

## ***The EYO (European Youth Observatory) Network***

European youth policies, even the most innovative, have suffered from a **deficit of scientific experimentation**: often the interventions have been made in line with the interests and the experiences of technicians and politicians, or in relation to contingent situations.

Based on these considerations, in **1997** some cities and provinces of Europe, which had significant experience in the field of youth policies, organised the **first meeting** “Europa tra Nord e Sud: Città e Regioni in Dialogo” (Europe between the North and South: Cities and Regions in Dialogue) that saw the participation of the cities of Barcelona, Cologne, Turin and Turku, and the Province of Barcelona and the Italian Campania Region.

In recent years some others cities and provinces joined the network: Gipuzkoa Region, Birmingham and Lodz.

### ***THE CREATION OF THE EYO***

We decided to modify the original idea of an “association” of the cities and provinces and create instead a **European network**, having as its objective research into the youth condition, in order to promote the **exchange of data and experiences**, reflection and cooperation between local administrations, on one hand, and the creation of the conditions for the elaboration and the implementation of **common projects**, on the other.

This, then, is how the **EYO** (European Youth Observatory) was born, a **European Observatory on the condition of young people** in the cities and in the provinces of various European countries.

The EYO has the following characteristics:

1. *The area of analysis* → cities with more than 150,000 inhabitants, or provinces. We chose a rather wide range in consideration of the differences existing in the different contexts.
2. *The Object*→ the youth reality in its entirety: therefore, the conditions of life of young people, their values and lifestyles, the projects and services for young people set up in the different cities and provinces of Europe.
3. *The Time Scale*→ to observe the changes taking place over a period of time, we decided to collect the data and information related to different periods (indicatively every five years).

So, we are proposing the **EYO** as an **instrument for youth policies at a local level**. A tool, it should be underlined, that cannot solve the problems by itself, but it can help to put them in focus, providing comparative data and information useful for dealing with the problems in the research-action context.

### ***THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE EYO***

Over the years the EYO has set up an organisational structure for its operation, which at this time is made up as follows:

- **A membership protocol**, including a fee, which is presently set at 2,000 Euro per year. The cities or provinces interested in joining the network must officially underwrite this protocol and pay the corresponding fee.
- A technical and organisational **secretariat**.
- **A presidency group** (WPC - Working Party to the Chair) made up of two cities or provinces: the last one that hosted the annual meeting and the one that will host the next year's meeting, and the Secretariat.
- **Work Groups**, permanent or temporary, linked to the specific projects.

The work of the EYO is divided substantially into two types: **constant activities** and **projects**. The constant activities include: updating of the statistical data on the youth condition; the permanent research group; management of the web page; the secretariat and the presidency group.

The projects vary from one year to the next and can involve all or only some of the administrations belonging to the EYO; moreover, organisations outside the EYO can also take part in the projects: public or private bodies, associations, etc.

### ***THE FUTURE OF THE EYO***

Besides carrying on its “constant” activities, and working on common projects, in the past two years the EYO has defined an overall strategy to strengthen the network, based on various points:

- First of all, it is fundamental that we enlarge the EYO to new cities and provinces, especially aimed at the new member countries of the European Union. A first important result in this direction was the official entry to the network of the City of Lodz (Poland) that took place in 2004. This enlargement, however, must be gradual (not more than one or two new members each year); the long-term objective, is to have at least one city or province from each EU country.
- It is also very important to work on communication, to increase the visibility of the EYO, and also its influence at local and European levels.
- We intend, moreover, to continue to intensify the **exchange of experiences** and information on all questions regarding the world of young people.
- Finally, the EYO plans to form **closer ties** with **other similar networks** existing in Europe, and open up its horizons also to extra-European situations.