

SHADOW REPORT

Evaluation of the implementation of the first two common objectives: information and participation

Beforehand, CNAJEP wishes to stress its interest in and total support of the European Youth Forum's initiative. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) applied in the context of the White Paper had indeed raised many expectations among youth organisations and French associations. Today we are forced to notice that the expected dialogue with the Ministry has not taken place. This is where the OMC's limit lies, in the sense that it essentially depends on the good will of the Member States. Once again, it is important to underline that in the fragile social context, the French associative movement is experiencing a heavy crisis in terms of relationships with the State: crisis of confidence, crisis of reason which leads us to rethink our action and relations with the public sphere.

1. The implementation process

A- Contact with governments

- *How involved was the NYC in the consultation process of the White Paper?*
- *Has the government/NYC cooperation increased because of the process; did you meet to discuss other issues?*
- *Did the NYC first contact the government or did the government first contact the NYC? Was this in a formal or informal context?*

As the National Youth Council of France, CNAJEP had contributed to the elaboration of the European Commission's White Paper 'A new impetus for European youth', through position papers and hearings. This contribution was more or less regularly followed-up in the framework of the definition of its common objectives. CNAJEP has regretted a certain lack of cooperation at the national level during the answers to the questionnaires or during the process's follow-up; two essential elements came to somehow spoil this cooperation, i.e. the time and conditions favourable to the elaboration of a real reflection on the one hand, and the full transparency of the answers formulated by the French State to Europe on the other hand.

Although the implementation phase of the common objectives on participation and information has been launched for more than two years, CNAJEP can but deplore a manifest lack of dialogue and transparency between the Ministry and the associations. As far as CNAJEP knows, there has been no consultation process around the public policies implemented by the State in order to answer the Common objectives on information and participation.

During the encounters with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Associative life, the topic of the White Paper was evoked only once:

On 8th December 2004, a meeting between CNAJEP's Europe Group and a representative from the *Bureau des Echanges internationaux* - BEI (*International Exchanges Office*) - Direction for Youth, Associative life and Popular Education was organised.

The meeting aimed at taking stock of CNAJEP's European activities, and exploring how a better cooperation between BEI and CNAJEP could be born, amongst other things regarding the implementation of the Common Objectives on voluntary activities and a greater/better understanding and knowledge of youth, but above all for the evaluation of the implementation of the Common Objectives on Participation and Information. During that meeting, both parties agreed to assert that *'A constant dialogue between the Ministry and CNAJEP is essential on that topic; [and that] it would be good to have more transparency on the final reports, and more meetings during the whole evaluation process.'*

This wish has remained unfulfilled.

Finally, concerning France's final report on the evaluation of the implementation of the Common Objectives Participation and Information, CNAJEP was indeed contacted by the government. However, this consultation did not aim to discuss and bring our contributions/remarks on the public policies implemented by the State to answer the Cos, but rather to ask us in what terms, us, National Youth Council, we had been implementing activities corresponding to the COs.

Seen the context prevailing in France, we had deemed inappropriate to give any follow-up to this request while explaining our position.

As a conclusion, CNAJEP was not invited to any possible concertation on the State's public policies, the final report of France is not public, and the only appeal of the Ministry consisted in asking us to talk about our activities and not about those of the State itself. Hence the difficulty for us to mention a concertation process at all. However, it is important to remind the peculiarity of the French situation where two structures similar to a National Youth Council are coexisting: CNAJEP, non-governmental organisation founded in 1968, gathering more than 70 associations, and member of the European Youth Forum; and a second structure (CNJ) created in 1999, chaired by the Minister of Youth who elects its 200 members and facilitated by the services of the Ministry.

We are forced to acknowledge that since 2004, CNJ has occupied a more and more important place close to the government and it has even asked for membership to the Forum.

The point here is not to criticize CNJ but rather the position of the government which refuses any meeting between CNAJEP and CNJ, and all the more, excludes CNAJEP from various national actions and European events.

