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# Report on the Common Framework: Youth Policies in European Countries and their Potential for Social Innovation

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Comparative Perspective

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## The SocIEtY Project

The aim of the SocIEtY research project seeks to: (1) Improve the quality of life of disadvantaged young people through social innovation; (2) Identify opportunities to reduce inequalities; and (3) Extend and build knowledge and tools for the ultimate policy goal of a 'good life for all'.

The project explores how young people aged 15-24 live in different European countries today; and examines what can be done to create social and institutional opportunities which will better enable them to live the lives they have reason to value. Using Amartya Sen's Capability Approach<sup>1</sup> as a framework, the project develops a broad knowledge base to foster socially innovative policymaking. The Capability Approach is centred on the freedom and opportunity individuals have to make choices that they value.

Employing quantitative and qualitative methods SocIEtY builds knowledge on how existing policies and social practices of networks of social support tackle the problems faced by disadvantaged young people; how far, and in what ways, young people's ideas, experiences, aspirations and voices can be included in policymaking; and how social innovation can link these two issues, leading to social inclusion and to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

## Aims and Objectives of Work Package 3

The focus of Work Package 3 is on the national (and where appropriate regional) youth policies, and particularly the participation of young people, in the *areas of employment, education and lived experiences*. Work Package 3 analyses the socio-political context within which realistic decisions are made. Where possible the focus is on the 15-24 years age group.

The specific Work Package 3 *objectives* are:

1. To identify and evaluate relevant existing youth policies in relation to disadvantage and analyse how inequalities are defined and measured in each partner country.
2. To identify which actors are responsible for the development and delivery of policy and what the relationship is between the state and various actors.

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<sup>1</sup> Sen, A. (1985) *Commodities and capabilities*. Amsterdam: Elsevier | Sen, A. (1990) Justice: Means versus Freedoms. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 19(2), pp. 111-21 | Sen, A. (1992) *Inequality Re-examined*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation | Sen, A. (1998) *Development as freedom*. New York: Knopf Press

3. To identify social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy.
4. To analyse the differing socio-economic conditions within which the different policies operate, through longitudinal analysis of key statistics from EU-SILC and EU LFS data, as well as other datasets, from a Capability Approach perspective.

## **Methodology**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. A secondary data analysis, using EU-SILC and EU LFS as well as other datasets was used to expand the informational basis and to clarify the picture of existing inequalities and policies with regard to youth in general, and youth and transition in particular countries. For the collection of available national data; and analysis of the main strategies to support vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and identification of possibilities of social innovation within European social models literature reviews, policy and documentary analysis and expert interviews were undertaken.

## **Common themes and comparative perspective**

There are some common themes that emerge from the results presented in the chapters.

The first chapters (2-5) presented in this report analyse the *differing socio-economic conditions within which the different policies operate*, through analysis of key statistics from EU-SILC, EU LFS, the EUROSTAT online database, the Flash EuroBarometer survey “Youth on the Move” (No 319a) the OECD online database and the World Development Indicators, from a Capability Approach perspective. These chapters provide valuable *insights into the capability enhancing resources and valued outcomes of young people across Europe*. The analyses show the *importance of both context and individual characteristics for participation, and the way in which context mediates the impact of individual characteristics*. Previous measures and assessments have focused on youth disadvantage and inequality from a market centred and one dimensional perspective, which do not take account of the wider contexts of young people’s lives. Context and individual characteristics are also important for understanding the impact of the economic crisis on young people’s participation, which has varied across countries. It is also notable that the *clustering of countries identified in these analyses, with respect to the outcomes of interest, challenges the conventional clustering based on European social or welfare state models*. This may be due to the impact of the economic crisis, although convergence between regimes had already been observed prior to the crisis. These chapters also *raise questions about the normative assumptions that underpin the way in which youth disadvantage is conceptualised*. For example most studies of youth unemployment have focused on the national or individual level, neglecting within and between country regional differences. In addition, much of the focus in policy to tackle youth unemployment is on the headline employment rate indicator and the need to increase employment rates; rather than the decreasing quality of employment in Europe.

Chapters 6 to 16 show that in most countries *youth is not always a distinct national government policy area*. Youth policy is often fragmented, covering multiple policy areas and political levels. In all of the countries there are *difficulties in creating one coherent or common definition of disadvantage* and that multiple measures are used. There are however convergences in the factors of disadvantage that are highlighted in policy and/or by stakeholders in the reports. These *understandings of disadvantage often focus on individual*

*and family attributes and deficits only.* Individuals and their families are often ascribed the responsibility for their situation, by for example the state, politics, society, media, rather than disadvantage being caused by wider socio-economic factors. *Still lacking, is a public discourse about the role of socio-economic and political constraints of opportunities.* Supply side oriented measures dominate discourse and policies. No country reported economic growth measures to improve demand for young people in the labour market. In most countries there are no systematic policies to raise incentives for companies to employ young people, to adapt work and training processes, to train trainers etc.

*Programmes and measures to address youth disadvantage are often framed within a school-based and employment-centred transition regime.* There is a strong focus in these programmes on education and training (human capital formation) and employability skills and a developing a work ethic (being punctual, being reliable, etc.). As such, policies target individuals and their abilities, competencies and willingness to train and work. The policy responses generally do not seem to take into account that achievements of young people in the labour market and in formal education rely on a wide diversity of factors, some of which lie beyond the sphere of formal education and job training. As such it seems that disadvantage is not always understood from an intersectional or cumulative perspective; and does not seem to take into account of subjective factors.

*In some countries there is a lack of institutional or formal forms of participation or participation is not incentivised. In other countries there are well-developed participation policies or networks of organisations.* However, the research findings identify that participation, where it occurs, occurs through formal channels and on adult's terms, rather than necessarily the terms of young people. It seems obvious that these forms of participation are not able to include and address the situation of vulnerable youth in an adequate way. No country reported systematic attempts to create more informal ways of participation for young people in policy, programmes and measures, or in community life. Generally it seems that only 'organised' youth/those who are engaged in educational or political structures have voice.

The research findings identify that *social innovation is not a term that stakeholder necessarily engage with.* Those who use the term/are familiar with it provide broad definitions about change and meeting un-met needs. *Social innovation was seen as both a top-down and bottom-up process across the case studies.* So far no example of a general shake up of the educational and transition system in European countries could be found even though youth are among the groups affected most by the crisis and the subsequent cuts in social policy. *There is a lack of a systemic (i.e. government wide) innovative approach in government at a national level,* which raises concerns about the long-term institutionalisation and funding of socially innovative policies. Some examples of policy innovation were given, as well as funding streams that seek to encourage innovation. Where there have been reforms and new policies implemented questions can be raised about whether these are socially innovative changes. Social innovation and/or good practice often cited as happening at the local level, often supported by third sector organisations. As such third sector organisations and advocacy organisation can be framed as key actors in revealing the 'new social needs' of young people.



## Chapter 2: Educational Outcomes Across the EU

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### Introduction

This report examines educational participation and achievement among young people (aged 16-29) across Europe, and the factors associated with these outcomes and the individual, family, neighbourhood and national level. A growing number of young people across Europe are engaged neither with the labour market nor in education (NEET), and education has a significant impact on this; those with low levels of education are three times more likely than those with tertiary education to be NEET and more than twice as likely as those with secondary education. Thus, the participation and achievement in education of young people is an issue of key concern for policymakers across Europe.

The report takes a capabilities approach, in which education is conceptualised as a capability enhancing resource and valued outcome, with young people's capacity to access it and to succeed restricted or enhanced by a number of conversion factors. The analysis considers the ways in which young people's capabilities may be enhanced or diminished, such that they are empowered to choose education or prevented from doing so by the conversion factors that moderate their ability to move from resources to functionings. These conversion factors are hypothesised to operate as barriers or enablers at the level of the young person themselves, the immediate environment in which they find themselves, and the wider macro level environment.

Three main questions are addressed in this research:

*Q1. How does participation in education among 16-18 year olds vary between countries; how has it varied over time; and what factors are associated with the participation of this age group in education?*

*Q2. How does participation in education among 19-29 year olds vary between countries; how has it varied over time; and what factors are associated with the participation of this age group in education?*

*Q3. How does low educational attainment among 19-29 year olds vary between countries; how has it varied over time; and what factors are associated with the low educational attainment?*

### Methods

The analysis uses micro data from the EU Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), from the years 2005, 2008 and 2011. This household survey, which now covers 31 European countries, is collated by Eurostat from cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys within each country. The database provides information on income and deprivation at the household level, as well as data on education, health and labour market outcomes for all individuals over the age of 16 in the household. The EU-SILC micro data was combined with macro level indicators

of possible influences on educational outcomes. These were obtained from figures published by Eurostat and the OECD.

Macro-level similarities between countries' approaches to education were explored with factor analysis, and groups of countries are identified using hierarchical cluster analysis of these factors. Descriptive analysis and logistic and multilevel regression modelling is used to explore associations between the outcomes and conversion factors of interest.

### **Macro level influences on educational participation and outcomes**

Factor analysis condensed a large number of macro level variables into seven factors that might influence educational outcomes: education spending; education performance; orientation to science, technology and research; and ICT infrastructure. Macro level variables representing the prevailing economic climate were also used in the analysis.

These factors were used to classify countries into clusters with similar macro level characteristics. Three such clusters were identified: Northern Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden and the UK); Eastern Europe and Island Economies (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Cyprus and Malta); and Transitional Economies (Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia). These groupings are different from, and more contemporary than, those formed by the Esping-Andersen typology of 1990.

### **Participation in education among 16-18 year olds**

There was little evidence of any noticeable trend in participation over time (2005 to 2011), or anything that could be interpreted as a 'recession effect'. Participation in education among this age group was found to be particularly low in the Northern European cluster, relative to the others. This is something of a paradox, considering the generally high levels of investment in education in these countries, and that they tend to fare relatively well on other potentially important conversion factors such as deprivation. Although there are significant differences between countries, it is hard to identify important macro level features, as participation seemed to be uncorrelated with features that might be expected to be capability enhancing. Counter-intuitively, participation was found to be negatively associated with education expenditure. It is also worth noting that there is a substantial gender gap in participation, which is much more likely among young women, even after controlling for a range of micro and macro level factors.

