

Identifying future youth trends

European Academy on Youth Work

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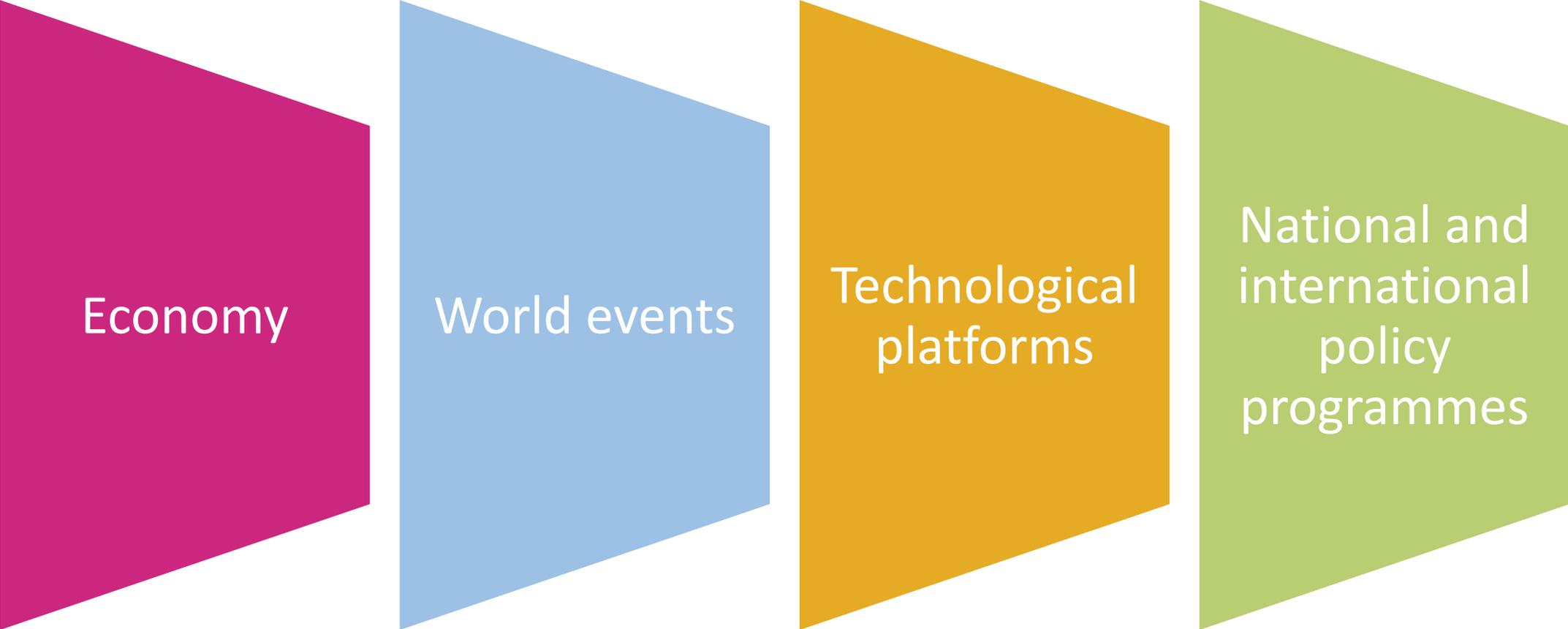
abstract

Predicting the future has not generally been something that *social scientists* have been very good at. **Anticipating** the future is, however, an *important policy ambition* which involves *planning* and enormous *budgetary allocations*. This presentation revisits **predictions made in 2017** in a paper commissioned by the Council of Europe where we were asked to examine *contemporary research on young people* and develop a series of **future looking 'trends'** i.e. *plausible* ways in which various fields could develop in the *future*. Five years later, it is of interest to **re-visit** our **predictions** and *assess* the extent to which we managed to anticipate the future as well as to see where our predictions were not so accurate.

