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Stream 9: The European Social Dimension: New opportunity structures for national social NGOs?

Europe: Core Business or Bonus?

German and Hungarian Social NGOs in the Field of Youth Policy and their Way of Dealing with EU Policy



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1 Introduction

The increasing involvement of Civil Society Organisations¹ (CSOs) into policy making e.g. through the Open Method of Co-ordination has become one of the features of the EU's strategy for gaining legitimacy for their work and at the same time for reaching the citizens at the national level. The failure of the referenda on the EU constitution in The Netherlands and France underlined the necessity of bringing the EU closer to its citizens. As the EU's "PLAN D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate" shows, civil society is one of the means to get in contact with the people (European Commission 2005b:COM(2005)494 final). The EU fosters the development of CSOs at the European level but aims as well at organisations operating in the member states.

And the CSOs' perspective on the EU? Are they willing to take over this task? Indeed, national Civil Society Organisations seem to become aware of the European dimension of their work and join European umbrella organisations. Some organisations even open their own office in Brussels or establish the position of European policy officer in their national offices.

But what is the motivation of the organisations for dealing with European issues? Why do they decide that the EU is relevant for them and what aspects of EU policy are they most interested in? And are EU issues for organisations part of their normal everyday work or is there a recognisable difference in the way they deal with EU and national policy issues?

This paper casts light on these questions by focusing on EU youth policy and the CSOs concerned with this policy field. First preliminary results will be presented of twenty semi-structured, qualitative interviews conducted between November 2005 and July 2006 with representatives of CSOs dealing with young people and experts in this field both in Hungary and Germany.

This policy fields has been chosen as the EU dimension of youth policy only really gained momentum since the publication of the White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth" (European Commission 2001:COM(2001)681final) in 2001. This can be seen as a starting point for the growing interest of CSOs from this field. Furthermore, CSOs are directly addressed by EU youth policy through the Open Method of Co-Ordination and by the EU youth programme and its predecessors. Thirdly, this policy field is of additional interest as it belongs to those areas of social policy where the EU has few explicit competences laid down

¹ The use of the term Civil Society Organisations is based on the definition of the European Social and Economic Committee which is widely accepted in the European institutions (**European Economic and Social Committee** 1999 *The Role and Contribution of Civil Society Organisation in the building of Europe.*, (1999/C329/10).

in the treaties. In spite of this, the issue of youth is now on the European agenda. This is evidence of the ongoing European integration which affects a growing number of national policy fields.

And which organisations are addressed by EU youth policy? The Social NGOs active in the youth sector (YNGOs) cover a broad range of organisations: There are, first of all, youth organisations. This term refers to organisations being run by young people for young people and mainly concerned with providing leisure activities for young people. Secondly, there are children and youth welfare organisations which provide various social services for young people and thirdly, there are children's and youth's rights organisations. However, the boundaries between these organisations are somewhat blurred; e.g. social service providers for the youth might very well take over an advocacy role and speak up for children's and youth's rights. The education of young people is often an issue for both youth organisations and youth welfare organisations.

While looking at YNGOs and their perspective on the EU it is essential to be aware of the national situation of these organisations as these are the starting point for any EU related activities. Looking at similar organisations which operate in different national surroundings (i.e. Hungary and Germany) and are exposed to the same EU policy gives insights into the different circumstances that might foster EU activities of Social NGOs.

Research which examines the interaction of EU policy and national actors is addressed under the heading of Europeanisation. Hence, the paper will first of all deal with the Europeanisation research agenda as this gives useful impulses for judging the relation between EU policy and YNGOs Europe related activities. After giving an overview of youth-related policy activities on the European level, the national situation and working conditions of YNGOs will be described. Then EU related activities of the YNGOs in Hungary and Germany will be presented in order to finally answer the question whether dealing with the EU today means core business for YNGOs or is just a bonus to their every-day-work.²

² This paper presents the first results of empirical research conducted for my PhD project between November 2005 and July 2006. A full analysis of my results will be published next year. Comments on this "work in progress" are very welcome!

2 The Influence of Europe on the Research Agenda

2.1 Not only state actors are affected

Research on the European Union focused for a long time on the increasing competences which were transferred from the member states to the EU level. Under the heading of European integration researchers try to explain why and how different nation states work together in order to build up a supranational respectively intergovernmental institution like the EU. In the last years another perspective has found its place on the research agenda: What are the consequences of EU membership for the national level? What does it mean for the national state when more and more decisions are made on the European level? The government and its public administration have to implement EU policies; parliaments have to decide on EU guidelines to incorporate EU decision into national law. This influence of the EU on the national level and its consequences are usually dubbed Europeanisation. Various definitions of this concept exist. A very broad definition that points to the multifaceted conception of Europeanisation is provided by Radaelli (Radaelli 2004:3):

“Europeanisation consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies.”

State actors are directly addressed by EU policy; they are obliged to implement EU decisions. This might lead to changes in national policy traditions if these differ from EU decisions or to changes of the working procedures of public administration. As the effect of European influence at a first glance is more obvious on state actors, these are very often the subject of Europeanisation research.

However, at a second glance it becomes clear that non-state actors – and this implies CSOs – are affected as well. CSOs are active in different policy fields and increasingly policy fields are dealt with at the European level. Not all policy fields are subject to binding EU decisions. Several policy fields – especially social policy – are discussed and co-ordinated at the European level through the Open Method of Co-ordination. These policy fields are the working environment for CSOs. CSOs are confronted with the fact that not just the national government but additionally the European level is dealing with their subject. Hence, they e.g. might decide to monitor both national policymakers and the European level to be prepared for

relevant decisions. All this makes it clear that they are part of the above defined Europeanisation processes. CSOs participate in national discourses and they are affected when settings of their national policy field - i.e. the political structures and the policy itself - are changed.

The EU directly addresses CSOs by providing funding opportunities for instance by means of the European Structural Fund or – as will be shown - by the European youth programme. CSOs are also encouraged by the EU to participate in the consultation procedures at the European level and the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) implies the necessity to consult national CSOs.

