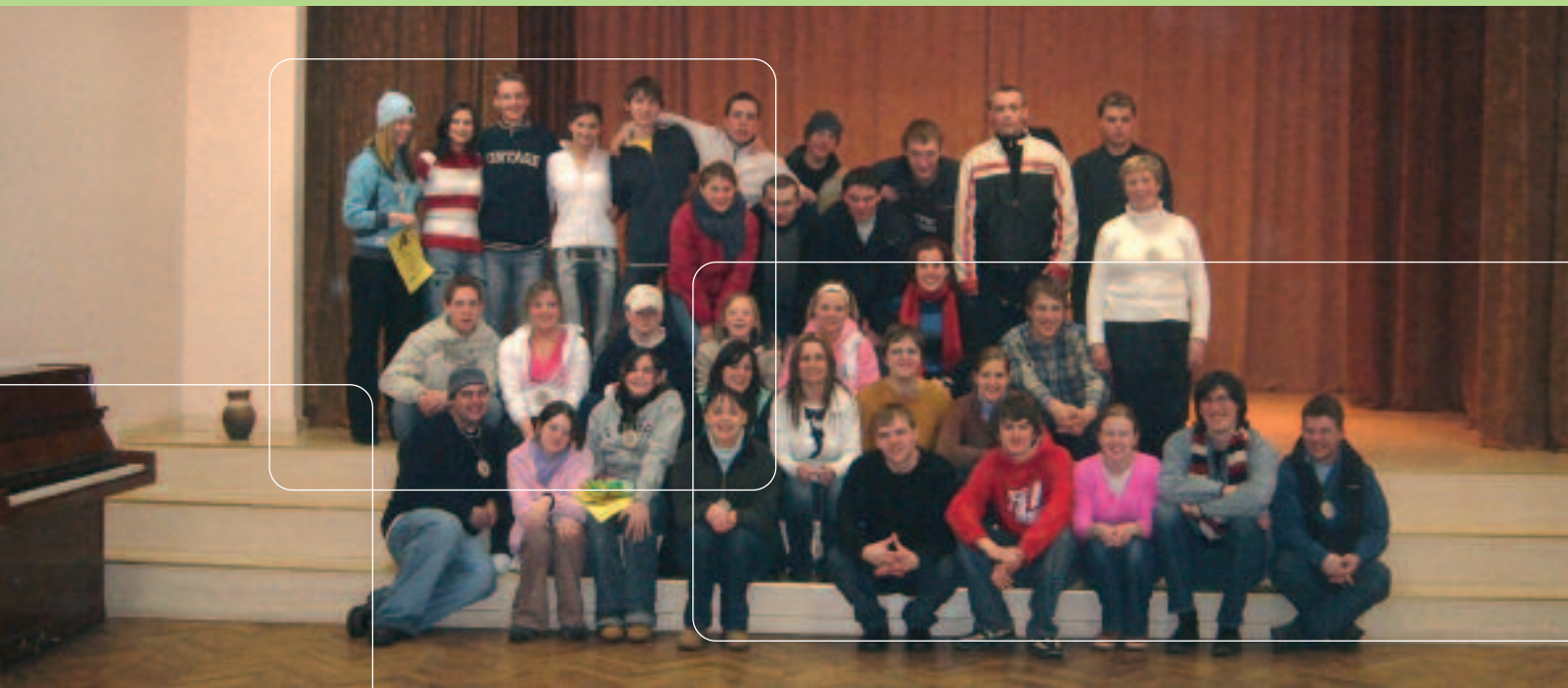


## European Comparative Study on Young People and Rural Development

September 2006



*'Europe is about peace, trade, travel, opening our  
minds as well as our frontiers.'*

John O'Farrell, Head of Northern Ireland  
in Europe, Belfast Telegraph 7th July 2004

*"The trip to Kerry was excellent for me, and all the young people who went. It was good to be able to meet with people from another religion who lived not that far from us. I now realise that I have a lot in common with them but that we also do some things different. In Killarney we were lucky to have such great weather and the people there were very friendly and we received a warm welcome anywhere we visited. Again we had the chance to meet young people of my own age and I found I also have a lot in common with them. There are also differences between us and the young people of Killarney and Cahersiveen. Some of them live in the middle of nowhere and have absolutely nothing to do, but some of them seem to have loads going on in their lives, which is a good thing in one way but I would rather be somewhere in between, where I have things to do but also have times where I don't have to do anything.*

*The things I enjoyed most about the trip was the fun we had getting to know the young people in Kerry and Cahersiveen. The food was also great because you were able to choose what you want when you eat out and not told what you have to eat. I also enjoyed the craic in Killarney especially with all the cars for the rally. I would like to get to spend more time with the young people in Kerry just to see what their lives are really like and also to meet people with the same interests as me."*

Martin McKeown, Moy Youth Group



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*"We thought the young people of Killarney would be completely different and that we wouldn't get on with the Protestant people but we are all the same in reality"*  
(Young Man - aged 15)

# Acknowledgements

The European Comparative Study was first and foremost about partnership with so many different people and organisations who gave so willingly of their time and expertise. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to:

- The young people for taking risks, for their willingness and co-operation, for sharing and listening and most of all for being themselves.
- All of the workers and volunteers from the local communities we worked in who provided venues, came to meetings, travelled with us and most of all their belief in and support for young people.
- Our partners, the Southern Latgale NGO Support Centre in Latvia and especially Valdis Kudins, the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service in the Republic of Ireland and especially Rena Powell and Urkraft in Sweden and especially Mats Lindstrom, who all gave so much of their time in planning for our visits, gave us the warmest welcome and looked after us so well.
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- Our policy experts, Nick Mack and Richard Loudon who scanned the world wide web to place our work in the broader policy context.

*“This experience has helped me understand different cultures I face in life both at home and abroad, it has challenged me to be open to all people I meet and to try and interact with people whom we may see as different”*

(Young Woman aged 15)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

One of the key issues facing rural young people is the lack of opportunities to engage in activities that their urban counterparts sometimes take for granted. This is especially true in relation to sharing experiences with young people from other cultural traditions and travelling overseas.

The European Comparative Study on Young People and Rural Development was developed with an aim to provide opportunities for rural young people to broaden their experiences alongside highlighting and enabling best practice to be shared between rural and youth policies and practices in Latvia, Republic of Ireland and Sweden. This also provided us with an opportunity to maximise and promote the learning from our current 'Creating Links' Programme.<sup>1</sup>

### The key objectives include:

- Promoting peace and reconciliation through the sharing of ideas and experiences within and across four European Countries.
- Providing an opportunity for rural young people, community activists and practitioners to share their experiences with another European Country.
- Establishing a network across the European Union to create a sharing and learning forum and maximise opportunities for the future development of programmes specifically targeting rural young people.
- Collating a European Comparative Study that focuses on young people's involvement in rural development policies and practices with due regard to equity, diversity, and interdependence within each location.

<sup>1</sup> 'Creating Links' is part of YouthAction N.I.'s ongoing work with rural young people. The aim of this programme is to increase young people's participation in the Rural Development Programme to ensure the long term sustainability of rural communities.

