



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

MYPLACE

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MYPLACE: Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement (Policy Brief)

This FIRST policy brief, February 2013, introduces the Framework 7 Programme MYPLACE research project involving partners in 14 countries, coordinated by the University of Manchester. Two future Briefs, in January 2014 and July 2014 will highlight results and policy recommendations.

Ongoing project

Commenced June 2011

February 2013

INTRODUCTION

MYPLACE ([www.fp7-myplace](http://www.fp7-myplace.eu)) is a major 7.9 Million Euro EC funded project, running from June 2011 to May 2015 which explores young people's civic, political and social participation in 14 European countries, and particularly how it is shaped by the past, present and future shadows of totalitarianism and populism in Europe.

Conceptually, it goes beyond the comparison of discrete national 'political cultures' or rigid classifications of political heritage, such as 'post-communist' or 'liberal democratic'. It is premised rather on the pan-European nature of a range of radical and populist political traditions and the cyclical rather than novel nature of the popularity they might currently enjoy.

Empirically, MYPLACE employs an impressive combination of survey, interview and ethnographic research methods to provide new, pan-European data that not only measures levels of participation but captures the meanings young people attach to it.

Analytically, through its specific focus on 'youth' and the historical and cultural contextualization of young people's social and political participation, MYPLACE replaces the routine, and often abstract assumptions of presumed 'disengagement' from politics with an empirically rich mapping of their understandings and orientations towards European civic and political spaces

In policy terms, MYPLACE identifies both the obstacles and facilitators for young people's reclamation of the European political arena as 'my place'.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY BRIEF

This Policy Brief is the first of a series of 3 which MYPLACE will produce between now and the end of the project in 2015. In addition, a fuller evidence based policy review will be published synthesizing policy relevant findings from the project. Since at this early stage the project is actively gathering data for its Work Packages, the purpose of this Brief is to highlight the work of the project and the opportunities for involvement by policy makers and practitioners. With this end in view it therefore highlights the research outputs that will emerge from its 6 interlocking research-based Work Packages, and be reported in Policy Briefs 2 and 3, along with specific policy recommendations.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

MYPLACE contextualises the appeal of far right, radical left and populist movements holistically within the total profile of youth consciousness and action, rather than simply focusing on the most publicly visible aspects. MYPLACE goes beyond restrictive conventional definitions limited to electoral or 'party politics' that exclude too many youth actions that have political implications and effects, by mapping a wide array of socio-political activities engaged in by young people and their associated preferences, expectations and values. It seeks to analyse international, cross national features and influences, and contextualises contemporary youth actions against national and European 'historical memory'.

It is a large scale project which is unusual in combining survey, interview and ethnographic case study research methods to capture both levels of civic, political and social participation and the subjective meanings young people attach to it. Through a specific focus on 'youth' and the historical and cultural contextualization of young people's social participation, MYPLACE challenges over-generalized concepts of 'disengagement' from politics by documenting the wide range of young people's understandings and responses to civic and political spaces. It examines these processes across 14 countries which represent a wide variety of historical, social, political and administrative conditions that shape the lifeworlds of young people in different countries and their social and political actions. Five of the countries joined European Union relatively recently or still are in the accession process: Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Croatia. Georgia and Russia, which have rather different cultural-historical backgrounds, represent countries from the outside of European Union, The more 'central' countries of Europe and Scandinavia are represented by Denmark, Finland, and Germany (former Western and Eastern parts of the country being treated separately). The three main countries of Southern Europe, Spain, Portugal and Greece also feature, and the Anglo-Saxon world is represented by England. The project is therefore well situated to uncover how common European and contrasting national political and cultural traditions and economic circumstances shape the ways in which young people respond in similar and different ways.

MYPLACE's ambitious scope and research reach thus ensures considerable policy relevance at European and national levels, capturing emerging trends within and between a large number of European countries, through a wide set of quantitative and qualitative research methods, to:

- Measure attitudes to, and participation, in political organisations, social movements and civic action programmes among young people in Europe and understand how these attitudes and engagements are differentiated along lines of gender, ethnicity, class and region;
- Measure views on legitimate forms of political representation and action in the context of different forms of democratic heritage;
- Map the range of youth activism across Europe and the ways in which young activists are networked inter-regionally and trans-nationally;
- Analyse the extent to which young people may be following established traditions or developing/adapting them to innovative forms of activism based on the internet and social media;
- Understand the appeal of radical, extreme or populist movements to young people and the linkage to forms of regional, national and European transmission of political heritage;

- Understand how broader political issues, such as the 'Arab Spring', global economic pressures, immigration, public sector retrenchment, reform of higher education and welfare restructuring may to varying degrees be affecting young people and shaping their perceptions and responses.

