be considered	15
2.6	<i>Alliances and partnerships – structures and frameworks for collaboration</i>	
2.7	<i>Structures for delivery</i>	
2.8	<i>Capacity – resources and distribution</i>	
2.9	<i>Inclusion and Equality – vulnerable and excluded groups of young people</i>	
2.10	<i>Youth work</i>	
2.11	<i>Implementation</i>	
	Part Three - editorial feedback	23
3.	Conclusion	24
4.	Recommendations	25
	References	27
	Appendix 1: Concept note and draft programme	28
	Appendix 2: Participants in discussions during the advisory mission	35
	Appendix 3: Framework and objectives of the youth policy advisory mission	36
	Appendix 4: Articles and news items about the advisory mission	51
	Appendix 5: Letter from the Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe addressed to the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia	52

1. Introduction – background of the mission

One of the main objectives of intergovernmental cooperation in the Council of Europe's Youth Department is to promote and support the development of member states' youth field, based on the values and standards of the Council of Europe. Public institutions and governmental authorities responsible for youth receive expert assistance to address youth policy issues and challenges, depending on the needs and contexts of the requesting states.

Within this framework of assistance measures, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia requested assistance for youth policy development from the Council of Europe's Youth Department to support the revision of the national youth strategy. The objective of the mission was to assess the national youth strategy and to ensure that it was in line with the Council of Europe's standards in the field of youth, based on documentation provided by the Ministry, thematic discussions and field visits.

The mission took place on 16-18 July 2019 in Yerevan and Gyumri (for a detailed programme of the visit, see Appendix I). The advisory mission delegation was composed of Florian Cescon, Head of the Council of Europe's Youth Policy Division, Ivan Hromada, Vice-Chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Andrea Ugrinoska, Bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), Ville Majamaa, Vice President of the European Youth Forum and Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy and general rapporteur.

1.1 Council of Europe's youth policy advisory missions

As part of its youth policy support measures to member states, the Council of Europe Youth Department has been providing 'advisory missions' since 2002. In contrast to the more well-known international reviews of national youth policy ('youth policy reviews'), which are wide-ranging and take a considerable time, advisory missions are designed to be 'fast and practical', usually addressing a single issue and seeking to provide a 'rapid response' to that issue, one which the public authorities within the country concerned feel would benefit from external scrutiny and what has come to be known as a 'stranger's eye'. The conclusions of an advisory mission are drawn from preliminary reading of any proposed texts and discussions with relevant stakeholders during a short visit to the country. In the case of Armenia, the visit took place over three days (16-18 July 2019). Further information about the mission – its concept, respondents and its place within the broader framework of Council of Europe Youth Department support measures – is provided in Appendix 1-3.

The issue in question for the Council of Europe advisory mission delegation in relation to Armenia was its draft national youth strategy and, perhaps, the need and timing of a youth law² to cement commitment to, and application of the strategy.

² Though the Deputy Minister in the Ministry for Education, Science, Culture and Sports spoke of the need for a 'legislative platform', the issue of a Law on Youth was not prominent in subsequent discussions. It was noted that while there needed to be compliance with wider legislation, and while there seemed to still be some case for a Law on Youth, it must not be "just declarative and toothless". There were arguments that "the conceptual framework for youth policy may be better tackled by amendments to current legislation rather than a distinct and dedicated new law". The advisory mission delegation did not learn enough on this front to comment on it in this report, though it was informed that Article 6 of the Constitution requires each sector to

Prior to the advisory mission visit, members of the delegation were provided with a Google translated version of the strategy³ and some preliminary analysis and observations produced by the rapporteur in anticipation of the delegation's visit to Armenia, in order to offer some guidance for pertinent questions and concerns. Ultimately, however, it was for each member of the expert delegation to determine how they wished to pursue items of interest within the national youth strategy and then for the rapporteur to collate them within a final report.

The Council of Europe's distinctive contribution to supporting youth policy development in member states revolves around six particular areas: participation, information, access to rights, social inclusion, youth work and mobility. The advisory mission's programme in Armenia (see Appendix 1) was firmly focused on *youth work*, despite the wider remit of the national youth strategy and the broader canvas of commentary made by all participants in the programme (from Ministers to practitioners). Those comments often related to the huge challenges around youth employment and the prospective impact (and potential) of new technologies. The advisory mission delegation acknowledges these wider policy dimensions within the national youth strategy – and, critically, notes the importance of making appropriate connections between a *youth* strategy and other strategies that are now being developed in policy domains such as employment – but, given the predominantly youth work perspectives it experienced, has concentrated its own observations and analysis in that area.

1.2 *National context*

Armenia has recently experienced a period of political transformation. The advisory mission delegation visited Armenia only just over a year after what has been declared as the 'velvet revolution' took place and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who led it, was elected (on 8th May 2018). There has, since then, been a dramatic sense of change and reform, including in relation to the youth sector (though we will also note some lines of continuity, which should be expected, in elements of the youth strategy). It should also be noted that the former Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has now been subsumed within a larger Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. Although it was asserted that this makes no material difference to the development of the national youth strategy, some stakeholders also suggested that this is at least a symbolic relegation of 'youth' in the political imagination, despite the recurrent statement, as articulated in the opening speeches welcoming the advisory mission, that a "driving force of the velvet revolution was youth", that "youth policy and youth issues are at the core of our policy development", and that a key challenge was "youth engagement in the social and political life of Armenia".

1.3 *Council of Europe's Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022*

The advisory mission also took place within the context of the recent launch of the Council of Europe's Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022. This, significantly, includes some important references to young people that need to be connected to the national youth strategy.

have its own regulatory law. Such legislation would outlast the duration of any youth strategy; hence its perceived importance.

³ At times the translation needed a second 'informed' interpretation. Notably 'youth work' was sometimes translated as 'youth employment'. Careful reading of the document indicated, however, that while youth employment was clearly one key objective of the strategy, youth work was also another.

Though many other elements of the Action Plan also have a bearing on youth issues and the lives of young people in Armenia (notably those attending to children’s rights, gender equality, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the development of quality education), two particular sections (both concerned with the promotion of democracy) are worth reporting in full, so that they are firmly drawn out from the ‘small print’. The first is part of an opening statement on Democracy (section 2.3) and the criticality of building trust in the electoral process and increasing confidence in democratic institutions, both core priorities of the Action Plan. It points particularly to the need to increase the electoral and political participation of women, *youth* and first-time voters (emphasis added):

Improving the quality of local democracy by promoting ethical, transparent, accountable and participatory local governance through actions to combat corruption and foster citizen participation, *including youth participation*, will also be a focus of the Action Plan. Efforts are also needed to increase youth participation and *the role of youth non-governmental organisations in developing values-based youth policies at national and local levels, with democratic, transparent, rotation-based effective youth advisory or representative bodies* (emphasis added)

Of even more significance for the advisory mission is the section within the Action Plan (section 2.3.2) that reinforces the commitments expressed above in the context of explicit attention to Youth for Democracy:

The Council of Europe intends to assist the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs⁴ in developing and implementing, in a gender-sensitive manner, a state youth policy in line with European standards. The Action Plan will therefore include a youth dimension specifically aimed at increasing youth participation and the role of youth non-governmental organisations in developing values-based youth policy, while in parallel strengthening human rights and democratic participation. The Action Plan will likewise pay special attention to young people’s access to rights with a gender equality dimension at national and local levels. The establishment of democratic, transparent, rotation-based effective youth advisory or representative bodies will be instrumental to secure youth’s access to rights. In addition, a specific focus will be placed on the needs of young people from rural areas and at empowering their human capital.

The organisation will also support measures in favour of the youth policy field, building on Council of Europe existing standards and recommendations. Another Action Plan component will aim to build the capacities of relevant stakeholders working with young people, in particularly youth workers and leaders of youth organisations. In this regard, the Council of Europe will seek to build the capacities of trainers and multipliers in human rights education with young people with a view to supporting the implementation of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE)⁵.

It will become apparent that many of these directions will translate into our own recommendations in relation to the National Youth Strategy.

⁴ Between the publication of the Action Plan and the visit of the advisory mission, the Ministry had been renamed the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, though ‘youth’ remains a part of its responsibilities, with a discrete Youth Department.

⁵<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016803034e3>

1.4 Strong commitment of all parties involved in the youth agenda within Armenia

Before embarking on those observations, the advisory mission delegation would like to celebrate and express appreciation of the determination and commitment of all parties involved in the youth agenda within Armenia: politicians, officials, NGO representatives, researchers, trainers, practitioners and others. As the Deputy Minister from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (see Appendix 1) insisted in his opening remarks:

Youth is a top priority in Armenia and presents both an opportunity and a challenge. We need their responsibility but there is also very high unemployment. So we need first to support their professional orientation and the protection of their labour rights and the prevention of exploitation in the labour market, especially in the private sector. We need to provide opportunities for young people to grow and to come up with their own initiatives. For this, there is a need for a legislative platform to enable young people to become full members of society

The advisory mission delegation was welcomed with exceptional hospitality throughout its programme and wishes to thank those who organised the programme for making it such a rewarding and instructive experience. The vision for young people in Armenia is clearly positive and optimistic; the advisory mission delegation was exposed to a variety of accounts and examples of emerging and unfolding good practice.