Hence, research on the effects of EU membership on the national level increasingly takes CSOs into account (c.f. for instance the study for The Netherlands by E. van den Berg, Berg 2004). But all Europeanisation research has to deal with the question of how to trace which changes and developments at the national level are really due to EU policies and why this is the case.

2.2 The difficulties of tracing Europeanisation

Despite the fact that state actors are obliged to accept EU policy in several policy fields it is not so easy to determine a cause-and-effect relation between EU requirements and national change. The question of EU influence and change on the national level should not be reduced to a simple Top-Down process as this might make the researcher blind to other influences which might be the cause for national change (Radaelli 2003:50). Indeed, pure national reasons might lead to adaptation: "[...] (It is often difficult to isolate the 'net effect' of Europe and to disentangle it from other sources of domestic change not only at the global, but also at the national level and local level."(Börzel 2003:18f.).

It is important to be aware that EU influence –even on state actors - is not always very direct as it is e.g. in the case of a directive that has to be implemented. Knill and Lehmkuhl (Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002) for instance identify more subtle ways of influencing the national level. The EU might “change domestic opportunity structures”³ by strengthening one actor in a certain field, for instance consumers. As a consequence, an established constellation of domestic actors is changed and this might influence future national decisions in the policy field. Other EU policy might only be aimed at preparing a real policy change in the future – especially when it comes to disputed issues -by making decisions which point towards the long-term goal. By implementing these “preparing” policies in the long run the domestic

³ Knill and Lehmkuhl dub this “Europeanization by changing domestic opportunity structures” (ibid.: 258/268f.)

climate might change in favour of the more far reaching ideas; “Europeanization by framing domestic beliefs” has happened (ibid.: 258, 271f.).

The situation of identifying EU influence is more difficult when it comes to CSOs. In contrast to state actors, these are not obliged to react to EU policy. They can be addressed by EU programmes which offer funding for projects or by being encouraged to participate in EU consultation procedures. But this can only be an offer; the CSOs have to decide whether to accept it or not. Furthermore, in several policy fields, it is the national parliaments and governments which have to make decisions on turning EU policies into national law. Hence, the organisations have to conclude whether in these cases the EU level is relevant or whether it is sufficient for CSOs to deal with national decision makers. And in those fields where the EU has little competence but relevant issues are discussed on the EU level due to the OMC, it is up to the organisations to decide whether this EU agenda setting is reflected in national policy and therefore relevant at all. It will be shown later that these aspects also apply to the field of youth policy.

2.3 CSOs as subjects of Europeanisation research

It becomes clear that Europeanisation research which studies the EU influence on CSOs needs to focus on the CSOs. It is their decision to deal with EU issues or not. Consequently, it is necessary to concentrate on their perception of EU issues in order to understand the role of CSOs in the Europeanisation process. Thus, approaches which focus on the way the EU hands down their policies to the national level – like the Knill-Lehmkuhl approach presented above – are not helpful in this respect.

For explaining the mechanisms of Europeanisation primarily from the involved actors’ point of view most authors argue on the basis of neo-institutionalist approaches, in particular on a) rationalist and b) sociological institutionalism.⁴

The rational institutionalist perspective highlights resource dependency approaches which characterises actors as rational, goal-oriented, and purposeful. They are considered to follow the so-called *logic of consequentialism or logic of expected consequences* (Börzel 2003:8f.; March and Olsen 1998:949). The underlying assumption is that actors depend on each other to achieve their goals. To reach these goals it is necessary that the actors exchange their

⁴ The following paragraph mainly draws on Börzel 2003; Risse, T., Cowles, M. G. and Caporaso, J. 2001 'Europeanization and Domestic Change: Introduction', in M. Green Cowles, J. Caporaso and T. Risse (eds) *Transforming Europe. Europeanization and Domestic Change*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.; and on Börzel, T. A. and Risse, T. 2003 'Conceptualizing the Domestic Impact of Europe', in K. Featherstone and C. M. Radaelli (eds) *The Politics of Europeanization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

resources. Actors intent to get as much influence on the outcome as possible by trying at the same time to stay as independent as possible from other actors involved. Consequentially, actors need to have a clear idea of their preferences and try to use their own resources as effective as possible. In terms of the Europeanisation process this means that the EU can on the one hand be perceived as an external constraint on the actors⁵ behaviour. However, on the other hand the EU is as well a new evolving opportunity structure which provides – at least for some actors- additional means to attain their goals. In other words: The EU can contribute to a redistribution of resources between actors involved in a process. Whether the EU is actually influencing the redistribution of resources at the domestic level - and thus can be considered as a new opportunity structure from which some actors benefit - depends on different aspects. First of all, there has to be a misfit between EU requirements and the domestic level to make an adaptation process necessary and possible. As a second step for analysing whether the Europeanisation process really has an effect on the distribution of resources the literature in general refers to two mediating factors: multiple veto points and facilitating formal institutions. Multiple veto points can be identified in political system which are characterised by the fact that decision making power is spread over various layers and institutions/actors. As a consequence, general and EU induced political change is more difficult to pursue. Thus, the coalition in favour of an adaptation to EU requirements is harder to build and has to include various actors. Hence, political change has to take place under more difficult conditions. On the other hand, the existence of facilitating formal institutions can enable actors who would benefit from the adaptation to EU requirements to overcome those multiple veto points and thus take advantage of the new opportunity structure provided by the EU.

