Degree Project

Level: Bachelor’s thesis

Youth Policy of the European Union

Implementation of the EU Youth Strategy for the action to reduce early school leavers within two member states.

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Abstract

This is a case study with purpose to examine the implementation of the European Union Youth Strategy and the action of reducing early school leavers, which was put in force with the youth field of the European Union in 2010. The strategy contains of eight action fields, onwards only the field within education & training will be examined further in line with the strategy’s main objective to provide equal opportunities for young people in education. The theory of Normalization Process Theory focuses on policy implementation and how it becomes fully embedded within the intended society. Throughout the examination will be of how the implementation is supposed to work and how it actually is put into action within the two member states selected for this study, Sweden and Cyprus. The question to examine is to what degree has ‘the EU Youth Strategy’, and the fact of it being implemented within the member states, influenced the reduction of early school leavers. Through the method of comparative case study approach, materials were gathered throughout a variety of forms such as legislations, policies, evaluations, reports and many more. The analysis consists of the implementations of the action into the states, through what institutions and national legislations, as well as analysing the received grant from the European Union and what it has produced within the states. In conclusion, presenting the results of Sweden and Cyprus, both succeeding to reduce early school leavers, nevertheless, through different actions and interpretations of the strategy.

Keywords
European Union, European Youth, Policy implementation, Early school leavers
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1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) was constructed in the 50’s to uphold peace within Europe, since then much has changed. Today there are 28 member states and the work of the EU is not only about upholding peace but also about the free market, Euro and much more. Therefore, it is interesting to examine further into the work of the EU, to get a broader picture of what the organisation does for the people of Europe, as well as, collecting an understanding for the extensive work that the EU does which is not mentioned by the media. Young people of the EU are the future and the society should do what it can to encourage and help the youth develop and offer them the opportunity to broaden their perspective of Europe but also the World. For the EU to do their part and support young people, they collaborate with the member states to set up different areas within the youth field.

The policy for ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ was put into force in 2010 and following onto 2018 with two overall objectives of youth’s equal opportunity to education and encouragement of youth participating in society (European Commission [EC] 2017h). The objectives come from the framework of ‘the EU Youth Strategy’, although they are worked on collectively through different policies, such as ‘the single programme’, which is also known as ‘the Erasmus+ Programme’ created and later put into force in 2014. The programme even has an article in the strategy which insists that ‘the Programme shall contribute to the achievement of:…the overall objectives of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)’ (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50–73, article 4.d.), as well as consisting of four main areas, one named ‘Youth’. The youth field covers everything from education and training, high-quality education, youth participation, youth employment, reducing of early school leavers, and so much more. The field on EU level is in place to support the member states towards implementing improvements through policymaking, organisations and other initiatives to enforce youth people within the EU community (EC 2017h.)

Therefore, it seemed interesting to go deeper into the field to really understand its purpose and intentions for the Europeans. The youth field consists of so much more than the opportunity for student exchanges and study abroad agreements. It proposes ideas for improving the quality of education on national levels, in that way giving more people a better education and the opportunity to get access to education to begin with.
1.1 Purpose and Research question

Peter Esaiasson, Mikael Gilljam, Henrik Oscarsson and Lena Wängnerud in the ‘Methodology Practice’ (2012) introduce various research problems to choose from to show the variety within political studies and normative research problems are one of them. They believe that the research problem "is about constructing good arguments for what constitutes acceptable human action". Issues that may be concerned with, for example, fair distribution of scarce resources, if one as a citizen should follow legislation and to what extent the school should be compensated for the pupils' different conditions for taking advantage of the teaching. Above all, the latter as a research problem is interesting in comparison with this study, since the interesting part is that the EU's entire purpose of the policy is to create better conditions for the European youth citizens regarding their education. Thus, it is curious to see if the EU policy really has an impact on a member state and its national level governance.

This essay will examine ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ (OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1–11) and the action field of reducing early school leavers, if it has been implemented into the member states governments and how it is managed on national levels. This is interesting to study more deeply because the EU should represent the community, the free people, and the EU creates different laws and policies which are meant to apply across all the member states. Thus, it is wonderous how it can come down to the individual member states assets and how the opportunities for the people can differ so much between the different member states when all the states get grants from the EU for specific policies and action areas, such as the Youth area. Therefore, the purpose for this essay is to get an understanding of how the EU can influence member states and to examine if a policy produced by the EU have an effect on the member states or is it just a good document that is being added to the pile of accomplishments presented by the EU.

Therefore, this study focus question will be on the one youth action area of:

*To what degree has ‘the EU Youth Strategy’, and the fact of it being implemented with the two member states of Sweden and Cyprus, influenced the reduction of early school leavers?*

This focus question has been worked on for a long time when the area for young people is so large and wide, there are so many different goals that the EU has set up, but also all the various action areas that the EU is working on improving. Thus, the mentioned action area is the only one of the action areas which will be studied onwards.
As previous research enlightens, not all parts of the youth field have been mentioned as much throughout publications, for example such as study abroad opportunities and youth unemployment. Hence, this is specifically interesting to see how reduction of early school leavers have been implemented into the member states with the support of the EU. The study is based upon the Normalization process theory to understand if the policy has been implemented into member states to the point of it becoming the new norm within the society and thereby have made a significant effect within the action area of the member state. Although the strategy examined is not legislation from the EU to the member states, the member states who have signed the policy needs to follow the implementation and work towards the set objectives.

The strategy made it very difficult to delimit the study, although there is no opportunity to examine the entire strategy for this examination, at the same time as the EU itself conducts an evaluation every three years\(^1\) to see how the strategy works overall and how member states works with it on their national level. Those results are presented in a report which is written and presented by the Commission, which shows that a part of the examination is continually made by the EU themselves. However, it is more of an overall evaluation of each member states and no specific actions taken are presented from the member states. Thus, this study will focus on how the implementation itself has gone into the national level of the two chosen cases of Sweden and Cyprus as examined member states. Onward to analyse whether their actions are in line with the EU policy and strategy and how the grants given for this specific action area were used to implement the strategy. Then a comparison will also be made of how the statistics look in the selected cases about early school departures to see if the measures taken have had an actual impact on reducing early school leaving.

2. Theoretical framework

Henceforth, previous research, background and the relevant theory will be presented through separated sections of, the youth policy area, the EU Youth Strategy, the implementation instruments and normalization process theory. The section starts with the previous research to connect the study with the science field as interdisciplinary relevance and then move onwards to the theory.

\(^1\) Reports from year 2012 and 2015 to be reviewed for this essay, as the 2018 had not been published at the point when the research was done.
2.1 Previous research

The previous research within the area of EU’s young people are mostly coming from within the EU itself, through differently constructed research work groups and departments, mainly the European Commission. This includes research for example of the member states public participation in elections that the states institutions have gathered to set up policies, programmes and actions to move developments forward within the youth field. The scientific findings are presented and published by the EU institutions as evaluations, youth reports, resolutions and updates from the National Agencies, e.g. through the ‘Erasmus+ Annual Report’ (EC 2017i).

Although it is important to mention that the member states are part of collecting the data due to their national agencies cooperating directly with the EU institutions, however there is very little material undertaken by the individual states. The material that the national agencies contribute, such as statistics and data from different corporations and institutions within the state, are then shared with the EU to be part of the publications. This is then presented through e.g. ‘the EU Youth Report’, which was published in 2012 (SWD/2012/256 final) and 2015 (COM/2015/0429 final) as evaluations of the first and second cycles of the strategy, how the implementation of the framework had progressed and what the results were so far. Nevertheless, in the youth reports there is mostly talk about the strategy and the implementation developments all together, a few state specific actions are presented, and the reports are mainly focused on the performing numbers instead of what actual actions were taken on national level. In consequence, the research is interesting to look at but predominantly from the perspective of assessing the performance of the implementation.