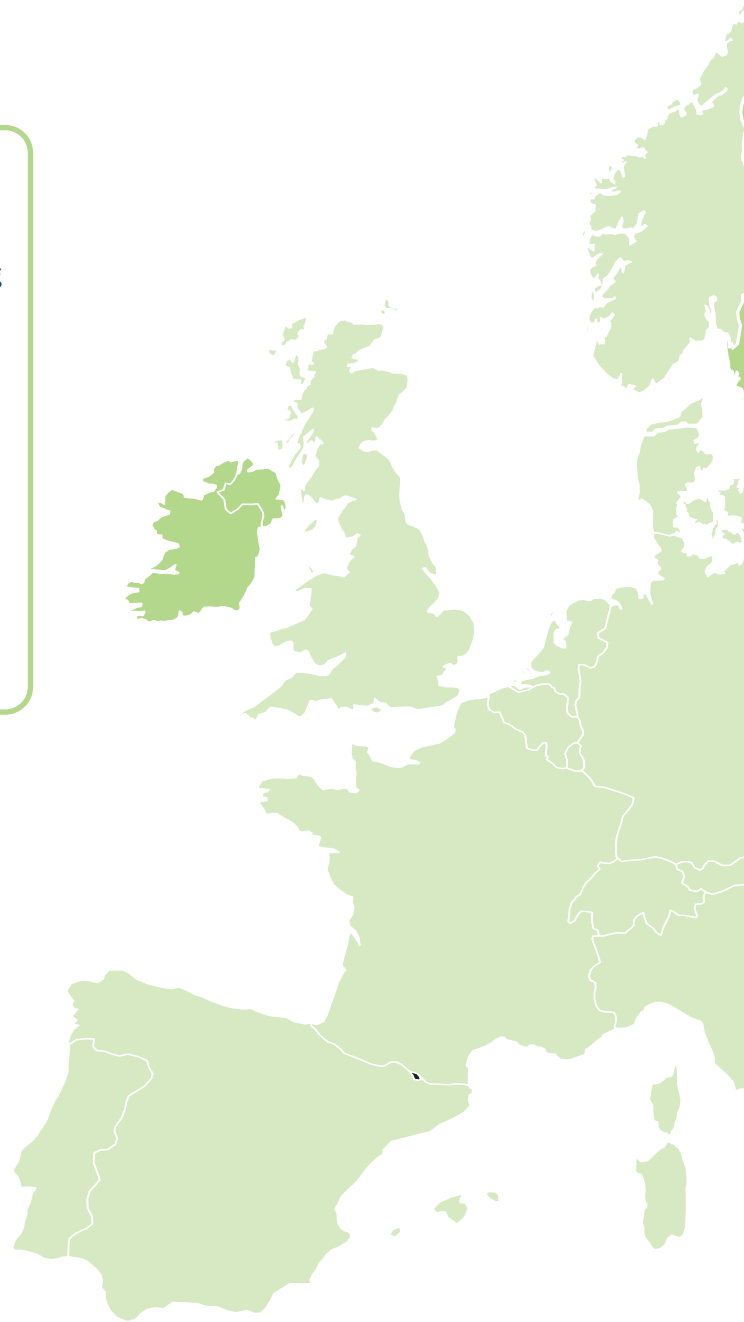
## Chapter 2

### EU Study Partners

#### YouthAction Northern Ireland

YouthAction Northern Ireland is a voluntary youth organisation which works to enable young people achieve their full potential by providing services, information, training and support. It also seeks to extend the understanding of youth work through the development of innovative models of practice.

The organisation works with youth workers and interested adults to support and assist young people as they strive to find and/or create their identity and develop their role in the community. It provides services complementary to statutory and other independent agencies throughout Northern Ireland. Particular emphasis is placed on groups from disadvantaged communities who are working towards their own development.



#### Kerry Diocesan Youth Service (KDYS), Killarney, Republic of Ireland

KDYS is a voluntary youth work organisation established in 1971. Over the years there has been substantial growth in the organisation and today KDYS works with over 4000 young people. A team of three hundred volunteers supported by professional staff carries out this work. KDYS provides a wide range of educational, training, sporting, and recreational activities for registered groups to participate in.



## Urkraft

Urkraft was founded in 1987 with the aim to capture the potential of young people. Today Urkraft is an organisation with 150 young people and around 40 staff. They manage a restaurant, bakery, TV Station, conference centre, PR office and they arrange an annual festival for 90,000 young people.



## Southern Latgale NGO Support Centre – Latvia

The Southern Latgale NGO Support Centre, formerly the Daugavpils Regional NGO Support Centre was founded in 1998 by the "NGO Centre" and the "Daugavpils Pedagogical University Nature Studies and Environmental Education Centre". In 2000 the centre decided to become an independent self-supporting organisation. The Southern Latgale NGO Support Centre offers information, technical and consultative support for registered regional NGOs.

# Chapter 3

## Study Visits

### Introduction

The study visits were an integral element of the European Comparative Study.

The overall aims were to:

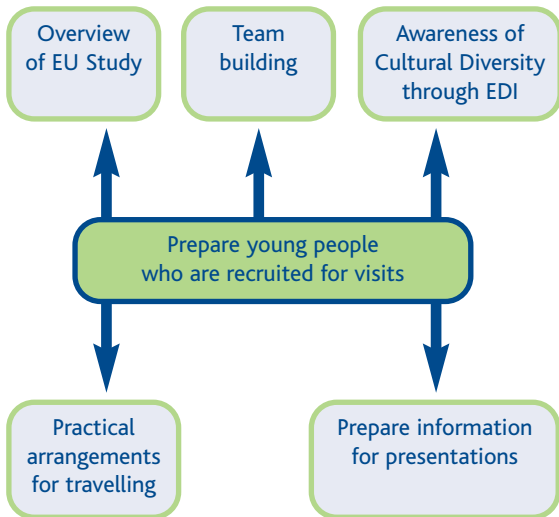
- Promote peace and reconciliation between rural young people from different cultural/religious backgrounds
- Provide an opportunity for young people, community representatives and local organisations to increase their understanding and awareness of other European cultures.
- Provide an opportunity to collate information on practice and policy development relevant to rural young people across the European Union.
- Contribute to the development of a network across the European Union to share ideas and experiences and explore opportunities for future work.

### Preparing to go...

As part of the preparation for the study visits, YouthAction staff made a short visit to the partner countries in Latvia, Sweden and Republic of Ireland. This was important to help establish a network of contacts, build up relationships with partner organisations, agree roles and responsibilities and discuss and agree the programme for the visits themselves.

Following the visits we kept in contact with the partners via email, telephone and fax which enabled us to share information and confirm plans for the study visits themselves. We developed and launched a website dedicated to the European Comparative Study for the partners, young people and community activists as another source of information and an opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences. The website also included a message board primarily aimed at the young people engaged in the project.



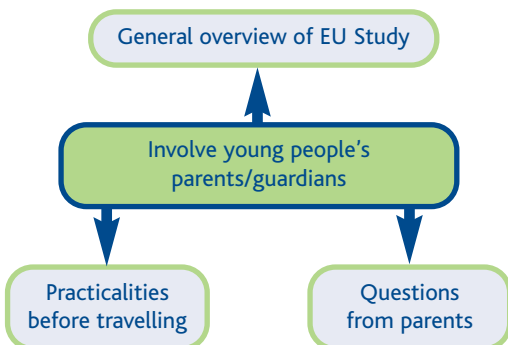
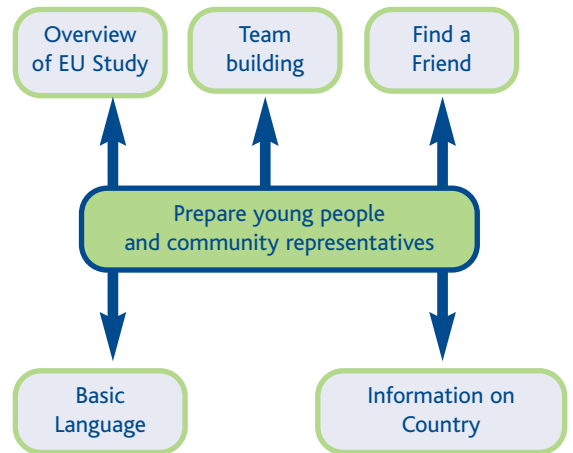


**Preparation Day 1**  
 Young people from the different areas were brought together to get to know each other, become familiar with the youth workers involved and also to prepare information on their lives as rural young people for a presentation in the partner country. We also discussed and agreed the study visit programme and shared some information on the country to which they were travelling.

*"If we hadn't met all the people travelling it would have been a bit mad as we would not know what they are like and how to get to know them"* (Young man aged 16 travelling to Sweden)

**Preparation Day 2**  
 On the second day young people and youth workers met the community representatives and practitioners who would be travelling with them. This included team building and an opportunity to learn a few phrases in the relevant language. At the end of the session we organised a 'find a friend' exercise where each person secretly received the name of another person who they had to look out for on the trip. This made sure everyone was getting a bit of special attention. This proved very worthwhile for the community representatives and helped them feel more confident about going.

