

Generalist Youth Information Services in France in 1997

The attached pages constitute the chapter concerning **France**
which is part of a 17-country study completed in 1997.

Each chapter provides a summary of the situation in the country at the end of 1997
concerning generalist youth information and counselling,
and the methods and structures involved in its organisation and distribution.

This study was conducted by the **European Youth Information and Counselling Agency** (ERYICA), to which all the author organisations belong as “Member Organisations” or as “Co-operating Organisations”. Accordingly, the study is limited to those countries where in 1996-97 there existed functioning networks of generalist youth information centres and services which were co-operating with ERYICA.

The 17 chapters of this study, in separate English and French versions, can be consulted on the ERYICA Internet site (“www.eryica.org” - see the section “Documents”, then “1997 Study”). Each file, which is in Word 2.0 for Windows / PC (varying between 4 and 20 pages in length), can also be downloaded from the site.

More recent information about each ERYICA national partner, its activities and its network can also be found on the ERYICA Internet site:

- a) **current addresses of national partners**: under “Discover ERYICA”, then “Members”, then “Country”
- b) **links to Internet sites of national partners**: under “Discover SERVICES”, then “Web-sites of ERYICA Partners”
- c) (when the organisation co-ordinates a network) **links to a list of addresses of regional or local centres**: under “Discover ERYICA”, then “Members”, then “Country”.

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FRANCE

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, young people need to be able to master ever-more complex information in order to cope successfully with life, become socially and professionally integrated and gain their autonomy. It is therefore essential, in a world saturated by a plethora of images and messages, that clear, efficient, comprehensive and regularly updated information be delivered to young people in those areas which interest them, priority being given to employment, health and housing.

Over the last twenty years, the French Ministry for Youth and Sport, in partnership with other bodies, has been pursuing this public service mission by gradually developing a dynamic nationwide network of youth information centres, offices, points and, more recently, information buses, all within easy reach of young people.

DATES AND FIGURES

1968: a White Paper on Youth, published by the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport, emphasised the urgent need to ensure the delivery of information to young people.

1969: the Ministry for Youth and Sport set up the "*Centre d'Information et de Documentation Jeunesse*" (CIDJ - Youth Information and Documentation Centre) in Paris to meet this need. During the following years, an increasing number of "*Centres*

d'Information Jeunesse" (CIJ: Youth Information Centres) were set up in the provinces.

1977: 12 CIJs in existence. Gradually, a common organisational and administrative approach was developed for all the centres.

1980: computerisation of the centres.

1997: a **nation-wide network** of around 1,456 Youth Information Centres, Offices and Points, composed of:

- 1 national centre: the **CIDJ**
- 31 **regional centres** based in the administrative capitals of French regions, in overseas "départements" and the Ile-de-France (CRIJ / CIJ)
- 207 **Youth Information Offices** (BIJ: *Bureaux d'Information Jeunesse*)
- 1,217 **Youth Information Points** (PIJ: *Points d'Information Jeunesse*)

These structures are used by around five million young people each year.

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

The information for this text has been provided by the "Centre d'information et de documentation jeunesse" (CIDJ):

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Registered by the French Ministry for Youth and Sport, these structures fulfil a public service mission in compliance with the French Youth Information Charter signed in 1991 and which guarantees quality services for young people.

In the European environment, the information required in order to learn how to deal with life is of an ever-increasing complexity. Moreover, information plays a more critical role than in the past, since it must empower young people to deal with their daily environment and to identify social constraints so as to better understand their scope of freedom and opportunities for development.

Information is a vital factor for enabling young people to become autonomous, play a responsible social role and develop on a personal level. As such, the right to information must be guaranteed to all young people without discrimination on social, political, racial, philosophical or religious grounds. It is indispensable to their mobility and must therefore offer extensive coverage of European issues, thereby enabling them to embark on the path leading to a Europe which is part of their daily lives.

Since provision of youth information evidently constitutes a vital public service mission to help and prepare young people to play an active role as citizens, the French Ministry for Youth and Sport plans to develop and run a network of Youth Information structures in partnership with the signatories of the above-mentioned Charter.

The Youth Information Centres, Offices and Points fulfil, together with the Ministry, a multi-purpose mission of providing young people with information and documentation according to the following code of principles:

- *the information shall be provided in full respect of the user's privacy and anonymity;*
- *the information shall, above all, be based on the needs or requests directly expressed by the young people concerned, delivered as and when needed and in full respect of their identity;*
- *the information shall be complete, impartial, accurate, practical and up-to-date;*
- *the information provided should cover all subjects which interest young people or relate to their everyday life: education, vocational training, employment, continuing education, social and everyday issues, leisure, holidays, foreign countries, sport, etc.;*
- *services are free of charge, personalised and adapted to the request, whether this concerns information consulted on a self-serve basis or an individual interview more adapted to counselling, guidance and a global approach to a young person's problems or individual choices. Information is provided by professional staff trained for this purpose.*

This mission is ensured by the Youth Information Centres by the regions, "départements", French overseas "départements" and the Ile-de-France, using local relays in the form of one or more Youth Information Offices or Points. A national-level, common documentation is prepared by the national resource centre, the CIDJ.

