

State of the Art.

European and International Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and Children's Rights

Comparison and
Possible Synergies



**EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY
AGENDAS ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:**

COMPARISON AND POSSIBLE SYNERGIES



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Executive summary

This study compares the policy agendas on children(‘s rights) and youth of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations and identifies possible synergies. Focus is placed on those internal policy agendas of the organizations where a policy on children(‘s rights) or young people is the central objective; EU external policy is excluded from the analysis.

At the three policy levels, the same definition is used of the child, being “every human being below the age of eighteen years”. In contrast, divergent age limits are set to delineate the concept of “youth”. Notwithstanding these differences, the age group of 10/15 until 18 years falls under the definition of both children and youth. There is thus particularly great potential for tuning the policy agendas on children’s rights and youth for this group.

The actual comparison of the policy agendas is done in three stages. First, the policy agendas on one topic – children’s rights or youth – are compared across the three policy levels. Then, the main policy documents on children’s rights and youth within one organization are put side by side. In a third movement, the observations of the two preceding comparisons are brought together. Throughout the comparisons, particular attention is paid to common thematic priorities and shared measures of implementation.

Comparing the policy agendas on children’s rights reveals that the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations have four thematic priorities in common: participation, violence against children, poverty and social exclusion, and a focus on vulnerable children. The European Union and the Council of Europe share an interest in child-friendly justice/access to justice, and family policies. The policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations both focus on health.

Concerning the measures to implement the policy agendas on children’s rights, the three documents all mention mobilizing resources, coordination and cooperation, communication on children’s rights, and monitoring and evaluation. The European Union and the Council of Europe agendas put special emphasis on mainstreaming, whereas the European Union and the United Nations policy documents also advance training and capacity building as well as the use of progress reports. The establishment of partnerships is particularly anticipated in the policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

Turning to the youth policy agendas, there is a wide range of thematic priorities shared by the three organizations: participation, education, employment, poverty and social exclusion, voluntary activities, creativity, culture and cultural diversity, human rights and democracy, environment, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, and intergenerational issues. Moreover, the youth policies of the European Union and the United Nations both tackle the issues of health and globalization. Within the Council of Europe and the United Nations, youth policy also pays particular attention to situations of armed conflict.

The following measures of implementation are subscribed to by the three organizations: mobilizing resources, coordination and cooperation, the participation of young people in the development and implementation of youth policy, and knowledge building and evidence-based youth policy. Like in the policy agendas on children’s rights, the European Union and the Council of Europe emphasize the importance of mainstreaming, whereas the Council of Europe and the United Nations policy documents include the creation of partnerships.

The comparison of the policy agendas on children's rights and youth of the European Union leads to the conclusion that both agendas share the thematic priorities of participation and poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, a great variety of measures of implementation are common to both EU policy agendas. The Council of Europe policy documents on children's rights and youth both list participation, poverty and social exclusion, and democracy as thematic priorities. They also share various measures of implementation. At United Nations level, there are many thematic overlaps between the policy agendas on children's rights and youth: participation, poverty and social exclusion, health, education, armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, environment, and child labour (children's rights)/employment (youth). Also here, a range of measures of implementation is shared.

The references in the main policy documents to two forms of cooperation are examined: inter-organizational cooperation and cooperation with the other policy field of children's rights or youth. The different policy agendas on children's rights and youth contain various expressions of intent to increase cooperation between the three organizations. This is especially the case for the cooperation between the European Union and the Council of Europe. On the other hand, especially the policy agendas on children's rights and youth of the Council of Europe include various references to the need of reinforcing cooperation with the other policy field. The youth policy agenda of the European Union suggests that a children's policy dimension should be included in all appropriate fields of action.

In conclusion, there appear two thematic priorities as being shared by the policy agendas on children's rights and youth of the three organizations: participation on the one hand, and poverty and social exclusion on the other. At the three policy levels, implementation measures include mobilizing resources and coordination and cooperation. Moreover, there are various means of implementation that are shared by two of the three organizations in the policy agendas of both children's rights and youth: mainstreaming (European Union and Council of Europe), training and capacity building (European Union and United Nations), and partnerships (Council of Europe and United Nations).

1. Introduction

In this paper, the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights are compared and possible synergies between these agendas are identified.

The present analysis builds on the inventory presented in the document “European and International Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and Children's Rights: State of Play”.¹ Both documents should be read together, as the present study presupposes some familiarity with the different policy agendas as portrayed in the “State of Play” document.

The policy agendas described in the abovementioned document and compared here have four characteristics in common. First, the policy agendas studied are those where a policy towards children, youth and/or children's rights is the central objective. Also, the analysis is limited to agendas that intend to influence government policies. The policy agendas compared are those of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.² Finally, the study concerns those policies to be taken into account by the European Union Member States internally, thus excluding EU external policy from its ambit.

It must be stressed that the present analysis is inevitably limited in various ways. To start, only the *current* and *principal* policy document in the field of children, youth and children's rights of each organization is studied into detail; other subsidiary or more specific texts are not included in the comparison. A historical overview is provided in the “State of Play” document. Moreover, the investigation is a *textual* analysis of the main policy document. Some approaches, especially with respect to the means of implementation, may form part of the general working methods of the organization and not be reiterated in every single document. Lastly and most importantly, centering on the main policy documents with respect to *children, youth and children's rights* risks obviating efforts made toward children and young people in specific sectors, such as education or migration. Therefore, the results presented in this paper should be used and interpreted with the necessary prudence. They must be reinstated in a broader perspective and a comprehensive view on (the rights of) children and young people on the one hand and the policies and practices of the three organizations on the other.

After mapping the age limits used to demarcate the concepts of “children” and “youth” within the three organizations (Chapter 2), the policy agendas on children(s rights) and youth are compared in different stages and ways. First, the policy agendas on one issue (children's rights or youth) are compared across the three policy levels of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations (Chapter 3). Then, possible synergies are identified between the policy agendas on children's rights and youth of each organization separately (Chapter 4). The next chapter extracts from the main policy documents the expressions of interest in different forms of cooperation: inter-organizational cooperation on the one hand and cooperation with the other policy field of children's rights or youth on the other (Chapter 5). This paper ends with a comprehensive comparison which brings together the observations from the comparisons carried out in Chapters 3 and 4 (Chapter 6).

¹ A paper on this subject was prepared by the Children's Rights Knowledge Centre (KeKi), which has informed the document “European and International Policy Agendas on Children, Youth and Children's Rights – A Belgian EU Presidency-Youth Note” of 2010.

² Not included are, for instance, the initiatives of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

In the comparative chapters a similar structure is consistently followed:

- Legal basis
- Decision-making body
- Main policy document
 - o Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation
 - o Time frame
 - o Objectives of the policy agenda on children/youth
 - o Agenda – Thematic priorities
 - o Approaches, methods and instruments – Measures of implementation
 - o References to policies on children(‘s rights)/youth respectively

With respect to the “decision-making body”, the final responsible organ is indicated. However, these organs often adopt texts that are the result of a long negotiation process. Within the United Nations system, for instance, the principal decision-making body – the United Nations General Assembly – mainly adopts texts which have been drafted and discussed in other fora, such as working groups or the Third Committee of the General Assembly. The actual decision-making may thus take place at another level than in the officially designated instance.

Finally, it must be noted that the structure of analysis presented above works better for the policy agendas on youth than for the policy agendas on children and children’s rights. The youth policy agendas of the three organizations follow more or less the same structure, whereas the policy agendas on children and children’s rights demonstrate less coherence.

2. Age limits of children and youth

Pursuant to Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child means “every human being below the age of eighteen years.” This definition of the child is used not only at United Nations level, but also by the European Union³ and the Council of Europe.⁴ As regards the age limit of children, there is thus uniformity throughout the three policy levels.

In contrast, there is no consistency in the definition of “youth.” In the EU Strategy on Youth of 2009, the term “youth” has been described by the European Commission as “[m]eaning broadly speaking teenagers and young adults from 13 to 30 years old.”⁵ In the White Paper on Youth of 2001, however, youth had been considered as the period from 15 to 25 years of age. Council of Europe youth policy addresses children and young people from the age of 10/12 until 30 years. Within the United Nations system, young people are generally defined as those between the ages of 15 and 24.⁶ Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the meaning of the concept of youth varies in different societies and cultures around the world.

Notwithstanding the different interpretations of the concept of youth at the three policy levels, some broad commonalities may be identified. Within the three organizations, the upper age limit for “youth” is situated between 24 and 30 years.

³ COM (2006) 367 final.

⁴ Stockholm Strategy 2009-2011, note 1.

⁵ COM (2009) 200 final, note 1.

⁶ However, the World Health Organization has adopted the following working definitions: “adolescent” refers to any individual between 10-19 years; “young person” refers to any individual between 10-24 years; and “youth” to persons between 15-24 years.

The lower age limit of youth varies between 10 and 15 years.⁷ The latter implies that there is a partial overlap between the concepts of “children” and “youth”. Children from the age of – depending on the source – 10 to 15 until 18 years old fall under the definition of both children and youth, and thus belong to the target groups of both policy agendas. This raises at least the following questions:

- In general, how is the target group which is common to the policy agendas of children(’s rights) and youth, namely young people of 10/15 until 18 years old, dealt with?
- Are specific initiatives taken to tune the policy agendas for this age group...
 - o within the European Union, Council of Europe, United Nations?
 - o at national level (when implementing the three policy agendas)?
- Which initiatives could be taken to tune these agendas?
 - o A specific action plan for the age group 10/15 until 18?

A concluding observation/recommendation could be that there is particularly great potential for tuning the agendas on children’s rights and youth for the age group of 10/15 until 18 years old, and that priority attention could/should be paid to this age group.

Much has been thought and written about the appropriateness of age as an indicator or determining factor for a certain policy (or law) to apply. Especially in areas such as criminal law, attaining a certain age may have far-reaching consequences, for instance with respect to the institution that decides on the fate of a juvenile delinquent (type of tribunal). In reality, elements such as maturity may be more relevant.

Figure 1. Overview of age limits of children and youth

	Children	Youth
European Union	<18	15-25 (White Paper 2001) 13-30 (EU Strategy 2009)
Council of Europe	< 18	10/12 - 30
United Nations	<18	15-24

⁷ This is not self-evident. In Belgium, for instance, youth is defined as “persons up to and including the age of 30, or a part of this population group.” Flemish Parliament Act of 18 July 2008 on conducting a Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights, art. 2, 1°.

3. Comparison and possible synergies of policy agendas across policy levels

In this section, the policy agendas on one topic – children(’s rights) *or* youth – are compared and possible synergies are identified between the respective agendas of the European Union, the Council of Europe and/or the United Nations. The analysis thus focuses on one thematic axe across the three policy levels.

