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# Building Strategic Cooperation: The Implementation of Cross-Sectoral Youth Policy in Luxembourg

## Findings from an Evaluation Study

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## Summary

The evaluation of the Youth Pact focused on the question whether the Youth Pact has had a fostering effect on the implementation of a cross-sectoral youth policy in Luxembourg and identifies factors that have contributed to this aim.

The legal basis of the Youth Pact is considered very important, because the legitimacy and binding nature of actions is intensified by their incorporation in cross-sectoral action plans like the Youth Pact. The combination of the legal basis of the Youth Pact and its introduction by the government in the context of its official briefings were considered as strong signs of the political support for the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral youth policy.

The interdepartmental<sup>1</sup> cooperative compilation of the Youth Pact has had a lasting impact on the perception of the involved actors of the Youth Pact and on cross-sectoral collaboration. Bilateral talks between the governmental departments and divisions also developed and strengthened the interdepartmental collaboration in the context of cross-sectoral youth policy.

One of the major challenges of cross-sectoral youth policy is to respect the heterogeneity of interests and the intentions of the many different actors who are involved. The willingness of departments to invest time and money into a cooperation is influenced by the existence of shared current priority topics or practical joint projects.

Cross-sectoral youth policy is implemented by means of formal instruments, bodies and processes to build up strategic collaborations such as the interdepartmental committee “Youth”, strategic partnerships and communication structures. These instruments offer the possibility to enhance the viability and efficiency of cross-sectoral youth policy in a situation of heterogeneous interests and scarce (time) resources.

The results of the analysis show that an interdepartmental understanding of different policy areas and informal and interpersonal relationships are very important for a successful cross-sectoral youth policy. Challenging for the implementation of cross-sectoral youth policy is the balancing of formal instruments and processes on one hand and the informal aspects of interdepartmental collaboration on the other.

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## **1. Introduction**

With the creation of the Youth Pact, the governmental department responsible for national education, children and youth (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse, MENJE) in Luxembourg has conceived an instrument, which corresponds to some of the central socio-political challenges of adolescence. Subject areas such as the occupational and social integration of young people through education, vocational training, housing, mobility and a stable job along with the possibility of leading a self-determined life are emphasised as political cross-sectoral issues with a comprehensive list of actions and measures to be taken. By that, the Youth Pact supports the fundamental requirements for the achievement of youth policy goals, such as securing good living conditions and providing a favourable framework for development for as many young people in Luxembourg as possible.

The present evaluation focuses on the first edition of the Youth Pact 2012-2014. Specifically, it analyses whether the Youth Pact has had a fostering effect on cross-sectoral youth policy and the interdepartmental collaboration taking place in this context.

## **2. National and political context**

### ***2.1. Societal challenges in Luxembourg***

Socio-economic changes, caused by globalisation, social change and demographic developments have led to an increased importance of youth policy at both the national and European level throughout Europe (cf. Fricke, n. d.) In Luxembourg, one of the wealthiest European countries with relatively low at-risk-of-poverty rates and a low rate of unemployment, a strong immigration during the last decades has resulted in a quick growth of society and especially of the young population. In 2009, 45.3% of the young people between the ages of 12 and 19 years living in Luxembourg did not carry the Luxembourg nationality (cf. Willems et al., 2010). In this situation, social inequalities as well as linguistic and cultural differences are growing (cf. Willems et al., 2010). The results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) show, for example, significant difficulties as far as educational integration of children and young people with a migration background are concerned (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle, 2012). As in other European countries, there is a strong correlation between the level of education and youth unemployment. Young people with good qualifications achieve the transition from school to work quicker than young people with low levels of education.

For the Luxembourg youth policy, this situation results in the societal mandate to create an enabling and favourable environment, which facilitates the social and professional integration of all young people, ensures social cohesion and provides opportunities for political participation.

## 2.2. Cross-sectoral youth policy in Luxembourg

In recent years, the concept of transversality has gained popularity, particularly in the context of European and national youth policy. In the European youth policy and especially since the publication of the White Paper “A new impetus for European youth” (2001) and the EU-Youth strategy (2009), transversality is understood as a concept by which youth policy objectives should be taken into account in other youth relevant policy fields such as health, education, employment and social inclusion. The goal is to establish coherence with public policy areas that are directly or indirectly relevant for young people and their issues.

