

Lets get back there!

Youth Information in Europe and Ireland

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Common International Symposium Eurodesk, ERYICA and ECYC November 2018

Youth Information is a rapidly evolving, dynamic and needed area of youth provision that young people have a right to within European Policy. There are new programmes, knowledge, service provision initiatives and policy changes which are of common interest to all stakeholders.

This event had the purpose of promoting and evidencing the value of European and national youth information services for young people in the context of Eurodesk and youth information services' role in the implementation of the EU youth strategy. It also provided delegates with an opportunity for networking, learning and development of a common understanding of the evolving challenges and opportunities in youth information.

The introduction by Patrick Burke, CEO Youth Work Ireland highlighted four key principles that should underpin youth information services:

1. Young people have the unequivocal right to quality information;
2. Youth information services should always work in a collaborative environment/manner;
3. Youth information sector has to constantly adapt to an ever changing environment and to provide relevant and adequate services to all young people;
4. In Ireland we have a national coherent system for providing quality information to young people. The national co-ordination of this system needs to be resourced.



These principles featured strongly throughout the day in the discussions and presentations. Most especially the need for the national coordination role to be reinstated was accentuated on many occasions. Youth Information provision was at its strongest in Ireland when there was a National Co-ordinator role in place. The Symposium welcomed the support of Minister David Stanton, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality for this proposition in his address. Indeed it was his comment, **"Let's get back there!"**, that gave this report its title.

The first session on the European and Irish context for youth information focused on two main components: the overview, the history and the transformation that the youth information services went through over the last few decades and the positive and the crucial role youth information services play in fostering international youth mobility.

Maurice Devlin, Jean Monnet Professor and Director of the Centre for Youth Research and Development in Maynooth University reminded everyone of the significant developments that youth information services went through since their inception. In doing so he emphasised the transformation from the implicit nature, mainly implemented by non-state actors, to a more explicit and a standalone feature and the visibility of youth information recognised and underpinned by the first National Youth Policy of 1985. This development largely mirrored the developments at the EU level which led to the current EU Youth Strategy. In both of these processes there are several key changes that are visible and how the youth information services can be characterised; transition:

- from instrument to expressive
- from product to process
- from passive to active
- from source user to right holder
- from consumer to creator

Several presenters emphasised the crucial role youth information services play in fostering international youth mobility and supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing and taking advantage of international mobility opportunities such as volunteering, studying or working abroad. That was the focus of inputs from Jim Mullin of Léargas and Audrey Frith of Eurodesk. There are many advantages of international mobility that young people benefit from including; development of interpersonal skills, increasing employability chances, encouraging young people to go back to education or labour market, opening up possibilities to young people and being exposed to different cultures.

All agreed that it is paramount that those opportunities are open to all young people especially those with poorer socio-economic backgrounds who otherwise would not be able to be aware of and access those types of chances. Youth information services play a key role in reducing these inequalities in access to these types of opportunities and provide unique and valuable professional, customised support to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A video link prepared by Eurodesk/Léargas showed at the event illustrated how Eurodesk multipliers and youth information workers, have helped young people from Ireland and from Greece to access and have a positive experience in EVS placements in Finland and in Ireland. The video also showed a huge positive impact of the international volunteering experience on young people's lives. [Video can be accessed here>>](#)

Furthermore the cooperation and exchange between the organisations that facilitate international youth mobility allow for sharing international experiences of different countries on how the youth information services can work and operate in practice.



To deliver effective youth information it is of paramount importance to make sure that the perspective of young people lies at the heart of any intervention. In order to do that service providers need to know the views of young people and the way they perceive youth information. EYRICA carries out a pan-European survey to find out what are the most pressing challenges young people face in relation to access to information and counselling services. According to the latest 2018 data:

- Young people find youth information services one of the most reliable sources of information. This is very important especially in the current era of information overload.
- The preferred option of receiving information is still face-to-face. In times of the digital wave it is important to remember that the physical interactions are also a key channel
- Still most in demand are those services related to employment and educational opportunities.

Another instrument that can be used as a tool in youth information service is the European Youth Card managed by EYCA. It is an instrument young people are entitled to, that is valid and recognised throughout Europe and offers a range of benefits to young people. These can be straightforward discounts to a number of attractions etc, but also a more sophisticated tool in engaging with young people in broader societal issues. There is great variety between countries and in some cases regions on how interactive the card can be and what it can be used for. This is strongly associated with the funding available for the implementation of the card. The services that are available through the Irish card are quite basic due to low funding level.

Minister David Stanton, who stepped in for Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone, echoed some of the key themes discussed in the morning stressing the importance of quality information, youth mobility as a benefit not only for the young people but also for broader society. The key in his intervention was fairness in access to youth information and making sure that all young people could avail from the opportunity in equal measure.

The Minister's address also recognised that youth information has in the past enjoyed greater support and interest from the state. It was emphasised that youth information needs to be once again supported and emphasised more emphatically within youth service provision.

The afternoon session saw a presentation from Spunout - of an online tool created by and for young people. The tool connects young people with youth information services and information they want. It is also a referral to other services young people may need at a given time. The tool also provides an opportunity to gather a detailed amount of data on users, broken out by gender, age etc to adapt and adjust future services/interventions.