3.1. European and international policy agendas on children(’s rights)

LEGAL BASIS

Within the three organizations, the legal basis for conducting a policy on children’s rights is found in a treaty, which is legally binding for its States Parties. At United Nations level, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and its two Optional Protocols are most prominent, next to ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182. The Committee on the Rights of the Child is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Protocols. Within the Council of Europe, various conventions address particular aspects of children’s rights, in addition to a series of general human rights conventions, among which the European Convention on Human Rights, the revised European Social Charter, and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Warsaw Declaration and Action Plan of 2005 provide an explicit mandate to further act on children’s rights. A firm legal basis for developing a policy on children’s rights was established most recently within the European Union, through the inclusion of Article 3(3) al. 2 in the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union of 2008. Moreover, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/2007), which includes an article on children’s rights in general (Article 24) and one on child labour (Article 32), gained treaty-level status with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009.

It is remarkable that two treaty provisions explicitly refer to “children and young persons”. Pursuant to Article 17 of the revised European Social Charter of 1996, “children and young persons have the right to appropriate social, legal and economic protection”. Article 32 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union deals with the “prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work”.

DECISION-MAKING BODY

For decision- and policy-making on children(’s rights), Member States logically preserve competence within both the United Nations (in the General Assembly and also, to a certain extent, in the Human Rights Council) and the Council of Europe (in the Committee of Ministers), as both are intergovernmental organizations. The European Union on the other hand, functions on the basis of a mixed system of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. Here, the European Parliament and the Council are competent to adopt measures for combating trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative

procedure.⁸ For other measures that impact on children's rights, decision-making is linked to the substantive field in which these measures are taken, such as migration or education.

MAIN POLICY DOCUMENTS

The main policy documents on children's rights are intrinsically not binding. The policies are incorporated in respectively a communication of the European Commission (Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child), a decision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Stockholm Strategy) and a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (A World Fit for Children), as the outcome document of its special session on children. As regards the relationship between the latter document and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has emphasized in its General Comment No. 5 that

“making particular commitments at global meetings does not in any way reduce States parties' legal obligations under the Convention. Similarly, preparing specific plans of action in response to the special session does not reduce the need for a comprehensive implementation strategy for the Convention. States should integrate their response to the 2002 special session and to other relevant global conferences into their overall implementation strategy for the Convention as a whole.”⁹

Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation

Each organization disposes of a particular institution which is explicitly in charge of (monitoring) the implementation of children's rights. Within the European Union and the Council of Europe, it concerns a subdivision of a directorate, namely Unit C1 Fundamental Rights and the Rights of the Child (EU) and the Children's Rights and Family Policies Division (CoE). Within the United Nations system, a special fund was created to act on children's rights, namely UNICEF.

Time frame

The Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy of 2008 is the most recent of the current policy documents on children's rights, applying for the period 2009-2011. The European Commission Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” dates from 2006, and contains actions to be implemented between 2006 and 2008, or from 2007 onwards. A new Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014) is expected from the European Commission by the end of 2010; a public consultation was carried out from 11 June 2010 to 20 August 2010. The UN document “A World Fit for Children” already dates from 2002 and generally foresees actions to be implemented within the decade following.

⁸ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2008) arts. 79(2)(d) and 83(1).

⁹ UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5, para. 35.

General objectives

The UN Document “A World Fit for Children” lists ten general principles and objectives.¹⁰ The main objectives of the children’s rights policies of the Council of Europe and the European Union run remarkably parallel. A first common objective is to include a child rights perspective in the actions of the organization itself. A second shared objective is to support Member States in their efforts to promote and protect children’s rights.

Given that both the Council of Europe and the European Union aim at supporting their Member States in the promotion and protection of children’s rights, the two organizations could join forces in this endeavour.

Shared thematic priorities

For the policy agendas on children(’s rights), the analysis of the thematic priorities of the three organizations was done on the basis of the clusters put forward by the Committee on the Rights of the Child that are relevant in this context¹¹ (see Table 1 and Annex 2), given that most actors are familiar with this approach and it enhances comparability. A range of thematic overlaps can be identified. Some topics are mentioned in various policy agendas, but with a different level of urgency/priority. In these instances, the organizations attaching more importance to this issue are indicated in brackets in Table 1.

As a comprehensive strategy on the rights of the child is currently being drafted within the European Union, no thematic priorities have been set as yet at a general policy level. This impedes a complete comparison of the thematic priorities established at the different levels.¹² In the consultation document on the European Commission’s Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014), the questions relating to the situation on the ground revolved around five areas, “which have been identified as requiring particular attention”: child-friendly justice, justice policies safeguarding children’s rights, vulnerable groups of children, violence against children, and child poverty. As it may be presumed that these five themes will play a key role in the upcoming strategy, they have been provisionally included in the analysis.

- a. Thematic priorities shared by the policy agendas of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations

Three main thematic priorities seem to be most commonly shared by the three policy levels: participation, violence against children, and poverty and social exclusion. Coincidence or not, these three priorities each correspond to one group of rights enshrined in the CRC: participation rights, protection rights (protection against violence), and welfare rights (poverty, as linked to the right to an adequate

¹⁰ Put children first; eradicate poverty; leave no child behind (no discrimination); care for every child; educate every child; protect children from harm and exploitation; protect children from war; combat HIV/AIDS; listen to children and ensure their participation; protect the Earth for children.

¹¹ For instance, the first cluster “general measures of implementation” does not deal with thematic priorities but with means of implementation, and is addressed in the next section of this paper. Also the cluster “definition of the child” does not bear relevance in the context of an analysis of thematic priorities.

¹² Of course, various actions have been undertaken in other policy areas that address or may affect children’s rights. See SEC(2006) 889.

standard of living).¹³ In addition, the three policy agendas converge in their particular attention to vulnerable groups of children.

Participation is one of the four general principles of the CRC, enshrined among others in Article 12 (respect for the views of the child).¹⁴ In the European Commission's Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child", the specific objective of "establishing efficient coordination and consultation mechanisms" includes the action "to involve children in the decision-making process".¹⁵ A strategic objective of the Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy is "participation of children and their influence in society". Finally, one of the principles and objectives of the United Nations document "A World Fit for Children" is "listen to children and ensure their participation". To implement the Plan of Action attached, partnerships with children, including adolescents, are to be strengthened.

The protection of children against all forms of violence equally stands high on the different policy agendas. Violence against children is one of the five areas identified as requiring particular attention in the consultation document on the upcoming EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. The "eradication of all forms of violence against children" is a key strategic objective of the Council of Europe for the years 2009-2011. Specific actions are to be taken to prevent and combat specific forms of violence, such as trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. One of the four key goals of the UN document "A World Fit for Children" is "protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence".¹⁶ Strategies and actions are elaborated in four areas: general protection, protection from armed conflict, combating child labour, and elimination of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

Child poverty has gained increased policy attention in recent years. The 2006 Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" foresaw as one of its actions under the specific objective of "capitalizing on existing activities while addressing urgent needs" the promotion of a "clustering of actions on child poverty in the EU". Moreover, 2010 has been proclaimed the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Child poverty is also one of the five topics that the consultation document on the next Communication on children's rights focuses on. According to the Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy, "children in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion" are one of the categories of children which are to receive special attention under its strategic objective of a "special focus on particularly vulnerable children". The United Nations General Assembly emphasized "eradicate poverty: invest in children" as one of the principles and objectives central to creating a world fit for children.

¹³ Welfare rights, such as the right to an adequate standard of living (art. 27 CRC) and the right to education (art. 28 CRC), are often called "provision rights". The latter term inappropriately suggests, however, that the content of these rights is limited to the obligation of the state to "provide" in the enjoyment of these rights (*obligation to fulfill*). However, the state also has the *obligation to respect* the exercise of these rights, as well as the *obligation to protect* others from unduly interfering with the enjoyment of these rights.

¹⁴ The four general principles of the CRC are included in "A World Fit for Children" as principles and objectives: "leave no child behind" (non-discrimination); "put children first" (best interests of the child); "care for every child" (life, survival and development); and "listen to children and ensure their participation" (participation).

¹⁵ However, in the consultation document on the European Commission's Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014), participation seems to receive less attention, as the topic is relegated to the rest category of "other questions".

¹⁶ See also the reports of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, UN Doc. A/61/299 (report) and UN Doc. A/62/209 (progress report).

Finally, within the three organizations particular attention is paid to the situation and needs of vulnerable children. This is already evident in the focus on child poverty, elaborated on here above. Furthermore, in the UN document “A World Fit for Children” it is recognized that children belonging to vulnerable groups are often disproportionately disadvantaged because of discrimination and it is foreseen that appropriate measures will be taken to their benefit (para. 22). The UN General Assembly moreover proclaimed that priority attention will be given to “meeting the needs of the world’s most vulnerable children in developing countries, in particular in least developed countries and sub-Saharan Africa” (para. 53). The concept of vulnerable children is not specified. In contrast, the Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy identifies within its strategic objective of “special focus on particularly vulnerable children” three groups who are to receive special attention: children without parental care, children with disabilities, and children in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Within the European Union, the consultation document on the European Commission’s Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014) asks its respondents to identify the groups of children in a situation of particular vulnerability and to suggest ways in which the EU can contribute to concrete initiatives to better protect the rights and promote the best interests of vulnerable children.

In conclusion, synergies in Member States’ implementation of the European and international policy agendas on children’s rights seem most feasible in the areas of participation, violence against children, and poverty, as well as in the focus on particularly vulnerable children.

b. Thematic priorities shared by the policy agendas of the European Union and the Council of Europe

The European Union and the Council of Europe apparently share an interest in working on child-friendly justice and family policies. With regard to child-friendly justice, one of the strategic objectives of the Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy is “promotion of children’s access to justice”. In June 2010, the Group of Specialists on Child-Friendly Justice presented the “Final Draft [Recommendation containing] Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-Friendly Justice.”¹⁷ The explicit attention for the issue of child-friendly justice in the consultation document on the European Commission’s Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014) reveals the Union’s intentions to increase efforts in this domain.

The cluster “family environment and alternative care” of the CRC is addressed by both European organizations. Pursuant to the Stockholm Strategy, family policies are a priority area for mainstreaming children’s rights. The importance attached to the family by the Council of Europe is also evident from the fact that children without parental care are one of the three groups particularly vulnerable children that will receive special attention. Within the European Union, attention for the familial sphere appears from the area “justice policies safeguarding children’s rights”, which is one of the areas identified in the consultation document as requiring particular attention. In this area, questions are formulated that are largely situated in the ambit of family law, namely with respect to family mediation, the problems that EU citizens encounter in other Member States with regard to their civil status, the mutual recognition of effects of civil status documents, the need to establish minimum standards in relation to decisions on parental

¹⁷ CJ-S-CH (2010) 12.

responsibility, and adoption (both between EU Member States and third countries and between EU Member States). In this area, the European Union's specificity of being a supranational organization is probably most relevant.

c. Thematic priorities shared by the policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations

Health (under the cluster of the CRC "basic health and welfare") is a priority area of concern, especially in the policy agenda of the United Nations, and to a somewhat lesser extent within the Council of Europe. The promotion of healthy lives is one of the four key goals set by the UN document "A World Fit for Children". Focus is among others on reducing infant and under-five mortality, maternal mortality and child malnutrition. Within the Council of Europe, health is selected as one of the policy areas in which a child rights perspective should be integrated as a matter of priority, under the first strategic objective of "mainstreaming and co-ordination". Moreover, children with disabilities are one of the three groups of vulnerable children that will receive special attention.

d. Priorities mainly set by one policy agenda

Some thematic priorities are only prominently present in one of the policy agendas. For instance, the Stockholm Strategy of the Council of Europe points to four areas in which the mainstreaming of children's rights should be a priority: next to health and family policies (cf. supra), this concerns democracy and media. No extensive attention is paid to these issues within the other two organizations.