Previous research is also collected from a variety of published books, such as the European Union Politics (McCormick 2011) and Policy-making in the European Union (Wallace, et all. 2015), which are less statistical and more of an explanation tool to understand the processes of the implementation stage of a policy cycle. Notwithstanding, the process of implementation is as important for examining the data and the collected material of today, as for understanding the policy-making process and the construction of policies, which is presented through these books of previous research.

The present examination gains interdisciplinary relevance considering the contribution of published research, reports and studies, from a variety of institutions from different field of research concerning youth education and participation (Teorell and Svensson 2007, 18). The insights of this material are used to answer the research question which has not been answered previously thorough this method and angle. The implemented actions are important to examine
for the political society and the future policy-making within the EU, as well as for the onwards developments within this policy area and further improvements of the actions to succeed and reach the set goal to reduce early school leavers.

2.2 Youth policy, a part of public policy

The EU consists of different levels of legislation, for example; laws and policies. Public policy is one type of legislation within the EU and it has been defined as ‘whatever governments do to address the needs and problems of society’. It can take the form of public statements, government programmes, laws and actions but also as inertia and avoidance. It even has been compared to the ebb and flow, in such way as political and public interest in policy issues come and go as a response to the needs and problems which occurs within the member states (McCormick 2011, 309).

Public policy is driven by the complexity and ever-changing balance between the EU institutions, states and different collaboration actors. The policy’s development and implementation are therefore, as well, ever-changing through time and depending on the needs of the people and the member states. Thereby the programmes within the policy field vary between being short termed and long termed goals (McCormick 2011, 310). Education is quite the considerable field with long term goals for the EU, following the Lisbon treaty. Nevertheless, as the field of education consists of programmes and strategies which are area specific, the programmes are short termed and ever-changing with evolution and the needs of the people. For example, the Erasmus+ programme is set to expire 2020 (EC 2017a), but due to the treaty it will likely continue onwards yet in new forms, thereby constructed as short termed and open to the possibility of change after evaluation.

The youth strategy is a very typical public policy as it is developed out of the need in society and the Commission concluded it to ‘create more opportunities for EU citizens, improve access to opportunities for all and demonstrate solidarity’ (COM/2009/0200 final, #1). The strategy was created as a new framework, build out of previous EU programmes in the youth field, going back to the creation of the field in 1988. The previous frameworks for the field was evaluated and did not achieve good enough efficiency or had the capacity to deliver its set objectives, consequently ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ was presented and put into force 2010 and is still in force (ibid, #3).

The youth strategy consists of so-called tertiary rules, which are not legally binding but include recommendations and opinions issued by the EU (McCormick 2011, 311). In
accordance with the articles 6 and 165 of the TFEU, the EU must support, coordinate and supplement the member states actions within the framework of the youth field (COM/2015/0429 final). Hence, the EU is obligated by the treaty to help the member states when it comes to education, even though the EU does not have any executive or shared competence over this policy area. They can only act with a supporting role to what the member states already have decided to do but the EU have no right to make decisions within the area.

Education, in particular, is the responsibility of the member states, in comparison to the social policy, culture and employment policy which are all shared competences between the member states and the EU. Nevertheless, due to many policies having the youth perspective in common with education, it gets complicated to keep the competences apart in some areas within the youth strategy (McCormick 2011, 150). Hence, for each area of the strategy the specific regulation or policy needs to be advised.

The youth strategy has two main objectives which are ‘to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and the job market’ and ‘to encourage young people to actively participate in society’ (EC 2017h). To achieve the former objective some of the actions within the strategy are; to incorporate higher quality of education, ensure equal access to education and reduce early school leavers (EC 2017g). Onwards the focus will be upon the action to reduce early school leavers, which consists of youths up to the age of 18, depending on the state’s education system and at what age youths begin and finishes upper secondary school. Therefore, the definition of early school leavers includes youths leaving school before completing upper secondary school (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016).

2.3 The action – Reduce early school leavers

Since the strategy was put into force within the EU, there have been two evaluation reports published up until the point of this essay research in 2018, the first in 2012 and the second in 2015. Through these the progress up until that point are presented and what implementations have been put into action, this will be examined more thoroughly hereby.

The youth strategy has two main objectives, equal access to education and encourage young people to participate more in politics. This is divided into fields of different actions, ‘Education & Training’ had the framework set in 2009 and was put into force in 2010 to achieve equal access to high-quality education and reduce early school leavers. To introduce a complement to the formal education, the opportunity of non-formal learning was to be promoted and recognised in the member states. Thereby promoting that young people’s transition between
education, training and the labour market should be supported, as well as a reduction in early school leaving to improve the knowledge of young people. Therefore, initiatives by member states and the Commission within their respective spheres of competence where to implement actions such as; support to the development of youth work and other non-formal learning opportunities as one action to address early school leaving (OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1–11).

When the resolution of ‘An EU strategy for Youth’ was published later in 2011, the actions were still in line with the framework in force since 2010. Mostly it was a reminder of what the actions were supposed to be within the youth field and the European Parliament agreeing with the publication that the youth field is crucial to our society. The resolution recognised the importance of cooperation among institutions at local, regional, national and European level in order to achieve the objectives of the policy and called upon the Commission, the member states and youth representatives to play an active part in implementing the youth strategy (OJ C 161E, 31.5.2011. p. 21–31. #8).

The Parliament also encouraged the member states to intensify the interaction between the sides of the knowledge triangle, education, research and innovation as key elements for growth and job creation; strongly recommended promoting common criteria for stronger mutual recognition of non-formal education (ibid, #30). Also, to draw more attention to the problem of early school leavers and the measures that were needed to ensure that a high percentage as possible of young people would complete their period of compulsory education (ibid, #32). The Parliament was giving the involved institutions a push forward through the resolution and thereby, giving everyone involved the confirmation that developments was moving in the intentional path.

Perhaps the most important points in the resolution for education to young people are the importance of providing young people with access to guidance and counselling on the transition from education to work. For the member states to ensure that children and young people, irrespective of the families’ legal status or coming from a low-income family, to have the same right and equal access to state education. To offer them help to succeed with respect for their own culture and language, the necessary command of the language of the host member states and a knowledge of its culture as a tool for integration (ibid, #36-38). This is one of the main points from the resolution and without this aspect in mind, the strategy is unlikely to fulfil its purpose.

The joint report of 2012, evaluated the developments so far, completing the first cycle of the youth strategy. As the report displays a majority of the member states reported that they had
taken measures to recognise, support and further develop the youth field in line with the Council Resolution on youth work. The Commission and member states were working together to improve education & training through the ‘ET2020’ framework, which is the over-viewing goal for the policy area and not specific in this matter to the youth strategy alone (OJ C 394, 20.12.2012, p. 5–16.).

The 2012 joint report presented the first cycle of the youth strategy, which had focused primarily on non-formal learning as a complementary tool to formal learning. Although both the Commission and the member states actively support youth organisations as important provider of non-formal learning opportunities. Many member states emphasize the role of youth work as reaching out to early school leavers, by this means, helping them get back into education or work. In this context, the member states did take actions to raise awareness of non-formal learning and to recognise other learning outcomes at national level (ibid.).

With all considered, the second cycle passed and in 2015 the second youth report was published (EU 2016). Regarding if any further implementations had been made and what the results had become since the start of the strategy but also since the first cycle’s evaluation.

Nevertheless, due to the economic crisis that occurred in the EU and terrorist attacks throughout Europe it was a tough cycle for the young people. In total, 13.7 million were neither employed nor in education or training (NEETs). Close to 27 million were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, the poverty rates were higher for young people than for the overall population and involuntary part-time work or protracted temporary positions exposed this generation to a risk of long-term poverty. The young people were in more need of help than before and it was critical, the actions that had been taken previous years did not help them in this crisis and it was very clear that the people were hurting (COM/2015/0429 final. #2).

However, the report presented that in order to make the framework’s implementation more effective the Commission and the member states could improve the sharing of relevant data and other collected evidence outside the youth field. The situation of young people in the EU is measured regularly of a dashboard of 41 indicators on conditions affecting young people. 26 member states are increasingly using these indicators and further evidence from e.g. Eurostat, Eurofound and the partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe. All parts need to work on sharing these evidences beyond the frame of youth policy and with others working with young people (ibid, #4).