*"I was worried that the young people would be hard to handle but after meeting them tonight I am more confident about travelling to Latvia"* (Community Representative travelling to Latvia)



**Preparation Day 3**  
 On the third day parents and guardians were invite along to find out more about the project, ask questions and help to ease any fears or anxieties. It also helped to tidy up any final practicalities before travelling.

*'I took part in the E.U. Study visit to Sweden and had a brilliant time. It was wonderful to meet different people from both Armagh and Tyrone who I got really friendly with and would like to keep in contact with. I also got to know some young people in Sweden and would love to get a chance to find out more about them. It would be wonderful to return the favour and have them visit us here in Northern Ireland.'*  
(Young woman, aged 16)

#### DAY 1

- Travelling to destination
- Meeting partners, young people and workers

#### DAY 2

- Meeting with rural young people and sharing experiences
- Presentations from both groups
- Discussion and comparison on issues between rural young people from N. Ireland and partner country
- Visiting rural communities and local projects
- Evening activity with young people from partner country

*'On 25th February 2005 the Middletown, Creggan and Aghnacloy young people travelled to Sweden and arrived that night. The aim of this trip was to share our experiences with the Swedish young people and to make different friends as well as getting to know about Sweden. I feel we did this really well.*

*What I really enjoyed about this trip was the opportunity for me to explore a different country with different people that I have only met and also with my own friends from Middletown as well as the youth leaders and community representatives. I feel that this was a great opportunity for us all even the leaders on the trip. Sweden is a very cold place and very leisurely. I would say there was two and a half feet of snow in most places, which looked like you would sink if you stood in it.*

*To help us share something about ourselves we created a map of our area showing all the things we like and what we do in our country. We took this to Sweden to share with their young people and they did the same with us. Through this I learnt some new things about Sweden. At school they learn to speak our language whereas at home we wouldn't learn theirs. From my experience of Sweden and meeting young people there I would definitely like to go back, especially for the snow.*

(Young man, aged 15)

*'While on my visit to Latvia I realised that not everyone lives like we do, the money, the food, the clothes and Latvian culture were different from ours, we even found differences with the other young people from Northern Ireland.*

*However, we did find the young people of Latvia to have similar hobbies to us. They enjoy bowling, ice-skating and going to the cinema, all activities that I would take part in at home. One of my favourite things about Latvia was how friendly and helpful the people are, they went out of their way to make us feel welcome and also seemed to be really helpful towards each other.*

(Young man, aged 16)

### DAY 3

- Sightseeing
- Discussions on rural and youth policy in partner country
- Discussion on opportunities for future contact and partnership working

### DAY 4

- Travelling home

### Participants included:

- 29 young people from Aughnacloy, Creggan, Fivemiletown, Middletown, and Moy
- 4 community activists
- 7 practitioners from partner organisations
- 9 YouthAction N.I. staff

(See Appendix 1 for list of participants)

*'The most exciting part of the visit to Sweden for me was meeting the young people and watching them gel so well with other workers and community representatives. To begin with Swedish young people seemed a lot more confident than our young people but as the visit went on our young people interacted more and became more confident. I feel that I got more confident through my interaction with young people and found that my skills are pretty transferable from working with the community and with young people themselves.'*

(Community worker)

# Chapter 4

## Policy Critique

### Introduction

The European Comparative Study provided an opportunity to identify and examine policy developments in each of the partner countries. Although it can be argued that rural young people are not an homogenous group and many aspects of government policy relate to them we agreed for the purposes of this study to focus on Rural Development policy and Youth Service policy.

Learning from an examination of policy developments in each of the partner countries has the potential to make a valuable contribution to current thinking. This is especially significant because we are at a critical juncture in relation to Rural Development Policy and Youth Service Policy in Northern Ireland. The most comprehensive study to date on Rural Development Policy<sup>2</sup> has just been completed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. This has the potential to make a key contribution to how Rural Development Policy is developed and delivered until the end of the next programme period in 2013

Similar developments are taking place within the youth sector as a new Youth Work strategy emerges that seeks to meet the current and future needs of young people across Northern Ireland.<sup>3</sup> The resulting strategies have the potential to have a significant impact on meeting the needs of young people in rural communities.

As noted two comparisons have been completed and detailed below. The first focusing on Rural Development Policy with regard to young people and the second on Youth Service Policy with regard to rural young people. Both these studies were completed independently and seek to contribute to any ongoing debate about how best to respond to the needs and issues most critical to rural young people.

### Youth Service Policy

#### European Context.

Comparative studies within the European Union (EU) are popular for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is a recognised commitment to high standards across the community, and secondly there is an awareness of rights and principles as citizenship, social inclusion, community relations and participation of young people are all common themes. The White Paper '**A New Impetus for European Youth**' (November 2001) shows the European Union (EU) commitment to co-ordinating policies and keeping youth concerns at a high level. The EU has demonstrated commitment by providing financial aid for many imaginative youth projects and community-based initiatives in Northern Ireland through the SSPPR initiative.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A Study on Rural Policy, March 2005 Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

<sup>3</sup> Strategy for the delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland 2005 – 2008 Department of Education (DE)

<sup>4</sup> European Union Special Social Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (EUSPPR)

However, the difficulty with such comparisons is that the demography of member states varies greatly. In addition, Government Departments, which are responsible for youth work, and the systems which deliver and monitor the work are different in each area. Some states have a dedicated Minister for Youth Affairs/Minister for Youth and Sport, whereas in others, such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland (ROI), the responsible minister has Youth Work as part of the wider portfolio within Education.

There are also different approaches in the preparation and training of youth workers. For example, in Germany there is a four-year training programme in *Sozial Arbeit und Sozial Pedagogik* (Social Work and Social Education) that provides generic training for a wide range of careers from childcare to work with the elderly. France also has generic training for *Animation and Education Populaire*. In the UK and ROI there is separate training for Youth Work and related professions such as Social Work. This does not sound like a significant difference but it indicates the different perception of the role and function of youth workers. In Northern Ireland and ROI youth work tends to be linked with formal education whereas in most EU member states it is a much more generic profession. This could be a significant obstacle to commonality of policy.

It is therefore not at central government level but at local and community level where commonality occurs most. Rapid economic growth along with political changes (for example from EU enlargement) can have detrimental effects on the most vulnerable. This obviously can include marginalized young people, but there is across the EU a general agreement of the need for effective schemes in dealing with youth issues. A key aspect is the participation of young people in policies which affect them and models of effective practice can be compared and contrasted across member states to good effect.

In terms of rural youth issues, there is a clear lack of clarity of policy. This has arisen from the tendency of youth work to focus on the detrimental effects of urbanisation on young people, but there is growing awareness of the needs of rural youth not simply because of isolation but through the realisation that rural communities will not renew themselves if young people move to cities. In Northern Ireland the recent Study on Rural Policy<sup>5</sup> highlighted the fact that:

*"...The loss of educated and dynamic young people in some rural areas has depleted the crucial entrepreneurial resource and impacted on the morale of the community as well as the social and cultural life."*

<sup>5</sup> A Study on Rural Policy, March 2005 Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

## Northern Ireland

A Youth Service Policy Review carried out by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland<sup>6</sup> was aimed at the 'Renewal of the Youth Service'. It picked up on current issues from central government such as social inclusion, targeting social need, participation of young people and community relations. It did not redefine the youth service in any clear coherent way, but it did decide that the age range for the Youth Service should be 5 to 25 years. Many of the ideas were tied to a structure linked to formal educational approaches and although there is currently a broader approach from statutory youth work agencies i.e. Education and Library Boards, they continue to support the implementation of the Youth Service curriculum.<sup>7</sup>

Youth Work in Northern Ireland has widened in recent years to embrace such areas as Youth Justice and Health. There is also a growing acceptance of the Youth Work qualification outside what was considered the main employers, i.e. the Education and Library Boards.<sup>8</sup> A wide range of voluntary agencies has had the freedom to develop varied imaginative work, much of which is community based.<sup>9</sup>

In relation to rural young people specifically there was very little reference to rural youth in the Youth Service Policy Review. Such young people were of course included in the references to marginalized and disadvantaged youth, but young people in urban settings have always been considered most in need because of the social conditions. The areas of social malaise and extreme deprivation have always been seen to be within the urban conurbations, i.e. West or North Belfast. This has given an unbalanced view of the needs of rural young people and it has taken YouthAction and other organisations to raise greater awareness. The 'Creating Links'<sup>10</sup> programme works at a community level to develop models of practice and tries to influence policy concerning the delivery of services to rural young people.