There are, however, the inevitable caveats drawing both from Council of Europe values and standards within the youth sector and from the extensive transnational knowledge and experience of each delegation member within the advisory mission. An advisory mission is necessarily charged with providing a critical but constructive reading of what it witnesses, through the material provided by the Armenian authorities and the evidence presented by those it met. The advisory mission was just three days – the delegation asks forgiveness for any errors of fact or judgement, but hopes that the issues it raises attract serious attention and discussion with the objective of improving opportunities and prospects for young people in Armenia. Above all, the delegation feels that its contribution can support a strategy that is more coherent and aligned, and in tune with developments in the youth sector elsewhere in Europe. It is hoped that this contribution can strengthen the role of the strategy in transforming policy into practice through successful partnerships and delivery mechanisms, thereby reaching the desired populations of young people (especially vulnerable and excluded groups) in a timely and meaningful way.

As with all Council of Europe Youth Department advisory mission reports, this report is confidential to the public authorities of Armenia, though it is always strongly recommended that its content and conclusions are shared more widely, in order to promote reflection and development of best practice.

1.5 The National Youth Strategy

The previous national youth strategy (2012-2017) for the Republic of Armenia came to an end in 2017. At that point, the Institute for Youth Studies was asked to carry out research on the situation of young people in Armenia in order to provide an evidence base for the next strategy, building on an assessment of the value and impact of the previous strategy. The current draft strategy is the first to have adopted this approach, including bringing all

stakeholders together in a consultation process (the advisory mission delegation was told that the former youth strategy had been very ‘top down’). The Head of the Youth Policy Department was forthright about the determination of the government “to be as participatory as possible”. Whereas the ‘old vision’ was to involve the private sector, the new approach is “about government funding and the engagement of NGOs that wish to cooperate with the Ministry”. “Anyone who is interested has a role to play”, she said.

In the context of wider political events, the current strategy is still in the process of development and has not yet been publicly released. When concluded, it will need to be harmonised with the new Constitution (2018) and will need the endorsement of the whole government, not just the Prime Minister’s Department. There is commitment to ensuring that the new strategy, according to the Head of the Youth Policy Department, will be “in line with wider international standards” – hence the decision to request the support of the Council of Europe.

The draft State Youth Policy Strategy 2018-2022 for the Republic of Armenia was provided to the advisory mission delegation in advance of its visit. It comprises an introductory section concerned with General Provisions (paras 1-4) and nine Chapters:

1. Strategy Goal (paras 5-14)
2. Analysis of the Current Situation of State Youth Policy (paras 15-26)
3. Description of the Youth Situation (paras 27-90)
4. Goals, Problems, Actions of the Strategy – Main Objectives (Needs, Problems) (paras 91-141)
5. Implementing Parties (paras 142-143)
6. Expenses and Influence on State Expenses (144-147)
7. Reports, Monitoring and Evaluation (paras 148-152)
8. Communication and Communication Plan (paras 153-154)
9. Expected Results of the Strategy (paras 155-157)

The advisory mission delegation would wish to commend right at the start that this strategy has not been built from scratch but has sought to learn lessons from the previous national youth strategy, drawing particularly on the *Report on the Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2013-2017 national youth strategy*. The thematic framework for the current strategy does not, indeed, depart dramatically from the one that prevailed previously, though its content and determination to promote more local engagement is significantly different.

‘Youth’ in Armenia is defined as young people between the age of 16 and 30, who comprise over a quarter of Armenia’s population. The youth strategy is designed to embrace four discrete groups (young people, youth NGOs, young families, and youth workers) and to achieve a disparate range of strategic goals, including both the personal development of young people and their contribution to Armenia’s socio-economic challenges. The participation of young people is considered paramount – young people are seen as both beneficiaries and contributors to the strategy.

The strategy identifies a range of youth policy instruments that are already established, including the Department of Youth Policy⁶ of the Ministry, the Armenian Youth Foundation, a National Youth Policy Council, ten regional youth councils, a Youth Workers’ Charter, and

⁶ The advisory mission delegation would like to thank Ms. Tamara Torosyan, Head of the Youth Policy Department, for all her help in organising the mission.

the Institute for Youth Studies that, alongside other organisations, have provided a strong foundation of knowledge about the situation of young people in Armenia.

This evidence base, the strategy suggests, reveals the need for more robust attention to youth participation and the creation of environments for youth self-organisation, highlights the scale of youth unemployment (especially amongst young women, young people with disabilities, and young people in rural areas), emphasises the case for the further development of youth work, identifies the need to promote healthy lifestyles, and suggests the value of building youth co-operation, intercultural dialogue and youth mobility both within and beyond Armenia. Throughout Chapter 3, depicting the youth situation, young women and young people with disabilities are routinely identified as experiencing disproportionate social exclusion, though occasionally (cf. para.89) it is noted that research points to a much wider range of ‘vulnerable groups’ who suffer from greater social exclusion.

It is the social *inclusion* of vulnerable groups that is expressly prioritised in the five key objectives of the national youth strategy:

1. Increasing **youth participation**
2. Developing mechanisms for addressing **youth employment** issues
3. Further development of **youth work**
4. Promoting the **healthy lifestyles** of young people
5. Encouraging **youth mobility**

This broad menu of youth policy aspirations is envisaged to be led by ‘the Ministry’ (para.142) and achieved through close co-operation between the Ministry and a number of other Ministries (notably Labour and Social Affairs, and Health), their regional and local sub-divisions, local authorities and non-governmental organisations, and international organisations. It is noted (para.143 2)) that “The Ministry closely cooperates with youth NGOs”.

Brief chapters towards the end of the national youth strategy focus on likely sources of financing (including the state budget), approaches to monitoring and evaluation (with attention to impact, effectiveness, stability of outcomes, and relevance), and a communication plan to promote the visibility of the strategy. The final chapter delineates the anticipated ‘final outcome’, ‘intermediate results’ and ‘direct outcome’ of the strategy, with the latter a curious, though quite acceptable, mix of information provision, multiplier effects, capacity building, scalability and communication.

This is a necessarily brief synopsis of the Republic of Armenia national youth strategy. Where commentary and observation by the Council of Europe advisory mission delegation refers specifically to an element of the strategy, the paragraph in question will be cited and further elaboration of the content of the strategy may be provided.

Much of the discussion throughout the programme predictably related directly or indirectly to elements of the national youth strategy. After all, the point was made repeatedly, resources and political commitment would be firmly connected to the strategy. The advisory mission delegation has sought to concentrate and cluster its observations under three headings, relating to (i) the *concepts and context* within which the strategy has been

developed (in short, the approach that seems to have been taken in constructing the strategy), (ii) key *themes and issues* that merit further consideration, and (iii) some more modest, yet arguably still significant and hopefully useful, *editorial feedback*.

2. Perspectives from the advisory mission delegation

Part One – the approach taken in the strategy document: concepts and context

2.1 *Depicting young people*

There are a number of issues here. Though the strategy speaks forcefully about developing the participation of young people in all spheres of life and states that it focuses on the individual, social and educational growth of young people, it also refers to the goal of the strategy being to support young people's participation in *solving* socio-economic issues (para 12; our emphasis). The strategy talks later about solving youth problems (para 27). There are mixed messages here and although the advisory mission delegation welcomed the perspective that young people should be both beneficiaries of, and contributors to the strategy, it felt that there should be a stronger emphasis on youth rights, drawing from, for example, the Council of Europe *Recommendation on Access to Rights*⁷ and the European Youth Forum's *8 standards for a quality youth policy*⁸, within which a rights-based approach is Standard 1:

Youth policy should be based on the standards set out by the international human rights framework and follow the principles of equality and non-discrimination. A rights-based approach to youth policy urges policymakers to work towards the long-term fulfilment of youth rights, including the right to participate in defining those rights, and empowers young people by defining them as rights-holders (European Youth Forum 2016, p.4)

Likewise, in explaining the rationale behind the Recommendation on Access to Rights, the Council of Europe advances the following argument:

Young people are entitled to enjoy full **human rights** and all other rights under national and international law. However, young people across Europe are increasingly experiencing **challenges** in accessing these rights, not least because they are particularly affected by **economic, social and environmental problems**, and by other difficulties facing many European societies.

Young people's access to rights is an essential element in building a culture based on the principles of **human rights, democracy and the rule of law**. There is concern that some member states do not safeguard sufficiently these rights for all young people.

Unemployment, precariousness, discrimination and social exclusion are a reality for many young people in Europe. Even those with good qualifications experience a difficult transition from education to the labour market. Young people are among the most vulnerable groups in society and the dire socio-economic situation in many Council of Europe member states presents **huge barriers to their autonomy, to their personal development and to their full participation in society** (emphasis original).

⁷ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016806a93e2

⁸ <http://tools.youthforum.org/8-standards/>

Young people's disengagement from society is often cited as one of the most significant factors in their inability to access their rights. The at times rather negative depiction of Armenian youth within the strategy – as 'politically indifferent', for example – contrasts with the position adopted elsewhere that it is the environment around young people that needs attention if young people are to flourish. The advisory mission delegation therefore urges greater attention to the language adopted in depicting young people, favouring perspectives that are rights-based and opportunity-focused rather than deficit-modelled and problem-oriented. More generally, evaluative and judgmental language should be avoided, even if what is said is descriptively accurate.

2.2 *Link to relevant international and Council of Europe standards*

To that end, the advisory mission delegation suggests that the strategy is prefaced with a number of established far-reaching transnational 'youth policy' documentation from both European and global institutions, such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security⁹, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰, the European Union's Youth Strategy 2019-2027¹¹, the current Council of Europe youth strategy (Agenda 2020)¹², the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 (currently in preparation), and the main Council of Europe standards in the field of youth, especially the most recent recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member states¹³. All contain overarching ideas about effective youth strategies that could be enlisted as key threads within the national youth strategy of the Republic of Armenia.