The Council of the European Union’s “renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field” for the period 2010-2018 (Council of Europe, 2009) sparked an increase in the importance of transversal or cross-sectoral youth policy as a topic for European events (workshops, conferences). This has also been the subject of several peer-learning seminars, which have been offered within European youth policy and which have been organised (among others) by Luxembourg.

With reference to youth policies in Europe and European youth policy, the Luxembourg youth policy defines its strategic orientation as „participatory, transversal and evidence-based" (Meisch & Schroeder, 2009, p. 301). Transversal or cross-sectoral youth policy is thus one of the three key features of youth policy in Luxembourg, and the Youth Pact is the main instrument for the implementation of cross-sectoral youth policy.<sup>ii</sup>

The division “youth” within the Luxembourg Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (MENJE) is responsible for the implementation of these three key features of national youth policy. By providing opportunities for non-formal education (including political participation, voluntary work and cultural education), young people should be given the chance to develop autonomous, self-confident and responsible personalities. These youth policy aims were emphasised in the Luxembourg Youth Act<sup>iii</sup> in the year 2008 and the corresponding Grand-Ducal decree<sup>iv</sup>. This law allowed the establishment of several youth policy institutions and committees, as well as strengthened the existing youth policy measures. Those key measures introduced as part of the Youth Act are:

- **The interdepartmental committee "Youth":** This committee acts as the central coordinating authority within the implementation process of transversal youth policy. The main tasks of the committee are to advise the government on youth policy projects, to make proposals on promoting the cross-sectoral process and to coordinate actions with other transversal government strategies.
- **Youth report:** Every five years, the government is required to produce a report on the situation and living conditions of young people in Luxembourg. The first report was published in 2010, the second one will be launched at the end of the year 2015. The youth reports provide an empirical foundation for the development of an action plan for youth policy, the Youth Pact.

- **The national structured dialogue:** An important instrument for promoting the participation of young people was established by the creation of the Luxembourg Youth Parliament in October 2009. In addition to the youth parliament, the instrument of the national structured dialogue was established. It aims to enhance the communication mechanisms between the Luxembourg government and young people. In order to ensure its implementation, the government set up an additional committee "comité élargi jeunesse". It defines the agenda of the annual cycles of the national structured dialogue, which focus a specific issue every year, and it coordinates appropriate actions and measures. In comparison to the inter-departmental committee, which is composed only of representatives of different governmental departments, this committee also includes representatives of youth organisations.

In addition to these measures, the Youth Act stipulates a five-year action plan for cross-sectoral youth policy, the **"Youth Pact"**. According to the introduction of the Youth Pact, "the measures of youth policy concern the youth sector itself, but also other sectors influencing the lives of young people such as education and vocational training, work and health to name but the most important. The Youth Pact takes up upon this transversal vision" (Pacte pour la Jeunesse, 2012, p. 5). The Youth Pact is thus an action plan that explicitly implements cross-sectoral youth policy.

As such and in accordance with article 15 of the Youth Act, the first edition of this action plan for youth policy, the Youth Pact 2012-2014 sets out a series of policy actions led by various governmental departments from youth relevant policy areas. The main objective is to develop (in a five-year cycle) an action plan for youth policy, to adequately meet the challenges of young people's lives.

Based on the National Youth Report 2010, focal areas, such as education, family, work or social life are defined, and the involved governmental departments agree to collaborate across sectors and departments in the context of interdepartmental exchanges and different communication and cooperation networks to conceive and implement a coherent and commonly coordinated cross-sectoral youth policy.

Two overarching objectives of the Youth Pact can be identified:

- On one hand, the Youth Pact will pursue the short-term goal of an expeditious implementation of each of the actions in the five chapters.
- On the other hand, the Youth Pact will pursue the long-term goals of defining youth policy issues as a political cross-sectoral task and strengthening transversal youth policy by developing an overall vision.

To achieve these, the Youth Pact 2012-2014 delineates 75 actions in five different "thematic chapters": 1) Successful transition from school to work; 2) Successful start to adult life; 3) Well-being of youth; 4) Young people as actors; 5) Scientific accompaniment of youth policy. These five chapters are organised into 22 specific objectives.

### 3. Theoretical framework and methodological design

#### 3.1. Definitions and theoretical framework of the study

Cross-sectoral policies aim to develop linkages across sectors in a way that broadens and deepens the overall impact and the support base for innovation. They demand political partnerships and combine complementary roles and responsibilities of departments and stakeholders (Hilverdink, 2013).