<sup>6</sup> *A Youth Service for the New Millennium, 'Youth Service Policy Review, DENI (1999)*

<sup>7</sup> *A Model for Effective Practice, Department of Education*

<sup>8</sup> *'Worth their Weight in Gold' An investigation into the career paths of Community Youth Work Graduates in Northern Ireland [1972-2001]. Harland K. et al (2003)*

<sup>9</sup> *Community Based Youth Work The challenge and potential, Pat Henry (1998)*

<sup>10</sup> *'Creating Links', YouthAction N.I., 2003 – 2005*

## Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland (ROI) has similar issues to Northern Ireland and both have been considerably influenced by developments in Great Britain. A current research report by the Cork Local Voluntary Youth Council (CLVYC)<sup>11</sup> is relevant here. The report points out how youth work is generally under resourced and usually the rural loses out to the urban. This can also be true when the problems documented cross urban and rural boundaries e.g. the lack of support for voluntary effort in youth work, the problem in resourcing youth work initiatives and the existence of groups of young people with specific needs. It is sometimes felt that it is better to support the greater number in the urban area than the lesser in the rural location. However, it should be pointed out that the ROI National Youth Work Development Plan 2003–2007<sup>12</sup> has an action programme for the development of rural youth work.

The CLVYC report uses Pacione's<sup>13</sup> summary of the basic differences in urban and rural living in trying to understand the varying degrees of deprivation and the diverse needs which can give rise to particular types of youth work interventions;

*“There are important differences in the nature of urban and rural deprivation, stemming mainly from the basic contrasts in the physical and social environments. Thus whereas the fundamental dimensions of urban deprivation are associated with problems of environmental decay, class and ethnic conflict, overcrowding, delinquency, criminality and social disorganisation, deprived rural areas suffer more from the problems of inaccessibility, social isolation and the lack of a threshold population large enough to attract and maintain even the most basic village services and facilities.”*

The report continues to highlight the need for a more informed approach to rural youth and challenges the stereotyped descriptions of rural bliss, which can undermine the needs of many young people residing in rural areas.

The CLVYC report makes a case for a rural youth work approach in the ROI and proposes that research, as well as specialist training for youth work in rural settings, could assist the process. The report argues that rural based voluntary youth and community organisations such as Foroige, Macra Na Feirme and Muinir Na Tire should be invited to work together to highlight the rural issues of young people, bringing these issues out of the villages and onto the regional and national agenda.

<sup>11</sup> *The Development of Youth Work in Cork City and County Research Report by CLVYC, Cork Local Voluntary Youth Council, 2005*

<sup>12</sup> *National Youth Work Development Plan, ROI Department of Education, 2003*

<sup>13</sup> *Different quality of life in a Metropolitan Village, Pacione M. 1980 Transactions of the Institute of Geographer, Vol 5pp 185-206*

## Latvia

These comments are based on a translated document<sup>14</sup> and research already carried out for the European Comparative Study.

Latvia is an emerging democracy and the enthusiasm for participatory democracy is clear. The involvement and participation of young people is sought at every level of youth work programmes. The definition of 'youth' as the social group aged between 15 and 25 years contrasts with the Northern Ireland Youth Service 5 to 25 years.

The Latvian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has developed a Youth Policy State Programme for 2005 – 2009. The programme is linked with the EU White Paper "New Impulse for European Youth".<sup>15</sup> The translation of the title of the Latvian document on which I am basing these comments, 'Program's Bonding with Priorities of Government and Ministries and Politics Approved Documents', creates a slight difficulty in full understanding. However, the spirit and essence of the information is clear.

The Latvian programme is based on an Informal Education approach defined as:

*"Youth informal education – organised educational activities outside formal education systems with a purpose, aimed on education, which serves for widening the horizons, of purposeful auditory and more objectively, specifically aimed at individuals' education, bonded to a specific situation and environment."*

This statement has lost a bit in translation but the meaning is clear. The rest of the document clarifies and reinforces a youth work approach, which complements the formal education system and broadens into recreational and cultural pursuits. A connection is made between a young person's lack of things to do in his/her leisure time and getting into trouble with the law. There is much in the report about the lack of adequate provision for youth and many of the goals 2006 – 2009 are about implementing, improving and financing youth programmes.

This programme does not specifically mention rural youth, but the reference to "a specific situation and environment" means that local or area based issues will be considered which will obviously include rural areas since these make a large part of the country. As the report says:

*"In accordance with the European White Paper ...involvement should be at local level because who else can motivate the youths to take active part with a self-initiative, than one's own town or parish."*

<sup>14</sup> Program's Bonding with Priorities of Government and Ministries and Politics Approved Documents Latvian translated document 2005

<sup>15</sup> A New Impetus for European Youth, EU White Paper 2003



## Sweden

Swedish youth policy is based on two main principles; that youth is a possible human resource, and that young people should be enabled to participate in societal affairs as much as possible. The principle of youth as a human resource (and not as a problem category) contrasts well with Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland approaches where youth policy tends towards a focus on disadvantaged young people and those most in need.

The National Board for Youth carried out a national review, which led to a government bill on youth policy which was brought in at the end of 1999. In October 1999, under the direction of the European Steering Committee for Youth a group of international experts evaluated Swedish youth policy. The report published in October 1999 commended many aspects of the new bill but made some criticisms of the delivery of youth policy that it was hoped the bill would address.

*'Swedish youth policy is cross-sectionally organised, with governmental policy at the top and the municipalities in charge of the execution. Ungdomsstyrelsen serves as an intermediary between these two main layers. Critical questions are directed as to the weak role of the counties, the ambivalent role of the National Council for Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) and state subsidies, given the preference for organised youth. The practice of 'good examples' serves as a dissemination strategy for innovation'.<sup>16</sup>*

The report reinforces the principle of youth as a resource and welcomes the further emphasis that the bill will give to this. However, as to the opportunities for Swedish young people to exercise influence and participate in society, the evaluators felt that this was very limited. Young people are tied to their parents' homes since there is a lack of possibilities for them to live on their own. This impedes the objective of participation and its full implementation.

There is no direct reference to rural youth within the new bill, but this is implicit in the discussion of problems providing a youth policy for such a large and sparsely populated country. Here are some criticisms of centralisation and decentralisation as detailed in the report;

*'The geographic size of the country and the unevenly spread population has implications for youth policy: it is quite evident that youth activities in sparsely populated areas need more planning and organising to use facilities economically and to deal with isolation and distances. That arouses the question if Sweden needs different youth policies and also different types of youth work. For example, we learned that young women migrate to bigger cities in search of better education opportunities and living conditions while young men are less mobile. They are left with a problem of how to build relationships and families. What does the Swedish government do to foster a favourable family policy?'*<sup>16</sup>

Sweden is by far the biggest of the four states in this Comparative Study, and more than half of the country is 'rural' by definition. The rural population of Sweden is around two million and of these 200,000 live in particularly sparsely populated areas. This means an intensification of the problems and issues outlined in the other states. The location of the northern part of the country near the Arctic Circle is another important difference.

In the Swedish National Rural Development Agency Year Book (2004)<sup>17</sup> there is reference to England as having a more positive attitude to their rural areas.<sup>18</sup> Hopefully, this assumption could be tested out through the type of Comparative Study suggested here. The previous comments have shown that with regard to rural youth policy in all of the four member states in question they have a less than adequate approach. The coming together of interested practitioners within the member states of the EU has much to offer.