These structures may obtain the **“Youth and Sports” registration status** provided they comply with the Charter's principles and sign a standard convention. This enables them to use the pictogram and name shared by all the structures which have signed the Charter.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Considering that providing youth information is a priority public service mission, the relations between the State (Ministry for Youth and Sport), the Regional Offices for Youth and Sport and a given Youth Information Centre are governed by a convention. Central government defines the principles and the general framework for youth information policy. It also fixes the regional budgets and prepares decision-making tools which allow the Regional Offices for Youth and Sport to co-ordinate regional Youth Information policy.

Structures linked to the national network (BIJs, PIJs, Youth Information buses, etc.) may have registration status. This registration is subject to the signature of a **partnership convention** at local level, specifying:

- the structure's commitment to comply with the network's code of principles (cf. Charter),
- the network's operating rules,
- the conditions for monitoring the structure's activities.

It is up to the Regional Office for Youth and Sport to fix a CIJ's operating grant and to share out the regional budget so as to ensure coherent management and operation of the entire regional network (BIJs, PIJs, etc.). It also makes sure that the conditions (opening times, services, etc.) in which this public service is provided are respected by the CIJ.

The "département"-level unit for Youth and Sport intervenes in the regional policy-making process. It plays a decisive role in ensuring that local needs are communicated down-up. It makes proposals for the location of PIJs and supports their operations in collaboration with all of the local partners. It makes sure that youth information is taken into

account in the development of local community policy-making (both in rural and urban areas).

LEGAL STATUS AND CO-ORDINATION

CIDJ is a non-profit-making organisation with a specific national mission (cf. following pages). As a national resource centre, it prepares common documentation and distributes this to the regional partners:

- it co-ordinates actions in the technological domain
- it provides training
- it takes the lead in various innovative actions at the request of the Ministry for Youth and Sport.

A **CRIJ** (or **CIJ**) is a non-profit-making organisation responsible for producing information, and distributing and delivering it to young people:

- it receives and informs the public
- it prepares regional documentation and distributes all national- and regional-level documentation to its relay-points (BIJs, PIJs, Youth Information Buses)
- it provides training for youth information workers in its region
- it manages its own BIJ / PIJ network.

A **BIJ** is a local organisation whose sole mission is to give information to young people. Usually it is a non-profit-making organisation, but can also be run by the local authority. A ministry grant of 50,000 FF may be obtained to help launch a new BIJ.

Typically, a BIJ has its own independent, permanent premises, which are used solely for youth information purposes and sited in an easily accessible location. Open to the public all week long, the whole year round, it is run by full-time professionals who are responsible for the structure. In addition, there is at least one other staff member

who provides support for secretarial work, the reception desk and information and documentation services.

A **PIJ** is a service hosted by an already existing structure, such as a local association, the town hall or, more rarely, in locations regularly visited by young people (railway stations, shopping malls, etc.). It is most often found in careers guidance centres for disadvantaged youth (e.g. "missions locales", PAIOs), youth clubs, local authority youth services, public libraries, tourist information offices, cultural centres, apprenticeship training centres, hostels for young workers, CAFs (Family Allowance offices), "département"-level federations (Léo Lagrange, Familles rurales, etc.). The PIJ is provided with its own premises by the hosting structure or operates through a Youth Information bus (Bus Info Jeunes). It is open to the public on a part-time basis the whole year round. The staffing structure includes at least one person from the hosting organisation.

SPECIFIC ROLE OF CIDJ

Founded by the Ministry for Youth and Sport in 1969 as a non-profit-making organisation, CIDJ has a fourfold mission: **international, national, regional & local.**

Like all structures belonging to the Youth Information network, it delivers youth services and information and it receives nearly 1 million young people each year. This may be individually for self-service information purposes or an interview, or in groups when there is a special-theme day. CIDJ hosts a job centre (ANPE) and makes available consultation with the AFPA (public vocational training agency) a psychologist/careers guidance worker and an APEJ (association helping young unemployed) adviser. CIDJ is also represented at a great many of the professional fairs organised for young

people, and is regularly consulted by the media.

Its regional mission involves producing documentation for the regions and running the Ile-de-France network, with support from 4 "département" centres in Essonne, Seine-et-Marne, Yvelines and Val-d'Oise.

As a national resource centre, CIDJ has set up the documentary structure common to the entire network. This has resulted in an encyclopaedic work, called "**Actuel CIDJ**", covering all subjects of interest to young people. The publication's 400 subjects (totalling some 5,000 pages) form the national document base which is complemented by:

- regional publications (CRIJ),
- local documentation updated by each centre (CRIJ, BIJ, PIJ).