As for reducing early school leavers, very little was done in the filed due to other actions in need of higher priority at the time. Even though divergences across the EU remained, early
school leaving could be seen to decline (ibid, #2). Some actions were taken by the member states to improve educational outcomes and to bring down early school leaving and promote higher-education attainment to reach the Europe 2020 headline targets, but not as much as planned for (ibid, #3.1). The target in the Europe 2020 strategy for education, is to reduce the rates of early leaving to below 10% by 2020 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016. 312).

2.4 Implementation process and instruments

The implementation stage of a policy process is only one part of ‘the policy cycle’ which consists of five stages; agenda setting, formulation, adoption, implementation and evaluation. Implementation works in the way of acting upon adopted policies, it is the stage of the policy cycle where the idea of a policy is put into action and placed at the member states to be embedded into the society (McCormick 2011, 312). This transpires through actions that have been decided through the policy. For instance, if a state wants to help the people to become healthier, then the state must put action into place, through building workout centres, educating on healthy foods and train gym instructors or coaches. These measures represent the tools to become healthier which have been implemented in the state.

Implementation is a critical part of the process for a policy, even though at this late stage of the cycle there might be political or bureaucratic resistance and policies can be reinterpreted and redefined (Krill 2016). Different problems may arise such as lack of political agreement or will, problems within the institutions responsible for the implementation itself, resistance of the subjects of the policy, a redefinition of priorities as a result of changed circumstances or new data, and many more aspects. Everything is still open and possible to change the outcome of the policy; the process is still ongoing (McCormick 2011, 316).

The institution of EU which is responsible for overseeing implementation is the Commission, yet it must work through and with national authorities to make the actual work happen. All the member states have different capacities, their efficiency and commitment vary from each other, making it a difficult job for the Commission to collaborate with them. Therefore, the Commission relies heavily on individuals and interest groups to keep an eye on their home state and alert the Commission if anyone falls behind with the work (ibid, 316).

For the presented strategy to be effectively implemented there is a need for instruments in the specific youth field. Therefore, implementation instruments have been constructed by the EU, a set of tools to support and to implement the specific initiatives in the youth field. There
are seven instruments: knowledge building and evidence-based youth policymaking, mutual learning, progress reporting, dissemination of results, monitoring of the process, consultations and structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations and, lastly, mobilization of the EU programmes and funds (OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1–11. ‘FURTHER AGREES that’ 3.iii.a-g).

Since this study has its focus on implementations to reduce early school leavers, many studies about early leavers are done through surveys or analysis of national student registers, this is done to ensure that governments strategies and policies target young people. This is called knowledge building and evidence-based youth policymaking, it is important to that the member states governments work from concrete evidence, experiences and knowledge to be able to improve where it is mostly needed. The EU Youth Report is one of the key documents when it comes to presenting statistics and data on youth (EC 2017i).

Knowledge building and evidence-based youth policymaking instrument is based upon the idea that with a better knowledge and understanding for the living conditions, values and attitudes of young people’s needs. Which through gathering and sharing with other relevant policy fields, appropriate and timely measures can be taken within the policymaking process. Such knowledge can be collected via support from ‘the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy’ and its correspondents using youth research, studies, special European youth surveys and networks of researchers (OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1–11. ‘FURTHER AGREES that’ 3.iii.a).

The youth reports are also essential contributors towards evidence-based policymaking, as well as cooperation between relevant authorities. Youth researchers, young people, youth organisations and those active in youth work are encouraged as well (ibid). The bigger and broader the network of collaborations are, the greater knowledge can be incorporated and the evidence to be more correct, which can help forwards with the policymaking. The knowledge and evidence of the reality is so important, in the way to see what is needed to be supported and thereby plant the idea for policymaking and to come up with the actions that are relevant to achieve the idea.

2.5 Normalization Process Theory

A theory to examine the implementation process of an action. Normalization Process Theory (NPT) is built upon the idea that for an action to have a complete effect, the action needs to be implemented at the level of becoming the new norm within the area of a society. As
presented by Carl May and Tracy Finch, NPT ‘is concerned with the social organization of the work (implementation), of making practices routine elements of everyday life (embedding), and of sustaining embedded practices in their social contexts (integration)’ (2009, 538).

The theory is constructed upon four key components of coherence, cognitive participation, collective action and reflexive monitoring. Through these components focus is on the general processes by which material practices come to be embedded in the society’s contexts, and thereby becoming fully implemented as a new norm (May and Finch 2009, 539). This is the belief of the NPT model, that through these components the idea for example in this case the strategy is the idea, which will have an impact and reach the outset goal as a new norm within the society in order to achieve the goal of the idea.

The theory according to May and Finch comes from within the work that the people do, defined work as ‘purposive social action that involves the investment of personal and group resources to achieve goals’ (2009, 539). The work directions come for the material practices, in this case the directives from the EU and the paperwork of the Youth Strategy that carries the idea. Although there are some concerns with material practices to keep in mind, such as, not knowing the things that people do to perform certain acts and meet specific goals. Onwards, there are also concerns with embedding material practices that are already produced, reproduced, and transformed, in formal settings and within an institutional or organizational framework, such as a policy or Youth Strategy, which are intentionally composed and purposively directed, to then putting it to practice (May and Finch 2009, 539-540).

The NPT framework is constructed as a so-called interaction chain, where directions are referred to as implementation and the work takes place in socially patterned points in time and space which are connected by the flow of the neutral social processes. The normalization part of the theory is defined as ‘the work that actors do as they engage with some ensemble of activities and by which means it becomes routinely embedded in the matrices of already existing, socially patterned, knowledge and practices’ (May and Finch 2009, 540). Consequently, this theory only includes processes with the intention of deliberate social action within formal organizational settings and excludes the processes of 'evolutionary' or 'traditional' historical processes of incorporation new laws or governmental goals.
The function of the four key components coherence, cognitive participation, collective action and reflexive monitoring, as an interaction chain can be seen in the illustrated ‘figure 1’ above. These mechanisms work together to incorporate the policy as a norm within the society. Coherence insinuates that a practice; an ensemble of beliefs, behaviours, and acts which manipulate or organize objects and others, is made possible by a set of ideas about its meaning, uses, and utility; and by socially defined and organized competencies (May and Finch 2009, 542). In other words, the idea needs to be planted for something to be done and then shared with others through a collective interest for the idea coherence occurs and thereby starting the process of making something change. In such way that the EU have noticed the problem with early school leavers and therefrom gotten the idea to do something to help the member states reduce leavers on the national levels.

Cognitive participation is the component in which the engagement occur, human engagement with the material practice runs throughout the long interaction chain. The chain can involve highly focused work, or more diffuse patterns of activity, the main point is for actors small or large to engage in social events and across organizational boarders. Such chains are organized through socially patterned cognitive participation, which is an important component for NPT to prosper (May and Finch 2009, 543). As for this case where the idea was promoted by the EU to encourage the participation, the idea then spread out and a cognitive participation occurs. Participation can occur through individual initiatives; the point is to work with the idea and whether that is through an individual talking to another individual or starting...
some sort of engagement groups does not matter. It all is some sort of cognitive participation to encourage people to engage with the idea of the previous component.

The component which holds all the strings of the theory is collective action, the centre of the chain which work partly to reshape behaviours or actions, to reorganize relationships and contexts, it involves collective actions aimed at the goal. Working together with already existing actors to not having to reinvent the wheel, but to collaborate to achieve improvement or other necessaries that needs to be done for the society, without the collective view much can be overlooked (May and Finch 2009, 544). Taking advantage of as the organizations and institutions that already exist, with the goal of having a big impact and spreading the idea further and deeper into the society and all its actors. This is probably the most important component of the chain, as without the support of the actors within the society it is very difficult to reach out to the society as a whole, sure you can impact some individuals but is the structure of the society is not behind the idea than changes are going to be hard. As aspects and actors within a society need to have a change in mind in order to incorporate it within the daily life of the people, without the society saying something is good or bad then it is probably something that most people will overlook. It needs to be an idea incorporated within the whole society for it to be a collective action.