Although different concepts and definitions of cross-sectoral collaboration are used at both the political and scientific level, their interpretations have significant similarities. While the term "transversality" is dominantly used in the francophone countries—including Luxembourg—, the English-speaking countries use the term "intersector(i)al collaboration/cooperation". The German-speaking countries tend to use both, that is the concept of "cross-sectoral co-operation" and the concept of "cross-sectional policy", with the latter in differentiation to "interdepartmental policy" (Münchmeier, 2004).

Félix Guattari describes transversality as opposed to a vertical and horizontal arrangement of structure, which both appear problematic. From Guattari's perspective, the absence of verticality means that a transversal organisation is not structured hierarchically (Guattari, 1976). Additionally, he describes it as something constructive, as something that cannot be taken for granted, but that needs to be actively constituted by the political actors.

A more application-oriented definition of intersectoral collaboration has been published by the German department of public health. According to this

*„Intersectoral cooperation is a recognised relationship between a part or parts of different sectors of society that have been formed to take action on an issue to achieve certain outcomes, (short or longer term), in a way which is more effective, efficient or sustainable than might be achieved by one sector alone“ (Kirch, 2008, p. 808).*

These definitions and conceptualisations show the fundamental characteristics and features of a cross-sectoral policy, as it has been established in European youth policy and implemented in the Luxembourg Youth Pact.

The present study is based on certain theoretical preconceptions about how to characterise the structures and practical implementation of cross-sectoral policies. The theoretical discourses of an "integrated policy" (Lang & Tosun, 2014; Scharpf, 1973) and policy networks (Mayntz & Scharpf, 1995) as well as the experiences resulting from collaboration processes in public management (Thomson and Perry, 2006) can be mentioned here. Empirical research on the issue of cross-sectoral policy is still relatively scarce. A study published by the University of Lisbon proposes to clarify and organise the many different understandings of the terms and concepts used in the field of cross-sectoral policies. Therefore, it provides an overview of existing information on cross-sectoral policy cooperation based on materials produced in the context of cooperation in the European Union, the work from the Council of Europe and specific countries with concrete experiences in cross-sectoral cooperation (Magda, 2014).

Moreover, examples of practices can be found in different sets of reports, data and documents at the European and national level. These papers report, for example, models and instruments of cross-sectoral policies in European countries.

### **3.2. Design and methods of evaluation**

The Ministry for National Education, Children and Youth (MENJE) commissioned the University of Luxembourg to conduct an evaluation of the implementation and realisation of the Luxembourgish Youth Pact (2012-2014). This evaluation has two main goals: First, to research and analyse how far the cross-sectoral nature of youth policy issues, topics and questions could be strengthened through the implementation of the Youth Pact; and second, to determine the current status of the various actions and tasks of the Youth Pact.

The relevant research questions in the evaluation were:

- How do the stakeholders see and use the instruments of the Youth Pact, and how does it succeed in implementing and promoting cross-sectoral youth policy?
- Which communication structures, topics, processes and deliverables are there between the governmental departments in regard to the topic of youth and youth policy?
- What expectations and possibilities for implementation do the stakeholders see from their perspective in order to implement cross-sectoral youth policy?
- What can be considered the factors of success and failure for interdepartmental collaboration in the context of the Youth Pact?

In order to answer these questions and to analyse the complex implications and interrelationships of cross-sectoral youth policies in the context of the Luxembourg Youth Pact, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was considered appropriate. (cf. Stockmann, 2004, p. 15). Thus, in its methodological approach, the evaluation includes the following data sources:

- **Document analysis**

A comprehensive collection of working documents, records of meetings, contributions to conferences and literature contributions which describe the communication process in the framework of the Youth Pact was accumulated. These documents were analysed with the goal of generating knowledge regarding the practical implementation of cross-sectoral youth policy.

- **Expert interviews**

Expert interviews were conducted with 17 representatives from different governmental departments. The goal of the interviews was to collect and understand the stakeholders' attitudes, awareness and knowledge as well as their practical experiences with interdepartmental collaboration within the framework of cross-sectoral youth policy and the Youth Pact.

- **Small-scale surveys**

The goal of the small scale surveys was to collect information on the current status of the actions and measures at two points in time: at the midpoint of the Youth Pact's (2012-2014) duration and at its conclusion. The questionnaires were completed by various stakeholders from different governmental departments. Descriptive-statistical analyses of these data were performed.



