

Youth - actor of social change

In 2001 the Directorate of Youth and Sports of the Council of Europe organised a symposium titled 'Youth – Actor of Social Change'. Since then, the call for a shift from seeing young people as objects, victims or a problem within social change towards addressing them as subjects, actors or a resource for society has become more pronounced; yet, without having major impacts in policy and research or in society at large. In fact, the position of young men and women in society is still characterised by the assumption that following institutionalised trajectories leads to standard biographies in which adulthood is equivalent with a full citizenship status.

- The perspective results from an understanding of social integration as structure

transitional life situations and strategies:

- Under the heading of we ask on the one hand for the problems and challenges that young people encounter in their processes of social integration; on the other for the decisions they take and the coping strategies they develop?
- Under the heading of we ask what competencies they need for coping with challenges and problems; where and how they do acquire them; and how formal,

In recent decades such a view has become increasingly challenged; especially as policy and research struggle in understanding and addressing phenomena like structural unemployment, ed-

erarchical gender roles appropriately.

Consequently, transitions in the life course – and especially the transition towards adulthood – have lost their linearity and become much more uncertain and insecure. They have become diver-

creates the attention for how individuals actively manage, what decisions they take and how they cope with risks and demands.

This is even more crucial as social inequalities according to class and education, gender

bour markets and the shift towards activation in welfare policies are turned into disadvantage that has to be compensated by the individuals; either by adaptation or by reducing occupational and biographical aspirations.

With regard to young people's role in social change the project aims at integrating European youth research in a double perspective:

non-formal and informal learning are inter-related in this regard?

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is structured by three thematic working groups where these questions are applied to three sub-themes: young parenthood, school-to-work-transitions of ethnic minority youth, young

of these working groups are:

- ing research in order to identify both key issues and research gaps and to develop comparative knowledge.
- Thematic workshops with practitioners and

materialises in the following outcomes:

- port,
- a higher education course module on youth as actor of social change,
- a networking map regarding youth research and policy across Europe,
- a collection of good practice policies,
- the Internet Portal www.up2youth.org, and
- the regular -newsletter.

The period of young parenthood is crucial for reworking given understandings of family, of gendered work division, of individual life planning. Focusing on young parents as actors of social change, on the analytical level is concerned with the following questions:

- perience and manage changed gender roles and which impact do social and ethnic backgrounds have in this regard? Which subjective reasons do young men and women have to delay or even renounce to parenthood, and which problems do they face in realising their family plans?
- : where do young parents acquire competencies for parenting, can they transfer informal competencies to their work sphere, and

how do they negotiate parental obligations with their work responsibilities?

- : how do young men and women negotiate their becoming and being parents, especially when both partners work and/or are still/again in education? How do they adjust their independent life styles to their new roles, how do they reconcile family with regional or even international mobility?
- On the level, is interested in:
- comparing the policies addressing young parent-

people's subjective needs;

into a viable work-life balance policy;

ca, Italy:

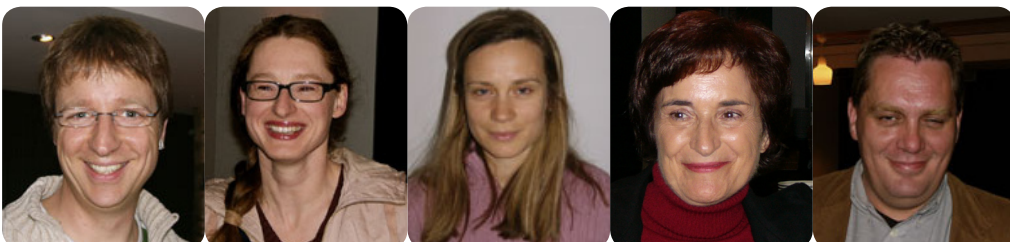
New Europe Centre for Regional Studies, Plov-



Department of Social Pedagogy, University of Technology of Dresden, Germany:

gy, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia:

Department of Social Psychology,
School of Education, Queen's



European policy developments

European Youth Pact

In 2005 the European Council adopted the European Youth Pact to increase the synergies between different policy sectors concerned with the social integration of young people: <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11081.htm>

Inclusion strategies for young people with fewer opportunities ...