2.3 *The role of young people and youth organisations*

It is well over a decade since the Council of Europe conducted an international review of Armenia's national youth policy (see Sipos *et al.* 2009). There is little point in dwelling on many of its findings and recommendations. However, the international review did register the relatively limited involvement of young people and youth organisations in social organisation and youth policy development. That conclusion contrasts sharply with the aspirations of the current strategy. As noted above, youth NGOs are identified both as one of the 'immediate beneficiaries' of the strategy (para 10) and one of the 'implementing parties' of the strategy (para 143 2). It is to be hoped that this is to be more than a rhetorical commitment. The advisory mission delegation applauds the intention of supporting the implementation of youth policy in communities through the Model Charter of the Youth Council and the corresponding regional youth councils (para 21). It was also reassured to read of the increasingly active role of youth non-governmental organisations (para 22) and the 'Youth Capital of the Year' program designed to strengthen the development of youth organisations in particular areas (para 23).

The advisory mission delegation was, nonetheless, concerned to hear some reservations expressed about the role of the National Youth Council (which, in the past, it was suggested, had been "tokenistic and not really a voice for young people") and, indeed, the functioning of the regional youth councils that were described as sometimes existing "more on paper

⁹ <http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/SCR-2250.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/eu-youth-strategy-adopted_en

¹² <https://rm.coe.int/1680702428>

¹³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/adopted-texts>

than in reality”. Despite the claims of the government, one participant also asserted that “we need a mechanism for the voice of the youth sector”. There followed a lengthy debate about the role, impact, purpose and organisation of the National Youth Council (as well as, indeed, that there should be other mechanisms for engaging the voice of young people). No doubt those remarks will trigger some scrutiny by the European Youth Forum, which has clear criteria in relation to the formation and role of national youth councils.

2.4 *Evidence and action*

The advisory mission delegation welcomes the significant evidence base on which the national youth strategy is constructed – both the ‘Analysis of the Current Situation of Youth State Policy [*sic*’ (Chapter 2) and the ‘Description of Youth Situation’ (Chapter 3). Though a number of people pointed out that the data presented within the strategy are largely from 2016 and that “things have dramatically changed since then”, there is likely to be a limit to how much new research can usefully be conducted.

However, there do need to be closer links between the evidence provided and the strategic actions that are subsequently formulated. Some evidence fails to transmute into discernible action or, in contrast, some proposed actions do not appear to have any evidential grounding (see for example, paras 88-90 related to ‘vulnerable groups’ and social inclusion; para 81 related to intolerance with regard to the issue of sexual orientation (para 81); and para 134 related to the military-patriotic upbringing). Moreover, despite the fact that hate speech remains an issue of major concern for human rights in most European countries, the strategy does not seem to contain any reference to the need to combat it online and offline.

Perhaps of even more importance in a strategy document is the need for greater strategic coherence. Though, for example, there are five strategic goals (para 91), there are only three ‘final’ outcomes (para 155) in the ‘Expected Results of [the] Strategy’ (Chapter 9). There is a need for more consistency and less disconnect between the different chapters of the strategy.

2.5 *The challenge of implementation*

Any wide-ranging youth strategy attracts concerns about its capacity for implementation. More will be said about this below, but it is worth recalling the three ‘E’s advanced by Karen Evans (1998). She argued that youth policy needed to be considered three times: as ‘Espoused’ by politicians, as ‘Enacted’ by civil servants and practitioners, and as ‘Experienced’ by young people.

The advisory mission delegation has already applauded the aspirations of the national youth strategy and the vision that has been ‘espoused’. However, many of these aspirations have yet to be ‘enacted’ – supported by sufficient human and financial resources, and reaching out to vulnerable groups and into rural areas.

It is reported within the strategy that “the trust of young people to the electoral political institutions is quite low” (para 32). It is, therefore, imperative that young people *experience* the impact of the strategy relatively quickly, if some level of trust is to be restored. To that end, there is a strong case for identifying some specific priorities within the strategy that might constitute ‘quick wins’ – tangible deliverables within a reasonable time frame. The

advisory mission delegation was informed that the action plan to be included in the strategy, that will set out “appropriate action, responsible and cooperative structures, implementation deadlines, and funding sources” (para 4), is to be produced ‘later’. It is strongly recommended that this should include some headline priorities that can demonstrably prove the possibilities of successful implementation. It is now almost a truism to state that it is in fact quite easy to *write* a strategy paper; the challenge always lies in making things happen.

Part Two – key themes and issues to be considered

2.6 *Alliances and partnerships – structures and frameworks for collaboration*

Both within the strategy (particularly Chapter 5: ‘Implementing Parties’, but also Chapter 2: ‘Analysis of Current Situation of Youth State Policy [*sic*]’, and elsewhere) and during discussion throughout the advisory mission programme, much was made of the importance of partnership and collaboration. In the opening meeting, considerable emphasis was placed on the connection and ‘complementarity’ of the national youth strategy to, for example, the imminent (youth) employment strategy and the Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia. The Head of the Youth Policy Department called on those present (see Appendix 2) “to support the development and implementation of the youth policy strategy”, acknowledging that its mandate was beyond the capacity of the Department alone and that implementation would need the “help of other ministries and international youth organisations”. There would be a need for “inter-sectoral co-operation” and the contribution of international experience.

The advisory mission delegation was somewhat concerned about the capacity and commitment to putting appropriate structures in place. There would appear to be a need for them at three levels:

- Governmental (inter-ministerial)
- Stakeholder
- Young people and youth organisations

Yet the advisory mission delegation learned that there is either reluctance to put such structures in place or that previous structures that might have played this role are no longer operative. Given the critical part that *other* Ministries are intended to play in the implementation of the strategy (para 143), there is a *prima facie* case for some form of cross-governmental or inter-ministerial body, convened and chaired through the Deputy Minister responsible for youth affairs, to oversee and co-ordinate the delivery of the strategy. The advisory mission delegation was informed, however, that the new government “is not very keen on having any cross-ministerial or sub-ministerial groups, and more interested in supporting more practical measures”. One is not likely to succeed without the other; the two go together, particular now that the Youth Policy Department lies within what was sometimes referred to as the new ‘mega-Ministry’. Inter-sectoral co-operation is a critical issue especially, as one individual put it, “one can hardly name a public agency that would not be involved”. And, as one participant in the round table discussion observed, the strategy contains numerous aspirations over which the Youth Policy Department has no control over outcomes and results, yet there are many other strategies (concerning, for example, SMEs, development plans for municipalities, regional development plans, employment strategies) that bear on the lives of young people and are relevant to the

strategy. It is this *cross-over* – between the diverse policy domains addressed within the youth strategy, and the youth dimension within other strategies – that demands strategic attention and co-ordination at governmental level.

There were more reassuring perspectives at the stakeholder level, and the advisory mission delegation was impressed at the range of stakeholders who attended the discussion on the first day of the visit (see Appendix 2). Within the strategy, in Chapter 2 which analyses the *current* situation of state youth policy (our emphasis), reference is made to the National Youth Policy Council, formed in 2009, whose goal

Is to support the development and implementation of youth policy in the Republic of Armenia, to promote the participation of young people in public life and to promote the activities of youth organisations. The Council was formed on a co-operative basis with the equal representation of the state and public sectors.... (para 20)

The advisory mission delegation was told, however, that this Council no longer functions and there are no plans to re-establish it, though it was also suggested that it might once again be considered and possibly even resurrect it within the context of the new strategy. The National Youth Policy Council did indeed include ‘all’ stakeholders, with representatives of public and civic sectors in equal numbers. Though there were fewer NGOs at the time, the approach of the Council was described as “quite participatory” and people were allowed to apply to attend as observers. The Council ceased to operate in 2015 and even if it technically still exists (no-one was quite sure), “it does not function and there are no resources allocated to it”.

The advisory mission delegation feels strongly that serious attention should be given to refreshing or re-establishing such a body, if the non-governmental sector relating to youth is to become fully engaged in the development and delivery of the strategy. There will, of course, be challenges around the composition of such a group and procedures for the ‘appointment’ of its members – whether through appointment, election, selection, application or nomination – but that is a matter of detail once the principle of constituting such a group is decided upon.

Similarly, though the strategy refers to the formation of regional youth councils (para 21), it was not clear to the advisory mission delegation whether these actually exist in any effective form. Seemingly, both regional and municipal authorities have the discretion (though not necessarily the budget) to establish such bodies but may not always see ‘youth’ as their priority. The government cannot compel their formation. As this report will note below, the representation of young people and youth organisations at all levels, including the regional level, is considered to be a major step in the successful and effective execution of the national youth strategy.

Lastly, given the commendation of the evidence base underpinning the strategy, the advisory mission delegation was concerned to learn that the Institute for Youth Studies no longer exists. The youth sector throughout Europe has evolved through a dynamic exchange within the triangle of research, policy and practice. Sustaining a knowledge base both to respond to, and to inform policy and practice, remains important; if research and survey work is now an ‘in-house’ responsibility of the already rather depleted Youth Policy Department (it no longer has a division dealing with events, and so has had to take on this role, as well as research), it will need to be resourced appropriately.