### **Participation in education among 19-29 year olds**

For this age group, again it was difficult to identify any notable trends in participation over time, or pinpoint any kind of recession effect. The regression modelling suggested again a substantial gender gap, and material factors at the household level also played a role. There was found to be a strong negative association between early family formation and participation in education; those who are living on their own single or couple parent household are much less likely to be participating in education. This could suggest that the two are not compatible, or it may reflect patterns of social stratification, or simply differences in the choices made by young people. Differences were found to exist between country clusters after controlling for individual and household factors, with those in the Northern Europe cluster this

time found to be more likely to participate than those in Transition countries. Multilevel modelling suggested that a country's science orientation could play a role in influencing educational participation, although again an unexpectedly negative relationship was found between educational participation and expenditure.

### **Achievement in education among 19-29 year olds**

For this outcome, the micro level factors emerged as the stronger predictors of low achievement than the macro level factors used in this analysis. Gender, migration, health, household income and life course stage all had similar effects to those found on participation. Very modest differences were found between country clusters (with those in Northern Europe slightly more likely to gain qualifications), and none of the macro level variables used in the multilevel model were found to be significant.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The analysis confirms a number of ways in which young people's capability to pursue, and achieve in, education may be limited by their personal and household circumstances, and by the prevailing policy and economic conditions in the country in which they live. Young men, migrants, and those with poor health face particular barriers in education, and material factors and family background continue to play a role in shaping educational opportunities. There is also evidence of some role of macro level policy and economic factors in shaping participation, although cross-national differences in participation do not necessarily seem to correspond with the extent to which these macro level conditions might be thought to enhance educational capabilities.

## **Chapter 3: Youth Unemployment Within and Across the Countries of the EU15 throughout the Economic Crisis**

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### **Rationale for the Research**

This report explores youth unemployment rates across the EU15. A series of investigations illustrate rankings, trends, dispersion dynamics and determinants of regional, as well as national, youth unemployment rates and variations that occurred throughout the crisis. While multiple policies and analyses have been developed to study and address the effects of the crisis on youth unemployment, too often they focus on the aggregate national level of analysis, underestimating within-country differences. However, regional contexts within nations largely differ, giving rise to diversified needs and interventions. On the other hand, there may also be important regional similarities across-countries, with the possibility of sharing of best practices or of disclosing effectively tailored local policies.

The study complements mainstream national analyses of youth unemployment by providing evidence on the absolute and relative levels, changes and trends of youth unemployment within and across the countries of the EU15. It also contributes to the scientific and political debate on European regional convergence and cohesion by analyzing it in terms of youth labour market differentials instead of income per capita and income growth, as it is typically done. This is particularly relevant at a time when youth unemployment has become a top priority on the agenda of the majority of European countries and a component of the European Cohesion policy and European Social funds are directly aimed at reducing regional disparities in the employment sector.

### **Data and Methodology**

- The analyses focus on a sample composed of the EU-15 countries and associated 82 regions, for a pre-crisis year (2007) and two years (2011 and 2013) in which to see prior and subsequent effects of the on-going crisis.
- Aggregate data at the regional and national level was drawn from: the EUROSTAT online database, the OECD online database and the World Development Indicators.
- Elaborate descriptive analyses explore youth unemployment rates across the EU15 before and throughout the crisis. The magnitude of youth unemployment, together with changing patterns and trends, are first investigated from an aggregate European perspective, then focusing on a national and cross-country analysis, and finally a more detailed intra-national and inter-national investigation is carried out. A series of graphical representations and coropleth maps are used to illustrate the changing distribution of youth unemployment rates within and across countries of the EU15.

- National and European regional  $\sigma$ -convergence<sup>2</sup> and  $\beta$ -convergence<sup>3</sup> are empirically investigated.
- A multi-level analysis also investigates the impact of the crisis and the determinants of youth unemployment at the regional and national level.

## Main Findings

***Throughout the crisis in the EU15 there has been a conspicuous macro-regional average increase in youth unemployment.***

- Throughout the economic crisis the EU15 scenario markedly changed in terms of youth unemployment rates. Overall, there has been a conspicuous macro-regional average rise in youth unemployment, although each country had a distinct path.
- In 2007 the average youth unemployment rate was of 15 per cent; by 2011 it had increased by 5.7 percentage points, reaching a value of 20.7 per cent. In the second part of the crisis, from 2011 to 2013, it kept escalating, although less so – finally recording a mean value of 22.8 per cent.

***A group of Mediterranean Countries had particularly significant and continuous rises in youth unemployment. In marked contrast, Germany registered a progressive reduction. Other countries had diverse trends in a first phase of the crisis, from 2007 to 2011, than subsequently, from 2011 to 2013.***

- A marked polarization emerged between a group of Mediterranean countries (Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy) that recorded prominently rising youth unemployment rates and Germany, which conversely, progressively reduced its youth unemployment from 2007 to 2013.
- Together with Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Denmark managed to always keep their rates below the yearly EU15 average.
- From 2007 to 2011, youth unemployment rates in Ireland had one of the most substantial relative increases, of over 220%. This rise brought Ireland from being one of the relatively best performing countries before the crisis to one of the worst. However, Ireland, differently from Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy, managed to start reversing this trend in a second phase of the crisis, from 2011 to 2013, recording a relative decrease of 7%.
- Ireland, Denmark, Luxemburg, the U.K. and Finland also had rising youth unemployment rates from 2007 to 2011, but reduced them by 2013.

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of  $\sigma$ -convergence is drawn upon the literature studying European cohesion whereby when the absolute differences of per capita income between regions decrease over time, there is evidence of  $\sigma$ -convergence. On the contrary, increased divergence implies that the standard deviation of regional income per capita has increased over time. In the context of this paper,  $\sigma$ -convergence is redefined as the fall of absolute dispersion of youth unemployment rates, instead of per capita income, across regions within one country, or across countries within the EU15.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of  $\beta$ -convergence, denoting a process whereby entities that were relatively disadvantaged improve faster than those that were relatively advantaged is also tailored to the study of youth unemployment so that: a relatively greater reduction in youth unemployment rates in  $t+1$  in the regions recording higher rates in  $t$ , determines a positive  $\beta$ -convergence. On the other hand, if the regions starting with relatively higher youth unemployment rates also have a higher growth-rate,  $\beta$ -convergence is not occurring.

***Regional differences within countries, as well as similarities across countries, were present in 2007 and regional dispersion generally increased throughout the crisis.***

- Noticeable intra-national regional differences and cross-country regional similarities in youth unemployment rates were present both before, as well as during the economic crisis. Thus, adopting a regional perspective to complement a national and European one is justified and should be taken into account for effectively tailoring policies.
- Throughout the crisis,  $\sigma$ -convergence in average national youth unemployment rates across the countries of the EU15 markedly decreased.
- Across the EU15, most countries that started off with lower youth unemployment rates before the crisis, kept performing better than those that began with higher rates: thus, overall macro-regional  $\beta$ -convergence did not occur.
- From 2007 to 2013, within-country  $\sigma$ -convergence in terms of regional youth unemployment rates decreased in most nations, although to different extents and starting from diverse levels.
- $\beta$ -convergence increased exclusively in Germany, as all regions decreased their youth unemployment rates and the regions that had higher rates before the crisis, mostly regions from former Eastern Germany, decreased their rates to a greater extent than those that were initially better off.
- The opposite of  $\beta$ -convergence, and thus an increased intra-national inequality, occurred in Austria, Belgium, Spain, Ireland, Portugal and the U.K., where a polarization between regions starting with lower youth unemployment rates that increased their rates to a lesser extent than those initially most disadvantaged, was exasperated by the crisis.

***Diverse structural conditions unequally managed to respond to the crisis beyond the initially generally adverse contingent affects.***

- The crisis had a robust impact on youth unemployment: a time-period in which the crisis is on-going, as year 2013, results being associated to a significant increase in youth unemployment compared to the 2007 pre-crisis scenario. This effect is highly significant and differentiated both within and across countries.
- A rise in adult unemployment, proxy of the underlying labour-market structural and cyclical capacity, is significantly associated to an even greater increase in youth unemployment.
- An increase in national gross fixed capital formation is highly significantly associated to a decrease in youth unemployment rates.
- Increased labour market strictness is significantly associated to a decrease in youth unemployment rates, however the result presented here is highly driven by Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Denmark that have quite strict regulation, but manage to keep youth unemployment low knowledgably thanks to counterbalancing high signaling capabilities of their education systems and well-performing structural factors.

## Chapter 4: Mapping Capability-Unfriendly Jobs of Young Europeans Before and During The Crisis

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The Lisbon strategy, launched in 2000, called for creating “more and better jobs” in Europe. The target in terms of more jobs was that the European Union should have 70% of the working age population in employment. A decade later, despite the fact that the EU27 fell short of achieving its stated objectives, the Europe 2020 policy set a new high-level target for increasing the employment rate to 75% by 2020 for the 20-64 age group. The objective of “more jobs” addresses something which is clear and in principle measurable through the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS). Hence, a lot of attention is paid to the data published in the Labour Force Survey, focusing on the headline employment rate indicator. Five years after the beginning of the financial crisis, and four years into the Europe 2020 Strategy, the employment rate keeps deteriorating. Employment levels declined sharply with the onset of the economic crisis so that, between 2008 and 2013, the overall employment rate in the EU28 fell by 1.9 percentage points (Eurostat, 2014). Youth unemployment is a particularly important issue in the Europe 2020 strategy which points out the importance of policies to foster young people’s entry into the labour market.