The sociological perspective on actors' behaviour which is as well used for explaining Europeanisation focuses on a constructivist *logic of appropriateness*. This approach differs from the rationalist view with its logic of consequentialism which implies that actors have a clear idea about their preferences. In contrast, according to the logic of appropriateness actors intend to fulfil social expectations as the actors' behaviour within a "system" is guided by a common understanding of what socially accepted behaviour is. Furthermore, "[a]ppropriateness need not attend to consequences, but it involves cognitive and ethical dimensions, targets, and aspirations"(March and Olsen 1998:951). The sociological institutionalist sees institutions as a means to give actors an idea about their interests and about acceptable ways to attain these goals. Thus, the EU from a sociological institutionalist

⁵ Actors in this context refers to ALL different national actors (meaning both state actors and CSOs) involved in the Europeanisation process at the national level.

perspective presents new “institutions”, i.e. new ideas, meanings, rules, and norms the member states have to absorb. Consequently, the best chance for EU requirements to be incorporated into the domestic system of institutions is when they do **not** differ strongly from domestic ideas (Börzel 2003:16f; Börzel and Risse 2003:70f). However, in these cases real fundamental change is not necessary to fulfil EU requirements. For analysing under which conditions change is most likely to occur two mediating factors have been identified: norm entrepreneurs and co-operative informal institutions.

Norm entrepreneurs act as “change agents” (Börzel and Risse 2003:67) by actively lobbying for new ideas and norms deriving from the EU and thus help to start a process of social learning at the domestic level. These norm entrepreneurs are not single actors but a group of people who are linked by shared values and beliefs (i.e. advocacy groups) or actors who are able to legitimate norms and ideas out of their knowledge and their position (epistemic communities).

The existence of co-operative informal institutions such as e.g. a co-operative political culture helps to overcome obstacles in the decision-making process as they contribute to consensus-building. This consensus-building idea is as an institution widely accepted and thus shows an appropriate way to deal with EU requirements. To take advantage of multiple veto points as a way to prevent changes would not qualify as appropriate behaviour. It is clear that these two factors foster the process of adaptation.

The two different logics of action are not exclusive but can as well be connected or as March and Olsen put it: “Any particular action probably involves elements of both.” (March and Olsen 1998:952).

These two approaches point to two different perceptions and explanations of the Europeanisation process at the national level. They both have in common that they identify structures which promote respectively hamper Europeanisation. Hence, a closer look at the environment of CSOs seems to be relevant in order to properly understand the CSOs behaviour and to identify structures which work in favour of or against Europeanisation. The embeddedness of organisations into their environment can be addressed under different perspectives. First of all, the legal framework in which they operate is relevant. Another aspect focuses on the question whether CSOs fulfil an advocacy role. This implies that they are involved in agenda setting and policy formulation, and provide the possibilities for political participation. The third perspective asks how CSOs which act as social service providers are embedded in the settings of the welfare state and whether state authorities cooperate with these social service providers (Rymysza and Zimmer 2004).

These aspects will be reflected in the following presentation of the national environments of YNGOs in Hungary and Germany. The identified relevance of national circumstances can be examined with this research design which looks at similar organisations which are exposed to the same EU policy but act in different national environments. Firstly, it is necessary to have a closer look at EU youth policy and the way it addresses organisations active in this field, in order to understand YNGOs way of dealing with Europe.

3 A policy field becomes European: The example of EU child and youth policy

Looking at youth policy at the European level under the headline of Europeanisation brings back the question which “Europe” Europeanisation refers to: To the EU (and thus to “EU-isation” (Radaelli 2003:27)) or the influence of other European institutions such as the Council of Europe (Vink 2003:65). Indeed, not just the European Union but as well the Council of Europe (CoE) are active in the field of youth policy. The CoE e.g. provides training courses for people active in YNGOs in its European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest. Furthermore, the CoE regularly sends experts on youth issues to their member states and later publishes reports on the national youth policies. The EU and the CoE cooperate in the field of youth policy since 1998 with a current agreement for the period between May 2005 and December 2006. Both institutions conduct common training courses and seminars for youth workers, researchers and policy makers (Council of Europe and European Commission 2005).

However, this paper will concentrate on the youth policy of the European Union as the EU has the most concrete youth policy measures affecting the national level⁶.

Before elaborating on EU youth policy it is important to clarify what youth policy actually is. Youth policy “in general refers to all measures, activities and programmes which aim at creating living conditions which do not expose the young generation to risks and provide opportunities for young people. (...) In general, three categories of youth policies can be identified: Policies concerning

- (1) Professional integration and qualification of young people.
- (2) Protection against risks and danger

⁶ For further information on the relation between the CoE and the EU regarding youth policy c.f. **Du Bois-Reymond, M.** 2004 *Lernfeld Europa. Eine kritische Analyse der Lebens- und Lernbedingungen von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Europa*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften., pp.91ff.

(3) Promotion of cultural, social and political integration.”(Definition according to Hornstein 1999, p.411, own translation)

Besides these policies, youth issues are always horizontal issues that are as well part of social policy in general, education policy or labour market policy (ibid.).

EU Youth policy basically focuses on two different aspects: Firstly on the promotion of Active (EU) Citizenship and secondly on the social and professional of young people⁷. In the following, an overview will be given over those youth policy measures which are of special interest for YNGOs.

The EU YOUTH community action programme (for the period 2000-2006) and its predecessors exist since 1988 and aims at young people aged 15-25⁸. The programme wants to promote mobility within Europe and is described as a non-formal learning programme. On the national level it is implemented by national agencies. The EU youth programme is not just interesting for individuals who e.g. want to go abroad with the European Voluntary Service (Action 2 of the programme). YNGOs are also directly addressed (European Commission 2005c). They can be hosting or sending organisations for European Volunteers or the organisers of youth exchanges (Action 1 “Youth for Europe). In fact, YNGOs are usually the ones who develop the ideas for a project and write application for funding. Furthermore, YNGOs can benefit from Action 5 of the programme, the so-called “Support measures” which a.o. things provide training courses for youth workers, projects managers and youth leaders from YNGOs.

Another important step in the development of EU youth policy was the White Paper “New Impetus for European Youth” (COM(2001)681final). The White Paper is the outcome of a consultation process and gives an insight into the current situation of young people in Europe. It comes to the conclusion that the youth issues should be mainstreamed into other policy fields and argues in favour of applying the open method of co-ordination in the youth field in order to increase co-operation of the member states concerning youth issues. This argumentation was adopted by the European Council in 2002 (European Council 2002) and the open method of co-ordination was introduced in four different fields:

- (a) **Participation**, referring to enlarging the opportunities for young people to participate in the decision making process as active citizens

⁷ Legal basis for youth related activities is especially Art. 149 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty establishing the European Community (Version 24 December 2002).