Similarly, the main policy document on children's rights of the United Nations, "A World Fit for Children", contains various priority themes that are practically absent in the internal European policy agendas. These include education, armed conflict¹⁸ and child labour¹⁹ (as special focuses within the area of violence against children), HIV/AIDS, and the environment²⁰. This may be because these policy areas are perceived to involve a lower degree of urgency in Europe than in many other parts of the world. Nevertheless, especially good education is a universal prerequisite for the effective realization of children's rights, and also the environment is a global concern.

The thematic priorities of the upcoming European Commission's Communication on Children's Rights are not yet known. The consultation document reveals nevertheless that the European Union seems to subscribe the thematic priorities set at other policy levels: child-friendly justice (CoE); family policies ("justice policies safeguarding children's rights", which focus on family law) (CoE); vulnerable groups of children (CoE and UN); violence against children (CoE and UN); and child poverty (CoE and UN).

¹⁸ However, EU external policy on children's rights does pay extensive attention to the situation of children in armed conflict, as evidenced by among others the "EU Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflict".

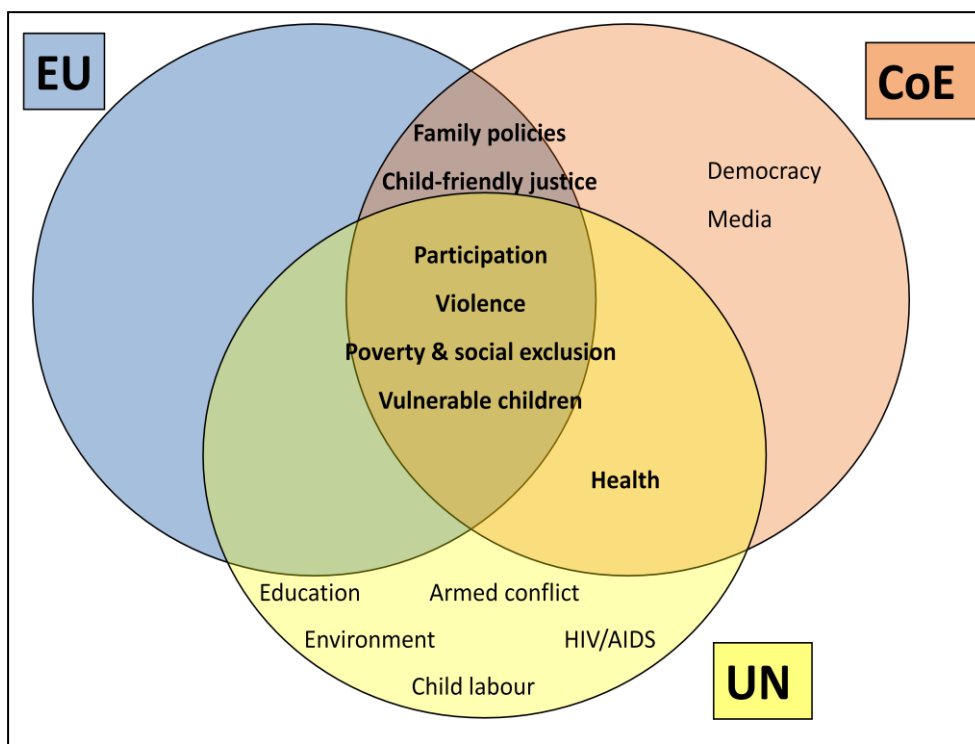
¹⁹ Child labour is also an important issue in EU external policy on children's rights. As such, child labour was the main theme of the fourth European Forum on the Rights of the Child of 2009. On 14 June 2010, the Council of the European Union adopted the "Council Conclusions on Child Labour" at its 3023rd Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg.

²⁰ One of the principles and objectives of "A World Fit for Children" is to "protect the Earth for Children", thus safeguarding the natural environment.

- e. Issues included in the CRC but not taken up as such in the main policy documents

Finally, some issues that are incorporated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are not addressed as such in the main policy documents on children’s rights of the three organizations. These include various of the rights of the cluster “civil rights and freedoms”, such as freedom of expression; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and freedom of association. Interpreted broadly, the thematic priority of participation may be understood as also addressing issues concerning freedom of association. Of the cluster “education, leisure and cultural activities”, education is a priority in the UN Document “A World Fit for Children”. Leisure and cultural activities are not significantly addressed in any of the three policy agendas.

Figure 2. Thematic priorities shared by the European and international policy agendas on children(’s rights)



Approaches, methods and instruments / Measures of implementation

- a. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations

To a considerable extent, the three organizations share their working methods and approaches to implement the policy agendas on children's rights. The main focuses are on mobilizing resources, coordination and cooperation, communication on children's rights and monitoring and evaluation.

Policy implementation requires first and foremost human and financial resources, a need recognized by the three organizations. Pursuant to its 2006 Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child", "the Commission is committed to allocating the necessary human and financial resources to implement this strategy". It is added that efforts will be made to secure the financial resources necessary to fund the actions proposed in this communication and the future strategy. According to the Stockholm Strategy, the Council of Europe programme on children's rights "shall continue to use the existing resources in the most efficient manner." Within the United Nations, the Governments participating in the Special Session on Children commit themselves to allocating resources to fulfill and protect the rights and to secure the well-being of children (A World Fit for Children, para. 31(a)). Moreover, innovative arrangements for mobilizing additional resources are to be promoted (para. 56).

At the three policy levels, efforts should be made to improve (internal and external) coordination and cooperation.²¹ The expressed intentions of cooperation between the three organizations themselves are dealt with more in detail in Chapter 7 below.

The importance of both coordination and cooperation in the implementation of children's rights is stressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment No. 5 on General measures of implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.²² The Committee therein expresses its belief that "effective implementation of the Convention requires visible cross-sectoral coordination to recognize and realize children's rights across Government, between different levels of government and between Government and civil society - including in particular children and young people themselves".²³ The significance of cooperation appears from the proposed measures of implementation "cooperation with civil society"²⁴ and "international cooperation"²⁵.

The 2006 Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" includes as specific objective "establishing effective coordination and consultation mechanisms". To strengthen cooperation among the main stakeholders, a European Forum on the Rights of the Child was established including all relevant stakeholders, such as Member States, UN agencies, the Council of Europe, civil society and children themselves. Moreover, it is foreseen that a web-based discussion and work platform is to be set up. To improve coordination between its various actions to increase consistency and effectiveness, the European Commission set up a formal inter-service group on the rights of the child, which is responsible to follow-up on the strategy, and appointed a Commission coordinator for the Rights of the Child. In Chapter III.2 on "Resources and Reporting", it is

²¹ Coordination and cooperation are addressed together, because in some policy documents no clear distinction between the two seems to be made.

²² UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5.

²³ *Ibid.*, para. 27. See also paras. 37-39.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, paras. 56-59.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, paras. 60-64.

stated that “[t]o ensure the efficiency of programmes that affect children’s rights, the Inter-service Group will pay due attention to possible synergies”.

Under the strategic objective of “mainstreaming and co-ordination” of the Stockholm Strategy, the Council of Europe Programme “Building a Europe for and with children” should continue to coordinate all its activities.²⁶ Under Chapter III “Working Methods”, it is said that “[a]t programme level, internal and external co-operation will be ensured through a permanent platform leading the strategic planning, implementation and evaluation of the programme”.²⁷ Both the European Union and the Council of Europe thus aim to increase coordination in the field of children’s rights by means of the establishment of a multi-stakeholder institution, respectively called forum (EU) and permanent platform (CoE).

Pursuant to the UN document “A World Fit for Children”, technical cooperation between countries will be promoted “in order to share positive experience and strategies in the implementation of the present Plan of Action” (para. 55). Moreover, the United Nations Member States resolved “to ensure greater policy coherence and better cooperation between the United Nations, its agencies, and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as other multilateral bodies and civil society, with a view to achieving the goals of the present Plan of Action” (A World Fit for Children, para. 58).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the importance of communication on children’s rights in Article 42 (the obligation to make the content of the Convention widely known to children and adults) and Article 44 (6) (the obligation to make reports widely available within the State). The content of these obligations is elaborated on in the Committee’s General Comment No. 5 on General measures of implementation.²⁸ Although the three main policy agendas all pay attention to communication on children’s rights, the greatest weight is attached to it in the European Commission’s document. One of the seven objectives of the 2006 Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights” is “communicating more effectively on children’s rights”. The European Commission should design a communication strategy on children’s rights and provide information on children’s rights in a child-friendly manner, by means of a child-friendly website. The Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy mentions communication more briefly as among its key working methods. To facilitate the first strategic objective of mainstreaming and co-ordination, the Council of Europe should moreover establish an online clearing house on children’s rights, to ensure that all those working with children have easy access to relevant information originated within the Council of Europe. In the UN Document “A World Fit for Children”, the Governments participating in the special session of the General Assembly on children commit themselves to implementing the Plan of Action through consideration of measures such as enhancing widespread awareness and understanding of the rights of the child (para. 31).

The three organizations also subscribe to the importance of monitoring and evaluation. According to General Comment No. 5, “[r]igorous monitoring of implementation is required, which should be built into the process of government

²⁶ Also, the Warsaw Action Plan states that “effective coordination of child-related activities must be ensured within the Organisation”.

²⁷ This platform is composed of the co-ordination unit within the Council of Europe Secretariat; the Council of Europe intersecretariat task force; the thematic co-ordinator of the Committee of Ministers; an Internet-based clearing house; and a children’s rights e-platform.