Against the dominant understanding which limits labour market performance to the enhancement of employment quantity, our research investigates the capability approach as an alternative and normative framework to assess employment quality of young Europeans aged between 16 to 24 years old being employed. In this perspective, what matters is not only the employment rate indicator but the enhancement of young people’s real freedom to choose an employment they have reason to value., i.e. the capability for work. The article seeks to contribute to this aim by creating a Capability-unfriendly Job Index (CaUJI), a composite Index of different aspects affecting both the employment relation and the work itself based on information available in the Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS). The CaUJI consists of five indicators, namely involuntary temporary contract, involuntary part-time, involuntary working time, unpaid overtime working hours and looking for another job. Each indicator takes the form of simple ‘yes/no’ dichotomies where one corresponds to the worst and zero to the best performing situation. Two weighting systems of indicators are used here, one based on Cerioli and Zani (1990) “frequency-based” rule and an alternative option proposed by Betti & Verma (1998), an option based on the double-weighting rule sensitive to both the relative frequency of items and the correlation among them.

Taking a view prior to the economic crisis of 2008, the empirical analysis over the 2006-2012 period leads to four main questions: (1) How does the current economic crisis affect the dual objective or more and better jobs in Europe? (2) To what extent does our index of work quality based on the capability approach – CaUJI- contribute to a different picture from the employment rate? (3) What is the relationship between job quantity and job quality among the European Member States, i.e. does the value of the quantitative indicator related to the employment rate move in the opposite direction or in the same direction as the qualitative

results related to the CaUJI over the 2006-2012 period? (4) Which Member States are particularly hard hit by the crisis and which member States are the best performers?

The empirical analysis leads to the four following results.

- 1) First, it emphasizes the overall impact of the crisis on the employment rate as well as on the capability-unfriendly jobs of the young Europeans even if the overall incidence of the crisis varies significantly across countries: the quality of employment as measured through the lens of the CaUJI is decreasing over the 2006-2012 period in Europe and the employment quality is decreasing.
- 2) Second, it supports the hypothesis that, in general, a higher level of employment rate is associated with fewer “capability-unfriendly” jobs, even if results display variations across countries.
- 3) Third, it highlights important differences across countries, with contrasted evolutions of capability-unfriendly jobs in Europe.
- 4) Fourth, it reveals that member states experience different challenges with regard to the objective of more and better jobs over the 2006-2012 period: we find seven countries, i.e. Germany, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Estonia and Romania in which there is both a growth in employment rate and a decrease in CaUJI over the 2006-2012 period, i.e. an increase in terms of job quality. With the exception of these countries, the situation has worsened over the period at least on one of the two indicators. Germany is the best performer in Europe in terms of employment rate increase while Austria is the best performer in Europe in terms of decline of capability-unfriendly jobs.

Future research will be conducted using the Capability-unfriendly Job Index. The next step will consist in determining the individual and contextual determinants of job quality (as defined through the lens of the Capability Approach). This will be done by enriching EU-LFS data with macro and meso variables derived from other data sets, such as the Labour Market Policy database. The issue at stake is to understand the relative importance of the various levels (individual, regional, national), therefore multilevel models will be implemented.



# Chapter 5: Multidimensional Youth Inequality across European Regional Clusters

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## **Rationale for the Research**

A second paper goes beyond the univariate perspective, by investigating young people's educational attainments, social and political participation, as well as employment prospects, across diverse socio-economic contexts in the EU15. The investigation first groups European NUTS level-1 regions along levels of multi-dimensional socio-economic development, drawing upon indicators of healthcare, education and labour market progress as well as purely economic growth. Young people's attainments and relative disadvantages across spheres are then explored within and between clusters. Finally, the interplays amongst youngster's outcomes and the context specificity of these inter-relations are investigated.

This paper contributes to the literature on the assessment of young people's social outcomes, opportunities and inequalities across Europe, as well as to studies exploring diverse socio-economic regional progress. From a policy perspective, it can inform both the targeting and tailoring of social policies aimed at youth, as well as those focusing on regional cohesion. In both cases, it does so from a multi-dimensional perspective. Further, through the exploration of context-specific dynamics of disadvantage, policies can be informed on where "corrosive" clustering of youth disadvantages should be targeted and where, on the other hand, disadvantages have been successfully isolated. Similarly, the analysis reveals attainments that in certain socio-economic contexts are particularly "fertile" for enabling other important outcomes for young people.

## **Data and Methodology**

- The analyses focus on the year 2011, when the economic crisis was on-going; and on a sample of nine countries of the EU15 and relative NUTS level-1 regions. The countries account for typically diverse European social models: Denmark and the Netherlands, from the Nordic model; the U.K., from the Anglo-Saxon model; France, Belgium, Austria and Germany belonging to the Continental model; and Spain and Italy from the Mediterranean model.
- Data on contextual multidimensional socio-economic progress is drawn from the EUROSTAT online database.
- Data on young people's educational and labour market attainments are also drawn from the EUROSTAT online database, while data on young people's social and political participation is drawn from the Flash EuroBarometer survey "Youth on the Move" (No 319a).
- Cluster analysis is used to form cross-national, NUTS level-1 regional clusters that are homogenous along socio-economic characteristics.

- Levels of young people's participation in education, employment, social activities and politics are analysed, also looking at differences by gender, within and across regional clusters regional socio-economic clusters.
- Correlation analyses are performed for each cluster, in order to explore fertile and corrosive associations across young people's outcomes and their context-specificity.

## **Main Findings**

***Multi-dimensional socio-economic development differs within countries of the EU15. Regional clusters of socio-economic progress cut across country boundaries, as well as traditional social welfare categories.***

- Across nine countries of the EU15 six differentiated regional socio-economic contextual clusters were identified, illustratively renamed as: "Most Economically Disadvantaged, but with Higher Life Expectancy", "Highest Post-Compulsory Educational Attainment", "Average Socio-Economic Performance", "Well-Off European Regions", "High Labour Market Performance" and "Richest Metropolitan Areas".
- Diverse socio-economic performance is recorded within countries and similarities are found at the regional level both across countries and across social welfare models.

***Economic performance purely measured in terms of GDP per capita is not enough to capture socio-economic development, and it is often inconsistent with indicators of educational and public health progress.***

- A cluster, composed of mostly Southern European regions (from Spain and Italy), resulted to be the most disadvantaged from a standard economic and labour-market point of view, as well as with respect to educational attainment; however, it outperforms in terms of average years of life expectancy.
- A second cluster, grouping the Eastern regions of Germany (with the exclusion of the metropolitan area of Berlin), outperform in terms of post-compulsory educational attainment (although not tertiary education enrolment), but have the highest long-term unemployment and lowest life expectancy levels.
- A third cluster, unites regions mostly from the U.K., France and Germany, that perform well relative to unemployment rates and around sample averages in other respects, apart from recording relatively high infant mortality rates.
- A fourth cluster, uniting regions across several countries, behaves along average levels across indicators, but has noticeably below average unemployment rates.
- A fifth cluster, uniting regions across Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Denmark, outperforms in terms of the lowest levels of both regular and long-term unemployment; yet, it registers the highest infant mortality rates.
- The sixth cluster unites regions with the richest metropolitan areas: Hamburg in Germany, Île de France (where Paris is) in France, the region of Brussels in Belgium and of London in the U.K. This cluster performs particularly well from a purely standard economic point of view, recording the highest average level of GDP – that is over double that of the EU27. Yet, it records a level of unemployment over both sample and EU27 means, and an above average (both sample and EU27) mean long-term unemployment.
- A multi-dimensional notion of development provides additional information that is often not in line with the purely economic performance of the cluster.

### ***Young people's attainments vary within and between socio-economic contexts.***

- Young people's labour market, educational, social and political participation varies considerably across socio-economic regional clusters.
- Young people's outcomes are not always strictly in line with those of the aggregate socio-economic scenario, confirming the fact that they constitute an important population subgroup, one that has been uniquely affected by the 2008 economic crisis, and that requires group-specific, contextualized, tailored policies.
- Females are structurally disadvantaged with respect to young male across all clusters (except the first) with regards to being NEET. Conversely, females record lower than male average levels of early school leaving across all contexts.
- Young people's labour-market, educational, social and political participation inter-relate amongst each other differently across socio-economic contextual clusters, revealing an important context-specificity of fertile and corrosive relations across outcomes. There is space for policy-interventions to limit cumulative disadvantages or enable virtuous cycles.
- One particularly cross-cutting corrosive disadvantage is early school leaving. It enhances youth unemployment and a status of being neither in education, employment nor training across all contextual scenarios. However, depending on the socio-economic context, the corrosive influence of early school leaving is more or less isolated from influencing young people's social and political participation.

### **Technical Statement**

To perform the analyses of the aforementioned papers there were a series of important data requirements to meet. In fact, one of the reasons limiting the application of both multi-dimensional and regional analyses is the lack of data. The technical statement included in this report provides a bullet-point summary of the processes followed to conceive and produce a dataset that would allow:

1. Accounting for the impact of the crisis, thereby requiring recent data as well as comparable information for a pre-crisis scenario;
2. Measuring young people's attainments across a multiplicity of spheres, including education, employment and social and political participation;
3. Capturing diversified regional contexts within and across countries of the EU15.

## Chapter 6: Politics of Participation? Soft and Hard Policies in German Youth Policies

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This paper focuses on the socio-economic political context and its implications on youth policies in Germany. It examines the issue of inequalities among youth with particular emphasis on “youth poverty” and “youth participation”. For both topics, current policies are reviewed. The analysis mainly concentrates on statistics and policies on the national and regional level.

The situation of vulnerable young people is not restricted to aspects of poverty, unemployment, or disadvantages in the educational system. Examining questions of vulnerability and inequalities among young people, always requires to look also at the constraints and enablements of the life young people want to realise, and at their access to objects, relationships and practices they appreciate and have reason to value. Insofar, poverty is not merely understood as material poverty, but as the absence of capabilities.