The last component, reflexive monitoring continuously evaluates the patterns of collective action and their outcomes, both formally and informally through participants in the implementation processes, the formality and intensity of this monitoring work reflects the nature of their cognitive participation and collective action. To keep in mind that embedding is dependent on work that defines and organizes the everyday understanding of a practice (May and Finch 2009, 545-546). The self-evaluation is necessary in order to keep moving forward and onwards with the process of implementing an idea to its fullest. Without evaluation the process of NPT might stop in total, the evaluation is what makes it keep on going the making the chain complete. The monitoring of the process is important to understand how the process have gone, have the idea succeeded and what could have been done differently, remember that and the next idea might be implemented better or faster due to the society and the people that put in the work know what to do. Nonetheless, according to the NPT these components are the main keys for successfully incorporating a policy within the society and everyday life of the people as it then will become normalized and their new norm.

In conclusion, NPT offers a robust and replicable framework for analysing the dynamic collective work and relationships involved in the implementation process and social shaping of
practices. It is a theory for empirical application rather than abstract critique and focuses attention on organized and organizing agency in the production and reproduction of the implementation, embedding (or not), and continuing integration of material practices. Although in 1991 Boudon were hesitant and argued that theories such as this is not simply powerful, but also ‘efficient’ because they can 'federate' and consolidate empirical and theoretical observations across disciplines (May and Finch 2009, 549-550). All social processes are complex and emergent, implementation processes are no different. In real-world studies, ‘predictions about outcomes are complicated by multiple confounders that include the sheer number of actors in a process’ (May and Finch 2009, 548), stating that it is never easy to understand and examine a process with so many actors and different wills involved in it. Crucially, these processes are also sites of resistance and conflict and therefore, predictions are complex and emergent process are a problem, even though the normalization part.

3. Research Design

The main design for the study is a comparative case study method of the implementation between two member states within the EU. The selection of the member states was done through a pilot study, supported by findings in the Youth strategy as explained in further detail below.

3.1 Comparative case study

The comparative case study approach (CCS) is a case-based research with its approach coming from the macro, meso, and micro dimensions. The approach engages two logics of comparison: first, the more common com-pare and contrast logic; and second, a “tracing across” sites or scales. The CCS approach is considered to be an exploratory method that comes from experience and aids in the process of discovery or problem-solving. The approach is sought out to be a reminder of how much actually can be achieved through comparison and by focusing on “the phenomenon” of a study. The term phenomenon directs the researcher, first, toward something like a policy or a program and then, it leads us onto asking what might be unexpected about it, and why and to whom does it matter (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017. 6).

The method functions around examining through different angles of the comparison, it puts the attention to the vertical, horizontal and the transversal elements of a study. The three axes stands for: ‘a horizontal look that not only contrasts one case with another, but also traces social actors, documents, or other influences across these cases; a vertical comparison of influences
at different levels, from the international to the national to regional and local scales; and a transversal comparison over time’ (ibid, 14).

By that it means that there are much more to take into consideration of a comparative case study than only examining one specific angle and part when so much more factors are affecting on the outcomes of, for example a policy. The CCS do not only focus on one unit, but it also pays attention towards the individuals, groups, sites and/or states, all in once as a sort of multi-sited ethnography. ‘Multi-sited ethnography does not contrast places assumed to be unrelated; instead, it looks at linkages across place, space, and time’. This way the study may look at how processes unfold, often influenced by actors and events over time in different locations and at different scales (Ibid, 7).

Barlett and Varvus argue that comparative case studies need to consider two different logics of comparison. The first need to identify specific units of analysis and compare and contrast them in order to find cases to study. The second, processual logic seeks to trace across individuals, groups, sites, and time periods to find the specific units which are interesting for each studies approach (ibid, 8).

The CCS approach does not start with a bounded case, instead a policy or a new standardized assessment is chosen as the phenomenon searched for to understand. The case is then formed by tracing across sites and scales to understand how the phenomenon came into being, how it has been appropriated by different actors, and how it has been transformed in practice. At the same time, even while including multiple sites and cases, comparative case studies purpose is not to flatten the cases by ignoring valuable contextual information, such as historical circumstances, or imposing concepts or categories taken from one site onto another. The CCS approach aim to disrupt dichotomies, static categories, and taken-for-granted notions of what is going on. Nonetheless, the CCS approach also aims to understand and incorporate the perspectives of social actors in the study, this is common to most qualitative research, especially ethnography and ethnographically oriented studies (ibid, 10).

The CCS approach also derived from a critical theoretical stance, by mean that the approach is steered by critical theory with concerns and assumptions regarding power and inequality. Critical theory aims to critique inequality and changing society, meaning that it studies the cultural production of structures, processes, and practices of power, exploitation, and agency; and it reveals how common-sense, hegemonic notions about the social world maintain differences of various sorts. Attention to power and inequality is central to the CCS approach (ibid, 11).
Lastly, Bartlatt and Vavrys argue that traditional case study approaches are missing a major opportunity by not integrating comparison more centrally into their work. The CCS approach encourage comparison across the three axes in order to get a more extended result with more units taken in consideration of influencing the outcome (Ibid, 14).

Considering working with the NPT and the study here presented this is the most fitting method in mind, collecting all the different aspects and approaches made in order to collect the data, selecting the cases and making an understanding of the policy at work.

As the method of CCS approach is used together with the NPT this will be an interpretative case study to apply the theory on the case. These types of case studies resemble atheoretical case studies in one aspect, both, are selected for analysis because of an interest in the case rather than an interest in the formulation of general theory. They differ, however, in that they make explicit use of established theoretical propositions. In these studies, a generalization is applied to a specific case with the aim of throwing light on the case rather than of improving the generalization in any way. Hence, they are studies in 'applied science'.

3.2 Operationalization of the NPT

The function of the four key components coherence, cognitive participation, collective action and reflexive monitoring was presented previously within the NPT section. These four keys are here on to be operationalized to explain more specific what this study will examine in order to find results in line with the theory as well as the question to answer. Since this is not a typical variable use study, it will not be presented as such either. The operationalization of the NPT is based on the key components and will onwards be specified to connect the keys to this study and the components which will be examined and evaluated. If the keys, then as defined onwards are fulfilled and achieved then that means that the cases have succeeded with implementing the policy according to the NPT.

Starting with the first key of the chain, coherence is the stage of the chain where the idea is created. The idea is ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ which is already created and published by the EU as a policy accepted by the member states; therefore, this key component will not be examined any more specifically since it is already achieved.

Next key component is cognitive participation the key that promote and encourage participation in order to spread the idea. Participation can occur through individual initiatives; the point is to work with the idea and whether that is through an individual talking to another individual or starting some sort of engagement groups does not matter. Therefore, this will be
examined in such way of looking into numbers of started engagement groups within the policy area or other types of initiatives and activities made by the people.

The third key which holds all the strings of the theory is collective action, the centre of the chain. It focuses on reshaping and reorganizing to achieve collective actions, when the society, the institutions and the actors within a state work together the changes are more likely to be achieved. The support of the organizations and institutions are crucial for a policy to be implemented and accepted by the society. This will be examined through number of acts and initiatives the states institutions and actors have made for this specific policy area. Also looking into the grants that the member states receive from the EU and how that have been used and how much have been put into the policy area.

Lastly, the reflexive monitoring key which focus is on the self-evaluation, which is necessary in order to keep moving forward and onwards with the process of implementing an idea to its fullest. Without evaluation the process of NPT might stop in total, therefore this is something that is greatly done by the EU. The EU publish evaluation reports every third year, this way they can follow the process and if necessary, they can make some changes with the execution of the policy along the way. Therefore, this key component is also achieved by the EU itself and this study will not go into the process of the reports, although the two published reports to far will be used and analysed for the progress results of the cases.