⁸ 15-25 is therefore the EU definition of youth or young people. The successor programme “Youth in Action” for the period 2007-2013 will as well address young people in the age group 13-30.

(b) **Information**, referring to the manner information for young people and professionals in the youth field are provided

(c) **Voluntary Action**, referring to the promotion of volunteering among young people

(d) **Greater understanding and knowledge of youth**, referring to promote youth research

The member states are obliged to answer the European Commission's questionnaires concerning these issues by consulting young people, youth associations and representatives of the youth. The need for consultations of young people and organisations in the field has been underlined by a Council resolution in November 2005 (European Council 2005). However, the way OMC is used in this field differs from the way it is used in other areas as no quantitative benchmarks are defined and the implementation of the objectives is not coordinated on the EU level but left to the member states (c.f. <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11182.htm> (accessed on 18 July 2006) and Linsenmann 2003).

The European Youth Pact from 2005 was another important step to bring youth issues on the European agenda. It asks for the integration of youth issues into the renewed Lisbon strategy and "aims to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans." (European Commission 2005a, Annex 1) For the three strands of the pact (1. Employment, integration and social advancement, 2. Education, training and mobility and 3. reconciliation of family life and working life) objectives – though very general ones – are determined. The member states are supposed to reach these goals such as e.g. reducing youth unemployment and the number of early school leavers. Furthermore, youth issues are to be integrated into the Social Inclusion Strategy and the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme. An overview of European programmes such as the European Social Fund or the European Regional Development Fund which (financially) support the Youth Pact's targets is given as well. The European Commission sees this as presenting a "truly integrated policy approach to young people" for the first time (European Commission 2005a).

A very recent development concerning youth (and child) issues is the publication of the Commission's communication "Towards an EU strategy on the Rights of the Child" (European Commission 2006) which underlines the importance guarding children's rights both for internal and external EU policies. According to the communication, in the coming years the EU aims at e.g. promoting action against child poverty, starting consulting children and to mainstream children's rights to EU policy.

To address children's issues is a logical step after putting youth issues on the agenda. Targets like combating youth poverty as laid out in the European Youth Pact cannot be separated from targeting child poverty. The announcements in the Commission's communication promise the establishment of child issues on the European agenda. However, the legal basis for child issues is less clear than the legal basis for youth policies.

All these examples highlight that youth issues are on the European agenda. However, at the same time "it is true that youth policy proper is essentially the responsibility of the EU Member States and, in some countries, it is largely regionalised and is often dealt with at the local level. (...) Subsidiarity must therefore apply in this field for reasons of principle and for the sake of efficiency."(European Commission 2001). This underlines what all these EU youth initiatives are mostly about: It focuses on co-operation in youth issues on the European level, on defining common goals. The legislative competence is still on the national level and not all aspects which were defined as being part of youth policy are actually dealt with at the European. So can this policy field be described as becoming European? And what affect does the evolving of a European dimension have on the national level of the EU member states?

First of all, the settings of this originally national policy field have changed simply by the fact that these issues are discussed at the European level and national governments have to react to that. They have to implement the EU Youth programme and due to the introduction of OMC they have to deliver reports. At the same time it is clear that there are no sanctions if national governments are failing in targeting common objectives. Whether the subjects discussed on the EU level are setting the national agenda and are reflected in national youth policy decisions - immediately or medium-term - would need further exploration. The effects of EU social policy like the EU youth policy are often considered as having primarily the function of agenda setting on the national level (Walther 2002:1153).

From the perspective of the organisation this is a situation of insecurity: Concrete legislation is still a national competence, it is up to YNGOs to decide whether actively participating in the discourse on the EU level is relevant for them. At the same time the EU encourages the participation of national YNGOs through the OMC. YNGOs are as well addressed by the different programmes the EU uses for implementing their youth policy. Organisations can apply for project funding from Social Fund or the EU Youth programme. And yet, the EU institutions have no possibility to actually force the organisations to deal with EU issues.

Hence, it is relevant to look at the national circumstances and the organisations themselves to understand the commitment resp. non-commitment to EU issues.

4 The national situation as a known territory for YNGOs

4.1 Youth Policy and YNGOs in Germany

4.1.1 The legal framework and relevant state actors

The special feature of German youth policy is the particular role assigned to YNGOs. This is laid down in the German Social Code Volume VIII on Child and Youth Services (Child and Youth Service Act - CYSA) which was introduced in 1990. It replaced the Youth Welfare Act from 1922 which - with amendments - was in place until then.⁹

The CYSA deals with subjects such as guardianship and custody assistance by the local authorities, the promotion of youth work, the establishment of day care centres and support measures such as providing counselling for young people and families which need assistance for raising their children. More important is that it determines the goals of German youth policy and defines relevant terms such as youth work or which age group youth policy addresses.

Most competences in the youth field – as laid out in the CYSA – are on the local level where the actual work takes place. It is the task of the local authorities to ensure that child and youth services are offered and financed. The “Länder” level (federal state level) has to support the local youth offices in their work. All “Länder” have ministries for youth issues. The federal level’s competence in the youth field is restricted to issuing a report on the situation of young people. Through the National Child and Youth Plan (Kinder- und Jugendplan des Bundes) the federal government can finance pilot projects with a nation-wide relevance. The youth policy at the federal level is co-ordinated by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Becksky, et al. 2004:51/131/137ff; Struck 2002:539f.). The Ministry is also in charge of implementing the EU youth programme. As in other countries this is not done by the ministry itself but by the national agency called “YOUTH for Europe – Jugend für Europa”. The national agency informs not just about the EU YOUTH programme but sees it as well as its task to inform about youth policy on the EU level in general through a special website (www.jugendpolitikineuropa.de) and an electronic newsletter.

