

Guideline Questions

for the shadow report
on the implementation of the common objectives
on information and participation

The Implementation Process

Contact with governments

- How involved was the NYC in the consultation process of the White Paper?

The CJE was invited by the INJUVE in August of 2002 to respond to the first questionnaires about the situation of the participation and the information in Spain. CJE distributed this questionnaire among their organizations and collected their answers. Since it was August and our MOs were in vacation during that month we did not get as many answers as expected and INJUVE, told us that our contribution had not been as useful as they first thought.

After the Commission elaborated the joint report, we held several meetings to decide the most suitable form to organize this co-operation process, being the proposal of the CJE the creation of a joint working group composed by representatives of the CJE and the Injuve.

Nevertheless, we finally did not take any decision on how to organize this process. We continued to maintain periodical meetings on the process of the OMC and the implementation of these objectives (among other subjects), but they were informative meetings, and not decision-making.

The CJE was invited to participate in the writing of the final report to the Commission, in the same status as the regional governments.

- Has the government/NYC cooperation increased because of the process; did you meet to discuss other issues?

We have meeting very often to discuss a wide range of issues. The OMC was just one more issue to be informed, but not something co-developed.

Our co-operation did not increase in any case because of the OMC.

- Did the NYC first contact the government or did the government first contact the NYC? Was this in a formal or informal context?

For the questionnaires, it was INJUVE contacting us. However, after that, it has always been us asking meetings to get information on their work.

Understanding of the process

- Note the difference between the government perspective and the NYC perspective on information

We understood this process at first as a co-managed method. We thought they planned to develop certain policies as results of the OMC. Their perspective was that OMC settled the basis on some themes, but we have already reached those basics. We presume that their position on our participation in this process was that we could give our contribution on those areas where they needed some information, but the process was their responsibility and therefore it was under their control.

- What do you understand under 'information'?
- Member States have chosen those guidelines, because they have already been connected

The new government entered in this process when the objectives had been already approved and they faced the challenge of implementing them. This government has developed a new perspective of youth policy through the "Youth Plan", which is a holistic approach to youth policy, very close to a youth Mainstreaming initiative.

This Plan consists of a package of measures, which are aimed to be the basis for youth policies in the different regions of the country. These measures have not been implemented yet.

Although the OMC was mentioned in the preface of this Plan, as one more step of youth policy, we cannot see a clear connection between this Plan and the OMC process. Both initiatives follow the same path and share objectives, but we cannot see the relation cause-effect between the Plan and the OMC.

- Did the government have a strategy or policy on youth information, before the White Paper? Since the White Paper?

No. Information was not included in none of the previous strategies for your policy.

Information is included in the Youth Plan, but these measures have not been implemented yet.

Information is a regional competence, and therefore, the national government can only co-ordinate the work of the different bodies working on this field.

There is a working group on youth information, which is the co-ordinating body for youth info, composed by professionals on youth information from different regions and areas. Right now, they are developing some tools, such as a thesaurus.

Information

Measuring implementation

- Please compare the Common Objectives agreed by the Member States with the actions taken in your country/at the European level to implement them:
 - Did the governments develop new tools?

The working group on youth information is developing some tools such as a thesaurus.

The INJUVE changed its webpage in order to improve the quality of the information they provide to young people, and the same did some regional governments. But we have no data to say exactly how this was improved.

Again, we do not see the connexion between these changes and the OMC.

- Is there concrete funding for youth information?

It is regional funding. We do not have the info on how many regions provide specific funding for youth information, but generally, there is no funding for that. Any activity dealing with information is covered with funding for youth activities in general.

- It may be a local competence, but national governments should assume the responsibilities that they have agreed on guidelines. There should be a basic strategy at the national level to ensure that everybody has information on youth issues.

As we mentioned above there is no overall strategy for information. It remains a regional policy co-ordinated by national government through this working group.

- If they took initiative, did governments refer to the Guidelines and Common Objectives?

Except for the preface of the "Youth Plan" we have not seen any references to

the OMC nor the WP in any policy or initiative undertaken.

- Did the White Paper prevent budget cuts or a reduction in local youth information initiatives?

We do not think that information on WP and OMC has reached the local level, meaning that it did not have nor a positive nor a negative impact.