After an introduction and explanation of the methods used in this investigation (chapter 3) and a demonstration how inequalities are defined and measured in Germany, the report focusses especially on youth poverty as a current issue as well as on the labour market position of young people (chapter 4).

Empirical data and deeper analysis on *youth poverty* is still a desideratum for research in Germany. While there was a main focus on child poverty (and as well “children at risk”) in the last years, a discussion about youth poverty remained a blind spot. Anyhow, poverty rates of the age group from 15 to 30 years – and particularly people between 20 and 25 years – are the highest in relation to all other age cohorts. Additionally they were rising fastest in the last 25 – and especially in the last 10 – years.

Concerning the *labour market position of young people*, the access to vocational training (especially in the dual system) is the main dividing line on the labour market. The three mentioned aspects – inequality in the school system, insufficient training positions on the apprenticeship market and the aspect of “certificate poverty” – are not only characteristic for the situation (and the expansion) of the transition sector, they are relevant to all efforts within this context. Again, the question arises if the established institutions and organisations reproduce inequalities rather than reducing them.

Insofar *youth disadvantage* is predominantly understood in terms of ‘NEETs’ and subsequently nearly all programmes and measurements are framed within a school-based and employment-centred transition regime. *Youth poverty* is merely measured and evaluated as a high rate of dependence from social benefits. Young migrants are often seen as a relevant target group, but their opportunities are not acknowledged under structural conditions and barriers (i.e. institutional discrimination and spatial segregation). Hence, inequality among youth is not perceived in a multidimensional and intersectional perspective and in addition often as a lack of individual aspirations and secondary virtues. Insofar a multidimensional evaluation of youth

poverty for policy making and social accounting, which goes beyond income quality, is still lacking.

Concerning the policies, instruments and levels of intervention (chapter 5) disadvantaged youth are just partly tackled in social policy, labour market policy (especially the transition sector), educational policy and youth welfare (Youth welfare in Germany not only integrates different forms of care - e.g. residential homes, foster families – but as well life-world orientated youth work, such as youth clubs, streetwork etc.). Though, there is no joint-up policy for disadvantaged youth as such, rather there is a tendency of specialization, juridification and targeting in particular policy areas.

In this manner the political responsibilities for youth policy are not clear cut (chapter 6). While labour market policies are mainly conducted on national level, school policies are a genuine task of the federal states; social policies and youth welfare again are managed on the level of municipalities. Notwithstanding the policy-making power of national politics concerning for example the conditions and ranges of social transfers/benefits, the municipalities have to manage social services and deal with these target (targeted) groups. In line with Germany's federal structure, youth policy is not only a matter of the national government but also of the federal states, municipal authorities and voluntary child and youth service organisations in the framework of their partnership with public agencies.

Looking at the role of *social innovation* in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy (chapter 7) one can observe that social innovation was predominantly seen as an institutionally driven perspective, where new programmes and measurements were established and tried to tackle emerging social problems. Governmental and non-governmental actors (third sector organisations, charity and social welfare organisations, trade unions etc.) are seen as the agencies for social innovation. Aspects of deliberative democracy (i.e. plebiscites, public hearings etc.) are not at the core of public action.

But youth participation is now seen as the social innovation per se. Derived from the EU youth strategy, several policies in Germany occurred, where an independent youth policy was proclaimed and a broad focus on youth should be established. This paper analyses three main initiatives of this area on different levels: the “Structured dialogue” on the EU level, the “centre for an independent youth policy” on the national level and a regional initiative from North Rhine-Westphalia called “Umdenken - Jungdenken”. These programmes represent one main strand of - participatively applied and politically regulated - policy answers to the situation of young adults and seem to be characteristic for newer ways of dealing with participation of young adults on the one and legitimising policy making on the other hand. In line with these newer ways of dealing with youth policy, participation becomes omnipresent in public discourses and politically postulated and promoted. Nevertheless it has to be questioned if these processes are more than “symbolic innovations” and unveil the vulnerable situation of youth and give rise to the power of young people in policy making processes.

# Chapter 7: The Socio-Economic Political Context for Addressing Youth Unemployment in Scotland

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## **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on national level youth employment policy in Scotland. It provides a Capability Approach informed evaluation of employment policy making in relation to disadvantaged youth by mapping current policy processes and social support measures.

## **Methods**

The methodology had two components: (1) literature review and collection of available national data; and (2) analysis of the main strategies to support disadvantaged youth and identification of social innovation through policy review and expert interviews.

## **National definitions**

Since the economic downturn, youth unemployment has become an increasingly significant government concern, as young people have been affected by rising unemployment. The economic climate means that more young people can be considered as disadvantaged in the labour market. However, while the young unemployed as a group in general are a policy concern there are certain sub-groups that are identified as particularly disadvantaged e.g. NEETs, care leavers; low attainers. Though the economic recession has had a negative impact on young people; labour market statistics show that even before the recession unemployment was an issue facing young people.

In the main policy and policymakers understand disadvantage in terms of “objective” factors, although the nuances of disadvantage and the difficulties of creating one definition of disadvantage are recognised. As such current understandings of disadvantage are not taking a Capability Approach, focusing of achieved functionings rather than the ways in which these are achieved, and people’s freedoms to live a life that they have reason to value.

## **Policies, instruments and levels of intervention**

Welfare is delivered through a single, common policy framework across the UK, but the devolved administrations have powers to implement complementary programmes. Broadly the focus is on the individual job seeker’s attributes and deficits, employability and participation (e.g. getting young people into work or providing them with the skills and qualifications) rather than participation in ‘quality’ employment and wider issues. Policy does acknowledge the importance of ‘meaningful’ work. But how this is defined, and by whom, is not clear. The focus is on achieving (full-time) job outcomes and there is little recognition of the processes and importance of moving young people nearer to the labour market.

## **Policy making, implementation and participation**

This research has identified national level mechanisms, platforms and champions that have been developed to increase the engagement and participation of young people, developing their capability for voice, in government policy making. Generally young people's participation policy happens through formal channels. Theoretically these formal channels are open to all young people. However, some of the participants felt that it was not always obvious to see whether any information gathered is reflected in any strategies or policies. There are however, examples of ways in which young people can effect change in policy making. While there are mechanisms are built into programmes for feedback and evaluation and some flexibility in programmes to the needs of young people, the fundamentals of programmes stay the same because of the needs of commissioners thus hampering young people's capabilities for voice and choice.

## **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

For many of the participants the term 'social innovation' was not a term that they engaged with and they were unsure of what it meant. In terms of whether youth policy was socially innovative, some policy examples were given, as well as funding streams that seek to encourage innovation: however generally the participants felt that there was a lack of a systemic innovative approach in all government departments. Examples of social innovation cited by participants have the common thread of being concerned with empowering service users. As such, social innovation appears to be a mechanism through which engagement and a capability for voice can be developed. Innovative activity was more often cited as happening in the third sector. In the main, social innovation is seen to occur at the local. However, innovation in the third sector and more generally was thought to be stifled by the way in which services are tendered.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

The findings provide insights to the national Informational Basis of Judgement with regard to disadvantage in the labour market. The understandings of disadvantage and the policies and programmes used to address youth unemployment focus is on the individual job seeker's attributes and deficits, employability and participation in any employment rather than participation in 'quality' employment and wider issues e.g. wellbeing and satisfaction with life and the value attached to job outcomes. Policy does acknowledge the importance of 'meaningful' work. But how this is defined, and by whom, is not clear.

The findings suggest that policy tends to focus on certain dimensions of disadvantage and discard others as policies tend to be focused on particular target groups. However, the findings presented in this chapter have also highlighted that the national Informational Basis of Judgment regarding disadvantage in the labour market has broadened as a result of the economic downturn. The interview participants' narratives indicate that policymakers and those delivering policy on the ground understand that defining disadvantage can be difficult, and that blunt measures may overlook those facing complex and multiple barriers.

This chapter has shown that engagement and co-productive activity is an important part of the asset based approach that has increasingly informed the development of Scottish Government

policy. Generally the way in which young people can realise their capability for voice in the development and delivery of government policy is through formal channels. There are also mechanisms built into programmes for feedback and evaluation, and some flexibility in programmes towards the needs of young people, although the extent to which service users can negotiate the content of a programme is limited. Theoretically these formal channels are open to all young people; however, this chapter has highlighted reservations amongst key stakeholders as to whether the views of young people influence the overall direction of policy, and whether the views of those most disadvantaged are always heard because of barriers in the way that young people's voices are sought.



## Chapter 8: An Overview of the French National Youth Policies and Socio-Economic Political Context

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### Youth, a critical situation and a recent policy

It is only from the early 80s that the efforts of the State focused on the social and professional integration of young people heavily affected by the phenomena of insecurity, impoverishment and unemployment. Despite their individual aspiration to autonomy, thirty years later, the French youth is increasingly dependent on families. The French youngsters remain particularly exposed to the risk of poverty: in 2008, for 20% of them the income is below the poverty line (13 % in the general population). The government then initiated various measures aiming at supporting information, apprenticeship and professionalization for the less than 26 years, and also developing guidance and vocational training. In 2009, a Fund for youth experimentation was created with a budget of € 200 million. In 2010, two additional levers were implemented: the creation of a civic (voluntary) service and an experimental youth minimum income scheme. In 2013, with the change of government, a new policy entitled "Priority to Youth" aims to reform public policy for youth. It focuses on four areas: accessing social rights; empowering young people and securing their life course (training, housing, health, etc.); fighting against inequalities and discrimination; encouraging youth participation in the public debate.

### Disadvantaged youth: a double exclusion

Disadvantaged youngsters are excluded from the wider community enjoying a so-called "normal" standard of living but also from the smaller community of the supported poor. Before the age of 18, minors confronted to intense family or social difficulties are taken in charge through the Child Welfare. At the age of 25, the poorest are eligible to the minimum income scheme. But no general caring obligation is raised for the society between these two time lines. Thus, up to 24 years, the youngster's social rights are attached to his family, not to him as an individual. Between these two limits, we find a "left behind age class".