As to Swedish youth in a European context, much is done and much still has to be done in order to create a youth policy which prepares Swedish young people for a life not only at home but also in other European countries

<sup>16</sup> Youth Policy in Sweden, Published by European Steering Committee for Youth, 1999

<sup>17</sup> Swedish National Rural Development Agency Year Book, 2004

<sup>18</sup> FACTS, Info Brochure of the Swedish NRDA, 2005

## Conclusion

The most common feature within all the four states under consideration is the inadequate and disjointed provision for rural young people. There are currently policies and action plans but the needs of youth are often low on the financial agenda. Rural youth policies are usually subsumed within more general aspects on the youth agenda. The new developments in youth policy identified in each of the four member states do not often mention rural youth specifically.

On the positive side, the commonality of purpose brought about by the White Paper, "A New Impulse for European Youth" is considerable. The social inclusion of young people and the various programmes, which increase the participation of young people in their own affairs are key factors here.

In terms of a Comparative Study, the differences between Sweden and Latvia and the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are considerable. However, the freshness and commitment with which Latvia approaches the democratic participation of young people is inspiring. In addition the extremes of the Swedish rural settings in terms of isolation and distance, which are being addressed by the new Swedish Youth Policy should provide an interesting model of practice.

## Rural Development Policy

A key finding across all four countries examined in this short study was the limited reference within rural policy to young people. Policy makers must be assumed to have themselves assumed that rural policy would apply equally to any age group without adjustment.

More discussion can be found at a European level, with common trends and issues outlined there, and illustrated below. What seems to be lacking is the translation firstly into national rural development agendas and then more particularly the additional interpretation and operationalisation at local level, with limited read-across into the work of youth sector organisations and networks.

With the exception of Rural Youth Europe it proved difficult to identify any specific policy positions or initiatives in relation to rural young people. Young Farmers, 4H and MIJARC represent youth organisation networks with rural agendas but which seem to exist in isolation from mainstream youth policy thinking. A key issue is therefore how or why rural youth might articulate within youth policy – what contribution might it make, how might it be distinguished? Or are the general youth policy principles and objectives outlined here sufficient?

## European Context

Young people generally are faced with a growing level of risk and uncertainty within what is variously described as a globalising or knowledge-based economy and a more mobile, individualised society. Europe's rural economies are certainly no exception and have undergone extensive transformation, over the past five years in particular, and with what might be forecast as an accelerating pace of change. There has been growing awareness over levels of social exclusion amongst the rural population, with young people seen as especially vulnerable.

The literature generally points to a need to provide support for young people during the critical transition from school into economic inclusion, and young people's wish to be able to count on the assistance and support of institutions during their period of transition and the inability of those institutions to meet young people's needs. Young people may seek independence but they also want dependability around them.

From the reforms of the late 1980s, the European Union's (EU) Structural Funds have tended to take a more territorial approach to regional development. Enlargement of the EU in the 1990s led to further adjustments to the mainstream structural funding programmes alongside the introduction of the LEADER and INTERREG Community Initiative schemes. The objectives of the structural funds were streamlined following the Agenda 2000 summit and Community Initiatives, such as LEADER+, have been altered accordingly. These changes have resulted in a rather complicated picture with regard to EU funding programmes and therefore any analysis of rural development policy is problematic because of the variety of programmes and their interaction.

Aims at simplification of EU funding across the board for 2007 until 2013 have included simplification of rural development funding to a single fund, along with an attempt to coordinate rural strategies across the EU through reference to an EU rural strategy in the first instance. (<http://eruopa.eu.int/comm./agriculture/capreform/rdguidelines/>)

The EU regulation for rural development (the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development), and associated strategy, note the 'lack of opportunities, contacts and training infrastructure for young people in remote rural areas' and highlights this as a focus for the strategy. Emphasis is placed in job creation and economic growth in those parts of the strategy not related to environmental stewardship or agricultural development, focusing on issues such as human capital and enterprise, in concordance with the higher order objectives of the (re-launched) Lisbon strategy. Specific measures aimed at young people, however, include only 'training young people in traditional rural skills', which, whilst laudable, may seem somewhat at odds with the broader economic and social objectives identified by the strategy.

### Rural Young People and Rural Development

The interests of rural young people might be served either by youth programmes adopting a specific rural slant, or rural development programmes adopting a specific youth slant.

Programmes focusing on young people are more likely to be part of broad measures targeted at youth in general (see Youth Policy Section), and are delivered through youth related organisations and infrastructures. There is little sign that these have been 'rural proofed' in relation to the methods of delivery and access for rural young people in particular.

Analysis of available information<sup>19</sup> on existing rural development measures points to a notable lack of projects aimed explicitly at young people. There also appears to be a lack of analysis at national level to ascertain the specific and varied needs of rural young people other than at EU level, although more specialised searching within countries may reveal more than is possible within the confines of this exercise. In order to formulate concrete policy proposals for rural young people, there is a need for better data and statistics. A notable exception is YouthAction N.I.'s research.<sup>20</sup> Such data must be able to take into account the diversity of rural areas, as well as being able to disaggregate and thereby enable an understanding of any differences in experiences between urban and rural youth.

*19 i.e via desk research but also available in English*

*20 'A Sense of Belonging' – YouthAction NI (1997)*

The lack of a youth focus in rural development programmes is mirrored in the existing literature on the subject. Two key exceptions include:

- A comparative analysis of the situations of young people between 16 and 25 across 6 member states, including Northern Ireland, under the title 'ULLMAR' – other participants include France, UK, Portugal, Spain, Hungary and Finland.
- A useful overview of the inclusion of young people in rural policy across Europe can be found in the PAYPIRD report (Policies and Young People in Rural Development)<sup>21</sup>. It notes, for example, that a key lesson may be the need in rural areas to:

*“allow a degree of experimentation with the existing structures for youth programme delivery in order to make it accessible to rural young people”.* This is important because case study work reported in the project showed that often, the vast majority of schemes tend to be located in more populated areas.

As a key feature across Europe, the report highlights the significance of programmes aimed at employability for young people, and support around the 'transition' from education to employment. It again suggests that the accessibility of these in rural areas needs to be given closer attention.

Inclusion of young people in rural policy may, the PAYPIRD report suggests, relate to *“the uncertainty and confusion regarding rural development policies, problems exacerbated by complex bureaucratic structures and regulations. Information flows could also be improved and co-operation with different sectors encouraged. Connections should also be made with regional and national authorities through the use of ‘facilitators’ as this enhances participation rates and improves the outcomes of rural development programmes”.*

In addition, young people are reported to be largely unaware of existing policies, and especially of those of the European Union. Their unawareness of policies appears to derive both from poor access to information (often in faraway urban centres) and from the inaccessible form and content of the information, which could be made more user-friendly and be delivered in more appropriate ways.

**LEADER+** has taken some of these concerns on board and suggestions have been made to target specific groups, such as young people, to address problems of social exclusion. This is not, however, a feature of LEADER in Northern Ireland which has largely been restricted to economic projects and micro-business development.

<sup>21</sup> John Burnett, Birgit Jentsch and Mark Shucksmith, PAYPIRD final Report. Arkleton Trust

The aims of rural development can conflict with those of youth work, especially where 'getting on' (through education) is a means of 'getting out' (of the restricted options available in local labour markets in rural areas). Perhaps this dilemma can only be resolved through providing both 'support to leave' alongside 'support to stay'. Either way, such 'support' will not be easy to provide.

The PAYPIRD study found very little involvement of young people in decision-making. "Young people across all study areas felt unhappy with the institutional frameworks provided for youth "participation". Crucially, the study reports that; "In general, youth organisations are rejected as not pertinent to their aspirations and youth cultures". A key issue appears to be the lack of feedback mechanisms to show young people who do participate that their ideas have been taken into account.

Bearing in mind the limitations in relation to specific connections made between rural policy and young people noted above, the following gives some flavour of the rural policy scene in each of the EU countries participating in this project.

