



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy

*2802nd EDUCATION, YOUTH and CULTURE Council meeting
Brussels, 24-25 May 2007*

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council,

HAVING REGARD TO

- (1) the Council's request¹ to evaluate in 2009 the general framework for European cooperation in the youth field which was agreed in 2002;
- (2) the first exchange of views on future perspectives for European youth policy, which was held at the Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting on 16 February 2007 on the basis of a joint discussion paper from the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies and with a view to the evaluation of the cooperation framework;
- (3) the work of the European Commission's Bureau of European Policy Advisers² which emphasises the importance of investing in young people's well-being, health, education, labour market integration and active citizenship;

¹ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship (OJ C 292, 24.11.2005, p. 5).

² http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/publications/index_en.htm

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- (4) the European Commission's interim report to the Spring 2007 European Council entitled *Social reality stocktaking*³, which highlights the issue of intergenerational equity against the background of globalisation and demographic change and paves the way for an open debate on social issues and challenges that will also fundamentally affect the social situation of young people in Europe;
- (5) the Council's request⁴ to promote a structured dialogue with young people with a view to increasing the involvement, at all levels, of young people and their organisations in shaping and implementing the policies affecting them and thereby promoting their active citizenship;
- (6) the European Pact for Youth approved by the Spring 2005 European Council, which identified priority areas for action in which greater involvement of young people and of all relevant actors in youth policy was required,
 1. POINT OUT that, in accordance with the European Pact for Youth, effective and sustainable youth policy-making requires in the relevant policy areas a truly cross-sectoral approach to whose shaping and implementation the Council intends to make a key contribution;
 2. FURTHER POINT OUT that, in view of the demographic changes observable in all Member States, with the number of young people as a proportion of the total population set to decline further in forthcoming decades, a cross-sectoral strategy is increasingly needed in order to develop intergenerationally equitable, sustainable policies which share both the opportunities and the necessary burdens evenly across all age groups and which enable young people to gain a level of autonomy appropriate to their age and needs;
 3. NOTE that the open method of coordination and the European Pact for Youth are the main tools for developing youth policies in Europe. In the interests of efficiency, coherence and visibility, initiatives aimed at ensuring that these tools can in future better interact and thus be mutually reinforcing should be developed. Any increase in the amount of reporting currently required of Member States should be avoided;
 4. UNDERLINE the importance of the *Youth in Action* programme⁵ in increasing European cooperation in the field of youth policy, of the European Structural Funds in contributing towards the implementation of the European Pact for Youth at national, regional and local level and of the open method of coordination;

³ COM(2007) 63 final.

⁴ Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship (OJ C 297, 7.12.2006, p. 6).

⁵ OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 30.

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5. WELCOME initiatives from the Commission highlighting the role of young women and men as a fundamental resource for the future organisation of society in the European Union and its Member States, by encouraging a truly cross-sectoral approach towards youth policy-making, reinforcing the structured dialogue with young people and promoting young people's autonomy and active citizenship;
6. EXPRESS their willingness to help develop, take forward and follow up such initiatives, whilst seeking support from the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and taking the role of relevant regional and local actors into account;
- 6a) INTEND, by adopting these conclusions, to contribute with a set of relevant proposals on future thematic and structural perspectives to a thorough discussion on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy and to the evaluation of the cooperation framework in 2009;
7. CONSIDER, against this background, the following issues to be particularly relevant:
 - (a) European cooperation in the field of youth policy shares responsibility for addressing young people's quality of life in Europe by means of specific youth policy instruments, but also through improved mainstreaming of the youth dimension into, and cross-sectoral coordination with, related policy fields. Such cooperation could be strengthened with the aim of:
 - improving young people's social inclusion and facilitating their transition towards autonomy and thus responding to demographic challenges, in particular by:
 - providing the possibility for all young people to acquire the necessary basic skills and competencies,
 - facilitating the transition between education and training and employment,
 - combining flexibility, including the increased mobility required from young people, and security ("flexicurity"),
 - promoting the entrepreneurial potential of young people, and
 - where necessary, promoting policies which offer second chances that put young people back on the path to build their human capital for the future;
 - improving the conditions for living in multicultural societies by fostering the inter-cultural skills of young people;
 - promoting respect for human rights and values such as tolerance, mutual respect, diversity, equality and solidarity as well as combating all forms of discrimination;
 - increasing young people's well being, which includes enabling them to lead a healthy life;

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- promoting the cultural and creative engagement of young people;
 - providing support for young people through better reconciliation of work, family and private life so as to enable them, if they so wish, to start a family and to participate fully in training and education or to enter into working life at the same time;
 - improving the socio-economic conditions in which young people in disadvantaged urban and rural areas live.
- (b) Developing youth policy in a cross-sectoral manner and in close cooperation with young people, those active in the youth field and youth organisations is paramount. Amongst other proposals to be developed, the existing instruments of the structured dialogue – such as Presidency youth events and the European Youth Week – should be used to host informal fora involving actors from related policy areas of the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. Care should be taken to ensure that young people's representatives are involved from the outset in the development and implementation of such fora, with particular consideration for young people in socially, culturally or economically disadvantaged situations.

Proposals for strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation in the Council and its bodies involving the youth field should be developed.

- (c) A regular European Youth Report on the situation of young people in Europe could help to analyse and draw attention to young people's concerns and their quality of life, as well as the development of youth policies in Europe. As part of the structured dialogue, young people should actively contribute to the reporting exercise. The Reports should be viewed as visible incentives to trigger discussions according to their thematic priorities.

To avoid additional reporting obligations, this should be done by using the information collected through the reporting exercises under the open method of coordination, with the possible addition of relevant data and structured examples of good practice from the Member States, youth organisations and the research field.

- (d) To improve continuity, coherence and visibility in the youth field, optimum use should be made of the cooperation between three Presidencies on the basis of 18-month-programmes. In line with the Council's Rules of Procedure⁶, this would include timely cooperation with the following three Presidencies and the Commission, so that on the basis of an agenda endorsed by the Council the thematic priorities would be clearly identified for the following three years.

⁶ OJ L 285, 16.10.2006, p. 47.

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The Presidencies should in particular pay attention to interlinking the individual steps of the structured dialogue with young people and to ensuring that issues discussed with young people can be followed up.

- (e) A cross-border framework to facilitate exchanges of good practice between local and regional youth policy players should be set up, with a particular emphasis on "peer learning" in relation to local implementation strategies for the European Youth Pact. The findings of those exchanges should be made easily accessible to all interested parties and they should be systematically evaluated and exploited, also as part of the contribution of Youth Ministers towards achieving the Lisbon Goals.

The exchanges should be supported by a set of guidelines for planning, structuring and evaluation. The development of an award scheme should be considered in order to draw attention to excellent examples of successful implementation of local strategies and to raise awareness of the work done within the youth field in the European context.

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