## **4. Main factors of success for the implementation of the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral youth policy – Empirical findings**

The analysis of the data collected in the framework of this evaluation yielded rich and detailed information about the actors, instruments, processes, bodies, influential factors, results and challenges involved in the implementation of the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral policy. With an international audience in mind, the main findings with regard to cross-sectoral youth policy were selected<sup>v</sup> for presentation in this summary.

### ***4.1. Ensuring political support and fostering identification***

A first step of this evaluation was to reconstruct the interview partners' views on the Youth Pact. The interview partners from the youth division at the Ministry for National Education, Children and Youth perceive the Youth Pact as a specific instrument for the implementation of the cross-sectoral aspect of the national youth policy as it is defined by the Youth Act. This legal basis of the Youth Pact is very important to them and constitutes a political success in itself.

The representatives of the different governmental departments from other policy areas do not have such a differentiated view of the national youth policy, and they do not necessarily differentiate between the different agendas or the different instruments of this policy field. They attribute the Youth Pact and their different moments of collaboration with actors from the youth field to their department's general effort in the youth field and to their overall collaboration with the youth division. The legal basis of the Youth Pact is important to them, because it reinforces the legitimacy and binding nature they want to transfer to their actions by incorporating them in cross-sectoral action plans like the Youth Pact. The interview partners, for whom political relevance, priority and support are very important, consider the combination of the legal basis of the Youth Pact and its launch by the government in the context of its official briefings as strong signs of political support for the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral youth policy.

The interview partners see two sides to the Youth Pact 2012-2014. Mostly, they see an action plan and herewith a thematically organised list of actions in relation to youth that different governmental departments are implementing or plan to implement. In addition to this, they see some elements of an overarching strategy or vision.

The compilation of the Youth Pact and the approach used for the realisation of this task had a lasting impact on the perception of the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral collaboration between departments. After the Youth Act was adopted in 2008, the youth division was assigned the task of compiling of the Youth Pact. The youth division conceived and formulated the five focal areas of the Youth Pact on the basis of the results of the Youth Report 2010. The next step was to initiate bilateral talks with those governmental departments that, according to the Youth Act, are represented in the interdepartmental committee "Youth".

During the ensuing bilateral talks, the representatives of the youth department and of the departments from the other policy fields discussed and chose the specific actions that should be included in the Youth Pact. The criteria for the selection of actions were mainly topic compatibility, probability of realisation, the amount of necessary resources for the realisation and their availability as well as a

binding commitment of the respective departments for the achievement of the actions. Only few actions were specifically conceived for the Youth Pact 2012-2014. Most of the selected actions were already in planning or were already being implemented (unilaterally) in the corresponding departments. This cooperative compilation of the Youth Act with actions, that were proposed and already existing within the different governmental departments, ensured a strong identification of the governmental department with the actions for which they have the lead.

In addition to the compilation of the Youth Pact, these bilateral talks also developed and strengthened the interdepartmental collaboration in the context of cross-sectoral youth policy. At this point in time, several cross-sectoral collaborations between the youth division and departments from other policy areas existed, but cross-sectoral bodies such as the interdepartmental committee "Youth" were just being initiated. In retrospect, the compilation of the Youth Pact was the period during which the largest number of different policy areas collaborated simultaneously and intensely.

#### ***4.2. Respecting heterogeneity in the implementation of cross-sectoral youth policy***

There were many different actors involved in the Youth Pact. While the governmental departments represented in the interdepartmental committee "Youth" and their divisions were involved both at the strategic level (conception and coordination) and the operational level (implementation and realisation of the different actions), the other actors were only involved at the operational level.<sup>vi</sup> As one of the focuses of the evaluation is on the cross-sectoral collaboration between governmental departments in the context of the Youth Pact, the involvement of governmental departments and their divisions was more closely analysed.

As far as the representatives of different governmental departments are concerned, their perception, involvement and level of information with regard to the Youth Pact seems to vary according to their hierarchical position. The representatives from a very high hierarchical position (counsellors of ministers, heads of directorates) describe the Youth Pact in a rather technical and functional way. They see it as a means to an end, an instrument or method, which is conceived and implemented by representatives at a lower level. They approve of it, but they do not actively work on or with it, and they often do not identify with it. From all the interview partners, it is the representatives from the next hierarchical level (heads of divisions or close collaborators of these), who are the most involved in the Youth Pact and identify with it. They are involved on the operational as well as the strategic level of the Youth Pact. On the operational level and together with internal departmental civil servants, they conceive, delegate, coordinate and ensure the implementation of the different actions for which they were identified as leading organisation during the compilation of the Youth Pact. In most cases, the practical implementation and realisation of the actions as well as the contact with the target audience is delegated to national agencies, youth organisations and agencies and associations from the private sector. On the strategic level, they are involved in the conception of the Youth Pact and the bilateral talks that took place in this context, they participate in the interdepartmental committee "Youth", they are the main contact partners of their departments with respect to cross-sectoral youth policy and they collaborate with the youth division.