## Latvia

The level of employment for young people ages 15 to 24 is low (28%) and could be declining (falling during the period November 1999 to November 2000 by 3.3 percentage points, for example). This is felt to be partially related to the increased enrolment at higher education establishments and vocational secondary schools, so that fewer young people enter the labour market. However, it is also felt that young people graduating from secondary school have insufficient professional skills or work experience to compete successfully on the labour market. There are still no national data available concerning the employment of graduates (the CBS Labour Force Survey does not include these positions) and therefore it is difficult to evaluate whether the strategy for young people to seek a higher education is effective, or what additional support they may need to make the transition into employment.

This general difficulty is exacerbated for rural young people in two ways:

- There is a significant socio-economic inequality between Riga, the capital city and the rural regions. The GDP in the rural regions of Latgale and Vidzeme in 1999, for example, made up 16% and 19% respectively of the average EU level, while in Riga it was 37%. Registered unemployment in Riga in the year 2000 was on average 4.2%, but in Rezekne it was 12.3%. For this reason rural young people continue to migrate away from rural areas, and labour and intellectual potential is concentrated in Riga.
- Secondly there is a disproportion between rural and urban areas in the number and quality of primary, basic and secondary schools, which along with lack of mobility deprive children from rural areas of access to different types of education after their primary school.

A problem familiar to Northern Ireland also lies with falling number of pupils who, therefore, *"have to be taught in joined classes. Another, is that the existing capacities of school buildings, especially rural, are half-utilized, which increases costs per student. In addition, rural teachers are an ageing group and there are no incentives for young people to go and teach in rural areas"*.<sup>22</sup>

There is, however, an increasing focus on developing a more coherent policy approach to include agriculture, rural development, education and training in order to more fully integrate the rural unemployed, including key identified social groups such as the unskilled, young people and long term unemployed into the labour market.

Socially, a key problem identified for rural young people is a significant lack of exposure to culture and sports events. *"Because of poor financing, the national cinematography programs have deteriorated. Currently, the existence of libraries, museums, theatres and other cultural and educational institutions is not guaranteed"*. (ibid)

Latvia has inherited fifty years of a totalitarian regime which engrained mistrust between the state and individuals and weakened civil society. That system has been very quickly replaced by a new market-based society but with concentrations of new economic power in some areas. There are also challenges in achieving multi-culturalism across a range of different cultural backgrounds, not least, since the achievement of independence with Russians living in Latvia. New paths have opened new opportunities for dialogue and consultation between the state and civil society but which require more transparency in decision making processes.

Experience shows in Latvia that rural or local development priorities are more likely to see people attempt to participate more in decision making both because the channels are more open to them, and because the results have a more direct and immediate effect on their lives. Rural policy is seen as an opportunity to promote communication, education and innovation projects, as well as to decentralise and encourage the participation of rural organizations and the public.

Young people, however, are often found in recent survey exercises to think that they are not so well integrated in society. *"They often feel ignored or unprepared to compete on the labour market. What is striking though, is that young people in many cases do not seem to be so interested in changing "this social alienation". So for example, according to a survey carried out in 2000, more than half of young people did not know about any organizations established specifically for them"*.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Guntars Catlaks Director of the Soros Foundation – Latvia. "Transformation of Education" Program (2001)

<sup>23</sup> Information on the situation of young people in the Euro–Mediterranean area as seen by young people. Targeted Meeting in Budapest in October 2004 EuroMed Youth Platform <http://www.euromedp.org/en/home.asp>



## Sweden

Rural areas make up more than half of Sweden. Distances from workplaces and various service outlets are long. Altogether the rural population of Sweden numbers two million people. Of these, 200,000 live in particularly sparsely populated areas. If rural areas are defined as areas outside of densely populated areas with more than 3,000 residents, a quarter of Sweden's almost nine million residents live in rural areas. Rural and sparsely populated areas are no longer inhabited by "aging farmers and a few vacation homeowners", but are increasingly similar in profile to inhabitants of densely populated areas, working in a variety of fields. The majority is employed in manufacturing, retail and communications. Young people share a sense of mobility. The well-educated especially tend to leave their home districts in search of better work opportunities. Unemployment runs high in some rural areas, and young women are reported to be more anxious to leave their rural villages than young men. There is, in some areas, a "massive rural outmigration" amongst young people. Young people are as such regarded as a dwindling asset rather than as a nuisance.

Rural Development in Sweden is primarily coordinated by the Swedish National Rural Development Agency (Glesbygdsverket <http://www.glesbygdsverket.se>) attached to the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications. Interestingly, whilst Sweden has such a significant rural character, it does not feel it has significant rural policies, as indicated by the following press release on the Glesbygdsverket web site;

*"We chose to study England because they have a different and more positive attitude to their rural areas. There is also something there which we do not have in Sweden, namely a pronounced and clear intention of what they want and how they regard their rural areas".*

*"England has quite a different way of carrying out their policy for rural areas compared to Sweden. Before any decisions are made, Departments and Authorities have to answer questions about the consequences the decision will have on rural areas. This system is called 'Rural Proofing'".*  
Pia Enochsson, the Director General for the Swedish National Rural Development Agency.

However, the Government now wants to get a stronger grip on what is happening to the rural areas in regional development work

### ***Young People and Rural Policy.***

Very little explicit mention of distinct policies for rural youth was found. As with Latvia, this may be because rurality is part and parcel of life in the country and not viewed as a separate place. The aims of youth policy seem to be viewed as equally applicable across the board and the approach

to working at municipality level through 'resource centres' provides a spatially distributed and locally sensitive means to progress youth policy objectives equitably. The idea of the 'Ungdomsrad', or young people's advisory group, however, is found in several local authorities in rural Sweden (Banks 1994)<sup>24</sup>

### ***The Swedish Village Action Movement***

The Swedish Village Action Movement, which is the foundation for a 'Rural Parliament', is part of a much wider, and rapidly growing, European network of rural action movements. The Swedish movement is one of the longest established. Such movements now exist in all Scandinavian countries and in many of the Baltic States and Eastern European countries.

The movement had enabled a substantial strengthening of civic society and local democracy in Sweden, with major impacts on rural development at local level, and increased political awareness and support at national level. Its strength lies in the activities and networking of its 4000 Village Action Groups.

The mobilisation, co-ordination and political support for the Village Action Groups are carried out by the Popular Movements Council, under the banner of 'Hela Sverige ska leva!' (All Sweden shall live!)<sup>25</sup>

The village movement is a grass-roots movement, helping to release the creative potential of small communities and to express their diverse needs. It does not permit the dominance of sectoral agendas and powerful interest groups but provides for integration of the broad spectrum of local agendas. The Village Action Groups focus on well-being, culture, community halls, roads, tourism, marketing, environment, youth, planning and strategy, schools, nurseries, jobs, shops, housing, communications, training.

The Swedish experience shows that the pre-conditions for the building of a rural movement include the key role of local informal education in the mobilisation process (as in the Swedish Study Circles<sup>26</sup> and Folk High Schools<sup>27</sup>), overlapping therefore with the development of young people.

There is general concern, however, that young people are not participating in the movement. They do not feel comfortable in the traditional village meetings or the study circles. "Too much talk - too little action". This led to a special project called 'Young in the Countryside', although no additional information on the scheme could be found in English.

*24 Banks, S. (1994) 'Swedish participation', Young People Now, August, pp. 20-21.*

*25 For more on this see [www.bygde.net](http://www.bygde.net)*

*26 Study Circles are a traditional institution in Sweden long used in local communities as a means of meeting and discussing issues of importance. Study circles exist in most communities, on all manner of topics. These may range from the more formal adult education classes, to a more open model where people consider current affairs at local and national level. Involvement in a study circle often leads to action. This is often referred to as 'study circle democracy'.*

*27 Folk High-Schools are a feature of Scandinavia, which offer flexible studying opportunities and are often used as a gathering point for village activists. They cover a wider geographical area than study circles and offer more a wide range of learning opportunities for people of all ages. Folk High-Schools have been associated with the development of new ideas and local democracy*

## Northern Ireland

Rarely do the terms 'rural' and 'young people' come together in a survey of rural development policy documents for Northern Ireland.

