The Participation of Civil Society Youth Organisations in EU Youth Politics

Double-Degree Master in "European Governance"

MASARYK UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Universiteit Utrecht

Supervisor: Mr. Dr. Albertine Veldman

Student Name: Christoph Sebald

Date of Submission: 06.07.2015

Type: Final thesis

Second Supervisor: PhDr. Petr Kaniok, Ph.D.

Student No.: 4115708

Contact: crsebald@gmx.de

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

CEU = Council of the European Union	EYW = European Youth Week
CJEU = Court of Justice of the European Union	INGYO = International Non-Governmental Youth Org.
CoE = Council of Europe	MEP = Member of the European Parliament
Commission = European Commission	MFF = Multiannual Financial Framework
CS(Y)O = Civil Society (Youth) Organisation	MLG = Multi-level Governance
DG = Directorate General	MS = Member States
DG EAC = Commission DG Education and Culture	NWG = National Working Group
EEC = European Economic Community	NYC = National Youth Council
EES = European Employment Strategy	OLP = Ordinary Legislative Procedure
EP = European Parliament	OMC = Open Method of Coordination
ESC = European Steering Committee	SD = Structured Dialogue
ESF = European Social Fund	TEU = Treaty on European Union
EU = European Union	TFEU = Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
EUYC = European Union Youth Conference	
EYE = European Youth Event	YFJ = European Youth Forum
	YWP = Youth Working Party

1. Setting the Scene: Introduction and Research Question

Collective self-determination as a philosophical idea is elementary for democracy as we know it today. ***Participatory mechanisms*** that *link the people with the locus of decision-making on common concerns* translate this idea into practice (Friedrich 2011:2, 28; Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:9). For good reasons, the participation of young citizens in EU politics demands scientific attention. As this introduction shows, their underrepresentation in electoral democracy reaches worrying levels and correlates with policies that go to the detriment of the young.

For instance, the participation rate of young people in the elections to the European Parliament (EP) is significantly lower than the participation rate of any other age bracket (Eurostat 2014:10). This is, however, not confined to the European level. Youth absenteeism in elections is a widespread phenomenon across the MS (LoYV 2014:6). It entails particular threats for the legitimacy of a democratic polity. First, absenteeism of the young today may translate into their absenteeism in later life, which leads to ever more decreasing turnout rates. Second, the failure of the young to participate implies the danger of producing policies that are biased against the young (LoYV 2014:22). The latter concern is substantiated by: 1) a low and declining membership of young people in political parties, 2) the underrepresentation of young people in public offices, 3) a comparatively small age cohort of 0-29 year olds due to demographic change, which quite naturally leads to a declining weight of young people in electoral democracies (Eurostat 2015:19ff.; LoYV 2014:11-13, 46). Put differently, a declining political participation of young people can disincentivise elected politicians to consider their interests. The result may be a vicious circle of decreasing influence over and a declining participation of young people in public politics (Shephard and Patrikios 2013:753).

Young people find themselves marginalised not only in political but also in social-economic life. Young workers (15-24 years old) today are twice as likely as older workers to have non-standard employment contracts and they are particularly often in temporary employment. This in turn makes young people vulnerable to job loss in times of economic downturn and contributed to a steep decline of the employment rate of the young since 2008 (Eurofound 2013:8f., 19).

While the economic downturn in conjunction with general trends on the labour market already disproportionately hit the young, public policy responses to the crisis often amplified this bias. For example, the public expenditure in areas particularly relevant for young people[1] was slashed in almost every EU MS (YFJ 2014b:8) and policy responses to the crisis sometimes clearly discriminated against the young[2] (Sloam 2013:837). All this reinforced a disillusionment with traditional electoral politics and the frustration with their social, economic and political marginalisation made many young people engage in both peaceful and violent protest (Williamson 2014:9f.).

Summarising, it can be reasoned that the eminent risk of young people increasingly disengaging from electoral processes justifies researching their participation in democratic life. Furthermore, there are good arguments for concentrating investigations onto the European level.

Kohler-Koch and Rittberger observe a "governance turn" in EU studies since the late 1980's, coinciding with the adoption of the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht (2006:32). These Treaties consolidated and accelerated European integration, thereby penetrating the core of national sovereignty and further limiting the possibilities of democratic self-determination (Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:18). Conferring competences onto the EU level empowers transnational actors often at the expense of national parliaments. Consequently, scientists and politicians alike increasingly voiced their concerns about the democratic quality of a nascent EU polity (Follesdal and Hix 2006:534f.).

On top of that, the EU is characterised by a structure that makes the design of well-functioning democratic mechanisms particularly challenging. It has been described as a multi-level polity that leads to a fragmentation of formerly centralised authority across levels (MLG 1) and goes along with a dispersion of authority at its fringes, inter alia, by letting non-state actors participate in sector specific governance settings (MLG2)[3] (Hooghe and Marks 2001:8-

---

[1] This includes for instance: education, health, families, children, unemployment and social protection.

[2] This includes for instance: reduced minimum wage, reinforced conditionality and means-testing in unemployment benefits for young people or increased study fees for university (Sloam 2013:837; YFJ 2014b:10f.).

[3] On the one hand, the EU is still built around a MLG I structure (A limited number of multi-task jurisdictions with mutually exclusive territorial boundaries on a limited number of jurisdictional levels in a quasi-permanent system), which means a federal polity with public multi-task authorities (e.g. national or regional governments, the Commission). On the other hand, the EU saw a rise of MLG II settings (A high number of task-specific, territorially overlapping jurisdictions on many levels in a flexible system), which means that non-government

11). Due to its geographic scope and rather abstract policies, citizens may find it difficult to connect with the EU. Blurring the "frontiers of authority" also implies weakening the responsibility and accountability chains of European decision-makers. This constitutes additional challenges to participative mechanisms.

Concluding, it can be observed that critics often argue that European integration led to 1) a complex multi-level polity that implies a fragmentation of power and less visible responsibility chains, 2) a shift of competence to the EU level, often relocating power from directly elected national parliaments to a still relatively weak EP and various executive actors (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006:33; Moravcsik 2002:604f.). Mindful of the alleged democratic deficit of the EU, the thesis is confined to researching participation at EU level. This seems all the more justified, since there is a vibrant scientific debate surrounding it.

In the course of the "governance turn", scientists did not only start to perceive their object of study differently but they also put forward a whole string of normative considerations. One stream of literature is especially occupied with the question of how to buttress democracy in the Union. These contributions normally have in common that governance is defined in contrast to government. While government stands for hierarchical decision-making of public actors, governance tends to emphasis the co-production of norms through public and non-state actors in a non-hierarchical way (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006:28f.).

Complementing hierarchical forms of decision-making with horizontal and cooperative governance arrangements bears the notion of adding to the effectiveness and efficiency of decision-making (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006:30f.). The basic idea is that by participating in decisions of concern to them, civil society contributes its practical experience, thereby informing decision-making and enhancing its quality (Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:21). Consequently, scholars argued that opening up decision-making processes to private actors benefits the democratic legitimacy of the Union (Friedrich 2011:14).

A very positive connotation of participatory governance in the 1990's and public pressure following the withdrawal of the Santer Commission in 1999, over accusations of nepotism and corruption, prompted the incoming Prodi Commission to resolutely advance with its White

---

actors increasingly (co-)produce sector specific regulation (e.g. self-regulation by industry, regulatory agencies or involvement of civil society organisations in decision-making) (Hooghe and Marks 2001:6-10).

Paper on European Governance[4] (Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:24f.). The Commission was quick to jump on the governance bandwagon and to spell out its strategy to solve the ongoing legitimacy problem of the Union. It additionally responded to a process, most clearly exemplified by the Laeken Declaration, which aimed at bringing citizens, and primarily the young, closer to the Union (Trenz et al. 2011:123). Since then, the demand for civil society participation found its way into the Treaties (Art. 10(3) and Art 11(1,2) TEU). In practice this means that the EU increasingly recognised CSO as partners in decision-making. It supports them financially and devises instruments to allow for their participation in politics (Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:38).

Scientists and politicians alike promoted the participation of CSO as an auspicious remedy for the EU's democratic deficit. This is not to say that it has been the only path taken either. The EU and its MS also attempted to strengthen the democratic foundations of the Union by reinforcing representative democracy, in particular the EP (Friedrich 2011:14). However, due to a high level of youth absenteeism and the underrepresentation of young people in public offices, it is unlikely that a stronger role for the EP alone leads to young people's concerns being sufficiently represented in EU politics. Even to the contrary, drawing from the literature, participative governance settings seem to be more promising in this regard, provided that CSYO have the possibility to effectively participate in EU youth politics.

Thus, the thesis pursues assessing how far the lofty goals of participative governance carry in practice. Primarily, ***it contributes to empirically scrutinising whether CSO effectively participate in EU politics***. According to the literature, the effective participation of CSO in EU politics is an indispensable element, if the democratic legitimacy of the Union is meant to be elevated through governance settings. If there is no effective participation, the democratic quality of the Union remains, per definition, unaffected. Provided that CSYO are representative of the concerns of young people, their effective participation in EU youth politics can be construed as a potential compensation for the underrepresentation of young

---

[4] The White Paper actually followed President Romano Prodi's announcement in the EP in February 2000 that the promotion of new forms of governance will be one of his priorities (COM 2002e:5). It kicked off a whole series of publications aiming at increasing the legitimacy of the Union through the inclusion of civil society and better law making. Besides the White Paper on "European Governance" (COM 2001a), this process encompassed a proposal to introduce impact assessments to improve the quality of policy making (COM 2002a), a proposal to simplify and improve the regulatory environment (COM 2002b), a Communication on consultation standards (COM 2002c), one on the collection and use of expert knowledge (COM 2002d) and an interinstitutional agreement (C 321/1/2003) on better law-making.

people in electoral politics. **EU youth politics** is defined as participative and decision-making processes in the EU youth field[5]. Eventually, ***the thesis also pursues closing a gap in the literature on EU participative governance***.

Against the backdrop of these elaborations, the thesis pursues responding to two research questions:

Q1: Do Civil Society Youth Organisations (CSYO) effectively participate in formal participatory mechanisms at European level in the youth field?

Q2: Do Civil Society Youth Organisations (CSYO) effectively participate in the decision-making processes at European level in the youth field?

While Q1 focusses on the structured dialogue (SD) with young people, Q2 researches the influence of CSYO on the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field 2010-2018 (Council Resolution C 311/1/2009) and Erasmus+ (Regulation 1288/2013/EU). Researching the SD with young people is justified because it is the most salient permanent participative mechanism in the youth field. Researching the decision-making process on the renewed framework and Erasmus+ is justified because the analysis below shows that, the participation of CSYO in these decision-making processes is indicative of the overall level of participation of CSYO in the youth field. The cases have been carefully chosen to allow a certain level of generalisation of the findings for the EU youth field.

To answer the research questions, the thesis deploys a qualitative research design, relying on a comparative case study and triangulation. It proceeds as follows: first, the thesis is located in the scientific literature and its expected scientific contribution is explained. Afterwards, the politico-legal context is mapped out, which is important to get a profound understanding of the boundaries, obstacles and ambiguities that CSYO face in the youth field. In conjunction with a historical analysis, this allows to better understand the research design and the choice of cases. Eventually, the research design is fleshed out, which is followed by the empirical chapters. In a concluding part, the findings are discussed and a few recommendations are made.

---

[5] The EU youth field includes all fields of action identified by the Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field 2010-2018 (C 311/1/2009). The framework identifies eight fields of action, including: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, creativity and culture (Ibidem).

One limitation of this thesis is that it is confined to EU youth politics, meaning that the findings do not necessarily apply to other EU policy fields. This limitation is to a certain extent bridged, as the findings of this thesis are linked to the findings of existing literature on participative governance mechanisms in other EU policy fields. Another limitation is that the thesis cannot research participatory mechanisms in all the eight fields of action identified by the renewed framework. Even though the cases are carefully chosen, their generalisability for the EU youth field has its limits.

2. Literature Review

This chapter discusses the scientific literature in the field and locates this research therein. It consists of two parts. One elaborates on scientific contributions on EU youth affairs, the other on participative governance in the European Union. The main findings of this chapter are summarised at the end[6].

Browsing various search engines, there have only been three articles found that are dedicated to participatory mechanisms in European youth affairs. Shephard and Patrikios observe that young people's participation in formal politics, particularly in elections, is declining. In their perception, this may result in a vicious circle of decreasing influence over and a declining participation of young people in public politics (Shephard and Patrikios 2013:753). Following this, they research youth parliaments as "(…) *one of the available mechanisms for the promotion of political engagement* (…)" and "*political literacy*" among young people (Ibidem:755f.). They find that although youth voice is rarely translated into political action, Youth Parliaments help young people to develop education and core skills (Shephard and Patrikios 2013:765f.). Their research has discernibly influenced the objective of the thesis, namely assessing ways to get to grips with the underrepresentation of young people in electoral politics.

Laine and Gretschel research the Council Presidency Youth Events, especially the Finish Youth Event in 2006, as an instrument to discuss current EU youth policy with young people. Thereby, they focus on the perception of young people (2009:192). Their findings suggest that young people were particularly unhappy with a patronising atmosphere during the Youth

---

[6] While some contributions are individually commented, the set of articles on youth policy is commented en bloc, since they are similar in content and less instrumental for the research design.

Event (Ibidem:201f.). Additionally, they suggest that the influence of young people on the final policy document, the Council Conclusions, was actually miniscule (Laine and Gretschel 2009:197). While Laine and Gretschel restrict their research to the participation of young people in SD events, this thesis goes beyond that. It systematically researches the participation of CSYO in the EU youth field.

Chabanet's (2014) article can be located at the point of intersection of research on EU youth policy and EU youth politics. He elaborates on EU youth employment policies with a particular focus on the 'corporatist' system of youth participation in the EU. In his eyes, this reflects the notion to, in a highly structured manner, cooperate only with a limited amount of CSYO (Ibidem:486). Although he holds that the SD is a step forward, he also points to critics who claim that a strong focus on the European Youth Forum (YFJ) as a key partner marginalizes other youth organisations and implies a discourse confined to highly institutionalised stakeholders (Ibidem:488, 491). His key argument is that the consultative arrangements set up by the EU cloak the visibility of the question of youth employment that is, according to him, most important for young people across Europe (Chabanet 2014:480). Although he observes that youth unemployment is high on the EU's agenda, Chabanet argues that a comprehensive strategy to tackle this multidimensional problem is still lacking (Ibidem:490).

Chabanet touches upon two potential challenges to an effective participation of CSYO in EU politics, namely: a) equal access of CSYO to participative mechanisms, b) the (in-) ability of CSYO to effectively participate in transversal politics. Both potential challenges find reflection in the research design.

Copeland and ter Haar (2011) aim at examining the role of the OMC in its interaction with other instruments of European integration at the example of EU youth policy (Copeland and ter Haar 2011:1). In this context, they provide a very detailed overview of the development of EU youth policies and the legal instruments applied until 2011 (Ibidem:7-11). Although the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field is a legally non-binding Resolution, Copeland and ter Haar argue that it provides common objectives for the different instruments applied in the youth field. Thus, they brand EU youth policy a field of hybrid governance, although hybridity as a concept typically refers to the simultaneity and interaction of hard law and new governance (Copeland and ter Haar 2011:1, 13f.). Copeland

and ter Haar provide a useful classification and a starting point for the historical analysis deployed below in this thesis.

Lahusen et al. (2013) focus on EU youth employment policies. Their key argument is that a lack of commitment of the EU institutions to translate abstract objectives into concrete policy instruments and a deadlock in the Council organs is detrimental to the evolution of targeted and proactive youth employment policies at EU level (Lahusen et al. 2013:303-306).

Along similar lines, Bessant and Wats argue that the 'active society' paradigm is a major obstacle to policy initiatives aiming at the reduction of youth unemployment (2014:135). By applying a 'southern theory' perspective they argue that the education policy templates produced in the 'metropolis' (Northern Europe) and declared universally applicable, impede what was their objective once they are transferred into the 'south' (poor and structurally weak regions in Europe) (Bessant and Wats 2014:126, 133f.). In their view, it is absurd to assume that more education will lead to a sudden approximation of living standards across the EU. Even to the contrary, instead of bringing about social cohesion, raising education levels in Europe correlates with an increase in youth unemployment, accompanied by a rise of under-employment and over-qualification of young people (Ibidem:128f., 135).

Banjac argues that EU youth policy is governed by a decentralized setting, including a multitude of actors (both public and private) as well as techniques. In his view, the EU disperses power and involves various actors through applying new governance instruments such as the OMC and the SD (Banjac 2014:141). He holds that by restructuring government in a polycentric way, thus blurring the distinction between public and private, the EU is consolidating a neo-liberal rationale that encourages individuals to "(…) *give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form*" (Ibidem:144). Essentially, Banjac holds that Europe's youth is not only governed in a way that shapes their individual desires, aspirations and interests but that the whole government arrangement increasingly shifts the responsibility to cope with policy problems (e.g. employment) to the young individuals themselves (2014:142, 156).

On EU youth policy, the literature is skewed towards youth employment and youth employability policies. What is more, almost all the authors level criticism against the Union for its failure to lift young people out of unemployment. As can be seen above, their explanations are manifold. However, although probably justified in essence, their critique

needs to be qualified, as the EU enjoys only limited competences in the field of employment (see: Art. 5(2,3) TFEU). Policy responsibility may thus rest to a higher degree with the MS than the authors seem to imply. Furthermore, the perceived lack of effective EU employment policies is not confined to the youth field, even though action may seem to be more urgent there.

When it comes to researching EU participative governance settings, Kohler-Koch and Quittkat clearly set the standard with their seminal work on EU governance and the participation of civil society therein (2013). Exploring the participative consultation regime of the Commission, they perceive the EU as a multi-level polity where civil society actors assume the role of intermediaries between the EU institutions and the citizens (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:8, 13). Their function is consequently to bring a broad range of interests to the attention of decision-makers, thereby enhancing the output legitimacy of the Union as a whole (Ibidem:8, 21). In the eyes of Kohler-Koch and Quittkat, the lofty promise of participative democracy given by the EU institutions is in practice implemented as a participatory consultation regime (2013:37f.). After outlining the historical development of the Commission consultation regime and its heterogeneous application across the Directorate Generals (DG) (Ibidem:43ff., 52ff.), they research in-depth the implementation of the consultation regime in DG Social Affairs and DG Health and Consumer Protection (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:62).

Proceeding, Quittkat identifies the consultation instruments[7] used by the Commission (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:63-68). She observes linkages between certain instruments and stages of the consultation process as well as specific patterns of interaction of different consultation instruments (Ibidem:69, 80). Quittkat also analyses the emergence of online consultations as a tool to consult broadly. Typically, they are deployed in an early stage of a policy process but different DG vary significantly in making use of this instrument (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:89f.). While Quittkat finds that online consultations indeed come along with low entry barriers, she holds that the Commission frequently fails to act transparently. Often, it neither publishes individual contributions, nor a consultation report, which makes it

---

[7] Instruments identified can be classified into three categories: instruments for expert consultation, instruments for stakeholder consultation and instruments for the consultation of the (interested) public (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:63). They can not only be distinguished by the addressee of the instrument but also by the degree of formalization (Ibidem).

very difficult to hold it to account because the basis of its policy decisions remains unclear (Ibidem:110, 176, 180). Kohler-Koch and Quittkat conclude that: a) although business remains most influential, the Commission's efforts to make their consultation regime more accessible led to a pluralisation of interests represented therein (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:184), b) while the participation of CSO contributes to a pluralisation of interests, CSO fail to act as a transmission belt between the Union and its citizens. Long communication channels that are organised top-down make it difficult to meaningfully involve the grass-roots level (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:185f.).

Powerful interest groups like business associations are not systematically operating in the youth field. Thus, this thesis already circuits a disruptive factor. Put differently, it is more likely that CSO participation in the youth field elevates the democratic legitimacy of the Union than it is in a policy field, where powerful interest groups are strongly involved. The youth field is thus a good case to examine the normative assumptions of the participative governance literature. Following the findings of Kohler-Koch and Quittkat, equal access opportunities and an effort of EU-level CSYO to reach out to their membership is reflected in the research design. A limitation is that Kohler-Koch and Quittkat focus on the consultation regime of the Commission, instead of researching participation throughout the decision-making process.

Friedrich pursues testing the assumption that organised civil society (CSO) participation boosts the democratisation of EU governance processes and its potential to remedy the democratic deficit of the Union (2011:4, 13f.). He follows a deductive approach, trying to reconstruct participatory patterns in the EU in the light of normative ideals (Ibidem:17f.). In his view, participatory activities are a constitutive element of democracy (understood as "self-rule" or "self-determination" of the people), as they connect the citizens with the locus of decision-making and enable the political system to be responsive to the people's needs (Friedrich 2011:2, 27f., 39f.). By referring to Habermas, he holds that civil society organisations should ideally pick up the concerns of (disadvantaged) citizens, transmit them into the institutionalised political system and, by doing so, contribute to the pluralisation of interests (Ibidem:54, 57, 59). Friedrich states that political equality is a foundational principle of democracy. He operationalises participation by measuring equal access to and the inclusion of a diversity of concerns into policy-making processes, the responsiveness of EU institutions and their transparency (Friedrich 2011:67, 69-71, 93ff., 103ff., 113ff.).

Concretely, Friedrich researches the participation of CSO in two EU policy areas: 1) in the field of migration, he explores the decision-making process on the Directive on Family Re-unification, and 2) in the field of environment, he researches the decision-making process on the REACH[8] Regulation (2011:77f.). With regard to CSO participation in migration politics, Friedrichs observes that the responsiveness, especially of the Council to CSO positions was minimal and that over time, a series of issues of particular importance to CSO were excluded from the document (Friedrich 2011:144f.). With respect to the REACH Regulation, Friedrich observes that although there was a certain responsiveness to CSO, this responsiveness was biased towards business (friendly) associations that were successful both in changing the decision-making process and the legislation's content (Ibidem:168f.). In his view, there is no coherent approach of responsiveness to CSO of EU institutions. While the Council, especially in the field of migration (unanimity and intergovernmental), appears to be averse to civil society participation, the EP appears to be most attentive (Friedrich 2011:181). His final conclusion is that the EU participatory regime partially opens up politics but aims at stability instead of democratisation, which imposes limits on the *"(…) democratic character of the currently observable participatory practices*" (Ibidem:182-184).

With regard to the research design, the thesis draws inspiration from Friedrich as well as Kohler-Koch and Quittkat. Both publications propose four concepts, each linked to a set of indicators, to assess whether CSO effectively participate in EU politics and hence contribute to its democratic legitimacy. As their concepts produce good results and allow to meaningfully interpret the collected data, this thesis applies their concepts but adapts them to the specific characteristics of the youth field. Due to space constraints, other, less targeted contributions are not considered in this literature review[9].