Rapporteur's Summary

Several of the participants voiced their concerns of lack of attention, at the national policy level, to the youth sector and in particular youth information issues and the lack of funding. I would suggest that the Irish organisations pay more attention to the European Commission country specific recommendations (CRS). These recommendations, specific for each country, focus the attention and subsequent actions of respective governments to address them in the following year. This could be one of the reasons why provision of childcare has been on the agenda of Irish government as the lack of provision has been repeatedly singled out as an issue that must be addressed. Connecting youth information to some of the current recommendations may provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the topic and secure more funding for youth and youth information in particular.

[View the 2018 European Semester Country Specific Recommendation / Commission Recommendations](#)

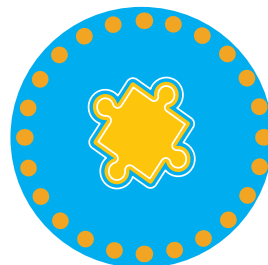
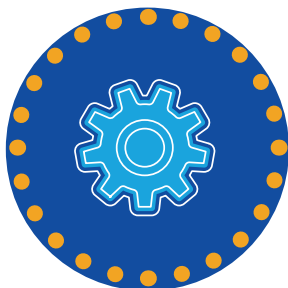
Recommendations

1. That the Government of Ireland acknowledge Youth Information as a right and therefore a universal service for all young people.
2. In keeping with Minister Stanton's ambition to return Youth Information to its former status and capacity, it is recommended that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs re-establish and resource a national coordinator function. The key purpose of this function is to ensure cooperation with Eurodesk, EYRICA and EYCA at all levels, and coordinate provision of Youth Information services in Ireland.
3. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs undertake an analysis of the availability and allocation of current Youth Information resources with a view towards identifying and remedying current gaps in provision.

Report Prepared by Anna Ludwinek, Research Manager Eurofound

Attendees

Anne Ludwig, <i>Eurofound</i>	Lorraine Thompson, <i>Donegal Youth Services</i>
Carmel O'Brien, <i>FDYS Wexford</i>	Luke Kelley, <i>Crosscare</i>
Deirdre Bermingham, <i>Youth Work Ireland Galway</i>	Maggie Flanagan, <i>Waterford & Sth Tipperary CYS</i>
Dermot Troy, <i>Limerick Youth Services</i>	Manuel Sanchez Garcia, <i>EYCA</i>
Des Bailey, <i>KDYS</i>	Marisa Netto, <i>PMPI</i>
Éabha Reid, <i>NYCI</i>	Mary Cunningham, <i>NYCI</i>
Edweena Farrell, <i>Youth Work Ireland Midlands</i>	Mary Mescal, <i>Ossory Youth</i>
Eimeo McGinn, <i>Youth Work Ireland Cavan/Monaghan</i>	Matthew McKenna, <i>Leargas</i>
Eva Reina, <i>ERYICA</i>	Maurice Devlin, <i>Maynooth University</i>
Fabian Boros, <i>YMCA Ireland</i>	Melissa Mackin, <i>Youth Work Ireland Cavan/Monaghan</i>
Fiona O'Grady, <i>Limerick Youth Services</i>	Mike Farrell, <i>Kildare Youth Service</i>
Fran Bissett, <i>Kildare Youth Services</i>	Niamh Sherry, <i>Youth Work Ireland Cavan/Monaghan</i>
Audrey Frith, <i>Eurodesk</i>	Olivia Hobbs, <i>Youth Work Ireland Cavan/Monaghan</i>
Gareth Gibson, <i>Donegal Youth Service</i>	Rachel Dunne-Lance, <i>Clare Youth Service</i>
Ger Cronin, <i>Kildare Youth Service</i>	Rebecca Price, <i>YMCA Ireland</i>
Geraldine O'Halloran, <i>KDYS</i>	Ronan McCann, <i>Youth Work Ireland Nth Connaught</i>
Helen Butler, <i>Youth Work Ireland Galway</i>	Seamus Bane, <i>Limerick & Clare ETD</i>
Ian Power, <i>SpunOut.ie</i>	Susan Swift, <i>Crosscare</i>
Jacinta Purcell, <i>Ossory Youth</i>	Thomas Ryan, <i>Youth Work Ireland Galway</i>
Jack Deacon, <i>SpunOut.ie</i>	Tina Russell, <i>Youth Work Ireland Cavan Monaghan</i>
Jean O'Keeffe, <i>Clare Youth Service</i>	TJ Hourihan, <i>YMCA Ireland</i>
Joanne Byrne, <i>Dept. of Children & Youth Affairs</i>	Tracey Moore, <i>Youth Work Ireland Midlands</i>
Kevin O'Brien, <i>SpunOut.ie</i>	Bernard Hackett, <i>Waterford & Sth Tipperary CYS</i>
Chris Hogarty, <i>Waterford & Sth Tipperary CYS</i>	Patrick Burke, <i>Youth Work Ireland</i>
	Matthew Seebach, <i>Youth Work Ireland</i>
	Gina Halpin, <i>Youth Work Ireland</i>
	Breege Kiernan, <i>Youth Work Ireland</i>



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