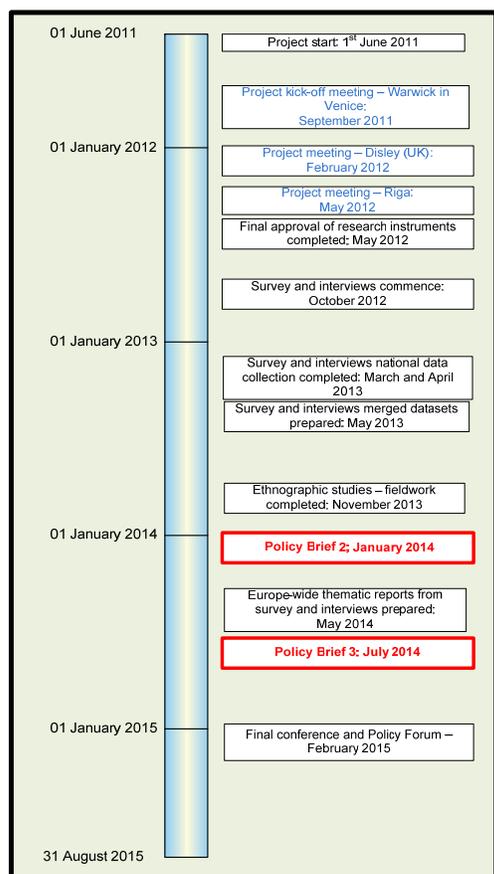
POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As well as producing high quality theoretically informed research findings, MYPLACE through Workpackage 8 (see below) is firmly committed to ensuring that these help to inform national and European level policy discussions and deliberations. With this end in view, Youth Policy Advisory Groups (YPAGs) with wide stakeholder membership of experts and policy actors, have been set up from the start of the project in each partner country. These have already been meeting and have made some initial inputs into the research design. As the project proceeds, YPAGs will be increasingly influential in interpreting the results, analysing their policy implications, and helping to translate these into forms that are useful and relevant for a wide range of policy actors in youth work and youth policy circles at national and EU levels.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

MYPLACE is collecting survey data in 30 main research sites – 2 sites in each country and 4 in Germany (2 in former East Germany and 2 in former West Germany). In each survey location in-depth interviews with 30 interviewees are also being conducted. Each country is also undertaking ethnographic analyses of 3 interesting youth movements or organisations in their country. Museums reproducing history of the country are involved as research partners. The project uses a mixed methods approach integrating the 5 interlocking Work Packages outlined below (WPs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

In addition 2 work packages (WPs 8 and 10) focus on dissemination of the findings and recommendations to policy and practitioner circles, and wider audiences.



Work Package 2 - Interpreting the past (The construction and transmission of historical memory)

Work Package Leaders :

- Anton Popov (University of Warwick)
- Dusan Deak (University of SS Cyril and Methodius, Trnava)

This Work Package focuses on the 'Memory' aspects of MYPLACE's research, in partnership with museums, document archives, and NGOs as 'sites of memory'. Its main objective is identify and provide comparative analysis of public discourses of 'difficult' (e.g. 'authoritarian', 'communist', 'fascist', 'national-socialist', neo-liberal etc) periods in recent national histories as they are manifested in the 'sites of memory', that is, public institutions involved in commemorative activities. Alongside this it investigates processes of intergenerational transmission of memory in family settings, and how this impacts on civic and political engagement by young people.

This work involves a range of collaborative activities including ethnographic studies, inter-generational interviews, focus groups with young people and expert interviews. The research for this has been completed and the results are being analysed.

Work Packages 3 and 4 – Fieldwork Preparation and Measuring Participation using the Survey method

Work Package Leaders:

- Gary Pollock (Manchester Metropolitan University) (WPs 3 and 4)
- Tina Zurabishvili (Caucasus Research Resource Centers program, Georgia) (WP4)

Work Package 3, completed in February 2012 informed the refinement of the empirical research design and research instruments. i.e., the survey, follow-up interviews and ethnographic studies.

Work package 4 is gathering the largest primary dataset in the project, through a survey of young people in the fieldwork sites in each country or region. Its main objectives are to collect questionnaire data to:

- Identify the breadth of forms of socio-political activism among young people from two contrasting sites in each country or region;
- Measure respondents' knowledge, attitudes towards and experiences of extreme politics;
- Uncover levels of knowledge and attitudes towards different aspects of democratic participation and representation;
- Produce country specific and Europe wide descriptions of political engagement;
- Develop national and European wide typologies of political participation;
- Undertake statistical modelling to highlight predictors of different levels and types of participation;
- Explore and model the categories of political participation alongside other social activities.

The survey of young people commenced in late 2012 and continued into early 2013, surveying 18,000 young people across 30 field sites in 15 regions (14 countries, with East and West Germany treated separately).

Work Package 5 – Interpreting Participation (Semi-structured interviews)

Work Package Leader:

- Florian Sipos (University of Debrecen)

Work Package 5 will carry out approximately 900 follow-up interviews with respondents to the WP4 Survey, the aims being to:

- Elicit the meanings attached to statements or opinions expressed in the survey by respondents;
- Provide an opportunity for respondents to explain in a more nuanced way their positions on key elements of the survey;
- Provide a space to articulate experiences or ideas relevant to the research but not included in the questionnaire.