YouthAction's 'Sense of Belonging' Report<sup>28</sup> stands as the main key examination of the experiences of rural young people. The Rural Development Council's most recent community research ('the Beacon Communities Initiative') also places a focus on young people. Take-up of these issues into policy and programmes, however, has been very limited.

An emphasis on local community development within the approach to rural development in Northern Ireland could be acting in tension with individual desire for freedom to engage in a market-driven global economy. Young people are faced with difficult choices between their identity as members of their home community and their desire to participate in larger 'communities of choice' often based on urban (or internet-based) cultural references and values.

Access to fields and the countryside is, ironically, not readily available to young people in rural Northern Ireland, findings echoed in research commissioned by the Countryside Agency for young people and families in rural England<sup>29</sup>, highlighting a lack of open play and leisure facilities for children, significant risks from speeding traffic, and difficulties in gaining access to the countryside.

There is some evidence of a drift of young people away from some (particularly remoter) rural areas on reaching 18 but it is difficult to substantiate statistically, although the recent 'Study on Rural Policy' 2005 does highlight the impact of migration. The report states:  
*'The loss of educated and dynamic and ambitious young people in some rural areas has depleted the crucial entrepreneurial resource and impacted on the morale of the community as well as the social and cultural quality of life.'*

Analysis of the migration data provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) shows that overall:

- Those between 18 and 39 are most likely to move home
- Those between 20 and 24 are most mobile, with higher proportions leaving Northern Ireland but also arriving into Northern Ireland from elsewhere in the UK
- Overall, more 18 – 24 year olds leave Northern Ireland than arrive.

Mapping changes in the population of younger people within Northern Ireland is currently difficult because of changes between the 1991 and 2001 census periods in the way the address of students was recorded.

<sup>28</sup> 'Sense of Belonging' – An action research project focusing on the needs, hopes and aspirations of rural young people in the 14-25 age range, YouthAction NI 1997

<sup>29</sup> Challenging The Rural Idyll: Children And Families Speak Out About Life In Rural England In The 21st [www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie)

Whilst things are in transition at the present time toward a new rural strategy for 2007 -13, initial signs do not immediately suggest significant change in relation to young people. However, with the possible introduction of a Village Renewal measure there is potential for some of the learning from the Swedish experience 'Young in the Countryside' to be translated into good practice here. Also the DARD corporate draft strategy 2006 - 2011 for example, makes no specific mention of young people as an indicator of success (although the strategy is placed at quite a high overall level). Significant attention is focused on the future for farming, but within this there continues to be concern about succession and the entry of young farmers into the sector, many young people now shying away from farming that is based on low pay, isolation and long hours.

The Irish Cross-Border Area Network (ICBAN) recently ran a broad-ranging review of the 'Cross-border Experience' and included some consideration of young people, which reflects the general situation in more peripheral parts of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A strong emigration problem, in common with Sweden and Latvia, is noted, reflecting the 'getting on (through education) as a means to 'getting out'. The need to improve civic engagement for young people is also noted.

Key needs relating to support for rural young people include:

- A support infrastructure to enable youth to develop capacity locally to sustain a young population and encourage young people to come back.
- Youth facilities and multi-purpose resource centres for young people as an urgent need – enabling access to services such as counselling, childcare, tuition in the same location as other facilities and activities for young people, with a need for flexible opening hours.
- Transport for young people in rural areas to combat isolation and promote safety - underage driving is seen as a problem.

The review report notes the inter-dependency between *“an economically active population which can support the older population in the region ... (and) the provision of development support so that young people have the option of employment and a viable lifestyle in the region”*.

## Republic of Ireland

A search for references to young people at the website of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, one of the newest Departments of State, provided the following result:

**Results for:** young people

**No results were found for your search.**

Try changing some of the words in your query.

Nor is any reference to be found in the website and publications of The Western Development Commission (WDC), a key statutory body with responsibility for fostering and promoting economic and social development in the Western Region (counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Clare), which *“through its work, in policy analysis and regional*

*development the WDC aims to ensure that the interests of the Western Region are always considered at the highest levels of government."*

Whilst references to young people within the Teagasc <sup>30</sup> site are associated with agricultural transition and training and education support for those taking over farms on a part-time basis or seeking professional qualifications in agriculture or food industry activities.

Many of the issues outlined by ICBAN above apply here. Again, it is difficult to find explicit reference to the issues affecting young people within rural policy documents for the Republic of Ireland. For example, the rural white paper, notes in its scene setting that:

*"The loss of educated, dynamic and ambitious young people depletes the crucial entrepreneurial resource and impacts on the morale of the community as well as the social and cultural quality of life. An imbalance in the population structure in the form of a high dependency ratio also erodes the capacity of the community to act collectively on its own behalf and contributes to increased marginalisation"*

However, whilst it draws together a range of strategic initiatives, it only has the following to say about young people in particular:

*"The ability of young people to avail of education and training without having to leave their areas has important consequences for the population profile of rural areas".*

The paper highlights the case that "In many cases, policies are already in place to address current and future needs" outside of rural policy per se – the list, however, makes no connection to youth policy.

## Conclusion

Rural Development Policy is predicated on issues such as agricultural decline, planning pressures and economic diversification. Its roots continue to present difficulties when attempting to make connections across into policy areas without a traditional link to rural policy and this includes youth policy.

Out-migration of young people is a significant concern and is regarded as detrimental to the goal of rural regeneration generally. A clear economic link is beginning to take shape which relates economic vibrancy with the retention of young people in rural areas. This in turn could lead to more coherent strategies for supporting rural young people but there is little sign yet that this is the case. The PAYPIRD report, for example, notes that *"greater efforts will need to be made in order to change the perceptions of young people of local development and improve their participation rates. Introducing more youth specific programmes could be a useful way of arresting this marginalisation of young people. This new focus would have positive implications for the development of rural areas generally"*.

Other common themes across the three policy pictures for young people in Latvia, Sweden and Ireland include:

<sup>30</sup> [www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie)

- **The challenge of diversity and integration**

In all cases, increasing diversity of people in each country or a new need to address cultural difference was a key theme for youth work. This is illustrated by the theme for the last European Rural Youth European Rally 2004, held in Greenmount College, Belfast entitled "Conquering Conflict across Cultural Divides" hosted by the Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster.

- **The challenge of top/bottom integration**

In each country quite complex arrangements are being tested to reach, engage and involve young people but often this very complexity, and the range of strategic objectives they seek to address, becomes problematic.

- **The challenge of modernisation and the market**

As the Youth Council for Ireland put it;

A challenge for young people is globalisation and the growth of "individualism" at the expense of community, and "consumerism" which encourages the young person to see themselves as being autonomous, free to do, listen, play, go where they want, presenting a need to help young people navigate their way through the global exchange of ideas and products toward a sense of place and identity. This would seem a particularly challenging agenda if young people are to be encouraged to play an active part in shaping the future of their rural areas.

*"This opportunity allowed me to understand that the skills I use to work with the adult community are transferable to working with young people"*  
(Community Activist)

# Chapter 5

## Rural Youth Work Practice

### Introduction

This chapter aims to highlight and document examples of rural youth work practice in each location. Through the study visits opportunities were created to meet groups and organisations who shared examples of their work and in some cases involved us in group work sessions with young people. Alongside this we also shared learning from the 'Creating Links' project.

In Latvia, the youth project we visited based in Likсна, provides young people with a venue to meet and socialise with friends. This venue, a small flat, had a games room, gym and also a study area for young people who help to manage and run the centre along with volunteers from the local community. The project was open seven nights a week and demonstrated young people's commitment to self help. It also helped the community realise that with some encouragement and trust, young people can work together to help address their own needs. The voluntary efforts of both young people and community members were highly valued.