Concluding this chapter, it can be observed that relatively little research has been conducted so far that systematically analyses EU youth policies and even less literature systematically explores EU youth politics. Moreover, some policy areas identified by the renewed framework as cross-sectorial fields of action, do not seem to be perceived and discussed as youth policy by the scientific community. Exemplary for this tendency is perhaps

---

[8] Regulation on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH).
[9] Examples are the contribution by Liebert and Trenz (2013) and the special issue in *Policy and Society* on civil society and the reconstruction of democracy in Europe (see: Liebert and Trenz 2009).

EU education policy[10]. Quite the opposite can be observed with respect to youth employment policy, which, judging from the literature, seems to be regarded and discussed as a youth policy. This debate is supposedly also linked to an increasing awareness of youth unemployment constituting a major public policy problem.

Starkly contrasting with that is the plentitude of scientific contributions on civil society participation in democratic arenas. Having said that, this flood of scientific activity quickly ebbs away, once the focus is drawn towards empirical research on EU participative settings (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:3; Liebert and Trenz 2011b:10f.). Again, EU youth politics are side-lined by the scientific community. Finally, a preference for certain methods can be observed in the literature on EU youth affairs. Scientists rely mostly on document analysis and, to a lesser extent, interviews with relevant stakeholders. In a few cases, questionnaires have been used but only in one occasion (see: Laine and Gretschel 2009) did scientists actually participate in or observe participatory processes[11].

Filling a gap in the literature, the thesis systematically analyses the participation of CSYO in EU youth politics. It thereby contributes to gathering evidence in order to empirically evaluate the normative assumptions on participative governance regimes. Researching participation in the context of EU youth politics can be expected to be extraordinarily fruitful. Reasons are that the participation mechanisms in the youth field are comparatively well developed, there is relatively little politicisation and traditionally powerful interest groups, like business associations or trade unions, are less dominant.

If the findings of this research suggest that the participation of CSYO is not noticeably adding to the democratic quality of EU youth politics, even though the preconditions are promising, than it is unlikely that CSO participation will enhance the democratic legitimacy of the Union in any other policy field, too. Finally, following Friedrich, Kohler-Koch and Quittkat, we can expect the EU institutions to vary in their willingness to let CSYO participate in EU

---

[10] See: Garben (2011), Pénin (2007) and Souto-Otero et al. (2008) who all discuss education policy as a distinct policy field, without specifically addressing it as a youth policy field.
[11] Little variety in the use of methods may lead to method related bias, particularly in the case of a document analysis. Documents are political in nature and therefore not necessarily reliable sources. It is not unlikely that institutions try to create narratives in these documents that are favorable for themselves. Interviews in combination with a questionnaire or direct observation should normally suffice to balance this risk. Further reflections on the use of methods follow below.

youth politics. They suggest that the Commission and especially the EP are eager to let CSO participate, while the Council is far less so. This may imply negative repercussions for CSYO in decision-making processes, where the Council is the sole legislative body.

3. Legal Basis and Politico-Legal Context of EU Youth Politics

This part provides an introduction to the legal basis of EU youth politics and the instruments applied therein. It sets the scene for subsequent chapters and informs the research design presented below. The competences of the Union under the education, training, youth and sport chapter are analysed in detail because the thesis researches participative mechanisms and decision-making processes falling within its scope. Due to space limitations, this chapter only briefly sketches the competence of the Union in the other fields of action identified by the renewed framework.

Reflections on the competence to act antecede this enquiry into EU youth politics. This is necessary as all the competences of the Union are attributed by its MS and governed by a distinctly stringent set of limitations. Most importantly, the Union is bound by the principle of conferral, which holds that all competences that have not expressly been conferred upon the Union remain with the MS (Art. 4(1) TEU; Art. 5 TEU). This means that every action of the Union has to be based on a provision in the EU Treaties. If an act of the Union lacks a legal basis, the European Court of Justice (CJEU), acting under Art. 263(2) TFEU, will declare it null and void (Craig 2012:368).

While the principle of conferral demarcates the competences of the Union, the principles of subsidiarity (Art. 5(3) TEU) and proportionality (Art. 5(4) TEU) specify how these attributed competences shall be exercised (Craig 2012:393; Delmas-Marty:329). Subsidiarity applies in areas where the Union is empowered to act by the Treaties but where it lacks exclusive competence. Under subsidiarity, the Union shall act only, if the *"(…) objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level"* (Art. 5(3) TEU). All actions falling within the scope of EU law are governed by the principle of proportionality (Craig 2012:628). It means that the actions of the Union as well as the MS when acting under the scope of EU law *"(…) shall not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties"* (Art. 5(4) TEU). To be proportionate, a

measure has to be suitable to fulfil the desired objective, it has to be necessary (least restrictive to the individual's freedom) and proportionate in stricto sensu (Craig 2012:392). Deducing from the CJEU's adjudication, it is evident that proportionality does not only restrict actions under the scope of EU law but it also requires the Union and its MS to implement EU law effectively (Craig 2012:630).

Participative mechanisms are ultimately based on the value of democracy (Art. 2 TEU)[12], which includes that every citizen has the *right* to participate in the democratic life of the Union (Art. 10(3) TEU). It mirrors the necessity that in an ongoing integration process, decisions have to be taken as openly and as closely to the citizen as possible (Art. 1 TEU). More concretely this means that EU institutions have to grant civil society representatives the opportunity to present their views in an open, transparent and regular dialogue (Art. 11(1, 2) TEU in conjunction with Art. 17 TFEU). Furthermore, the Commission has to conduct broad consultations with the parties concerned when taking actions (Art. 11(3) TEU) and all EU institutions are bound by the principles of good governance and good administration (Art. 15 TFEU, Art. 41f. CFREU), which additionally underpin the provisions on participative democracy. Finally, the Treaty explicitly demands that EU institutions encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe (Art. 165(2) TFEU).

Competence is a thorny issue in the youth field. One reason is that subsidiarity is omnipresent. The other reason is that the EU youth field, as pointed out above, is cross-sectorial and consequently much dispersed. In the Treaties, a distinction is being made between exclusive competences, shared competences and the competence to support, coordinate or supplement MS actions without replacing them (Art. 2 TFEU). Depending on the respective field of action, the Union has either shared competences or the competence to support, coordinate or supplement MS actions in the youth field, whereby the latter clearly dominates[13].

---

[12] Having said that, it has to be recalled that the Treaty clearly states that the Union is founded on representative democracy (Art. 10(1) TEU). Consequently, the participation of civil society actors is strictly limited to a supplementary role.

[13] Shared competence applies only to actions carried out in the field of social policy as defined in chapter X of the TFEU (Art. 4(2b) TFEU in conjunction with Art 153(1) TFEU) and public health matters for aspects defined under Art. 168(4) TFEU. The most prominent example is the young people at work Directive (94/33/EC; Watson 2014:225). It addresses a disproportionate level of risk exposure of young people at work, aims at prohibiting child labour as well as regulating adolescence work (Riesenhuber 2012:522f.) and fleshes out Art. 15 of the

As can be seen in the historical analysis (see: Annex V), most regulatory activity in the youth field has taken place under the Treaty chapter on education, vocational training and youth, which was introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht[14] (Bernard 2012:15). Education and training is not in itself recognized as an objective of the Union under the Treaties but it is included in the mainstreaming provision, requiring the EU institutions to take into account requirements related to a high level of education and training when regulating (Art. 9 TFEU; Bernard 2012:27f.). Although the competence of the Union in the field of education, training, youth and sports is limited to a supportive, coordinative and supplementary role (Art. 6e TFEU), the European Parliament (EP) and the Council can rely on the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP). Furthermore, the Council can adopt Recommendations to fulfil the objectives enumerated in chapter XII (Art. 165, 166 TFEU). While there is no restriction as to the choice of the legal instrument when the EP and the Council are legislating under the OLP, they can only adopt incentive measures to coordinate or support cross-border action. The harmonisation of national regulations is ruled out by the Treaty (Art. 165(4) TFEU). Another important limitation is that the Union must respect the MS responsibility for the content and organisation of education and training (Art. 165(1) and Art. 166(1) TFEU).

Both in education and vocational training, the scope of action is (historically) closely linked to mobility and exchange schemes (Art. 165(2) TFEU; Garben 2011:59f.). Additionally to the competences outlined above, the Treaty in Art. 53 also contains a specific legal basis for the recognition of diploma (Garben 2011:62). For the youth field, the Erasmus+ Regulation (1288/2013/EU) bears most weight in the area of education and training, since it merged all the action programmes into one single piece of legislation.

EU cooperation in the youth field is signified by a dual approach. While the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) directly implements the youth specific fields of action, it is restricted to support the mainstreaming of a youth perspective in cross-sectorial fields of action

---

framework Directive on the safety and health of workers (89/391/EEC). To the knowledge of the author, no legal act has been concluded in the youth field on the basis of Art. 168(4) TFEU.

[14] The reason is that there is little hard law in the EU youth field (Copeland and ter Haar 2011). An exception are however the various action programmes of the Union, which date back to 1964 (64/307/EEC). As has been stressed in one of the interviews, EU youth *policy* has started with these action programmes and they continue to play a strong role (Interview COM A; Garben 2011:74f.; Souto-Otero et al. 2008:236). However, the thesis will deal with the history of EU youth policies below.

(Resolution C 168/2/2002; Resolution C 311/1/2009)[15]. This cooperation is structured by 3-years work cycles, which consist of the terms of two Trio Presidencies. For each work cycle, the Council adopts a number of priorities that fall within the EU youth field and on the basis of the joint Council/Commission EU Youth Report. This EU Youth Report monitors the progress made in the eight fields of action and is due at the end of each 3-years work cycle. As stated above, the EU youth field encompasses eight different fields of action and seven implementation instruments, which are identified by the renewed framework (Resolution 311/1/2009). The framework clearly states that the competence in the youth field remains with the MS and that the cooperation duly respects the principle of subsidiarity (Ibidem).

As a consequence of the wide thematic scope of the EU youth field, there are numerous legal bases in the Treaties that fall within its scope. Since mainstreaming initiatives in cross-sectorial fields of action are often adopted by different Council formations, EP Committees or Commission DGs than youth specific initiatives, there is a multitude of potential institutional actors.

Characteristic for the EU youth field is that the renewed framework contains a distinct mechanism, the so called structured dialogue (SD) with young people and youth organisations, which allows them to *"(…) participate in the development of policies affecting them"* (Council Resolution C 311/1/2009). This continuous mechanism for joint reflection on the policy development in the youth field is linked both to the 18-months term and the thematic priorities of a Trio Presidency (Ibidem.). Hence, the SD is connected with the OMC in the youth field.

Concluding, it can be reiterated that EU youth politics is embedded in a very complex legal and political context. There is a certain tension between a potentially wide thematic scope of the EU youth field and the absence of a robust mechanism to ensure that the youth perspective is effectively mainstreamed in cross-sectorial fields of action. Furthermore, the renewed framework provides some guidelines for cooperation but leaves considerable leeway for institutional actors to inspire or resist tangible action in the EU youth field. The competences of the Union are limited and predominantly supportive, coordinative and

---

[15] Youth specific initiatives are actions specifically targeted at young people in the areas of non-formal learning, participation, voluntary activities, youth work, mobility and information. All the other initiatives falling within the scope of the renewed framework are considered cross-sectorial fields of action (Resolution C 311/1/2009).

supplementary. While the EU can conclude legal acts in cross-sectorial fields of action, initiatives in the youth-specific field can only be adopted under the OMC. Besides these different decision-making processes, young people and youth organisations can also participate in the SD.

Finally, the politico-legal analysis already foreshadows the multitude of potential actors in the wider youth field. This includes various Council formations or Commission DG but also potent sector specific stakeholders (e.g. universities, business associations or trade unions). While the cross-sectorial approach to youth policy is something that the youth sector itself consistently called for (YFJ 2008:2,4), it is equally clear that it entails peculiar challenges. Being often poorly equipped with financial means, CSYO are expected to have difficulties advocating for their case in cross-sectorial fields of action.

4. Theoretical Concept, Research Design and Operationalisation

At this point, the objectives of the thesis are recalled. Primarily, it contributes to the stock of empirical contributions assessing the assumptions of new governance concepts. Concretely, it puts the assumption to the test that the participation of CSO has the potential to remedy the democratic deficit of the Union. Thereby, it closes a gap in the existing literature. In order to achieve these objectives, the thesis relies on a qualitative and deductive research design. It applies a comparative case study and relies on triangulation to produce valid findings.

Before the research questions are operationalised, it is important to briefly reflect on the normative assumptions underlying this thesis. This is needed in order to be clear about the democratic standard deployed when assessing the contribution of CSYO to the democratic legitimacy of the Union.

A constitutive element of a democracy is the "*free and equal collective self-determination*" of the people (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013:4). For this end, any democratic collective requires **participative mechanisms** (Friedrich 2011:39). These can be defined as connecting individuals with the places of collective self-determination, i.e. decision-making (Ibidem:28).

As stated in the introduction, young people tend to be underrepresented and their concerns marginalised in electoral democracy. This is particularly pronounced at EU level and

comes on top of the general concerns about the democratic legitimacy of the Union. Participative governance has been depicted as a promising strategy to address the legitimacy problem of the EU in general. However, it remains to be seen whether the participative governance mechanisms in place are sufficient to ensure that young people's interests are adequately taken into account in EU youth politics. As stated above, **EU youth politics** is defined as decision-making processes falling within the scope of the EU youth field as defined by the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field 2010-2018 (Council Resolution C 311/1/2009).

Following scholars like Hooghe and Marks (2001), this thesis holds that the EU is a complex multi-level polity. A complicated structure makes it difficult for individual citizens to make their voice heard on the European level. Thus, theory assigns CSO the role to aggregate interests transnationally and to voice them in the European arena. This is also why the thesis researches the participation of CSYO[16] in EU youth politics and not the participation of individual citizens. CSO contribute to the Union's democratic legitimacy because they bring "*(…) the plurality of interests to the attention of decision-makers*" (Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:7f.)[17]. The assumption is that by participating in decisions of concern to them, CSO contribute their expertise. This makes decision-making processes more reflective of the concerns involved and thus enhances the quality of policies (Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:21). In short: More informed decisions translate into a higher output legitimacy of the EU. Consequently, scholars hold that opening up decision-making processes to CSO benefits the democratic legitimacy of the Union (Friedrich 2011:14).

Inferring from these normative considerations, it can be said that the democratic legitimacy of the Union is only strengthened, if CSYO effectively participate in EU youth politics, i.e. in decision-making processes that affect them. Similarly, the effective participation of CSYO is an

---

[16] This has to be further differentiated. Although most participants in the SD with young people are representing some CSYO, this mechanism partly also involves unorganized young people. Their role is, however, not decisive for the SD and its outcomes. Chabanet (2014) even called the SD a form of corporatist interest representation with a strong role for the YFJ.

[17] Kohler-Koch et al. discuss two more concepts (see: 2013:7f.) but like them, this thesis comes to the conclusion that the other two concepts are less convincing, especially for the youth field. One borrows strongly from the theory of the regulatory state. It argues that CSO contribute to good regulation and that EU institutions include them, when they expect better law-making from their participation. This plays a certain role in the youth field but it is the participation of young people in democratic life, which is called for by the Treaty, irrespective of CSYO's expertise. The other theory holds that CSO are part of a European polity and citizenship building process but it is questionable, whether CSYO with their limited outreach really live up to this ambition.

indispensable requirement, if their participation is to be considered a compensation for the marginalisation of young people in electoral politics.

Effective participation is admittedly a vague concept and demands further elaborations. To begin with, it has to be recalled that the Treaty itself already sets minimum quality standards for CSO participation. It states that CSO shall have the opportunity to present their views in an *open, transparent and regular dialogue* (Art. 11(1, 2) TEU in conjunction with Art. 17 TFEU). Furthermore, the Commission is required to conduct *broad consultations with the parties concerned* when taking actions (Art. 11(3) TEU) and all EU institutions are bound by the principles of *good governance* and *good administration* (Art. 15 TFEU, Art. 41f. CFREU).

Kohler-Koch et al. go a bit further and opt for equal and effective participation, publicity and accountability to be the most fundamental criteria for evaluating CSO's democratic contribution (2013:4). Since their attention primarily revolves the consultation regime of the Commission, they tend to pay more attention to the quality of participation than to the impact of political decisions. However, they still hold that participatory mechanisms have to show some effect (Ibidem:174). Friedrich proposes almost identical indicators, including equal access, the inclusion of diverse points of views, responsiveness of decision-makers and transparency (2011:69)[18]. He also has a certain inclination towards the input side of politics.

The thesis broadly follows these conceptions but adapts them to the characteristics of EU youth politics. Drawing inspiration from the concepts described above, effective participation encompasses four concepts: participation, inclusiveness, transparency and responsiveness. These concepts are linked to more fine-grained indicators.

Participation is the most basic precondition for CSYO to influence EU youth politics. It means that they have the opportunity to submit sufficiently well-founded positions during the decision-making process (Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:175). *Sufficiently well-founded positions* means that CSYO have the time and space to present their core claims and that they can briefly motivate them, either orally or in written. Participation is the better: a) the more often it occurs, b) the more diverse the settings (written contribution, conferences, dialogue), c) the more formalised it is because formalisation allows CSYO to better prepare.

---

[18] Even though Friedrich uses a different terminology, he researches very similar things. Equal and effective participation roughly equates to equal access and inclusiveness, while transparency corresponds publicity and accountability roughly corresponds responsiveness.

Inclusiveness requires *equal and broad access opportunities* of participative mechanisms. This includes that CSYO have the same opportunities to voice their concerns as more powerful stakeholders. It also means that EU institutions are *inclusive towards all political viewpoints* and mitigate power asymmetries (see: Friedrich 2011:69f.; Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:174). An additional criteria derives from the analysis above. CSYO themselves must convincingly attempt to broadly engage their membership during the decision-making process in order to indeed bring a broad range of interests to the attention of decision-makers. Inclusiveness is ensured, if: a) CSYO have similar possibilities to participate as other interest groups, b) the EU institutions deploy participation mechanisms that address a broad target group, c) CSYO attempt to receive broad input from their membership, in oral or in written and use it for their advocacy work.

Transparency is required by the Treaty but it is also an important precondition for participation and necessary to judge the responsiveness of institutions. CSYO have to possess all the information that is relevant to fully participate in a decision-making process. Institutions also have to be clear about what happens with input received. Furthermore, the information and the rationale on which EU institutions eventually base their decisions have to be made publicly available (Friedrich 2011:71). However, an additional criteria has to be added in EU youth politics. CSYO are often relying on volunteers and only few CSYO can afford to employ professionals for their advocacy work. Thus, even if all the information is theoretically accessible, they may just not be aware of it due to a lack of resources. The EU institutions know about that, which bears the risk that they attempt to obscure decision-making processes by refraining from providing the necessary information to CSYO. Consequently, the EU institutions only act transparently, if they make an effort to inform CSYO. Transparency is given, if: a) the information on the decision-making process is accessible, b) EU institutions are clear about what happens with the input received, c) if EU institutions make an effort to inform young people about the decision-making process.

Responsiveness means that there needs to be a certain success of CSYO. Decision-makers have to genuinely reflect on the input provided by CSYO. Their subsequent decisions need to either incorporate the positions of CSYO or decision-makers have to provide reasons based on general principles for disregarding CSYO's positions (Friedrich 2011:70; Kohler-Koch et al. 2013:175). Responsiveness must be given at every stage of the decision-making process and

is ensured, if: a) the input of CSYO is incorporated into a decision, b) a justification based on general principles is given for partly or fully disregarding the input of CSYO.

Effective participation of CSYO has to occur at every stage of the decision-making process, including: a) when the agenda is set or a proposal prepared, b) before a legislative body takes a decision, c) when former decisions, policies or programmes are evaluated, d) where applicable, when EU institutions implement or prepare the implementation of decisions. Below, table 1 visualises the analytical framework. It will be used to summarise and better depict the results at the end of each of the three empirical parts.

Table 1: Table of analysis on effective participation of CSYO in EU youth politics.

	Stage of the decision-making process			
	Agenda-setting	Decision-making	Implementation	Evaluation
Participation				
Inclusiveness				
Transparency				
Responsiveness				

Overall, there are 16 single cells in this table. In every cell, there will be a short assessment under each empirical chapter, linked to a five point scale that measures the performance in a certain cell. The scale reaches from +2 to -2[19]. If the average of all the numbers allocated to a table equals or exceeds +1, the participation of CSYO is considered effective. In any other case, their participation was not effective. This numeric assessment solely serves the purpose of better depicting the results.

When applying these concepts, it is of utmost importance that the topography of the EU youth field is firmly understood and that the research questions are reflective thereof. Based on an extensive historical analysis (see: Annex V) this thesis formulates two research questions and carefully chooses three cases that allow to maximise the generalisability of the findings. Below, the findings are briefly summarised and the characteristics of the EU youth field explained.

Youth related policies have been around since the Treaty of Rome. From the very beginning, there is a certain proximity between the application of action programmes and the

---

[19] This means: +2 (is clearly the case), +1 (is the case), 0 (is partly the case), -1 (is not the case), -2 (is clearly not the case).

objective to shape the skills of young people to supply the nascent common market with qualified mobile workers. Recalling the vague politico-legal context, the historical analysis nourishes the suspicion that progress in the youth field is highly contagious on the goodwill of central actors. Dedicated Commissioners or Presidency countries made at times the difference and moved the youth field noticeably ahead.

Historically, the most important fields of action are vocational training, formal and non-formal education, employment and political participation. All these policy areas have in common that the competences of the Union are rather limited and MS retain a high level of control. While the CJEU was instrumental in lifting the youth field to the EU level, the Commission and the Council are the most powerful institutions today, especially since the question of the legal basis was settled by the Treaty of Maastricht. The influence of the EP depends on the decision-making procedure in question.

When it comes to the instruments applied, we can see a division between hard law action programmes on the one hand and soft law policies on the other hand. It can be expected that the negotiations are tougher, if the instrument to be applied is hard law and if money is involved, simply because the stakes are higher. While the current programme was adopted under the OLP, youth policies are commonly adopted under the OMC. Numerically speaking, the vast majority of decisions in the EU youth field are taken under the OMC but the integrated Erasmus+ programme largely finances key actions in the youth field, like exchange schemes or SD. An important difference is that the OLP involves more institutions and that its procedures are more complex than the OMC. Moreover, it can be expected that CSYO maintain good relations with the few institutional formations in the specific youth field, while they have more difficulties reaching out to the diverse institutional formations in cross-sectorial fields of action. Connected to that, there are also more competing interest groups active in cross-sectorial fields of action, which is expected to make it more challenging for CSYO to make their voice heard. Finally, the SD allows CSYO to participate and influence the policy development in a more general and permanent way.

What can be inferred from these observations is that the EU youth field is organised along a set of organisational dualisms. The assumption is that a certain legal instrument, decision-making process or actor constellation affects the participation of CSYO. In order to maximise the generalisability of the findings, these specific characteristics are captured by the research

design. Table 2 shows the organisational characteristics of the EU youth field and depicts the findings of both the politico-legal and the historical analysis.