⁹ This alleged continuity of German child and youth policy was of course interrupted by the Nazi regime and the former German Democratic Republic had its own youth policy. However, with the reunification in 1990 West-German structures were introduced to the former GDR. Beside the Child and Youth Services Act there are further laws dealing with youth issues such as the “Protection of Young People Act” or the “Federal Child Benefit Act”. (For a general overview c.f. **Becksky, S., Dreber, M.-L., Freitag, C. and Hänisch, D.** 2004 *Child and Youth Policy - Child and Youth Services in the Federal Republic of Germany. Structures - Institutions - Organisations*, Bonn: International Youth Exchange and Visitor's Service of the Federal Republic of Germany (IJAB).) However, the Child and Youth Service Act is the most relevant law when it comes to describing the position of YNGOs in the field.

“Youth for Europe” is part of a QUANGO called “International Youth Exchange and Visitors’ Service of the Federal Republic of Germany” (German acronym: IJAB). The IJAB is legally an association and its members are relevant actors in the youth field, mainly youth organisations and youth welfare organisations. Its foundation in 1967 was mainly supported by the then youth ministry. Its main purpose is the implementation of the international dimension of German youth policy by e.g. providing exchange programmes and language courses for professionals and providing information for young people on their possibilities to go abroad. Additionally, it acts as an information point for the whole youth sector by providing – both for foreigners and Germans - general information on the German youth sector, e.g. about the legal framework and organisations active in the field (Becsky, et al. 2004:381ff.).

4.1.2 The particular role of YNGOs

The special function of YNGOs or Social NGOs in general is due to the system of subsidiarity which is in place in German social policy. This principle implies that public authorities should abstain from providing services themselves whenever non-public providers are willing to step in. The aim is to create a plurality of service providers with different denominational and ideological backgrounds so that beneficiaries of social services have the right to choose the organisation they go to. Which are these non-public service providers? Under certain conditions they can be for-profits but this is still rare. In general, these are non-profit service providers, churches or youth organisations. They need to meet certain criteria to be accredited. However, the CYSA states that churches and the organisations linked to the Free Welfare Organisations are in general to be recognised as providers of youth services.¹⁰ These organisations have a long tradition in youth services and since the 1920 they are the most relevant social service providers in Germany. They are the main non-state actors in the youth field but there are as well less institutionalised service providers which developed from local initiatives (Behr 2002:565ff.). The CYSA commissions the local authorities to encourage and support the work of these non-state service providers.

What jobs do these organisations do? They provide day care and after school care facilities, run counselling services for young people and families or work with socially excluded young people. In the area of youth work, i.e. non-formal learning, sport activities or organised

¹⁰ The so-called Free Welfare Associations in Germany are Diaconia, Caritas, Central Welfare office for Jews in Germany, Red Cross, Workers’ Welfare Organisation, German Non-Denominational Welfare Associations (Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband) have a privileged position as Service providers in German social policy in general – due to the system of subsidiarity.

holidays for young people, youth organisations are especially active. The promotion of these youth organisations is according to the CYSA an explicit task of the local authorities. These organisations are as well recognised as interest representatives of young people.

The special feature of youth policy in Germany is that the organisations active in the youth field are entitled to participate in the decision making process. On local and on “Länder” level, representatives of active YNGOs - together with representatives of the local authorities – form the Youth Services Committee. These committees have the right to make decision linked to the development of local youth policy (Struck 2002:358).

4.1.3 Germany YNGOs and their way of self-organisation

The involvement in the decision-making process both at local and “Länder” level fosters the formation of umbrella organisations which correspond to the different tiers of the German political system. In the youth field the two major umbrellas at the national level are the German Federal Youth Council and the Child and Youth Welfare Association. National umbrellas are often financially supported by the National Child and Youth Plan as it is the federal government’s aim to further a national infrastructure of YNGOs – despite the fact that the national level has very few competences in youth policy (Becky, et al. 2004:54f.).

The Federal Youth Council from 1949 – its predecessor was already founded in the 1920s - is the umbrella of the German youth organisations such as e.g. Catholic Youth, Scouts or the Choral Youth in the German Singers’ Association to name but a few. Altogether, the national headquarters of 22 youth organisations are members. Most of them are linked to adult organisations from various ideological and denominational backgrounds and are characterised by a high degree of volunteer work, but employ as well professional staff e.g. to run their headquarters and as social workers. In each of the German “Länder” they have a regional branch. They act as interest representatives for young people and their member organisations (Gängler 2002; Stafseng 1996:131f.). The Federal Youth Council is a member of the European Youth Forum.

Speaking up for young people is also an objective of the Child and Youth Welfare Association founded in 1949. Its members cover all groups which have a stake in welfare service provision for children. Thus, we find here representatives of the Free Welfare Associations, professional organisations, specialist organisations in youth services¹¹, the youth organisations incl. their umbrella the National Youth Council, and representatives of

¹¹ These specialist organisations are themselves umbrellas, e.g. of all organisation active in youth social work or all organisations which provide family and youth counselling. In general these organisations cut across the different ideologies and denominations which dominate the field.

public youth service providers (generally representatives of the youth ministries on “Länder” level). The service providers in the Child and Youth Welfare Association are as well characterised by volunteers, e.g. as members of the board but they have a high degree of professional staff both in the administration and in the actual service provision (e.g. social workers, psychologists etc.). The Child Youth and Welfare Association is a member of the European umbrella Eurochild.

A major challenge for both youth organisations and youth welfare organisations is the erosion of their original traditional milieus such as the worker’s movement or the different denominations. In the past, these milieus were the guarantor for a stable number of members and users.

The second challenge for YNGOs (and Social NGOs in general) is the financial crisis of the German state which affects all tiers of the German Federal system. Beside membership fees and donations public money is the main resource of funding for organisations in this field. With budget cuts in all policy fields, youth services also are affected. Local authorities are obliged to ensure the provision of certain youth services but have a certain leeway in terms of the scope.

