

# PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH 2020 – what do YOU see?



Volume 1

## Youth Partnership

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



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# **Perspectives on youth**

**Volume 1**  
**2020 – what do YOU see?**

*The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the European Commission or the Council of Europe, their member states or the organisations co-operating with the institutions.*

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## **Preface from the group of publishers**

Given the deep and damaging dysfunction of the economy and the political inconsistency that promotes mobility as an asset, which is only to be countered by a re-drawing of xenophobia, it is a hard task to describe clear perspectives for the future. It is thus an important and responsible task to identify the high impact issues that are affecting and will most likely affect young people – to describe and debate them, and put them to the test cross-culturally. It is purposeful and creative to gather analyses from quality research, mix in some opinion and vision, and sprinkle over it all some healthy cynicism. It is our hope that *Perspectives on youth* will have some resonance and create critical responses across borders and communities. We hope it provides the ingredients for debate and dialogue, not contestation and rhetoric. We are setting our principles high, at a time of a lowering of hope and ambition.

Use *Perspectives on youth* as a resource to channel some positive energy into the currently pretty bleak situation.





## Introduction by the editorial team

→ Dear readers,

Welcome to *Perspectives on youth*. We, the group of publishers and the editorial team of this new series are happy to issue this first volume.

### **Why *Perspectives on youth*?**

The *Perspectives on youth* publication is not (merely) an academic series, it is not (merely) a collection of visionary policy statements, nor is it (merely) an echo of reflections on practices in the youth field. It is none of all the above and all of them at the same time. Do not be surprised if on one page you find an academic article with footnotes, bibliographical references and empirical data, and on another, you find an article that you might read on an Internet blog. Do not be surprised if you find journalistic-style interviews of policy makers at the same time that you find a reflection article from a youth worker or from a youth researcher on a specific situation affecting youth in one specific country, that could serve as food for thought in other countries (or even at the European level). Do not be surprised because this is actually the purpose of this publication: to bring an element of

surprise and to encourage a dialogue between policy makers, researchers and practitioners in the youth field.

It is through this triangle of research, practice and policy that the publication aims to bring national youth policies closer together and keep the ongoing (mainly European) dialogue about key problems of national and supranational youth policies on a solid foundation in terms of content, expertise and politics. Thus the series aims at supporting a closer European and international co-operation in the field of youth policy as well as facilitating dialogue between policy makers, researchers and practitioners. This is because the development and promotion of youth policies and of youth work, which are based on knowledge and evidence, and mutual learning between member states of the European Union, and the Council of Europe, are key elements of youth policy in Europe.

### **The first volume... “2020 – what do YOU see?”**

The first volume focuses on “2020 – what do YOU see?”, featuring a futuristic perspective on the lives of young people, across Europe and the wider world, based on research, social trends, policy planning, changing demography, employment prospects, sustainable development, security, and so on.

“Will today’s perspectives still exist in the real world? Can we have a vision for 2020 including a critique of ‘Agenda 2020, Europe 2020’ to make a critical analysis of contemporary European youth policy, its relation to the global youth issues and where it seems to be heading? What is LEFT for young people, what is RIGHT for young people through a futuristic perspective? What would be the reactions to the economic, political and cultural crisis(es)? Even if what we ask invites readers to look into a crystal ball, can we make evidence-based grounded speculations to scan the horizons of youth policy and youth prospects...?” (from the call for papers for this volume).

Looking forward can be done in manifold ways. It mirrors the “Zeitgeist” of a given period in history. In the bestseller *The world in 100 years* published by Arthur Brehmer in 1910<sup>1</sup> – four years before the First World War – contributions are consistently optimistic, heading for new horizons, desire for change, confidence and belief in progress. Roughly 100 years later, in 2012 – for European countries a relatively peaceful period of time – the book *2112 – Die Welt in 100 Jahren*, published by Ernst A. Grandits,<sup>2</sup> stands for socio-cultural concerns, pessimism, political angst and scepticism regarding technical and environmental developments. It describes in the chapter on “the social world in 22nd century” the time of the dividing Iron Curtain and the Cold War as nearly idyllic compared to what we might expect in a couple of years. In this “vision”, young people are hanging around in a commercialised world, dozing.