Table 2: Organisational characteristics of the EU youth field.

	Organisational duality		
Instrument applied	Programme (financial tool)		Policy (regulation)
	Regulation (hard law)		Recommendation, Resolution, Conclusion (soft law)
Decision-making procedure	OLP		OMC
Institutional formation	Cross-sectorial		Youth specific
Interests involved	Diversity of stakeholders		Limited number of stakeholders
Permanent participation mechanism	SD with young people and youth organisations		

Drawing from the analysis of the politico-legal context and the historical development of the EU youth field allows us to: a) identify potential challenges for the effective participation of CSYO, b) choose cases and formulate the research questions in a way that they are representative for the participative opportunities in the youth field.

Against the backdrop of these elaborations and based on the analysis in chapter 3 and 4, the thesis pursues responding to two research questions:

Q1: Do Civil Society Youth Organisations (CSYO) effectively participate in formal participatory mechanisms at European level in the youth field?

Q2: Do Civil Society Youth Organisations (CSYO) effectively participate in the decision-making processes at European level in the youth field?

Below, the choice of the research questions and cases under investigation is explained. As stated above, the choice of the research questions and cases reflects the specific topography of the EU youth field (see: Table 2 above). These choices have been made with a view to maximising the generalisability of the findings. Both the findings of the politico-legal and the historical analysis inform these choices.

Q1 has been formulated to research the SD, which is *the* participative mechanism in the youth field. It allows for continuous joint reflection of decision-makers and young people on the development of EU youth policy and there is no other mechanism that compares, neither in terms of structure nor in continuity.

Q2 has been formulated to research decision-making processes in the EU youth field. Case studies are generally suitable to get an in-depth perspective on the participation of CSYO in politics. However, due to the limited resources available, the thesis is limited to two cases under Q2. It researches the decision-making process leading to the adoption of: a) Erasmus+, b) the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field. These cases have been chosen because they are extreme points with hindsight to the factors potentially affecting the participation of CSYO in EU youth politics as depicted in Table 2 (see above). The Erasmus+ Regulation is a programme, adopted under the OLP by the Education Ministers and involved a wide range of interest groups. The Resolution on a renewed framework is a policy, adopted under the OMC by the Youth Ministers and involved predominantly youth stakeholders. All the other decision-making processes in the youth field are somewhere in-between. Finally, these two cases are also very important because they establish the policy and the financial framework for the EU youth field. The participation in these two decision-making processes consequently also influences the participation opportunities in all the other decision-making processes in the EU youth field.

In order to respond to the research questions and to produce valid findings, the thesis relies on triangulation. This means that the thesis applies a broad range of qualitative political science methods, including: a) an analysis of the documents of the EU institutions and CSYO, b) a set of 14 semi-structured expert interviews that are evenly distributed across the research questions and the key actors involved in the participative processes (e.g. Commission, EP as well as MS officials and representatives of CSYO)[20], c) a semi-structured questionnaire that has been sent out to the National Youth Councils (NYC) to evaluate the SD[21], d) the participation in and the observation of SD events, in particular the European Youth Week. Such a mix of methods is suitable to analyse all the different dimensions of the participative mechanisms under investigation.

Analysing the documents produced by the EU institutions and CSYO allows to reconstruct the formal steps of the processes under investigation. Documents can tell whether CSYO

---

[20] A list of interviews can be found at the end of the bibliography. While some interviewees have been suggested by experienced YFJ staff members, the author in some cases also relied on the snowball method to ensure that the interviewees are well chosen.

[21] The questionnaire was designed by the European Steering Committee (ESC) and sent out to the National Working Groups (NWG) as well as International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYO) to map out the SD. However, the author collated the responses, conducted the analysis and wrote the final report. This was part of the tasks he performed during his internship. The Map Out can be found in annex III.

participated in the formal settings. They allow to assess the institution's information policy and to compare the initial position of CSYO with the content of the final decision taken. However, it is not possible to make any inferences on the more informal channels of participation. Furthermore, it is difficult to tell whether the EU institutions have been responsive, in the sense of the theoretical concept outlined above, just by reading the documents. Another limitation of the document analysis is that while the Commission is obliged to produce a series of documents in the course of a mandatory Impact Assessment (COM 2015e:17), the Council produces particularly few documents that allow to trace the participation of interest groups. Consequently, further methods have to be relied upon.

In order to better understand the responsiveness of the EU institutions at every stage of the processes under investigation, methods have to be applied that capture the views, experiences and knowledge of participants. This is necessary in order to trace non-documented participation opportunities, the responsiveness of decision-makers and whether CSYO have been well-informed by the EU institutions. Therefore, the thesis deploys interviews as well as a questionnaire. These interviews were transcribed and a systematic content analysis conducted[22]. In like manner were the responses to the questionnaire analysed. Eventually, the author of the thesis repeatedly participated in meetings connected to SD and most importantly, in the European Youth Week event on SD. A limitation is that both the questionnaire and the observations are limited to participation in the SD, thus they cannot be relied upon for research question two.

To sum up, it is recalled that this part briefly elaborates on the normative assumptions guiding this research. The thesis argues that the effective participation of CSYO in EU youth politics can enhance the democratic legitimacy of the Union because they aggregate young people's interests transnationally and bring them to the attention of EU decision-makers. Furthermore, four concepts are devised to assess whether CSYO effectively participate in the EU youth field. Eventually, the thesis elaborates on the methods applied and how they are supposed to obtain valid and relevant findings.

---

[22] The Interviews are not contained in this thesis due to confidentiality reasons.

5. Youth Participation through Structured Dialogue with Young People

This chapter empirically explores the conduct of SD with young people. An assessment of its genesis and historical origins underpins these findings (see: annex IV). First, the legal basis of SD is outlined and individual instruments, which are part of the SD are explained. Eventually, the thesis assesses the current SD process and whether it allows young people to effectively participate in EU youth politics. Finally, the chapter closes with a short conclusion.

It is tricky to pin down what the SD actually is or what purpose was established for, since it has constantly been evolving. On a very general level, it can be said that the SD is a set of participative mechanisms that allows young people to participate in a continuous and structured dialogue *"(…) on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field"* (Council Resolution C 311/1/2009). Based on the analysis in annex IV, three periods can be distinguished: 1.) an *antecedent* period, following the Council Resolution on youth participation in 1999 inviting the Commission to set up a dialogue with young people, 2) a *formative* period, following the Council Resolution on common objectives for participation by and information for young people in 2003 introducing the label SD with young people, and 3) a *consolidative* period, following the adoption of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field in 2009, which outlined a reinforced structure for SD with young people. This chapter assesses the reinforced structure implemented since 2010.

With regard to SD, the Resolution holds that it is a forum for *"(…) continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field"* (Council Resolution C 311/1/2009). Annex III to the Resolution holds that the SD is based on the 18-months work cycles of the Trio Presidencies, with an overall theme corresponding to the priorities in the Resolution and additionally the possibility for each Presidency to set individual priority themes on top of that. According to the Annex, SD is based on consultations with young people in the MS, at the EU Youth Conference organised by the Presidency country and at the European Youth Week. Furthermore, the Commission is invited to set up the European Steering Committee (ESC), which is responsible for coordinating SD at European

level and the MS are invited to establish complementary National Working Groups (NWG) at national level[23] (Annex III, Council Resolution C 311/1/2009).

During the consolidation period, each Trio Presidency implemented the SD with young people differently but all of them based their implementation on the basic structure outlined in the renewed framework (Interview YFJ A). These more or less tangible modifications can be traced by taking a closer look at the various Resolutions that emerged from the SD process as well as the EU Youth Report.

Preceding the first Cycle, the Council set the (common) thematic priorities[24] (COM 2012b:91). During the first Cycle under the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Trio Presidency, the European Steering Committee (ESC) and National Working Groups (NWG) were established. The Belgian Presidency insisted on making the YFJ chair the ESC and correspondingly, making NYC chair the NWG (Interview MS B; COM 2012b:92). This practice has been maintained since. The ESC has a pivotal role in the consultation process because it sets the guiding questions which are sent to the NWG and serve as the basis for the consultations in the MS. The NWG then conduct the consultations in the MS and send their input back to the YFJ, which collates the national reports into a background file for the EU Youth Conference. During the EU Youth Conference nominated youth delegates and policy-makers representing national authorities and EU institutions engage in a dialogue based on the collated input, which leads to a set of joint recommendations. These joint recommendations are then taken into account in Council conclusions adopted by Youth Ministers after each EU Youth Conference. At the end of a Cycle, the Ministers adopt a Resolution instead of conclusions and wrap up the whole Cycle (COM 2012b:91-93; Interview COM D).

The Council Resolution concluding the first Cycle put forward recommendations of how to improve the SD[25] (C 164/1/2011). However, they are very general, they do not spell out

---

[23] The ESC is comprised of representatives of: 1) the COM, 2) the Trio Presidency country's Youth Ministers, 3) the Trio Presidency NYC and National Agencies for the Youth programmes, 4) the YFJ. The NWG should be comprised of: 1) representatives of the Ministry for Youth Affairs, 2) the NYC, 3) diverse other youth stakeholders (Annex III, Council Resolution C 311/1/2009).

[24] A Cycle is the name for the 18-month term of a Trio Presidency. In the first Cycle from spring 2010 to spring 2011, the overall priority was youth employment (Council Resolution C 164/1/2011).

[25] Examples are: 1) to promote a political follow-up of the SD results, 2) providing feedback to young people regarding the results of SD, 3) promoting the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in SD, 4) consider sustainable financial support for SD in the next generation EU programme, 5) establish a realistic time frame for consultations, 6) revise the methods to ensure quality output of SD (Council Resolution C 164/1/2011).

specific mechanisms and are thus almost devoid of meaning. In 2012, the Commission and the Council published their EU Youth Report, meant to monitor the progress under the framework for European cooperation in the youth field. It's relevance for SD remains limited, since it does not allow to clearly trace the influence of SD with young people on EU or MS youth policy (COM 2012b; Council and European Commission C 394/3/2012).

During the second Cycle, the Polish-Danish-Cypress Trio Presidency could not agree on a single common theme and decided thus to derogate from the overarching structure developed under the first Trio Presidency's Cycle (Interview NYC A). The reason was that Poland insisted on having a priority on youth cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries (Council Resolution C 380/1/2012; Interview A). Consequently, the other Presidencies equally opted for their own Priorities, fragmenting the Cycle (Ibidem). The Resolution concluding the Cycle took note of proposals for the further development of SD, including the proposal that young people should be involved from the setting of priorities of each Presidency to monitoring the follow-up and evaluating the implementation of SD (Council Resolution C 380/1/2012)[26]. Though the proposals are a bit more concrete than in the Resolution following the first Cycle the changes are again rather small.

During the third Cycle, the Irish-Lithuanian-Hellenic Trio Presidency chose social inclusion as their common priority. Since the adoption of the Erasmus+ Regulation in 2013, the NWG have been supported through direct and annual grants (Council Resolution C 183/1/2014). The additional funding opportunities help NWG to reinforce their consultation activities in the MS and have generally been well received by CSYO, even though they also reported having procedural issues (ESC 2015).

An assessment made by the YFJ of how many joint recommendations of young people and decision-makers adopted during the EU Youth Conferences of the third Cycle were eventually reflected in Council documents shows sobering results. Findings suggest that during the third Cycle only 15% of the joint recommendations were fully addressed in the subsequent Council Conclusions, 20% partly and 65% of the joint recommendations were not addressed at all.

---

[26] The Resolution specifically calls on Trio Presidencies to engage youth representatives and the Commission in an early consultation prior to proposing the overall thematic priorities. This means that since the 3rd Cycle young people were involved in defining the priorities of the SD. It also suggests other things, inter alia: 1) to make NWG more inclusive, 2) to better disseminate SD results to cross-sectorial stakeholders, 3) to better stress the link between SD and policy-making at EU and national level, 4) to make SD an integral part of the European Youth Week, 5) so provide sustainable financial support for the SD (Council Resolution C 380/1/2012).

Numerically speaking, this even constituted a decline compared to the second Cycle, where roughly 50% of the joint recommendations were fully or partly considered (YFJ 2015). Particularly disappointing for CSYO is the fact that the final Council Resolution did not reflect a single joint recommendation. Only four vague statements were put in the Annex to the Resolution (Council Resolution C 183/1/2014). This exposes a considerably low pick up rate of joint recommendations by the Council and questions the effectiveness of youth participation in SD. Problematic is in particular that the Council did not provide any justification of why it refused to take on board so many joint recommendations (Interview YFJ B).

On the other hand, the Resolution concluding the third Cycle dealt at length with improving SD and proposed a revised structure. Most importantly, the Resolution holds that SD should be linked to the overall thematic priority of a Trio Presidency and it proposes a simplified structure to ensure thematic continuity and a better time management throughout the Cycle. It proposed that under the first Presidency, a common understanding of the thematic priority should be developed through a bottom-up approach. Consultations during the second Presidency should lead to a first set of possible solutions, which should be drawn to the attention of the Council and conclude with recommendations on the thematic priority. Under the third Presidency, concrete actions shall be formulated, which will be submitted to the Council (Council Resolution C 183/1/2014).

While the EU Youth Conferences and the preceding national events remain the primary spaces for dialogue between young people and decision-makers, they now fulfil a distinctive function under each stage of a Cycle. Furthermore, the Resolution very clearly suggests that there has to be a link between the SD process and the deliberations in the Council. Eventually, the Commission and the MS consider a feedback mechanism to young people on the feasibility of the joint recommendations (Council Resolution C 183/1/2014). It goes without saying that the revised structure looks promising with regard to improving the participation of young people in the decision-making processes of the Council. The wording of the Resolution is furthermore more concrete than in the preceding SD Resolutions.

For the 4th Cycle, the Trio Presidency of Italy-Latvia-Luxembourg chose youth empowerment as their common priority (Annex II, Council Resolution C 183/1/2014). It duly implements the revised structure of SD and it is this new structure of the 4th Cycle that serves as the basis for the assessment in this part. Additionally, a general evaluation of SD events is

being made and broader challenges of the SD are pointed out. A limitation is that the 4th Cycle has not been concluded, yet, hence it remains a preliminary assessment.

Before the 4th Cycle started, the incoming Trio Presidency and the Commission jointly agreed on a common priority, which was empowerment of young people. Their proposal was then sent to the NWG and some International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYO), which could comment on the proposed topic. Taking into account the input received, the priority was narrowed down to empowerment for political participation (Interview COM D; YFJ B; Trio Presidency et al. 2014:2)[27]. This implements the provision that Trio Presidencies should engage early in a consultation with youth representatives and the COM prior to proposing the overall thematic priorities (Council Resolution C 380/1/2012). Additionally, Italy chose a separate priority, which is however not relevant in this context (Interview YFJ B).

During the Italian Presidency, the aim was to develop a common understanding and explore the topic of youth empowerment. NWG were invited to organise discussions between youth representatives, decision-makers and other stakeholders in the MS to prepare their delegates for the first EU Youth Conference in Rome on 13-15 October 2014 (Interview COM D; Trio Presidency et al. 2014:3, 13). The ESC then autonomously defined the topics for the workshops of the EU Youth Conference in Rome, which led to a certain tension because the young delegates had the feeling that an important topic has not been considered by the ESC (Interview YFJ B)[28]. Eventually, the young delegates and the representatives from the Commission as well as the national Ministries jointly adopted a so called *Guiding Framework*, which served as the basis for the big consultation conducted under the second Presidency (Interview COM D; Italian Council Presidency 2014)[29]. Directly after the EU Youth Conference

---

[27] *"It was on the basis of the feedback of young people that the topic has been narrowed down to political participation but the topic as such was predefined. It was not an overall consultation on what should the topic be"* (Interview COM D).

[28] *"(…) so I think we had defined seven or eight workshops. We is the ESC, they had defined the workshop with sub-topics, so they had decided what is understood by empowerment of youth for political participation, (…) and the participants were complaining that there was no workshop with to be able to participate politically, (…) meaning that if you don't have a job, if you don't have a housing, you cannot be autonomous from your own parents. You have other things to do than participating politically and being involved. (…) It was conscious, I mean, that was not something that the Presidency wanted to, that the ESC wanted to discuss but the young people did"* (Interview YFJ B).

[29] *"The other good thing about the fourth Cycle is the setting of the guiding framework because that is done jointly with policy-makers and youth representatives, yes. So that's in the spirit of the dialogue, if you like. And it worked reasonably well in Rome"* (Interview COM D).

in Rome, the ESC sent guiding questions, based on the Guiding Framework, to the NWG and INGYO to serve as a basis for the consultation (Trio Presidency et al. 2014:13).

During the next four months and extending into the Latvian Presidency, the NWG and INGYO were given the task to broadly consult young people, decision-makers and other youth stakeholders on the thematic priority. About 40.000 young people were involved in diverse dialogue and consultation settings (Interview COM D; YFJ B; Trio Presidency et al. 2014:3, 13). Some NYC report that they attempted to reach out to non-organised, rural or disadvantaged young people (ESC 2015). This input was then sent to the YFJ, which collated the input into background documents for the EU Youth Conference in Riga on 23-26th March 2015 (Interview COM D; YFJ B; Latvian Council Presidency 2015)[30]. During the EU Youth Conference in Riga, young delegates and decision-makers together adopted joint recommendations (Latvian Council Presidency 2015). These were presented to the YWP and later attached as an annex to a discussion paper, which served as a basis for a public High-Level Policy Debate of Youth Ministers in the Council on 18th of May. Even though the Ministers did not comment on the feasibility of individual recommendations, they frequently referred to them in a general way during their statements (Interview COM D; YFJ B)[31]. This at least partly implemented the new provisions of the framework, namely that the joint recommendations shall be drawn to the attention of the Council during the second Presidency, and that the Commission and the Council could consider a feedback mechanism on the joint recommendations (Council Resolution C 183/1/2014). Eventually, the NWG and INGYO are encouraged to organise again discussions, react to the input from the Ministers and sound out ways to refine the joint recommendations adopted in Riga (Trio Presidency et al. 2014:14).

---

[30] "*The results of the consultation are compiled by the YFJ in a document that is then distributed to all the participants and the facilitators and this is then the background document to which they can refer in their workshop (…)*" (Interview YFJ B).

[31] "*There was a Youth Conference in Latvia where you had joint recommendations that came out. And those joint recommendations were indeed brought to the YWP and to the Council at the occasion of the High-Level Policy Debate, which took place on 18th of May. The Ministers received a discussion paper to which the joint recommendations were attached as an annex but on the same document. (…) and people referred to it and in that case, I mean, they were brought to the attention. That's how it has been implemented. (…) There is a mechanism, there is space where MS are invited to give some input but whether we can call it feedback that's a bit up to interpretation. Because they haven't gone through one recommendation after another to say, this is feasible, this is not feasible. They just said what from their perspective would be a good way to go to tackle youth participation and it happened that they referred to some of the recommendations that emerged in the discussions on the Youth Conference but I don't know, you know, it doesn't mean that they have given feedback*" (Interview YFJ B).

From 4th to 6th May, the Commission organised a Structured Dialogue Conference during the European Youth Week, as it is foreseen in the revised framework and with a view to reflecting on the SD as a process (COM 2015d; Interview COM D). A consultation of the YFJ among its membership was conducted, the input collated and this so called SD Map Out then served as one of the background documents for the discussions of young delegates and decision-makers (ESC 2015). They finally adopted joint recommendations on how to improve the SD (COM 2015f) and the Luxembourgish Presidency committed to reflecting them in the Resolution concluding the Cycle (Interview COM D)[32].

What is still to happen under the Luxembourgish Presidency is that young delegates and decision-makers jointly refine the Riga recommendations on the basis of the additional comments received by the NWG and adopt the final recommendations during the EU Youth Conference in Luxembourg (Trio Presidency et al. 2014:14). The representatives from Luxembourg further committed that the (draft) recommendations will be one source of inspiration for the Council Resolution adopted by the Council at the end of their Presidency, concluding the 4th SD Cycle (Interview YFJ B)[33].

Generally, the revised structure, including the reduced number of consultations and policy documents, is welcomed among the stakeholders. Reasons that have been mentioned, are: a) a reduced administrative burden for all involved actors due to a reduced number of consultations, b) more time to organise dialogue events during the consultation and connected to that an increased outreach, c) less policy documents allow to better monitor the implementation of the SD outcomes on national level, d) a better alignment of the SD and the OMC in the youth field (Interview COM D; YFJ B)[34].

---

[32] "*This is why you saw Luxembourg appear both in the opening and in the closing session in the [Conference], to tell the people before the show started, yes, something will happen with what you agree and [the representative from Luxembourg], who was there, doing the same at the end, saying, yes, we are committed to reflect that in the Resolution. You need that agreement*" (Interview COM D).

[33] "*The YFJ has been discussing with the Luxembourgish that they will take [the joint recommendations] into account and the Luxembourgish promised that it will be one of the sources to draft the first draft*" (Interview YFJ B).

[34] "*I think, above all, that [the fourth Cycle] has increased the outreach. I think that this is not just something that is important for the Commission but it is something that is important to the whole process. For the credibility of the process (…) Now you have the focus on a single topic, throughout the Cycle. That is a big improvement. Because this also means, also from the point of view of youth organisations that it becomes a little bit easier to handle. In the old days, dealing with consultations every six months of sometimes quite different topics, some of which were quite specific, has not, I think, made it easier for youth organisations either to organize the way they work with it*" (Interview COM D).

Following the assessment of the current structure of SD, this part examines the participation of young delegates in the context of EU Youth Conferences, which are *the* occasion of political participation and dialogue at EU level.

Drawing from the Map Out it can be said that in the vast majority of cases, the NYC nominate their three young delegates for the EU Youth Conference among those who were actively participating during the consultations on national level. While some NYC appoint their delegates for up to two or three years, others select theirs on a more ad hoc basis (ESC 2015, Interview YFJ B). Generally, the Presidency countries, when sending out their invitation to the EU Youth Conference, ask the NYC to send people who know the process and who have been involved in the consultation (Interview COM D)[35]. Almost all NYC organise preparatory meetings to make their delegates understand the SD, the methodology at the EU Youth Conference and they do ensure that these young people can represent the national consultations (ESC 2015; Interview NYC B). Additionally, the first session during the EU Youth Conference, the so called youth delegates' session, is typically preparatory in nature and devoted to informing the delegates about the Conference and the SD process in general (Interview YFJ B)[36].

"*Then the rhythm has improved a lot. It is less stressful, there is more time, much more time than before, to go in-depth in the topic. There is only one outcome instead of four before. Four Council Conclusions just makes it impossible to monitor and follow-up. So with one every Cycle it makes it possible to consider monitoring. I think that it's better in terms of timing, it's better for in terms of time for consultation as well. Since it was every six months, you had about a month, a month and a half to carry out consultations. (…) They now have four months to carry out the consultations. (…) there is more coherence between what is working at the EU Youth Conference and what is happening at the YWP. Before it was just ridiculous because the time of the EU Youth Conference was happening, already the YWP has been working on a draft, quite advanced draft, meaning that it was already very advanced work in the YWP and then you had the EUYC and it is just harder to fit in. So I think now, the Luxembourgish who are in charge of drafting the Council Resolution, haven't started yet and they already have a basis, they already have a draft set of recommendations [from the EU Youth Conference in Riga]*" (Interview YFJ B).