2.7 Structures for delivery

Beyond the framing 'visions' for youth policy and strategy, and accompanying legislation and budgetary allocations, the most critical element is to have effective structures for delivery (see Williamson 2002). Otherwise, national strategies remain paper documents, if there is no system to put them into practice. Delivery can, however, take many forms that range from tightly state-controlled prescription, through contracting out and outsourcing with clearly defined service agreements, to more loosely delegated flexibility. Any model has its advantages and disadvantages. Over rigid systems meet resistance and struggle to take root; over flexible systems risk producing too much variation. Yet some variation is also important, in order to be responsive to different needs and issues at ground level.

What is not in doubt is the need for robust relationships between those responsible at national and local levels – and in between. Indeed, regional mediation can be critical, whether in relation to government machinery at national and local levels or in relation to more diffuse partnerships between a wider constellation of stakeholders.

The advisory mission delegation met both with the Mayor of Gyumri (Armenia's second city and the starting point for the 'velvet revolution') and with the Governor of Shirak, the region in which Gyumri is situated. The Governor, who had some experiential knowledge of the youth sector (including at a European level), provided an impressive account of the place of 'youth policy' in Armenia, including the following observations:

Even though I am not responsible for youth policy, my personal interest has some focus on it. Our foreign policy does not have particular interests except a general interest in the value to Armenia. Now we are adopting some policy change. This is a good window of opportunity for thinking about changes in the youth field.

Local youth policy ideas were never taken seriously. Things like youth participation and co-management, but now is the time to push forward our youth policy ideas alongside other policy development. European youth policy standards have always been guidelines for us, and I hope we will be building a youth policy based on best practices and what has worked well in the past. And we are sure that working on Erasmus+ and visa liberalisation will bring better opportunities for young people in our region. So, it is important for us today to understand current trends and the best practice today across the European field. Youth is still not mentioned much in government discussion but when we look at actions and activities they are very much focused on young people, to give them better opportunities.... My third political commitment was to youth, before there was any national position. My first grant was from the European Youth Foundation. An online application for 7,500 Euro – the limit. Not much but it was a first step. Then I was a grant assessor for grants programme in Armenia – and the paperwork was just too much. That was something we could change quite easily.

Of course, I don't have a budget line for youth, just schools, hospitals and social assistance. Some things I can't change. We grew up in state socialist central determination. That decided for youth. Now we want things to be changed, including devolution of responsibilities... We have very specific and unique situation in Shirak, with quite a lot of young people with a good background in wider youth policy and youth work models. And we want to share, across regions and indeed with the national government.

I draw a lot from my personal experience. One month after being appointed, I thought about writing a strategy for the region. I've been here for five months, and things are moving so fast, so it is often hard to establish what our priorities are. But now things are becoming

more settled and the government is starting to plan for five years because the picture is now much clearer.

And we must position the youth strategies in relation to wider strategies on education or social affairs. A youth strategy one year ago probably would not have worked, but now there is a chance.

The Governor's remarks raise a number of issues. The first is the issue of a discrete budget line for youth at regional level. The Governor said that this was absent, though the advisory mission delegation was told by others that each region is allocated a regional budget "and they are free to determine their priorities". This could, it was suggested, include youth. The second point is that the Governor confirmed the importance of inter-ministerial collaboration. The third was to reinforce the timely opportunity being presented by a national youth strategy.

Of most significance, however, is the Governor's observation that the successful unfolding and application of the strategy will be contingent on treating the youth agenda as a two-way street, in which local (and regional) knowledge and experience can, and should, not only inform local responsiveness and shape regional priorities but must also contribute to fleshing out the bones of the national strategy. In short, while the national strategy may stimulate youth development through articulating a national framework, there should be provision for regional youth strategies across the ten regions that are adapted to regional needs, and also corresponding local youth strategy action plans to ensure tailored local responsiveness. As the Governor concluded:

There are organisations like the YIC [the Youth Initiatives Centre in Gyumri] that are showing the value of youth work and the contribution of youth policy to local civic and political life. There is still a risk of too much state control in the youth sector, and we don't want that back. Perhaps you do have a perception that the role of youth organisations is diminished but I assure you there is room for those organisations that are willing to work in line with international standards and contribute to the development of the national youth strategy. There is no favouritism any more towards any particular youth organisations. We are not starting from scratch. We know what to do and we know what not to do. Now the youth are at the heart of our thinking. My own staff are themselves young; we trust them now. We are engaging them and listening to their vision.

The advisory mission delegation would argue that the regional level is, literally, pivotal – the pivot on which communication between national and local levels can be facilitated and through which horizontal collaboration between stakeholders can be promoted.

2.8 Capacity – resources and distribution

Any strategy clearly needs sufficient human and financial resources to make it happen; there is always some tension between the ambition of a strategy and the capacity to realise it. In relation to the national youth strategy in Armenia, the ambition is huge while the capacity is prospectively relatively limited. Expectations will, therefore, need to be managed. The advisory mission delegation learned through consultation and conversation during its visit that there is both great enthusiasm and some level of scepticism as to what may be achieved. Given the prevailing concerns that are even expressed in the strategy (para 32) about the lack of trust in electoral political institutions, the possibilities for ensuring optimum delivery of the strategy need to be maximised.

This report has already addressed some elements of this issue, notably the critical need to engage line ministries and civil society (including youth organisations) in sharing ownership of and commitment to the strategy. Here the focus is on how best an always limited budget should be utilised. The advisory mission delegation understands that negotiations are ongoing within the new Ministry in terms of the budgetary position for the Youth Policy Department, which now also has to absorb responsibility for the management of events and for youth research. Nonetheless, it can be anticipated that any resource allocation for the strategy will be divided between some level of budget to provide what might be called 'structural grants' to support deliver partners and another budget line for programme development (that, hopefully, will move beyond the financing of just events and activities).

Given the concerns expressed about past procedures for the allocation of grants, it will be essential for the public authorities to ensure the integrity of any grant scheme and its careful and clear integration with the objectives of the strategy. In the round table discussion of Chapter 2 of the strategy ('Analysis of Current Situation of Youth State Policy [*sic*]'), considerable disquiet was expressed about previous practices that had fomented a lack of trust, particularly as "only a few youth organisations and youth NGOs had the level of understanding and the resource collateral to even apply for available grants".

The advisory mission delegation was provided with firm reassurances that "any programmes will have to be related to the strategy if they are to be supported" but all stakeholders in the process must become convinced that this will be the case. To that end, there should be transparent stakeholder representation in the oversight and decision-making of the grant scheme. Further, given what the advisory mission delegation learned about the administration of the previous grant scheme (in particular the concern expressed about the dismantling of the online platform for the grants process¹⁴), there is a powerful case for ensuring lean, streamlined application and allocation procedures, ideally online, in order to secure national coverage and widespread accessibility, as well as cementing trust in the process.

2.9 *Inclusion and Equality – vulnerable and excluded groups of young people*

This report has already made some reference to the disconnect, at times, between the evidence base for the strategy and the subsequent strategic vision. Nowhere is this more striking than in relation to categories of young people who are defined within the strategy as vulnerable and excluded, though there are exceptions. Attention to young people in rural areas is the best illustration of *strong* connections between research evidence (para 33, para 54 and para 89) and strategic aspiration (para 103 and para 139). The challenge for youth employment was also specifically related, by the Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in his opening remarks (see Appendix 1), to young people in rural areas. And in her presentation of the national youth strategy, when focusing on healthy

¹⁴ No reason was given for the closure of the former online grants system. The advisory mission delegation was informed that grants continued to be allocated in a more traditional way. This had caused problems of access for more isolated young people. The Youth Policy Department was now seeking approval to re-start the only grants programme. The previous one had been based on collaborating between the government and the NGO sector. Decisions were made by specialists, paid by the Ministry. The Department had had no control over the assessment process; it had been "an open and transparent process". That grants scheme had only financed youth programmes and projects, not capacity-building and infrastructure for youth organisations.

lifestyles and vulnerable groups, the Head of the Youth Policy Department made specific reference to the prevention of trafficking and observed that it is “young people from rural areas who are the main ones involved in labour migration and who are often the most ignorant and vulnerable to falling prey to trafficking”.

There is, however, not the same attention to other groups defined in the research as vulnerable to inequalities and exclusion, such as girls and young women (para 55 and para 87), young people with disabilities (para 57 and para 89), or young people from ethnic minorities (para 87 and para 89). An even broader spectrum of young people facing vulnerability and exclusion is listed in the research section of the strategy:

Persons residing in places of detention or medical enforced restraint, without the parental care, refugees,, extreme poverty, young people (NEET), single mothers, displaced persons, *and so on* (para 89; emphasis added)

‘And so on’ is an unhelpful phrase in a national strategy. Even those groups that are named appear to have no specific place subsequently within the strategy. Nor is there any discussion of what is now known as ‘intersectionality’ but has classically been discussed in youth policy as multiple and overlapping disadvantage, the concentration of difficulties and discrimination that leads to protracted exclusion. At the very end of Chapter 3 ‘Description of Youth Situation’ it is stated that “The targeted youth groups, including those vulnerable, will be identified during the Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Plan” (para 90). The advisory mission delegation remains uncomfortable about this level of generality, even vagueness¹⁵. For young people in vulnerable situations to be adequately supported in keeping with the positive aspirations of the strategy, they have to be named. Some, though by no means all, are named as part of the research evidence but are then subsequently overlooked in Chapter 4 (‘Goals, Problems, Actions of Strategy: Main Objectives (Needs, Problems)'). This is inconsistent and requires attention.