The different governmental departments and their representatives have very different intentions and goals when it comes to the interdepartmental collaboration in the context of the Youth Pact:

- Some governmental departments want to increase their overall **visibility** by making their efforts (actions and programs) in the field of youth more visible. In addition, they want to ensure that the target groups and especially young people are informed about the measures offered to them. They hope to convey a positive image of youth to the general public.
- By summarising all the actions and programs carried out by the different departments in the field of youth in the Youth Pact and by keeping each other **informed** about their activities, the governmental departments hope to increase the **coherence** of their actions and cross-sectoral youth policy.
- Through their participation and collaboration in the Youth Pact and in cross-sectoral youth policy, some governmental departments want to increase the legitimacy, priority for budget allocation, the efficiency, the impact and the standing of their **own political priorities**.
- A major goal of most governmental departments is to ensure a positive **“cost-effect-balance”** in all cross-sectoral processes and actions. They consciously analyse how much time and financial resources they have to invest to stay involved in cross-sectoral processes and what imminent or future gain their policy field, their department or themselves can expect.
- In addition to these intentions on the organisational level of the governmental departments and divisions, **individual and personal goals** of the representatives also play an important role. The interview partners talked about their personal motivation to improve the fate of certain target groups and about their personal interest and concerns. Some interview partners also implied that some representatives use cross-sectoral collaborations to enhance their own statuses and ensure the development of their careers.

While the partners collaborating on the strategic level were very similar because they were all representatives of governmental departments, they had very different perspectives according to their hierarchical position and pursued very heterogeneous organisational and individual objectives. After the bilateral talks between the different departments and the youth division during the compilation of the Youth Pact, it was thus logical that the intensity with which the different departments dedicated themselves to youth-relevant and youth policy topics evolved at different paces. While some departments seemed to reduce their collaboration with the youth division, other departments invested themselves fully in the collaboration with the division youth, which was strengthened and developed into a normal routine. For a sustainable cross-sectoral youth policy that is able to react to changing societal challenges and political priorities, it is very important to respect and enable collaborations at different levels of involvement. This ensures the continuity of the overall exchange of information and contact between as many departments as possible, prevents departments from dropping out and maintains the possibility for a future intensification of the involvement of departments.

The willingness of departments to invest time and money into a cooperation and the intensity of a collaboration seems to be strongly influenced by the existence of common current priority topics or practical common projects and one of the major challenges of inter-departmental collaboration and cross-sectoral youth policy is to develop and conceive topics and priorities that are compatible with those of other departments and have the potential to rally as many departments as possible.<sup>vii</sup>

### 4.3. Building multilateral communication and strategic collaboration

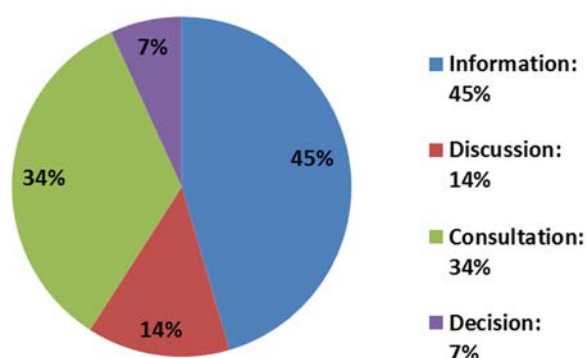
Cross-sectoral youth policy and interdepartmental collaboration is implemented through several formal bodies and processes. The main cross-sectoral body is the interdepartmental committee “Youth”, but many other bodies and processes from youth policy are implemented in a cross-sectoral way and thus play an important role for the development of interdepartmental collaboration and the institutionalisation of cross-sectoral youth policy.

