

European Youth Forum
Position Paper

Development of Youth Work in
South Eastern Europe
For a co-ordinated European approach

Adopted by the Executive Committee,
Ponta Delgada, Azores (Portugal), 14-15 April 2000

Introduction

The latest developments in the region, namely the war in Kosovo, has put South Eastern Europe again at the centre of attention in Europe and of the International Community. Over the 1990ies hardly any political and economic progress has been made in many parts of the region. War and nationalism have fostered undemocratic developments and the effects of the wars both in the countries involved and in the wider region have further increased the gap between the "Europe of integration" and South Eastern Europe. Young people are both victims and actors in this process.

The European Youth Forum welcomes the initiatives taken by the International Community, namely by the European Union and the Council of Europe, to strengthen the co-operation with the countries of South Eastern Europe. The establishment of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, and in particular Working Table I "Democracy and Human Rights" provide instruments to contribute to the development of civil society in the region.

Youth organisations and structures will be indispensable for the successful realisation of the objectives of the international community to foster democratic, political and economic stability and to bring the countries of South Eastern Europe closer to the "Europe of integration".

Youth Policy has practically ceased to exist in South Eastern Europe. Youth organisations are weak and often not able to respond to the needs of young people. As a heritage of a decade of conflict many youth organisations are highly politicised and split along party-political or ethnic lines. National youth structures are hardly existing or suffering the effects of polarisation in an atmosphere of unwillingness to co-operate. Civil society in many parts of the region hardly exists or is in an early stage of development. For its sustained development it needs the establishment and active work of youth organisations and National Youth Councils able to contribute to building tolerance, trust and co-operation among young people and their organisations. They should act as a school of democracy and development for the benefit of all young people.

The European Youth Forum is committed to contribute to the development of youth work in South Eastern Europe. Due to a lack of resources and capacity in South Eastern Europe, the development of youth work in many parts of the region will also need strong and long-term support from young people and their organisations from outside the region.

The European Youth Form therefore advocates for a co-ordinated European approach of youth organisations, non-governmental organisations, European and international institutions in the development of youth work in and with South Eastern Europe. Youth organisations have the potential to play a vital role in a process of reconciliation, peace building and cross-national co-operation among young people in the war-torn societies in South Eastern Europe.

The European Youth Forum advocates for a wider and inclusive regional approach, including young people and youth organisations from all countries in the region, however believes that more immediate action to take place in those countries recently hit by conflict.

THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

On the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

- WELCOMES the progress made inside the Stability Pact and the results of the Donors Conference in the end of March 2000 in Brussels, in particular the pledges made by the International Community to the work of Working Group I "Democracy and Human Rights".
- DEMANDS that the Stability Pact should allocate a generous share of the funding pledged for Working Table I for such a programme without putting too much pressure on quick delivery, given the need for long-term development of youth programmes and policies and the potentially negative and alienating effects of short-termism.
- COMMITS to continue its contribution to the Task Force for Education and Youth, namely the Working Group on Young People and endorses the achievements made so far.
- BELIEVES that a comprehensive programme for young people shall be developed in the context of the Stability Pact, in co-ordination and co-operation especially with the European Union, the Council of Europe and other international organisation, based on a strong partnership with non-governmental partners in the youth field. The programme should have a common philosophy and a common "logo" to add value and visibility to youth action in the region.

The programme should create a policy of openness and mobility in order to avoid exclusion and marginalisation of parts of the region. The Programme should contribute towards strengthening civil society. The project objectives should include one or more of the following:

- promotion of youth participation
- local capacity building
- combating racism, intolerance and ethnic nationalism
- promotion of proper legislation on youth and children
- promotion of appropriate infrastructure and public funding for young people's needs
- promotion of a healthy lifestyle

The Programme should consider connecting young people in South Eastern Europe as a relay with a high potential for the development of lasting regional co-

operation in South Eastern Europe, including NGO networking, youth workers training, youth research, information exchange, etc.

Projects supported by the programme should meet one of the following structural criteria:

- developing existing networks for/of youth and student organisations, etc.
 - creation of training facilities and resources for youth workers, social workers, civil servants, teachers, etc.
 - developing youth information and counselling systems and training for their use
 - promotion of exchanges
 - inclusion of young people into all existing European youth and cultural exchange programmes.
- UNDERLINES that the calls for financial support for projects and grant announcements by all the international organisations and institutions, as well as national governments and agencies, must be open and transparent, so as to ensure equal opportunities for all interested youth organisations, to participate in the process of co-operation in South Eastern Europe.