4.2 Youth Policy and YNGOs in Hungary

4.2.1 The legal framework and relevant state actors

The collapse of the communist regime in Hungary implied the end of the well-established communist youth policy. Youth and youth policy were a special focus of communist regimes. Hence, this very ideology-driven policy field needed to be reinvented in post-socialist time (Jasiukaityte and Reiter 2004:186). The current status of Hungarian Youth Policy needs to be understood against this background and can best be described as being in a developing state¹². Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that Hungarian politics since the political change are characterised by a change of government after each general elections which regularly take place every four years. This constant alternation between right-of-centre and left-of-centre governments was interrupted for the first time in April 2006 when the left-of-centre government of Ferenc Gyurcsány (Hungarian Socialist Party) was confirmed in the general election.

¹² As a consequence of this developing stage not much literature on Hungarian youth policy is available and Hungary e.g. has not been included yet in the national youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe. Hence, the whole chapter on the Hungarian situation is as well based on information I gathered in my interviews.

These changes of government also explain that the responsibility for youth issues was part of the portfolio of different ministries incl. the prime minister's office. Following the win of the general election 2006, the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities was dissolved and youth policy became part of the newly created Ministry for Social and Labour Affairs.¹³

The government agency "Mobilitas" is another relevant actor in the field. It was founded in 1995 and acts as the National agency for the European Youth programme (and its predecessor) since Hungary's participation started in 1997. Mobilitas is in charge of the survey on the situation of young Hungarians the government conducts every four years. It is active in the field of youth information and provides information on general youth issues and EU-related news via an electronic and printed newsletter. It has seven regional branches, so called regional youth services. Mobilitas can be considered as an equivalent to the German IJAB described above¹⁴.

Youth policy, its aims and the responsibilities of different state actors in terms of youth policy are so far mostly based on government decrees. For about five years the different governments are working on a youth law which would provide a legal framework for a.o. the role of the state in terms of youth issues, the youth organisation system and the delivery of youth welfare services. At the time of writing, the bill has not yet passed parliament. The longevity of this process is partly due to the lack of expertise and interest of the members of parliament in that issue but at the same time to the lack of self-organisation of the field (International Council on National Youth Policy 2005; Ocsovai 2003). The whole field and its representatives were in general described by my interviewees as being very partisan. The International Council on National Youth Policy concluded in his study on Hungarian youth policy that "the advancement of Youth Policy is rather hampered by a lack of cooperation, harmonization, and simple sharing of information among the different levels and sectors in and outside the government that deal with youth." (International Council on National Youth Policy 2005: 44). It has to be seen whether now, after the general election in 2006, the new parliament will pass the Youth Law. The government's programme contains the intention to establish a National Youth Programme aiming at assisting the social integration of young people (Government of the Republic of Hungary 2006:65).

¹³ This involved reducing the number of people working on youth issues by half and included a change of the head of the youth department, as I learnt in an interview in July 2006. However, this development has to be seen as part of the Prime Minister's strategy to downsize the number of ministries and civil servants.

¹⁴ However, as one of my interviewees told me, the future of Mobilitas is also unclear. In consequence of the government's restructuring of the civil service and the downsizing the number of employees there were talks about dissolving Mobilitas.

The local level also has competences in the youth field and is supposed to develop a strategy concerning youth issues. However, in the absence of a valid National Youth Act which clearly defines the competences of the local authorities it highly depends on the different local authorities and the particular situation what actually is going on at the local level.

Despite the missing legal framework the government provides different funding opportunities for organisations in the youth field. Beside the funding possibilities available to all Hungarian Civil Society Organisations (i.e. the 1%-law and the National Civil Fund), the government established two further important funding sources especially for the youth sector: the Basic Programme for Child and Youth and the Public National Foundation for Children and Youth.

The Basic Programme is a tender system where YNGOs can offer their bid for certain tasks or projects the government wants to be accomplished. YNGOs can apply to the Children and Youth Foundation for funding. There are seven so-called Regional Youth Council which decide about these grant application. The Regional Youth Council consists – beside the representatives of the county, the local authorities and the ministries – of civil society representatives. Members of the Regional Youth Council are usually representatives of the different denominations (mainly Catholic Church, Protestant Church, Protestant Lutheran Church), representatives of the student union (HÖÖK), the National Association of Large Families and of two umbrellas in the youth sector (OGYIP and MAGYIT which will be described below). Thus, these youth councils give the opportunity for the participation of organisations in the field. In what respect this opportunity is used for more than discussing the grant application depends on the members of each Regional Youth Council.

4.2.2 Hungarian YNGOs and their way of self-organisation

For understanding the current situation of YNGOs in Hungary it is essential to consider that only the political changes towards a democratic regime made the development of a pluralistic structure possible. Until 1945, a variety of organisations existed and many organisations such as churches or political parties had their own youth organisations. After the Communist party came into party a “unifying” process of the different organisation started and since 1957 only the Communist Youth Organisation remained. Its members were young people between 14 and 30; children from the age of 6-14 were members of the Hungarian Pioneer Association. The structure of these organisations was strongly linked to schools (Szabo 1991:67ff.). The evolvement of new youth organisations did not start abruptly at the beginning of the 1990s. Already during the 1980s youth groups, clubs and movements linked e.g. to environmental movements or the peace movement developed. In 1988, several youth organizations founded

the “Association of Young Democrats” (FIDESZ) as an association for political active young people in favour of democratic reforms.¹⁵

Now local initiatives and associations are dominating the youth field. Boy and Girl Scouts were (re-)established, the same is true for youth organisations linked to churches. The largest organisation in the youth field is the National Student Union (HÖÖK). Interview partners, however, pointed out that there are different opinions about the status of the National Student Union as its existence at every university is obligatory and is supported (as well financially) by the universities respectively the government. Hence, there is a contrast to organisations which start off as private initiative and have to apply for funding themselves.

