

The Council welcomes the overall record of implementation of the 1999 updated programme, although it noted that the improvement in the budget surplus actually achieved in 1999 and the reduction in government debt both fell some way short of the projections then made, with all three subsectors of general government contributing to the shortfall in the overall surplus and with lower revenue than expected. In addition, inflationary pressures have emerged. The rise in domestically generated inflation appears linked to a corresponding rise in inflation in the service sector.

The macroeconomic scenario presented in the latest updated stability programme includes strong economic growth in 2000 due to continued robust internal and external demand. Thereafter, GDP is assumed to decelerate from 2001 for the remainder of the projection period. The central characteristic of a medium-term slowing down in the economy appears plausible, taking into account the rapid recent growth of the Finnish economy and the strains on capacity already evident in certain areas. The risk remains that the economy may overheat and that excessive demand may add to inflationary pressures. The Council considers that moderate wage developments will be crucial in this respect.

As already referred to in the 2000 broad economic policy guidelines, the Council also considers that a tight fiscal stance in Finland is necessary to contain risks of overheating.

Subject to this, the Council commends the fiscal strategy of the updated stability programme. This consolidates previous programmes and aims to maintain surpluses around 4,5 % of GDP through a reduction in government expenditure in relation to GDP but at the same time reduces the tax burden.

The underlying budgetary position corresponding to the 4,5 % expected surplus for 2000 will allow Finland to continue to fulfil the requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact. The Council considers that continued fiscal restraint embodied in the updated programme is justified in view of the future effects of population ageing on pensions and health care costs, to which Finland is particularly exposed.

The Council welcomes the commitment in the updated programme to continued structural reforms. Reforms are particularly important in promoting the government's central objective of raising employment and at the same time safeguarding price stability. Fiscal reform, reducing the still heavy overall taxation and social contribution burden on labour, can reinforce this potential. Concerns remain that the structure of the pension system contains disincentives for older workers to remain in the labour market and that pension system funding may need to be strengthened in the face of rapid ageing. The reductions in government expenditure and revenue relative to GDP anticipated in the programme and continued structural reforms should both help to increase employment.

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**RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF  
THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,**

**of 14 December 2000**

**on the social inclusion of young people**

(2000/C 374/04)

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

Whereas:

(1) Article 2 of the Treaty establishing the European Community gave the Community the task of promoting throughout the Community a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities and a

high level of employment and of social protection and the raising of the standard of living and quality of life.

(2) Article 136 of the said Treaty assigned to the Community and the Member States the particular objectives of the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions and the combating of exclusion.

(3) Article 149 of the said Treaty provides for action by the Community to be aimed in particular at encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors.

- (4) The Lisbon declaration on youth policies and programmes defined guidelines for developing youth policy, in particular in the areas of education, employment, participation and health <sup>(1)</sup>.
- (5) The European Parliament and the Council, in their Decision No 253/2000/EC of 24 January 2000 establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates' <sup>(2)</sup> and their Decision No 1031/2000/EC of 13 April 2000 establishing the 'Youth' Community action programme <sup>(3)</sup>, and the Council in its Decision 1999/382/EC of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme 'Leonardo da Vinci' <sup>(4)</sup>, established Community action programmes contributing to the construction of a Europe of knowledge open to all.
- (6) On 8 February 1999 the Council and the Ministers responsible for Youth adopted a resolution on youth participation, which emphasises the importance of young people taking an active part in social, political, cultural and economic life.
- (7) The 'Youth' Council on 23 November 1999 established guidelines including a cross-sectoral approach to youth questions and a policy based on involving young people which are to underpin the policy of cooperation regarding youth.
- (8) The European Council meeting in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000 set a strategic goal for the European Union linking economic progress with social progress. In pursuit of that goal the European Council advocated an open method of coordination and called for the setting of appropriate targets for the fight against poverty and social exclusion to be approved by the end of the year, while emphasising that the best safeguard against social exclusion is a job and that the improvement of skills, education and lifelong training, voluntary service activities and universal access to knowledge, play an important part in combating social exclusion.
- (9) The Commission has adopted a communication on a social policy agenda in preparation for the European Council in Nice, based on recognition of the interaction between economic, employment and social policies,

TAKE THE VIEW that the process of European construction cannot succeed without the involvement of young people.