... was the title of a seminar organised jointly by DG Employment and Social Affairs and DG Education and Culture

one step towards the European Youth Pact. The seminar centred around the presentation of the Thematic Study on

Follow up of White Paper on Youth

The Commission has released a communication on participation and information in the youth sector: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/doc/comm/comm_youth200706_en.pdf

Finnish EU presidency

The objectives of the Finnish EU presidency with regard to youth focus on the modernisation of higher education and vocational training, youth participation and information and the role of youth research. It can be found under

tion_youth_and_culture/

A new generation of EU programmes ...

for education and training, culture, youth and the audiovisual sector in

Information is available at http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/

Toolkit on Youth Participation

released a best value Toolkit for Youth <http://urbact.eu/youngcitizensproject>

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe has launched the European Youth Campaign for diversity, human rights and participation: <http://alldifferent-allegal.info/>

ing countries shows that most of these questions are fairly well covered. Nevertheless, some blind spots

hood, including insights in the subjective motives of young people to decide pro or con having children. Only few studies are available which systematically interlink research on family, youth, gender, ethnicity and labour market.

Roughly speaking, parenthood is a public discourse all over Europe, but it is predominated by problems of fertility rates and demographic decline, while young parenthood as a biographically meaningful status passage is neglected.

There are different kinds of obstacles for young people to overcome when entering parenthood. In Germany it is the educational system with too few

and parenting; in Slovenia a tradition-based con-

es the decision making process of young men and women and might interfere with post-modern demands of life; in Italy parenthood is corresponding with the prolonged transition to adulthood and

enthood is a topic for young adults but is not dealt

parenthood is dominated by the public discourse on teenage pregnancy. High levels of part-time work, a rather good infrastructure and an emphasis on

to be most appropriate in the Netherlands, where the three-children-family is becoming a social model besides the none and 2-children family. Trust in the state as problem-solving agency is high,

jection against any intervention of the state in family issues. This scepticism might root in the memory of previous fascist family policies, comparable to former state-socialist countries where the family is still conceived as a haven to escape state control. At the same time, the former state-socialist countries suffer lack of social security. The project's

and regional differences as well as overarching trends in the research countries.

The probably the most widespread concept associated with 'Youth – Actor of Social Change' is participation inasmuch as it is understood and also promoted as the active part

ample by the European Commission's White Pa-

gests that participation occurs much less than this should be the case in democratic societies. This is due to the changes in young people's life conditions which are connected to the de-standardisation of transitions towards adulthood, especially the contradiction between autonomy and prolonged dependency, and which have heavily undermined their citizenship status; especially in the

decrease seems also related to the major political crisis that currently affects all modern societies. Apart from this the limitations and restrictions of current participation programmes to 'soft' policy areas such as youth work and non-formal learning reveal the ambivalence that participation is promoted in a period in which social rights and

of self-responsibility.

In terms the following questions will be dealt with in detail:

- : what forms of participation do

tent is participation related to other processes of social integration such as the relation between public services and the needs and autonomy of young people?

- : Are lacking competencies of young people used to justify non-participation or is training offered to young people with regard

training based on formal, non-formal or informal learning as well as peer learning?

- : What policy objectives and forms of engagement correspond to young people's subjec-

count the question of young people life-styles? Do these objectives and forms consider the di-

lar, young migrants and young women? Do they provide spaces and resources for youth cultural symbolic production?

In terms of policy the thematic working group will aim at assessing what ways of promoting youth

policies are integrated in a participatory perspective thereby promoting civic participation of young people in Europe, especially of the so-called disadvantaged young people.

was concerned with the understanding and aspects of participation to be dealt with primarily as well as with the kind of data and studies to be included in the analysis. With regard to the understanding of participation there was a consensus that the focus

cal community, associations but also in schools or universities. However, there was also a consensus that it is highly ideological what is publicly referred to and accepted as participation; while actions by which young people try to raise attention are not always acknowledged and stigmatised as deviant

7th Framework Programme for Research

The latest developments concerning FP 7 can be followed at <http://cordis.europa.eu>

a provisional version of „Topic 8 - Socio-economic sciences and the Humanities“ is available at ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/ec_fp7_amended_en.pdf.

Forthcoming events

Children and young people in everyday environment.