- Is the government collecting data on how many people are attending youth information centers.

Not at the national level. Maybe regional government are doing so, but we do not have info on that. At the national level, there is very few information on the number of youth centres and on their activities.

- Did they fund/organise infrastructures for coordinating youth information centers?

We do not have information on any activities of this type.

Results

- Do you know if things have changed over the past 2 years? If yes, is it because of the White paper? What do you think are the obstacles for the implementation? Do you have ideas on how these obstacles could have been overcome? (N.B. this is very important.)

As we already explained, things have slightly changed. Internet is being more and more used at the local level, and this is improving the access to youth information services. We have also perceived an improvement of the quality of information provided.

However, we cannot see any link between this and the objectives. There is no mention to the OMC in any document of this field and the improvement has no relation with the European level. We believe that this would have happened in any case, even without the OMC.

First obstacle that we identify is decentralisation of competences. Even though this brings closer the information services to the citizenship, there is no coordination at the national level, and even for some cases, there is no information on what they are doing at the regional and local level.

Second obstacle, lack of financial resources to implement the objectives. There has been no especial funding to fulfil the requirements of the OMC, nor from the Commission nor from the national governments. Therefore, regional administrations cannot improve their services without additional resources

(even though they have not implemented neither those objectives that did not imply any additional expenses)

Probably this would have been different if, as we suggested several times, OMC included some evaluation indicators, so that Governments would have been pressed to do so.

Annex of the Council Resolution adopted 25 November 2005

Measures for achieving the common objectives for information for young people
In the light of the actual circumstances and the priorities of each Member State, the following non-exhaustive list of lines of action may be pursued:

INFORMATION

1. Access for young people to information services

- a) promote, at the appropriate levels, the development in Member States of comprehensive, coherent and coordinated information services which take account of the specific needs of young people and are as youth friendly and economically accessible as possible;
- b) facilitate equal access of all young people to information, while avoiding any form of discrimination or exclusion based on economic, social, gender, cultural or geographical grounds;
- c) encourage the development of national, regional and local youth portals linked to the European Youth Portal.

2. Quality information

- a) monitor the quality of youth information, taking existing instruments into account (e.g. good practices and the ERYICA's European Youth Information Charter);
- b) improve the education and training of those working in the field of youth information;
- c) improve the link between information and counselling, with the aim of encouraging a learning and capacity-building process among young people on how to obtain, select and evaluate information in order to become informed users of information;
- d) promote the dissemination of specific information for young people through all information channels, particularly those most frequently used by young people, such as the Internet, mobile phones, video films and cinema.

3. Participation by young people in information

- a) promote the participation of youth organisations and people working in the area of youth information at European, national, regional and local level in the preparation and implementation of youth information strategies;

- b) promote involvement by young people in the preparation of understandable, user-friendly, targeted information products, so as to improve the quality of the information and access for all young people;
- c) encourage greater involvement by young people in the dissemination of information and advice (particularly in youth information centres, schools, youth organisations and the media), in order to help all young people to access information.

Participation

Process of implementation

- What kinds of structures/methodologies were used for the implementation (e.g. committees, etc...)?

As explained before, we do not see any clear implementation of the OMC. For this report, we are using the “Youth Plan” as the main initiative from the government in the field of youth policies, but there is no clear link between this Plan and the OMC.

The “Youth Plan” process was very innovating even in the way of designing it. There was a consultative process, which lasted almost one year. CJE was fully involved in the process and closely co-operated with the INJUVE in the designing of all measures, as full members of the committee created within the INJUVE for this Plan.

Apart from that, there was an open on line consultation for young people, a publicity campaign and a “Youth Forum” (three days seminar) gathering 200 young people.

- Who was involved?

CJE, out MOs, non-organised youth through on line consultation and working groups, regional governments, several ministries, and other governmental decision making bodies.

- Were regions and local authorities involved in the process?

Yes. They were also consulted.

- Were any bodies established to specify in more detail the common objectives?

No. There was no mention to the OMC in the process.

Tools/measures

- Please compare the Common Objectives agreed by the Member States with the actions taken in your country/at the European level:
 - Were any concrete measures taken?
 - e.g. a new funding system;
 - new programmes;
 - stronger support to youth organizations?