[35] "*(…) when the invitations are sent to them, it is normally spelled out by the Presidency and it is the Presidency who invites, not the Commission, yes, that there should be people who know about the process, who were involved in the consultation and bla, bla, bla. Can represent the position*" (Interview COM D).

[36] "*I don't think that the youth delegates have enough information. I think we try to explain them always at the beginning … last time we had [the representative from Luxembourg] to explain them a bit the political process going on but you know, it is the plenary room at the very beginning and not everybody is listening. Those who are listening maybe don't have the basis to understand even that there is a Council, you know. (…) So we have tried to make power-point documents to make a presentation but it is something that takes time and I think it's also about the NWG to explain the delegates but I think the NWG also not necessarily understand everything because it's quite complex. (…) I think we really try to inform them as much as we can, through email, an explanation on the spot but I think that there are still some delegates who are not clear with what happens after and now that the process has changed also we really try to explain at the beginning at each EU Youth Conference, there is a session called the youth delegates' session, where we really spend time on that and explain the process*" (Interview YFJ B).

In practice however, the picture is mixed. While some experienced delegates may indeed know the process and perhaps even understand the link to the OMC, many delegates clearly do not, despite the efforts to make them understand. This is for the most part, it seems, due to structural challenges, for instance that: a) structured dialogue is a complex process, b) which is continuously being revised, c) linked to the OMC, another complex process, and eventually d) there is a high turnover rate among the young delegates. Young delegates are certainly not helped by the fact that some NYC themselves have difficulties to fully understand the process (Interview COM D; NYC B; YFJ B)[37].

It is widely held among the interviewees that the SD offers young people and CSYO the opportunity to present the findings of their national consultation in the topic of the workshop they have been assigned to during the EU Youth Conference or the European Youth Week. Furthermore, there is a broad agreement that young delegates have a lot of influence over the joint recommendations (Interview COM D; NYC B; YFJ B). However, this is mostly because they regularly outnumber the representatives from the Ministries, partly because the ratio is anyways skewed towards young people and partly because the Ministerial delegates do not always participate in the EU Youth Conference, although they are invited to do so. It is consistently held that while the representatives of some MS are very committed to the process, others are clearly not and in some cases a lack of funding in the respective Youth Ministry plays a role as well (Interview COM D; YFJ B)[38]. Obviously, this is a bad sign for

---

[37] "*Yes, maybe the [young delegates] are [aware of the mechanisms of the OMC] but I think it is not easy for them, as it is for us to be reflect what it means because if you do a big process, a big process like SD and the consultation rounds and collect the opinions then you have a very less output from it. It's frustrating, of course*" (Interview NYC B).
"*I am not so sure [if young people are aware of the mechanisms of the OMC]. (…) maybe in general not but again, we like to think that the NWG are prepared and some of them certainly are and some of them are certainly not but there the NWG really do have a role to play because getting them to represent the outcomes at national level, of what we have talked about before, is important*" (Interview COM D).
"*Yes, and then you explain to the [young delegates] and then they change, so, you have to explain all the time (…) Some countries, they keep the same delegates for two-three years, some countries go and change every Cycle, even every Conference. I think there is a very different knowledge amongst the participants*" (Interview YFJ B).
[38] "*I have seen it because in Rome it was really a very, very low participation of decision-makers because meaning that decision-makers would just come for the first workshop but would not come at the other ones. So usually for each topic you have seven or eight slots. So they would come to the first one and then they would just leave. So there was a very low participation of decision-makers, so it was mostly young people discussing amongst themselves. (…) You have some committed countries that send somebody that is there for the whole time participating, you have some countries like [MS] that doesn't*" (Interview YFJ B).
"*No. [Decision-makers do not participate in SD events] (…). There is no doubt about that. The statistics are available and sometimes, not recently but there were times when you could see decision-makers returning from sightseeing, shopping or whatever the word is, yes. And rather than being in the room. (…) But I think there is one reason why I think that this is a problem and I think there is also a lack of interest in some cases. Some MS, yours is a very good example, who will never miss a second of a Youth Conference and who are very firm. (…) But it is*

responsiveness. During the Conferences, the young delegates adopt recommendations but little participation from the Ministry side often translates into recommendations that "lack realism" and are immediately dismissed for formal or political reasons in the YWP (Interview COM D)[39]. There is an apparent lack of dialogue on the feasibility of the joint recommendations during the Conferences. On this, the interviewees reported that the Latvian Presidency and the ESC put a lot of effort into making Ministry representatives participate in the EU Youth Conference in Riga and indeed, the participation has been described as being better than ever before (Interview COM D)[40].

Responsiveness also requires a brief estimation of how much the joint recommendations adopted at EU Youth Conferences eventually influence the Council documents. The interviewees unanimously agree that the Council took particularly few joint recommendations on board during the 3rd Cycle, which peaked in the Resolution concluding the Cycle containing only four vague recommendations in the annex. This is confirmed by the evaluation of the YFJ (Interview COM D; YFJ B; see: annex II, YFJ 2015)[41]. However, there is some optimism sensible

---

not across the board because there are some MS who are there from the first minute to the last minute without exception. And then there are others who are not. (…) I mean [funding] is another issue. To send two people to Riga for five days, if you live in [MS], this is expensive. The [MS] were not in Riga either, for the same reason. I mean they had no funding available. The youth people will always be there because we pay for them, yes. So but we cannot under the financial regulations of the EU pay for MS officials" (Interview COM D).
"I mean the ratio between youth representatives and [Ministry representatives] is probably a bit too big, yes. And of course, that is not helped by the fact that some of them are not there, no" (Interview COM D).

[39] *"[I]t would have sometimes perhaps been useful if the MS in the EU Youth Conferences, when they adopted final recommendations that they would have said, no come on, this it no happening. And you know, realistic recommendations is what it should be all about because if they are not, people will start dismissing it at the political level. (…) [O]f course, [if it is not realistic] many delegations in the YWP will say, sorry, this is something we cannot consider because it is not in my Minister's competence. (…) The same people who sit [in the YWP] and say 'what is this?' are the same people who were quite happy to let it go through as a joint recommendation at the Youth Conference, yes. It is always a little bit of a joke and I often remind them about it but it is true. It is true"* (Interview COM D).

[40] *"And in Riga there was the kind of change of mindsets and the ones that were here were really active, participating the whole time (…). [Ministry representatives] feel a bit more the ownership, that they also have the responsibility to say to young people no if they go too far or if the recommendation is not feasible but it's work in progress but I would say that it has improved a lot"* (Interview YFJ B).
"I think, and coming back again to the 4th Cycle, at least the signs are better now. There was a good participation in Riga. There was also, I think, a good intervention, we discussed it in some length in the preparatory meeting and (…) the chair of the ESC gave the first speech in the opening session and really hammered home how important it was to have the input of [Ministry representatives] and he talked a lot of, two days before, of how, I mean we have instructed the facilitators, you must stop the discussion, you must ask the [Ministry representatives]: how do you feel about that? Do you think this is a realistic option? There was really a lot of effort put into making [them] feel at home, yes" (Interview COM D).

[41] *"That was very disappointing for the Commission as well. (…) And putting, putting the outcomes of SD in an Annex, I mean, it's a very bad sign and I am pretty sure that this will never happen again. (…) Putting the recommendations into the Annex was a very bad day for SD and I think everybody realized that"* (Interview YFJ B).

that the Council will take more joint recommendations on board in the 4th Cycle. Partly because the revised structure makes it easier for the YWP to consider them, partly because the decision-makers were keen to participate during the EU Youth Conference in Riga. This presumably led to more "realistic" recommendations and the decision-makers may also feel more ownership over them (Interview COM D; YFJ B).

There is limited evidence that the outcomes of SD are mainstreamed in other policy areas. One thing that has been mentioned is that the chosen topic already predetermines whether a topic is relevant at all for cross-sectorial fields of action. Another problem is that there is no robust mechanism of cross-sectorial cooperation, neither at EU level, nor in the MS. While there have undoubtedly emerged policies like the Youth Guarantee, which have also been discussed during SD events, it is hardly possible to determine whether they have been influenced by SD or not (Interview COM D; MS A; NYC B; YFJ B)[42]. On the other hand, a recommendation from the European Youth Week advises the Trio Presidency to early on identify and involve relevant representatives from cross-sectorial policy fields in the SD. This, however, has not yet been implemented (COM 2015f; Interview YFJ B)[43]. On the MS level, about two third of NYC report that they regularly have contact with other Ministries than the one responsible for youth but rarely is there a permanent and structured participation of these Ministries in SD. Furthermore, a number of NYC perceived it as a considerable challenge to involve other Ministries (ESC 2015).

Talking about feedback, the picture is quite mixed again. For the 4th Cycle, the Commission set up an online consultation platform, where NWG can host their consultations. Through an automatic identification of key words, the platform allows the users to see, which of their ideas advanced in the national consultation made it into the joint recommendations at the EU

---

[42] "*I think we have no good practices so far. Some people talk about the Youth Guarantee but it is not even sure that the Youth Guarantee is coming from the SD, it has been mentioned throughout the process of the SD when it was employment as a priority. But it was also discussed apparently in the S&D Group. So we don't know what is the truth. (…) I think [cross-sectorial outreach] has to improve a lot because I think right now nobody knows the SD other than the people who work in the YWP. It's not discussed in other Council formations, which can be relevant to the topic*" (Interview YFJ B).
"*The answer to that I think is yes and no. (…) but it depends a little bit on the topic I think. If the next topic is going to be something around inclusion, which is possible, then it offers greater opportunities for being cross-sectorial I think*" (Interview YFJ B).
[43] "*There is actually a recommendation coming from the European Youth Week on that, that advises the Trio Presidency and the ESC at the beginning to identify the stakeholders that are relevant for the topic and to involve them the whole time, notably inviting them to the EU Youth Conference, write the experts from those fields, disseminating the information to those fields, etc., etc.*" (Interview YFJ B).

Youth Conference. A drawback is however, that it took the Commission quite a while to set it up and that only five NWG relied on the platform during the 4th Cycle (Interview YFJ B)[44]. Furthermore, the YFJ in the past compared the joint recommendations with the Council Resolution/Conclusions, drew up a report on which joint recommendations were reflected in the Council document and sent it to the NWG. In the past, the Council did rarely provide any feedback on how it dealt with the joint recommendations. However, the Luxembourgish Presidency is said to have committed to report back to the EU Youth Conference delegates, which of their recommendations has been taken on board and why others could not be reflected (Interview YFJ B)[45].

Eventually, there is the case of implementation and monitoring. According to one interviewee, the upcoming EU Youth Report will show that about half the MS are using structures to implement outcomes, which is an increase compared with 2012 (Interview COM D)[46]. A downside of the EU Youth Report is that it is not fine-grained enough to really monitor the implementation of the SD outcomes. It is rather MS reporting on how they generally reflects EU youth policy in their national context.

The interviewee furthermore stresses that the NWG are responsible to convey the SD outcomes at national level to ensure their implementation. They also receive a grant under Erasmus+ to monitor the implementation of the results (Interview COM D)[47]. On the other

---

[44] "*OK, the Commission has an online participation platform, which is this online platform where the different NWG can host their consultation and then automatic, thanks to key words, a process that says which one of the ideas were kept in the recommendations. (…) but the online platform has really taken a long time before it has been working well, I would say. Right now we only had four or five countries that used it this time*" (Interview YFJ B).

[45] "*For now there is no follow-up and monitoring for the SD. The only thing that is being done is that the YFJ until now was doing the comparison between the Council Conclusions and the joint recommendations. Now it should be done by the Trio Presidency. (…) they haven't done it yet but they have committed to do so, to justify why some of the recommendations were followed up and why others were not*" (Interview YFJ B).

[46] "*[T]here is evidence there from about half the MS that they are using structures to implement outcomes. It's a good development. It's an increase compared with 2012, the last time we did it. So hopefully this is something that will improve (…)*" (Interview COM D).

[47] "*But there is a certain role for the NWG again. And on the NWG sit also the Ministry. The one who agreed in the Council to adopt this, is in most cases also, not the Minister of course but the civil servant or whoever it is in the Youth Department, also in the NWG. And I think the NWG are much more active now at trying to promote the outcomes also at national level. Don't forget, it is still a fairly new process, yes, and in some countries it is something completely new. I mean, there was not much SD in the whole of Eastern Europe, no. (…) The Commission has set the NWG a monitoring task in the context of the grants, which are being paid. Monitoring was also one of the outcomes of the [SD] review, the big one of 2013, the formal one, if you like, which was not picked up by the Council. We then in the Commission said, OK, we give it as task to the NWG. (…) I think some of them are [monitoring]. I mean, we will receive their reports on the grants, that is a better time for evaluating (…)*" (Interview COM D).

hand, it has been pointed out that there is no formal monitoring system and that the NWG already complain about a very high workload. This is not even to talk about the structural difficulties of clearly identifying the influence of SD on national level (Interview YFJ B)[48]. In practice, it can be observed that almost all NWG do follow-up SD results in some way or another but there is hardly any NWG that implements a systematic mechanism to monitor the implementation. Additionally, around a third of the NWG expressly stated that the improvement of follow-up and monitoring capacities is one of the major challenges they face (ESC 2015).

Wrapping up these reflections, a set of general pitfalls to an effective participation of CSYO in SD are discussed. For CSYO the SD is a very complex mechanism, which deploys inaccessible language, requires expert knowledge and entails an enormous work load. It is a slightly paradox situation that CSYO formally chair a process that many of the young participants do not fully understand[49]. This contrasts with the lack of visibility of the SD outcomes and their implementation in the MS (ESC 2015; Interview NYC B; YFJ B)[50]. Despite these drawbacks, CSYO value the SD, in particular because it stimulates dialogue between young people and decision-makers at national, regional and local level (Interview NYC B; YFJ B)[51]. After all, even though the record of the SD in terms of results may not be exactly breath-taking, things do not look that gloomy when SD is set into perspective. Since its very beginning, the SD steadily

---

[48] *"Yes, they will have a hard time and there are two things here. One thing is that there are no processes. No formal mechanism to have this information because it does require cooperation of the NWG who complain over having already a huge workload but there is no formal system. (…) The second thing is that it is always very difficult. It is difficult because you don't know if a proposed policy reform being implemented at national level has been implemented because there was a Council Conclusion saying so because, come on, it is just soft law, so is it a real incentive or not? We learned that for some countries it is clearly not an incentive"* (Interview YFJ B).

[49] *Both the ESC and the vast majority of NWG are chaired by the YFJ or the NYC respectively.*

[50] *"[I]t does allow to have some influence but I wouldn't say that it is effective because the decision-making competences on the European level are very, very low or very small and for that it's really big and huge process, which has not a real big impact. But the positive thing on that is that the NYC but also in Germany the local youth councils get involved into the process and get in touch with decision-makers so this is a good tool"* (Interview NYC B).

"I think this is one of the biggest challenges that there is no visibility of what is the purpose and the impact of this process" (Interview YFJ B).

[51] *"I think it is somewhere in the middle because I think it is one of the rare processes where there is really a discussion happening at the local and the regional level"* (Interview YFJ B).

"(…) I think [SD] is something that we cannot drop and say, OK it does not work, so let's just move on with another tool. I think it's a great thing that you really have to work a lot with the decision-makers, with the Presidency and you have to increase the quality of the proposals, you have to find a way to have the recommendations being the base of the discussion in the YWP, you have to have something that is realistic" (Interview YFJ B).

progressed and there is some evidence that the current Presidency will carry on and further refine the process. This thesis evaluates but a snapshot in an ongoing process.

Table 3 below presents the findings of this chapter. Summing up the table, it can be said that the SD does not allow CSYO to effectively participate in EU youth politics (numerical Ø: +0,74). However, it can be observed that the SD has a very strong input dimension, meaning that it is a comparatively inclusive mechanism that supplies CSYO with solid opportunities to participate. There is, so to say, an emphasis on dialogue. To illustrate the outreach of the SD, it has to be recalled that 40.000 young people were involved during the 4th Cycle and that there is evidence that the SD also reaches beyond the organised and well-integrated young people (ESC 2015).

Less impressive is however the output side of the SD and this is also why the model leads to a negative assessment of effective participation of CSYO. The SD informs the OMC in the youth field, which produces soft policies that shall guide the development of national policies but their implementation is hardly monitored. Additionally, the consensual nature of the OMC, its application to 28 different realities in the MS and the heterogeneous membership of youth organisations mouths in abstract youth policies at EU level.

Connected with a lack of visibility of the outcomes, this can be frustrating for young people. However, two things should be taken into consideration. First, the SD came a long way and in particular the latest revision simplified the process, it provides more time for conducting the consultation and allows to better monitor a reduced number of outcomes. Second, it should not be expected that the MS will devise robust implementation and monitoring mechanisms in the near future because it would call the distribution of competences in the youth field into question. Youth Policy remains a competence of the MS and thus, under the given circumstances, the SD lives up to its potential fairly well. A way forward could be to strengthen the dialogue at national or even sub-national level and tie it to more robust implementation mechanisms. This is further discussed in the conclusion to this thesis.

Table 3: Effective participation of CSYO in EU youth politics through Structured Dialogue.

	Stage of the decision-making process			
	Agenda-setting	Decision-making	Implementation	Evaluation
Participation	CSYO are able to comment on the common priority of the Trio Presidency preceding the Cycle; young delegates jointly set the guiding framework with decision-makers in EU Youth Conference in Rome where they could present the views of their national discussions. This means a number of opportunities, written input and direct interaction and relatively formalised process – all three indicators good (+2)	Young people were able to participate in various national consultation settings. Young delegates were able to present the results of their national consultation in the EU Youth Conference in Riga. Multiple conferences, written input and direct interaction, very formalised process – all three indicators good (+2)	YFJ chairs the ESC and NYC chair the NWG. They can bring forward their views of how to implement the SD outcomes. NWG formally also have the task to monitor the implementation. So CSYO can present their views when the implementation is prepared, though there is little evidence that this continues when policies actually are implemented. Multiple sessions, only one format (no written participation) but formalised (+1)	Young delegates could also participate in the European Youth Week Conference and NWG could send input for the background document. Multiple opportunities, written input and direct interaction, very formalised process – all three indicators good (+2)
Inclusiveness	NYC, YFJ and some INGYO involved in setting common priority; young delegates participate in setting guiding framework but no wide consultation. CSYO had same opportunities but the mechanisms are not directed at a very broad audience. CSYO consulted their members (+1)	About 40.000 young people participated in the consultations and there is some evidence that some NYC also tried to include non-organised and disadvantaged young people. Young delegates participated in Riga. No other interest groups involved, mechanism directed at a very broad audience, CSYO consulted members (+2)	NYC and YFJ participate in the preparation of the implementation. Mechanism is directed at a limited number of CSYO. Unclear if the involved CSYO consult their members (0)	NWG sent delegates to the European Youth Week Conference. NYC contributed to SD Map Out but no broad consultation. CSYO had same opportunities but the mechanisms are not directed at a very broad audience. CSYO consulted their members (+1)
Transparency	Generally, NWG inform their delegates and the ESC also informs delegates during the EU Youth Conference.	Generally, NWG inform their delegates and the ESC also informs delegates during the EU Youth Conference. However,	This is clearly difficult. First, young delegates receive very little information on the implementation of SD outcomes.	Generally NWG inform their delegates and the Commission also informs the delegates during the European Youth

	However, delegates may still not be aware of the process. More importantly in this case is that the workshops in Rome were predefined by the ESC and there is reason to believe that the young delegates were not informed about the basis of this decision. It is not clear on what basis the Trio Presidency suggested the common priority in the first place. Hence not all information available but effort to inform young delegates about the process (0)	delegates may still not be aware of the process. This time, however, they could partly see what happened with their input at the occasion of the High-Level Policy Debate. For the Council, this was comparatively transparent. However, it is less visible for them that the input is conveyed into the YWP. Information on the decision-making process was provided but it is only partly clear to the participants what happens with their input (+1)	The only tool for now is the EU Youth Report but it assesses the impact of EU youth policy on the MS more broadly. There is no clear follow-up and monitoring mechanism. NWG rarely have a robust follow-up and monitoring strategy. If the NWG are able to provide some monitoring due to the new grants remains to be seen. There is little information available on the implementation and EU institutions also don't make an effort to provide them. (-1)	Week Conference. However, delegates may still not be aware of the process. In particular because the European Youth Week is organised only once per Cycle and delegates may thus be less aware of the processes than during the EU Youth Conference. Information is available but institutions must put more effort into providing it. It is also less clear what happens with the input, only the promise of Luxembourg to "reflect" it in the Resolution (0)
Responsiveness	The Council took on board the input of CSYO when setting the common priorities and the guiding framework. However, there were few decision-makers at the EU Youth Conference in Rome, which means that there was little dialogue on the feasibility of the joint recommendations during the Conference. Hence only few decision-makers actively reflected on the input received (0)	During the EU Youth Conference in Riga and the European Youth Week Conference, decision-makers were actively engaged. The Latvian Presidency presented the joint recommendations to the YWP and the Council at the occasion of the High-Level Policy Debate. However, Ministers did not comment on the feasibility of individual recommendations but more broadly. Limitation: It cannot be said, yet, how responsive the Council will be under the LU Presidency when the Resolution is adopted (+1)	Very difficult to assess due to a lack of information. EU Youth Report points to about half the MS having structures to implement SD results. But then, there is no justification whatsoever given by the MS. There is not much evidence that MS actively reflect on the input received through SD either (-1)	During the European Youth Week Conference, the LU Presidency committed to reflecting the joint recommendations in the Council Resolution but this remains to be seen. Thus this cell is not assessed.

6. Youth Participation in the Revision of the Action Programme

This chapter of the thesis researches the participation of CSYO spanning the decision-making process on Erasmus+, which has been adopted in 2013. As the Erasmus+ Regulation is part of the negotiations on the budgetary perspectives of the EU, the chapter also explores, where necessary, the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 (MFF). It starts off with pinpointing the initial position of CSYO, goes on to describe the decision-making process in detail and eventually applies the concepts developed above.