### Deprived of a fundamental right: the right to education

The rate of early school leaving without qualification is a key indicator of persistent inequality factors: *"13 % of young people [leaving school] without training without qualification every year and this figure does not move now since last 10-15 years"* (National Observatory of Poverty and Social Exclusion). As shown by all scientific studies, educational inequalities largely reflect social inequalities. If some dropouts succeed to "bounce", for most of them the lack of degree results in a chaotic social and professional integration covered by the principles of a meritocratic system: *"It is as if there was no inequality at the outset. (...) It is in an illusion of equality of opportunity for all with respect to the system while this is so precisely a great, great, illusion"* (Expert interview).

## **Stroked by the crisis**

The economic downturn has increased both the youth's vulnerability and its position on the political agenda. Vulnerability factors have developed facing the crisis. So that the unemployment rate for young boys became higher than girls, while it has never been the case. French youth is also fragmented by geographical origin at different scales. The economic context creates or reinforces territorial disparities but at the same time has also increased the concern and efforts in public policies.

## **And not constituting a specific target of social action**

If the difficulties of youth access to employment have increased, their permanence questions. Since the 70s, the failure of public policy to fulfill youth employment, including for the less skilled, suggests the existence of structural mechanisms. In France, young people do not constitute a specific target for social benefits. As mentioned by the National Institute for Youth and Popular Education (INJEP) "*civil majority is not social majority*". Hence, it is when young people leave their families that the risk of falling into poverty can be extremely important. For young people who have no family or whose family cannot provide assistance, the lack of targeted social policies expand the risk of social exclusion is huge.

## **A national scope for youth policy**

In France, Policies fighting youth inequality and poverty is far from being an integrated one. The multiplicity of policy instruments, geographical scales and levels of governance produces a great complexity. But what appears central is that the two main levers – school and employment – remain centralized policies while youth policy is based on many programs and actions, controlled and financed by various ministries. These programs are plural in their content and embodiment, centralized or decentralized, purely state-driven or enrolled in a conventional framework involving government agencies, local authorities or associations. This multiplicity of policy instruments, territorial scales and levels of intervention produces a complex system whose scarce visibility constitutes a factor explaining non take-up of rights and services. For what concerns the ongoing program "*Priority to Youth*", some references are made to the situation of youth in Europe but no direct link is made in the official documents with the European policies. In fact, the term "Europe" is used 3 times in this 80 pages programming document and not to refer to any existing European program for youth. A large partnership is proposed with public agencies, local communities, regional authorities, NGOs, etc. but significantly Europe is never mentioned as one of these partners.

## **A scarce voice given to young people in the policymaking process**

No institutionalized or formal forms of participation or voice are given to youngsters in education and employment policies. Youngsters and youth associations are not enjoying a positive role over the agenda setting, the decision making process or the implementation chain. The main barriers are related to a lack of status given to youngsters and a political/firm decision-making system owned by adults. The existing forms of representation appear lean and powerless. The only capability for voice given to youngsters can be identified only at the local level in the case managing relation and is highly dependent on the street level bureaucrats' discretion.

## **Chapter 9: Danish Report on the Socio-Economic Political Context**

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### **Introduction**

The political context in Denmark is characterized by a tension between national and local political level. As the Danish state structure is highly decentralized, it became necessary to analyze reform activities in central and local government. In addition, it was necessary to take other changes into account – primarily what is labeled the transition from a welfare state to a competitive state. This transition emphasizes a change in policies related to the selected area of investigation (Svendborg Municipality and a social housing area which former was on the so called “Ghetto-list” – due to rates of unemployment , ethnic minorities and criminality) implying that policies and interventions are multidimensional, ranging education, training, employment, day care institutions and lived experiences.

In order to identify relevant policies the approach used was two-dimensional – top-down and button-up approach – a logic that highly influenced the methodological design.

### **Methods**

The methods applied in the case are interrelated in a research design where both a qualitative content analysis (QCA) on a purposive sample of policy documents where conducted. This was done upon a inductive sampled corpus of policies. This induction was done as a result of *semi-structured life-world interviews* with experts of the field. 11 interviews were conducted. Two of these were group interviews. The interviews followed an interview guide prepared in advance.

### **Policy making and implementation**

The analysis states that interventions from the state as well as interventions thought as marked-directed have not solved the problems of the particularly disadvantaged social housing estate. Voluntary work has been helpful to a certain extent, but civil society is overburdened with social tasks which used to be part of the state or municipality policy.

### **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

Therefore, social innovation has been seen as a proper remedy. The report states that social innovation is a contested terrain, and at this early stage of analysis local dimensions of social innovation still have to be evidenced. Obviously, different forms of social innovation are established at a local level, because local institutions have to execute national and local policy with constrained resources. However, examples of social innovation have been identified – e.g. local day care institutions have to develop solutions of heavy social problems by using innovative ideas in the cooperation between professionals (teachers, social pedagogues, family therapists, etc.) and between professionals and parents/children.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

The most important conclusion seen from a comparative perspective is that no exclusive youth policy is defined. Youth policy in Denmark is a mixtum compositum of various policy fields (education, preventive work (e.g. against criminality), empowerment, and developing local employment in the municipality of Svendborg. Further, the informational basis for judgment of justice (IBJJ) is to some extent construed, and forms of social innovation are identified. A belief system that is predominant produced within discourse both form and is formed by the existing social practices, and that produces and reproduces social structures. The discourse that produces and reproduces this heuristic model is furthermore strengthened by a mutual interdependency between the construction of the belief in this relationship in discourse and the actual national statistics.

## Chapter 10: Youth Unemployment and Public Policies in Italy

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This chapter identifies and evaluates relevant existing employment youth policies in relation to disadvantage; more specifically, it analyses which actors are responsible for the development and delivery of employment policy, what is the relationship between the state and various actors, what are the forms of social innovation and its role in the delivery and development of existing and new youth employment policies.

### Methods

The qualitative methodology adopted has two components: (a) Literature review and collection of available national data; (b) Semi-directive interviews. The interviewees have been conducted with prominent stakeholders engaged in the definition of public policies tackling problematic issues related to youth unemployment.

### National definitions

Inequalities are examined with respect to three dimensions relevant for youth well-being: education, employment and participation. The aim is to explore inequalities in terms of opportunities, capabilities and outcomes, adopting the multidimensional definition of disadvantage and corrosive disadvantage.

The stakeholders interviewed highlighted that the most disadvantaged amongst young generations are the long-term unemployed young people (the 15 to 24 years old ones) with low educational levels. Disadvantage is mainly related to educational processes, e.g. mismatch between the skill demand and supply, early school leaving and the diffused absence of familial support. In addition, the economic crisis brought about by an increase in the number of young people who are excluded from the labour market and unable to be agents of processes of empowerment.

On the labour market, youth (15-24 years old) unemployment rate has increased almost consistently from 2007 to 2013 and the gap between youth and overall unemployment rate has widened. The Italian labour market situation is also greatly unequal across regions, with the South showing the highest overall unemployment rates as well as youth unemployment. In addition, the number of youth Neither in Employment nor Education nor Training (NEETs) is particularly high in Italy: 21.4% at the end of 2012. Breaking down the age group of young people into 15-19 year olds and 20-24 year olds, the length of duration of unemployment is higher amongst the older group of youth, suggesting that the risk of long-term and permanent unemployment increases along the transition from school to work.

## **Policies, instruments and levels of intervention**

The stakeholders involved in the research agreed on the lack of well-targeted policies and sufficient financial resources dedicated to contrast youth unemployment; existing policies often appear to overlap and are scarcely integrated at the national and regional level; the young unemployed are not sufficiently involved in policy making and their participation is generally not incentivized.

The main policies available to young people, in the Italian labour market, have been analysed: Law 196/1997 introduced apprenticeship contracts (*apprendistato*) for young people (16-24 years old) in all work sectors; the Biagi reform (2003) introduced flexibility in the labour market enhancing various forms of atypical contracts; *Decreto Lavoro* (Law 76/2013) provided incentives in order to employ young workers (18-29 years old). The *Youth Guarantee* (2014-2020) is beginning a long-term plan to tackle youth unemployment in Italy with the aim to favor fixed term contracts, auto-entrepreneurship (e.g. start-ups) and to contrast social exclusion in the Southern Italian regions.

A lack of tertiary education enrollment and attainment (University), compared to other European countries, has also been highlighted. Moreover, resources for employment support services are significantly lower compared to other European countries. A general lack of youth participation in influencing public policies aimed at tackling unemployment has been outlined. If disadvantage is identified but not institutionally addressed, several actors intervene as substitutes of the State: for a general impoverishment of families and the third sector organizations, commonly young unemployed people turn to the black-market in order to find a job.

## **Policy making and implementation**

The stakeholders outlined general limits in the development, delivery and implementation of current public policies tackling poverty and inequalities. Young unemployed appeared not sufficiently involved in policy implementation processes and they rarely turn to existing local employment support services available for delivering re-qualification programs to favor the entry in the work market or municipalities in order to apply for the *Social Card*.

The policies tackling inequalities involve national and local levels of interventions. With regards to the implementation of the *Decreto Lavoro*, the Ministry of Labour has normative, monitoring and controlling responsibilities at the national level. The resources available for tackling poverty at the local level appeared hugely inadequate. However, the *Social Card* is gradually becoming a subsidy to unemployment. A minimum income, networks of support for labour market entrance and during the transitions between two works are needed.

## **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

A general absence of social innovative policies oriented to disadvantage youth in Italy has been outlined. The involved stakeholders quoted a number of good practices in reference to innovative services that aim to tackle social needs and to contrast youth unemployment, especially at the local level.

All the interviewees gave a very broad definition of social innovation. The existing policies are generally perceived as not socially innovative. All the interviewees outlined a general need to support the introduction and implementation of innovative ideas. Third sector organizations are especially prone to realize new bottom-up ideas. For example, *Legacoopsociali* quoted several examples of social innovation policies (e.g. start-up projects).

