

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 16 November 2007 on a transversal approach to youth policy with a view to enabling young people to fulfil their potential and participate actively in society

(2007/C 282/12)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD TO:

- (1) the Commission White Paper 'A new impetus for European Youth' adopted in 2001 ⁽¹⁾ highlighting the importance of developing opportunities for young people to fulfil their potential and actively participate in society;
- (2) the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 ⁽²⁾ adopting the open method of coordination as a new framework for European cooperation in the youth field;
- (3) the conclusions of the European Council of 22 and 23 March 2005 ⁽³⁾ adopting the European Youth Pact as one of the instruments contributing to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives for growth and jobs by developing a youth dimension in other relevant European policies;
- (4) the conclusions of the European Council of 23 and 24 March 2006 ⁽⁴⁾ emphasising the need to implement the European Youth Pact, in association with young people and youth organisations, and reinforce links between policies on education, training, employment, social inclusion and mobility so as to improve the situation of young people in the labour market and to reduce significantly youth unemployment whilst also supporting policies that promote reconciliation of family life and working life, equal opportunities, solidarity between the generations, health, and lifelong learning;
- (5) the Commission Communication ⁽⁵⁾ and Council Resolution on participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active citizenship ⁽⁶⁾, launching a genuine dialogue with young people, structured from the local to the European level;
- (6) the conclusions of the European Council of 8 and 9 March 2007 ⁽⁷⁾ calling for further development of policies which promote *inter alia* the role of young people, including their transition from school to working life;

- (7) the study of the European Commission's Bureau of European Policy Advisers ⁽⁸⁾ which calls for a renewed comprehensive youth investment strategy covering areas such as young people's well-being, health, education, employment and citizenship,

RECALL THE RELEVANCE OF the Council conclusions of May 2007 on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy ⁽⁹⁾ emphasising the central role of the Council in improved mainstreaming of the youth dimension into, and cross-sectoral coordination with, related policy fields with the aim of improving young people's quality of life in Europe AND CONTINUE TO CONSIDER the relevant proposals for future cooperation in the field of youth policy made therein;

ACKNOWLEDGE that the Commission Communication of 5 September 2007 entitled *Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society* ⁽¹⁰⁾ — accompanied by two staff working documents, on youth and voluntary activities and on youth employment in the EU ⁽¹¹⁾ respectively — makes a highly relevant analysis of the current challenges in the youth field in Europe and puts forward concrete initiatives.

UNDERLINE THAT:

- (1) Europe's growth and prosperity depend on an active contribution and participation by all young people, especially since their number relative to the population as a whole is shrinking;
- (2) young people will have to bear the growing cost of an ageing population, which calls for an intergenerational response;
- (3) it is important for the economic, cultural and social development of the EU to create favourable conditions for young people to develop their skills, to work and to participate actively in society, particularly in the light of globalisation and knowledge-based economies;
- (4) many of the problems young people face, such as high rates of child poverty, poor health, dropping out of school and youth unemployment, indicate a need to review the investments Europe is making in its youth;

⁽¹⁾ COM(2001) 681 final.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 168, 13.7.2002, p. 2.

⁽³⁾ 7619/1/05.

⁽⁴⁾ 7775/1/06 REV 1.

⁽⁵⁾ COM(2006) 417.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 297, 7.12.2006, p. 6.

⁽⁷⁾ 7224/1/07 REV 1.

⁽⁸⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/publications/index_en.htm

⁽⁹⁾ 8771/07.

⁽¹⁰⁾ COM(2007) 498 final.

⁽¹¹⁾ SEC(2007) 1084 and 1093.

- (5) a healthy lifestyle is a prerequisite for building human potential and for full participation of young people;
- (6) there is a need for a truly comprehensive knowledge-based youth policy which stems from a strong cooperation between policy-makers and stakeholders, including young people, youth organisations, youth leaders, researchers in the youth field and youth workers at European, national, regional and local levels;
- (7) there is a need for a transversal youth strategy, forging closer links between the European youth policy framework set up since the adoption of the White Paper on Youth ⁽¹⁾, and other policies impacting on youth, with the aim of developing a coherent approach to youth policy as a key to obtaining real progress towards the identified youth policy goals;
- (8) the successful implementation of the objectives of the European Youth Pact depends on an improved cooperation between policy makers and other relevant stakeholders at both political and technical level and calls for better links to be established between ongoing processes and policy instruments at European, national, regional and local levels.

For a truly transversal youth policy

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- (1) endeavour to invest better, and earlier in young people to promote their education, employment, social inclusion, health and active citizenship in a lifecycle approach, taking into account the diversity among young people and avoiding any kind of discrimination;
- (2) reinforce their commitment to improving the implementation and monitoring of youth policy at all levels of decision-making, while paying special attention to the Lisbon Strategy;
- (3) commit themselves to an improved implementation of the European Youth Pact within the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs — as it offers a wide potential for better ‘social and professional integration of young people’ — *inter alia* by addressing youth issues in the National Reform Programmes in a more visible, systematic and improved way, and better monitor the implementation of the European Youth Pact;

⁽¹⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field (OJ C 168, 13.7.2002, p. 2).