At the occasion of the general assembly of the YFJ in November 2010, the membership of the YFJ adopted a position paper on the future youth programme, which was consequently used as a basis for the YFJ's advocacy work (Interview YFJ C; YFJ 2010)[52]. This position was based on a broad consultation among the member organisations of the YFJ. A couple of key claims can be identified, including that: a) the youth programme should remain an independent programme, b) the budget should increase from 885€ million to 1€ billion, c) there needs to be reliable support to youth organisations and more long-term programmes, d) the programme should support the implementation of policies like 'Youth on the Move', e) the administrative burden should be reduced, f) the programme should take a pan-European approach and also allow non-EU CSYO to participate, g) CSYO should co-manage the implementation of the programme at all levels (COM 2011c:11; YFJ 2010). It has been stressed in one of the interviews that the YFJ and the membership failed to spell out a clear vision on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and how other programmes could support young people. This had negative repercussions for the YFJ's advocacy work because there was no official position they could convey to the institutions (Interview YFJ C)[53]. Due to limited number of resources, the thesis is constraint to the analysis of the position of the YFJ and its

---

[52] "*But anyways, we adopted our official position on the future programme, it was General Assembly 2010, with the Youth in Action 2.0 position paper or how it was called. So basically, that was the position that we based all our advocacy and work on the future programme on*" (Interview YFJ C).

[53] "*Because the problem was also at once that the YFJ did not have a comprehensive view on how the MFF in general should look like and what would be a good deal for young people from it. So that was really problematic for me as a lobby spear because we only focused at the youth programme and we didn't look at the MFF as a whole and we didn't think about what other programmes and what other budget lines could support young people. (…) Well there was a problem all the time in the beginning because the EP and the Council were talking about the MFF in general and were discussing about different headlines but then the programme are under the headlines. So it would have made much more sense that the YFJ would have had also a position about the MFF*" (Interview YFJ C).

membership. The choice can be justified, since the YFJ comprises all the NYC and a number of INGYO, which makes it the most representative CSYO platform in the EU.

After the initial position of CSYO is presented, the thesis moves on to closely trace the decision-making process leading to the adoption of Erasmus+. The process was initiated by the launch of the Impact Assessment through the Commission in June 2010, which was completed in the second half of 2011 (COM 2011c:5). During the Impact Assessment, the Commission did two things: a) it evaluated the predecessor programmes, including 'Youth in Action', on the basis of a report conducted by an external evaluator (ECORYS) and the reports from the MS, b) it broadly consulted on its upcoming Proposal, again supported by an external evaluator (ECORYS) (COM 2011c:6; COM 2011f:4). This chapter first outlines the evaluation activities and goes then on to briefly assess the consultation process.

Already in January 2010, the Commission conducted a survey among a sample of 4550 programme participants, which was complemented by an online questionnaire conducted by the contracted evaluator (ECORYS 2011a) in June 2010 among a sample of 3920 young participants. Additionally, the online questionnaire was targeted at a control group of 2000 non-participating young people (COM 2011f:4). Moreover, in-depth interviews and focus groups complemented the research, whereby the external evaluator broadly collected information, including from CSYO representatives (ECORYS 2011a:42). Both the report of the external evaluator and the Commission report are available and they allow for a good level of transparency, when it comes to assessing who had the chance to input into the evaluation. CSYO had similar opportunities to present their views than other stakeholders.

The external evaluator recommended to: a) better integrate the Youth in Action Programme by reducing the (sub-) actions of the Programme, b) consider to gear the programme more towards employability and other programmes focused on employment, c) keep the balance between the support of CSYO and funding for individuals, d) consider how to improve the efficiency of the programme and reduce the administrative burden for applicants, e) to establish a monitoring system, including a possibility for users to contribute to the development of the programme (ECORYS 2011a:131-134). Generally, the Commission observed that both young people and national authorities were very satisfied with the Youth in Action programme, that it effectively met its objectives and that the administrative costs are appropriate (COM 2011f:4-7).

In May 2011, the external evaluator then presented its report on the public consultation on the future European youth programme (ECORYS 2011b). It was based on 4401 individual and 2386 institutional responses, whereby about two-thirds of the individual responses came from young people, aged 13-30. The vast majority of individual respondents has a CSYO background (87%) (ECORYS 2011b:13). Particularly interesting for this thesis is that about 40% of the respondents were in favour of continuing the Programme as it was, 43% preferred a separate but more integrated Programme, while only 17% were in favour of merging it with the Lifelong Learning programme (ECORYS 2011b:35). Correspondingly, the public consultations on other programmes of the Commission Directorate General Education and Culture, notably on the future Lifelong Learning Programme came to similar results. All sectoral stakeholders tended to prefer more integrated but separate programmes (GHK 2011:39; Interview COM C).

In public statements, Commissioner Vassiliou repeatedly stated that her preferred option is a separate youth programme (Interview COM C)[54]. Furthermore, in its Resolution on a future MFF, the European Parliament in June 2011 expressly demanded a reinforced investment into youth and that the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action programmes remain separate (Rec. 104 Resolution 2010/2011(INI)). However, the Commission decided differently.

In its Communication A Budget for Europe 2020, published in late June 2011, the Commission proposed to merge the programmes in the education and youth sector into a single programme with the objective to rationalise and simplify the current structure (COM 2011d:16f.). All sub-programmes were sought to be eliminated (COM 2011e:30). This happened in the context of a general imperative to merge programmes, to simplify the implementation and to install output-based conditionality mechanisms (COM 2011d:8).

In the ensuing Proposal by the Commission establishing the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, called "*Erasmus for all*" and adopted in November 2011, the merger is further motivated. The Proposal is framed along the lines of: a) prioritising investment into human capital to reach the objectives of Europe 2020, b) streamlining actions, simplification of rules and rationalisation to lower the implementation costs, c) exploiting "economies of scale" by merging programmes with similar content and implementation

---

[54] *"Now on this specific case of Erasmus+, I am tempted to think that Ms. Vassiliou was honest, stating that her preferred option, she said it several times, was a specific programme of Youth in Action"* (Interview COM C).

structures, d) insisting on a high spending flexibility and allocating the funds based on the performance of the actions and recipients, while ensuring minimum allocation levels (COM 2011b:2-4; 44, 45). With its Proposal, the Commission decided to diametrically oppose the input of CSYO and other stakeholders. De facto, it took an autonomous decision and deliberately disregarded both the consultation and the evaluation.

At this point, a short excursion is in order. It has to be recalled that budgetary negotiations are a two-level bargain, one on the overall level and structure of expenditure, the other on the specific legal bases for the programmes implementing the budgetary framework (MFF). These negotiations take place almost simultaneously and the specific legal bases can only be adopted, once the negotiations on the MFF have been concluded (EUCO 2011; Interview COM C)[55]. Furthermore, the broader circumstances of the Commission's Proposal have to be taken into account. The negotiations on the MFF and what later became Erasmus+ took place in a context of crisis, in which some MS clearly stated the view that the MFF needs to reflect the fiscal consolidation efforts made at national level (EUCO 2011).

Under Barroso, the Commissioners were thus asked to simplify, streamline and merge their programmes with a view to safeguarding the Commission's proposal on the MFF (Interview COM C)[56]. There is robust evidence that in spring or summer 2011 the management of DG Education and Culture made the strategic decision to propose the merger of its programmes. Interviewees hold that this step was taken mainly bearing in mind the budgetary prospects of the programme and this for the following reasons: a) complying with the demands of Barroso fortified the negotiation position of DG EAC within the Commission, b) the programmes could be subsumed under the "Erasmus"-brand, the name of a well-known programme that is broadly perceived as being very successful, c) there was a thematic overlap of the youth and

---

[55] *"You have to work on two levels at the same time. People work on the financial perspectives, the legal has been prepared sometimes already agreed by the institutions with sometimes only a blank in the articles of how much they will be given"* (Interview COM C).

[56] *"The general mood in the Commission was that we should not go for too many separate programmes but to really merge (…) Ahm, it was obviously difficult, in the period of crisis, for the Commission to come with a proposal for the new financial perspective. (…) And for many reasons coming with an increase of the MFF, compared with the period before was surely felt by Barroso as difficult. So a way to nevertheless, I will not say blur the package proposed but to objectively and quite rightly so built on synergies, on simplification and things like that. (…) [I]t's true that there was a strong pressure from Barroso for simplification and streamlining everywhere, not just for youth, not for DG EAC. If you take the number of programmes that existed in 2013 and the number of programmes, which are more or less the same in 2014, you will see a strong reduction and by the way, we talk about youth but seven programmes were merged within Erasmus+, not just Erasmus and Youth in Action"* (Interview COM C).

education programmes (Interview COM C; YFJ C)[57]. Even though this decision was maybe strategically wise, the Commission was neither responsive to the views of CSYO, nor was the basis of the decision made transparent.

With hindsight to the merger, it is particularly problematic that the evidence suggests that CSYO were not aware of the mechanisms and procedures of the budgetary negotiations (Interview NYC B; YFJ C)[58]. They neither had a clear position on the MFF, nor did they develop an advocacy strategy during the agenda-setting process. Furthermore, the interviewees hold that it was rather difficult to get access to decision-makers responsible for the budget, even though they report some exchange of views (Interview NYC B; YFJ C)[59]. Consequently, it can be inferred that their influence on the MFF was very limited.

---

[57] "*But because they merged the Programme, they were able to propose a much, much bigger budget for the Programme and so in a sense it was a wise move from DG EAC to do this. And second of all, Youth in Action Programme is not very well known of. Erasmus Programme is extremely well-known Programme, so it was not so … a smart move from them to brand it Erasmus. Because, well, the Heads of States know what the Erasmus is and well in general, people think this it's a great Programme*" (Interview YFJ C).
"*[A reflection of Ms. Vassiliou may have been], if I play the game of merging seven Programmes, yes, indeed within the negotiations on the size of all the Programmes underlining the Proposal of the Commission on the MFF in June 2011, maybe would be seen favourable by Barroso and get a bigger fund. I mean, this was the kind of thigs were said in many speeches by Vassiliou or Prats-Monné [the Director General of DG EAC], (…) we have done a lot to support the idea that by merging we would cut the administrative costs, we would save administrative expenditure, we would have better programs because there will be synergies and things like that. (…) we have effective Programmes which support priorities in EU 2020. (…) I can only say that, indeed, budgetary speaking, we were much better served by being in the category [one of expenditure] and drawn by Erasmus than we would have been, if we would have been treated as a separate youth Programme under category three, I think*" (Interview COM C).
[58] "*To be honest, youth organisations, our members, did not understand at all the link [between the Youth Programme and the MFF]. And that's why I say that the Youth Forum should have a position on the MFF and then on the Programme, so that the members would understand that the Programme is part of a bigger process and that when the EU budget is cut, then obviously, you would think that the Programmes are cut as well. (…) So that was very problematic that, first of all we didn't have a comprehensive understanding about the MFF. Nobody had looked at the different Programmes, the different budget lines of the MFF, nobody had an understanding that the Programmes the EU has could support young people in the future*" (Interview YFJ C).
"*Yes, I think [that the link to the MFF made the participation challenging] because it was the first time I got in touch with the MFF and I think for many people who are not involved in financial processes at the European level, it is not very easy to get into this topic and to combine it with a lobbying process on an education Programme. So this was not very easy because, yes … and also the discussion about the MFF was very hard in the media in the public opinion and this was also a point that … it was not easy for us, I think*"(Interview NYC B).
[59] "*[It was not really easy to get access to DG Budget]. Basically what we did when it comes to DG Budget and the Commissioner for Budget, we exchanged letters, basically. (…) But our general problem is in the youth field that we mainly know our Youth Minister, we know our Youth Commissioner and those people are not very powerful*" (Interview YFJ C).
"*Yes, it was very difficult … Oh, wait, we had one, I just remember, Rainer Böge who is a MEP with, I think he did the budget plans also and I think this was easy to get him because he was a member of one of our or he was vice-president of the German rural youth, so he was aware of our structures and we could get an appointment with him. But this was the only responsible person we could address for the financial plan*" (Interview NYC B).

CSYO were by no means happy with the Proposal from the Commission. Primarily they were worried about the fact that the programmes were merged and that the Proposal did not even include a separate chapter for youth. Youth had been subsumed under the title of education, while sport and culture retained their separate chapters (Interview YFJ C; YFJ 2012)[60]. Also some of the MS were concerned that the merger reduced the visibility of the Youth programme and that youth may lose out against the more powerful formal education sector (EUCO 2011; Interview YFJ C). This suspicion was probably also nourished by the name "Erasmus for All", which was perceived as inappropriately describing the programme (Interview EP A). Another issue was that the "Erasmus for All" Proposal, unlike its predecessor programmes, only foresaw project-based grants. Thus a broad coalition of CSO urged the EU institutions to reintroduce operating grants for EU-level CSO to allow them to maintain their offices and the dialogue towards the institutions (EUCIS-LLL and YFJ 2012). Eventually, CSO called for being involved in the implementation of the programme, in particular when drafting the users' guides for Erasmus+ (Ibidem).

In December 2011, the YFJ kicked off its advocacy campaign towards the Council and the EP with a stakeholder breakfast to which it invited both institutional representatives from the youth field and representatives from the YFJ member organisations (YFJ 2011). According to one interviewee, the breakfast allowed CSYO to identify allies among the MS and to establish informal contacts as a basis for future cooperation. This apparently encompassed that the YFJ was regularly updated on the negotiations in the Council and that some MS consulted with the YFJ on specific amendments (Interview YFJ C)[61]. However, the YFJ seems to have had little

---

[60] "*Because in the Proposal, we did not even have a youth chapter. So the sports had their own chapter. So basically, then we were really worried that NFE part of the Programme will diminish basically. That the formal education part basically will deal with all the money*" (Interview YFJ C).

[61] "*[We tried] to identify those MS who has similar views as we did and what I also remember from that is that it was really a good breakfast and then those MS that usually always support the Forum, for example Belgium, was very vocal and worried about the merger of the Programme and worried that the Commission didn't listen to the youth organisations and the MS in the consultation, etc. So, yes, it was really a good start I would say because after that we had good informal contacts with several MS, well Belgium, Germany was one of the strongest. Then we met all the Permanent Representatives with EUCIS-LLL, bilaterally an so on. (…) for example [MS] leaded all the time for us information from the working group how the Council is forming their position and they were able to already start creating the youth chapter and so on, so they were informally asking from us, what did we think, for example, the German Perm Rep called me once a week before and after the working group and what do we think about this, how do this look like, would we be able to accept this and so on. That was really, really a good start for the work with the Council*" (Interview YFJ C).

direct contact to the Education Committee, which was negotiating on the "Erasmus for All" Proposal (Interview YFJ C)[62].

Under the Danish Presidency in spring 2012, SD was used to allow a broader range of young people to convey their message. However, only one out of seven workshops was dedicated to the new Programme and these joint recommendations were not really reflected in the Council Conclusion adopted under the Danish Presidency (CEU 2012; Danish Council Presidency 2012). No evidence could be obtained that the joint recommendations on the future Programme were taken into account by the Council. One more thing that happened towards the Council is that the YFJ initiated a coordinated advocacy action with its member organisations towards the Heads of State or Government. The YFJ asked their NYC to send a letter to their Prime Minister or President and, according to one interviewee, many NYC did and many of them also received an answer (Interview YFJ C).

Under the lead of the Rapporteur, Ms. Doris Pack MEP, the EP organised a public hearing on the future education and youth programme in March 2012. At this occasion, the President of the YFJ had the chance to give a speech and reiterate the main claims of CSYO (EUCIS-LLL 2012; Interview YFJ C). Generally, CSYO seem to have had fairly good relations to the EP. It is reported by one interviewee that the YFJ worked in particularly close cooperation with the Shadow Rapporteur on Erasmus+ and had some influence on the Shadow Report (Interview YFJ C)[63].

A general observation from the interviews is that the participation of CSYO often crucially depended on personal contacts and much more so than in the other decision-making processes analysed in this thesis (see: Interview YFJ C; NYC B)[64]. There was relatively little reliance on formal mechanisms to make a broad range of CSYO participate but a strong reliance on typical advocacy and lobbying settings. This is a robust indicator that the decision-

---

[62] "*So but I guess because we had this breakfast and we were able to discuss with the people from the Youth Ministries, they were able then to discuss with their colleagues who came from the education side and who were actually the ones participating in these negotiations*" (Interview YFJ C).

[63] - *deleted for confidentiality reasons* (Interview YFJ C).

[64] - deleted for confidentiality reasons (Interview YFJ C).

"*(…) I just remember, Rainer Böge, who is a MEP with, I think he did the budget plans also and I think this was easy to get him because he was a member of one of our or he was vice-president of the German rural youth, so he was aware of our structures and we could get an appointment with him*" (Interview NYC B).

making process was not very inclusive and not very transparent for less involved CSYO. In terms of responsiveness, the picture looks different though.

Already in May 2012 the Council reached a Partial General Approach (a preliminary agreement) on the "Erasmus for All" Proposal, whereby one of the most salient changes was to design a separate youth chapter with a ring-fenced budget for the youth field (EUCO 2012). In December 2012, the final Report of the Education and Culture Committee of the EP was published. It included the following proposals relevant for CSYO: a) to change the name of the Programme because "Erasmus" was too much associated with individual student mobility and instead use the name "Lifelong Learning", while maintaining the sub-brands, including "Youth in Action", b) to have a separate Youth chapter with a separate budget line, c) to increase the minimum allocation levels for all the chapters, d) to make the Programming Committee also meet in different configurations, e.g. youth or sport (EP 2012).

When the Erasmus+ Regulation was eventually adopted, it contained a number of changes that reflected the interests of CSYO, including: a) a slightly modified name and the reintroduction of sub-brands, including Youth in Action, b) an own youth chapter with a dedicated budget line, c) financial support of SD through Erasmus+, d) higher minimum fund allocation thresholds for each chapter, e) that the merged Programming Committee should be reflective of the different chapters and meet in different configurations (Regulation 1288/2013/EU). Furthermore, it has to be stressed that the adoption of Erasmus+ led to a budget increase of roughly 70% for the youth sector[65]. Even though CSYO did not get their own chapter, the Council and in particular the EP were responsive to their views. On the other hand, this has to be put in perspective. It cannot be said with certainty that it was due to the influence of CSYO that these concerns were taken on board. Some MS shared their concerns from the very beginning. Furthermore, there was also no systematic justification of why certain positions of CSYO were taken on board and others not. Thus, the thesis holds that the EU institutions were responsive but not as much as they were when they revised the framework in 2009. This view is underpinned by one interviewee (Interview YFJ C)[66].

---

[65] While Youth in Action contained a budget of 885 € million between 2007 and 2013 (COM 2011c:11), the new Erasmus+ programme allocates 1477 € million to the youth sector (Regulation (1288/2013/EU).
[66] "*I would say that towards the EP and the Council, they were listening to what youth organisations wanted to say. The COM did listen but didn't take it into account that much*" (Interview YFJ C).

Eventually, the thesis briefly assesses how CSYO have been participating in the implementation of Erasmus+. Commissioner Vassiliou publicly declared that CSYO would be able to contribute to the so called Programme Guide, which is a detailed implementation document accompanying the Regulation (Interview YFJ C)[67]. In practice however, this promise did not carry far. While the YFJ member organisations were encouraged to send their input to the Commission, there is little evidence that the Commission provided feedback on that. Yet, it seems that some of the key concerns of CSYO were addressed, including the so called operating grants for CSYO (YFJ 2014a). CSYO do not formally participate in adopting the annual work programmes that implement Erasmus+ and neither are they regularly invited to the Programme Committee, which is the body monitoring the implementation of the programme. Only once was the YFJ invited to present the results of a survey they did on Erasmus+ among its membership. Eventually, one interviewee mentions that the single Programme Committee for Erasmus+ makes it more difficult for the youth sector to maintain informal contacts, since it is not necessarily the youth representatives sitting in the Committee (Interview YFJ D)[68].

So there have been some possibilities to participate in the implementation and in devising the implementation guide of the programme but these have been only indirect, in written form. Furthermore, there was only little information provided by the Commission and also the basis of the adoption of the implementation guide is not entirely clear. The participation is

---

[67] - deleted for confidentiality reasons (Interview YFJ C).

[68] "*So the question is, whether the youth organisations are participating in this process. The answer in this case is very simple: no. Meaning that the youth organisations do not have a formal structure to influence the work programme. The YFJ tries to do so, consulting members and then giving feedback to the Commission, to DG EAC but this is not put into a formal structure. (…)Yes, we have been invited last year, once, to present the results of a survey that we did on monitoring the implementation on the Erasmus+. By the way, we do this every year. We produce a document, we submit this document to the DG EAC, to the network of national agencies and actually because it is in our mission to tell the implementer bodies how to improve the programme. Even though this does not mean that we will have a result to that but it's our duty and mission to do that. (…) Well, that the Commission should take into account, I would say that sometimes they do take into account but this depends on the topic, meaning that they do take into account when it is convenient to them, so they don't have to. (…)You have a number of stakeholders involved in the programme and I think this complex programme is in a way, and again this is my view, is in a way a way for the Commission to justify the decision that they take to the external stakeholders, saying that this is because we need to satisfy a lot of different interests. (…)It's actually, in the Regulation of Erasmus+, there is the possibility to have a sub-Committees by sector and this hasn't been implemented by the Commission. So they keep having one Programme Committee and for us this is a big problem. Because with sectorial Programme Committees, we would be able to input much more in the process because it is much more likely that we would be invited more regularly to the meetings, more likely to input into the processes because we would know better the officials in charge of that. So that are the ones we usually work with. It is actually more likely that the representative of the MS would recognise our expertise because we would only talk about the youth part of the Programme and not about a huge Programme, where the youth part has only the 10%, where actually, the members of the Committee would not see the added value of having just one representative of one sector*" (Interview YFJ D).*

very YFJ centred, albeit it tries to engage its members. Finally, the Commission seems to take the views of CSYO sometimes into account but it does certainly not provide detailed justifications.

Below, table 4 illustrates the findings of this chapter, which is followed by a brief conclusion. Summarizing the table, it can be said that CSYO did not effectively participate in the decision-making process, including the implementation of Erasmus+ (numerical Ø: +0,56). This finding however has to be further explained. While the Commission did a very good evaluation and Impact Assessment, its strategic decision to merge the programmes and to allocate the funds based on performance without properly justifying its decision was not very responsive. During the decision-making process the picture is mixed but two factors mainly contribute to a negative outlook: a) the link to the negotiations on the MFF, which made the negotiations very complex and opaque, b) a lack of formalised participation mechanisms that allow for a broad participation. CSYO had rarely a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected decision-making processes on the MFF and the programme. In conjunction with participation mechanisms that were as a tendency not very inclusive and a predominance of classical lobbying efforts, this mouthed in the fact that only a few expert staff members of CSYO were really involved in the decision-making process.

Table 4: Effective participation of CSYO in the decision-making process on Erasmus+.

