

Youth - actor of social change. Findings from European youth research

Policy seminar

Brussels, 5 – 6 March 2009



The seminar ,Youth – actor of social change‘:

- Presenting the work and findings of the UP2YOUTH project
- Bringing together complementary EU-research on young people from FP6 and FP7
- Discussing with policy makers and experts from practice and research
- Informing the UP2YOUTH final report



The issue: young people – actors of social change?

- What does it mean?
- What is changing in European societies, especially with regard to the traditional markers of adulthood and social integration?
 - Family
 - Work
 - Citizenship
- What can youth research tell about young people's agency in social change?
- Hypothesis: neither victims nor profiteers of social change?



- Why is it relevant for policy makers?
 - policies rely on assumption on what agency is and why and how young people do act;
 - both representations of youth - victims and profiteers – can be found in policy discourses



For example, young people's agency in EU youth policy documents:

- Commission White Paper on Youth (2001):

“Young Europeans have a lot to say; after all, these are precisely the people who are primarily affected by economic change, demographic imbalance, globalisation or cultural diversity. We are expecting them to create new forms of social relations, different ways of expressing solidarity or of coping with differences and finding enrichment in them, while new uncertainties appear.” (p. 4)

- Youth Pact (2005):

“The Youth Pact aims to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans, while facilitating the reconciliation of working life and family life. The Pact should ensure the overall consistency of initiatives in these areas and provide the starting point for strong, ongoing mobilisation on behalf of young people. “ (p. 20)



- Investing in youth (BEPA 2006) :

“Early investments are crucial for all aspects of human capital formation. Investing in youth is an occasion to reunite social and economic goals. Investing early in youth education and care is much more efficient than repairing later when grown ups turn out to be unskilled, unemployed, depressed or violent. Investing in youth is a centre-piece for modernising our societies to stimulate performance and cohesion.” (BEPA 2006: Investing in Youth, p. 1)
- (Some) policy makers would like ‘technological’ knowledge (“what works?”) on young people’s agency and decision-making
- Researchers can (and should) dig deeper -> how and why of agency



- In fact, I didn't have any choice ... and at a certain point you do not see any sense in continuing applying for training or jobs.
(Male, 19, Germany)
- Abstention is a way of voting, it is understood as a vote for something else; this is to show that nobody interests us.
(Female, 21, France)
- I've got this one thing [a baby] for the rest of my life and I brought it into the world. I could stay on the dole for the rest of my life but I've still got something that I've done.
(Female, 19, UK)



- What policies are needed for empowering young people's agency ?
- (although all policies have some effect on young people's agency)
“All countries have a youth policy - by intent, default or neglect”
(Williamson 2007)
- What kind of knowledge is needed for (and has to be used) in evidence-based policy making aimed at empowering young people's agency?



The programme

- Opening session
- Thematic session 1: transitions into parenthood and family building
- Thematic session 2: transitions to work in the migration society
- Thematic session 3: youth participation
- Panel discussion: empowering young people's agency – research evidence for policy making