We consider the consultation process for the youth plan as an important step forward in the structured dialogue with youth, as proposed in the OMC. It means also that we take an active part in the designing of youth policies and that have strong support.

Last year, for the first time, CJE took part in the selection process for funding youth organisations.

Nevertheless, we cannot say the same for the regional governments, some of which have interfered in the work of their regional youth councils (in some cases even legally suspending them) in the period from the objectives approval and now.

- How can youth organisations best adapt to these changes?

For us, the key was that our MOs should know about the OMC and the objectives and use this information towards their regional administration. We distributed lots of information on this and even organised an explanatory seminar in 2004 where we explained again the WP and OMC process and debate possible ideas to implement the objectives. Very few people attended the seminar and this information was not considered relevant for MOs.

Results

- Do you know if things have changed over the past 2 years? If yes, is it because of the White paper? What do you think are the obstacles for the implementation? Do you have ideas on how these obstacles could have been overcome? (N.B. this is very important.)

Again, we don't think that changes are due to OMC process. At the national level the situation has improved significantly, but there has been no link with the OMC.

The OMC, from our point of view has been perceived as extra work to do for the European level, but not something that we had to integrate in our national and regional policies.

For the situation of regional youth councils, for some of them, the situation has improved or remains the same, but for some others it is much worse. We have witnessed two cases of regional youth councils (in Spain they are ruled by regional laws) dissolved by regional governments, which is something worrying for us.

For this objective, we don't see the obstacle in funding. The main obstacle has

been, most probably, the lack of information on the objectives and the OMC process, as well as the flexibility of the objectives (they were not pressed to follow them, they were not compulsory).

Last, we would like to stress the need to distinguish which of the actions undertaken by governments are a result of the OMC and which of them simply occurred. Even though these actions may share objectives and follow the same working line, the OMC has been a very long and resource-consuming process (human, time, and economic resources) and we need to separate clearly which initiatives are due to this process and which not.

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Measures for achieving the common objectives for information for young people
In the light of the actual circumstances and the priorities of each Member State, the following non-exhaustive list of lines of action may be pursued:

PARTICIPATION

4. Participation by young people in civic life:

- d) promote the involvement of young people in participatory structures, for example NGOs, associations, voluntary work, local youth councils, and encourage the activities of youth NGOs, while respecting their independence and autonomy;
- e) encourage the development of activities, initiatives and projects intended to involve young people directly at regional and local level;
- f) publicise and show greater recognition of the outreach work done by parents, youth workers and other persons;
- g) identify more clearly the obstacles in the way of participation by specific groups and by disadvantaged young people and encourage measures and mechanisms capable of overcoming those obstacles, in particular by making allowance for their diversities and priorities (cultural or ethnic background, disabilities, socio-economic factors, gender, etc.);
- h) examine qualitative evaluation methods of participation for young people

5. Greater participation by young people in the system of representative democracy

- a) Encourage and develop, [...] at all appropriate levels, a regular, structured dialogue between the public and/or government authorities and young people and their representative structures (national, regional and local youth councils, youth organisations, the European Youth forum, etc.);
- b) ensure that such dialogue can also include young people who are not members of organisations and that their concerns are taken into account;

- c) promote and develop this dialogue, so that young people can be more involved in public life;
- d) identify more clearly and study the obstacles in the way of participation by young people in the system of representative democracy and encourage measures and mechanisms conducive to the inclusion of all young people in all their diversities (cultural or ethnic background, disabilities, gender, socio-economic factors, etc.);

6. Support various forms of learning to participate

- a) further develop and extend training for participation within formal education systems (in conjunction with the objectives approved under the open method of coordination as applied to education);
- b) encourage the development of activities in the field of non-formal and informal education that promote the active participation of young people;
- c) further develop interaction between formal, non-formal and informal education
- d) foster the development of experience of participation where young people live their lives: in particular within the family, at school, in youth organisations, at university, at other places of education or training and at work, in sporting and leisure time contexts;
- e) recognise the important role of persons working with young people and facilitating their learning to participate and develop training actions in this field;
- f) promote and increase awareness of the benefits to all of the participation of committed young people and combat prejudices against young people which prevent them from playing an effective part;
- g) analyse more carefully the phenomena which lead to the civic exclusion of certain groups and encourage approaches focused on prevention.