In Gyumri, the advisory mission delegation visited the Youth Initiatives Centre which, with 29 staff and a number of volunteers through the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme and the USA Peace Corps, provides the structure for youth work in the city. Its work was wide-ranging but one core principle of its practice, since its foundation, has been inclusion: “we always try to organise events that bring people together” in contrast to the situation where, as another individual put it,

in Armenia, there are many good programmes for disability and special needs, but too often we try to promote inclusion by being more exclusionary, and different excluded groups don’t come together

It was argued that Armenia was still not good at creating a space that can be used by all young people and that there was a need for an open youth work model for the whole of the country. The Deputy Minister (from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports) himself stated that he was not keen on designing special projects “that separate some people from the general society” and the overwhelming consensus amongst the staff of the

¹⁵ One proposal was to take account of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies youth engagement strategy.

YIC was that inclusion should be built right into all aspects of the national youth strategy. The advisory mission delegation would concur fully with that position.

2.10 Youth work

Youth work is one of the five strategic objectives within the national youth strategy. It is given particular attention for 'further development'. The advisory mission delegation welcomed the clear commitment to youth work within the strategy, appreciated the knowledge and understanding of youth work displayed in various meetings, and commended the impressive youth work it witnessed in Gyumri, both at the Youth Initiatives Centre and at the Youth House.

Youth work, though often very differently defined across Europe, has developed a much stronger profile over the past decade, through the development of a body of knowledge about its history in different parts of Europe¹⁶, the holding of two (soon three) European Youth Work Conventions and the Declarations¹⁷ that came out of them, and the relatively recent Council of Europe Recommendation on Youth Work¹⁸.

Armenia has certainly had strong pockets of expertise in youth work for some years. This was evident to the advisory mission delegation, both through listening to youth work practitioners and trainers and visiting youth work activities. There are clearly powerful models of good practice built on great enthusiasm and dedication. The structure for a range of youth work practice in Gyumri, through the Youth Initiatives Centre, is exemplary and could provide a model for replication elsewhere. Its open youth centre, the Youth House, supporting "the empowerment of young people and independence from their parents", could be transplanted as a model of good practice to anywhere in Europe.

Beyond making the important observation that youth work in Gyumri is currently atypical and exceptional (and that there are no parallels elsewhere in Armenia), the advisory mission delegation would, however, wish to express a cautionary note. There appears to be a desire within the strategy and on the part of at least some practitioners, for the rapid professionalisation of youth work through the narrowing of definitions and eligibility. This may be premature, even if it may ultimately be a sensible vision. The evolution of youth work in Armenia requires dissemination, experimentation and diversity, not the concentration of experience and expertise, and the closing down of alternatives. As Williamson and Coussée (2019) have written in the final chapter of the history of youth work in Europe series:

the history of youth work tells us very clearly that youth work works precisely because of the room and space it makes accessible to young people, physically and intellectually, as they explore and learn from the world (and the youth workers) around them. Youth work is, by definition, loose-knit and flexible; when it is regimented, harnessed, institutionalised in one way or another, it ceases to be youth work.....

¹⁶ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/the-history-of-youth-work-in-europe-volume-1>

¹⁷ https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2803/2010_Declaration_European_youth_work_convention_en.pdf
http://www.alliance-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/The-2nd-European-Youth-Work-Declaration_FINAL-2015.pdf

¹⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/1680717e78>

Youth work is therefore arguably one of the hardest jobs in the world: making connections to the life of young people (making them feel 'at home') while enlarging their life-worlds (challenging them to meet new people and do things they do not do at home). The challenge for youth work is not guidance towards smooth social integration, labour market insertion or an ideal-typical adulthood. Youth work is more than the management of growing up. The youth work challenge it is to keep open identity development so as not to let it be prematurely constrained and corralled within a standard set of expectations. To achieve that without generating estrangement or anxiety in young people is a huge challenge. Having fun and being in a group is therefore quintessential to youth work in all its facets. The practice of youth work is critical within a dynamic democracy. Indeed, youth clubs and youth projects have been depicted as 'mini-democracies'. This may not always be strictly true, but they are platforms for the learning of democracy one way or another. Youth workers need the resources to offer a safe harbour to young people, from which they can set sail: somewhere to go, something to do, a place of their own where they can experience and exercise autonomy, and where they find friends and role models. The quartet of association, activities, autonomy and advice. And youth workers also need the social pedagogical space to move forward with young people, from bonding to bridging, from consuming to producing and from participation in youth work to participation through youth work into their wider worlds.

There are numerous references within the strategy to the need for young people in Armenia to develop the skills and confidence for 'self-organisation and self-expression', with research noting the continuing reliance of young people on others "even after twenty-five years of independence" (para 39) and the strategic response suggesting that

the education system should encourage free expression of the young people, questions about opinions, critical approach that will contribute to the free participation of young people, ideas and new initiatives (para 101)

It is not clear whether this strategic goal refers only to the formal education system or embraces education and learning contexts more broadly, but the advisory mission delegation is clear that enhancing the autonomy of young people lies well beyond the responsibility of just the school, college or university. Facilitating opportunities and experiences for young people to find their place in society, as the quotation from the history of youth work series above clearly conveys, is a key role for youth work, whose 'common ground', according to the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, is simultaneously about ensuring young people have *space* for autonomy and self-expression while also supporting *bridges* for young people to move purposefully to the next steps in their lives.

2.11 Implementation

This report has already addressed the challenge of implementation. This is revisited again here because, beyond the 'political' imperative to make something happen, there is the practical matter of putting in place the stepping stones to embed an appropriate programme of work and activity that operationalises the strategic vision. The advisory mission delegation was told that a national action plan has yet to be prepared. Beyond that, the advisory mission delegation has suggested the need for regional youth strategies and accompanying action plans, probably constructed from dialogue with their constituent municipalities which themselves will need to forge their own local action plans.

All such planning will need to be attached to annual budgeting procedures and be subject to periodic review, both internal monitoring and perhaps external evaluation. This report alludes above to the importance of all relevant stakeholders working together but this does not mean all stakeholders doing everything but rather identifying strengths and priorities that can inform an effective division of labour, reflecting the ubiquitous call in policy circles for *synergies*. Only if that is achieved – and only if opposition, resistance and negative criticism from those who still harbour some doubts is minimised – will the current strategy build the trust that it needs in order to establish full momentum, continuity and ultimately the sustainability of its commendable vision. The advisory mission delegation did not see any action plans (because none have yet been prepared) but without them the national youth strategy remains trapped on paper, however noble its intentions.

Part Three - editorial feedback

This part of the report summarises the feedback of the advisory mission delegation on the text of the National Youth Strategy document.

- Negative references to young people’s characteristics – cf. apathetic – should be deleted, unless back by specific research evidence
- It may be a weakness of Google Translate but para 8 refers to ‘young man’ and ‘his’, when clearly the reference needs to be to all young people
- Despite young families being one of the four primary beneficiaries of the strategy (para 10), a point emphasised during discussions, little more is said about this group within the strategy itself
- References to military-patriotic upbringing (para 133 and para 134), for which there is limited evidential backing in the research chapter, should be accompanied by contextual references to the UN 2250 Resolution on youth, peace and security, and a wider framework relating to education for active citizenship¹⁹
- Para 156 7) makes reference to Preventing Harmful Behaviours, yet little is said about this either in the Evidence chapter or in the main strategic chapter
- Para 157 9) The reduction in trafficking cases was mentioned as important during discussions but is not mentioned within the main part of the strategy

¹⁹ For example, http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_b/interact/mod07task03/appendix.htm

3. Conclusion

It is to be hoped that this reflective feedback by the Council of Europe advisory mission delegation can make a helpful contribution to the revision and progression of the national youth strategy for the Republic of Armenia.

In any strategy on any issue or for any group, choices have to be made and priorities established. The critical choice, invariably, is whether to go 'wide and shallow' or 'narrow and deep'. In the former case, leaving decisions on priorities to local discretion, something may well happen everywhere, but young people will have very different experiences. In the latter case, usually through determining and then requiring the delivery of some kind of 'core youth offer', all young people will (or at least should) have the same access and opportunity. Both positions allow for claiming that a national youth strategy has been implemented.

Endeavouring to go both 'wide and deep', however, rarely works: resources are too constrained, responsibilities are too diffuse, and requirements are too demanding. The current national youth strategy in Armenia is very broad in its aspirations and arguably too deep in its strategic intent.

As the advisory mission delegation suggests in this report, beyond a number of matters of content and procedure, it will be important to secure some 'quick wins', in order to establish trust, credibility, transparency and commitment amongst all prospective stakeholders in the strategy. Enlisting and sustaining the engagement of all key stakeholders will be the critical litmus test for the success and sustainability of the strategy. That, in turn, will strengthen the likelihood of other elements of the strategy being pursued with the vigour and enthusiasm of so many key stakeholders witnessed by the advisory mission delegation during its brief visit.

4. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the youth policy advisory mission, the delegation puts forward the following recommendations to the Armenian authorities.