Even though the NPT has the four key components only two of them will be in focus onwards, not because they are any less important but because this study focus lies on the implementation of the policy on the member states levels and not on the EU level. This is only to separate the angle of the study from the EU to the member states and how they actually work with the policy which is to be implemented on the states level. Also, it is not needed to examine something that the EU already have done or presented themselves.

3.3 The selected Member States

Regarding this comparative case study and the chosen cases to examine, which are Sweden and Cyprus. As the method section mentioned that there are many factors to take into account with a CCS approach, therefore the chosen states are selected out of a pilot study in order to find good candidates which would fit the purpose of the study.

The states are typical for the categories of high and low shareholder in the EU counted in Euro, received amount of grant, economic welfare statues in GNP out of the member states within the EU and the state capacity in population size. The selected states are diverse in many
ways due to be each other’s opponents within these categories, e.g. Sweden has 3.1% shares and Cyprus has 0.1%, placing Sweden in the top seven and Cyprus in the bottom three out of the member states (Eurostat 2017). The population size differs more than percent of shares, as Cyprus has 1,189,085 million compared to Sweden’s 9,982,709, and thereby separating the states quite a lot as one is big and one is small in population (Worldometers 2017).

The grant is the first and foremost important part when developing higher-quality education and to reduce early school leavers for all the states to have the same possibilities to work on it. Even though the grant is different for each state due to the four criterions to receive a grant, the grant can still have a great impact for that specific state. Some states need more financial support than others to cause a positive development and get the comparable positive results in the end. What the grant for each state amounts to is decided through a calculation depending on the four criterions population, cost of living, distance between capitals and performance (EC 2017a, 122).

Sweden was selected out of the qualifications as being one of the most highly seen welfare states, with a good healthcare and education system in place. Many states around the world looks up to the state and it is also my home state, which makes it interesting to compare to other states. Cyprus was chosen out of the interest to see how a smaller state, which has had more state issues in the last 50 years than Sweden, still seem to do well with economics and stability today. Might that be due to the help of the EU or have the state manage to adjust its welfare to the population and economic capacity. It is an interesting comparison to do between a long time stable welfare and a more problematic welfare to see if the youth strategy might have had an impact on the outcomes. As for how Sweden collect their evidence for early school leavers, it is done through surveys and student registers mainly. Thereby, the presented statistics is fairly correct and reliable, the main purpose of the surveys are the production of sample based statistical data on early leaving and in some cases, it is accompanied by qualitative information as to collect a more detailed information about the youth’s experiences (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2016, 7-8).

The two relevant states for this study went through the process of a pilot study, meaning that all the 28 member states were taken in consideration as first and then looked at one at a time according to the chosen typical categories. Thereafter, the most interesting member states was selected and investigated more thoroughly to end with the two member states of Sweden and Cyprus. All states that are currently members of the EU are part of the youth strategy and even neighbouring states are part of the programme (EC 2017d). The selected states represent
many more states and states with broad diversity, much broader than it was possible to examine within this study, and therefore this is not a study that is generally possible to generalise to all the member states. This is a case specific study, which can be taken into consideration with other studies in the future but not direct applied to the other member states or states outside of the EU.

Although this is not a random selection of samples, it was the best process to get the representative perspective of the member states, otherwise it might have become overrepresented of the wealthiest states and those with most population, or the other way around. Through the selection process a broader perspective of states and people are represented even though not all EU states are examined in this study.

3.4 The material of the EU Youth Strategy

Going into this study, ‘the Erasmus+ Programme’ and the Bologna process is mostly mentioned out of the youth field of EU. Therefore, the main policy for closer examination is ‘the EU Youth Strategy’, which is a strategy joint through previous framework and policies within the youth field going back to 1988 (COM/2009/0200 final. #3.1). Since 2010 when it was put into force the strategy has been the main objectives for the youth field of the EU and even ‘the Erasmus+ Programme’ (onwards referred to as ‘the programme’) have directives incorporated in its policy which derived from the youth strategy. The programme works with a great youth perspective and have a chapter dedicated to only ‘Youth’ directives and implementations, also one of its general goals have the youth in focus, uttering ‘whereas equal access for all youth people to high-quality education and training at all levels should be supported and opportunities for lifelong learning should be further promoted’ (OJ C 161E, 31.5.2011. p. 21–31.).

The main material worked on throughout this study are legislations from the EU, such as ‘the EU Youth Strategy’, its following communication, youth reports and evaluations, as well as the programme and other published documentations within the youth field. The actions under the programme are divided between decentralised measures, managed in each country by national agencies, and centralised steps, managed by ‘the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency’ (EACEA) in Brussels (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50–73. Article 26). Nonetheless, the agencies and the EACEA get their instructions and work orders from the implementations of the programme, the articles within the legislation prescribe how to act upon the idea (EC 2017b).
Tabell 1. Overview of the main documents within the youth field.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of publication</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>‘An EU Youth Strategy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Youth report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint report of the first cycle, 2010-2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>‘Erasmus+ programme’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Youth report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Structural Indicators on Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe – 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the youth strategy, ‘the Directorate General for Education, Youth Sport, and Culture’ (DG EAC) is the department within the European Commission which oversees the fields of education, training, youth, sport and culture. Hence, its actions concerning youth are based upon the framework of ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ and the department is continually working with implementing the objectives within the member states (EC 2017f). The framework of the strategy which was endorsed in 2009 and put into action in 2010 is still the foundation for today’s youth field (COM/2009/0200 final.). Although in 2012, a joint report was presented on the developed implementations of the first cycle, with a renewed framework for the next cycle (OJ C 394, 20.12.2012, p. 5–16, 2). Through these cycles of three years each, ending with an evaluation and presenting a renewed framework for the coming cycle is a way to contain the long-term goal, the main objectives, but to renew the short-term actions (COM/2009/0200 final, #4.2).

The first cycle of implementation for the strategy took place between 2010-2012, the second between 2013-2015 and the third cycle is ongoing since 2016 and lasts until 2018. As for the action field of education and training, during the first cycle, many member states emphasised the role of working with youths and reached out to early school leavers to help them get back into education or work (OJ C 394, 20.12.2012, p. 5–16, #4.1). The youth education came into focus for this study, because the youths are the ones who will take over one day and create the future. If we do not teach them and share our history with them now, who knows how it might evolve when the elders of today are unable to keep the world turning (COM/2009/0200 final, #1).
To find the right answers to this research question and following the NPT some material also comes from the member states institutions and governments as well. Some legislations from the states are presented to see if they have incorporated the policy within the governments and national legislation or not. Even though not so easy to find, some findings will be presented and analysed in line with the youth perspective and ‘the EU Youth Strategy’.

Since the youth strategy includes almost everything involving young people, it had to be narrowed down for this study and the focus landed upon the action field of ‘Education & Training’ as one of the main fields of the youth strategy (EC 2017h). In particular, as the research of the material progressed the focus went deeper within the action field, which promote specifically how to reduce early school leavers. Most interesting, the implementation of actions on national levels towards the goals of reducing early school leavers and that is onwards examined, and the corresponding process so far is assessed (EC 2017g).

3.5 Limitations of the study

‘The EU Youth Strategy’ has its objective set for 2018 and the Erasmus+ programme has its progress set until 2020. It means that the work is still in progress and therefore, it can only be evaluated on what has been done so far without assessing the final fulfilments of the objective. With just about one year left, much can be done in the next months, even though the implementations should have started by now and not only be a plan anymore. For positive findings in this study, most actions should have been constructed and the implementation stage of the policy cycle should be possible to evaluate as to how it is incorporate so far by the states. However, time might still be needed to properly evaluate the specific effects of the implemented actions. The focus therefore lies on the basic implementation of actions and how the state has planned for the action to provide in line with the policy.