²⁸ UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5, paras. 66-73.

at all levels”, next to independent monitoring by national human rights institutions, NGOs and others.²⁹ The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressly committed itself to monitoring progress towards the implementation of the Plan of Action contained in the document “A World fit for Children”.³⁰ One of the implementation measures suggested in “A World Fit for Children” is “[d]eveloping national monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of our actions on children” (para. 31). The Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy foresees in the establishment of a permanent platform which is responsible for the evaluation of the programme “Building a Europe for and with Children”. Finally, the European Forum on the Rights of the Child “will contribute to the design and monitoring of EU actions and act as an arena for exchange of good practice”.

b. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the European Union and the Council of Europe

Both the Council of Europe and the European Union put particular emphasis on mainstreaming children’s rights in their policies and actions.³¹ One of the strategic objectives of the Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy is “mainstreaming and co-ordination”. A child rights perspective should be integrated as a matter of priority in the policy areas of democracy, media, family policies and health. One of the specific objectives of the European Commission’s 2006 Communication “Towards an EU Strategy of the Rights of the Child” is “mainstreaming children’s rights in EU actions”. Moreover, the Communication states that the process of mainstreaming children’s rights in EU actions “will take into account work carried out under the Council of Europe Programme “Building a Europe for and with Children (2006-2008)” to effectively promote respect for children’s rights and protect children against all forms of violence.” This parallel approach has thus been formally acknowledged.

c. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the European Union and the United Nations

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has emphasized “States’ obligation to develop training and capacity-building for all those involved in the implementation process - government officials, parliamentarians and members of the judiciary - and for all those working with and for children.”³² A specific objective of the 2006 Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” is “enhancing capacity and expertise on children’s rights”, particularly through providing the necessary skills and tools to actors involved in mainstreaming children’s rights in EU policies. The UN document “A World Fit for Children” refers to training and capacity building on various places. For instance, the capacity of the primary caretakers (parents, families, or, as the case may be, legal guardians) to provide care, nurturing and protection will be strengthened (para. 6). Also, in the context of the protection from armed conflict, appropriate training and education in

²⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 36.

³¹ In the UN document “A World Fit for Children”, mainstreaming is only mentioned in relation to the goal of combating child labour: “Mainstream action relating to child labour into national poverty eradication and development efforts, especially in policies and programmes in the areas of health, education, employment and social protection.” (para. 39).

³² UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5, para. 53. See also paras. 54-55.

children's rights and protection will be provided to all civilian, military and police personnel involved in peacekeeping operations (para. 44, no. 25)

The European Commission's 2006 Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" foresees that a progress report will be presented every year.³³ In the document "A World Fit for Children", States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are encouraged "to consider including in their reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child information on measures taken and results achieved in the implementation of the present Plan of Action" (para. 61(a)). The Committee on the Rights of the Child has endorsed this suggestion and committed itself to monitoring progress towards meeting the commitments made at the United Nations General Assembly special session on children (cf. *supra*).³⁴

d. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations

The establishment of partnerships is especially anticipated in the policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Pursuant to the Stockholm Strategy, the Council of Europe will develop and further consolidate partnerships with key international stakeholders, in particular with the European Union, the United Nations, the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, NGO networks, professional networks (among others in the field of youth), and the business sector. To implement the Plan of Action contained in the UN document "A World Fit for Children", partnerships will be strengthened with a range of actors who have unique contributions to make to the promotion and protection of children's rights, namely children themselves; parents, families, legal guardians and other caregivers; local governments and authorities; parliamentarians or members of legislatures; non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations; the private sector and corporate entities; religious, spiritual, cultural and indigenous leaders; the mass media and their organizations; regional and international organizations; and people who work directly with children (para. 32). In the chapter on "mobilizing resources", the importance of "new partnerships with civil society, including with non-governmental organizations and the private sector" is re-emphasized (para. 56) and corporate social responsibility is encouraged (para. 57).

e. Measures of implementation mainly mentioned in one policy agenda

The Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy identifies "transversal work" and "integrated approaches" as among its key working methods to implement the children's rights agenda.³⁵ It is noted that the transversal nature of some subjects may lead to the establishment of specific groups of experts or ad hoc advisory groups.

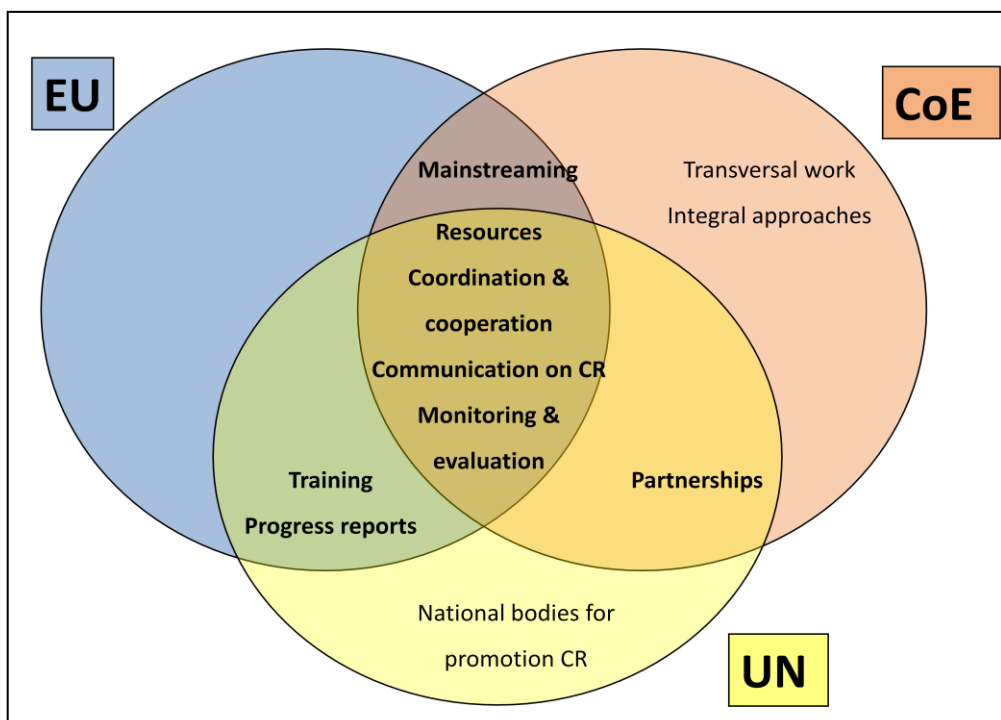
The UN document "A World Fit for Children" additionally mentions as a possible measure of implementation "[e]stablishing or strengthening national bodies such as, inter alia, independent ombudspersons for children, where appropriate, or other institutions for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child" (para. 31).

³³ Until now, however, no such progress reports have been issued.

³⁴ UN Doc. CRC/GC/2003/5, para. 36.

³⁵ The difference between the two working methods is not immediately clear.

Figure 3. Measures of implementation shared by the European and international policy agendas on children(’s rights)



3.2. European and international policy agendas on youth

LEGAL BASIS

The European Union disposes of the strongest legal basis to act in the field of youth, as its competence is enshrined in a treaty, namely the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union of 2008 (Articles 6 and 165,2). The legal basis to work in the youth field within the Council of Europe and the United Nations are non-binding, respectively the Warsaw Action Plan of 2005, which includes the object of “developing youth co-operation”, and the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965).

DECISION-MAKING BODY

The decisions on European and international youth policies are mainly made by bodies composed of representatives of the national governments: the Council of Youth Ministers within the European Union, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and the General Assembly (and the Human Rights Council) of the United Nations. However, the Council of Europe distinguishes itself by its participatory approach, as the Committee of Ministers is supported by the unique system of co-management between the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), the Advisory Council on Youth, the Joint Council of Youth, and the Programming Committee on Youth.

MAIN POLICY DOCUMENT

Similar to children's rights, the main policy documents in the field of youth are non-binding instruments, respectively a resolution of the Council of Youth Ministers of the European Union (on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth filed), a resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe), and a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond).

Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation

The institution responsible for the implementation of youth policy within both the European Union and the Council of Europe is a directorate with the same name, the Directorate of Youth and Sport, which respectively belongs to the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (EU) and the Directorate General IV – Education, Culture, Heritage, Youth and Sport (CoE). The fact that within the Council of Europe, the competence of “youth” is explicitly included in the name of the Directorate-General indicates the organization's long history in and importance attached to youth policy. According to the UN World Programme on Action for Youth, the Commission for Social Development – a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council – “has an important role to play as the focal point for the implementation of the Programme of Action” and is called upon to continue the policy-level dialogue on youth. At a more concrete level, the UN Programme on Youth is responsible for monitoring progress and constraints in the implementation of the World Programme of Action. The Programme forms part of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Time frame

The time frame of the different youth policy agendas differs. The current policy agendas of the European Union and the Council of Europe were only recently adopted, in 2009 and 2008 respectively. The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field applies for the period 2010-2018, whereas the time frame of the resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe is not specified (“for the coming years”). The World Programme of Action for Youth of the United Nations on the other hand was already adopted in 1995 and is coming to its end this year.

General objectives

The general objectives of youth policy of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations are partly similar. All three objectives are based on the concept of “opportunities”: the aim is to provide equal opportunities to young people so that they can fully participate in society. This common focus paves the way for cooperation in the implementation of the youth policy agendas. Within the European Union, the objective of creating more and equal opportunities is focused on education and the labour market. A second overall objective of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field is “to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people”. The general objectives of the Council of Europe and the United Nations are more broadly

formulated as to the provision of opportunities for full, effective and constructive participation in society. In addition, the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth aims to strengthen national capacities in the youth field.

Shared thematic priorities

Various thematic overlaps can be identified between the priorities set by the three organizations. Some topics are mentioned in various policy agendas, but with a different level of urgency/priority. There, the organization(s) attaching more importance to this issue are indicated in brackets.

For the analysis of the thematic priorities within the European Union youth policy, the Council resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field was complemented with its Annex 1 on “Youth-related aims and possible initiatives for Member States and the Commission”.

- a. Thematic priorities shared by the policy agendas of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations

Four thematic priorities stand out as being most commonly shared by the three organizations: participation, education, employment, and poverty and social exclusion. Besides, some other thematic priorities are mentioned in all three policy documents, but with a different degree of importance.

Like in the field of children(‘s rights), participation is one of the priorities subscribed to across the three policy levels. Moreover, two types of participation are consistently distinguished at the three levels and to be promoted: (i) participation in democratic processes and (ii) participation in everyday societal life. As such, participation is a main field of action in the Council resolution of the European Union. Annex 1 specifies that the aim is to support young people’s participation in (i) representative democracy and civil society at all levels and (ii) in society at large”. Under the Council of Europe priority “human rights and democracy”, particular emphasis must be put on (i) “promoting young people’s active participation in democratic processes and structures” and (ii) “promoting equal opportunities for the participation of all young people in all aspects of their everyday lives”. One of the priority areas of the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth is the full and effective participation of youth (i) in decision-making and (ii) in the life of society.

A second thematic priority shared by the three organizations is education. “Education and training” is a main field of action of European Union youth policy. According to the resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, “ensuring young people’s access to education [and] training ..., particularly through the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning” must receive special emphasis at the realization of the priority “social inclusion of young people”. Finally, the World Programme of Action for Youth lists education as its first priority area.

The three organizations also attach particular importance to the issue of youth employment. At European Union level, “employment and entrepreneurship” is a main field of action. The focus of the Council of Europe resolution is somewhat more specifically on “ensuring young people’s access to ... working life” and “supporting young people’s transition from education to the labour market, for

example by strengthening possibilities to reconcile private and working life.” Employment is equally a priority area within United Nations youth policy.