Looking into the future has always been a favourite pastime of human beings. But speculating about the future is also rather tricky. For example, US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld famously predicted that the war in Iraq would be over within six days! During a Council of Europe youth research symposium on “Youth

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1. *Die Welt in 100 Jahren (The world In 100 years)*, published in 1910 in *Verlagsanstalt Buntdruck* by Arthur Brehmer (editor, 1858-1923) and Ernst Lübbert, Berlin.

2. *2112 - Die Welt in 100 Jahren*, (2012) Georg Olms Verlag by Ernst A. Grandits (Author), Hildesheim, Zürich, New York.

in the Information Society” in 1997, it was suggested that no self-respecting young person would want to be without a computer after the following Christmas. As it happened, the most in-demand present in many parts of Europe were not state-of-the-art electronics but “pods”, simple plastic discs that were flicked at other people! A few years earlier, many in the music industry heralded the death of the performer, maintaining that the superstars of the future would be the technicians and producers, as music became more complex and technologically driven; they had not anticipated the imminent popularity of “unplugged”, as rock stars swapped their Fender Strats for acoustic guitars in order to perform to intimate audiences, which was then broadcast around the world. A hundred years earlier, concern was expressed that the rise in popularity of horse-drawn carriages in London would see the city covered in a deep swathe of horse manure by the turn of the century; the invention of the mass-produced Model T Ford had not been anticipated.

So, with some sense of irony, we have to tread carefully! Yet it is also important to try to conceptualise scenarios in the future, if any future planning is to take place. This does not have to entail gazing into a crystal ball, but building on the evidence that we currently possess in a plausible way.

As always, young people present both an opportunity and a threat, in their personal behaviour, civic engagement, economic activity or political commitment. They will both contribute actively or passively to the different scenarios and be the fortunate or unfortunate recipients of them. What is not in doubt is that, whatever happens in nation states and local communities, the European level will continue to be important. Though it may not directly touch the lives of a huge number of young people, both the European Union and the Council of Europe can shape the parameters and pioneer the experiences that affect many more young people throughout Europe. Hence the importance of looking to the future, with some educated guesswork.

### **What you will find in this first volume?**

Chiara Gariazzo, Director for Youth and Sport in the General Directorate for Education and Culture of the European Commission and Ólöf Ólafsdóttir, Director for Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the Council of Europe are interviewed and asked to share with the readers their reflections on the main challenges that young people in Europe face today and the ones they will face in the future. They give answers on what the two institutions do and will do to face these challenges and how research and practice in the youth field can contribute in this direction.

Pessimism is an attitude and not the mirror of reality. So, in his article “The intergenerational contract has been cancelled”, Karl Wagner expresses his belief in an upcoming young generation, born from the 1980s and 1990s onwards, as capable of managing the transition to a safer and more sustainable world. After reading the article, you are challenged to look around and ask the question: Do I spot signs of that upcoming development with young people? Where can this be? How can we help? And what can youth work and policy do to support these generations in their aspirations?

Magda Nico in her article “Generational changes, gaps and conflicts: a view from the South” argues that the economic crisis facing Europe serves as a critical moment for youth researchers to reflect upon, use and adapt the concept of generation in order to analyse and revisit processes of social change and the

political and social consequences of the latter for young people. Focusing on Portugal as one of the countries hardest hit by the crisis, Nico contends that young people are suffering the direct and indirect effects of new forms of social inequality, of social reproduction and of mechanisms that perpetuate poverty. Their future might, thus, be jeopardised in numerous and complex ways – ways yet to be identified within this ongoing process.

In a contemplative article entitled “Youth justice in a changing Europe: crisis conditions and alternative visions”, Barry Goldson shares with us his extensive knowledge and intriguing perspectives on youth justice in Europe. He argues that the future of European youth justice systems should hold the elements of what he calls “humane pragmatism”. He does not only dismiss utopian images of unconditional penal tolerance towards minors, but also totalising narratives that emphasise the rising of a harsh culture of control. His essay concludes with a well-founded consideration of what is needed to construct a progressive youth justice approach in Europe, in terms of values, political discourses, cultural understandings and professional ethos. Politicians and policy makers are encouraged to combine humanity with pragmatism in order to enhance a solid and meaningful future vision for youth justice.