#### 4.3.1 The interdepartmental committee “Youth” as an instrument of cross-sectoral youth policy

The inter-departmental committee “Youth” was established by the Youth Act in 2008 as the main body coordinating the implementation of cross-sectoral youth policy and was initiated during the period of the Youth Pact compilation. Immediately, this body became a central structure for the coordination and implementation of the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral youth policy. The interview partners mentioned it as a necessary, useful and positive opportunity and as the place where interdepartmental collaboration occurs. The main challenge they see for this committee is to keep the committee active, dynamic and lively and to ensure a continuous presence of higher-level representatives from all policy areas, even if time is a scarce resource.

The analysis of the minutes of the meetings and the associated documents of the interdepartmental committee “Youth” showed that the main functions and goals pursued in the meetings were information exchange (45%; mainly information shared by the youth division), followed by consultation (34%), discussions (14%) and decision making (7%).

**Figure 1: Functions and goals pursued in the interdepartmental committee “Youth”**



The results of the analysis of the documents and the interviews suggest that, since January 2011, the role of the interdepartmental committee “Youth” as a platform for information exchange has become increasingly more important and central, while other forms of collaboration have become less important. On the one hand, the interview partners confirm that the role as information exchange platform is what makes the interdepartmental committee so central and useful for the cross-sectoral youth policy and interdepartmental collaboration, on the other hand some interview partners evaluate this growing focus on information exchange negatively as it does not encourage an active and dynamic collaboration during the meetings of the committee.

The main topics treated in the interdepartmental committee “Youth” during the 5 meetings that took place between January 2011 und November 2014 were: the Youth Pact, the national structured dialogue and the national report on the situation of youth. These topics from youth policy, on which the first meetings focused, were mainly presented by the division “youth”. Other departments only started to present information about their youth relevant projects during the last meeting of the committee. This development can potentially bring new dynamics to the information exchange and might thus counterbalance the negative effects of a focus on unilateral information transmission.

While the Youth Pact, as a specific cross-sectoral instrument, was the main topic of the interdepartmental committee “Youth”, the treatment of other topics from fields such as youth participation (national structured dialogue) or evidence-based youth policy (national youth report) show that the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral youth policy are closely interlinked with the other topics and processes of the national youth policy and that many topics are implemented in a cross-sectoral way. This interweaving and interconnectedness of different structures, processes and bodies is linked to three factors: structural, personal and topical interlinkages.

The different processes and bodies are structurally linked, because they are based on each other and because they are formally linked to each other. For example, the national youth report is also an evidence base for the Youth Pact. In addition to this, there is a very significant overlap between the individual representatives of the governmental departments that participate in the different processes and bodies, and this results in the same people meeting in different circumstances and profiting from existing collaborations.

Last but not least, the interweaving and interlinkage of structures, processes and bodies arise from priority political topics, which are implemented and fostered by different instruments and processes in a cross-sectoral way. To illustrate this interlinkage of processes surrounding a topic, a brief description of the implementation of the topic “youth and housing” between 2012 and 2014 will now be presented.<sup>viii</sup>.

#### 4.3.2 Implementation of the political priority „youth and housing“

Through the analysis of a collection of different documents it was possible to identify six partially overlapping, interwoven and interdependent momentums in the continuous implementation of the political priority “youth and housing” by three governmental departments: national education, children and youth; housing; and family affairs and solidarity (see Figure 2):

- Inclusion of housing as a topic in the **Youth Pact 2012-2014**: In the subchapters 2 and 3 of the Youth Pact 2012-2014, measures such as the increase of housing offers for young people in precarious situations and the facilitation of the access of young people to housing are integrated in the first Youth Pact.
- Inclusion of youth as a target group in the **“National Strategy Against Homelessness and Exclusion Linked To Housing”**: This action plan was launched in 2013 by the department of family affairs and integration. It explicitly as well as implicitly refers to specific actions of the Youth Pact. Some actions of this strategy target young people.

- **“Youth Pact Day”**: In 2014, the first “Youth Pact Day” on the subject of „youth and housing“ was organised, focusing on young people in precarious situations. The agenda included a scientific approach to the role of housing for young adults, a cross-sectoral analysis of the situation and needs of the target population, presentations of pilot projects from different fields, a round table and interventions of three ministers. Public bodies and professionals from the youth and the social fields were the main target group.
- **Brochure “The path to the first flat – tips and tricks”**: In 2014, at the “Youth Pact Day”, the department of housing and the department of education presented a common brochure targeting young people and including practical tips on different forms of housing, costs, flat-hunting and available support.
- Housing as a topic in the second national report on the situation of young people in Luxembourg: The **second national youth report** will be published in 2015 and focuses on the transition from youth to adulthood, which includes access to housing and the transition towards an independent household. The elaboration of this report is accompanied by a “consultative committee”, formed by representatives from three governmental departments (education [including youth], housing and family/solidarity).
- Second cycle of the **national structured dialogue** “youth and housing”: During the second cycle of the national structured dialogue (2014-2015), all young people living in Luxembourg and the youth organisations were invited to participate in the debate about the housing needs of young people, and a closing round table with the involved ministers and departmental representatives took place.