In Sweden our partner organisation Urkraft in Skelleftea provides young people with a range of training opportunities to develop their employability skills, an opportunity to run a small business such as a bakery, television station, restaurant and conference centre facilities.

Young people undertake various roles in each of the small businesses and complete accredited training programmes. They were also involved in designing and implementing programmes within the organisation generally. Different ideas were integrated into programmes to keep the young people motivated. This included young people and staff members coming together every morning to show their talents in creative ways as they meet and greet each other to welcome the day ahead.

In the Republic of Ireland the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service (KDYS) delivers a range of projects to support young people in rural communities. An example of this is a Youth Worker who covers the South West area of Kerry providing support to volunteers in eight different areas. This includes providing support to a local community group in Cahersiveen who run a community centre and allow it to be used as a base to deliver youth work programmes. This provides key linkages between young people and the wider community. With this support they have set up a youth club which offers a variety of programmes to the young people such as sports, arts and crafts, creative workshops, interclub visits and international programmes.

The Youth Worker has a wide variety of tasks. These include:

- Supporting the volunteers in setting up and developing a youth club
- Recruiting, screening and training volunteers
- Identifying the needs of young people
- Delivering training programmes to young people
- Promoting and organising KDYS events at a local level
- Providing information for young people

In Northern Ireland 'Creating Links' is part of YouthAction's ongoing developmental work with rural young people in their community. The aim of the programme is to increase young people's participation in rural development to ensure the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

The 'Creating Links' programme emerged from action research and development work conducted by Youth Action N.I. since 1997. A published report 'A Sense of Belonging', helped to raise awareness and appreciation of the need to support young people to be full stakeholders in their community, and helped to identify the building blocks by which this might be achieved. The Creating Links programme developed a model that used a three-pronged approach, that is, engaging with young people, working with the wider community and working/networking with other key (agency or community/voluntary sector) stakeholders. All three strands converge on a community project identified, proposed, planned and implemented by young people themselves.

The sharing of practice across the four locations helped to generate different ideas between young people and practitioners. This was supported by developing and delivering programmes together which helped staff to ultimately learn from each other. Feedback from practitioners supported this view and they welcomed additional opportunities to work together on future programmes. Underpinning the practice and central to all the locations was a strong value base and belief in rural young people and their ability to take control and shape their own futures and the future of their communities.

*"This opportunity allowed me to understand that the skills I use to work with the adult community are transferable to working with young people"*  
(Community representative)



# Chapter 6

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion the European Comparative Study proved to be of great benefit to all those involved, most notably the young people and community representatives. More significantly the Study provided new and challenging opportunities for rural young people and enabled them to:

- Develop a greater awareness and understanding of cultural diversity within Northern Ireland and between the partner countries
- Develop better inter and intra-community relationships throughout rural communities in South Tyrone and South Armagh

The Study also supported the completion of a policy critique between each location which demonstrated a complex policy arena within and between the four countries. This provides opportunities and challenges to those seeking to address rural young people's needs. Through the rural policy critique we can see that in all four states policy tends to lean more towards agriculture and there is no clear link between policies that impact on young people, many of the policies also exclude them. Examining the youth policy critique it is clear that there is inadequate provision across the four countries and there are certainly policy areas to be challenged to provide for rural young people in each location.

The focus on practice and development of programmes generated a number of ideas and identified good practice in each location for future learning. Other benefits came through the ongoing contact with partners. This was supported through the development of good working relationships and encouraged by the ambition to work together in the future. Partners in Latvia and Republic of Ireland had the opportunity to visit Northern Ireland and gave presentations at a Rural Youth Conference held in the Rural College, Draperstown.

The real legacy of the Study has still to be realised as the young people and community representatives reflect on their experiences. The study has obviously 'opened up minds' as evidenced by the quotes and comments detailed in this study. The willingness of the participants to be involved in similar programmes in the future demonstrates the overall success of the initiative.

## Recommendations

### Policy

- The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development should seek to contribute to the Department of Education Rural Outreach Initiative funded through the Children and Young People's Funding package. The learning from this programme should also inform the emerging Rural Development Strategy for the next programme period 2007 -2013.
- The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development should seek to implement the keynote policy from the Lisbon Strategy in supporting rural young people's transition from education to employment and generating enterprise.

### Programme Development

- The International Committee as a sub group of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland should promote and provide information on grant aid through the voluntary and statutory youth sectors in order to enhance travel and exchange opportunities for rural young people.
- A core function of the new Youth Sector body to be established following the Review of Public Administration should be dedicated to youth exchange practice. This should encourage:

#### Networking

#### Sharing Practice

Development of effective partnerships to develop and deliver programmes

- Subsequent grant aid available through this new body for international work and exchanges should be rural proofed to ensure equitable and fair distribution for rural young people.

A funding stream should be located within the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister to replace the Outward and Forward Looking Region Measure of Peace II. This would enable young people and especially rural young people to benefit from International work. This should seek to complement and contribute to the Children and Young people's Strategy and The Youth Work Strategy for Northern Ireland.

# Appendix 1

## Participants on E.U Study

### LATVIA

#### Young People

Erin Corley	Aughnacloy
Sinead Gormley	Middletown
Shannon Lynn	Middletown
Martin Maguire	Creggan
Peter J Martin	Creggan
Shauna Martin	Aughnacloy
Gavin McCollum	Aughnacloy
Patrica Murphy	Middletown
Niamh O Rawe	Middletown
Aoife O Toole	Aughnacloy

#### Community Activists

Ciara Agnew	Sticky Fingers
Theresa Campbell	Creggan
Michael Gaffney	SELB
Shauna Gaffney	Middletown
Briega Lynn	Middletown

#### YouthAction Staff

Caroline Breakey  
Barry McGinley  
John McComb  
Shirley Moore  
Brenda Rafferty

### SWEDEN

#### Young People

Amy Goodman	Creggan
Justin Gormley	Middletown
Aisling Gormley	Middletown
Emma Hegarty	Middletown
Ryan McCollum	Aughnacloy
Pauric Mohan	Aughnacloy
Sinead Moley	Creggan
Louise Mone	Middletown
Gareth Sneddon	Aughnacloy
Michael Woods	Middletown

#### Community Activists

Shauna McCloskey	RCEP
Deirdre Mee	ROSA
Mark Owens	RCEP
Lisa Wright	COSTA

#### YouthAction Staff

Aileen O Callaghan  
Fergal O Donnell  
Mairead Hearty

### Republic Of Ireland

#### Young People

Kylie-Ann Clarke	Fivemiletown
Whitney Jennings	Fivemiletown
Martin McKeown	Moy
Shea McSorley	Moy
Shane Millar	Moy
Ann Stewart	Fivemiletown
Michelle Stewart	Fivemiletown

#### Community Activists

Phyllis Clarke	Fivemiletown
Seana O'Donnell	STAP

#### YouthAction Staff

Caroline Breakey  
Elaine Duff  
Mairead Hearty  
Barry McGinley  
Brenda Rafferty

## Note

SELB – Southern Education and Library Board

COSTA – Community Organisations of South Tyrone and Area Rural Support Network

ROSA – Regeneration of South Armagh Rural Support Network

RCEP – Rural Community Estates Programme

STAP – South Tyrone Area Partnership

*“What I really enjoyed about this trip was the opportunity for me to explore a different country with different people that I have only met”*

(Young woman, aged 14)



*"This experience has helped me understand different cultures I face in life both at home and abroad, it has challenged me to be open to all people I meet and to try and interact with people whom we may see as different"*

(Young female, aged 15)





*YouthAction*  
NORTHERN IRELAND

YouthAction Northern Ireland is a voluntary youth organisation which works to enable young people achieve their full potential by providing services, information, training and support. It also seeks to extend the understanding of youth work through the development of innovative models of practice.

The agency works with youth workers and interested adults to support and assist young people as they strive to find and/or create their identity and develop their role in the community. It provides services complementary to statutory and other independent agencies throughout Northern Ireland. Particular emphasis is placed on groups from disadvantaged communities who are working towards their own development.



Visit our website: [www.youthaction.org](http://www.youthaction.org)