	Stage of the decision-making process			
	Agenda-setting	Decision-making	Implementation	Evaluation
Participation	Impact Assessment by the Commission, which was supported by external contractor. There were multiple opportunities to participate, multiple settings (written input and direct encounters) and very formalised (+2)	EP organised a hearing, there were bilateral meetings, the Council relied to a limited extent on SD but predominantly classical advocacy work by YFJ and membership. This means multiple opportunities and settings but comparatively little formalisation (+1)	CSYO could send input to the Commission on the implementation guide. YFJ was once invited to the Programme Committee and has bilateral contact. Some opportunities to participate, some settings (written, direct encounter) and not very formalised (0)	Commission and external evaluator conducted interviews and questionnaires. This means there were multiple opportunities to participates, different settings (written and direct engagement) and it was a formalised approach (+2)
Inclusiveness	YFJ broadly consulted its membership to form its position. The Commission's public consultation is a tool to broadly consult and CSYO had similar participation opportunities (+2)	YFJ continued to rely on the input from its membership. SD was not systematically relied upon. Predominantly limited settings (like Hearing, conferences) or exclusive settings (bilateral advocacy). CSYO were put at a slight disadvantage because the Education Committee in the Council negotiated on Erasmus for All and not the Youth Working Party (0)	YFJ attempted to involve its members. Commission allowed for some input of CSYO to implementation guide. Very restricted access to the Committee for all stakeholders. CSYO had similarly few opportunities than other stakeholders, the Commission applies rather limited, if not exclusive mechanisms but YFJ collects input from members and regularly presents it to the Commission, thus it is partly inclusive (0)	The Commission and the external evaluator emphasised to gather input from a representative sample of Programme recipients + CSYO. Because the Commission in a scientifically sound way gathered representative input, inclusiveness is assumed to be given independent of CSYO consulting their members because the individuals were directly addressed (+2)

Transparency	All the information on the Impact Assessment is provided. It is clear that the public consultation should be the basis of the Commission Proposal (+2)	CSYO had difficulties understanding the link to the MFF. There was no attempt to inform CSYO. Less formalised settings imply, it is less clear what happens with the input received. Information was partly accessible but the institutions did clearly not enough to inform young people. CSYO partly knew what happened with their input (-1)	Little information is available on the process of drafting the implementation manual and little information is available on the work of the Committee, Commission is not so clear about what happens with CSYO input and there is no attempt to inform young people about the Comitology procedures (-2)	Both the report of the Commission and the long report of the external evaluator are available. All the information on the evaluation is available and it is clear that the input was supposed to be the basis for the Proposal for a new Programme (+2)
Responsiveness	The Commission proposed almost the exact opposite of the results of the public consultation, it did not even consider a youth chapter and there was no proper justification in the Impact Assessment. CSYO did not receive a clear justification (-2)	During the negotiations, the Council but in particular the EP took into account the interests of CSYO. The Regulation clearly reflects many of their positions. However, there was no systematic justification of why some positions of CSYO were not taken on board. (+1)	On the one hand, the implementation guide reflects some key concerns of CSYO. On the other hand there is no justification whether some of their positions are not taken on board. CSYO positions are only sometimes reflected in the work of the Committee and there is no systematic justification why some input has not been taken on board (-1)	Key findings, including that CSYO wanted to maintain a separate Programme were not taken into account. Other, like simplification, were taken into account, so the input was partly incorporated. However, there was no justification why some of the input was not taken on board (-1)

The findings are even less encouraging in terms of effective participation, if the focus is drawn towards the implementation of the programme. Despite the fact that the Regulation seems to suggest that civil society's concerns and that the specific needs of the various sectors should be taken into account (Regulation 1288/2013/EU), the Commission and the members of the Programme Committee show little appetite to translate these demands into formal participative mechanisms. Generally, it can be observed that CSYO had difficulties getting directly in touch with cross-sectorial institutional actors, like budget or education formations. However, this has to be qualified. While the findings suggest that CSYO had difficulties to reach out to the budget and education formations in the Commission and the Council, they had comparatively good relations with the EP Rapporteurs on the Programme. An improvement could be to solidly tie the decision-making process to the SD, which would formalise the participation of CSYO but this is discussed in detail below.

7. Youth Participation in the Revision of the Framework

This chapter of the thesis researches the participation of CSYO during the revision of the framework for European cooperation in the youth field in 2009. It starts off with depicting the initial position of CSYO, goes on to describe the decision-making process in detail and eventually applies the concepts developed above.

Under the lead of the YFJ, CSYO early on started to evaluate the old framework for European cooperation in the youth field 2002-2009, with hindsight to its revision. Two important documents in which CSYO voice their position are the: YFJ position "*Key principles for the new framework for European cooperation in the youth field*" adopted in late 2008 (YFJ 2008) and the "*Shadow Report on the evaluation of the current framework for European cooperation in the youth field*" (YFJ 2009c), which was published in March 2009 (Interview YFJ A; YFJ 2009a). While the position was adopted by the YFJ membership on the occasion of their General Assembly in 2008, the shadow report contains the evaluations of the first framework 2002-2009 by YFJ member organisations. Especially the shadow report has been extensively relied upon in the YFJ's advocacy work, according to an interviewee (YFJ A). In 2009 and following the Communication of the Commission of April 2009, the YFJ publicly voiced its reaction (YFJ 2009a) and also presented its view on the Communication to the first YWP under

the Swedish Presidency in July 2009 (YFJ 2009b). Due to limited resources, this thesis constrains itself to researching position of the member organisations of the YFJ. This is justified, since it is the platform of 99 youth organisations, including the NYC, in Europe.

Besides the informal channels of participation, the EU institutions relied on the SD with young people to give CSYO and unorganised young the opportunity to put their views on the future cooperation in the youth field on the table (COM 2008a). This process started in April 2008, included the EYE in Slovenia and (to a lesser extent) France and eventually culminated in November 2008 in the European Youth Week final conclusions (COM 2008b; COM 2009b:9). Finally, the Commission also held a public consultation in which many young people participated (COM 2009b:9).

A closer look at these documents allows us to extract the youth sectors' main positions in the eve of the framework revision. One thing that was probably most important for the youth sector is an *ambitious cross-sectorial youth policy* (Interview YFJ A). It appears in every document as a priority (COM 2008b:9; YFJ 2009c:10; YFJ 2008:4). Furthermore, CSYO called for a reinforced SD with young people (COM 2008b:3f.; YFJ 2009c:10; YFJ 2008:4f.), albeit the documents also reveal that CSYO were unable to spell out a coherent concept at this stage (Interview NYC A; Interview YFJ A). Other points raised were: 1) a more integrated framework, with fewer priorities and instruments, 2) maintaining the OMC, 3) devising a monitoring and evaluation system for the framework, which is related to the SD with young people because CSYO felt that there have been little results in the youth field, and 4) to reconsider the role of the EU institutions, including a better cross-sectorial cooperation of the Commission and the CEU (YFJ 2009c:10-12; YFJ 2008:3-6). Finally, and more generally, CSYO were calling for an improved participation of CSYO in youth policy-making, a better dissemination of information on youth policy and more resources for CSYO to fulfil their function as a conveyer belt (YFJ 2009c:14).

Now that the initial positions of the CSYO are clear, the thesis moves on to trace the decision-making process in more detail. The process was initiated by deliberations in the Council, which led to the Council conclusions of May 2007 on future perspectives for European cooperation in the youth field (Council conclusions C 314/24/2007). Therein, the Council calls for a truly cross-sectorial approach to youth policy, the maintenance of the OMC and the European Youth Pact, reinforcing the SD with young people and to improve continuity in the

youth field through 18-months-programmes based on Trio Presidencies (Ibidem). As can be seen, this early conclusions already contained core elements of the later framework adopted in 2009. Around the end of 2007, the Trio Presidency of France, the Czech Republic and Sweden that were to adopt the renewed framework started to plan their term (see: CoE 2008:9). While it was clear that they had to work on the revision of the framework, they had to agree upon a schedule. Already during this early stage, the respective NYC and the YFJ were involved to some degree (Interview MS C).

From April 2008 on, the Commission evaluated the first framework and consulted the relevant stakeholders on the future framework for European cooperation in the youth field. Since October 2008, the MS actively engaged in jointly evaluating the framework (COM 2009b:8).

A major element of the Commission consultation was the public consultation that took place between September and November 2008. It received 5426 contributions, of which about 88% were handed in by individuals and around 12% by different organisations. Young people (>=30 years old) represented more than 60% of the respondents (COM 2009b:40). Youth unemployment, the reform of the education system, environmental issues and the fight against social exclusion emerged as the policy areas most often perceived as priorities in the youth field (Ibidem:41). Besides a public consultation and targeted stakeholder consultations, the Commission actively sought to receive expert and scientific input. Most importantly, it compiled an unprecedented statistical compendium, called the EU Youth Report to substantiate its Communication (COM 2009c)[69].

CSYO were included inter alia through direct encounters between the YFJ and the Commission as well as the SD with young people (COM 2009b:9). Eventually, the Commission also strongly involved the MS in forming its Communication and used this opportunity to encourage them to consult with young people. First, the Commission collated the evaluations by the MS until October 2008 (COM 2009b:8, COM 2009d). One interviewee recalled that in the instructions of the COM, MS were invited to consult with young people when evaluating

---

[69] At this stage, it is not possible to conduct a more detailed analysis of the consultation process or its results, since neither the original questionnaire, nor the report on the findings of the public consultation could be recovered. They are no longer available on the Commission website. See: http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/2008/index_en.htm.

the first framework[70] (Interview MS C). Obviously, it is impossible to tell how many MS indeed followed this recommendation but the fact that the Commission invited the MS to do so, signals their positive attitude towards the participation of CSYO. Second, interviewees stated that the Commission also sent officials into the MS to conduct field visits, in which it interviewed both MS officials and representatives of the NYC[71] (Interview COM B; MS B, MS C). According to one interviewee, it has been the first time that young people have been systematically involved by the EU institutions in the evaluation of a policy (Interviewee MS B).

Based on this extensive input, the Commission in April 2009 confidently published its Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering" (COM 2009a). Interviewees across the board state that the Communication of the Commission was strong, of high quality and well-received both by the MS and CSYO (Interview MS A, MS B; MS C, YFJ A). It already contained eight fields of action and a separate part on youth work (COM 2009a) but left other things to be developed by the MS (Interview MS C)[72]. This also means that the Commission was in a strong position and it let Commission officials to fight passionately to preserve their Communication throughout the negotiation process (Interview MS A, MS B, MS C, YFJ A). According to the interviewees' assessment, however, the Commission was only partly successful. Although the Communication's essential structure resonates in the Council Resolution, the MS also made significant amendments, which was positively received by CSYO (Interview MS C; YFJ A).

While it is clear that CSYO and MS have been extensively consulted in the eve of the Communication, it also has to be stressed that the Commission exercised its right to initiative independently. Neither young people nor MS had an influence on the concrete structure of the Communication (Interview MS B). This may sound obvious but it is important to be

---

[70] "[A]ll MS were invited by the Commission to evaluate the framework upon till then and I think in the instructions it was made clear that when MS made their evaluation, they should also consult young people in those evaluations" (Interview MS C).

[71] "I think the Commission asked to have field visits in the different Member States and the Commission, so … of course the Member States have to make the programme but they asked, if it was possible to have one hour and a half or two hours, I don't remember but something like that, to have a discussion with the, with the responsible of the Youth Council. So it was part of their programme. And they were polite like always. So when the Member States were saying: no it's not possible; so that's also a sign. But the fact that the Commission is asking that was also new" (Interview MS B).

[72] "I mean the Commission, of course they had made a very good proposal and we said, we like the proposal, it's super good and Member States were in general very positive and, which the Commission also admitted, that some things had not been dealt with in their Communication and we had to pick up on certain issues that were not developed so much in the Communication, etc." (Interview MS C).

recalled. Moreover, although the Impact Assessment provides a good idea of how the Communication of the Commission came about and why the Commission went along as it did, there is no possibility to clearly track down the input of CSYO (COM 2009b). This clearly makes the assessment of youth participation tricky.

CSYO had mixed feelings about the Communication. While they welcomed the profound analysis on the situation of young people, the Commission cross-sectorial aspirations and the usage of a renewed OMC, they expressed their disappointment in other respects. In particular they criticised: 1) a lack of tools to ensure effective policy implementation and cross-sectorial cooperation, 2) clearer objectives and less priorities, 3) a lack of recognition of the role of youth work and youth participation, in particular a lack of clarity about the role of CSYO in the OMC, 4) too little progress on and the absence of a clear vision of SD with young people, 5) that the Commission failed to align the short-term priorities in the youth field with the 18-months Trio Presidency term (YFJ 2009a).

Already in February 2009 and under the Czech Presidency, the CEU formulated Key messages to the Spring European Council on the European Youth Pact and European cooperation in the youth field (Council conclusions 6669/09). Albeit content-wise fairly shallow, they are an indicator of ongoing discussions on a new framework for European cooperation in the youth field in the relevant Council formation and the YWP. Shortly after the Commission published its Communication, the Council in May 2009 adopted its conclusions evaluating the first framework for European cooperation in the youth field (Council conclusions 9169/09). MS evaluated the framework positively. Inter alia, MS stressed the need to: 1) develop a long-term strategy with short-term priorities, 2) better link the instruments applied, 3) clear objectives and a limited number of priorities, 3) improved follow-up and monitoring through the new EU Youth Report, 4) a clearer articulation of the role of youth work, 5) clear links between the policy framework and the action programmes in the youth field, 6) a reinforced OMC, 7) mechanisms for effective cross-sectorial cooperation, and 8) an improved SD with young people (Council conclusions 9169/09).

Although there is significant overlap with the Commission's Communication (Interview MS C), the Council deviated from it for the benefit of CSYO. It seems that there is a relatively high proximity between the position of CSYO and the Council at this point. Consequently, it is hardly

surprising that one interviewee stated that in his impression, the Council further "improved" the Communication (Interview YFJ A).

Once the proposal of the Commission was on the table, the locus of intervention changed for CSYO. While their early participatory efforts were primarily targeted at the Commission, the Presidency countries became the focal entry point for CSYO once the Communication was published. Interviewees consistently underline the importance of the SD events as a mechanism to let young people and CSYO participate in the revision of the framework for European cooperation in the youth field (Interview MS C, YFJ A). To better understand the magnitude of this change, it has to be recalled that the SD in its present structure only exists since the adoption of the renewed framework in November 2009. This is however not to say that there was no more or less formal participation mechanism already in place.

As described above and in annex IV, the SD mechanisms were established parallel to the deliberation and decision-making processes of the Council. It can only be inferred that young people participated effectively in the revision of the framework, if evidence indicates a notable link between the SD processes, in which they were indeed involved, and the negotiations in the Council. Deducing both from the literature and the interviews, it has to be reiterated that the influence of EYE outcomes on political documents was supposedly miniscule before the revision of the framework in 2009 (Interview MS B; MS C; Laine and Gretschel 2009:197).

Although the MS evaluated the first framework already under the French Presidency (autumn 2008) and adopted their final position under the Czech Presidency (spring 2009), the French EYE in Marseilles was not directly related to the framework revision (French Council Presidency 2008b). However, there was a short exchange of views on the evaluation and revision of the framework during the Informal Forum in November 2008, right before the Council meeting (CoE 2008:121; French Council Presidency 2008a). From the evidence obtained, it cannot be said whether CSYO had an influence on the deliberations in the Council or not.

Under the Czech Presidency, the revision of the framework was increasingly established on the SD agenda. Already before the first Council session in February, the COM, the Presidency and the YFJ met in an informal setting for an exchange of views (CoE 2009:125f.). As the first major SD event after the Commission Communication (April 2009) and the evaluation of the

first framework by the Council (May 2009), the EYE in Prague on 2nd-4th June was dedicated to the evaluation and revision of the framework (CoE 2008:10f.). Connected to that, the YFJ presented its position on the Communication to the YWP on its session right before the EYE took place (YFJ 2010a:23). During the EYE, young people prepared conclusions on: 1) participation, outreach and information, 2) social inclusion and health, 3) volunteering and education, 4) employability, entrepreneurship and developing potential, 5) evidence-based policy making. These conclusions highlighted the need to formulate clearer objectives, to be more detailed about specific implementation tools of the framework and to better recognise the role of CSYO in reaching the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy (YFJ 2010a:23). Eventually, the EYE contained a short joint meeting of the participating young representatives and national civil servants (CoE 2009:130).

It is difficult to judge how much the EYE recommendations influenced the final Council Resolution. On the one hand, there is some evidence that the Swedish Presidency picked them up (CoE 2009:11; Interview MS C). On the other hand, one interviewee stated that youth representatives were complaining about the Czech EYE, calling it a fake consultation (Interview YFJ A). What can be said for sure is that under the Czech Presidency, a first timid step was taken to bring the SD events with young people a little closer to the negotiations in the Council. At least the agenda was in line and there was more than just sporadic contact between decision-makers and youth representatives. However, from the interviews it can be inferred that the main innovations in terms of youth participation took place under the Swedish Presidency.

The Swedes put considerable effort in ensuring that young people thoroughly participated in the revision of the framework (Interview YFJ A)[73]. Again, CSYO participated both in the planning and the implementation of the Swedish Presidency with hindsight to youth affairs (Interview MS C). Already on July 13th, the YFJ was invited to the first session of the YWP and it had the chance to present its position on the Commission Communication (Interview MS C; YFJ 2009b). While the YFJ welcomed the Communication in general, it voiced several demands. In their view the Communication lacked: 1) a proposal to invest into CSYO with a view to raising the participation of young people in CSYO and to recognize the contribution of youth work to

---

[73] "*And I can say that the Swedish Presidency and the Swedish Ministry put a lot of effort in really having a strong youth participation in the set-up on the agreement and in the process of agreement on the framework*" (Interview YFJ A).

reaching the goals of the strategy, 2) a clear vision of SD with young people[74], 3) a focussed approach, with fewer fields of action and priorities, 4) clearly defined mechanisms to ensure the cross-sectorial cooperation of public officials in the Commission and the MS (YFJ 2009b). This corresponds with the claims of their membership.

A 'stellar moment' with regard to the participation of young people must have been the EU Youth Conference (EUYC) in Stockholm on September 12th-14th (Interview NYC A; YFJ A; Swedish Council Presidency 2009). Interviewees consistently hold that the EUYC in Stockholm entailed major innovations and tangible progress in terms of CSYO participation (Interview MS B; NYC A; YFJ A).

First, the YFJ and the Swedish NYC were closely cooperating with the Swedish Presidency in the preparations and the implementation of the EUYC (Interview MS C). Second, the Swedish Presidency was determined to ensure that both the positions of the MS and CSYO are adequately reflected in the final Resolution. Thus, the Swedes revised all the collated input in order to assess, if anything has not been taken on board by the Commission and then organised a broad dialogue on that (Interview MS C)[75]. Finally, the Swedish Presidency decided to organise their EUYC differently than the preceding Presidency EYE and closely tie it to the negotiations going on in the Council (Ibidem.).

Diverging from previous practice regarding the Presidencies' EYE, the Swedish organised their EUYC as a joint dialogue between decision-makers and young people. Interviewees consistently perceived this as a major innovation in the youth field (Interview MS B; MS C; NYC A; YFJ A)[76]. Young people and public officials from the Commission and the MS sat together in

---

[74] Annex II of the position paper made a concrete proposal on SD, which looks a bit similar to the proposal that made it into the final Resolution. However, interviewees consistently suggest that the eventual proposal came at a later stage and not from the YFJ (Interview MS C; Interview NYC A; Interview YFJ A; YFJ 2009b).

[75] *"(…) [W]e went through each and every MS input to see whether there is something missing in the Commission Communication or what did the YFJ say about this or etc.. So we really tried to look into what was said in the evaluations, to draw conclusions from that and then try to put that, that knowledge and this experience and those proposals in the text of the renewed framework. And have a dialogue also on the design, not only in the Youth Working Party but to really try to listen to all MS and to all other concerned actors. (…) So I think our responsibility was to … trying to get everyone to feel that this is a framework that works for us"* (Interview MS C).

[76] *"(…) what we found even more odd was that the Youth Events were Youth Events. You called it already then the Structured Dialogue but in fact it wasn't really a dialogue between youth representatives and the civil servants working on the issues, for instance in the Youth Working Party and the Directors General for youth. What happened was that the young people met first, during a day or two, then there came the Directors General. Then there was a meeting, joint meeting perhaps during a couple of hours, half a day at the most, where the youth representatives handed over their conclusions or key messages or whatever they were called from that event. And for Sweden, we didn't see that as a dialogue. So for us that is the reason why we found that, if we were*

a set of thematic workshops and had a dialogue on thematic aspects relevant for the renewed framework for two and a half days. Eventually, they agreed upon a set of common recommendations to the Youth Working Party, called the "*Key Messages*" of the EUYC (Swedish Council Presidency 2009)[77]. These Key Messages were then forwarded by the Swedish Presidency to the YWP, which in its October session prepared the decision of the Council on the renewed framework (Interview YFJ A). Once the Council adopted the renewed framework in November 2009, the Swedish Presidency sent a report to the participants of the EUYC. Therein, they commented on which Key Messages were taken on board and why other Key Messages were not endorsed by the Council (Interview COM D; MS C). This is definitely not a foot note in the negotiation process but an important indicator of responsiveness.

Sweden clearly set a precedent. It was mentioned that a few MS voiced some reservations in the run-up to the first joint EUYC of youth representatives and decision-makers. On the other hand, many MS supported the idea and CSYO warmly welcomed it, too. In the end, both MS representatives and CSYO were very content with the new format, even to the extent that the MS subsequently included it in the Resolution on the renewed framework (Interview MS C; Council Resolution C 311/1/2009).

Additionally to the efforts of the Swedes and under the lead of Belgium, the incoming Trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary (2010-2011) significantly contributed to the negotiations on the renewed framework in the second half of 2009 (Interview MS B; MS C; YFJ A). Belgium thereby had two strong positions: 1) it proposed a solid structure for the SD, 2) it insisted on duly recognising the role of youth work in the Resolution (Interview MS B).

---

serious about this, with the Structured Dialogue, we need to sit down at the same table and have the discussions. So that's how the idea was born" (Interview MS C).
"*That's true. The fact that they were sitting together was new. No, no, no, I agree on that*" (Interview MS B).
"(…) [T]he Swedes introduced these common sessions between young people and representatives of governments and that was indeed a big revolution, well, a big revolution, a small revolution if you consider mankind but in the youth field, it was a big evolution at least" (Interview NYC A).
"*(…) [T]he Youth Conference in Stockholm. That was quite an important moment of youth participation, of consultation, of evaluation. That was organized under the Swedish Presidency. It was the first time that it was called a Conference because it brought together young participants but also the actual representatives of each Member State in the Youth Working Party. Two days together in a Conference organized around the main fields of action of the Strategy, first, and then to the framework*" (Interview YFJ A).
[77] The workshops were distributed across ten thematic fields, including: 1) Education – empowering young people, 2) Employment and Entrepreneurship – tackling the challenges ahead, 3) Equal opportunities and non-discrimination – a win-win approach, 4) European Youth Pact – 2.0, new and improved?, 5) Health and well-being – a good life, 6) Participation – for better decision making, 7) Youth and the world – a global perspective, 8) Youth workers – everyday heroes, 9) Structured Dialogue – getting there together, 10) Better knowledge – the key to change (Swedish Council Presidency 2009).