- (4) strengthen youth issues in all policy fields impacting on young people;
- (5) raise awareness of youth issues among all relevant stakeholders such as policy-makers, labour and education institutions, enterprises, youth workers, researchers, families, social partners and organisations working for and with young people, and involve them in finding solutions.

NOTE THAT THE COMMISSION WILL:

- (1) on the basis of regular reporting exercises undertaken by the Member States within ongoing processes, draw up an EU report on youth in association with young people every three years, starting with a first report in 2009.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

- (1) establish closer links between the European youth policy framework and other policies impacting on youth thus developing a truly transversal approach with the aim of working towards young people's full participation in society;
- (2) take measures aiming at forging closer links between existing processes, such as the Lisbon Strategy, health strategies and various open methods of coordination in the fields of education, inclusion and youth.

For active youth participation

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- (1) implement the reinforced common objectives for participation by and information for young people in the framework of the open method of coordination in the youth field;
- (2) further implement the structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations ensuring that young people with fewer opportunities and those that are not members of an organisation are included in the structured dialogue;
- (3) promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming in policies and actions affecting youth;
- (4) encourage young people to take an active role in the context of national activities and for the planned action within European thematic years, such as the European Year on intercultural dialogue;

- (5) facilitate the access of young people to culture, taking note of the Commission's intention to undertake a study on the subject;
- (6) facilitate the recognition of the results of non-formal learning in the youth field.

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

- (1) use relevant EU programmes, such as the Youth in Action Programme ⁽¹⁾, the Lifelong Learning Programme ⁽²⁾, the Culture Programme (2007 to 2013) ⁽³⁾, the programme 'Europe for Citizens' ⁽⁴⁾ and the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities (2007-2013) ⁽⁵⁾ in cooperation with Member States, to promote young people's participation, in a coordinated approach;
- (2) finalise the adaptation of Europass to the needs of non-formal learning in the youth field.

For a strengthened partnership with young people

- (1) STRESS the relevance of the structured dialogue with young people at all levels and in the fields impacting on their lives, and the need to discuss ways to enhance such dialogue.
- (2) NOTE in this context that the Commission in its Communication of 5 September 2007 has invited the European Institutions and young people to reinforce their partnership and has suggested a joint declaration.

Improved employment opportunities for a full participation in society

RECOGNIZE THE RELEVANCE OF:

- (1) quality education and training from an early stage and following a lifelong learning approach, when addressing the participation of young people in employment and education;
- (2) making full use of the existing mechanisms and creating, where appropriate, other mechanisms to prevent early school-leaving;
- (3) working towards modernised education and training systems that anticipate the needs of the labour market;
- (4) providing counselling and career guidance, and promoting quality internships with a strong link to the training or study curriculum, as well as partnerships between schools and companies and public administrations, with the aim of facilitating transitions between education and training and the labour market and avoiding mismatches between education outcomes and labour market requirements;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 30.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 45.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 372, 27.12.2006, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 378, 27.12.2006, p. 32.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 54, 22.2.2007, p. 30.

- (5) addressing discrimination, stereotypes and difficulties that might hamper the opportunities of young people;
- (6) analysing the effects of policy measures on the labour market position of young people and taking them into account when designing flexicurity strategies.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- (1) promote the acquisition of key competences ⁽⁶⁾ for lifelong learning in education and training from an early stage as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to a specific environment;
- (2) promote, in particular in this framework, the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship (key competence No 7) which relates to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action and includes creativity, proactiveness, independence and innovation in personal and social life as much as at work;
- (3) encourage training programmes for young people and improve conditions for young entrepreneurs e.g. by promoting the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme amongst businesses and financial institutions to facilitate access to finance for the start-up of SMEs by young entrepreneurs;
- (4) use EU funds, in particular the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the Rural Development Fund or any other relevant EU funds and programmes, for supporting young people's transition from education to employment.

Messages to the European Council

CONSIDER THAT:

- (1) it is necessary to empower young people and broaden opportunities for young people to fully participate in education, employment and society;
- (2) young people are key actors with regard to their participation in society and must develop a sense of responsibility for their education, employment, health and active citizenship;
- (3) it is necessary to develop a transversal approach to youth policy as a key to obtaining real progress towards the identified youth policy goals;
- (4) it is necessary to improve the implementation and monitoring of youth policy at all levels of decision-making, while paying special attention to the Lisbon strategy;
- (5) young people's full participation in society is reliant upon a strong partnership between young people, youth organisations and those responsible for political decision-making impacting on youth.

⁽⁶⁾ Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10).

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL TO:

- (1) call on the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the Member States to invest better and earlier in youth in view of the challenges young people are facing and their shrinking number relative to the population as a whole;
 - (2) call on the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the Member States to adopt a transversal approach when addressing issues impacting on young people's lives, building on cooperation between policy-makers and stakeholders at European, national, regional and local levels and strengthening the focus of young people in policies impacting on them;
 - (3) further encourage Member States, when preparing their national reform programmes, and the Commission, in its Annual Progress Report, to report more systematically and more visibly on youth policies within the Lisbon Strategy, in order to facilitate the monitoring of the progress made;
 - (4) call on the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the Member States to reinforce their partnership with young people and youth organisations through the structured dialogue put in place in 2006 enabling the participation of young people in discussions and in decision-making affecting their daily lives.
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