Overall, it was possible to comprehensively implement the priority „youth and housing“ through the participation of several governmental departments and policy areas and through the utilisation of a variety of instruments. This case study shows to what extent structures, bodies and processes are interlinked and interdependent, how different momentums reflect the cross-sectoral nature of youth policy and how intensive and varied interdepartmental collaboration in the context of cross-sectoral youth policy can be, when a topic is suitable for several departments.

#### 4.3.3 Strategic partnerships and multilateral communication

Over the duration of the implementation of first edition of the Youth Pact (2012-2014), one can observe the development of two models of collaboration, each making different use of existing instruments: strategic partnerships and multilateral communication. These models are currently developing in cross-sectoral youth policy due to the necessity of allowing for the different intentions and levels of involvement of the different departments.

On the one hand, very intense bilateral or trilateral partnerships between the youth division and other governmental departments have formed around a few political priorities. The partners of these strategic partnerships join forces to enhance the visibility of their common topic (and themselves), to underline the political relevance and the urgency of their cause, to reinforce their call for the allocation of governmental resources, to enhance the quality of their measures and to maximise their impact and efficiency. Their collaboration is intense and goes beyond the Youth Pact and the interdepartmental

committee “youth” as the political priority is implemented through various bodies, actions, events and processes.

On the other hand, a multilateral cross-sectoral information exchange and communication has developed with other departments that are represented in the interdepartmental committee “youth”, but do not have a strategic partnership with the youth division. The core of this multilateral communication takes place in the meetings and through the protocols of the interdepartmental committee “youth”. The main objective is to share information about activities in the field of youth, to stay informed about developments that might concern their policy field and to maintain contact in order to keep the channels open for the possibility of a later, more intensive collaboration.

The development of these two models of collaboration strains cross-sectoral collaboration. This adds to the already existing heterogeneity as the strategic partners have access to more information and have a different level of knowledge about each other than the other departments, but they also offer the possibility to enhance the viability and efficiency of cross-sectoral youth policy in a situation of heterogeneous interests and scarce (time) resources.

#### ***4.4. Balancing informal and formal aspects of collaboration***

One of the main factors of success for interdepartmental collaboration is the balancing of the formal instruments and processes discussed in the previous section and the informal aspects of interdepartmental collaboration. The analysis of the interviews allowed the identification of two informal aspects that seem important for interdepartmental collaboration: the interdepartmental understanding of different policy areas through common knowledge construction and the informal and interpersonal relationships.

The internal ways of working and communicating in the separate governmental departments can vary considerably. Examples of differences between departments provided by the interview partners concerned administrative procedures, styles of communication, hierarchically defined rooms for manoeuvring, general ways of working and the speed of decision making to name a few. In addition to these, there are often differences on the conceptual level. This may concern different conceptions about youth (e.g. age range or needs of youth) but also different perspectives on seemingly straightforward topics (e.g. for housing: a focus on the social consequences of homelessness vs. the legislative aspects of promoting housing construction). To overcome these differences and to avoid misunderstandings, frustration, and conflict, critical factors for successful and effective interdepartmental collaboration include understanding the ways of working and thinking of the other departments as well as building a common knowledge and conception of youth and the objective of the collaboration. It is therefore vital to allow enough time for these processes of communication and common knowledge construction to unfold and to encourage them when possible.

Interpersonal relationships and informal ways of working are another important aspect of interdepartmental collaboration. In addition to the formal relationships established between departments by legal obligations and interdepartmental committees, interdepartmental collaboration relies on the interpersonal communication and collaboration of the individual representatives. In the context of cross-sectoral youth policy, the development of trust and interpersonal relationships between the representatives of the youth division and the representatives of the different

governmental departments enables informal channels and ways of communicating and collaborating. These are often characterised as direct, quick and uncomplicated by the interview partners, because they do not require lengthy meetings, protocols and exchanges of formal letters and thus increase the efficiency and speed of interdepartmental collaboration. These personal networks of relationships do, however, depend on a low fluctuation of the representatives as well as individual persons and their characteristics and affinities. Thus, they need to be combined and balanced with formal ways of communicating and collaborating to ensure sustainability and continuity in the long term.