According to one interviewee, the Trio Presidency under the lead of Belgium approached the YFJ already around June 2009 to prepare for their term (Interview YFJ A). Again, the respective NYC and the YFJ were involved in the preparation of the Presidency's term (Interview NYC A). Under the lead of Belgium, the Trio Presidency gathered all the stakeholders in the youth field to work out a strategy of how to proceed with SD in the youth field (Interview MS B). It is difficult to establish the precise timing but deducing both from the interviews and the fact that SD was discussed at the EUYC, it must have been shortly before the EUYC in September that the incoming Trio under the lead of Belgium presented their proposal on SD (Interview MS C; YFJ A; Swedish Council Presidency 2009)[78]. The Youth Attaché of Belgium then also chaired the working group on SD during the EU Youth Conference in Stockholm (Interview COM D).

Many interviewees affirm that it was controversial that the incoming Trio Presidency under the lead of Belgium made this proposal on SD during the Swedish term (Interview NYC A; YFJ A). Inferring from the interviews, it looks as if the Swedish appreciated the content of the proposal but that they had an issue with the timing. Whereas Sweden wanted to draw the negotiations on the framework to a close in order to have a good text, the Belgians presented a detailed proposal on SD somewhere before the EUYC in September 2009, just a few months before the renewed framework was to be adopted (Interview MS C; YFJ A)[79]. The representatives of Sweden and Belgium then sat together, shortened the proposal on SD while

[78] *"The Forum was invited quite early to discuss the Structured Dialogue with some Presidencies. Basically, the Trio Presidency that followed Sweden, it was Belgium, Spain and Hungary, they started to organize bilateral meetings with various organisations, including the Forum, I think already in June 2009. There was certainly one in September 2009 just before the Conference and then it continued on. So the Forum was involved and at some point we started to strongly support [the Belgian proposal on SD]"* (Interview YFJ A).
[79] *"(…) Belgium and their colleagues in their Trio believed that it would be important also to outline a bit more further in detail how the SD could be strengthened and be more structured. So when they approached us, I think it wasn't even in the beginning of the Presidency, it was some time during the term of our Presidency or so that they said, OK how do you feel about this. And we, we thought it was a good idea. And they have developed (…) a quite long document with very many details and we found that it is difficult to put too much things in detail in a Resolution. But we agreed that we absolutely set up a number of principles. So we sat together with them and drafted a shorter document, which then became the Annex in the framework. (…) I think for us, it was more … we didn't really have the time to … we had so many things on our table in the negotiations of the framework, so we thought, OK, we will just do it in this general paragraph [which is in the Resolution itself] but with the help of Belgium (…) it made things happen more quickly (…)"* (Interview MS C).
"(…) [T]he Strategy did not foresee what we know now as Structured Dialogue. This was an addition followed for by the Belgian Presidency initially that pushed on the Swedish Presidency to include it in the draft Resolution on the framework. And it's being a bit debated because the Swedish Presidency wanted to close the text to have a good text and the Belgians wanted to reopen the topic" (Interview YFJ A).

preserving its main content and agreed to put it into the Annex of the Resolution (Interview MS B; MS C; NYC A; Council Resolution C 311/1/2009)[80].

What is truly remarkable about the proposal on SD is its genesis, whereby the interviews suggest the following:

The Belgian civil servants in the youth field were aware of the Belgian NYCs having, as one interviewee expressed it, "*some clear thoughts*" about how the SD with young people should look like (Interview NYC A). So the NYC and the National Agencies for the Youth in Action Programme were proposed to draft a more structured SD concept. This concept was initially designed by the three NYC (Dutch-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking Community) and the National Agencies, then discussed with the Belgian Ministries and eventually, it formed the basis for the negotiations on the EU level. Although the original proposal was altered throughout these stages, the former representative of the Flemish NYC holds that the core features of their original SD proposal were safeguarded throughout the negotiation process (Interview NYC A)[81]. This means that the main participation mechanism in the youth field, outlined in Annex III of the Council Resolution (C 311/1/2009), was ultimately co-designed by the Belgian NYCs.

Although the other interviews are not detailed enough to thoroughly cross-check these statements, there is some reason to assume that this information is correct. First of all, the interviewee was very detailed and coherent about how the proposal on SD came about.

---

[80] *"Yes, we were negotiating with Sweden and I took the lead for that, and of course I was negotiating that with Spain and Hungary and others and were coming informally together because it had to be adopted by the Ministers"* (Interview MS B).

[81] *"Well, [the draft concept on SD] came from, directly from the Youth Council. Actually, I have been sitting together with somebody from the National Agency for the Youth in Action programme who was also very much involved in the Presidency and in the presentation of it. And one thing that bothered us already for a very, very long time is that the Youth Events were one off events. You had a Presidency picking a theme for the event and then they wanted to organise a dialogue in the run-up to this event or a preparation but to our opinion, this was not very successful. So this is why, we had been given, well not a task but we were proposed to draft a concept for a new Structured Dialogue. Or a renewed or a strengthened Structured Dialogue. So that's when the Flemish NYC but also in cooperation with our other Belgian partners, the Walloon, or the French-speaking and the German-speaking Youth Councils, we drafted that proposal and as I said, we sat together with the National Agencies, to interlink the three Youth Events of the Trio Presidency, to make it more of a process and to have a theme, a common theme throughout this 18-months period and this, in our opinion, would enable us to really start the process from 0 let's say, up until a final result where young people have been involved several times … ahm, and this is in opposition to the Youth Events. (…) [T]he initial proposal that we drafted was not a 100% copied into the Resolution but we made a proposal and on basis of that proposal we negotiated what was to be in the Resolution. And of course, we first discussed among us and then with the Ministries and then we still had to discuss on EU level. So for sure, there have been changes to the original proposal but the basis and the concept itself was safeguarded, let's say, throughout the process"* (Interview NYC A).

Secondly, other interviewees confirmed certain elements that were mentioned by the former representative of the Flemish NYC[82]. It is also interesting to note that the proposal on having a more structured SD that came from the Belgian NYCs, actually stirred up a controversy within the youth sector. According to the interviews, some CSYO were taken by surprise because they were not able to see where the proposal actually came from. On top of that, some of them supposedly feared that such a structured channel of participation may bear the risk of bypassing CSYO. Consequently, it took a while until the YFJ and its membership started to fully embrace it (Interview NYC A; YFJ A)[83]. This piece of evidence is not a negligibility but a vocal reminder of the youth sector being anything but homogenous, even though the YFJ normally seeks to bundle the various positions and to speak with "*one voice*".

Another finding that derives from the interviews and which is of relevance to the overall conclusions of the thesis concerns the perception of the interviewees on the SD proposal. Both the former representative of the Flemish NYC and the Belgian Youth Attaché hold that Belgium basically took its national consultation mechanism as a point of departure and adapted it to the specific structural features at EU level. The notion that Belgium has a strong tradition of civil dialogue in the youth field and tried to inspire the participative mechanism on the EU level by its own national practice resonates well in their responses (Interview MS B; NYC A)[84].

---

[82] Three interviewees confirmed that the proposal for a structured SD came "from Belgium" (Interview MS B; MS C; YFJ A). Furthermore, one interviewee also refers to the controversy among CSYO on the proposal for a structured approach to SD that the former Flemish youth representative mentions (Interview YFJ A).

[83] *"[T]he Forum [supported the Belgian proposal on Structured Dialogue] but had at some point a bit of a question mark on whether this was really the Structured Dialogue that the Forum wanted or whether this was something different. (…) I think one of the changes [that this proposal entailed] was that suddenly you could have many people passing some inputs. (…) [Youth Organisations] were saying we are totally bypassed. We can't have a voice in this. Including the Forum. There was a huge internal debate about should we support the Structured Dialogue as such or should we just keep it, do it a bit and continue to push our positions through our general direct advocacy"* (Interview YFJ A).
"Well, I still remember that it was difficult for other members of the YFJ to see where it came from, the proposal for the SD. They were very sceptical about it and we defended it of course, mainly the Belgian youth councils, also the Spanish and Hungarians but to a lesser extent but for them it came as new, even though they knew our opinions about participation, at least some of them but that it also why it has been changed and I am … it's a bit of a shame, that the YFJ didn't pick up the challenge, I mean they lived by the grace of their members of course, so if the member think it's not a good concept, they will not defend it. But we could have expected from the bureau and from the hierarchy in the YFJ to have supported it" (Interview NYC A).

[84] *"That's right. [We took our national mechanism and proposed it to the European level]. (…) So we had to modify our concept to the European reality, which is through Youth Events over 18-months … and of course, the setting is much different than you would have on a regional level or a national level. (…) but the basic idea is behind it, that's right"* (Interview NYC A).
"(…) [I]n the beginning I was telling you our policy model in Belgium is based on social dialogue and … OK what is a Structured Dialogue more. (…) It was new of course, the mechanism was new but doing that together with the key actors of civil society organisations was not new" (Interview MS B).

This goes hand in hand with the perception of many interviewees that a high level of participation during the revision process is closely related to Sweden and Belgium having a long tradition in terms of youth participation (Interview MS B; MS C; NYC A). Further underpinning this finding, it has been stated that Belgium convinced the other MS that the European Steering Committee, which steers the SD on European level, should be headed by the YFJ, in close cooperation with the other stakeholders (Interview MS B). This means that the SD has not only been co-designed by CSYO, but that it is, due to the Belgian intervention, also formally chaired by CSYO.

Summarising, it can be said that in particular the Commission as well as the Presidency countries Sweden and Belgium pursued involving young people in the revision of the framework for European cooperation in the youth field. While the Commission initiated the participative opportunities in the run-up to their Communication, the Presidency countries became the main entry point for the participation of CSYO. Furthermore, the revision process turned out to be a laboratory for novel participative practices, which were subsequently endorsed by the MS.

Finally, it can be said that overall, youth representatives had the feeling that they were effectively involved in the revision process (Interview NYC A; YFJ A). This matches with the perception of one interviewee who states that it is characteristic for the youth sector that CSYO participation is widely seen as an asset and that the youth field came quite far when it comes to the involvement of the target group (Interview MS C). The table below summarizes the findings with regard to effective participation of CSYO. As the SD is the main mechanism for CSYO to participate in the implementation of the framework and since it has been analysed above, the respective column remains empty.

Summing up the table it can be said that CSYO effectively participated in the revision of the framework (numerical Ø: +1,25). This is also in line with the perception of the interviewees as stated above. It is equally clear that the preferences of CSYO and the EU institutions were already fairly similar before the decision-making process. Furthermore, CSYO were allowed to input but in a given corridor and on a given topic, which means that the room for manoeuvre of CSYO was limited. It is difficult to imagine that the EU institutions would have taken on board a radically different idea. Generally, however, the CSYO were seen as the natural stakeholders and the institutions made an effort to listen to their concerns. In particular the

dedication of the Commission as well as the Presidency countries Sweden and Belgium facilitated the participation of CSYO. Eventually, it has to be reiterated that the revision of the framework proved to be a laboratory for the creation of new or reinforcement of existing participation mechanisms for CSYO.

Table 5: Effective participation of CSYO in the revision of the framework.

	Stage of the decision-making process			
	Agenda-setting	Decision-making	Implementation	Evaluation
Participation	Commission conducted impact assessment, public consultation, conferences and interviews. CSYO could participate multiple times, there are different formats (written, direct interaction) and the process is very formalised (+2)	CEU closely linked SD events to the decision-making process, which means that there have been broad consultations in the NWG. Some CSYO also participate in the preparation of the Presidency and the planning of the decision-making process. CSYO could participate multiple times, there are different formats (written, direct interaction) and the process is very formalised (+2)	-	CSYO have clearly been involved in the evaluation by the COM but only marginally, through the Informal Forum, in the Council's evaluation of the first framework. CSYO participated multiple times, there are different formats (interviews, direct interaction) and the process is formalised – in case of the Commission. In Council evaluation, CSYO participated only once in a formal setting and a direct encounter (+1)
Inclusiveness	YFJ broadly consulted members and used input for advocacy work, COM held public consultation and also tried to involve many NYC. Commission thus chose a mechanism suitable to collect a broad range of views, CSYO engaged members and had similar access opportunities (+2)	YFJ continued to use input from their membership, broad range of CSYO was able to put their views on the table in SD events, like EU Youth Conferences. EU Youth Conferences are directed at a broad range of interests, CSYO engaged members and similar access opportunities (+2)	-	YFJ broadly consulted members, COM made interviews with a number of NYC and NYC should have been involved by MS. Council relied on informal forum with a limited set of participants. No broad consultation. EU institutions chose mechanisms directed at a limited number of CSYO, CSYO engaged their members and had similar access opportunities (+1)
Transparency	Tricky. Report on the public consultation no longer available. Impact assessment is detailed and CSYO seemed to be informed about the process. Basis for decision (consultation) is overall clear. Not all the	CEU was comparatively transparent by providing a report on which joint recommendations of the EU Youth Conference were taken on board in the Council Resolution. Basis of decision was fairly clear (evaluation, Commission Communication, SD	-	Overall, CSYO seemed to be aware. Commission provided general information about evaluation in Impact Assessment. Commission met with CSYO during the evaluation and thus they had chance to get informed but this is less clear for the Council's

	information is (anymore) available, EU institutions are clear about input, Impact Assessment informs people about process (+1)	outcomes) but not fully, since the Council did not provide any more detailed information. CSYO seemed to be informed about the process and SD events were opportunity to inform young people about the decision-making process (+1)		evaluation. It is difficult to assess the Council's basis for its evaluation because it does not say. It is also unclear what happened with the input of CSYO at the occasion of the Informal Forum. While the Commission acted rather transparent, the Council was rather not transparent (0)
Responsiveness	CSYO positions resonate in Commission Communication and some of them were clearly incorporated. Impact assessment provides some feedback on the input of CSYO but no detailed justification of why some positions have not been addressed (+1)	CSYO positions resonate in Resolution. SD proposal can be traced back to CSYO proposal. Swedes justified why certain positions were taken on board and others not. All criteria of responsiveness fulfilled (+2)	-	Format of participation allowed for interaction, positions of CSYO appear in the Communication but institutions do not seem to provide feedback on why some issues were not addressed. Also the Impact assessment is clearly not detailed enough for that. Thus they were only partly responsive (0)

8. Conclusion and Prospects of Youth Participation in EU Youth Politics

Concluding, this part firstly responds to the research questions. It goes on to discuss specific characteristics of the EU youth field and eventually proposes actions of how to increase the effective participation of CSYO in EU youth politics.

Q1: Do Civil Society Youth Organisations (CSYO) effectively participate in formal participatory mechanisms at European level in the youth field?

According to the assessment in this thesis, the answer is: no. On the one hand the SD allows young people to present their views and to engage in a dialogue with decision-makers. This is also something that CSYO themselves value. On the other hand, decision-makers are not sufficiently responsive and the implementation of the SD results is insufficient to make CSYO effectively participate.

Q2: Do Civil Society Youth Organisations (CSYO) effectively participate in the decision-making processes at European level in the youth field?

In this case the answer is: it depends. While the concept applied suggests that CSYO effectively participated in the revision of the framework for European cooperation in the youth field, this is not the case for Erasmus+. Generally, it can be said that the Swedish and Belgian Presidency made excellent use of the SD, which allowed them to engage a broad range of CSYO, take their views on board and provide them with a proper feedback on why other views were not taken on board. This also helped to inform CSYO and arrange the whole decision-making process in a transparent way. Obviously, SD was not that much relied upon during the decision-making process on Erasmus+, which mouthed in a more limited engagement of CSYO, less transparency and knowledge among the CSYO about the process. Another difference between the two processes was that the adoption of Erasmus+ was carried out in a much more complex environment. This partly refers to the link with the MFF but also to the contestation of the negotiations on the budgetary perspectives.

Adding up all the numerical evaluations from the three tables above, we can say that CSYO do not effectively participate in EU youth politics (average: +0,64). Thus, the participation of CSYO leaves the democratic legitimacy of the Union, per definition, unaffected. Mindful of the fact that the EU youth field already circuits some of the pitfalls identified by earlier studies

and mindful also of the findings of Friedrich discussed above, it is unlikely that CSO currently effectively participate in EU youth politics. This finding must definitely be treated with care. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that the participation of CSO is currently not sufficient to remedy the democratic legitimacy of the Union.

However, these findings are not equally true for: a) the four stages of the decision-making process, b) the four concepts applied in this thesis. As table 6 shows, there are considerable variances in the data.

Table 6: General evaluation table.

	Stage of the decision-making process				Average
	Agenda-setting	Decision-making	Implementation	Evaluation	
Participation	+2	+1,7	+0,5	+1,7	+1,48
Inclusiveness	+1,7	+1,3	0	+1,3	+1,08
Transparency	+1	+0,3	-1,5	+0,7	+0,13
Responsiveness	-0,3	+1,3	-1	-0,5	-0,13
Average	+1,25	+1,15	-0,5	+0,8	

What can be said it that the participation is least effective when implementing policies or programmes, while it is quite effective during the agenda-setting and decision-making process. Responsiveness and transparency perform significantly worse than inclusiveness and participation. A general trend can be observed, namely: CSYO effectively participate in early

stages of the decision-making process but they tend to be less involved in later stages and in particular during the (preparation of the) implementation of policies or programmes. This is for the most part due to the Commission performing so called Impact Assessments, which are formalising a broad consultation of the affected parties and relatively stringent transparency criteria. Contrasting with that, neither the EP nor the Council have similar standards when it comes to the participation of affected parties.

Another topos that resonates strongly throughout the thesis is that CSYO achieve little cross-sectorial outreach. There is no effective mechanism on EU level to mainstream the concerns of young people in other policy areas, nor do CSYO effectively reach out to decision-makers in other fields of action. Interviewees and respondents to the Map Out questionnaire hold that they find it difficult to establish contacts and involve decision-makers in cross-sectorial fields of action. This may be explained by two facts: a) CSYO are normally not very well equipped with resources and establishing or maintaining a lot of contacts may just not be feasible, b) while CSYO are seen as the "natural" stakeholders in the youth field, where their expertise is acknowledged and valued, this is not the case in cross-sectorial policy fields, where they have to compete with sectorial stakeholders.

Clearly, this frustrates the idea that the participation of CSYO may compensate for the underrepresentation of young people in electoral politics. The short answer is, they do not. CSYO are not able to mainstream the concerns of young people in cross-sectorial policy areas, their effective activity is restricted to the youth specific fields of action and the concerns of young people in cross-sectorial fields remain as underrepresented as they are.

When it comes to the institutional actors, it can be said that CSYO maintain close relations with the Commission DG EAC, the members of the YWP in the Council and MEP in the Education and Culture Committee. Contrary to Friedrich who finds that the Council is least responsive to the concerns of CSO, it has to be stressed that some of the most dedicated supporters of CSYO sit in the YWP. Especially countries with a strong domestic youth policy, like Belgium, Germany, Finland or Sweden, have at times made a difference for the youth field. The proximity between the commitment of a MS to contribute to the development of the EU youth field and its youth policy tradition is something that has been pointed out in one interview (Interview MS A) and it seems to be confirmed by the thesis.

Eventually, it has to be reiterated that the decision-making processes on the first and the renewed policy framework were truly laboratories when it comes to the development of participative mechanisms in the youth field. This may imply that a broad involvement of young people during a formalised process with committed institutional actors is very fruitful for the development of participative settings.

Finally, this thesis puts forward three recommendations how the participation of CSYO in EU youth politics can be strengthened.

One possibility would be to solidly anchor the SD in the national and sub-national context. The reason is that due to the structural reasons described above, the output of SD will otherwise always remain limited due to a lack of competence on the EU level. If the joint dialogue is to produce results, it has to be recognised and institutionalised in the MS, where the competence rests. It also increases the visibility of the mechanism, once it produced tangible political output.

Connected to that, the thesis suggests to consistently apply the SD when revising the action programme. Critics may point out that young people are not informed enough to participate in such a technical process but their involvement clearly benefits the democratic quality of the process. The SD would allow to increase the inclusivity of the decision-making process on the programme and probably even the responsiveness, if the Presidencies keep up the practice of providing feedback on the feasibility of the joint recommendations. But more importantly, the SD comes along with information mechanisms. NYC would have to inform themselves to brief their delegates and also the ESC would inform the young delegates about the process during the EU Youth Conferences. Thus, relying on SD in the revision of the programme has the potential of elevating the knowledge of CSYO about the decision-making process and enables them to better participate therein.

At this point, a few remarks are in order. As the analysis above shows, the fact that young delegates receive information does not necessarily mean that they understand what they are told. Furthermore, the commitment of the decision-makers in such a process would be crucial. This includes that the Presidency country ensures that the outcomes of the EU Youth Conference actually reaches the right Committee in the Council. Therefore, it would require an effective mechanism to ensure the cross-sectorial cooperation in the EU youth field.

In the SD Map Out, the French NYC reports that France has lately established an Interministerial Youth Delegate, who is responsible for co-ordinating the work of Ministries in charge of issues that concern young people. If the respective Trio Presidency nominates an Interinstitutional Youth Delegate with a view of assisting the Presidencies in co-ordinating the co-operation among the Council formations relevant for young people, than this would already be a step forward.

Even though these modest proposals will probably not immediately turn the tide for CSYO in the EU youth field, they can be seen as a step in the right direction and they do address some of the weak points identified in the analysis above.

Scientific Bibliography

- **Banjac, Marinko (2014)**: Governing youth: configurations of EU youth policy, in: CEU Political Science Journal, Vol. 9(3), pp. 139-158.
- **Bernard, Catherine (2012)**: EU Employment Law, 4th Ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **Bessant, Judith and Rob William Wats (2014)**: 'Cruel optimism': a southern theory perspective on the European Union's Youth Strategy, 2008-2012, in: International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, Vol. 19(1), pp. 125-140.
- **Borrás, Susana and Kerstin Jacobsson (2004)**: The open method of co-ordination and new governance patterns in the EU, in: Journal of European Public Policy, Vol. 11(2), pp. 185-208).
- **Chabanet, Didier (2014)**: Between Youth Policy and Employment Policy: The Rise, Limits and Ambiguities of a Corporatist System of Youth Representation within the EU, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 52(3), pp. 479-494.
- **Copeland, Paul and Beryl ter Haar (2011):** EU Youth Policy: A Waterfall of Softness, Research memorandum University of Leiden, available at: https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/16651/Research%20 Memorandum%20HSZ%202011.02.pdf?sequence=1, (last access: 03.04.2015).
- **Craig, Paul (2012)**: EU Administrative Law, 2nd Ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **De la Porte, Caroline and Philippe Pochet (2012)**: Why and how (still) study the Open Method of Cooridnation (OMC)?, in: Journal of European Social Policy, Vol. 22(3), pp. 336-349.
- **De Witte, Bruno (1989)**: The Scope of Community Powers in Education and Culture in the Light of Subsequent Practice, in: Roland Bieber and Georg Ress (Ed.): The Dynamics of EC-Law, Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 261-281.
- **Delmas-Marty, Mireille (2013)**: Principes d'attribution, de subsidiarité et d'identité nationale des Etats membres, in: Allan Rosas, Egils Levits, Yves Bot (Ed.): The Court of Justice and the Construction of Europe: Analyses and Perspectives on Sixty Years of Case-law, The Hague: Asser Press, pp. 329-336.
- **Eberlein, Burkard and Dieter Kerwer (2004)**: New Governance in the European Union: A Theoretical Perspective, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 42(1), pp. 121-142.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2011)**: Anthology. Raw materials for a history of the European Youth Forum, Brussels.
- **Follesdal, Andreas and Simon Hix (2006)**: Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 44(3), pp. 533-562.
- **Friedrich, Dawid (2011)**: Democratic participation and civil society in the European Union, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- **Garben, Sacha (2011)**: EU Higher Education Law. The Bologna Process and Harmonization by Stealth, Alphen aan den Rijn: Kluwer Law International.
- **Hodson, Dermot and Imelda Maher (2001)**: The Open Method as a New Mode of Governance: The Case of Soft Economic Policy Co-ordination, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 39(4), pp. 719-746.
- **Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks (2001)**: Types of Multi-Level Governance, in: European Integration online Papers, Vol. 5(11), available at: *http://eiop.or.at/eiop/pdf/2001-011.pdf*, last access: 22.05.2015.
- **Kohler-Koch, Beate (2011)**: The three worlds of 'European civil society', in: Ulrike Liebert and Hans-Jörg Trenz (Ed.): The New Politics of European Civil Society, London [i.a.]: Routledge, pp. 59-72.