A fourth issue which raises particular concern within the three organizations is poverty and social exclusion. The two European youth policy agendas attach priority attention to social inclusion of young people. “Social inclusion” is a main field of action within European Union youth policy and one of the three priorities of the resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Moreover, under this priority “social inclusion of young people” of the Council of Europe policy agenda, special emphasis on supporting young people’s access to decent living conditions is required. In the World Programme of Youth, poverty is one of the priority areas.

The policy areas “voluntary activities” and “creativity, culture and cultural diversity” seem to receive somewhat more attention at European level than in the United Nations policy agenda. The resolution of the Council of the European Union identifies “voluntary activities” as a main field of action. The aim is to support young people’s voluntary activities and better recognize their value as an important form of non-formal learning. The Council of Europe and the United Nations also pay attention to the need to promote voluntary activities. Pursuant to the resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, “the development of youth mobility, voluntary activities and exchanges across Europe and beyond will be encouraged and supported”. The status of this provision is less clear, as the phrase is found in the third part of the resolution and not in the first part where the priorities are listed. In the World Programme of Action for Youth, one of the proposals for action in the area of employment is to establish voluntary community services involving youth.

There is also a common interest in the areas of creativity, culture and cultural diversity. “Creativity and culture” is a main field of action of European Union youth policy. Pursuant to Annex 1 of the Council resolution, “[y]oung people’s creativity and capacity for innovation should be supported through better quality access to and participation in culture and cultural expressions from an early age, thereby promoting personal development, enhanced learning capabilities, intercultural skills, understanding and respect for cultural diversity and the development of new and flexible skills for future job opportunities.” In addition, one of the possible initiatives in the field of action of social inclusion is to “[s]upport the development of intercultural awareness and competences for all young people and combat prejudice”. One of the three central priorities of the Council of Europe youth policy is “living together in diverse societies”. In the realization of this priority, particular weight is attached to “empowering young people to promote, in their daily lives, cultural diversity as well as intercultural dialogue and co-operation”. Moreover, as part of the Council of Europe priority of “social inclusion of young people”, the equal access of young people to cultural and creative activities should be ensured. At United Nations level, issues of culture and cultural diversity are addressed under the priority area of education. Governments should support programmes to educate young people in the cultural heritage of their own and other societies and to institute programmes to help youth understand cultural diversity. Another proposal for action is “promoting mutual respect and understanding and the ideals of peace, solidarity and tolerance among youth”.

Human rights is equally a shared concern, but is particularly emphasized by the Council of Europe. The theme “human rights and democracy” is one of its three key priorities, with special emphasis on “ensuring young people’s full enjoyment of human rights and human dignity, and encouraging their commitment in this

regard”. Within the European Union and United Nations policy documents, human rights appear as a guiding principle on the one hand, and in the context of human rights education on the other. As such, the 2009 Council resolution underlines that “European Youth Policy should be firmly anchored in the international system of human rights”. Moreover, under the field of action “youth and the world”, awareness of young people about human rights should be raised. One of the principles fundamental to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth is that “[e]very State should guarantee to all young people the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Also, “promoting human rights education” is one of the actions proposed under the priority area “education”.

Finally, there are some policy areas which are addressed at all three levels, but appear somewhat more pronounced in the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth than in the European policy agendas. These are the environment, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, and intergenerational issues. All four are priority areas of the World Programme of Action. The resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe mentions them as an area of special emphasis within one of its three priorities. The European Union policy document pays least explicit attention to these issues, as they only appear in relation to a possible initiative under another field of action.

With respect to the environment, Annex 1 of the resolution of the Council of the European Union states under the field of action “youth and the world” that young people should be encouraged to participate in “green volunteering” and “green” patterns of consumption and production. The Council of Europe policy agenda provides under the priority “human rights and democracy” that special emphasis should be put on promoting awareness education and action on environment and sustainable development. Concerning leisure-time activities, one of the possible initiatives in the field of action “creativity and culture” at European Union level is to “provide access to environments where young people can develop their creativity and interests and spend a meaningful leisure time”. Under the priority “social inclusion of young people”, the Council of Europe youth policy agenda aims at “ensuring young people’s access to cultural, sporting and creative activities”. According to the resolution of the Council of the European Union, promoting gender equality is one of the guiding principles which should be observed in all policies and activities concerning young people. Under the field of action “education and training”, a suggested initiative is “address gender stereotypes through education”. Within the Council of Europe, “effectively implementing gender equality and preventing all forms of gender-based violence” is one of the emphases under the priority “human rights and democracy”. Intergenerational issues are mentioned within the European Union youth policy under the field of action “voluntary activities”, where a possible initiative is to “promote intergenerational solidarity through voluntary activities”. The main policy document of the Council of Europe includes “encouraging intergenerational dialogue and solidarity” under its priority “social inclusion of young people”.

b. Thematic priorities shared by the policy agendas of the European Union and the United Nations

The European Union and the United Nations policy agendas on youth have two thematic priorities in common, which are not taken up to the same extent within the Council of Europe: health and globalization. “Health and well-being” is a main

field of action of the European Union's youth policy and a priority area of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Similarly, globalization is a parallel interest, expressed at European Union level in the field of action "youth and the world", and being a priority area of the United Nations youth policy agenda since 2007.

- c. Thematic priorities shared by the policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations

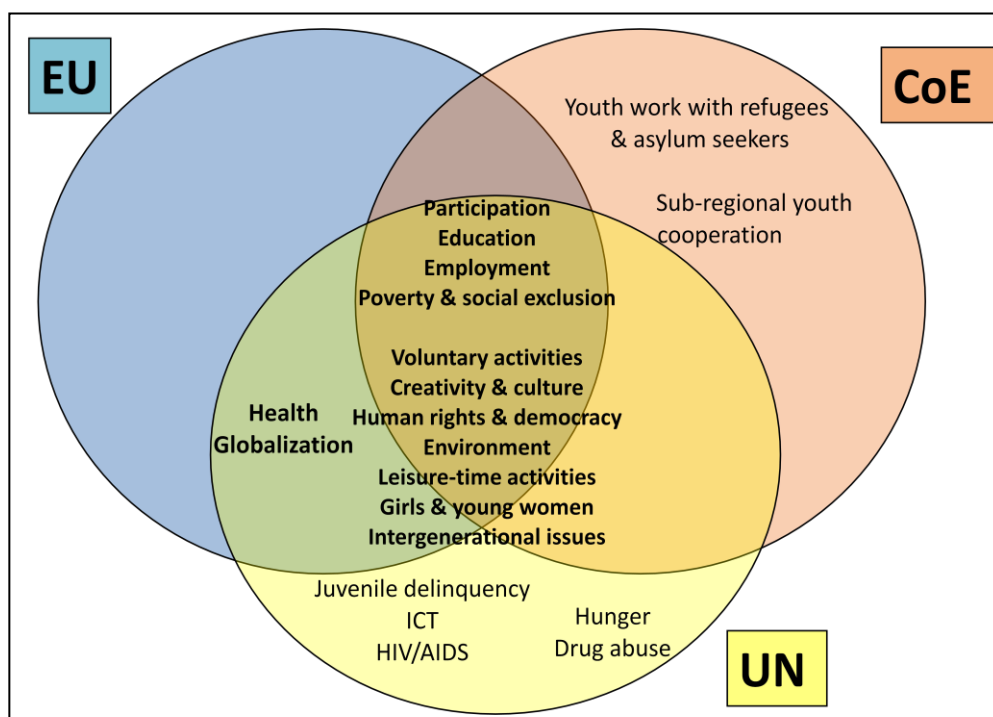
Armed conflict is a shared priority of the Council of Europe and the United Nations, which is not tackled by the internal youth policy agenda of the European Union. Being an additional priority area of the World Programme of Action for Youth, armed conflict is addressed within the Council of Europe youth policy agenda under its priority of "living together in diverse societies", in which special emphasis is to be put on "supporting initiatives of young people and their organisations with regard to conflict prevention and management, as well as post-conflict reconciliation by means of intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension".

- d. Thematic priorities mainly set by one policy agenda

Two issues receive particular attention within the Council of Europe youth policy agenda, under the priority "living together in diverse societies", namely "supporting youth work with young refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons" and "further encouraging the development of sub-regional youth co-operation in Europe and beyond".

Lastly, some priorities are principally set by the United Nations World Programme of Action. These are the priority areas of hunger, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, information and communications technology, and HIV/AIDS. The predominant presence of the United Nations in these themes must be nuanced in two ways. First, hunger can be seen as a specific aspect of poverty, and is in this way thus also covered by the European youth policy agendas. Second, information and communications technology is covered in Annex 1 of the Council Resolution on the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field of the European Union. Under the field of action of "participation", a proposed initiative is "make effective use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen participation of young people". The field of action "creativity and culture" includes as suggested action "make new technologies readily available to empower young people's creativity and capacity for innovation, and attract interest in culture, the arts and science."

Figure 4. Thematic priorities shared by the European and international policy agendas on youth



Approaches, methods and instruments / Measures of implementation

The three organizations have a somewhat different structure of their approaches, methods and instruments to implement their youth policy agendas. At European Union level, a dual approach is taken to achieve the two overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field: (i) specific initiatives in the youth field, i.e. policies and actions specifically targeted at young people, and (ii) mainstreaming initiatives.

- a. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations

The following measures of implementation are advanced in all three youth policy agendas: resources, cooperation and coordination, participation of young people in the development and implementation of youth policy, and knowledge building and youth research.

The main policy documents of the three organizations all pay attention to the need of resources to implement their youth policy agendas. One of the implementation instruments of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field is the “mobilization of EU Programmes and Funds”. In the 2008 Resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers resolves that “coherent presentation and optimum use of human, financial and other resources should be ensured through programming based on specific objectives and clearly defined evaluation criteria” and that “additional sources of financing, including from the non-governmental sector, should be sought”. Finally, the mechanisms necessary to implement the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth

“should engage, on a continuing basis, the human, political, economic, financial and socio-cultural resources necessary to ensure that the Programme is implemented efficiently”.

Across the three policy levels, emphasis is also put on increased coordination and cooperation. Again, the particular (intentions of) cooperation between the three organizations themselves is described in detail below (see Chapter 5). Specific to the European Union is that cooperation in the youth field should be implemented by means of a renewed open method of coordination. Among the general initiatives that should be considered in all fields of action are mentioned “developing and strengthening cooperation between policy makers in the respective fields of action and youth policy makers”; “strengthening cooperation with local and regional authorities”; and “recognising the value of bilateral and multilateral cooperation for European cooperation in the field of youth policy”. The resolution of the Council of Europe also stresses the importance of coordination and cooperation at various points.³⁶ Notably, it is explicitly stated that “co-ordination between child- and youth-related activities should be further enhanced” (cf. *infra*). Moreover, as regards youth policy development and co-operation, there should be “intergovernmental and international co-operation on the development of youth policy”.³⁷ As regards youth work, education and training, multilateral youth cooperation is suggested as an appropriate way of promoting international understanding in the spirit of the Council of Europe’s core values. With respect to youth research and knowledge of youth, co-operation between youth researchers and policy makers is to be promoted. The United Nations World Programme of Action also strongly supports more cooperation and coordination at national, regional and international level. For instance, national coordinating mechanisms are to be strengthened for integrated youth policies and programmes. At regional level, the United Nations regional commissions should work closely together with regional intergovernmental and non-governmental youth and youth-related organizations. In the context of international cooperation, means identified to promote the implementation of the World Programme of Action include planning and coordination, and technical cooperation.