The originality of "Actuel-CIDJ" is that it is the only comprehensive set of youth information documentation which serves both as:

- a reference for youth information providers,
- a tool that can be consulted by young people on a self-service basis.

CIDJ also publishes documents on specific themes intended for professionals and for the general public.

Within the framework of its national mission, the CIDJ training department offers a programme of courses which form a complete cycle of training on information skills. Three main areas are dealt with: document-management methods; how to inform young people on specific topics; developing projects for communicating information.

Finally, CIDJ helps to encourage youth mobility and is extending its activities to promote tourism for young people. It is officially registered as a tourist agency, which allows it (and most of the regional centres) to offer a travel service.

At international level, CIDJ has been authorised by the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Youth and Sport to co-ordinate all of the youth information actions which France has negotiated with its foreign partners within ERYICA (European Youth Information and Counselling Agency).

Profile of French Network

Head of Network:

CIDJ - Centre d'information et de documentation jeunesse

Network:

- 31 regional / departmental centres
- 207 youth information offices
- 1,217 youth information points

These structures are visited each year by around 5 million young people.

Legal Status:

All the CIJ are non-profit associations (governed by a 1901 law).

The BIJ and PIJ often depend on local authorities or on associations.

Number of information workers working in this field:

300 employed staff in the CIJ.

Responsible Governmental Body:

Ministry for Youth and Sport

- itinerant mobile antennae: Youth Information buses
- specialised spaces: on health, Europe, etc.

For which public?

It is a network open to:

- all young people (students from lower/upper secondary and higher education, working youth, job seekers), as well as parents, teachers, social workers...,
- all subjects (education, vocational training, employment, housing, rights, health, leisure, sports, holidays, Europe, abroad),
- all partners including "missions locales" and PAIOs (Careers guidance centres for disadvantaged youth), CIOs (National Education careers guidance services), ANPEs (job centres), the AFPA (vocational training organisation), associations, local authorities,
- all European countries with whom exchanges take place.

Innovative services

A great many structures that are members of the Youth Information network have set up specific services so as to meet young people's needs as best as possible. These include:

- employment (job offers, writing CVs, job application letters),
- housing (offers of accommodation),
- rights (legal aid),
- tickets (travel, shows).

In addition to carrying out their basic missions, the CIJs are currently called on to play a greater role in ministry-run programmes. This can be seen in a various number of actions:

- the Youth Card (since 1985)
- the *Défi Jeunesse* (Youth Challenge) programme of assistance to projects run by young people, launched in 1987
- the creation of local committees for youth accommodation

YOUTH INFORMATION IN FRANCE

What information?

- a place open to all young people without prior appointment
- documentation for self-service consultation
- information given on the spot, by mail, telephone, videotext, multimedia kiosks...

- preventive actions against drug abuse
- awareness actions for road safety
- *Youth for Europe* programme of the European Union.

They also organise days or weeks around a specific theme (health, road safety, etc.)

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRIJ-CIJ NETWORK

Since its creation, the youth information network has successfully adapted itself to meet changing needs. The challenge for the future now implies dealing with the following issues:

- **employment**

the network itself holds employment potential. In addition, its multiple actions in this area have made it an indispensable tool for young job seekers.

- **training**

Following the network's fast-paced development over the last few years, providing training for its staff has now become an essential service for operation of the network.

Moreover, in the field of vocational training, the network has a key role to play in the light of the institutional changes that have taken place (the 5-year law on employment and vocational training) and which now give the regions greater responsibility in this area.

- **European co-operation**

A resolution adopted by the ministries of European Union member states in March 1995 paved the way for co-operation in the areas of training and inter-connection of the network of centres using new technologies. Each structure within the network is likely to be involved in these projects.

- **multimedia**

Services which produce and diffuse information are inevitably concerned by the increasingly rapid development of new technologies. Inter-connection of the various structures, CD-ROM publishing and installation of multimedia kiosks are all projects that will soon come into being.

CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER NETWORKS

Today, there are a great many youth information and counselling networks in France. Their specific scope and complementarity, which certainly justifies the existence of a public service mission, does however lead to a certain overlapping that is sometimes confusing.

The framework agreement for the Youth Careers Guidance public network signed in March 1996 by five ministries (Education, Labour and Social Affairs, Agriculture, Youth and Sport, Employment) has evidenced the determination for greater coherence and efficiency in government policy on information, careers guidance, training and employment.

The determination to bring the existing network structures closer together was already apparent in February 1995, when a closer link was created between the network dealing with careers guidance for young people and the Youth Information network. Collaborative actions are now more far-reaching and have more clearly-defined goals:

- *"to encourage closer links at local level between existing networks by underpinning their complementary skills, while fully respecting each one of them"*
- *"to strengthen the co-ordination and links between the structures so that none be excluded".*

The collaboration between the different youth structures can include:

- the exchanging of professional skills and know-how;
- the development of common methods for the provision of services;
- joint actions for delivering youth information;
- the creation of common information materials;
- using these structures as observatories that can help to analyse and study young people's needs.