# Chapter 11: Socio-Economic Political Context: The Netherlands

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## Introduction

This report focuses on the Dutch national socio-economic and political context. Despite the relatively late birth of the Dutch welfare state, social provisions and welfare arrangements have eventually been established to a high degree, so as to keep social inequality -largely regarded a non-desirable development in the Netherlands- at a low level. Nowadays 'disadvantage' as such is not explicitly addressed in Dutch social policies, and related issues are predominantly framed in terms of 'risk' or 'vulnerability'. Consequentially, this report on disadvantage affecting young people draws up reviewing a collection of policy areas related to youth vulnerability. Although this foremost appears to be associated with school dropout, links are also regularly drawn between school dropout (and risk of), youth unemployment, and criminality.

## Methods

Because of the rather extensive literature on Dutch welfare policies, this report primarily draws upon a detailed document analysis (n=115), mainly concentrating on the period 2009-2014. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both scientific and field experts (n=17) to double-check findings and address pending questions. Because it proved particularly difficult to detect 'the voice' of young people in the literature and policy documents that were analysed, this was the most central topic of the interviews.

## National definitions

This section focuses on how social problems relating to youth are conceptualised by national governmental agencies in the Netherlands and addressed through statistical data produced at the national level. It therefore draws on content analysis of policy documents meant to design special measures for certain sections of youth, defined as in need of intervention, and on statistical data produced by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and accessible to a large audience via the web. Risk-based conceptualisations such as 'risk youth' and 'vulnerable youth' are outstanding in policy literature. The relatively high unemployment rate among youth of extra-European descent is argued to only partially be explainable by differences in level of education and work experience, and to hence also be attributable to discrimination on the Dutch labour market, which especially affects non-western young men as they are often associated with nuisance, unreliability, and threat.

## Policies, instruments and levels of intervention

Youth policy is not one, single policy area in the Netherlands. Rather, youth issues fall into the remit of a few ministries. Although the overall coordinating responsibility for youth policy in the Netherlands lies with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), its actual implementation is rather fragmented and occurs at multiple levels: municipalities are



responsible for issues related to education and employment, whereas targeted services for young people in need of special care are at present coordinated at the provincial level (soon to be transferred to the municipal level). The Dutch government predominantly 'translated' the Lisbon Agenda (2000-2010) into objectives to drastically reduce the number of school dropouts. The need for this has sometimes been explained by pointing at the negative effects which early school leaving may have for young people themselves; such as feelings of distress and unworthiness. Often, however, emphasis is predominantly put on the disadvantageous consequences for society at large. In this regard links are usually drawn between school dropout and social problems such as nuisance, criminal activities, and/or extra costs caused by 'those who no longer participate in society'.

### **Policy making, implementation and participation**

We could not find much evidence of the voice of young people in the policy areas under investigation: prevention and/or reduction of school drop-out. Policy-making seems to draw upon interdepartmental consultation primarily, also on research findings and on policy monitoring. Youth councils are consulted on policy matters, but rather not explicitly on social policy. However, most of the measures regarding prevention and/or reduction of school dropout are implemented at the local level. Therefore it is not highly surprising that there is no aggregate data regarding actual space for participation in the Netherlands at large. Overall there is no policy talk on aspirations in the Netherlands. In measures related to social services such as the special departments for youth, the aspirations of young people are officially explored but there is no evidence that the capability to aspire is actually addressed. On the contrary, it seems that the recipients are expected to display capacity of self-discipline and motivation for programmes that are designed elsewhere. In certain care organisations operating in the larger cities, there is a focus on hidden talents that are to be discovered, especially those that could prove useful to facilitate fitting in the labour market and ensuring financial autonomy. Beyond such a utilitarian purpose, discovering hidden talents may also contribute to fulfil one's aspiration to find one's way in society and achieve a desirable social status, but this is scarcely an explicit goal of talent development projects.

### **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

The term 'social innovation' is not frequently employed in the Netherlands, beyond a general commitment to increase policy efficiency and diminish costs. Therefore section 7 focuses on-going 'changes' in youth policy. Besides, since most respondents in our research highlighted a discrepancy between participation among 'highly-educated' young people and participation of the 'least-educated' young people, they were asked about suggestions to develop youth participation, which are reflected in section 7.2.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

Though not a commonly discussed issue in the Netherlands, there are contrasted takes on the voice of young people in general and disadvantaged youth in particular. In policy talk regarding enhancing participation, different types of participation may be discerned, i.e. economic (being in paid labour and financially autonomous); social (displaying involvement to one's surroundings); and political (having opportunities to influence decision making processes). In Dutch policy reports, the type of participation which is referred to when discussing

participation issues is usually not specifically indicated. However, the meaning given to 'participation' and 'active citizenship' has changed over the last decades: it is not anymore about political involvement, in a say in policies, but all about employment, social participation. Consequently, measures aimed at enhancing participation among disadvantaged youth scarcely endeavour to enhance the voice of disadvantaged youth. So far, it seems that a step towards a multidimensional understanding of promoting participation among disadvantaged groups still has to be taken in the Netherlands. Yet there are worthwhile foundations for this within the social sector, thanks to a long commitment to reducing social inequality in the Netherlands.

## Chapter 12: Belgian Report on the Socio-Economic Political Context

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### Introduction

This chapter briefly sketches the specificity of the Belgian situation with regard to policy towards youth, which unavoidably brings different interrelated policy domains into the picture: youth policy, education policy, poverty policy, welfare policy, labour market policy etc.

### Methods

In this section, we focus on the methodological part of the research. We combined two complementary research techniques. These methods included semi-structured interviews on the one hand and document analysis on the other hand. The research data were analysed in an interpretative way by means of a “qualitative content analysis”.

### National definitions

In this chapter, we give a concise overview of the evolution of poverty risk for young people and we explore the dimensions and definitions, used to capture ‘disadvantaged youth’. Considering the evolution of poverty in Belgium between 2005 and 2009, we can say that the poverty risk of children and young people has significantly increased and seems to be situated in urban contexts in the first place. In Flanders, disadvantaged youth is often indicated by the term “socially vulnerable youth”. In accordance with this definition, social vulnerability is described in the Flemish youth policy plan (2010-2014) as “the risk to be repetitively exposed to negative situations (control, sanctions) when dealing with social institutions and profit less from the positive provisions”. This description emphasizes a multidimensional perspective on disadvantage, as it integrates a variety of aspects, referred to as “risk factors” for social vulnerability. The SES of the parents (profession, work status, financial resources, educational level as interlinked factors) and the ethnic-cultural background of young people (often in combination with religion) are often identified as the main predictors of social exclusion in various domains of social life, including leisure, health, law, labour and education. Additionally, living in a single-parent family is found to augment the risk. Another important factor for being excluded is young people's own educational attainment. The Flemish poverty monitor (Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering, 2013) indicates both work and education/training as protective factors against poverty. As such, a strong focus in policy discourse lies on “NEETS” and those young people passing under the institutional radar, not taking up employment, education or training.

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<sup>4</sup> We want to thank Prof. Dr. Hilde Van Keer and Dr. Griet Roets for their valuable comments on this report.

## **Policies, instruments and levels of intervention**

In this part of the report, we describe the main policy strategies and instruments to address disadvantage. Combating poverty and social exclusion is stated as a top priority for the Flemish Government. In order to combat poverty in a coordinated manner, the Flemish Government has a coordinating minister and a coordination committee of poverty reduction, who are entitled to pursue a horizontal poverty policy, which is strengthened through the establishment of a knowledge platform with stakeholders. The Flemish Government draws up a continuously adjusted Flemish Action Plan on Poverty Reduction every five years.

The seven basic assumptions of the plan in realizing this mission are: 1) an empowering policy, 2) a participative policy, 3) a preventive policy, 4) an inclusive policy, 5) an integrated policy, 6) a persistent policy, and 7) an evaluated and evolving policy. The objectives of the Flemish Action Plan on Poverty Reduction are formulated according to ten social constitutional rights. In this chapter, we investigate the intersection of poverty reduction policy and youth policy through the diverse policy domains (reflected by ten constitutional rights). We explicitly address the participation opportunities, which are translated in a strategic goal in the Flemish Youth Policy Plan (2010-2014) for Flemish young people.

## **Policy making, implementation and participation**

In this chapter, we explore more in depth the definition of poverty in Flanders. Although the Flemish approach combines aspects of both a cultural and a materialistic definition of poverty (as reflected in the policy strategies, f.e. the basic act on Flemish social protection, study grants, social housing), the definition of poverty largely shifted to non-materialistic, cultural and psychosocial aspects. We describe the parallel with the definition of social vulnerability, which is also largely based on cultural and psychological aspects, rather than on structural characteristics. In this Flemish approach of poverty and social vulnerability, the role of government intervention and the welfare sector is to help to bridge this cultural gap, so that people in poverty can find connection with general services (f.e. education, health care...) of society. We briefly light up policy strategies and practices concerning disadvantaged youth in three domains: (1) youth work, (2) employment and (3) youth care, which are translations of the cultural/psychosocial interpretation of poverty/disadvantage.

## **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

This section explores the concept 'social innovation' in a Flemish context. As a knowledge economy, Flanders wants to endorse the smart, inclusive and sustainable growth objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and innovation is considered a crucial factor in this. In this chapter, we explore the diversity of definitions and interpretations of the concept social innovation. Summarized, we perceive a tension between two approaches concerning social innovation. On the one hand, there is a top down approach, based on an economical logic and implemented systematically. On the other hand, a bottom up approach is mentioned, inspired by a participative process and reflecting the perspective of the youngsters.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

In this last chapter, we return to one of the central concepts of the Capabilities Approach and focus, in particular, on the Informational Basis of the Judgements in Justice with regard to disadvantaged youth. We will resume Flanders' broadly accepted foundations for the construction of disadvantaged youth and the resulting content and purposes of policies and practices. To conclude, we formulate some recommendations. With regard to one of our central findings of the report, in particular the focus on integration and participation strategies on the domain of employment and education, we suggest, 1) to explore the meaning of these domains and of (non)participation to these institutions from the perspective of the youngsters, 2) to explore this meaning in relation to other integration strategies and broader social, political and economic issues, 3) to explicitly link recognition policies (enhancing the involvement and participation through empowering support) to redistribution policies (more structural factors). Concerning social innovation, we suggest that social innovation should go beyond an organisational top down perspective, and should be inspired by a participative process with youngsters that reflects their perspective and the diversity and plurality in our society.