Regarding the case selection, the states are specifically chosen due to some criteria’s and may not represent other countries in similar policies, which will cause a generalization problem. These states were chosen for their specific qualifications and for this specific category of the EU with its youth strategy. The states within the EU are very diverse in culture, language, history, political system, population, economic power and much more, which could also be part of implementation effects and the final outcome of the strategy. Therefore, it can be assumed that the chosen methods and theory of this study will lead to a reasonable outcome within the cases study’s outset purpose.
Limitation of the area examined is difficult itself due to youth being such a big part of society and the EU’s development, it is spread over so many different policies that it can easily have been some parts, reports, legislations or evaluations missed within this study. However, since all the published documents of the EU are spread out over the institutions and departments within the EU, even though there is a ‘Youth’ webpage under the Commission, there are many more documents to be found when going through other departments webpages. That has made the collecting of material difficult but also very interesting to see that the youth field is such a big part of the EU. It seems to be taken into great seriousness and appraised with great importance of the EU, which gives hope for the future and coming developments throughout the member states.

4. Results and Analysis

The analysis of the policy, its implementations in the states will here be examined, how the policy have been implemented and if so, according to the policies guidelines or not. The different results that the policy and programme that have been generated so far will be presented, also analysing how the expected results of the Commission have been accomplished by the states.

4.1 “The phenomenon” – ‘the EU Youth Strategy’

The method of CCS approach is constructed upon examining within different levels which was explained in previous section about the method. It focuses on the phenomenon before going into the actual comparison, and the phenomenon here is the policy which is being examined and the specific youth action area of reduction of early school leavers. As mentioned previous, the action area is set by the EU as a common goal within the member states to achieve and through the policy being accepted by the member states they have also agreed upon the terms of the policy in order to achieve the set goal of reaching 10% early school leavers before 2020. This is the so-called phenomenon for this analysis.

Onwards CCS approach the phenomenon from various angles, such as what or whom have influenced the policy to be constructed from the beginning. In this case the request from member states and the initiative from the EU to take actions towards reducing early school leavers were parts which influenced the action area to be taken into the policy. To educate the free people is considered a privilege and something good for the people of the EU, especially since education is mostly free in of the member states. Education should be something for the
people and the communities to strive for instead of becoming a percent of the early school leavers and perhaps end up on a rocky road. By offering the people of the member states good education the states can benefit from that in many ways, due to a well-educated community the society might be stronger and more independent from governmental contribution. It can be a win-win situation for both the individual, the community and the state if people finish their education.

As for the angle of time, education is something that has changed in many ways over the years. Going way back in time, education was only for the wealthy and privilege people which could afford to pay for good and high education, now a day it is available for everyone thanks to governmental contributions and the opportunity to take up a student loan to pay for higher education. Even though the quality varies between education areas, countries and even some educations still only are accessible though paying for it, most people have the opportunity to get a education of some sort and a diploma even though it may vary between the value of the diplomas. Time will keep on changing the opportunities and construction of education as the years keep on going by, this is just the way the life and world works. Nothing is permanent although what has been should be considered when education forms are moving forward.

4.2 Sweden’s development and implementations

According to the commission’s platform Eurydice (2018/19) almost half the Swedish population is involved in some form of organised education. Sweden also has among the highest public spending on education relative to GDP in the EU, which is a part of making education free of charge within the state. The education system is decentralised and steered by goals and learning outcomes that are decided at a central level with the overall responsibility of the Swedish government, which sets the framework for education at all levels. The major part for school funding’s comes from municipal tax revenues, which makes it possible to offer education free of change and the grant coming from the EU supports the system.

As for the case of Sweden to be compared through the CCS approach, Sweden is a country with around 10 million people in total and about 1,84 million are young people. With a high percentage of 86,9 % completing upper secondary education and the low number of 6,7 % are early leavers from education and training. With a goal from the EU to be under 10 % early school leaving, Sweden is on the good side of this specific goal within the strategy. Hence, by only looking at numbers for the education of the state it looks good so far in comparison with the EU overall (EC 2014, Sweden). The numbers indicated that the state is working with the
right tools in order to reduce the early school leavers, as the CCS approach points out through the vertical comparison that influence can come from different levels. This being a collaboration between the EU and the Swedish government in order to achieve common goals.

As for what Sweden receives from the EU in grants, according to the 2016 report the state received around 4.4 million euros for the youth field (EC 2017c, Annex 3.12). Which is average comparing to the other member states grants handed out, but as presented above the grant is decided from four criteria’s and therefore adapted to the state’s capacities (EC 2017a, 122). Out of the received grant, it produced activities within different sections of the youth field, but also constructed project and an average of 29,623 EUR was put in to each project during this year and an average of 798 EUR per participant was put into the youth field on national level. The part that went into projects generated 376 projects with a success rate of 49 %. Thereby, presenting clearly actions taken within the youth field and putting the grant in the right place, out of the received grant, a total of 3.6 million EUR was put into the activities, projects and the participants (EC 2017c, Annex 19.44-45). Through these project communities were created in order to support and help young people with various things, everything from just finding a friend to make school more fun or to get some extra tutoring to pass classes and building up the young people confident. The projects show themselves through all kinds of community actions and various organisations which are founded on governmental contributions in order to support the youth succeed, more on this below.

Regarding to the Swedish government’s implementations are reported to the EU by ‘the Ministry of Education and Research of Sweden’ in 2014 through a national report. In line with one of the main objectives of the youth strategy, equal access to education, the national report informs that ‘according to the Education Act (2010:800), all, irrespective of their geographic residence and social and financial circumstances, shall have equal access to education in the national school system’ (Ministry of Education and Research 2014, 8). Thereby, showing that Sweden has resources put into that objective set within the national frame and it is well incorporated within the national policies. Sweden is working on equal access to education, which also means that they take different difficult aspects into account and are working on making it possible for all young citizens to attend and finish school. In that way reducing early school leavers even more, by give more young people the opportunity to receive education to begin with, showing even more that the state tries to make education available for all in the community and thereby contribution to building up and strengthening the society also.
As regards to specifically reducing early school leavers, the Swedish government has implemented a numerous reforms and initiatives to raise the results in compulsory and upper secondary schools. In that way, more pupils who decide to leave compulsory school will still be eligible for a national programme at upper secondary school and thereby, reduce drop-out rates in upper secondary school. They also implemented initiatives to identify pupils in need of extra support or stimulation as early as possible, which requires early, clear and regular monitoring of pupils' knowledge. Also, the Government has implemented several important reforms to overcome deficiencies in schools' knowledge monitoring, including grades from school year 6 and more national tests in school years 6 and 9 in compulsory school. These cautions are taken to catch the once falling behind before it gone too far, even compulsory school is up for suggestion to become expand from nine-year to ten-year. Other initiatives that has been implemented in this area are, summer school and homework help in compulsory school and in the 2014 spring fiscal policy bill (Govt. Bill 2013/14:100) the Government recon that principal organisers will be obliged to offer pupils both summer school and homework help (ibid, 13).

Education systems generally have a duty to provide education and career guidance according to the Commission. A role to prevent students from leaving education and training early and give guidance which can help to ease transitions between education levels or pathways. Perceiving into Sweden in this question, school guidance service can be found at all three levels of education, a guidance provided in school which is there to reduce early school leavers and show support to the youth (ibid, 17-19). This put the state in the upfront when it comes to implementations towards reducing early school leavers, and the progresses shows that the state moves forward and is in good progress at the time.

The Swedish National Agency for Education ensures that Swedish education maintains a good standard of quality and see to the pupils and student’s wellbeing. The agency is based upon the national laws including the Education Act (2010:800) which present how the schools are supposed to offer extra support to those who need it for various of reasons. Some of the actions to give support are through planning of the school days, offering extra instructions or help with understanding the readings but also to offer the pupil or student extra time with a teacher. Because every person has different needs and different approaches works with different personalities and some need more help and others just need a lite nudge in the right direction to get started. The most important thing is, that this is all offered and decided to be available through legislation which are being influenced through ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ and its action
to reduce early school leavers. Through the support within the school many more young people can have a support system and get the extra help that they need to finish their education and get their diploma. The Education Act of Sweden was put into force in 2010, same year as the strategy was put into force by the EU. Even though it not specifically says that the act takes direct inputs from the strategy, this can not be a coincidence that the act was issued the same year. The previous Education Act was from 1985, and it was about time that it was reviewed and brought up to date and what better time to do it next to the EU as Sweden was part of producing the strategy as well.