Two umbrellas were established in the 1990s: MAGYIT (Hungarian Children and Youth organisations) and OGYIP (National Children and Youth Parliament). MAGYIT represents about 65 member organisations, OGYIP around 120. These numbers are to be contrasted with around 13000 organisations and institutions Mobilitas has contact with. The existence of these two different umbrellas reflects the above mentioned partisan split within the youth field: MAGYIT’s political opinion can be described as left, OGYIP as to be more on the right side of the political spectrum (information based on interviews, see as well Harrill 2000). Not at last to be able to be represented in the European Youth Forum and in an attempt to create a unified umbrella, GYIK, the National Youth Conference, was created at the end of 2003. However, the work of this umbrella was characterised by interview partners from the field as “only poorly functioning”. This verdict is linked to the characterisation of the whole field as being very partisan and the youth organisation’s unwillingness to overcome this split. The dominance of local initiatives which are not linked to an umbrella makes it difficult for the National Youth Council to claim to be the representative of the whole youth sector.

The low membership rate of umbrellas is typically for Hungarian civil society in most fields. Organisations often explain that by their unwillingness “to be represented by someone else, someone from above”. Another reason is that most YNGOs are small local initiatives based on voluntary work; the national level might seem to be too far away respectively membership fees for umbrellas might be unaffordable.

Another reason is the lack of self-conception of belonging to one field. Concepts such as youth work or youth social work are only developing; the university degree as youth workers only exists for three years. This lack of a common self-image is as well true for youth welfare organisations. They identify themselves with other general social service providers and not as particular special youth welfare organisations.

¹⁵ FIDESZ developed into one of the major Hungarian parties. The party won the 1998 election and were in power until 2002. FIDESZ can be described as being right-of-centre-conservative party.

In general, these YNGOs are characterised by a high degree of voluntary work and very few full-time staff.

The biggest challenge for almost all of these organisations face is the necessity to secure the funding for their organisations and their work. Foreign donor organisations like e.g. the Soros Foundation which were the main sponsors of civil society organisations from all fields are now leaving the country as they perceive their task of supporting civil society development to be fulfilled. Since the EU accession, EU supporting programmes for civil society have ended, too. National funding possibilities for civil society organisations in general and YNGOs in particular have been created as mentioned above but these cannot yet fill the gap. Interviewees complained that it is usually possible to get money to conduct projects but this is not enough to establish sustainable organisational structures.

Is the absence of a coherent National Youth Act a challenge for the organisations? Most organisations have arranged themselves with the current situation and have found their niche. They are mostly active on the local level and funding opportunities for the youth field exist. However, the whole field would certainly benefit from a youth law which defines the aims of Hungarian youth policy and concepts such as youth work.

5 And what about the EU?

5.1 Different starting points

The closer look at the situation of YNGOs in Germany and Hungary revealed that they have very different starting positions when it comes to dealing with the EU. German organisations are backed by a comprehensive legal framework that gives the organisation a privileged position. YNGOs have a long tradition as relevant actors in the policy field and are well organised by means of different umbrellas. Almost the contrast is true for Hungary where YNGOs only have a short history and few organisations are organized in umbrella associations. They operate despite the lack of a legal framework. The whole youth sector is characterised by a deep partisan split. Another big difference is that Hungarian organisations are mostly run by volunteers whereas German organisations have a higher degree of professionalisation including more paid staff. A similarity between organisations from both countries is that they complain about funding problems. However, it has to be pointed out that most German organisations are complaining on a very high level and the perspective of Hungarian and German organisation is quite different. Whereas German organisations are

complaining that their relatively easily accessible public funding is decreasing, Hungarian organisations are struggling to get any funding at all. This is of course a bit of an oversimplification but it characterises the differences.

And yet organisations are exposed to the same EU policy – despite the fact that Hungary only joined the EU in 2004. But the EU Youth Programme respectively its predecessor was implemented in Hungary since the 1997. The major developments in EU youth policy took place since 2001 and the publication of the White Paper on youth issue. It is this period that most German organisations identify as the starting point for their EU related activities. However, they do not name the publication of the White Paper as the reason for starting to deal with Europe but the initiative of individuals within the organisation. These employees of the organisations discovered EU policy as an important issue and started to promote it within the organisation. For the umbrella organisations, this often led to – if resources allowed – the establishment of the function of a European policy officer.

Hence, it is obvious that between the two countries there is hardly a difference when it comes to the question of how long EU issues play a role. In the following, the first results of the empirical research will highlight the different facets of EU-YNGOs relationship.

5.2 Being aware of EU policies

The awareness of EU policy is supported by the two national agencies of the EU youth programme, Mobilitas and IJAB. Both provide information on EU issues via a newsletter for those who are interested. YNGOs – especially umbrellas - both in Hungary and Germany try as well to provide information for their members. However, interview partners from both countries point out that resources are needed to be able to spread EU information. Due to lack of language skills all available information – e.g. from a European umbrella organisation - needs to be translated by the national umbrella and additional information for those who are not so familiar with EU issues have to be written. All this requires resources including staff that has the time to keep informed on EU issues. Hungarian interviewees pointed out that the use of the internet is not so widely spread yet. Hence, the cheaper information provision by an electronic newsletter is not an option. To make sure that all members can receive the information, a newsletter is sent by snail mail.

Interview partners from both countries agreed that for people active in the field the lack of language skills is the major obstacle to dealing more actively with EU issues.

European policy officers of German YNGOs realise that there is a big discrepancy between their member organisations' interest for and awareness of national youth policy and EU youth policy. The interest for youth policy on “Länder” or national level is much higher than for EU

policy. To the regret of the interviewed German EU policy officers this is as well true for the situation within the national umbrella organisation. The EU policy officer is most of the time the only one who actively deals with EU issues. In most organisations, he has to inform the rest of the staff about important developments on EU level which might affect their portfolio; they do not monitor EU developments themselves. The interviews in Germany made it very clear that mostly the national level of the YNGOs deals with EU youth policy issues; these discussions rarely reach the local level. YNGOs on the local level get in touch with EU issues not through discussions on the White Paper but by the EU Youth Programme.