The fieldwork for Work Package 5 is being conducted alongside the survey data collection.

Work Package 6 – Mapping Activism (Typologies)

Work Package Leaders :

- Airi-Alina Allaste (Tallinn University)
- Mariona Ferrer-Fons (Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona)

Throughout the project, each national team will conduct research that allows them to map the range of youth activism in the survey regions and set this in the context and history of the country as a whole. This involves mapping and describing the space for social activism in each participating country prior to developing a typology of activism that captures both common dimensions across the European space as well as national/regional distinctions. The specific aims of Work Package 6 are to:

- Map and describe the space for social and political activism in each participating country;
- Produce typologies of youth activism at the national and transnational comparative level;
- Understand the extent to which young people are mobilised on 'single issues' and/or more general concerns about the future of their country and/or the European Union;
- Elicit which issues are the foci for youth mobilisation in each country and those to which they remain indifferent.

Work Package 7 – Interpreting Activism (Ethnographies)

Work Package Leaders:

- Hilary Pilkington (University of Manchester)
- Phil Mizen (University of Warwick)

Three targeted ethnographic studies are being conducted in each country with groups of young activists. The precise nature of the groups selected was shaped by the WP6 mapping exercise, who have been selected not for representativeness but because they constitute an interesting, challenging or new form of activism relevant to the project objectives and research questions. Work Package 7 aims to:

- Provide deep insight into the practices of youth activism across the European space;
- Provide case studies of youth activism in which authoritarian or populist agendas are invoked;
- Provide case studies of youth activism in which authoritarian or populist agendas are resisted; or opposed.
- Illuminate whether and how youth activism differs from other forms of political activism;
- Trace the transnational connectedness of youth activism.

This will result in over 40 ethnographic case studies, which will be loosely organised into similar 'clusters' to provide opportunities for cross-case analyses.

Work Package 8 – Policy and Impact

Work Package Leaders:

- Marti Taru (Tallinn University)
- Mick Carpenter (University of Warwick)

Through this Work Package, MYPLACE will embed policy activities in the project from the outset, with the aim of enhancing science-policy links at European and national levels.

At European level:

- Providing scientific data and policy briefs to the EC Youth in Action programme (2007-13) on three of its priorities: participation of young people; respect for cultural diversity and the fight against racism/xenophobia; and European citizenship;
- Providing policy briefs through the the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYF) (<http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/index>) a Council of Europe (CoE) and EC partnership, and disseminating findings to the network of national correspondents (EC) and members of the youth research network (CoE), collaborating to apply t application of findings to policy evaluation and recommendations;
- Disseminating, through CORDIS, knowledge generated by the project about the active participation of young people across the wider Europe.

At national levels:

- Developing links with the relevant national institutions and organisations and providing them with an appropriate set of deliverables from the project;
- Working with policy and practitioner partners to produce an evidence based policy publication in the local language spanning the needs of policy makers, youth work practitioners and scientific researchers, with a thematic focus relevant to the local context;
- Active dissemination and promotion of this collaborative publication at national and regional levels.

The Youth Policy Advisory Groups (YPAGs) established in each of the 14 participating countries have all met and made initial inputs into the research design, and will assist in interpreting findings, formulating recommendations and facilitating dissemination as outlined above.

Work Package 9 – Dissemination

Work Package Leaders:

- Gary Pollock (Manchester Metropolitan University)
- Elena Omelchenko (Research Centre 'Region', Ul'ianovsk State University)

Work Package 9 covers all dissemination activities, including:

- academic publication,
- [web](#)
- social media ([Wordpress](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#))
- visual dissemination (including films and photo libraries)

- conferences
- dissemination events with museum partners



MYPLACE countries

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement (MYPLACE)

COORDINATOR

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CONSORTIUM

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*Daugavpils Universitate
Daugavpils, Latvia*

*Debreceni Egyetem
Debrecen, Hungary*

*Friedrich-Schiller Universitaet Jena
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*Institut Drustvenih Znanost Ivo Pilar
Zagreb, Croatia*

*Manchester Metropolitan University
Manchester, United Kingdom*

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*Tallinn University
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*The University of Manchester
Manchester, United Kingdom*

*The University of Warwick
Coventry, United Kingdom*

*Universitaet Bremen
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Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Barcelona, Spain

*University of Eastern Finland
Kuopio, Finland*

*Univerzita sv Cyrila a Metoda v Trnavae
Trnava, Slovakia*

FUNDING SCHEME

FP7 Framework Programme for Research of the European Union – Collaborative project Activity SSH-2010-5.1-1: “Democracy and the shadows of totalitarianism and populism: the European experience”

DURATION

June 2011 – May 2015 (48 months).

BUDGET

EU contribution: 7 994 463 €

WEBSITE

www.fp7-myplace.eu

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**

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FURTHER READING

Deliverable 2.1: Country based reports on discourse production (publication via European Commission and MYPLACE website pending).