

Abstract

Adolescence as a distinct phase in development is shaped by the larger context of societies which provide different opportunities or pose barriers to adolescents' wellbeing. This keynote discusses the role of youth policy at a European and national level and the ways how research informs policy in European countries. The first part of this talk takes a broader look at youth policy at the European level, focusing the Youth Strategy of the European Union. Key fields targeted in EU youth policy are outlined, discussing strategies to promote youth empowerment in more detail. As a related example, we address the role of youth work and efforts in EU youth policy to promote (further) qualification of youth workers. As will be shown, European youth policy not only drives practice, but also research. As an example, it will be pointed out how EU research programs aimed to inform provisions for unaccompanied minor refugees.

In a second part, selected fields of adolescent development will be focused to discuss how research and experiences in practice inform national policy and how national policies feed back into research and the development of practice. Taking Germany as an example, we will focus efforts to combat social inequalities in young people's educational achievements and access to higher education, putting them in the broader developmental and international perspective. Finally, turning to adolescents' social development, preventive programs targeting romantic and sexual development will be addressed to discuss how dating violence in adolescence has been made an issue in youth policy and practice. As will be pointed out, a joint European data base on adolescents' development is still lacking but would have great potential to evaluate the impact of different national or regional strategies to improve adolescents' well-being and future development.