- **General recommendations** on the approach taken in the strategy (concept and context)
 1. Ensure that the language used to depict young people, their perspectives and circumstances, are anchored in a rights-based and opportunity-focused orientation
 2. Add references to appropriate transnational documentation (in particular relevant Council of Europe standards in the field of youth) to guide the thinking and action points within the strategy
 3. Ensure that the active involvement of young people and youth-led organisations, as stated as a priority within the strategy, is put into practice at all levels within Armenian society, by putting them at the forefront of the development, monitoring and implementation of the strategy
 4. Strengthen the strategic coherence of evidence and action within the strategy
 5. Consider the principal ‘quick wins’ within the strategy that can best be achieved through an action plan within a realistic time scale
- **Specific recommendations** on the key themes and issues to be considered in the strategy
 - *With regard to alliances and partnerships (structures and frameworks for collaboration)*
 - 6. Consider the need for a cross-governmental/inter-ministerial body to oversee and co-ordinate the delivery of the strategy
 - 7. (Re)establish a National Youth Policy Council to ensure stakeholder representation in the development and delivery of the strategy
 - 8. Ensure effective and meaningful participation and representation of young people at all levels of governance in the delivery of the strategy
 - 9. Secure and sustain appropriate resources to maintain a knowledge and evidence base about young people’s lives and the effectiveness of the strategy (in particular following the discontinuation of the Institute for Youth Studies)
 - *With regard to the structures for delivery*
 - 10. Regional authorities need a strengthened place within the national youth strategy, to serve as a bridge between national and local levels, and as a platform for horizontal stakeholder collaboration

11. Regional authorities need the capacity to determine their own regional youth strategies, within the national framework but ensuring responsiveness to regional specificities and, in turn, providing a framework within which local youth action plans can be developed
12. Local youth action plans should be formulated, within the framework of regional youth strategies
 - *With regard to capacity (resources and distribution)*
13. There should be transparent stakeholder representation in the oversight and decision-making with regard to the distribution of financial resources for structural support and programme development, in line with the goals of the strategy
14. Any grant scheme, for structural support or programme development, should have a streamlined application and allocation process, ideally online
 - *With regard to inclusion and equality (vulnerable and excluded groups of young people)*
15. Vulnerable and excluded groups of young people should be carefully and consistently named
16. Where research evidence points to vulnerability and exclusion of certain groups of young people, this should be reflected in the goals and actions of the strategy
17. Inclusion should be a central aspiration of all aspects of the strategy
18. The strategy should serve to enhance the autonomy of all young people in Armenia
 - *With regard to youth work*
19. The strategy should ensure the dissemination of diverse models of youth work practice throughout the country
20. Youth work should be acknowledged as a key site for the strategic achievement of self-expression and self-organisation by young people
 - *With regard to the implementation of the strategy*
21. Clear stepping stones should be outlined so that the strategy can be rolled out efficiently
22. Action plans, with provision for review and adaptation, should be developed at national, regional and local levels

References

Council of Europe (2018), *Self-assessment tool for youth policy*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe

European Youth Forum (2016), *8 Standards for a quality youth policy*, Brussels: European Youth Forum

Evans, K. (1998), *Shaping Futures: Learning for Competence and Citizenship*, Aldershot: Ashgate

Sipos, J., Czerniejewski, M., Lauritzen, P., Hunting, J., Titley, G., Dolejsiova, D. and Williamson, H. (2009), *Youth Policy in Armenia*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing

Williamson, H. (2002), *Supporting young people in Europe: principles, policy and practice*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe

Williamson, H. and Coussée, F. (2019), 'Reflective Dialogue: Conclusions from the History Project -Twelve trilemmas for youth work', in H. Williamson and T. Basarab (eds), *The history of youth work in Europe Volume VII: Pan-European and Transnational youth organisations & The overall lessons learned from the history project*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe

Appendix 1: Concept note and draft programme



Strasbourg/Yerevan, 16 July 2019

Council of Europe's youth policy advisory mission to Armenia (16-18 July 2019)

Concept note and draft programme

1/ Background

At the invitation of the national authorities, a Council of Europe's expert delegation will visit Armenia on 16-18 July 2019 in order to advise the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia (Youth Policy Department) on the revision of the national youth strategy, in line with the Council of Europe's standards in the field of youth.

This mission will be organised at a crucial juncture in the national political context, which might entail significant changes in the national youth policy.

This advisory mission is part of the package of [intergovernmental assistance measures to member states](#) in the field of youth proposed by the Council of Europe. It is organised under the aegis of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ).

The Council of Europe's [youth policy advisory missions](#) aim at providing targeted expertise and advice from international experts to the requesting authorities. A delegation of up to five independent experts will visit the country to conduct the assessment and prepare their recommendations according to Council of Europe norms and standards. The delegation will be supported by a representative of the national authorities with relevant language and thematic expertise.

A concise report containing concrete and practical recommendations pertinent to the youth policy development issues of concern to the country will be produced for the authorities after the advisory mission, for possible follow-up in the immediate and medium terms.

More background information can be found on the Council of Europe's [youth portal](#).

2/ Overall aim of the youth policy advisory mission

The overall **aim** of this advisory mission is to prepare **recommendations** to the authorities (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport) on the **revision of the national youth strategy of Armenia**, notably on the basis of the Council of Europe's norms and standards in the field of youth.

A written report summarising the Council of Europe expert delegation's recommendations will be addressed to the authorities after the advisory mission.

3/ Objectives

The **objectives** of the youth policy advisory mission are to provide **practical advice** to the authorities of Armenia, so that the **national youth strategy** (provisions, mechanisms and instruments) can be:

- **relevant** and meaningful;
- **participatory** (involvement of the major stakeholders);
- **sustainable** (capacity-building for its effective implementation);
- **values-based** (on the basis of the Council of Europe standards in the field of youth).

To this end, the youth policy advisory mission will **focus on some of the following aspects** or themes:

- The **contents of the national youth strategy**: main provisions; rationale underpinning the strategy; roles, responsibilities and mandates of key stakeholders; how it is envisaged to work/be implemented.
- **Achievements and challenges**: what has been done so far (successes); what is proving to be most problematic (barriers to implementation); lessons learned.
- The **principles and practices of good governance** to be followed in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national youth strategy:
 - participatory approach: why and how to engage youth and youth organisations in the national youth strategy (barriers, challenges and possible solutions)
 - strategy development process: how was the national youth strategy drafted? who was involved?
 - cooperation between key stakeholders of the youth sector for effective youth policy implementation;
 - local experiences of national youth policy implementation (what can we learn from such experiences for the process going forward);
 - effort to enhance the coherence, transparency, information flow and sharing in implementation of the national youth strategy.
- How to design and implement a **values-based** national youth strategy?
 - main Council of Europe standards in the field of youth;
 - how to integrate them in the national youth strategy and implement them.

4/ The Council of Europe's expert delegation

In accordance with standard practice, the delegation will be composed of a member of the [European Steering Committee for Youth](#) (CDEJ), a member of the [Advisory Council on Youth](#) (CCJ), a representative of the [European Youth Forum](#) (YFJ), a youth-policy expert/general rapporteur, as well as a representative of the Council of Europe's secretariat.

The Council of Europe's expert delegation will be composed as follows:

- CDEJ representative: **Ivan Hromada** (vice-chair of the European Steering Committee for Youth)
- CCJ representative: **Andrea Ugrinoska** (Bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth)
- YFJ representative: **Ville Majamaa** (Vice President of the European Youth Forum)
- General rapporteur: **Howard Williamson** (Professor of European Youth Policy)
- Secretariat's representative: **Florian Cescon** (Head of the Youth Policy Division, Council of Europe)

5/ National representatives and stakeholders

Throughout the youth policy advisory mission, the Council of Europe's expert delegation will have an opportunity to exchange views with representatives of some of the following stakeholders, involved in the national youth policy:

- Ministries (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia; other key line Ministries with an active involvement in youth related policy implementation)
- key youth organisations involved in the national youth strategy
- Key partners of governmental authorities engaging with youth related issues
- Key development actors or non-governmental organisations engaging with youth related issues (such as youth centres, local and regional authorities, research institutions active on youth policy related issues, etc.)

6/ Draft programme

On this basis, the draft programme below was prepared jointly by the Council of Europe's Youth Policy Division and the Youth Policy Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia.

It might be modified or adapted during the visit itself, according to needs or circumstances.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Monday 15 July 2019

- Throughout the day Arrival of the expert delegation at Yerevan "Zvartnots" Airport
Self-organised transfers from the airport to the hotel ("City" taxi service)
Check-in at [Best Western Congress Hotel](#)
- 19.00-21.00 **Preparatory dinner** between representatives of the Council of Europe's expert delegation and of the Youth Department

Tuesday 16 July 2019

- 10.00-10.15 Departure from Best Western Congress Hotel to Ibis Yerevan Centre
- 10.15-10.45 Registration (coffee break included)

Session I: Opening, welcome and objectives

- 10.45.-11.00 Welcome address from the Armenian authorities
Gevorg Loretsyan, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia
Arman Udumyan - Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia
- 11.00-11.30 Introduction of participants
- 11.30-12.00 Framework and objectives of the advisory mission: the Council of Europe's youth policy approaches and assistance to members states
Florian Cescon, Head of the Youth Policy Division, Council of Europe

Session II: the draft national youth strategy 2019-2023 - state of play and initial discussion

- 12.00-12.30 Presentation of the draft of the national youth strategy **2019-2023** (main provisions; rationale; roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders; implementation)
Tamara Torosyan, Head of Youth Policy Department, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia
- Initial feedback from the Council of Europe's expert delegation
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch

Sessions III: Achievements, challenges and key elements to consider

Exchange of views between:

- ✓ the Council of Europe's expert delegation
- ✓ representatives of national authorities (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, Ministry of Justice)
- ✓ key organisations involved in the national youth strategy (organisations, partners, international organisations and donors)

