

Decentralization as a process of developing and strengthening youth policy at national and local levels

The European Youth Forum welcomes the positive breakthroughs regarding youth policy and youth sector developments in Turkey. Made up of more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, which are federations of youth organisations in themselves, the European Youth Forum's mission is to empower young people to actively participate in the shaping of Europe and the society in which they live.

One of the main criteria to measure this achievement is to see how well developed the youth sector is in any given country, how strong the youth organisations are and how much their opinion is fed into the policy development and implementation processes at the national, regional and local levels.

Supporting cooperation processes among youth organisations on national levels, which potentially lead to the establishment of national youth platforms, the European Youth Forum also encourages and works closely with the International Youth NGOs to better involve its branches not only in the creation of national youth councils but actively participate in the design and participation of national youth policy.

The study visits of the European Youth Forum to Turkey, as well as the constant flow of inputs, information and updates have contributed to the consolidation of YNGOs and youth policy implementation at the national level. Nevertheless, the lack of an integrated national policy and intergovernmental coordination on youth issues, principles, quality and context of services which are supposed to be delivered by the local administrations are matters of further needed intensive work and change in Turkey.

The diversity of models and processes of governmental youth structures as well as young people organizing themselves and creating representation systems at national and local levels, their close cooperation, work and functioning is a great CHALLENGE when it comes to be imported by a certain country. It is a challenge in itself since it would have to eventually leave the model pattern and be translated into reality. This translation into reality should go smoothly at national and local level simultaneously.

Different country cases that European Youth Forum has followed as well as the work of our member organizations - National Youth Councils, have been encouraged and based their developments on several instruments: the 'golden' 11 indicators of a (national) Youth Policy, the 'Revised Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life'. The *11 indicators of a youth policy* is a guiding tool for government officials in the youth field, and also serves as a lobbying tool for youth NGOs advocating for a more proactive youth policy.

In this respective case Turkey will have to live up to its responsibilities of devising a coherent youth policy by developing and implementing national youth policy action plans followed or preceded by local ones(depends on the process taken). - explain

With no fixed prioritization order from my side now; these are some tasks of the TO DO list of the governmental authorities on national and local levels, list that will have to be reflected in the national and local youth policy:

- promotion of non-formal education,
- establishment of a separate budget line to support youth NGOs activities with a view to promoting the development of the youth NGO sector,
- development of youth legislation that corresponds to the different dimensions of youth policy,
- development of a training policy and promoting active trainers in the youth field,
- development of a youth information strategy aimed at informing young people of opportunities offered and about what the government is doing in the youth field,
- youth research that collates data on young people, upon which a youth policy should be based,
- bring innovative methods, reflecting an effort to be creative in approaching traditional areas of government responsibility,
- inter-ministerial co-operation, thereby recognising that youth policy is cross-sectoral in nature and needs to involve different areas of government intervention,
- mechanisms of active involvement of the non-governmental youth sector and the National Youth Councils in the decision-making process in order to ensure comprehensive and long-term youth participation in the area of youth policy.

Even more, promotion of a multi-level policy, recognising that a coherent youth policy must be implemented at all different levels of government with a strategy for active participation of young people and non-governmental youth organisations.

In order to assure the consultation and partnership between the government on one side and young people and youth organisations on the other, a structure should be established (such as a consultative committee or advisory council) which is consulted and given the mandate to influence government on issues regarding young people. Not only should such a structure exist at the national level, it should also be developed at all different levels of government administration.

There are cases when the national level experiences of successful consultative committees serve as examples to the local levels initiatives; YET, in the same time, there are many cases when the local successful youth committees/councils/etc name hinges national ones.

- *Turkey Local Agenda 21 Program has achieved outstanding steps towards building youth capacity at local level through the establishment of local youth centers and local youth councils and maintaining a dynamic networking among them*

And last but not least, **YOUNG PEOPLE ARE A RESOURCE**. The potential young people have of shaping their own future is tremendous, and they constitute an indispensable resource for the countries where they live. Yet, in order for young people to realise their potential to the benefit of their communities and country, their own national governments as well as the local communities, international institutions involved in these countries need to take note of their needs and rights.

Youth policy is a constant round up research, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation process. Fostering this process at national and local levels in a concomitant, inter-enriching approach, would not only promote but bring to life the concept of youth policy as an integrated, cross-sectoral, multi-level element of overall policy development in Turkey.

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