B- Understanding of the process

- *Note the difference between the government perspective and the NYC perspective on information.*
- *What do you understand under 'information'?*
- *Member States have chosen those guidelines, because they have already been connected*
- *Did the government have a strategy or policy on youth information, before the White Paper? Since the White Paper?*

The question of youth information is a recurrent topic at the European level; what information to what public and under which form? At the French level, there exists a network of institutional places, the 'Youth Information' Network (coordinated by the CIDJ) the action of which can hardly be assessed on the French territory. There is indeed a big diversity in those places, a lot of which often hardly targeted, badly situated, etc. The youth information policy is mainly based on employment, health, citizenship, and associations are not much represented. Besides, it is to be noted that the CIDJ's services are payable for associations?! Hence the information is not being perceived the same way at the governmental level and at the associative level. According to us, information for less privileged young people should be a priority, it should include general and well thought-out information on different topics (training, citizenship, employment, commitment, associations, etc.). The government's information policy doesn't really seem to have progressed since the publication of the White Paper, at least not significantly. It used to exist, with its defects and imperfections, notably regarding the link with the associative world, and in that sense things have not really improved.

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?*

Youth information in France gathers several structures, most of which existed before the White Paper:

- 1 national centre : CIDJ (Youth Information and Documentation Centre) in Paris
- 30 CRIJ (Youth information regional centres)
- 265 BIJ (Youth information Offices)
- 1374 PIJ (Youth information Points)
- 22 Youth information buses (itinerant service)

Each year, the French youth information network welcomes around 5 million visitors (figures of the Youth and Sports Ministry). They are open to young people but also to parents, teachers, social workers, etc. on topics like education, vocational training and professions, employment, housing, rights, health, leisure activities, etc. Being labelled by the Youth Ministry - regional and departmental youth and sports direction, the youth information structures accomplish their mission conformingly with a youth information charter.

In this way, most of these structures existed before the White Paper. In the context of the Common Objectives, the Youth Ministry implemented several actions, notably a **youth portal** (www.jeunesse.gouv.fr) created in May 2005 which gathers different information on studies, work, health, Europe, etc. Unfortunately, its update is irregular and sometimes inappropriate as regards current events (for e.g. in November 2005, during the revolts in France, no information was available on the topic). It has to be said that there exist other youth portals in France: Ville de Paris, the site of the youth rights, teenagers-justice, etc. most of these sites having been created independently from the White Paper.

Apart from that, several actions also exist such as the **Summer Jobs Operation**: each year the CIDJ and CRIJ, in collaboration with the ANPE (Employment Agency) organise the Summer Jobs days to enable young people to have access to employment offers in lots of activities' areas. Since 2004, the system has been complemented by a European strand, and employment offers from other European countries are also being proposed.

Finally, a project linked to the cyb points - youth digital spaces was to be

implemented in 2005. It was about training for employment adaptability financed by the Youth, Sports and Associative life Ministry. They were supposed to train 350 youth workers until June 2005. The trainings were to focus on workshops facilitation (creation of web pages, web sites, affiches, PAO, ...), use of free softwares, guiding young people in the creation of projects (artistic, cultural, etc.), network maintenance, the internet right (legislation and responsibility for the spaces), etc.

- *Is there concrete funding for youth information? 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.*

Although the youth information strand seems one of the government's priorities, the question of funds is more problematic. It is effectively difficult to answer that question without analysing the preliminary budget of the Youth Ministry for 2005 which was not yet available at the time of writing this report. However, it seems that a big part of the Ministry's unfrozen funds has gone to governmental plans in which youth associations are not or little involved. It is important to notice the reduction in the Ministry subventions granted to associations in 2005; which leads to the reduction of projects and to major functioning difficulties for the associative world.

Once again, in terms of information, one can talk of a will to act or of CRIJ which also play local, the problem residing in the quality of these systems and in the public they succeed in reaching.

- *If they took initiative, did governments refer to the Guidelines and Common Objectives? Did the White Paper prevent budget cuts or a reduction in local youth information initiatives?*

As far as we know, the government has not mentioned the Common objectives of the White Paper in the implementation of measures for youth information. Besides, as seen before, drastic budget cuts have taken place without taking the White Paper into account.