14.00-15.00 → *Focus of the discussion: contents of the draft national youth strategy*

15.00 -16.00 → *Focus of the discussion: achievements and challenges*

- *what has been done so far? (successes)*
- *what is proving to be most problematic? (barriers to implementation)*
- *what are the lessons learned?*

16.00-16.30 Coffee break

16.30-17.30 → *Focus of the discussion: key elements to be considered in the national youth policy, for instance:*

- *participatory approach*
- *strategy development process*
- *co-operation between stakeholders*
- *coherence, transparency, information sharing*
- *capacity-building*
- *Council of Europe standards in the field of youth*

17.30-18.00 Conclusions of the day

19.00 Dinner

Session IV: the national youth strategy in practice: a field visit to Gyumri

08.30	Departure from Yerevan
8.30-10.30	Travel from Yerevan to Gyumri
10.30-11.15	Meeting with Samvel Balasanyan, mayor of the city of Gyumri
11.45-13.00	Meeting with local youth organizations at Gyumri's Center for Youth Initiatives
13.30-15.00	Lunch at Florence Gyumri restaurant
15.00-16.00	Meeting with Tigran Petrosyan, governor of the Shirak province
16.00-17.30	Visit to Gyumri's "Youth House" Open Youth Center
17.30-18.30	Short tour of Gyumri (including Black Fortress)
18.30-20.30	Travel back from Gyumri to Yerevan
21.00	Free evening in Yerevan

Thursday 18 July 2019

10.00-10.15 Departure from Best Western Congress Hotel to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport

Session V: Preliminary conclusions and next steps

10.00-11.00 Exchange of views between the Council of Europe's expert delegation and the Deputy Minister on the preliminary conclusions

Including initial oral report of the General Rapporteur:
Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy

11.00-12.30 Exchange of views between the Council of Europe's expert delegation and the Youth Policy Department

→ *Focus of the discussion:*

- *feedback from the advisory mission so far (including field visit)*
- *discussion on preliminary recommendations and next steps*

12.30 **End of official programme** of the youth policy advisory mission

13.00 Lunch

14.00 - 18.00 **Starting to draft the recommendations**
[meeting open to Council of Europe's expert delegation only]

19.00 Dinner

Friday 19 July 2019

Throughout the day Check-out from [Best Western Congress Hotel](#)
Self-organised transfers from the hotel to the airport
Departure of the Council of Europe's expert delegation from Yerevan "Zvartnots" Airport

Appendix 2: Participants in discussions during the advisory mission

Tuesday, July 16

Gevorg Loretsyan – Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
Arman Udumyan – Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs
Tamara Torosyan – Head of Youth Policy Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
Gohar Mamikonyan – Advisor to the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
Anahit Karapetyan – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Tigran Samvelyan – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Susanna Adamyan – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Rima Karapetyan – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Vahe Sargsyan - Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure

Carmen Grilca – EU delegation
Hasmik Soghomonyan – UNDP
Anastasia Platonova – UNDP
Hasmik Aleksanyan- UNICEF
Anna Barfyan – UNFPA
Nazeli Kirakosyan – The Armenian Red Cross Society
Zaruhi Tonoyan- Oxygen Armenia
Iren Sargsyan – Save the Children Armenia
Arsen Simonyan – Save the Children Armenia
Liana Sargsyan – World Vision Armenia
Kristine Aslikyan – World Vision Armenia
Ester Hakobyan – DVV International Armenia
Anna Yeghoyan – Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre NGO
Arthur Najaryan - President of Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre NGO
Zara Lavchyan – Trainers National Team NGO
Karine Stepanyan - KASA Fondation Humanitaire Suisse
Anna Tovmasyan – Armenian Progressive Youth NGO
Marina Galstyan – Researcher

Wednesday, July 17

Tigran Petrosyan – Governor of Shirak Province
Samvel Balasanyan – Mayor of Gyumri
Gayane Arakelyan – coordinator of “Youth House” open youth centre

N.B.: all participants have been listed only once, even if they participated in the whole duration of the mission.

Appendix 3: Framework and objectives of the youth policy advisory mission

The image shows the cover of a report. The background is a dark blue gradient. In the top left corner, there is the Council of Europe logo, which consists of a circle of twelve yellow stars and the text 'COUNCIL OF EUROPE' and 'CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE'. To the right of the logo, the text 'Council of Europe' and 'Conseil de l'Europe' is written in white. Below this, the title 'Framework and objectives of the youth policy advisory mission' is written in a large, white, serif font. Underneath the title, the text 'Introduction by Florian Cescon, Head of the Youth Policy Division, Council of Europe' is written in a smaller, white, italicized serif font. At the bottom left, the text 'Council of Europe' and 'Conseil de l'Europe' is written in white. To the right of this text is a stylized, light blue globe. The bottom half of the cover is separated from the top half by a horizontal line. Below this line, the Council of Europe logo and name are repeated in the top left corner. The main title for this section is 'I/ Framework of the advisory mission', written in a large, white, serif font. Below this, the text 'General background / The Council of Europe's youth policy approaches (assistance to member States)' is written in a smaller, white, serif font. At the bottom left, the text 'Council of Europe' and 'Conseil de l'Europe' is written in white. To the right of this text is a stylized, light blue globe.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe

Framework and objectives of the youth policy advisory mission

*Introduction by Florian Cescon,
Head of the Youth Policy Division,
Council of Europe*

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe

I/ Framework of the advisory mission

General background /
The Council of Europe's youth policy
approaches (assistance to member States)

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



General background: the Council of Europe and Armenia

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



Introduction

The Council of Europe and Armenia

- ✓ **Armenia** became the 42nd Council of Europe's member State in 2001
- ✓ **Council of Europe office** in Yerevan
 - ✓ represents the Secretary General in Armenia.
 - ✓ co-operates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other national authorities supporting the implementation of statutory obligations to the Council of Europe by Armenia.
 - ✓ co-ordinates and implements Projects and Programmes supporting legislative and institutional reforms in Armenia.



The Council of Europe and Armenia

- ✓ 2019-2022 Council of Europe **Action Plan for Armenia**
 - ✓ adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 9 January 2019
 - ✓ launched by the Deputy Secretary General and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia on 17 June 2019
 - ✓ framework for the co-operation of the Organisation with the Armenian authorities, with a view to promote current reforms in the country.
 - ✓ four main directions of action: protecting and promoting human rights; ensuring justice; combatting threats to the rule of law; **promoting democratic governance** (including youth dimension).



The Council of Europe and Armenia

- ✓ 2019-2022 Council of Europe **Action Plan for Armenia**
 - ✓ “Youth for democracy”: part of the Action Plan
 - ✓ Aim: to assist the authorities in developing and implementing youth policy in line with the Council of Europe standards
 - ✓ Special focus: “values-based youth policy” (youth participation, access to rights)
 - ✓ Actions: practical advice to the authorities (e.g. current advisory mission), capacity-building (education for democratic citizenship/human rights education: “50/50 training courses”)

Thematic background: Council of Europe's youth policy approaches

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



Overall aim of the Council of Europe's youth policy

- ✓ **Foster the Organisation's values** (democracy, human rights and the rule of law) through **non formal education, youth policy** and practice.
- ✓ The programme **focuses on** the emerging generation, enabling **young people** to become engaged and responsible European citizens who **advocate human rights** and **participate fully** in democratic life.

THINK YOUTH!



Objectives: what should youth policy do?

From the Council of Europe's perspective, youth policy should:

- ✓ be **opportunity-focused** (rather than problem-oriented)
- ✓ aim to “**make**” **young Europeans** (through a set of commonly-agreed standards and **values**)
- ✓ **empower young people**: consider them as resources
- ✓ engage them in the development of **democratic, inclusive and peaceful societies** (“agents of change”)



Which scope for national “youth policy”?



- ✓ Each country decides what is to be considered a youth policy (including age range)
- ✓ Some national youth policies: **anything that affects young people** (social protection, gender equality, unemployment, formal education, health, housing...)
- ✓ Others: much **narrower scope**
- ✓ Youth policy always **mirrors how public authorities look at young people**

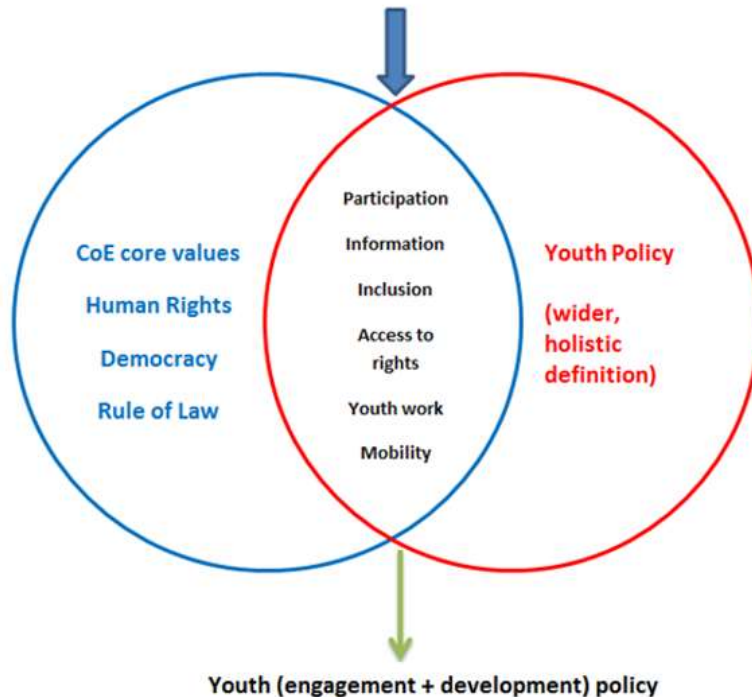


In practice, “youth policy”...

