

LOST IN TRANSLATION¹

– Why aren't integrated youth policies implemented in practice?

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Abstract. For decades, one of the main aims of the European youth field has been the political promotion of integrated youth policies within the larger purpose of improving the living conditions of young people through better coordination and collaboration of existing services. European organisations (EU and the Council of Europe) have emphasised the importance of implementing an integrated approach on international, national, regional and local levels (see, for example, the White Paper on Youth and Council of Europe Recommendations 2001). However, there are too few examples of successful implementations of this approach. The various reasons that lie behind this failure include: a lack of theoretical and conceptual clarity, a perception that it is (too) difficult to implement, a vague understanding of its potential added value, a lack of mandate and an inadequate commitment by invested partners, too short a time span for the parties to learn to collaborate, insufficient trust-building, a lack of integrated cooperation with politicians, the poor allocation of budget heads for planned activities and a lack of inspiring objectives. This report provides a preliminary reflection on these problems and inadequacies.

To better understand integrated youth policies, the report first explores the historical and social context of cross-sectoral cooperation. Secondly, we look into the implications of recent research on the 'collaborative management' of integrated youth policies. Lastly, we provide a review of the shared experience of selected practices of integrated youth policies that appear to show more promising results.

The report presents a theoretical model of different integrated youth policy approaches based on (1) the changing relationship between science and policy, on (2) the perceived nature of social problems, and (3) on the effect of increased uncertainty. There is a historical change from trust in science to an increasing influence of politics, whereby evidence-based policies are becoming increasingly politically driven. Second, social issues are gradually conceptualised as complex phenomena that require cross-agency cooperation, leading to sector-based governance to provide space for collaborative forms of governance. Third, increased uncertainty and austerity measures drive organisations in the public, private and third sectors to find innovative solutions by linking versatile actors, competencies, ideas and resources through networking, platforms and collaborative management. This report argues that today's challenge in translating youth policies into practice requires a new type of collaborative governance and collaborative management. The report summarises recent research on collaborative management and proposes how this should be applied in integrated youth policies.

¹ The title refers to Sofia Coppola's film *Lost in Translation* (2003) with Bill Murray and Scarlet Johansson, which explores themes like alienation and disconnection. Similarly, this report explores the disconnection between what the youth field wants and what it gets; the disconnection between the established rhetoric of integrated youth policies and the widespread sense of disappointment in their implementation.

INTEGRATED YOUTH POLICY: AMBIGUITIES, CONFUSING HISTORY AND A DISCOURAGING RECORD OF PRACTICE	3
AN AMBIGUOUS TERM.....	3
CONFUSING HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS.....	4
A RECORD OF BAD PRACTICE.	6
REASONS FOR FAILING.	6
<i>The structural weakness of the youth field to lead collaboration.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Lacking conceptual and theoretical clarity.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Lacking perception of added value.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Politicians matter.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Lacking mandate.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Goodwill is not enough: planned actions must be linked to budgets.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Lack of inspiring objectives and too much focus on implementation neglect emergent issues.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Underestimation of the trust-building process.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Not enough infrastructural support.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Short term focus.....</i>	<i>17</i>
WHY ARE YOUTH POLICY PRIORITIES NOT TRANSLATED INTO COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES?	18
GOING BEYOND FAILINGS.	19
A NOTE ON DIVERSITY IN EUROPE.	19
INTEGRATED YOUTH POLICIES QUESTIONED	20