November 2006, Rennes, France.
colloque-enfantsjeunes@uhb.fr

Youth, Globalization and Migration – Local Diversity in Transition

Research Network 'Youth & Generation' in cooperation with Section of youth, Slovak Sociological Society by Slovak Academy of Sciences, Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, 19th-22th
<http://www.valt.helsinki.fi>

Conference on Emerging Adulthood

February 15-16, 2007, Tucson, Arizona; <http://www.ssea.org>

International Symposium „State - Children - Family“

http://www.time-politics.com/html/workshop_and_conference.html

Work with Young People: Advancing Theory, Policy And Practice

www.dmu.ac.uk/wwyp

New Publications

Cater, Suzanne & Coleman, Lester

youth-knowledge.net/system/galleries/download/research_reports/2005_so-

. Aldershot:

. Aldershot: Ashgate

University of Trnava: CE-

Special issue of Papers – Revista

Catalan, edited by the Department of Sociology of the Autonomous Univer-

. Paris: OECD



Social change in European societies is closely related to processes of mobility and migration although this refers to a

new streams of immigrant workers into account: some in the second and third generation, immigrants from former colonies, refugees and asylum seekers as well as ethnic minorities with a

Europe or the Travellers in Ireland. Research on ethnic minority and migrant youth for a long time has been dominated by a problem perspective relating to school and transition failure in terms

tween two cultures", young women retained in traditional gender roles or involvement in criminal activities. In the 1990s a growing body of research showed the emergence of new types of

ing to an ethnic minority began to be looked at as a source of particular biographical and social

sity. At the same time, research on transitions to work showed thc1ohl7 7ohc1p38h76s768hv768h7677h768h7c18hf78k7638h7c17e7s106

ic integration and socio-cultural of ethnic minority youth and the formal, non-for-takes place and how they contribute to young people's social integration.

On the level, the working group deals with the conditions and possibilities of individual agency of ethnic minority youth in different transition regimes in the interplay between education systems, labour markets and modes of integra-

cussions in the working group centered around the development of a common understanding of

its subject questions arose on how to make sure

across the countries involved can be dealt with. The working group therefore takes a broad ap-

grant youth to include groups such as: young immigrants, children of immigrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers or people from former colonies and people with trans-national identities. We

later generations, who can be distinguished from

try or region, through their colour of skin, family

of these groups is that they face negative ascrip-

majority and in many countries their achievements in accessing the labour market are lower compared to majority or autochthonous groups of young people. At a theoretical analytical level the

challenge is about combining questions of ethnicity and youth understanding. The social integration of "Western" young people points to late modern aspects of individualisation, and therefore young people have to learn to function "culturally" as agents in late modern western world. This aspect of social integration as individual

nority youth cultural background, where social integration may follow the logic of social categorial integration - where social categories refer to fam-

aspect of the challenge of social and cultural integration points to the clash between categorial social integration and late modern individual social integration. Individualisation processes represent a double challenge for ethnic minority youth.

tion in ordinary youth life, education and the labour market, they are also immersed in changing references and values and have therefore dif-

ised world. That often creates contradictions with their cultural background, especially when they have to depend on family support. In fact, young people from ethnic minorities develop collective and youth cultural forms of coping that are often antagonistic to mainstream society as well as to their family cultures. While many young people are able to manage these challenges, others react by dropping out from training schemes and develop subcultures which often are stuck in dis-integrated arenas. In this situation they are not

also frustrations in their ambitions for becoming recognised in every day life and the integrative arenas of school and work.

Institute for Social Sciences, Lisbon, Portugal:
Helsinki University, Finland:

rest, Romania:



AREA Valencia, Spain:



Flashlights

"The power to decide – the right to welfare"

In 2005 the Swedish Government has adopted a new youth policy bill aimed at reforming national and local youth policy in a cross-sectoral way. The title 'the power to decide – the right to welfare' is programmatic inasmuch as genuine access to welfare and incre-

decisions affecting their lives are the

can be downloaded from http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/48839:jsesionid=as0l3sun_Wz6.

"Our work. Our Place. Our Future"

City Council is running a programme within the European Community's

programme for urban regeneration. The focus of the project is to improve living conditions for all local people by engaging the skills, enthusiasm and qualities of local young people. The majority of projects funded under the programme is run by or dedicated to young people which is unique in European urban regeneration funds. The steering committee of the programme consists of a majority of young people.

that they are the future and as such, they should be the source of solutions to local issues. Too often, they are seen as the cause of problems, but they are often the victims of systemic failure that goes back across decades."

<http://www.bristolsouthurban2.co.uk/>

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