- 1. Context**
- 2. Foresight planning**
- 3. Themes and drivers of change**
- 4. Revisiting predictions from 2017**

1. Context

Major drivers of change



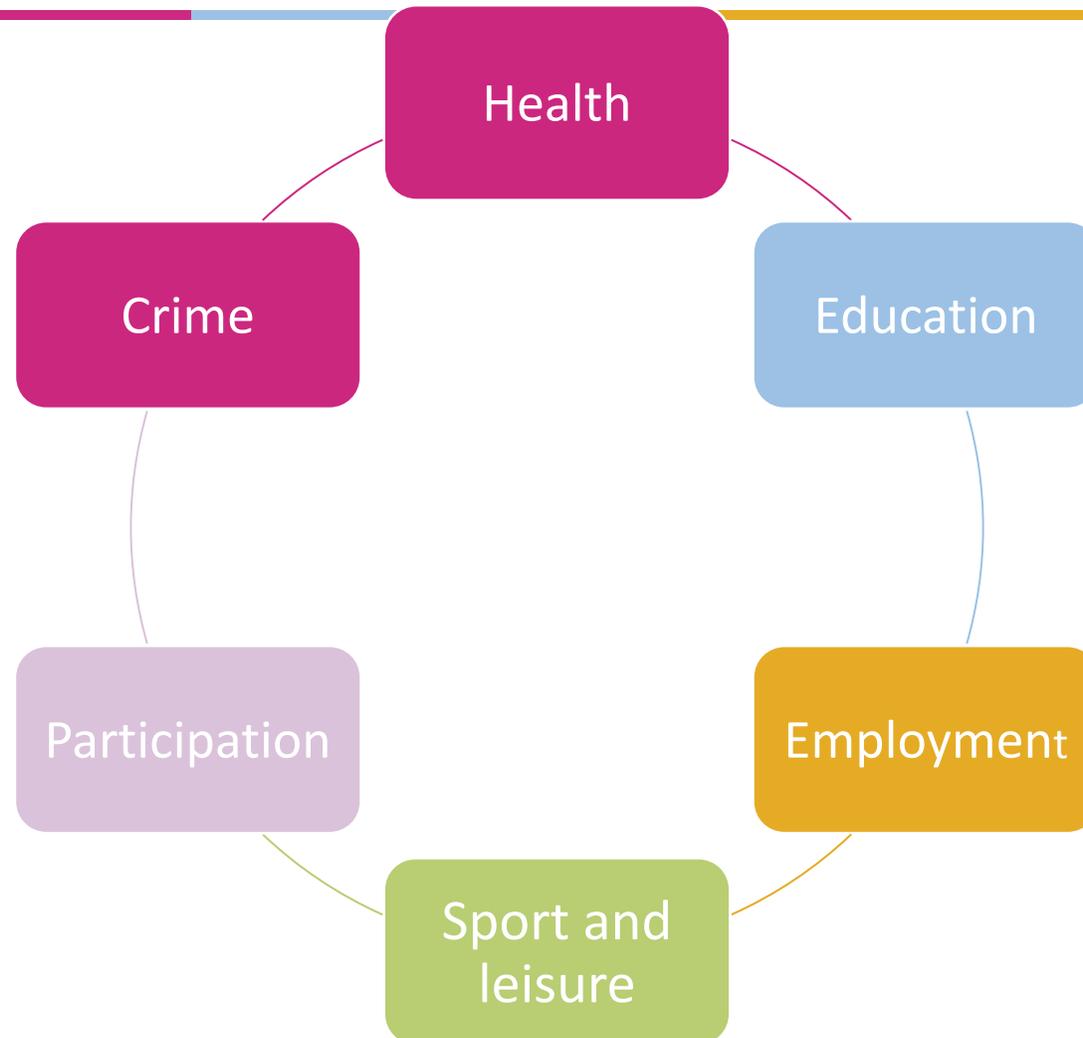
Economy

World events

Technological
platforms

National and
international
policy
programmes

Spheres of life



Continuity and change

Better understanding of needs

Continuity of stratified experiences

Unequal opportunity structures

Polarisation of inequalities

Challenges for policy and practice

Issues facing practice expand

- as understandings of needs become more nuanced

Resources to support practice contract

- we remain in the shadow of austerity since the financial crash

Programmes become more narrowly defined and targeted

- as government spending is cut

Identification of 'what works' central to policy making

- research is used to inform policy making

Imperative that social impacts can be monetised

- cost-benefit models aim to capture complexity of inputs and outputs

2. Foresight Planning

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674209/futures-toolkit-edition-1.pdf

Aims and Objectives

Identify future
policy trends

Ensure
coverage of
priority policy
areas

Foresight: Signals for Future Policy

Signals



Year
2032

Future trends identified by signal spotters

Identify and categorise signals from the HS

Internal workshop reviews the drivers

Four scenarios: high impact and high uncertainty drivers

Signal Spotters

National policy
makers

Research
experts

NGO/services
employees

Commentators

Young People

From Insights to Future Drivers

Focus: Childhood and youth wellbeing

Time horizon: 10 years

Source: 15 November 2018; New Scientist; A new test can predict IVF embryos' risk of having a low IQ

Abstract: New IVF screening tests can assess complex traits, such as the risk of some diseases and low intelligence.