AFFIRM that, with their wealth of experience, capabilities and critical acumen, young people must be more closely associated with the policies which concern them. Similarly, social and institutional players dealing with young people should have an opportunity to give their views and make their contribution to a policy of cooperation in the youth field.

CONSIDER that exchanges of young people in Europe help, on the one hand, to make young people more aware of what is at stake in Europe by making Europe more real for them, and, on the other, to encourage a better understanding among them of Europe's cultural diversity, as well as of its common fundamental values, based on the endeavour to ensure respect for human rights and to combat racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination, to increase a sense of solidarity and to develop their spirit of initiative.

NOTE that young people, particularly the most vulnerable, are particularly susceptible to social, political and cultural exclusion.

STRESS the difficulties encountered by many young people in gaining autonomy and attaining social and occupational inclusion.

WELCOME what has been done under the Luxembourg process, through the guidelines on employment and the initiative launched by the Lisbon European Council for a Community action programme to fight social exclusion, which have all, in their own field, contributed to the social inclusion of young people.

ENCOURAGE the Community institutions and Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity and further to the Lisbon European Council, to launch Europe-wide cooperation initiatives in conjunction with national and, as appropriate, regional and local youth policies, and INVITE, in this context, the Commission and the Member States, each within its own sphere of competence, to:

- (i) make the improvement of the socioeconomic situation of young people and their social inclusion, as well as preventing and tackling their exclusion, a priority common to all relevant European Union policies;
- (ii) promote broad access by a wide range of young people to Community and national initiatives and programmes designed for their benefit, particularly with regard to mobility;
- (iii) study common objectives directed at:

— developing for all young people residing legally in a Member State conditions which enable them to play a full part in economic and social life (standard of living, quality of life, employment, training, education, housing, healthcare, culture, sport and leisure),

<sup>(1)</sup> Declaration adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in August 1998.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 28, 3.2.2000, p. 1.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 117, 18.5.2000, p. 1.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ L 146, 11.6.1999, p. 33.

- fighting discriminatory behaviour against young people, whether based on sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation,
  - preventing breakdowns in conditions of existence which could lead to situations of marginalisation and the risk of exclusion, particularly by developing capabilities for occupational inclusion and by promoting policies aimed at ensuring that no one is excluded from the information society,
  - assisting the mobilisation of institutional, social and economic players to help the social inclusion of young people,
  - encouraging young people to participate in drawing up the policies which concern them.
- (iv) develop exchanges of information and good practice in the field of combating the social exclusion of young people;
- ENCOURAGE the Member States to:
- (a) promote measures to prevent young people being excluded, unemployed and leading a precarious existence, and develop new training opportunities for young people excluded from education and training systems;
  - (b) foster access and return to work for those young people having the greatest difficulty in entering the world of work;
  - (c) develop accompanying measures suited to situations of job and training rotation;
  - (d) fight discrimination against young people in employment, particularly as regards access to and conditions of employment;
  - (e) promote access to quality education and initiate support measures for young people in particular difficulty, and,
- under the guidelines for employment, for young people who drop out of the school system early;
  - (f) encourage access to information for young people and take steps to ensure that young people are not excluded from new information technologies, so that they can fully utilise them;
  - (g) encourage young people to obtain and hold on to housing;
  - (h) strengthen the shelter and support structures for young people from broken homes who have been the victims of or threatened with violence;
  - (i) seek a high level of health protection for young people and develop preventive health care and information, particularly on contraception and sexuality, taking into account their specific needs and the requirement of confidentiality, and on substance abuse;
  - (j) develop leisure-time sporting, cultural and educational activities directed at young people, particularly by encouraging incentive pricing policies;
  - (k) support non-governmental youth organisations and youth associations, both in the measures they take to help young people and in the opportunities they offer young people of playing an active role in civil society;
  - (l) develop information suited to young people, particularly by using qualified staff;
  - (m) create the conditions for young people to become involved in the decisions taken concerning them.
- WISH THIS RESOLUTION to contribute to the development of the policy of cooperation in the youth field, in particular by defining common objectives to work towards and to be taken into consideration when targets for combating poverty and social exclusion are being determined and implemented.