At the three policy levels, there is a notable concern to enhance the participation of young people in the formulation and implementation of youth policy. In the youth policy agendas, participation is thus not only a thematic priority (cf. *supra*), but also a means of implementation. In this respect, the system of co-management employed by the Council of Europe goes further than both the “consultations and structured dialogue with young people and youth organizations” carried out within the European Union and the “effective channels of communication between non-governmental youth organizations and the United Nations system” that are important for dialogue and consultation on the situation of youth and for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

The three organizations emphasize that youth policy should be evidence-based, and that more knowledge on youth should be acquired through research. The instruments of implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field encompass “knowledge building and evidence-based policy.” The Resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

³⁶ The Council resolution also explicitly states that “co-ordination between child- and youth-related activities should be further enhanced”.

³⁷ In addition, the Council resolution mentions co-management as “a unique and valuable co-operation mechanism between governments and youth organisations”. Here, co-management is dealt with in the rubric on the “involvement of young people in policy making”.

dedicates one of the three pillars in the part on approaches, methods and instruments to “youth research and knowledge of youth.” In the UN World Programme of Action for Youth, the means of implementation include data collection as well as research and policy studies.

b. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the European Union and the Council of Europe

Mainstreaming is a key means of implementing the European policy agendas. To realize the general objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, mainstreaming initiatives are one pillar of the dual approach proposed, next to specific initiatives in the youth field. Such mainstreaming initiatives are described as “initiatives to enable a cross-sectoral approach where due account is taken of youth issues when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other policy fields which have a significant impact on the lives of young people”. The resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe equally promotes mainstreaming, as it provides that “measures should be taken in order to encourage all sectors of the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the youth sector, to take into account the youth dimension when defining and carrying out their programmes of activities”.³⁸

c. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the European Union and the United Nations

Although less prominently than within the children’s rights agendas, training and capacity building are also addressed in the main youth policy documents of the European Union and the United Nations. In the resolution of the Council of the European Union, capacity building appears in the form of “mutual learning”, which provides the opportunity to identify and learn from good practices in different Member States. According to the World Programme of Action, national capacities could be strengthened for a range of activities, such as data collection and dissemination of information, research and policy studies, planning, implementation and coordination, and training and advisory studies.

d. Measures of implementation shared by the policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations

Partnerships are equally an important means of implementation. Like in the field of children’s rights, partnerships are most explicitly foreseen in the policy agendas of the Council of Europe and the United Nations (although they can be seen as linked to cooperation and coordination). One of the approaches, methods and instruments as regards youth policy development and co-operation within the Council of Europe resolution are “partnerships with other stakeholders and services involved in areas which are relevant to the Council of Europe youth policy”. The United Nations World Programme of Action aspires “systematic outreach and partnership among the Programme’s many constituencies in both the non-governmental and private sectors”.

³⁸ Also, the Warsaw Action Plan states that “[a] child rights perspective will be implemented throughout all the activities of the Council of Europe”.

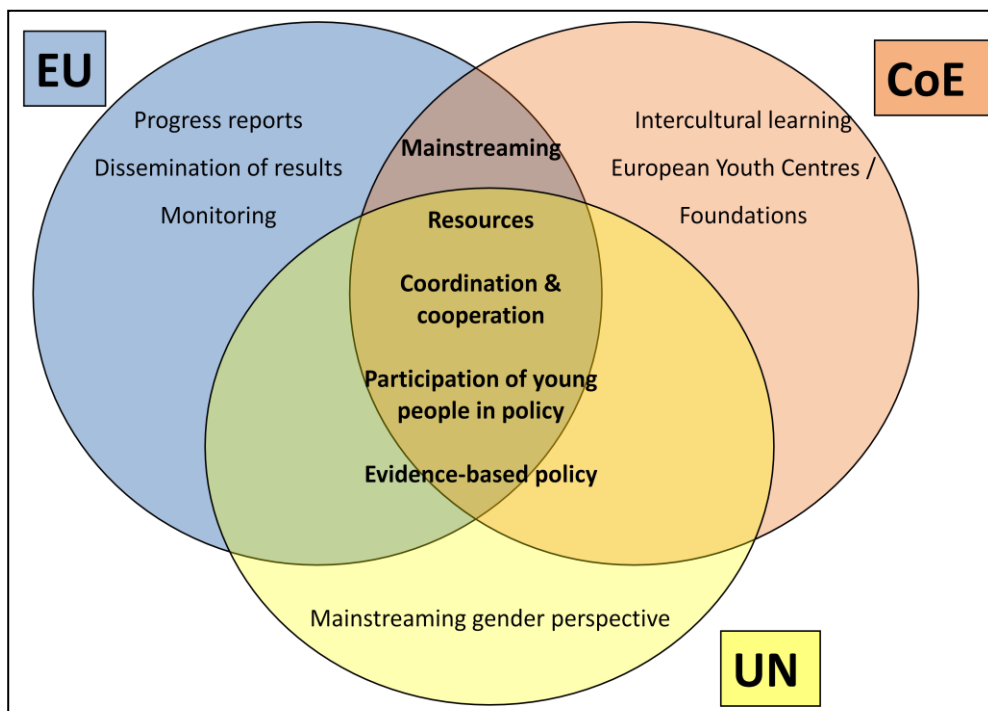
e. Measures of implementation mainly mentioned in one policy agenda

The resolution of the Council of the European Union on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field additionally lists the following instruments for the framework to be effectively implemented: progress reports, dissemination of results, and monitoring of the process.

Within the Council of Europe, some instruments are explicitly attached to a particular priority. As such, it is said that intercultural learning as a non-formal educational method is particularly relevant for promoting intercultural dialogue and combating racism and intolerance (under the priorities of cultural diversity and poverty and social exclusion). Also, to develop European youth co-operation, the European Youth Centres and European Youth Foundation are presented as unique instruments to realize this priority.

At United Nations level, it is explicitly stated that in implementing the World Programme of Action, youth organizations and other actors should promote a policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective.

Figure 5. Measures of implementation shared by the European and international policy agendas on youth



4. Comparison and possible synergies of policy agendas at one policy level

In this chapter, the policy agendas on children’s rights and youth *within one organization* are compared and possible synergies are identified. The European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations are consecutively discussed.

4.1. European Union

In general, the European Union’s youth policy has a longer history and is more robust than its policy in the field of children’s rights, as will appear from the comparison below.

LEGAL BASIS

Within the European Union, the legal basis to act in the field of youth is more long-standing than EU competence with respect to children’s rights. Youth was included as a new policy area in the Treaty on European Union, signed in Maastricht in 1992, whereas “the protection of the rights of the child” was only incorporated as a goal in the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union of 2008, which entered into force on 1 December 2009.

DECISION-MAKING BODY

For youth, the decision-making body is the Council of Youth Ministers. Decision-making in the field of children’s rights is linked to the substantive field in which measures are taken. Only in the areas of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, the Council and the European Parliament are competent to take measures.³⁹

MAIN POLICY DOCUMENT

The main policy document on European youth policy (a resolution of the Council of Youth Ministers) has a greater weight than the policy document on a strategy for children’s rights (a communication of the European Commission).

Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation

The – at least historically – larger importance attached to youth is also evident at institutional-bureaucratic level. The policy area of “youth” is situated at Directorate level (“Directorate of Youth and Sport”), whereas the area of children’s rights is allocated to a Unit (Unit C1 Fundamental Rights and the Rights of the Child of Directorate C, Fundamental Rights and Union Citizenship).

³⁹ Consolidated Version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2008) arts. 79(2)(d) and 83(1).

Time frame

European Union youth policy is taking a longer-term perspective than the – still being developed – strategy on children’s rights. The renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field aims to cover the period 2010-2018. The 2006 Communication of the European Commission “Towards an EU Strategy of the Rights of the Child” contained actions to be implemented between 2006 and 2008, or “from 2007 onwards”. The new Communication on Children’s Rights expected by the end of 2010 will cover the period 2011-2014.

General objectives

Evidently, the policy on children’s rights takes a *rights*-based approach. The two basic aims are to promote and protect children’s rights in European Union actions and to support Member States’ efforts in this field. The youth policy agenda on the other hand aims at creating *opportunities* for all young people in education and in the labour market, and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

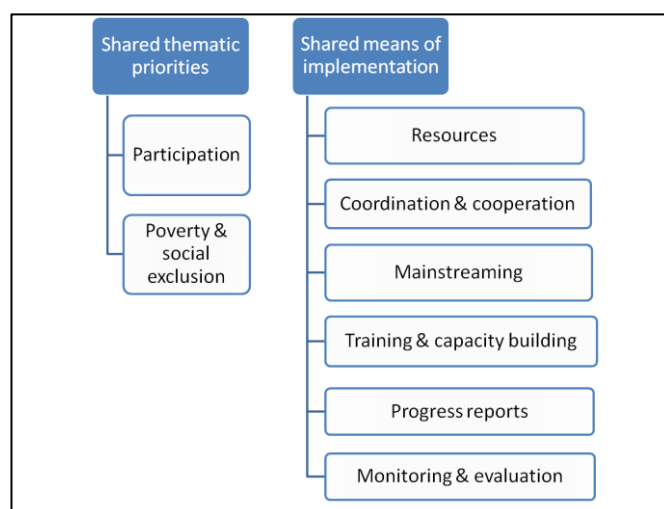
Shared thematic priorities

The two thematic priorities shared by the European Union policy agendas on children’s rights and youth are participation, and poverty and social exclusion.⁴⁰

Approaches, methods and instruments / Measures of implementation

The following instruments of implementation are provided for in both European Union policy agendas: mobilizing resources, coordination and cooperation, mainstreaming, training and capacity building, progress reports, and monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 6. Comparing the European Union policy agendas on children’s rights and youth



⁴⁰ As aforementioned, the issues included in the consultation on the upcoming Communication on the Rights of the Child (2011-2014) are incorporated in the analysis.

4.2. Council of Europe

LEGAL BASIS

The legal basis of the Council of Europe's competence to develop a children's rights policy is extensive, consisting of various human rights treaties. The Warsaw Declaration of 2005 called for measures to eradicate violence against children. The most concrete basis for policy development is shared by the fields of children's rights and youth, namely the Warsaw Action Plan of 2005.

DECISION-MAKING BODY

The main decision-making body within the Council of Europe in the fields of children's rights and youth is the Committee of Ministers. As regards youth policy, a unique system of co-management was set up, which provides input from youth organizations in the development of youth policy.