Basing her analysis on current evolutions in higher education in Europe, Lorenza Antonucci in her article “The future of the social dimension in European higher education: university for all, but without student support?” warns about the negative impact of austerity measures on student support on the experiences of higher education for certain sections of the student population. Her contribution provokes thought on how seemingly adequate austerity measures might work to postpone and in the end reinforce economic hardship among young people. The author tells us how she envisages the future of higher education in Europe, stressing the importance of a social dimension.

Valentina Cuzzocrea in the article “Projecting the category of the NEET into the future” examines the history of the concept of “NEET” (not in education, employment or training) and its use within youth policy and scholarly debate in Europe. She notes that the current use of the term is much wider than originally intended; it covers a much broader age range than the 16- and 17-year olds it initially referred to in the UK context and, in addition, a literal interpretation of “NEET” includes not only extremely disadvantaged youth but also some relatively privileged young people in a position to exercise choice. In a case study of Italy she argues that the usefulness and applicability of the NEET concept is highly contingent on the welfare characteristics (and therefore typical youth transition patterns) of different national and even regional contexts.

Ajsa Hadzibegovic’s more journalistic than academic essay, “Young entrepreneurs owning 2020”, is an appeal for a concept of a holistic education. It underlines the necessity of the combination of formal and informal as non-formal education. Hadzibegovic speaks up for supporting young people in creating new job opportunities. With a special focus on youth in the transitional societies in South-Eastern Europe she emphasises that we should not stigmatise this generation as a lost one, but recognise their potential, evident during the times of political and economic changes in that area.

Democracy requires the active participation of citizens. Tomi Kiilakoski and Anu Gretschel underline in their contribution “Challenging structured participation

opportunities” the importance of active engagement and involvement in decision-taking for young people. Their conceptual starting point is to “recognise the pluralism and richness of democratic culture” and young people’s relation to it. The authors refer to “instruments for promoting participation” and conclude with examples which show young people’s involvement in democratic processes. However, it remains for readers to figure out how to transfer these examples into other contexts and fields that are presented and how the links between political discourses and the daily lives of young people could be improved.

The article “Active citizenship 3.0/2020 – youth participation and social capital after post-democracy” by Benedikt Widmaier is a comprehensive reflection of the diverse forms of interpretation of engagement in and for society. The author takes into consideration the different sociological concepts; he works out the different understandings of the different “schools”, measures them against the background of his educational practice and proposes a further developed concept in the field. These democracy-theory discussions are not only highly relevant for the future of democracy (post-democracy?), but also for the development of new concepts of citizenship education.

The last article in this volume, “The think tank on youth policy in Europe” is actually three articles together. Hans-Joachim Schild, Howard Williamson, Hans-Georg Wicke and Koen Lambert, members of the think tank that gathered for the first time in spring 2012 in Berlin and then in spring 2013 in Brussels to debate on the existing state of “youth in Europe” and to consider prospective trajectories for the future, share with the readers their reflections on the discussions and the main concerns raised during the meetings. In the framework of the continuing economic and political crisis that has influenced the lives of young people across Europe, the authors raise questions about what kind of youth policy we want and actually need to create a better future for young people.

### **The future of this series and readers’ contributions**

While producing the first issue of *Perspectives on youth*, the call for papers for the second issue had already been published, inviting submissions that reflect on a particular instance of “connections” and “disconnections” in the lives of young people. The second volume will be published in summer 2014.

The editorial team has already proposed to focus for a third volume on the wider topic “Healthy Europe” and a call for papers will be published, if the results of this process are meaningful, if the feedback we receive from the readership is positive and if the aims of the publication are achieved. This would give us more reasons to continue investing in this adventure.

We will be happy to receive your comments and suggestions for improving this publication. You can address them to us through this email address: [perspectivesonyouth@gmail.com](mailto:perspectivesonyouth@gmail.com). We would also like you to help us disseminate this publication to your network and invite people to actively engage in its content.

### **The group of publishers:**

- Seija Astala, Ministry of Education and Culture, Youth Policy Division, Finland
- Gordon Blakely, British Council, Education and Society, United Kingdom
- Marie-Luise Dreber, IJAB – Fachstelle für Internationale Jugendarbeit, Deutschland