- **Kohler-Koch, Beate and Berthold Rittberger (2006)**: Review Article: The 'Governance Turn' in EU Studies, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 44, pp. 27-49.
- **Kohler-Koch, Beate and Christine Quittkat with Vanessa Buth and Christina Altides[85] (2013)**: De-Mystification of Participatory Democracy. EU Governance and Civil Society, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **König, Thomas, Stephanie Daimler and Daniel Finke (2008)**: The Treaty Reform of the EU: Constitutional Agenda-Setting, Intergovernmental Bargains and the Presidency's Crisis Management of Ratification Failure, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 46(2), pp. 337-363.
- **Lahusen, Christian, Natalie Schulz and Paolo R. Graziano (2013)**: Promoting Social Europe? The development of European youth unemployment policies, in: International Journal of Social Welfare, Vol. 22(3), pp. 300-309.
- **Laine, Sofia and Anu Gretschel (2009)**: Whose arena is the EU youth policy? Young participants' invovlement and influence in the EU youth policy from their own points of view: Case of the EU Presidency Youth Event in Hyvinkää, Finland, in: Young, Vol. 17(2), pp. 191-215.
- **Lange, Bettina and Nafsika Alexiadou (2007)**: New Forms of European Union Governance in the Education Sector? A Preliminary Analysis of the Open Method of Coordination, in: European Educational Research Journal, Vol. 6(4), pp. 321-335.
- **Liebert, Ulrike and Hans-Jörg Trenz (2009)**: Civil society and the reconstitution of democracy in Europe: Introducing a new research field, in: Policy and Society, Vol. 28(1), pp. 1-9.
- **Liebert, Ulrike and Hans-Jörg Trenz (2011a)**: The New Politics of European Civil Society, London [i.a.]: Routledge.
- **Liebert, Ulrike and Hans-Jörg Trenz (2011b)**: The 'new politics of European civil society'. Conceptual, normative and empirical issues, in: Ulrike Liebert and Hans-Jörg Trenz (Ed.): The New Politics of European Civil Society, London [i.a.]: Routledge, pp. 1-16.
- **Moravcsik, Andrew (2002)**: In Defence of the 'Democratic Deficit': Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, Vol. 40(4), pp. 603-624.
- **Pépin, Luce (2007)**: The History of EU Cooperation in the Field of Education and Training: how lifelong learning became a strategic objective, in: European Journal of Education, Vol. 42(1), pp. 121-132.
- **Riesenhuber, Karl (2012)**: European Employment Law, Cambridge [i.a.]: Intersentia.
- **Shephard, Mark and Stratos Patrikios (2013):** Making Democracy Work by Early Formal Engagement? A Comparative Exploration of Youth Parliaments in the EU, in: Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 66(4), pp. 752-771.
- **Sloam, James (2013)**: 'Voice and Equality': Young People's Politics in the European Union, in: West European Politics, Vol. 36(4), pp. 836-858.
- **Souto-Otero, Manuel, Timo Fleckenstein and Rod Dacombe (2008)**: Filling in the gaps: European governance, the open method of coordination and the European Commission, in: Journal of Education Policy, Vol. 23(3), pp. 231-249.
- **Trenz, Hans-Jörg, Nadine Bernhard and Erik Jentges (2011)**: Civil society and EU constitution making. Towards a European social constituency, in: Ulrike Liebert and Hans-Jörg Trenz (Ed.): The New Politics of European Civil Society, London [i.a.]: Routledge, pp. 123-142.
- **Wallace, Claire and Rene Bendit (2009)**: Youth Policies in Europe: Towards a Classification of Different Tendencies in Youth Policies in the European Union, in: Perspectives on European Politics and Society, Vol. 10(3), pp. 441-458.

---

[85] For the sake of simplicity, this book will be cited as follows: Kohler-Koch and Quittkat (2013).

- **Watson, Philippa (2014)**: EU Social and Employment Law, 2nd Ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- **Weiler, Joseph H. H. (1991)**: The transformation of Europe, in: Yale Law Journal, Vol. 100(8), p. 2403-2483.
- **Williamson, Howard (2014)**: Radicalisation to retreat: responses of the young to austerity Europe, in: International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, Vol. 19(1), pp. 5-18.

Legal References and Policy Documents

- **Case C-9/74** Donato Casagrande v Landeshauptstadt München [1974], ECR 773.
- **Case C-152/82** Sandro and Marisa Forcheri v Belgium [1983], ECR 2323.
- **Case C-293/83** Françoise Gravier v City of Liège [1985], ECR 593.
- **Case C-24/86** Vincent Blaizot v University of Liège [1988], ECR 379.
- **Case C-45/86** Commission v Council [1987], ECR 1493.
- **Case C-242/87** Commission v Council (Erasmus) [1989], ECR 1425.
- **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [CFREU]**, [2012], O.J. C 326/2.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (1985a)**: White Paper. Completing the Internal Market, COM (85) 310 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (1985b)**: Bulleting of the European Communities, Supplement 7/85. A people's Europe. Reports from the ad hoc Committee.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2001a)**: White Paper. European Governance, COM (2001) 428 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2001b)**: White Paper. A New Impetus for European Youth, COM (2001) 681 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2002a)**: Communication. On Impact Assessment, COM (2002) 276 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2002b)**: Communication. Action paln "Simplifying and improving the regulatory environment", COM (2002) 278 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2002c)**: Communication. Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission, COM (2001) 704 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2002d)**: Communication. On the collection and use of expertise by the Commission: "Improving the knowledge base for better policies, COM (2002) 713 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2002e)**: Report from the Commission on European Governance, available at: *http://ec.europa.eu/governance/docs/comm_rapport _en.pdf*, last access: 22.05.2015.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2003)**: Communication. Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth. Proposed common objectives for the participation and information of young people, in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field, COM (2003) 184 final.
- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2004a):** Communication. Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth. Proposed common objectives for a greater

understanding and knowledge of youth, in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field, COM (2004) 336 final.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2004b):** Communication. Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth: evaluation of activities conducted in the framework of European cooperation in the youth field, COM (2004) 694 final.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2005)**: Communication. The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, COM (2005) 494 final.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2006):** Communication. On European policies concerning youth participation and information. Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth: Implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship, COM (2006) 417 final.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2007)**: Communication. Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society, COM (2007) 498 final.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2008a)**: Press Release. European Youth Week 2008, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-08-1608_en.htm, last access: 03.06.2015.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2008b)**: Final Conclusions. European Youth Week 2008, available at: *http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/ 200811/20081117ATT42140/20081117ATT42140EN.pdf*, last access: 03.06.2015.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2009a)**: Communication. An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities, SEC (2009) 200 final.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2009b)**: Commission Staff Working Document. An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities. Impact Assessment, SEC (2009) 545.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2009c)**: Commission Staff Working Document. An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. EU Youth Report, SEC (2009) 549.

- **Commission of the European Communities [COM] (2009d)**: Commission Staff Working Document. An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth, SEC (2009) 548.

- **Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union [TEU]**, [2012], O.J. C 115/1.

- **Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [TFEU]**, [2012], O.J. C 115/1.

- **Council (64/307/EEC)** first joint programme to encourage the exchange of young workers within the Community [1964], O.J. 1226/64.

- **Council and European Commission (C 394/3/2012)** 2012 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18), O.J. C 394/3.

- **Council conclusions (C 314/24/2007)** on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy [2007], O.J. 314/24.

- **Council conclusions (9169/09)** on the evaluation of the current framework for European cooperation in the youth field and on future perspectives for the renewed framework, available at: http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209169%202009 %20INIT, last access: 03.06.2015.
- **Council conclusions (C 224/2/2013)** on maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy [2013], O.J. C 224/2.
- **Council Decision (63/266/EEC)** laying down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy [1963], O.J. 1338/63.
- **Council Decision (79/642/EEC)** establishing a second joint programme to encourage the exchange of young workers within the Community [1979], O.J. L 185/24.
- **Council Decision (84/636/EEC)** establishing a third joint programme to encourage the exchange of young workers within the Community [1984], O.J. L 331/36.
- **Council Decision (87/327/EEC)** adopting the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) [1987], O.J. L 166/20.
- **Council Decision (87/569/EEC)** concerning an action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life [1987], O.J. L 346/31.
- **Council Decision (88/348/EEC)** adopting an action programme for the promotion of youth exchanges in the Community – 'Youth for Europe' programme [1988], O.J. 158/42.
- **Council Decision (91/387/EEC)** amending Decision 87/569/EEC concerning an action programme for the vocational training of young people and their preparation for adult and working life [1991], O.J. L 214/69.
- **Council Directive (89/391/EEC)** on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work [1989], O.J. L 183/1.
- **Council Directive (94/33/EC)** on the protection of young people at work [1994], O.J. L 216/12.
- **Council of Europe [CoE] (1986)**: Report. First Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth, available at: *http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/IG_Coop/Min_Conferences/ 1_CEMRY_report_en.pdf*, (last access: 02.05.2015).
- **Council of Europe [CoE] (2008)**: Forum 21. European Journal on Child and Youth Policy, No. 12, available at: *http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Forum_21/No12_en.asp #TopOfPage*, last access: 04.06.2015.
- **Council of Europe [CoE] (2009)**: Forum 21. European Journal on Child and Youth Policy, No. 13, available at: *http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Forum_21/No13_en.asp #TopOfPage*, last access: 04.06.2015.
- **Council of the European Communities General Secretariat [CEC] (1987)**: European Educational Policy Statements, 3rd Ed., Brussels [i.a.]: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- **Council of the European Union [CEU] (2012)**: Council conclusions on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people, available at: *http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/130157.pdf*, last access: 04.07.2015.
- **Council of the European Union [CEU] (2013)**: Council Declaration. "European Alliance for Apprenticeships", available at: *http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/ pressdata/en/lsa/139011.pdf*, last access: 12.05.2015.
- **Council Recommendation (C 398/1/2012)** on the validation of non-formal and informal learning [2012], O.J. C 398/1.

- **Council Recommendation (C 120/1/2013)** on establishing a Youth Guarantee [2013], O.J. C 120/1.
- **Council Recommendation (C 88/1/2014)** on a Quality Framework for Traineeships [2014], O.J. C 88/1.
- **Council Recommendation (2014)** on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/141424.pdf, last access: 06.04.2015.
- **Council Regulation (1311/2013/EU, EURATOM)** laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 [2013], O.J. L 347/884.
- **Council Resolution (C 98/2/1974)** on cooperation in the field of education [1974], O.J. C 98/2.
- **Council Resolution (C 38/1/1976)** comprising an action programme in the field of education [1976], O.J. C 38/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 308/1/1976)** concerning measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life [1976], O.J. C 308/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 23/1/1980)** concerning measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life [1980], O.J. C 23/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 193/1/1982)** concerning measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life [1982], O.J. 193/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 328/3/1985)** extending for one year certain measures to be taken to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to working life [1985], O.J. C 328/3.
- **Council Resolution (C 42/1/1999)** on youth participation [1999], O.J. C 42/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 168/2/2002)** regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [2002], O.J. C 168/2.
- **Council Resolution (C 295/4/2003)** on common objectives for participation by and information for young people, O.J. C 295/4).
- **Council Resolution (C 141/1/2005)** on the evaluation of activities conducted in the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [2005], O.J. C 141/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 141/2/2005)** on implementing the common objective to increase participation by young people in the system of representative democracy [2005], O.J. C 141/2.
- **Council Resolution (C 297/2/2006)** on implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship, O.J. C 297/2.
- **Council Resolution (C 311/1/2009)** on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) [2009], O.J. C 311/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 164/1/2011)** on the structured dialogue with young people on youth employment, O.J. C 164/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 380/1/2012)** on the overview of the structured dialogue with young people on youth participation in democratic life in Europe, O.J. C 380/1.
- **Council Resolution (C 183/1/2014)** on the overview of the structured dialogue process including social inclusion of young people, O.J. C 183/1.

- **Council Resolution (C 183/2/2014)** on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015 [2014], O.J. C 183/5.
- **Danish Council Presidency (2012)**: EU Youth Conference of the Danish Presidency. Joint Recommendations, available at: http://www.go-europe.nl/eurodesk/JeugdbeleidinEuropa/ Gestructureerde%20dialoog/Joint_recommendations_EU_youth_conference_DK_March_20 12.pdf, last access: 04.07.2015.
- **Decision (1031/2000/EC)** of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'Youth' Community action programme [2000], O.J. L 117/1.
- **Decision (1719/2006/EC)** of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the 'Youth in Action' programme for the period 2007 to 2013 [2006], O.J. L 327/30.
- **ECORYS (2011a)**: Youth in Action. Interim Evaluation. Final Report, available at: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2522/interimreport_en.pdf*, last access: 04.07.2015.*
- **ECORYS (2011b)**: Public consultation on the future European youth programme. Overview of the results of the online public consultation, available at: https://www.jugendfuereuropa.de/ ueber-jfe/publikationen/public-consultation-on-the-future-european-youth-programme.2909/, last access: 02.07.2015.
- **EUCIS-LLL (2012)**: Minutes - Public Hearing at the European Parliament. Defining a future EU education and youth programme, available at: *http://platformlearnforlife.nl/documents/ Minutes_EP_Public_Hearing_Erasmus_for_all_27.03.pdf*, last access: 05.07.2015.
- **EUCIS-LLL and YFJ (2012)**: Letter to Doris Pack MEP, available at: *http://www.eucis-lll.eu/eucis-lll/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Letter-YFJ-and-EUCIS-LLL-PACK.pdf*, last access: 04.07.2015.
- **Eurofound (2013)**: Young people and temporary employment in Europe, available at: *http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef13 77en.pdf*, last access: 28.05.2015.
- **Eurofound (2014)**: Mapping youth transitions in Europe, available at: http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1 392en_0.pdf, last access: 28.05.2015.
- **European Commission (2010)**: Youth on the Move. An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union, COM (2010) 477 final.
- **European Commission (2011a)**: Communication. Youth Opportunities Initiative, COM (2011) 933 final.
- **European Commission (2011b)**: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing "Erasmus for all". The Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, COM (2011) 788 final.
- **European Commission (2011c)**: Impact Assessment on Youth Actions. Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing "Erasmus for all". The Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, SEC (2011) 1402 final.
- **European Commission (2011d)**: Communication. A Budget for Europe 2020, COM (2011) 500 final.
- **European Commission (2011e)**: Communication. A Budget for Europe 2020 - Part II: Policy fiches, COM (2011) 500 final.

- **European Commission (2011f)**: Report. Interim evaluation of the 'Youth in Action' Programme, COM (2011) 220 final.
- **European Commission (2012a)**: Communication. Moving Youth into Employment, COM (2012) 727 final.
- **European Commission (2012b)**: EU Youth Report. Results of the first cycle of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field (2010-2012), SWD (2012) 256 final.
- **European Commission (2013)**: Communication. Youth Employment Initiative, COM (2013) 144 final.
- **European Commission (2014)**: Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Version 3 (2015), available at: *http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf*, last access: 17.05.2015.
- **European Commission (2015e)**: Staff Working Document. Better Regulation Guidelines, SWD (2015) 111 final.
- **European Commission (2015f)**: European Youth Week. Conference for the main actors in Structured Dialogue, see: Annex VI.
- **European Council [EUCO] (2011)**: Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020). Report on progress of work within the Council in the second semester 2011, EUCO 17448/1/11.
- **European Council [EUCO] (2012)**: Press Release 185, EUCO 9362/2/12.
- **European Council [EUCO] (2013)**: Conclusions. Multiannual Financial Framework, EUCO 37/13.
- **European Parliament, European Council, European Commission (C 321/1/2003)** Interinstitutional Agreement on better law-making [2003], O.J. C 321/1.
- **European Parliament (2010/2211(INI))** resolution on Investing in the future: a new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for a competitive, sustainable and inclusive Europe [2011], P7_TA(2011)0266.
- **European Parliament (2012)**: Report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing "ERASMUS FOR ALL", The Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport [2012], A7-0405/2012.
- **European Steering Committee [ESC] (2015)**: MAP OUT 2014. The Structured Dialogue in the National Working Groups (NWG) and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs), see Annex III.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2008)**: Key principles for the new framework for European cooperation in the youth field, available at: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0781-08-FINAL_FutureEUyouthpolicy1.pdf, last access: 30.05.2015.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2009a)**: Reaction to the Commission Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering", sent separately, formally annex VI.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2009b)**: YFJ Contribution to the Council Resolution on an EU Strategy for Youth, sent separately, formally annex VI.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2009c)**: European Youth Forum Shadow Report on the evaluation of the current framework for European cooperation in the youth field, Brussels: European Youth Forum.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2010a)**: Annual Report/2009, available at: *http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/annualreport2009/9*, last access: 04.06.2015.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2010b)**: Position Paper. On Youth in Action 2.0, available at: *https://www.jugendpolitikineuropa.de/downloads/4-20-2756/0567-10_PP_YIA2.0_FINAL.pdf*, last access: 03.07.2015.

- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2011)**: Invitation. Stakeholder Breakfast Meeting on the New Youth Programme of the EU, available at: *http://intranet.youthforum.org/newsletters/ node/23450*, last access: 04.07.2015.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2012)**: Speech. Youth in Action 2.0: investing in youth participation & youth work to support young people's autonomy, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201203/20120329ATT42126/201 20329ATT42126EN.pdf, last access: 04.07.2015.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2014a)**: Monthly Overview – January 2014, available at: *http://www.youthforum.org/blog/monthly-overview-january-2014/*, last access: 05.07.2015.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2014b)**: Youth in the crisis. What went wrong?, available at: *http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2014/11/YFJ-Publication-What-went-wrong.pdf*, last access: 20.05.2015.
- **European Youth Forum [YFJ] (2015)**: Evaluation of the 3rd Cycle of Structured Dialogue, see Annex II.
- **Eurostat (2014)**: Post-election survey 2014. European elections 2014. Socio-demographic Annex, available at: *http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/post/post_ ee2014_sociodemographic_annex_en.pdf*, last access 20.05.2015.
- **Eurostat (2015)**: Being young in Europe today, 2015 Ed., available at: *http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-05-14-031*, last access: 28.05.2015.
- **French Council Presidency (2008a)**: Informal Forum. Brussels, 20 November 2008. Agenda, see Annex VI.
- **French Council Presidency (2008b)**: French EU Presidency Youth Event. Conclusions of the Working Groups, available at: *http://www.eurodesk.si/fileadmin/user_upload/doc/ DOKUMENTI/zakljucki_ml.dogodek_fr.pdf*, last access 04.06.2015.
- **GHK (2011)**: Preparation of a new programme in the field of education and training post-2013. Results of the public consultation, available at: *https://www.jugendpolitikineuropa.de/ downloads/4-20-2904/report_LLP_en.pdf*, last access: 04.07.2015.
- **Italian Council Presidency (2014)**: Guiding Framework. Youth Empowerment for Political Participation, available at: *http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2014/10/EUYC2014-Guiding-framework-final-outcome-.pdf*, last access 01.07.2015.
- **Latvian Council Presidency (2015)**: EU Youth Conference. Joint Conclusions on "Youth Empowerment for Political Participation", available at: *http://www.youthforum.org/ assets/2015/03/EUYC_recommendations.pdf*, last access: 01.07.2015.
- **League of Young Voters in Europe [LoYV] (2014)**: Addressing Youth Absenteeism in European Elections, available at: *http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2014/02/YFJ-LYV_StudyOnYouthAbsenteeism_WEB.pdf*, last access: 20.05.2015.
- **Recommendation (2001/613/EC)** of the European Parliament and of the Council on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers, [2001], O.J. L 215/30.
- **Regulation (1612/68/EEC)** on freedom of movement for workers within the Community [1968], O.J. L 257/2.
- **Regulation (1288/2013/EU)** of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC [2013], O.J. L 347/50.

- **Swedish Council Presidency (2009)**: Conference on the future EU cooperation in the youth field. Key messages, available at: *http://issuu.com/movit/docs/2009-september---conclusions-of-swedish-eu-youth-c*, last access: 09.06.2015.
- **Treaty establishing European Economic Community [TEEC]**, [1957].
- **Treaty of Lisbon** amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community **[ToL]**, [2007], O.J. C 306/1/2007.
- **Trio Presidency Italy-Latvia-Luxembourg, European Commission and European Youth Forum [Trio Presidency et al.]** (2014): Implementation Plan of the Structured Dialogue with Young People. 4th cycle for the period 1 July 2014 – 31st December 2015, see Annex.

Webpages

- **European Commission (2015a)**: Youth on the Move. A Europe 2020 initiative, available at: *http://ec.europa.eu/youthonthemove/,* last access: 12.05.2015.
- **European Commission (2015b)**: Budget. Multiannual Financial Framework. Programmes, available at: *http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/programmes/index_en.cfm#youth*, last access: 13.05.2015.
- **European Commission (2015c)**: Budget. Multiannual Financial Framework. MFF explained, available at: *http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/introduction/index_en.cfm*, last access: 13.05.2015.
- **European Commission (2015d)**: European Youth Week 2015 events, available at: https://europa.eu/youth/eyw/events_en, last access: 01.07.2015.

Interview References

1. **COM A**
2. **COM B**
3. **COM C**
4. **COM D**
5. **EP A**
6. **MS A**
7. **MS B**
8. **MS C**
9. **NYC A**
10. **NYC B**
11. **YFJ A**
12. **YFJ B**
13. **YFJ C**
14. **YFJ D**