# Chapter 13: The Socio-Economic Political Context of the Young in Spain

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## **Introduction**

In times of crisis, Spain is undergoing rapid changes in its socio-economic political context, and the youth is especially affected by this. Therefore, as much as it is complex, it is crucial to analyse this context and what the prospects are for the disadvantaged youth. That is what this report intends to do.

## **Methods**

The methodology is based on literature review and collection of available data and interviews to more than 20 key informants –policy makers, experts, youth professionals, youth representatives– in Madrid and Valencia about the disadvantages of the youth, youth policies, policy making and innovation.

## **National definitions**

A new view on youth disadvantage or risk of social exclusion –the term preferred in Spain– has emerged during the crisis. As compared to the classical view identifying the risk of social exclusion with a collusion of factors such as early school dropout, low income or breakdown of family and social network, this new view considers the youth as a whole as a disadvantaged collective, due to the differential effects of the crisis on them, limiting their possibilities of fulfilling their personal and professional aspirations. A key aspect of both views is the precarious position of the youth in the labour market. They are suffering high rates of unemployment and worsening working conditions (flexibility, low salaries, temporary jobs...). Those in high risk of social exclusion have less alternatives and options to avoid its impacts.

## **Policies, instruments and levels of intervention**

Youth policies and general policies that affect youth, instead of helping remediate these situations, have contributed to worsen them. Both programmes targeting the most excluded sections of the youth and activities oriented to ‘normalised’ youth have been reduced or eliminated. In addition, legal changes have limited the access of the young to health and education and weakened their labour rights. The few progressive measures taken are related with entrepreneurship, but there are questions about their effectiveness and their impact in terms of equality, as well as about the fact that they are a way of putting on the shoulders of the individual a social problem the state is responsible to solve. In all these programmes, the views and aspirations of the young are rarely taken into account –with the exception of a few municipal level initiatives– and programmes are instead designed in offices far from the everyday reality of the young.

## **Policy making, implementation and participation**

This has its reflection in the policy making process, which is very technocratic and does not allow for the involvement of local level actors having a clear perspective of the situation of the youth and experience on how to work with them. This affects municipal youth councillors, youth professionals and third sector organisations. To what concerns the participation of the youth, there are institutionalised interlocution mechanisms between the youth councils and the administration. However, many youth councils are being shut down or have become underfunded, which adds to their pre-existing limited representation and mobilisation capacity.

## **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

Social innovation is still a concept with blurred boundaries in Spain. Its trajectory and uses by different actors have favoured a top-down, individualised and market oriented perspective, neglecting collective social innovations. There is very little support from the administration to youth-related social innovation, and most of the existing initiatives come from the third sector or exceptional local administrations. As a whole, youth policies are not innovative but rather regressive, eliminating or downgrading programmes that effectively reduced inequalities and disadvantages.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The findings of this research provide insights to the national informational basis of judgement in justice (IBJJ). The current IBJJ does neither capture the new view on the risk of social exclusion of the youth, nor identifies adequately those most deprived. A more multidimensional IBJJ is thus needed.

Despite the rigidity of the IBJJ, social and political attention has geared towards the current situation of the youth. Nevertheless this attention has remained at a rhetorical level and youth policies have been rather regressive. The government has applied severe cuts and withdrawn measures for the youth, especially for those in high risk of social exclusion, increasing inequalities within the youth and between the young and older generations. The exception is the measures for entrepreneurship promotion, but being entrepreneurship the sole focus is problematic and illustrates the single-dimensional look of decision makers.

The reason of the lack of priority of the young is related to their negligible participation in the policy making process, limited to the interlocution through the youth councils, which on the top of that are being downgraded by the government. The picture is even bleaker for the young in high risk social exclusion, whose limited capacity of voice reduces their possibilities of defending their rights and making their situation noticeable.

Given this outlook, it is important to bear in mind that political decision making is not that much determined by the IBJJ used, but rather by partisan interests and political calculations, which need therefore to be taken into account when analysing youth policies.

# Chapter 14: The Socio-Economic Political Context for Addressing Youth Employment in Romania

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## Introduction

This report aims to analyse youth policies in Romania. It provides a multi-level analysis of actual policy making in relation to disadvantaged youth. Young people represent a highly important social group in nowadays Romania, not only because of their number / share in total population but because even they represent the future for Romania, they are one of the most excluded groups. The actual high rate of social exclusion of young people (especially from the labor market, but also from adequate / correlated education and other significant spheres of public life such as involvement in making decisions related to their future) it's partly a result of inadequate / neglected policies in the last 24 years focusing youth.

## Methods

The research process comprised three levels: *a)* Literature review at national level; *b)* Official public policy documents envisaging young people integration; *c)* Based on a semi-structured guide interview were taken 20 interviews (including over the phone) with various stakeholders having relevant experience to the in focus topics.

## National definitions

Although the share of young population in Romania is above the EU27 average of 25.1% (2012), the decrease in the last 10 years is more pronounced in Romania. EUROSTAT projections show it expects a sharp decline by 2060 the share of young people in the total population. Romania is among the countries heavily affected by this trend. According to the „National Strategy for Youth Policy 2014-2020” in Romania, the categories of disadvantaged young people affected by social exclusion are: young homeless people, young people that are leaving public residential care institutions, young people from territorially compact poor communities, young Roma people, teens with at least one parent working abroad, young people living with HIV / AIDS, victims of labor exploitation with sexual purposes, youngsters discriminated on grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, young people with disabilities.

## Policies, instruments and levels of intervention

"National Development Plan 2007-2013" proposed by the Government establishes the issue of integration of young people into the labor market as one of the priorities for action, as a result of rising unemployment rates. Government documents set the labor market integration of young people in close correlation with the ability of the education system to provide relevant skills and qualifications tailored to the market needs. Consecutively, the National Youth Strategy 2014-2020 addresses the situation of youth and policies for youth 14-35 years, as stipulated by Youth Law. Outside the National Development Plan, the Romanian legislation



does not elaborate, however, a stable framework regarding labor market integration of young people in the sense that there is no specific law in this area.

### **Policy making, implementation and participation**

From an institutional perspective and in close connection with the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the main institutional actors are MECTS, MMFPS, MECMA and MADR. Through subordinate structures at regional, county and local level they implement programs aimed at both young people in general and those in rural areas. MECTS is responsible for implementing the law of education as well as sports and leisure activities for young people. MMFPS support youth employment in particular through ANOFM, organizing job fairs and providing grants to employers. MECMA through AIPPIMM support youth entrepreneurship in particular by the START program launched in 2011 to develop entrepreneurial skills among young people and facilitating their access to finance. Eligible youth must be aged up to 35 years and to establish for the first time a company with limited liability. MADR finances through APDRP a program named "Installation of young farmers" for farmers of up to 40 years. At the end of 2013, there has been a debate on youth involvement in decision making at high level, debate organized and coordinated by youth delegates of Romania to the United Nations. In this debate has presented a new initiative for youth involvement in decision-making processes: Program Youth Delegate to the UN. In short, the program has five main objectives: 1) Direct involvement of young people in international youth policy development; 2) Sustainable development of society and democracy by facilitating youth participation at all levels of decision; 3) Promoting youth policies, mechanisms for youth policy coordination among young at a national level and the importance of youth programs as part of socio-economic; 4) Familiarize young people in Romania with global development issues and opportunities of involvement they have in this regard; 5) Support activities and initiatives of the youth of Romania.

### **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

Social innovation takes several forms adapted to the specific of particular public institutions. For example, the National Agency of Public Finances (ANFP) aims social innovation in 3 directions: administration between systemic constraints and development of the human factor; social media - a mechanism to facilitate dialogue with citizens; partnership - the formula for successful performance institutions for citizens. Theoretically, in the last 4-5 years the legislative and institutional framework in Romania feature / support implementation of the greater social innovation. But implementation of innovative ideas and initiatives is difficult sometimes because of lack of experience of the implementers, and the lack of support and know-how, assistance and continuous monitoring. Competitions for grants that help to implement ideas and new solutions to social problems of young people (and others) are not always fair play. There are people specialized in writing projects ("soldiers of fortune") which charge a fee of 10-25% of the total value of the project if it is funded. Unfortunately in many cases the winning institution / organization have no real capacity of implementation and execution, or to assure sustainability, and finally positive effects on target groups are negligible.