Insight: Prenatal screenings for intelligence remain controversial but norms have shifted significantly in terms of screenings for genetic disorders. If acceptance of IVF tests continues to rise, how will that affect the resources and services for those born into families that did not have access to such technologies?



Increased use of genome editing to engineer the traits of future children and generations

3. Themes and drivers of change

Child and Youth Wellbeing - projects



Measuring Youth Wellbeing

Establishes the **desirability** and **feasibility** of Europe wide longitudinal survey with a focus on child wellbeing:

Growing Up In Digital Europe **GUIDE**



European Cohort Development Project

Develops the research design and business case for GUIDE

- Representative national samples
- Birth cohort
- Age 8 cohort
- Child centric methodology
- Questionnaire content with a policy focus



COhort COmunity Research and Development Infrastructure Network for Access Throughout Europe

Establishes community of researchers and policy makers interested in child and youth wellbeing
Initiates the GUIDE survey



Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe

Growing Up in Digital Europe

Europe-wide longitudinal survey of child and youth wellbeing

Political support:



Actively engaging with **government ministers**, scientific **funding councils**, and charitable **organisations** at Member State and EU level.



Future Trends

Global
changes, local
challenges

Digitisation
and
automation

Polarising
inequality

Quality of life
and work

Child and
youth
participation

Contested
science

New world of
politics

Global Changes, Local Challenges



Demographic Change

Global Warming

Climate Change

Migration

Underpinning Drivers:

- Global warming increases the risk of flooding and communities in Europe are forced to relocate
- Ageing population
- Depopulation due to migration from certain countries and regions

Digitalisation & Automation in Everyday Life

Underpinning Drivers:

- Young people use of the internet is increasing and starting at younger age
- Online dependencies/addictions (social media, gaming, pornography, gambling)
- Artificial intelligence and automation changing the labour market
- Disinformation undermines trust



Artificial Intelligence

Online Life

Automation

Virtual & Augmented Reality

Big Data

Machine Learning

Internet Of Things

Robotics

Polarising Inequality

Inequality

Under and Unemployment

Poverty

Social Care

Public Services



Underpinning Drivers:

- High rates of youth unemployment
- Childhood poverty
- Privatisation and commodification of public services (social care, healthcare, education)
- Rising inequalities in education

Child and youth Participation

Underpinning Drivers:

- Increasing recognition of the rights of young people



Child and youth:

...rights

...participation

...oriented justice systems

...friendly environments

Contested Science



Science

Vaccinations

Anti-vax movement

Alternative medicine

Genome editing

Underpinning Drivers:

- Vaccination rates falling
- Covid sceptics
- Increased use of genome editing to engineer the traits of future children and generations

Quality of Life and Work

Underpinning Drivers:

- Young people are in increasingly precarious employment
- New post-Covid work patterns
- Guaranteed income welfare reforms



Changing nature of work

Work-Life Balance

Un- and Under-Employment

Guaranteed Income

Gig Economy

Virtual Work

Labour Market

Guaranteed Income

New World of Politics

Populism Euroscepticism

Civic Participation

Democracy

Online Participation



Underpinning Drivers:

- Anti-democratic tendencies and populism
- International war, conflict and solidarity
- Euroscepticism
- Widespread civic and democratic citizenship education
- Online political participation embraced by policymakers

4. Revisiting predictions from 2017

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261641/Youth+Trends+2017.pdf/e4d934cd-db60-6bfa-21ea-82ac43ede6fc>

2017: The main themes

**Marginalisation
and inequality**

**Empowerment
and
participation**

**Political values
and
participation**

A chance to evaluate

Assess how good each of the predictions were...

- Go to:

<https://mmu.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/youth-trends>

- Or use the QR code:



Marginalisation and inequality

- Education
- Employment
- Social and economic
- Health
- Polarisation of inequalities

Marginalisation and inequality

2017

1. Hypothesised 'mismatch' between the skills taught in schools, colleges and universities and the needs of industry and commerce
2. **An embedding of the 'gig' economy**
3. Increasing dependence on family, often extended family
4. **Current generation of young people are projected to be at risk of worse health in later life than their parents**
5. Effects of austerity are unevenly felt and without targeted intervention there is likely to be further polarisation of inequalities of both opportunity and outcome