4.3 Cyprus development and implementations

The Public Secondary General Education offers equal opportunities for education based on the socio-economic, cultural and national needs of Cyprus. The state aims to distribute knowledge with importance on general education and specialization in order to prepare students for their onwards education. It aims to promote and develop a healthy, spiritual and ethical personality, the creation of capable, democratic and law-abiding citizens, the consolidation of national identity, cultural values, universal ideals of freedom, justice, peace and the cultivation of love and respect, in order to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between people and peoples (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, 2019). All the above are in line with the strategy and the NPT, collectively we can help our young people achieve their goals and change the norm to stay in school.

Cyprus has a population around 1.8 million, and out of that about 0.19 million are young people (EC 2014, Cyprus). It has an average of 91.2 % who completed upper secondary education in 2016 (Eurostat 2018b) and with 7.6 % of early school leavers in comparison to the state’s highest of 13.7 % in 2008 since the measurements began (Eurostat 2018a). Comparing these numbers to the EU, Cyprus have better percentage of completing upper secondary education than average EU states with 9 %, as for leavers Cyprus are 3 % below the overall EU and below the ET2020 goal of 10 % (EC 2014, Cyprus). Regarding Cyprus high percentage of youth completing upper secondary school, between 2011 and 2014 the proportion of young people with upper secondary attainment increased between in the EU-28. Cyprus is one state where 90 % or more of young people completed at least upper secondary education. Nevertheless, it has been noted that a high share of young people with at least upper secondary education does not necessarily mean that tertiary attainment is also high in the state (EU 2016, 167).
Relevant to point out as well, Cyprus also have 36 % unemployed young people, that influence the structure of the society, but still many youths finish their education and a low rate of early school leavers is achieved, which is somewhat impressive (EC 2014, Cyprus). These statistical facts indicate that even though the youths have trouble getting an employment they are still good at completing school and getting their basic education, which they will be able to benefit from for the rest of their life. Even though they might not get a job right away after finishing their education, they have a good bas to lean back on. Another question for another time is how it come that the educated youth are having trouble finding a job, can it be the education level or value of the diploma in compare to what the jobs require, or is it a problem within the society and its request for jobs which is not in line with offered educations.

Thereby, showing that according to the CCS approach of the horizontal angel, influences of the outcome come from various part takers such as the documentation to regulate education within the state. Also, through the society and other actors outside school and the world of education, since there is a high unemployment rate among young people in Cyprus, that must have another angle to it outside of having a good education since most young people have finished their education. If that is influences by society to get a good education, but it can also be influenced by the society to have an education but not continue in the line of that education into work.

As for what Cyprus receives from the EU in grants, according to the 2016 report the state got around 2,3 million euros for the youth field (EC 2017c, Annex 3. 12). Which are in the lower grants comparing to the other member states grants received, but as mentioned above the grant is decided out of four criteria’s and therefore adapted to the state’s capacities. Out of the grant, it produced activities within different sections of the youth field, also projects were constructed, and an average of 24 971 EUR was put into each project during 2016. An average of 788 EUR per participant was put into the youth field on the national level. The part that went into projects generated 246 projects with a success rate of 32 %. Hence the grant produced actions taken within the youth field and shows that the grant generated implementations in the youth field, out of the received grant, a total of 1,4 million EUR was put into the activities, projects and the participants, which is good, but it leaves out just under half of the sum of money which is not reported where it goes into the youth field (EC 2017c, Annex 19, 44-45).

Through international actors and national actors, the grant is being put into good for the youth, the influence from the policy being implemented from the EU therefore have an impact on the national level. The influence of the vertical angle come from many different levels of
actors, all of them have an impact of helping the state succeed in offering good education and helping struggling pupils with their education on all levels. Many states have since ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ was constructed, created their own youth strategies on national levels with the spirit of the EU, nevertheless, Cyprus is one of two states which has not gone through with this and believe the one on EU level is enough at the time (EU 2016, 24).

Since the beginning of the twenty first century, there has been a general decline when it comes to leaving school early in Europe. So, in line with this long-term trend, fewer people left education prematurely in most European countries between 2011 and 2014, especially Cyprus is one of the states where the decrease has been most significant (ibid, 171-172). This only shows that time can make a great change in history and development, not only with the quality of education but also when it comes to the interest go finish the started education. Noteworthy, is the fact that there is a significant gender gap within Cyprus as to early school leavers, men are in the higher rates and women barely have any percentage of leavers, specific numbers of men being 11.4 % while women only have 4.3 % leavers of 2016 data collective (Eurostat 2018a). Hereby, establishing that the total percentage for Cyprus early leavers are much affected by the men leaving school early. This gender gap between early leavers is one of the wider gaps within Europe. Why this gender gap is so much more significant in Cyprus is not really known, perhaps it might be a culture aspect and a structured norm within the society that men do not need education as much as women do.

On other aspect, it is believed to be a connection between early leavers and those who perform poorly in school and on standardised tests and can be helped to re-enter mainstream education and subsequently to gain higher qualifications through the recognition and validation of learning outcomes achieved through types of non-formal education (EU 2016, 171). As for Cyprus implementations towards reducing early school leavers education is free and compulsory until the age of 15, afterwards the next step is upper secondary school, but education is offered as a preparing programme as well, before entering higher education (EC 2017e). A way and method to give the student extra support, study tools are taught, and the student is prepared for further studies through general knowledge. With this method it is believed to give every young person the same opportunity to succeed with higher education no matter which socio-economic class of society they come from. Everyone is thereby given the same opportunity and chance to stay in school, and through this minimise the feel to leave due to poorly performance in the classroom and on tests (EC 2015). All the above in this section is sounding well and good in theory, and since there are very few early school leavers it might be
a successful method for the youth in Cyprus. Nevertheless, this method is to help no matter which socio-economic class the young person comes from, it is still an interesting aspect to why the gender gap exist. Since it should not be a socio-economic different and it includes all genders, so is the gender gap of Cyprus based upon norms to how a man should live and how a woman should live. It is still an interesting thing, and it could perhaps be an essay of it own to examine since this will not be answered hereby.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), has as a part of its policy to modernize the education system, launched a number of improvements and reforms from the 2014-2015 school year, some of which have been implemented from the 2015-2016 school year to the present. Some of the reforms include, creation and implementation of a new curriculum for secondary general education, the high school has been transformed into a clear course directions and new frameworks for access to the Public Universities of Cyprus and Universities of Greece. Noteworthy, the successful completion of the program of utilization of ‘the Dynamic Educational Effectiveness Model for Improving the Functioning of School Units’ (DASIs) have made all schools voluntarily attempting to implement it and improve their schools’ models and program. Likewise, the state is working on restructuring the institution of Diagnostic Exams and applying the Cyprus-based formative diagnostic assessment of students at two (2) focal points of the curriculum, gradually implementing the new system of student assessment in Secondary General Education. Cyprus have a work in progress, but the state is working on improving their education and every part that is improving the school environment for the pupils and students is a good part in the work to reduce early school leavers.

4.4 Comparative analysis

Cyprus and Sweden in according to the CCS approach are quite similar on parts even though they have different amount of populations, grants and integrated education structures. Regarding the use of the youth grants, the fully grants are not put into the fields in either state but about the same percentage is undeclared, due to the grants being within the closer ranges and the similar amount is not declared on either. The missing money might be put into something else within the state, perhaps still within the youth field but outside of the EU reports. Hence, a low amount of criticism can be made about the fact that there is a percentage missing from the report and it is not easily traced through the youth reports which are supposed to present where the grants go to. It indicates that the fully grants are not initially put into the actions of the policy intended. Even though the grants may be kept within the youth field on
the national level, that should be mentioned within the reports if so this way the horizontal angle of influence can be overlooked and monitored by the individuals and actors who are interested.

