

# THE YOUTH POLICIES OF THE GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA

THE AIMS OF THE YOUTH POLICY FOLLOWED IN CATALONIA ARE TO PROGRESS TOWARDS PARTICIPATION, TO ENERGIZE THE WORLD OF YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF OUR YOUTH.

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**Y**outh policy in Catalonia is promoted by the General Secretariat for Youth, a body at present forming part of the Department of the Presidency. Although it originates in one particular department –the Catalan Government is organised in 14 departments or *conselleries*–, one of the chief characteristics of the youth policy is in fact its interdepartmental nature.

The Government's action for youth takes into account those aspects that interest and affect the life of young people. This is why we say that when the Councillor for Work proposes measures to reduce unemployment he is shaping youth policies, and when the Councillor for Territorial Policy and Public Works proposes subventions to home buyers he is also shaping youth policies, and the same goes for the Councillor for Health when he organises campaigns to prevent AIDS or unwanted pregnancies, and the Coun-

cillor for Agriculture with tax measures to facilitate the inheritance of land from parents to children. There are plenty of other examples we could give as regards teaching, training, culture, the environment, tourism, consumer affairs, etc. In other words, youth policy is, first of all, an action involving every department in the Generalitat and, at the same time, an action in need of co-ordination and planning to satisfy a single, coherent and determined wish to serve young people globally and efficiently.

The President of the Generalitat often says that politics is, at heart, pedagogy. This idea, in the context of youth policy itself, takes on a special significance. Youth politics responds to a profound educational vocation and sets out to promote, involve, transform, construct and create. Youth policy, as an educational action, also requires a frame of reference that defines a particular view of the in-

dividual and society. Let me therefore outline the ideas that give a meaning to the different actions we want to carry out:

*We want to back a society that is participative, creative and committed.* We are more interested in working with young people than for young people, because we want them to design and create their own projects. We shall continue to back the strengthening of young people's associational life.

*We want to back training.* We are not simply offering a range of services. We want to go further and make youth policy an educational action. We need well-prepared men and women able to adapt to constant transformation.

*We want to back young people capable of renovation and social dynamism.* Young people will design –are already designing– the society of tomorrow on the basis of their critical and innovative capacity and their potential for proposing





and testing new attitudes and new values. We want to back young people who will continue and develop the work of national construction. Young people who will advance the project of national construction, who know and love the country they live in and its people and, at the same time, who have an open-minded and respectful attitude to other cultures.

We want to back values that already exist around us. Young people prepared and trained, dynamic, free and increasingly committed, critical and creative, keen to excel themselves and attentive also to their environment, contributing to the construction and cohesion of the country and the society, to the general well-being and, especially, the well-being of those most in need.

We want to open up channels and platforms for debate to permanently observe

and analyse the reality of Catalonia's youth. Understanding young people's reality is an essential requisite for directing any action aimed at young people.

Having defined the type of youth we want and are working for, let me describe the five main objectives presiding the actions we carry out:

1. *Support for and defence of the youth association movement:* Associationism has traditionally been widespread in Catalonia and we feel that the basis of a youth policy calls for close collaboration between the Government and the civil society, represented in this case by youth associations and organisations. In fact, as we shall see in the next objective, many of the measures considered in our youth policy are eventually put into practice through the association movement.
2. *The offer of a range of services, in col-*

*laboration with the association movement:* We think it is important to define and set out the basic services that must be made available to young people so as to guarantee their rights in different spheres of life – information, work, health, housing, training, etc.–, always under the principle of subsidiarity: that is, whatever the civil society can do should not be done by the public administration.

3. *Study and debate on the subject of values and young people:* Understanding young people and the reality that surrounds and motivates them are basic to the development of actions aimed at young people, both by the Government and by associations and other educational agents.

4. *Presence over the whole of the territory:* In view of Catalonia's geographical characteristics and demographic distri-



bution, care must be taken to avoid important differences in opportunities and establish a territorially balanced system. In this respect, the existence of a local administration at the regional level (the *comarques*) helps decongest and decentralize services. In 1994, the *comarques* took over responsibility for youth matters delegated to them by the Generalitat.

5. *Development of an Interdepartmental Youth Plan:* Amongst all the actions put into practice there is one that stands out as best representing the integrated concept we have given to youth policies and which has, at the same time, become an innovative instrument of work. This is the Interdepartmental Youth Plan.

The Young Catalonia Interdepartmental Youth Plan is a key element in shaping youth policies in Catalonia. The first plan was put into operation over the 1993-

1994 period, and following its evaluation the Government approved the current Young Catalonia Interdepartmental Youth Plan 1995-1997.

The Young Catalonia plan responds to the need to combine the actions of all the Generalitat departments in youth policies, putting forward a series of measures in the face of various situations in need of government action, in which young people are involved.

In addition, the Young Catalonia Plan has made it possible to carry out educational action on what the Catalan Government does for young people. It has also been a call for attention regarding the need to consider young people as a whole and, at the same time, has agglutinated a group of people round an idea and a project.

The measures contained in the Plan are

arranged under the following subjects: information and access to services; energizing local and regional youth policies; associationism; training, work and business creation; health and prevention; the environment; services to young people: leisure, culture, housing and instruments for social integration; attitudes and values. National identity.

The measures have been formulated and are carried out on the basis of contributions by the different Generalitat bodies and the youth association movement itself, by experts, opinion groups and young people themselves.

The aim of the combined guidelines shaping youth policies in Catalonia is to progress towards participation, energize the world of young people throughout the country and to improve the quality of our young people's lives. ■



BARCELONA. CAMPING IN THE STREET IN FAVOUR OF DEVOTING 0.7% OF THE GNP TO COOPERATION