On the European Union

- WELCOMES the proposal of the European Commission to make South Eastern Europe a priority area for third country exchanges in the new Youth Action Programme for the year 2000-2006.
- ENCOURAGES the opening of the other European Union programmes in the field of education, vocational training and culture to young people from all countries of the regions, namely SOCRATES, TEMPUS and LEONARDO DA VINCI and CULTURE 2000.
- ENCOURAGES to support drawing up in parallel to the White Paper process in the European Union, a White Paper on Youth Policy for South Eastern Europe using a similar approach and thus connecting young people in South Eastern Europe with their peers in the European Union.
- ENCOURAGES the European Union to improve its overall co-ordination towards South Eastern Europe, especially inside the Stability Pact, in the youth and education sector by establishing one-stop-information points for young people and their organisations both in South Eastern Europe and in the European Union.
- DEMANDS that the European Union sets up a specific Youth Action Programme for South Eastern Europe¹ in order to facilitate the participation from young people from South Eastern Europe in multilateral youth activities and initiatives.

¹ Such a programme could be set up following the model of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Action Programme of the European Commission.

- DEMANDS that the member states and the European Union to adopt preferential regulations for young people and participants in exchange programmes regarding the granting, issuing and handling of visas. Member states should refrain from charging fees for the issuing of visas altogether.
- CALLS UPON the European Union to ensure that the sanctions towards the regime in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia do not negatively affect the co-operation with civil society, youth organisations and youth activities in the country.

On the Council of Europe

- WELCOMES the action plan on South Eastern Europe of the Youth and Sports Directorate and reaffirms its commitment to its successful implementation.
- SUPPORTS the initiative for a South Eastern European Youth Centre to be established as part of a strategy to build up capacity of youth leaders in the region and to act as a point of reference for training, development of youth work methodologies and networking of youth organisations on regional level.
- INVITES the Youth Directorate to facilitate the networking and contacts between youth organisations from the region and other parts of Europe as part of the Action Plan by organising a first Contact Forum during 2000, in which ideas for action can be developed.
- ENCOURAGES the further development of targeted pilot actions funded by the European Youth Foundation in South Eastern Europe, including the granting of administrative support to youth organisations. The objective of pilot projects should be to create a policy of openness and mobility in order to reduce exclusion and marginalisation in the region, and to support the participation of young people in the reconstruction of a stable civil society in South Eastern Europe. In particular, support for training and the organisation of young people are a priority.
- ENCOURAGES the further co-operation with the European Union in order to develop a coherent training programme for young people and youth leaders.
- URGES the member states of the Council of Europe to increase their support to the European Youth Foundation, with a special voluntary contribution for South Eastern Europe, thus emphasising their commitment to the priorities established in the Youth Sector.
- STRESS the importance of the implementation of the co-management and the co-decision making structures used in the Youth Sector when actions towards South Eastern Europe are taken.

On other international organisations

- CALLS UPON international organisations contributing to the Stability Pact, namely the Central European Initiative, Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to dialogue with youth organisations directly and to involve them in the development and implementation of their programmes in South Eastern Europe.

On youth organisations active South Eastern Europe

- ENCOURAGES the development of joint programmes and partnership between youth organisations in the region and the European Youth Forum and its members with the aim of increasing the capacity and sustainable development of youth organisations and initiative in South Eastern Europe.
- BELIEVES that youth organisations in South Eastern Europe should seek co-operation on regional level on a basis of mutual respect and equality, thus building up an environment of trust and understanding.
- REAFFIRMS the European Youth Forum's commitment to act as a resource for initiatives that bring youth organisations from the region together for exchange and networking, and recalls that the creation of structures can never be an end in itself for sustained development of youth work in the region.
- WELCOMES that youth organisations from outside the region are actively involved in the co-operation with youth organisations and initiatives within South Eastern Europe that is developing into long-term partnerships. These organisations have relevant experience that provides a valuable basis for expanding their work.
- BELIEVES that especially youth organisations from outside the region should more actively participate in the activities already planned and carried out in the context of the Youth Directorate and the ADACS programme of the Council of Europe.

Information on the background of this position paper and summary

Following the adoption of a resolution on the "Situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" by the Executive Committee in Potsdam (26-28 March 1999), the European Youth Forum is developing an integrated youth policy approach towards South Eastern Europe. The Executive Committee in Geneva (26-28 November 1999) discussed and contributed to working paper on young people in South Eastern Europe (document Executive 0481-99). The document was consequently used as a basis for European Youth Forum action, whereby the Youth Forum could contribute to the realisation of the three main strategic aims laid down in the document (youth dimension in the Stability Pact, opening of the new Youth Action Programme, support of the Council of Europe Youth Directorate Action Plan). After further discussion of the issues at hand the position paper was unanimously adopted by the Executive Committee of the European Youth Forum in April 2000, bringing together representatives from all member organisations.

Regional approach: The European Youth Forum advocates for a wider and inclusive regional approach, including young people and youth organisations from all countries in the region, however believes that more immediate action to take place in those countries recently hit by conflict.

Objective: The European Youth Forum argues for a coherent programme for young people in South Eastern Europe, developed in partnership by the international organisations, youth organisations and other NGOs in the region.