2022

1. Partially overtaken by "grade inflation" and youth media skills
2. **Is diverse and many occupations not affected**
3. Might be cyclical
4. **Covid has accelerated mental health issues, also had differential impact on drinking and exercise. Increased cost of living → worse diets**
5. Government interventions vary between society wide to competitive and targeted

Marginalisation and inequality

2017

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2022

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Empowerment and participation

- Electoral participation
- Disinterest and exclusion
- Digital communication
- Regulation of social media
- Identity politics
- Austerity influences on ideology
- Young people as focal actors in movements

Empowerment and participation

2017

1. Youth participation in elections is likely to remain low cf older people
2. Youth likely to continue to feel both uninterested in and shut out of politics
3. Digital communication is likely to be the primary medium of choice for engagement.
4. Poorly regulated social media → struggle to evaluate the degree of truth in stories. Perceived plausibility of a story is likely to be at least as important as the credibility of the source.
5. Identity politics will increase in importance with notions of citizenship, ethnicity, religion and regional belonging alongside patriotism, nationalism and nativism routinely discussed.
6. **Effects of austerity will spread wider in society and → economically driven ideological debates linked to identity politics in terms of both causes and consequences of societal inequalities.**
7. **Where there are acute national political events it is likely that young people will be at the vanguard and will be a core component of mobilized participation such as demonstrations and occupations.**

2022

1. This is a persistent finding
2. Often an elite activity. A tension between strongly pro-national perspectives an open contestation of positions (tolerance)
3. Fully embedded. Increasing exposure to influencers used for commercial and political purposes.
4. Tech companies have begun to self regulate, though EU regulatory infrastructures are also increasing. Issue: anti-science, extreme politics, but also a backlash from those who prioritise freedom above all else.
5. Perhaps unevenly across Europe, probably correlating with forms of populist discourse, a diversion from national economic problems. Witness debates about media bias sexuality, migrants, sex identity
6. **A deflection of the consequences of austerity through invoking so-called 'culture wars' which can take the attention away. Just how far this strategy is durable is a different question.**
7. **Greta Thurnberg and climate change various school related extinction rebellion events. Moscow demonstrations against the invasion of Ukraine, demonstrations in Belarus.**

Empowerment and participation

2017

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Political values and participation



Civic engagement

Reaching the vulnerable and marginal groups

Democracy and tolerance

Everyday social life

Importance of 'place'

Political values and participation

2017

1. Initiatives to promote civic engagement and participation will. It is likely that the availability for funding such initiatives will decline and that there will be a need to somehow do more with less resource. This will result in projects seeking to promote social innovations which are able to more effectively target scarce resources.
2. Vulnerable, marginal and 'hard to reach' groups of young people will continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in most engagement based initiatives. This will result in highly stratified opportunity structures which will systematically exclude many young people seen as the most important to engage with.
3. **increasing support for parties and policies which reflect populist sentiment makes it difficult to develop educational material that satisfies a broad range of political opinion. Concepts which have long been regarded as unquestioned pillars of society such as press freedom, democracy, tolerance and openness, will be subject to debate.**
4. Educational and training materials aimed to promote tolerant and inclusive citizenship are likely to be identified as problematic by organisations seeking to exploit contemporary societal tensions over nativism and migration.
5. The self-articulation of political values for most young people will continue to be through non formal structures and will manifest in everyday social life: education, leisure, employment and family.
6. **'Place' will become more important concept in understanding the motivations for civic and political engagement. Local context, related to historical socio cultural trajectories, will become increasingly important narratives when understanding sub-national political events.**

2022

1. likely to continue, austerity has been replaced with Covid investment. Social Innovation continues to be explored as a means of more efficiently targeting scarce resources
2. likely to continue exactly this way. Some countries will seek to have more interventionist and programmatic strategies, but these are likely to be in relatively affluent countries with a more social democratic tradition
3. **Populism is no longer marginal and appears in a number of previously mainstream parties. Political systems are being tested in relation to the extent to which they can withstand authoritarian tendencies.**
4. Examples of municipalities, countries and projects supporting and promoting inclusivity alongside discourses of exclusion. Migration continues, tensions remain.
5. Likely to continue – a perennial finding? Why would ordinary young people be politically engaged other than through the experiences of everyday life?
6. **Community, town, city, region, country, continent all continue to have importance**

Political values and participation

2017

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What did we miss?

- [make your views known in the survey]

Why did we miss things?

Reliance on
academic
findings

No
stakeholder
consultation

Unsystematic
method

Foresight planning facilitates better predictions