In Hungary, due to the lack of a coherent Hungarian national youth policy especially the EU White Paper on Youth Issues gets special attention. As there are no other real national guidelines for youth policy employees of Mobilitas often refer to the White Paper in their work. They advise local authorities to use the White Paper for developing their local youth strategies. YNGOs are informed about the White Paper and they are recommended to take account of the White Paper when they apply for funding. Here, EU policy fills the national policy gap.¹⁶

5.3 Interest representation

One way the EU directly addresses CSOs is by encouraging them to take part in EU consultation procedures. Some consultations allow it that national CSOs issue their statements directly via the Internet but often European umbrella organisations try to involve their national members in issuing a common statements. YNGO representatives in both Hungary and Germany agreed that they are usually eager to participate in these consultation procedures and try to send their opinion to their European umbrella. However, they complain that the time span to respond to the European umbrella's call for statement is usually very short. This is due to the fact that the European umbrella associations themselves have to answer to EU calls at relatively short notice. National umbrellas hardly get the time to actually consult their own members and as a result they often do not produce a statement at all. Hungarian organisations being run by less staff than their German counterparts made clear that they do not always have the manpower to respond to these consultation procedures. The gap between the European level and the organisations at the national level is not yet closed.

German YNGOs – i.e. the national headquarters - nevertheless regularly publish statements on current EU issues. They try not just to inform the public and their members about the developments but at the same time they try to lobby the national politicians. After all, the real

¹⁶ The empirical data this paper is based upon does not allow it to judge whether the contents of the White Paper actually has a lasting impact; this is to be seen when the National Youth Act is finally implemented.

decisions in terms of EU youth policy are made by representatives of the national governments.

This is not well perceived by all organisations in the field. Some are of the opinion that the national government should not be allowed to make decisions on German youth policies at the European level as the real competence in terms of youth policy are not on the national but on “Länder” and local level.

German interview partners explain their European activities such as being member of a European umbrella by their perception that decisions which affect their organisation and their clientele – the young people- are increasingly made on the European level. Hence, they perceive it as their job to be present on the EU level.

But their EU activities are as well explained by national circumstances. One interview partner made it clear that a national umbrella in Germany is generally expected to also deal with EU. As laid out above, the federal government finances organisations at the national level. Another interviewee even diagnosed a certain competition between the national umbrellas to establish themselves as an organisation with a European profile. This is their way to stay in the government’s focus and to be able to obtain funding from the national child and youth plan.

The situation in Hungary is somewhat different. As described above, a partisan split exists between different YNGOs; mechanisms for interest representation of the youth sector are still in a developing stage. As a consequence of the partisan influence on the field and the frequent changes of government, many organisations decided to stay completely out of politics. This is their survival strategy as they are afraid that if one government supports them, the next from might not fund them at all. Many organisations indeed declare that they do not perceive interest representation as their task; they just want to do their real job, e.g. deliver their service. This reaction is as well explained by their lack of resources, they want to put all their resources into their work and to not feel capable of additionally conducting lobbying activities. Interviewed experts explained that as well by the organisation’s lack of experience of dealing with politicians and public administration is a reason for their decision not to act as advocates.

5.4 The EU as funding source

The possibility to get access to EU funding is a major motivation for Hungarian YNGOs to become active at the European level by joining a European umbrella. Interview partners clearly stated that being part of EU-funded projects is the relevant source of funding for the whole organisation. Their survival strategy is to be active at the European level, the necessity

to represent the interest of the fields at the European level only ranks second, first they have to secure the existence of organisation itself. An interview partner from an umbrella of social service providers explained that their organisation joined a European umbrella in the youth field despite the fact that this Hungarian umbrella does not have a national profile as a YNGO. But this European umbrella is involved in European transnational projects and hence, membership provides good opportunities for their members to get access to European money. This does not mean that the organisations are only interested in European projects in order to get money. The international contacts and the idea of learning from organisations in other countries are important for them, too.

German YNGOs are as well interested in EU projects and funding. But here, only few national umbrellas are actively doing projects. This is the domain of their member organisations which are very interested in learning how to obtain EU funding. The national umbrellas and their member practise a kind of division of labour: The umbrella organisation is responsible for the interest representation and informing their members about relevant policy developments and funding opportunities. The member organisations are those organisations which actually deliver the youth service, apply for EU funding and – at least partly- fund their umbrella to gain access to relevant policy information.

6 Conclusion

Despite the different starting points there are similarities between the Hungarian and German YNGOs. The lack of language skills is identified by organisations from both countries as a relevant obstacle. And for YNGOs from both countries it is clear that dealing with EU issues is as well a question of resources. Not all German umbrellas are able to put as much efforts into their European work as they want. But for some Hungarian YNGOs, dealing with youth issues at the European level is seen as their access to funding.

In Germany, discussions on EU issues in Germany are mainly restricted to the national umbrellas and rarely seem to reach the local level. Thanks to the well-established structure of the youth sector, German YNGOs deal rather professionally with EU issues, e.g. with a European policy officer. At the same time, despite the good structure of the whole field and the established co-operation between different organisations, very few people in Germany actually really seem to be actively dealing with EU youth policy.

What consequences would these results have for the EU that aims at “using” these organisations for getting closer to its citizens? Clearly, the special situation of YNGOs and

CSOs in general in CEE countries need to be taken into account as they have to adapt to a situation that foreign donors – including the EU – have left the countries. All interview partners agreed that it is not possible to run an organisation only on project money; overhead budgets to establish sustainable structures are necessary.

Regarding the Europeanisation approach, the observations show that the EU is seen by organisations as an opportunity structure, especially in terms of possible funding. But the organisations dealing with the EU are never to be seen without the national context. If sufficient funding at the national level would be provided, organisations would probably turn less to the EU for funding. And it became clear that German organisations use their EU activities as well for positioning themselves in the national arena.

And has the EU become core business or is it a bonus for YNGOs? There is no definite answer to that. Some Hungarian YNGOs seem to have made the EU to their core business as their survival strategy is obtaining EU funds. For German organisations dealing with EU policy seems to be something normal, some of them incorporated the position of an EU policy officer into their structure. For some organisations which cannot afford these structures EU issues are a bonus to their everyday work they cannot always deal with. But are EU issues really core business – even for those organisations with an EU policy officer – when EU issues are almost exclusively discussed on the national level of an organisation?

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