Moving over to the implementations to reduce early school leavers, as both states are below the ET2020 goal that is worth a congratulation, though looking into the more specifics of those numbers a gender perspective needs to be considered as Cyprus has a wide gap between men and women who leave school earlier. This needs to be further evaluated within the state and come up with why this occurs. As for Sweden it is very much the exact same percentage for men and women leaving school early with the solid percentage of 8,2 % of men and 6,4 % of women (Eurostat 2018a). Furthermore, very little focus is on the fact that some cultures and societies have effects on the gender gap, due to norms and the structure of a society. This is not the main focus of ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ and it is brought up in very small portions within the action area of early school leavers, what is mentioned is what was presented. Which indicates that it might need some more attention in order to really succeed with reducing early school leavers. Not everyone needs tutoring and support, some young people might have the mindset of education not being as important from the family and the society. Therefore, it might be something that needs to have more attention in order to move even further with the action area.

Twenty-two reports confirm that ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ has reinforced existing youth priorities at national level. Many of the national youth strategies take their basis from the EU Youth Strategy by using the same principles, goals and fields of action or by getting inspiration from its instruments like the knowledge building and evidence-based youth policymaking instrument. It has also become part of the legislation on their national level as Education Acts and making the pupils and students health a part of the school to look after. Thereby, the process itself has become intertwined with the CCS approach of the vertical angle to be influenced through different levels from international to national and even locally levels, not only as being a method for this essay but also as a method to learn from other states. The policy has become an actual phenomenon and spread of in all various angles and directions to contribute to good and high-quality education which help reduce early school leavers. Cyprus and Sweden among others, point out that ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ has to some extent triggered a shift in their national youth policy. Which is a great step towards the targets and goals that was set on the EU level through the member states in the first place. This shows that the youth strategy does have an impact on the youth community and their home states.
Both member states have taken actions and followed the strategy and implemented actions of ‘safety net’s’ within their education systems to prevent young people from leaving school early. Through legislations within the states parts of the school systems are compulsory to begin with consulting, support and guidance is offered in the examined states and many more actions have been implemented in the education systems to help the ones having trouble in school before they leave, as they are one of the bigger leaver groups. Actions such as individual school planning and extra time with teachers but also making it more available to ask for help, for the young people to know that if help is needed all they have to do is ask. The states school system can offer help and that is thanks due to partly the EU, the strategy and the grants.

As for the model of NPT and the key components to achieve implementation of a new norm, going over one component at a time. Coherence, the idea to reduce early school leavers is a good effort for society in general, if more people stay in school, they can complete higher education and achieve broader opportunities later in life. Also, through youth staying in school knowledge will be better spread and shared though the society, as well as the unemployed youth will not become a burden to the society and other perspectives. This is the overall idea of why education is good and why early school leavers are bad for the society, but then there are always going to be other perspectives and society norms that might overtrump the belief that education will go the people good. Although, the idea of education and reduction of early school leavers is in line with coherence as a part of the NPT in order to implement a new norm within a society.

Cognitive participation, the strategy and specifically to reduce early leavers engage many people and activities was initiated on both states’ national levels. As presented previous there are many projects and support systems created to help young people and reduce early school leavers through a collective support system through the community. Many different individuals of the society are engaged with the strategy, thereby many people are a part of the actual implementation and turning the strategy into being a part of themselves and their society. Meaning one step closer to having embedded the idea as a norm.

Collective action, for the strategy and idea to really settle within the society it needs to be connected to all the involved actors and institutions, small or big. This has occurred in both states as the policy have been incorporated within government, legislations and other local actors. Some perhaps without even realising it happened, all the national institutions, education institutions, schools, teachers, students, they have all been a part of the policy even if so, just by talking about it and spreading the word. In that way everyone is connected, and the policy can have a greater impact but also it can keep on being even deeper embedded into the society.
In Sweden more tutoring and summer school has been implemented which is in need of teachers and politicians who first decided for it to be embedded and then for the teachers to give support and help to the youth out in the society and in schools. Even Cyprus has implemented a method to give support and help those who struggled in school and had trouble passing tests. That also included the collective actions of politicians approving the embedding, teachers supporting and giving the youth extra help and the general support from the community to have that opportunity.

Reflexive monitoring, as to knowing if an idea has become a norm of the society, the evaluation reports can only see the progress so far, but it can keep pushing the progress forward. It is always possible for improvements and the society will always have a natural motion of change so the work will probably never stop. Although, if early school leavers start so see and experience the positive parts of staying in school that is one big step in the right directions.

As the early school leavers within the examined states are low and getting lower, they are doing it correct and it is working according to the NPT model, the actions taken to reduce early leavers have made a positive impact on Sweden and Cyprus and it is moving towards become a new type of norm within their societies. In regard to the NPT for this study and the CCS approach, the cases of Sweden and Cyprus have followed the theory chain and the key components of cognitive participation and collective actions have been fulfilled with multiple results showing of people engaging with the policy to get it embedded within the society and the state. As well as the governments and institutions of the states have incorporated the youth perspective within legislations and other national policies, even though Sweden have come a bit further when it comes to incorporating the strategy from when it was put into force Cyprus is working on it and have presented more implementations and legislation changes in the last couple of years. The strategy is considered on the national levels and both states are working to prohibit early school leavers the best way they know.
5. **Conclusion**

In conclusion of how ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ and the objective of reducing early school leavers is implemented into the member states of Cyprus and Sweden, both states have made significant progress with reducing early school leavers since the strategy was put into force. The goal of below 10% is already meet by both states and at the time with two years left to the deadline, they should be able to keep the numbers down if they continue in the spirit which has been so far.

Therefore, even though results and statistics have gone up and down since the beginning of the strategy, improvements can be seen through ‘the EU Youth Reports.’ The strategy has made a positive impact, though for these two states it does not have to be thanks to the grant that is handed out to help the developments and implementations of the field. The two states have strong economics and education systems which can be producing the positive effect on the youth anyway. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that due to the amount of different legislations within different departments, something might have been missed.

As for the results of the member states actions towards reducing early school leavers. The strategy has been followed, actions and implementation through national legislations have been taken, and it results in reducing leavers according to Eurostat. Sweden have due to the strategy being put into force 2010 changed the Swedish Education act the same year, making some improvements and much of the added legislation is to reduce the early school leavers and give more support in school. Although as for Cyprus, with such high rate of youth completing education within such a small state, it generates many educated youths which might depend upon a strong society or perhaps firm support system, something to examine further perhaps in another study.

Being an early school leaver can be influenced by many various things, people and expectations, the state can only do as much as it can through offering support, help and extra tutoring which have been implemented through legislation, but in the end the decision can come down to a feeling of failure or perhaps even the pressure to succeed. As for to what degree ‘the EU Youth Strategy’ has influenced the reduction for early school leavers is difficult to say exactly, looking to the goals of the strategy of reaching under 10%, both states have succeeded. Although according to the theory of NPT to implement until a new norm is achieved, the strategy has been implemented into the legislation and the societies are doing work as well to a very high degree as the results presented above shows.
All the four key components are achieved within both states and the states have a good and strong education with a great support and safety net for young people who struggle in school, and to use that help in order to stay in school. Both states have reduced early school leavers since the tracing of statistics began and that is in line with the implemented actions taken to reduce leavers, but also to help young people get back on track to be able to finish their educations. The policy might not be the single factor of the reduction, but it seems to be a great part of the progress, both Sweden and Cyprus have incorporated the policy within their national legislations and made the action a priority on the national levels and keep on working with improving their education systems. The policy might not be the single factor of the reduction, but it seems to be a great part of the progress, both Sweden and Cyprus have incorporated the policy within their national legislations and made the action a priority on the national levels and keep on working with improving their education systems. Arguments might be that the states could have accomplished the same results on their own, and that might as well be true, although with the support and grant of the EU it might have been possible to achieve that much faster. Collective support and actions make one stronger, alone is not always better. Ideas have been shared through the policy instead of each state having to figure the best method out all by themselves, perhaps that would have been many years later.
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