These informal aspects of collaboration were crucial to enable the participants to overcome the feelings of awkwardness and foreignness as well as the sceptical attitudes present in the early meetings of the interdepartmental committee “youth” and to develop efficient and reliable networks of collaboration.

## 5. Results and challenges

Both the interview partners as well as the researchers assume a causal relationship between the factors described in the empirical findings as main factors of success and the positive developments in cross-sectoral youth policy in Luxembourg during the past four years.

- The implementation and realisation of the different actions compiled in the first edition of the Youth Pact have made notable progress. Specifically, 33% of the outlined actions have been implemented and completed, and 55% of the actions are currently being implemented or are continuous actions. This is a strong indicator for the commitment of the different actors to the actions delineated in the Youth Pact.
- There is a noticeable presence of youth as a target group, youth relevant topics and topics from youth policy (e.g. participation) in some of the other policy fields; and the Youth Pact is explicitly referred to and linked to strategies, action plans and publications conceived by other governmental departments. Thus, it has been possible to raise the awareness of other policy fields and their representatives about youth and youth policy and to launch and position cross-sectoral youth policy within these policy fields.
- Cross-sectoral youth policy and interdepartmental collaboration with the youth division have become a normal routine that is a natural reflex, for some policy fields. Considering the reported awkwardness, foreignness and sceptical attitudes present in the first meetings of the interdepartmental committee “youth”, this institutionalisation of cross-sectoral youth policy in Luxembourg can be considered a great success.

For the next edition of the Youth Pact and the further development of cross-sectoral youth policy, there are some challenges and some objectives that could be established:

The main challenge over the next years will be the reconciliation of and bridging the gap between governmental departments that are highly involved and opt for a strategic collaborations and those departments that are less involved and opt for the multilateral communication. Respecting the heterogeneity of the departments while preserving overall communication and intensifying the collaboration with some departments will be a hard balance to strike. In addition to ensuring the continuity of the existing strategic collaborations, a possible goal for the next years could be to adapt



the interdepartmental committee “youth” to accommodate multilateral communication while encouraging further strategic collaborations with departments where the collaboration is presently not as intense.

This challenge is closely linked to the task of ensuring continuous active participation of all the governmental departments represented in the interdepartmental committee “youth”: for example, by finding topics that are compatible with the interests and priorities of as many departments as possible, by fostering a lively and dynamic exchange in the committee and by encouraging interpersonal relationships and informal ways of collaboration.

For the future editions of the Youth Pact, the following objectives could be defined:

- ensuring the continuity of the Youth Pact while safeguarding and expanding the positive developments established within the first edition,
- developing an explicit overall strategy or vision,
- conceiving new actions and measures specifically for the Youth Pact, while ensuring the strong identification and commitment of the actors for the actions for which they have the lead,
- promoting the participation of more actors and young people in the compilation of the Youth Pact and
- monitoring the impact of the Youth Pact and cross-sectoral youth policy for young people.

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<sup>i</sup> Throughout this text the term interdepartmental is used to denote „between governmental departments or between representatives of governmental departments“. It excludes „between ministers“.

<sup>ii</sup> The terms transversal or cross-sectoral have however not been defined in a precise way in formal documents or publications of the Luxembourg youth policy.

<sup>iii</sup> Loi du 4 juillet 2008 sur la jeunesse.

<sup>iv</sup> Règlement grand-ducal du 9 janvier 2009 sur la jeunesse

<sup>v</sup> A comprehensive report with all the findings will be published by the end of 2015.

<sup>vi</sup> On the operational level, the actors involved included national agencies, local town administrations, agencies and associations from the private sector, youth organisations, professionals working in different fields and young people themselves. With the exception of the national agencies, all these actors also represent the audiences targeted by the different actions of the Youth Pact.

<sup>vii</sup> The case study of the priority “youth and housing” described later shows how intensive and varied interdepartmental collaboration in the context of cross-sectoral youth policy can be when a topic is suitable for several departments.

<sup>viii</sup> „Youth and Housing » should be seen as a case study of how process are interlinked in this specific case. It does therefore not imply, that it is an especially successful or especially representative example.

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