## Discussion and conclusion

The fieldwork and policy/ documents reviewing process drove to some significant, particular findings (conclusions) regarding social exclusion / disadvantage the Romanian youngsters are facing nowadays. The actual high rate of social exclusion of young people (especially from the labour market, but also from other significant spheres of public life such as involvement in making decisions related to their future) it's not only the result of the actual deep economic crisis started in 2008 and /or a consequence of our "communist totalitarian heritage" but also to inadequate policies (or neglected policies) in the last 24 years envisaging youngsters. Social exclusion of young people is a cumulative result of some structural/ systemic factors the adversely affected this social group. The main factors (and consecutively areas of urgent intervention) are: a) *Increasing public social expenditures*, mainly in the area of education / labour market / jobs creation; b) *Focus of support policies on disadvantaged individuals living in deprived areas*, such as rural area, small towns and the deprived neighbourhoods of big cities. Reducing youngsters' dependency by the social support / welfare through active employment (and consecutively citizenship) is a key factor not only for avoiding dependency trap but for a flourishing independent way of life which could be a strong example to follow for the next generations; c) *Diminishing the gap / lack of correlation between educational system and what the labour market is looking for.*

## **Chapter 15: Youth Poverty, Youth Inequality, and Youth Policy in Austria. Experts' Perception of Youth Poverty and Inequality – Active Labour Market Policies and Youth Work – Opportunities of Participation – Social Innovation**

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In this chapter, we describe and analyse policies related to inequality and poverty regarding young people in Austria. Based on expert interviews and a document analysis, we first examine the various definitions of the notion “disadvantaged youth”. In the next step, we look at interventions and measures (against youth inequality) taken in different policy fields, and identify areas of non-intervention. We then analyse young people’s opportunities to participate in policy making, in the implementation of youth policy, and in political decisions on a larger scale. In the course of our analysis we also raise the question in which way the concept of social innovation is used in the development of youth policy.

Besides the description of inequality ascriptive criteria such as migrant background and gender, the discussion on disadvantaged youth is shifting more and more to the causes of inequality – and here especially to the education system. Since PISA it has become increasingly evident that the Austrian education system is highly selective: The school enforces social inequality between different family backgrounds. It reinforces these differences by allocating students to different types of schools/tracks and qualification levels. Which qualification is obtained highly predetermines the choice of vocation, the opportunities available on the apprenticeship and job market, and the future level of income. The focus on the system of education resulted in a new ways of describing inequality, and early school leavers and youth in a NEET situation became more visible in research but as well in politics.

Regarding measures and interventions, we found that there is a broad range of measures aimed at improving the situation of disadvantaged youth. Most of them are designed to help with particular problems regarding school, apprenticeships, or jobs, and are not anti-poverty measures, except financial support for poor families. This also holds true when it comes to youth work. Although in principle youth work offers leisure time facilities for all youngsters, in actuality they function as a supportive service for disadvantaged youth. Another finding is that the Austrian school system maintains and reproduces inequalities as it is highly selective and does not respond to the educational needs of disadvantaged youngsters. This has an impact on the amount of early school leavers and youngsters in a NEET situation.

The focus on interventions is concerning the vocational training of young people as making an apprenticeship is considered to be the best way to avoid future unemployment or poverty. This training system, however, has negative aspects, too: There are not enough apprenticeship places and their amount is diminishing continually. In addition, the quality of the training is very low in some companies, so that youngsters have difficulties to pass the final apprenticeship examination; half of the apprentices are dissatisfied with their training and the dropout rate is high.

The fact that there is no co-ordinated anti-poverty youth policy is reflected in the policy making process. The procedures in the field of financial, educational, and vocational measures follow different rationales. Federalism, and the Austrian system of Social Partnership, which includes representative organisations of employees and employers, yield widely spread influence and power. This makes decision making difficult and opaque. This multi-level governance system places high demands on co-operation, a fact that has come to be understood by an increasing number of actors; albeit young people themselves are barely included in decision-making processes.

There is the National Youth Council and some advisory boards, which include young people; however these institutions are more or less toothless. Rather, they are to be seen as “trainings for (democratic) participation” than participation in and for itself. Moreover, they do not reach disadvantaged young people. Two other measures are more useful for youngsters: firstly, the system of youth work councils in companies, and secondly, the lowering of the voting age, which is accompanied by large-scale information campaigns and makes young people a more valuable demographic for politicians.

All in all, there are many measures taken to improve the situation of disadvantaged youth. Most of them, especially in the field of vocational training, work in a paternalistic way: the programmes are mandatory and the possibility to choose between these programmes or to participate in decision making is limited. Often, they do not get sufficient information on their rights. Most of these programmes are oriented towards employability rather than the development of capabilities. Youngsters perceive these programmes as stigmatising. As concerns politics, disadvantaged youth is usually not engaged; at least youth work tries to make political topics attractive to them, and offer them the opportunity to make the experience that their actions can result in real-world changes.

# Chapter 16: The Socio-Economic Political Context for Addressing Youth Unemployment in Switzerland

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## Introduction

This report focuses on youth policies in Switzerland. It provides a multi-focal analysis of current policy making in relation to disadvantaged youth. Due to Swiss federalism, it considers both the federal orientations in this realm and their implementation at a regional level, in relation with existing support network and local issues concerning youngsters.

## Methods

The methodology entails (1) a literature review that integrates legislation, official reports, and parliamentary discussions in order to track the policy-making process; and (2) a discourse analysis of expert interviews, focused on the identification of main developments, issues and trends, as well as the construction of youth as a target group of policies.

## National definitions

*Disadvantage* is far from being a “common” word in the vocabulary of policy-makers, especially when it comes to youth. Nevertheless, debates and initiatives have emerged during the last decades to tackle the NEETs phenomena and provide individualized measures for bettering “employability” and transitions to work. The Swiss transition regime is usually described as “employment centered” and characterized by a highly stratified educational system and the predominance of (dual) vocational training. Employers decide autonomously if they provide apprenticeships and whom they provide apprenticeships, which foster competition between pupils coming from socially highly hierarchized school tiers. This leads to a negative group stereotype about the low “employability” of school leavers from the lower tiers, who are more likely to meet the NEETs categorization and enter social assistance, where a third of all recipients are below 18 years (75.000, resp. 29.9%, OFS 2013). This is especially true for youngsters of the economically less well-off families. Switzerland’s transition regime has, like other continental welfare states, a familialist character in comparison to “universalist” transition regimes. The institutional specificities of the Swiss educational and welfare system thus generate specific groups of disadvantaged: young persons with migration background (three tier school system and selection processes at the entry into working life), young persons with single parents (due to the relatively strong male-breadwinner orientation) and those growing up in “poor” families.

## Policies, instruments and levels of intervention

Swiss federal authorities carry out few national measures which explicitly tackle inequalities and disadvantage among youth. As many interviewees confirmed, competencies towards children and young people are essentially left to cantons and municipalities, the federal state playing a subsidiary role (i.e. supporting specific initiatives). The federal level governs only VET

and upper secondary education, the unemployment insurance and some minimal regulations for youth and children rights (fixed in constitutional articles). As the cantons are also responsible for the implementation of these policies, even these more “standardized” approaches show a high degree of regional variations in the line of executive federalism. As a common characteristic (both at the federal and the cantonal level), youth policies are usually not conceived as including fields like education, employment and training, even though they have a considerable impact on the living conditions and capabilities of youngsters.

### **Policy making, implementation and participation**

Swiss multi-level governance system involves a broad range of actors and gives birth to various institutional arrangements, according to the characteristics of the regional context (political majorities, geographical location, economic networks, etc.). Focusing on the case of the canton of Vaud, our analysis highlights the various measures targeted at “youth in difficulty” as well as the actors involved. The implementation of the FORJAD scheme, for example, is based on a “social investment” approach to “youngsters in difficulty”, in which considerable resources are devolved to the labor market integration of young persons. A multitude of local, third-sector organizations are subcontracted by the state in order to provide integration services. The governance of provider organizations is on the one hand accompanied by a focus on performance indicators, mainly the rate of persons who could find an apprenticeship after participation, and on the other hand, seems to involve a lot of negotiation and exchange between providers and purchasers. As youngsters’ needs and aspirations are barely audible in the realm of “hard” policies, unless they meet the requirement of “realism”, youth participation appears to be circumscribed in the official democratic organs (youth councils and commissions) and in the design of projects, which refer to a narrow conception of youth policy (open youth work, youth forums, etc).

### **Social innovation and the role of social innovation in the delivery and development of existing and new youth policy**

Social innovation is an implicit topic in Swiss policy-making. As described above, due to the separation of competencies about youth related issues both at the horizontal and vertical level, the national state can influence policies concerning youth only in a sectorial and limited manner. We identified two ideal-types of social innovation. Social innovation can happen in a top-down way, insofar it is used as a policy coordination tool at the federal level. In this case, social innovation is used by central state actors to foster local experimentation (at the cantonal or communal level), which is then disseminated across different levels and spheres. Social innovation may also happen in a bottom-up manner. In these cases, local actors develop innovative policies, identify local needs and flexibly respond to these needs. Whether or not these policies are later on institutionalized and up-scaled, these processes often entail a process, in which a social problem is re-framed from a new perspective.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

Despite the fact that our report could discern certain critical policy shifts, leading to a better consideration of young persons in some policy domains, institutional specificities lead to slow processes of political reforms - this can amongst others be observed in the case of the new law on youth policies. The weak thematization of disadvantage and inequalities in youth policies is also an outcome of a fragmented political system with responsibilities at different

administrative levels and throughout different policy fields. The relatively late implementation of Swiss-wide reporting on education (2010) or on youth bears witness of this orientation. Nevertheless, as administrative units (cantons) are relatively small, and third-sector organisations traditionally have a strong stake in providing services, much social innovation exists on the local level. The same applies to the “vertical” and “horizontal” integration of different youth policy fields. Despite the fact that certain political actors are promoting a resolutely transversal youth policy, such a conception could not be implemented until now, leading to the fact that different policy fields relevant for youth work with quite divergent informational bases of judgements in justice. This is a central point of divergence, for instance with France (“*priorité jeunesse*”) covering issues from citizenship participation to labour market integration, or the much older but similarly transversal German law on Child and Youth Services (KJHG), being an own book integrated in federal social laws and covering issues from foster-care to open youth work.

Regarding the definitions of “disadvantage”, and the informational basis of youth-related policies, institutional fragmentation has a significant impact too. While actors from youth encouragement activities usually focus on young persons as future citizens, highlighting issues of civic participation, participation in public life and extra-curricular, free-time activities, actors from social assistance and labour market actors usually highlight young people’s role as the workforce of the future or as a cost factor. This coincides with an interpretation of young people as a cost factor for the community (in the case of young people without educational certificates) or in terms of a lack of skills required in the economy (when it comes to VET).