- *Is the government collecting data on how many people are attending youth information centres? Did they fund/organise infrastructures for coordinating youth information centres?*

(See first question)

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.)

Things do not seem to have changed radically. Of course, there are new actions (Will to act, Youth Portal, Youth Challenges, etc.) which started *a priori* around 2000-2001 and there is no doubt that the White Paper fostered the Ministry to carry these actions until the end. Nevertheless, one of the major obstacles to this process is the lack of concertation of the associative world and youth actors. In that sense, the objectives have only been half reached, some places and devices have been created but they only concern a minority of young people and not those who were most in need of them. Lots of things could have been done if the government and youth organisations had worked together for a youth policy in terms of information, but this also goes for participation and for all youth sectors. The youth situation in France is extremely harsh : poverty, unemployment, housing problems, precariousness, etc. Today the government is calling associations to try and 'fix' the broken link in the areas... but it is impossible to dress a wound for every single crisis, it is necessary to consult each other, to think of what needs to be done together and with young people. No one has the solution but together there might be a hope.

Participation

According to CNAJEP, the participation of 'young people' is perceived as the one of actors of European society and not as the one of a separate category. Concerning this, young people do not have as mere vocation to consider the questions directly affecting them but rather to deal with all the questions related to the social, economic, cultural and political functioning.

The challenge is to enable organised and non-organised individuals to express themselves differently than through a vote (representative democracy). It also is to create spaces within which an intergenerational dialogue can be established.

Participation should implement processes that can influence public policies, avoiding instrumentalisation logics and processes such as 'complaints books'.

Participation spaces are conceived as spaces for collective elaboration which favour the intergenerational (accompaniment) and the social mixity. Participation is a collective apprenticeship.

Various modes and forms of participation need to be taken into consideration (new modes, new forms).

Implementation process

- *What kinds of structures/methodologies were used for the implementation (e.g. committees, etc...)? Who was involved? Were regions and local authorities involved in the process? Were any bodies*

established to specify in more detail the common objectives?

CNAJEP has not been invited to take part in any implementation process of the Common objectives on participation. Does it mean that nothing has been done? In terms of youth participation in local/national life, it seems that the main actors concerned and contacted are youth councils. As was said at the beginning of this report, CNJ is not new and it is not the White Paper which enabled or incited its creation. Nevertheless, it was asked to propose a few measures in order to foster youth participation (see below for measures).

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?*
- *How can youth organisations best adapt to these changes?*

It is difficult to compare the common objectives and the actions implemented by the government because only a few things have been done, the government having based itself on what already existed.

Youth participation in local life

Since the beginning of the 80ies, local communities including a few youth organisations have taken the initiative to implement participation incentives for children and young people in the public decision-making. The Ministry has always supported those actions, notably from 1991, through its partnership with the National Association of Children and Youth Councils (ANACEJ, member association of CNAJEP) which gathers 450 local communities and 9 youth and popular education movements.

Since 1998 the Ministry has also implemented a National Youth Council and Departmental Youth Councils, the latter having a very variable activity according to the departments. According to the State services themselves, 1/3 function quite well, 1/3 are struggling along and the remaining third are not functioning anymore. However, it is important to stress that the functioning can vary from one council to another, and that the same goes for the representativity of their members. Hence if several councils function very well in terms of proposals and reflections, others are being strongly manipulated in their choices and decisions.

CNJ has forwarded several proposals regarding youth participation in local life such as the creation of an official network of Youth Councils, the implementation of a Charter of Youth Councils, the reinforcement of the Departmental youth councils, etc. Youth councils represent the core of the government action in matter of participation.

Seen the fact that associations have not been involved in a reflection process on youth participation by the government nor by CNJ, due to the cuts in grants and to the difficulties to meet our interlocutors at the Ministry, CNAJEP can not say more than this as regards the White Paper.

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.)*

Although it is impossible to say if things have changed for the last two years as regards participation, it is to be noted that participation of youth associations in the government's decisions has significantly decreased. Once again without negotiation nor concertation processes, things can only hardly evolve.