- ✓ is about **standards**
- ✓ but also **methodology** (principles, co-operation)
- ✓ **target groups/stakeholders**
- ✓ **scope** (areas of intervention)
- ✓ **budgets...**

Council of Europe
 Expertise / Experience
 Competitive advantage
 Core business
 Distinctive contribution

*Areas of
 intervention*





COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe

Council of Europe's youth policy

Instruments and priorities

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



Main instruments

Instruments of the youth programme

The Council of Europe's "Youth for Democracy" programme is carried out by the **Youth Department**, mainly through:

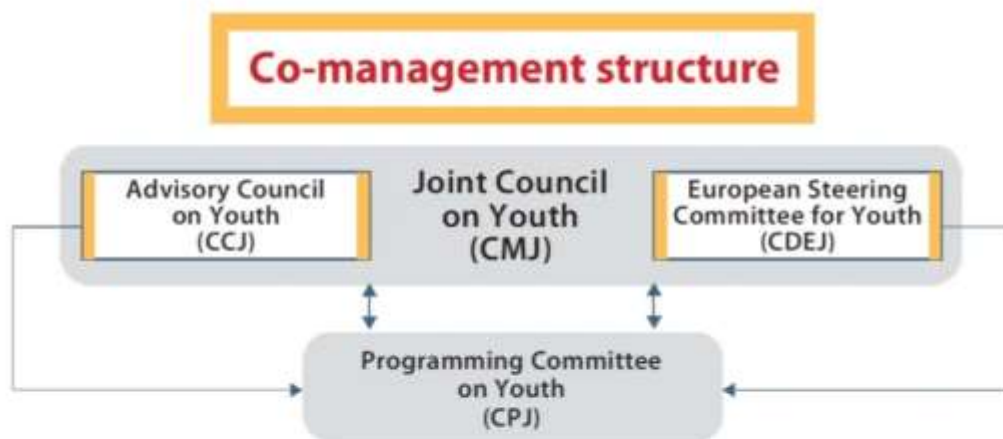
- ✓ European Youth Centres - Budapest, Strasbourg
- ✓ European Youth Foundation
- ✓ Partnership with European Commission
- ✓ Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility
- ✓ Intergovernmental co-operation (CDEJ)



- ✓ Unique **system of co-management**
- ✓ 4 statutory committees
- ✓ Representatives from youth **non-governmental organisations** (NGOs) sitting down in committees with **government officials** who together then work out:
 - the **priorities** for the youth sector
 - make recommendations for future **budgets and programmes**
 - any future youth-related **standards**



✓ co-management in practice



Council of Europe's youth policy

Assistance to member States in practice

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



Assistance measures: how to best support member States in the **evolving context** of youth policy?

- ✓ Youth sector under **increasing pressure**
- ✓ **Limited resources** (human and financial)
- ✓ Need for **rapid results** and response
- ✓ **Changing** priorities
- ✓ Need to associate young people with the Council of Europe's **core values** (human rights, rule of law, democracy)



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
 Conseil de l'Europe
 CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Assistance to member States

“Member States have been supported to develop youth policies promoting Council of Europe standards.”

*Assistance measures implemented under the responsibility of the CDEJ
 (European Steering Committee for Youth)*



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
 Conseil de l'Europe
 CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Context

✓ 21 international reviews of national youth policy



COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Home About us Youth policy European Youth Centres European Youth Foundation Programme Partners

You are here: Democracy Youth Resources

National youth policy reviews

An international review of national youth policy is the most complex and comprehensive of measures fostering youth policy evaluation and development available under this package. Undertaken this process involves wide ranging commitment, from political to financial, for both the requesting country and the Council of Europe. The main milestones include the preparation of a national report about the youth policy and youth situation in the country, an expert team assessment of the report followed up with up to two intensive field visits around the country to study the particular perspectives, the finalisation of the international report further to input from the requesting government, and its presentation at a public hearing.

National youth policy series

- Serbia (2016)
- Greece (2015)
- Ukraine (2013)
- Belgium (2012)
- Albania (2010)
- Moldova (2010)
- Armenia (2009)
- Latvia (2008)
- Hungary (2008)
- Cyprus (2007)
- Slovak Republic (2007)
- Malta (2005)
- Norway (2004)
- Lithuania (2003)
- Luxembourg (2002)
- Estonia (2001)
- Romania (2001)
- Spain (2000)
- Sweden (2000)
- Netherlands (2000)
- Finland (1999)

New “package” of assistance measures:

- ✓ **Aim:** to support member States in implementing Council of Europe’s standards
- ✓ **Specifically tailored** to the needs and requests of member States (demand-driven)
- ✓ **Capacity-building** activities (« Summer University », « 50/50 training courses », study visits, peer advice)
- ✓ Youth policy **advisory missions**
 - ✓ Usually tend to focus on matters of concern
 - ✓ Constructive and practical approach
 - ✓ Taking account of particular circumstances of country



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe

Council of Europe’s youth policy

Standards

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe





Youth policy at the Council of Europe: which standards and legal basis?

- ✓ **Agenda 2020** (strategic document approved by the youth ministers in 2008): 3 overarching themes that should inform youth policy until 2020:
 - human rights and democracy
 - living together in diverse societies
 - and social inclusion of young people
- ✓ A set of **Recommendations** of the Committee of Ministers (participation, access to rights, youth work, mobility...)



Committee of Ministers' Recommendations



- ✓ **Roadmaps for implementation** (specific to youth field)

Recent recommendations



Youth work
CM/Rec(2017)4



Access to rights
CM/Rec(2016)7



Enter!
CM/Rec(2015)3



Self-assessment tool for youth policy (based on standards)



II/ Objectives of the youth policy advisory mission





✓ Main aim:

“To prepare **recommendations** to the authorities (Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport)

on the revision of the **national youth strategy** of Armenia,

notably on the basis of the Council of Europe’s **norms and standards** in the field of youth.”



✓ Objectives:

To provide **practical advice** to the authorities of Armenia, so that the national youth strategy can be:

- ✓ **relevant** and meaningful;
- ✓ **participatory** (involvement of the major stakeholders);
- ✓ **sustainable** (capacity-building for its effective implementation);
- ✓ **values-based** (notably on the basis of the Council of Europe standards in the field of youth).

✓ **Focus:**

- ✓ **contents** of the national youth strategy
- ✓ **achievements and challenges** (lessons learned).
- ✓ some **key aspects**, based on CoE values:
 - participatory approach
 - strategy development process
 - cooperation between key stakeholders
 - local experiences
 - coherence, transparency, information sharing



Thank you for your attention



Appendix 4: articles and news items about the advisory mission

News item on the Council of Europe's youth portal

English: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/-/youth-policy-advisory-mission-to-armenia>

French: <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/youth/-/youth-policy-advisory-mission-to-armenia>

Articles on national media:

<https://mediamax.am/am/news/education/34233/>

<http://www.erit.am/news/en/87084>

<http://www.erit.am/news/en/87085>

<http://www.erit.am/news/en/87114>

<http://www.erit.am/news/hy/87114>

News item on the main national press agency:

<https://wires.coe.int/#/news/show/343707>

Photo gallery:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/Armenia-photo-gallery>

Appendix 5: Letter from Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe addressed to H.E. Arayik Harutyunyan, Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF DEMOCRACY
The Director General



For the attention of
H.E. Arayik Harutyunyan,
Minister of Education, Science, Culture
and Sport of the Republic of Armenia

Strasbourg, 29 July 2019

Dear Minister,

From 16 to 18 July 2019, a delegation of the Council of Europe visited Armenia to advise the national authorities on how to further develop and implement the national youth strategy.

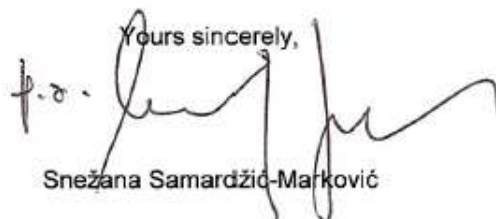
This advisory mission was part of the Council of Europe's package of intergovernmental assistance measures to member States in the field of youth, carried out under the aegis of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) at the request of the national authorities.

I hereby wish to thank warmly your Ministry, and especially Deputy Minister Gevorg Loretsyan and Head of the Youth Policy Department Tamara Torosyan, for the excellent organisation of this official visit of the Council of Europe to Yerevan and Gyumri.

As we both know, this advisory mission was organised at a crucial juncture in the national context, which might entail significant changes in the youth policy of Armenia. I am therefore satisfied that the preliminary advice provided by our delegation on the revision of the national youth strategy was deemed relevant and useful by the authorities. The main findings and recommendations of the advisory mission will be summarised in a report, which will be submitted shortly to the authorities.

I trust that these recommendations will be followed up closely by your Ministry, under the able guidance of Ms Torosyan, whose Department will be responsible for implementing the national youth strategy and who is also the official representative of Armenia to the CDEJ.

This will be crucial for ensuring that the national youth strategy of Armenia is in line with the Council of Europe's standards in the field of youth and benefits all young people of Armenia.

Yours sincerely,

Snežana Samardžić-Marković