MAIN POLICY DOCUMENT

The policy agenda on children's rights is included in a decision of the Committee of Ministers, whereas the youth policy agenda is incorporated in a resolution of the Committee of Ministers. According to the website of the Committee of Ministers, "decisions include any texts adopted at meetings of the Committee of Ministers", and "[a]dministrative decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers sometimes take the form of resolutions".⁴¹ They are non-binding for Member States.

Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation

The institution responsible for (monitoring) the implementation of youth policy stands higher in the hierarchy, being a directorate (the Directorate of Youth and Sport), than the institution entrusted with (monitoring) the implementation of children's rights, which is only a division of a directorate (Children's Rights and Family Policies Division of the Directorate of Social Affairs and Health).

Time frame

The policy agendas on children's rights and youth of the Council of Europe were both adopted in 2008. The Stockholm Strategy of the Programme "Building a Europe for and with Children" is designed to cover the period 2009-2011, whereas the time frame of the resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe is not specified ("for the coming years").

General objectives

The overall objectives of the Stockholm Strategy are (i) to support the implementation of children's *rights* by the Member States and (ii) to introduce a child rights perspective in all policies and activities of the Council of Europe and to support such an approach within the Member States. The youth policy agenda of the Council of Europe aims to provide young people with "equal *opportunities* and

⁴¹ < http://www.coe.int/t/cm/adoptedTexts_en.asp#P89_8764>.

experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society”.⁴²

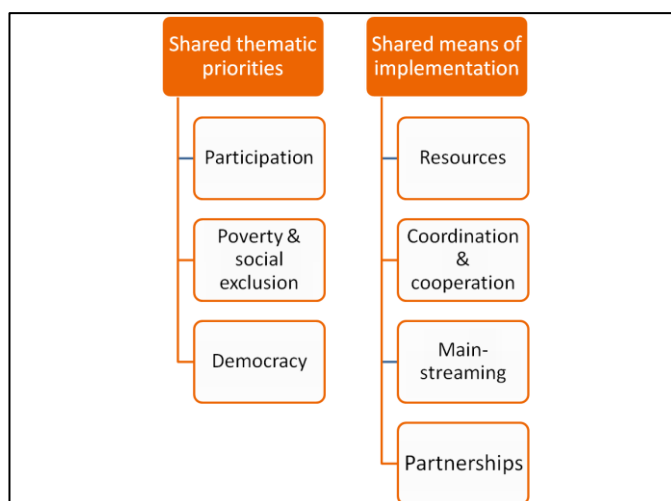
Shared thematic priorities

The thematic priorities common to the Council of Europe policy agendas on children’s rights and youth are participation, poverty and social exclusion, and – to a lesser extent – democracy. Human rights and democracy is one of the three key priorities set in the Committee of Ministers’ Resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe. According to the Stockholm strategy, democracy is one of the priority policy areas for mainstreaming children’s rights.

Approaches, methods and instruments / Measures of implementation

At the level of the Council of Europe, synergies in the implementation of the policy agendas on children’s rights and youth seem most feasible with respect to the following means: mobilizing resources, coordination and cooperation, mainstreaming, and the establishment of partnerships.

Figure 7. Comparing the Council of Europe policy agendas on children’s rights and youth



⁴² Emphasis added.

4.3. United Nations

LEGAL BASIS

The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and its two Optional Protocols provide a firm legal basis to develop a children's rights policy within the United Nations. Youth policy is grounded in the non-binding Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples of 1965.

DECISION-MAKING BODY

With regard to both children's rights and youth, the United Nations General Assembly is the principal decision-making body. However, as noted in the introduction, the texts adopted by the General Assembly are in practice mostly drafted within other fora, such as its Third Committee or a working group.

MAIN POLICY DOCUMENT

The main policy documents on children's rights and youth have the same legal weight, as they are both incorporated in a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly.

Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation

The institutions responsible for (monitoring) the implementation of the policy agendas on children's rights and youth are situated at different places in the organization chart of the United Nations. UNICEF is a fund which must report to the General Assembly, whereas the Commission for Social Development is a subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the UN Programme on Youth forms part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Time frame

The United Nations policy agendas on children's rights and youth have been adopted quite some time ago, in 2002 and 1995 respectively. The document "A World Fit for Children" provides actions for the coming decennium, while the World Programme of Action for Youth covers the period 1995-2010.

General objectives

The document "A World Fit for Children" lists ten principles and objectives. The general objectives of the World Programme of Action for Youth are to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the *opportunities* available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society.

Shared thematic priorities

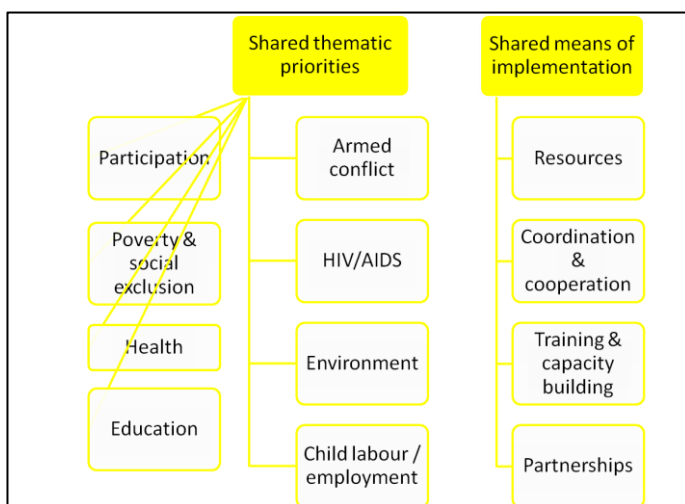
At United Nations level, there are quite some thematic overlaps between the policy agendas on children's rights and youth: participation, poverty and social

exclusion, health, education, armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, and the environment. The policy agendas also share a focus on labour issues, through the priority of child labour in the document “A World Fit for Children” and the priority area of employment in the World Programme of Action.

Approaches, methods and instruments / Measures of implementation

The following measures of implementation are provided in both the policy agendas on children(’s rights) and youth of the United Nations: mobilizing resources, coordination and cooperation, training and capacity building, and partnerships.

Figure 8. Comparing the United Nations policy agendas on children’s rights and youth



5. Cooperation

5.1. Inter-organizational cooperation

Cooperation between the different organizations can also be seen as one of the methods of implementation. However, given the explicit attention paid to this issue in the various policy documents, it is treated here separately. Between the European Union and the Council of Europe, a closer cooperation is noticeable.

EUROPEAN UNION – COUNCIL OF EUROPE

In respect of children's rights, one of the problems identified at European Union level is the "scattering of actions touching upon children's rights, between various international arena (EU, Council of Europe, United Nations, etc.) as well as within the EU institutions".⁴³ To counter this, various declarations and actions have been taken.

According to the Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" of 2006, the work carried out under the Council of Europe programme "Building a Europe for and with Children" will be taken into account in the process of mainstreaming children's rights in EU actions. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union of 2007 states that "[c]o-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union will include ... the protection of the rights of the child".

In the Stockholm Strategy of the Council of Europe, adopted in 2008, it is said that "the Council of Europe will develop and further consolidate partnerships with key international stakeholders, in particular with the European Union, including the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Fundamental Rights Agency and intergovernmental bodies such as l'Europe de l'Enfance and ChildONEurope".

Turning to the youth field, both the Council of Europe and the European Union have repeatedly expressed their preparedness to cooperate in this area. In the Warsaw Action Plan of 2005, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Council of Europe called on the Council of Europe to "strengthen co-operation with the European Union in areas of common interest, in particular in the legal, cultural, youth and social fields".

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union of 2007, reads that "[t]he Council of Europe and the European Union reaffirm their commitment to establish close co-operation based on their shared priorities and, where possible, to strengthen their relations in areas of common interest such as ... youth".⁴⁴ More specifically, "[t]he Council of Europe and the European Union will strengthen their co-operation in the youth field by developing and taking part in programmes and campaigns to empower young people to participate actively in the democratic process and by facilitating youth exchange".⁴⁵

The 2008 Resolution of the Committee of Ministers on the youth policy of the Council of Europe mentions "co-operation with the European Union" among the

⁴³ SEC(2006)888, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union (2007) para. 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 37.

approaches, methods and instruments as regards youth policy development and co-operation. Also, it is stated that “the partnership with the European Commission in the youth field should continue to be supported as an example of good co-operation between the two partners”. Similarly, the Council Resolution of 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field states that cooperation with the Council of Europe should be continued.

OTHER COOPERATIONS

There are also various references to the need of continuing and strengthening cooperation between the three organizations. Within the European Union, the Commission’s Communication “Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child” states that “[t]he Commission will strengthen cooperation among the main stakeholders, making optimal use of existing networks and international organisations or bodies involved in children’s rights. To this end, the Commission will bring the stakeholders together in a European Forum for the Rights of the Child. The Forum will include all the relevant stakeholders (including Member States, UN agencies, the Council of Europe, civil society and children themselves), and will contribute to the design and monitoring of EU actions and act as an arena for exchange of good practice.” The Council Resolution of 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field also confirms that “[c]ooperation with international organizations such as the Council of Europe, OECD and the United Nations should be continued, thereby providing a source of reference and inspiration.”

The Warsaw Action Plan of the Council of Europe notes with respect to the objective of “building a Europe for Children” that “[c]oordination with the United Nations in this field is essential, particularly in connection with follow-up to the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.” The Stockholm Strategy of the Council of Europe foresees that the Council of Europe will develop and strengthen partnerships with both the European Union (cf. supra) and the United Nations. Moreover, the Council of Europe will serve as the European forum for follow-up to the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General’s study on violence against children. With regard to youth policy, the 2008 Resolution of the Committee of Ministers includes among the approaches, method and instruments for youth policy development and co-operation “[i]ntergovernmental and international co-operation on the development of youth policy, with particular focus on setting standards and supporting their implementation.”

In the outcome document “A World Fit for Children”, the governments participating in the United Nations General Assembly special session on children resolve “to ensure greater policy coherence and better cooperation between the United Nations, its agencies, and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as other multilateral bodies and civil society, with a view to achieving the goals of the present Plan of Action” (para. 58). Pursuant to the UN World Programme of Action for Youth, “[c]urrent regional and interregional conferences of ministers responsible for youth affairs in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia are invited to intensify cooperation among each other and to consider meeting regularly at the international level under the aegis of the United Nations.”

Notwithstanding these different expressions of intent to (continue to) cooperate, it must be noted that institutional competition between the three organizations is taking place in practice.

5.2. Cooperation with the other policy field of children's rights or youth

Within the policy documents of the United Nations on children's rights and youth, no cross-references to the other policy field are made. On the other hand, at Council of Europe and European Union level, some of the policy agendas on children's rights and youth include cross-references to the other policy area and express interest to cooperate and exchange. The interconnections made at the Council of Europe level are the most advanced.

Within the Council of Europe, the Stockholm Strategy of the Programme "Building a Europe for and with Children" makes two explicit references to the youth sector. First, as part of the strategic objective of participation of children and their influence in society, it is stated that the Council of Europe should "reinforce cooperation between children's rights programme and the youth sector, building upon the youth sector's expertise in the field of participation and making use of the platform offered by the European Youth Forum". Furthermore, in the final chapter on "Partners", it is mentioned that the Council of Europe will develop and consolidate partnerships with, among others, professional networks, in particular in the fields of education, justice, social services, health and youth.

In the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers on the youth policy of the Council of Europe, there are equally two explicit references to children's policies). The preamble states that a dynamic youth policy is needed, "which includes children as well as young people". Moreover, the Committee of Ministers resolves that "co-ordination between child- and youth-related activities should be further enhanced".

At European Union level, the renewed social agenda takes "children and youth" together as one priority. The Commission's Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" does not include references to the youth field.

In the European Commission's Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering", it is stated under the field of action of "social inclusion" that "child, family and youth policies are closely linked and this Communication is complementary to the Commission Communication "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child". Adopting a cross-sectoral approach, it is noted that youth policies can contribute to delivering results in areas such as "child and family policy, education, gender equality, employment, housing and healthcare".

In Annex I of the Council Resolution on a renewed framework of cooperation, one of the general initiatives that are suggested for all fields of action is "[i]ncluding, where appropriate, a children's policy dimension, having regard to their rights and protection taking into account that the life and future prospects of young people are significantly determined by the opportunities, support and protection received during childhood".

6. Conclusion

6.1. Comprehensive comparison and identification of possible synergies

LEGAL BASIS

In general, youth policy has a longer history within the three organizations than policies on children's rights. Attention for children's rights only really sparked off with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

DECISION-MAKING BODY

Within the United Nations and the Council of Europe the ultimate decision-making bodies in the fields of children's rights and youth are the same (the UN General Assembly and the Committee of Ministers), even though for the development of youth policy the Committee of Ministers is supported by a system of co-management. At European Union level, the decision-making bodies for children's rights and youth differ. For children's rights, the decision-making process depends on the substantive field in which measures are taken that influence children's rights, except for trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. The Council of Youth Ministers establishes European Union youth policy.

MAIN POLICY DOCUMENT

Institution responsible for (monitoring) implementation

Both within the European Union and the Council of Europe, the institution responsible for (monitoring) the implementation of the youth policy agendas stands higher in the institutional hierarchy (Directorate level) than the one entrusted with (monitoring) the implementation of children's rights. In the United Nations system, there is no such a clear hierarchical distinction, given that the responsible institutions have a different structure (fund versus programme) and place in the organization chart.

Time frame

The current United Nations policy agendas on children's rights and youth are the oldest, dating from 2002 and 1995 respectively. The European policy agendas on children's rights and youth were adopted far more recently.

General objectives

Whereas the general objectives of the policy agendas on children are formulated in terms of *rights* (the promotion and protection of children's rights), the policy agendas on youth take as entry point the provision of (equal) *opportunities*. Does this distinction between "rights" and "opportunities" constitute a mere difference in wording, or is a substantially different approach underlying this divergent formulation of policy objectives? The policy agendas on children clearly adopt a rights-based perspective. Youth policy on the other hand focuses more on strengthening the capacities and skills of young people; the word "rights" appears

much less in the youth policy agendas. This might point to a difference in approach. For, in the latter case policy makers decide they want to create opportunities for a certain group (youth) because this seems interesting, relevant, useful or appropriate. It is another thing to start from the premise that a certain group (children) has rights and that these rights have to be realized. The realization of those rights may then create or increase opportunities.

Shared thematic priorities

Participation and “poverty and social exclusion” are the only two priorities that are common to the policy agendas of both children and youth of the three organizations. The goal of increasing participation of children and youth is running as a red thread through the different policy agendas. The participation of children and youth is to be promoted in democratic processes and structures, as well as in all aspects of everyday life. Particular attention is also paid to combating poverty and discrimination, as well as enhancing social inclusion. HIV/AIDS and armed conflict are priority areas in the policies of both children(‘s rights) and youth at United Nations level, but not at European level (internal policies of the Council of Europe and the European Union).

The European Union policy agendas on both children’s rights and youth seem to align themselves with the priorities set by the geographically larger organizations of the Council of Europe and the United Nations, as there are no thematic priorities that are exclusively dealt with at European Union level, without being tackled as well within the Council of Europe and/or the United Nations.

In general, youth policy agendas encompass a wider range of topics than the policy agendas on children’s rights. There are various themes that are addressed in all three youth policy agendas, but that are not taken up as such in any of the main policy documents on children’s rights. These include voluntary activities, creativity, culture and cultural diversity, environment, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, and intergenerational issues. On the other hand, the issue of violence does not appear in the youth policy agendas. Also the focus on vulnerable groups is more prominent in the policy agendas on children(‘s rights).

Approaches, methods and instruments / Measures of implementation

“Mobilizing resources” and “cooperation and coordination” are measures of implementation that are included in all the main policy documents reviewed, thus on both children’s rights and youth, at the three policy levels.

In addition, there are some approaches that are shared by two of the three organizations in both the policy agendas on children(‘s rights) and youth. Thus, good practices on these issues could be exchanged across organizations and across policy areas, and synergies could be developed. As such, the European policy agendas (of the European Union and the Council of Europe) on both children’s rights and youth all identify mainstreaming as a principal means of implementation. The European Union and the United Nations recognize in both policy agendas training and capacity building as important, while the Council of Europe and the United Nations anticipate the establishment of partnerships for the implementation of their policy agendas on children(‘s rights) and youth.

There are various means of implementation that are shared by all three agendas in one policy area, but which are not mentioned in the policy agendas of the other

field. As such, the measures “communication on children’s rights” and “monitoring and evaluation” are only included in the policy agendas on children’s rights of the three organizations, not in the youth policy agendas. Also, more importance seems to be attached to training and capacity building in the policy agendas on children’s rights than in the youth field. This may be because of the more recent rise of the concept of children’s rights as a global concern and perspective. The increased attention for human (and children’s) rights education in the framework of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) is another possible explanatory factor.

On the other hand, it is remarkable that all three youth policy agendas strongly emphasize the need for an evidence-based policy and more research in youth issues, whereas the policy agendas on children’s rights have less such a focus. Moreover, the youth policy agendas all aim at actively involving young people in the development and implementation of youth policy, which is not the case in the policy agendas on children’s rights. However, especially older children could definitely provide valuable input in the process of policy development and implementation.

Figure 9. Possible synergies between the policy agendas on children’s rights and youth of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations: thematic priorities

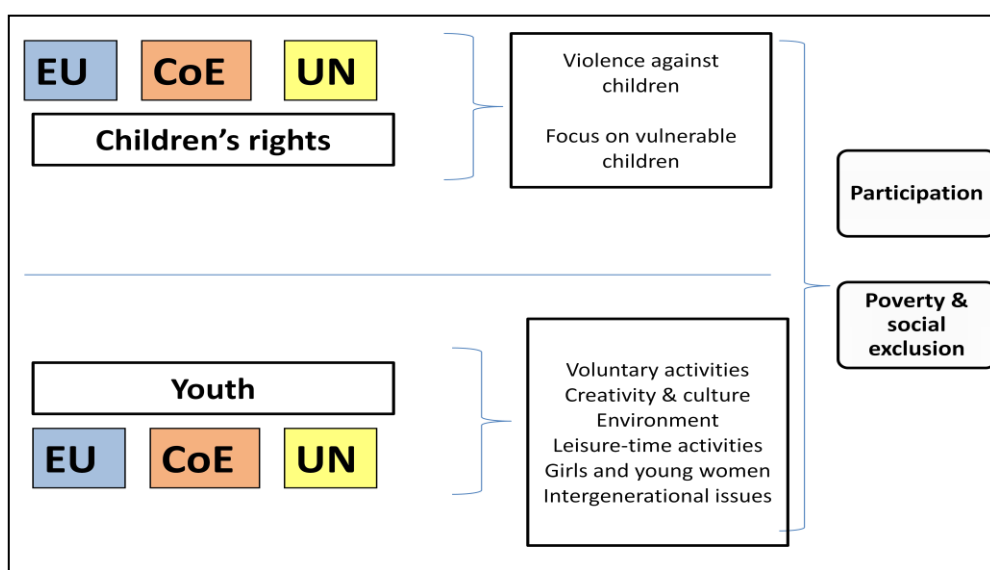
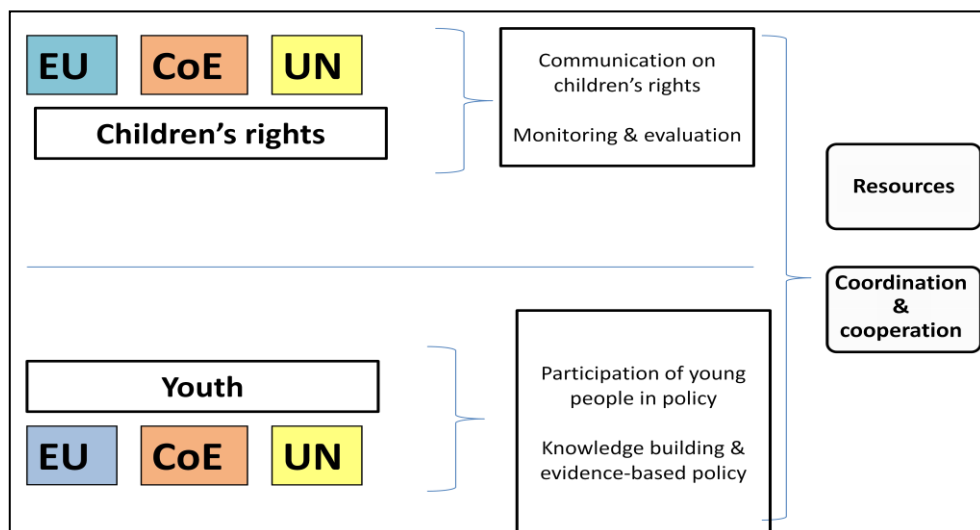


Figure 10. Possible synergies between the policy agendas on children’s rights and youth of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations: means of implementation



6.2. Concluding reflections

Member States of the European Union are facing at least six different European and international policy agendas with respect to children, youth and children’s rights. Comparing the policy agendas of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations on children’s rights and youth reveals that there is potential for increased exchange and cooperation in different ways. Various thematic priorities are shared across the three organizations and/or in the policy fields of both children’s rights and youth. As such, the thematic priorities of participation and poverty and social exclusion are shared by the policy agendas on children’s rights and youth of the three organizations. Also as regards the means of implementation, it is possible to bundle efforts. At the three policy levels, implementation measures include mobilizing resources and coordination and cooperation. Moreover, there are various means of implementation that are shared by two of the three organizations in the policy agendas of both children’s rights and youth: mainstreaming (European Union and Council of Europe), training and capacity building (European Union and United Nations), and partnerships (Council of Europe and United Nations). These possible synergies may be further explored and used, as to enhance coherence and efficiency in the implementation of the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children’s rights.