



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 23 January 2009

5492/09

**JEUN 6
EDUC 9
SOC 19**

REPORT

from :	General Secretariat of the Council
to	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) / Council
No prev. doc.	5210/09 JEUN 2 SOC 28 EDUC 10
Subject :	Key messages to the Spring European Council on the European Youth Pact and European cooperation in the youth field - <i>Adoption</i>

Delegations will find attached the text of the above draft key messages to the Spring European Council as prepared by the Youth Working Party. At the close of the proceedings in the Youth Working Party on 19 January, there existed a broad consensus on the political messages contained in the text. However, minor changes were made to the text after the discussions in the Youth Working Party to meet the concerns of some delegations regarding certain presentational issues.¹

The Permanent Representatives Committee is accordingly invited, subject to the lifting of any linguistic reservations, to confirm the agreement reached within the Youth Working Party on the draft text and forward this set of key messages for adoption by the Council, with a view to their subsequent submission to the Spring European Council.

¹ Paragraph 2 of Part A has been complemented with a sentence referring to the relevant Council response and a footnote has been inserted in Paragraph 3 of Part A indicating that the communications are still under consideration by the Council.

**Key messages to the Spring European Council
on the European Youth Pact and European cooperation in the youth field**

A. Context and progress made in 2008 in implementing the European Youth Pact

- (1) 2008 was the third year of implementation of the European Youth Pact with the aim of improving the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young people. In implementing the measures of the European Youth Pact in 2008, Member States particularly addressed issues such as the high unemployment of young people, the high ratio of fixed-term contracts and poor terms of employment for young people.
- (2) The Renewed Social Agenda presented in July 2008 puts children and youth – tomorrow's Europe – among its seven priority areas², so that they can realise their full potential in life. The Council, in approving on 17 December 2008 the joint opinion of the Social Protection Committee and the Employment Committee on the Renewed Social Agenda³, highlights the importance of solidarity among people and across generations and regions, especially in the context of economic downturn as it helps to restore citizens' confidence and facilitates economic recovery.
- (3) The Communication from the Commission of December 2008 on New Skills for New Jobs⁴ stresses the importance of upgrading the skills of the population to better match current and future labour market needs, and in its Communication on an updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training⁵ the Commission proposes four strategic challenges for the years to 2020 with the aim of making education and training systems more responsive to change and more open to the wider world.⁶

² Commission Communication "Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe", COM(2008) 412 final.

³ 16495/08

⁴ COM(2008) 868 final.

⁵ COM(2008) 865 final.

⁶ Without any prejudice to the Council's position on these documents.

- (4) According to the European Economic Recovery Plan⁷ approved by the European Council on 11-12 December 2008, the latest economic forecasts paint a bleak picture of close to zero growth and risks of contraction for the EU economy in 2009, with unemployment rising by some 2.7 million in the next two years, on the assumption that no corrective action is taken.

B. Key Messages

Young people, who often find themselves in relatively precarious employment situations and facing difficulties related to professional and social integration, are likely - especially those with fewer opportunities- to be particularly vulnerable in the deteriorating economic situation. They will probably find it more difficult to access stable and good-quality jobs. This can in turn have negative long-term effects on overall social cohesion. Although some progress has already been made, issues related to youth employment are still key challenges for the public authorities in Europe. Action taken in order to tackle these challenges would have both short-term and structural impacts. In this context, ensuring improved implementation and greater visibility of the European Youth Pact remains a priority.

I. In further implementing the European Youth Pact in 2009, Member States should strengthen their efforts to facilitate a smooth transition for young people from education, inactivity or unemployment to employment, while dealing with the specific challenges posed by the economic downturn.

- (1) While taking timely and effective actions against youth unemployment, where this is appropriate to the local situation, Member States should maintain their emphasis on coordinated medium- and long-term structural measures which specifically benefit young people.

⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Council - COM(2008) 800 final.

- (2) When applying the principles of flexicurity in their reform programmes, Member States should, where appropriate, consider the needs of young people entering and remaining on a sustainable basis in the labour market.
- (3) High priority should be given to young people with fewer opportunities and those living in poverty in view of the deteriorating economic situation as they are likely to be among the first to suffer. Account should also be taken of gender-specific challenges and possible solutions.
- (4) The role of youth organisations, professional youth work and youth research should be strengthened, particularly as providers of support to young people in the current economic situation. The involvement of young people and their organisations in the development of national reform programmes for the Lisbon Strategy and in the relevant follow-up actions might contribute to reducing youth unemployment and fighting poverty.

II. Young people can contribute significantly to the objectives related to growth and jobs, social cohesion and competitiveness in Europe and they should be considered as an even stronger priority in the post-2010 reformed Lisbon Strategy.

- (1) The situation of young people in the deteriorating economic climate, the fight against unemployment and social exclusion, flexicurity in transitions, quality education and training, new skills for new jobs, further development and recognition of skills and competences acquired through non-formal education, better reconciliation of family, private and professional life as well as mobility of young people in Europe should continue to be the key issues addressed in the post-Lisbon framework as well as supported by the relevant EU programmes. Attention should also be paid to the important role young people play in increasing creativity and innovation as well as in promoting entrepreneurship and information and communication technologies.

- (2) The future framework for European cooperation in the youth field should include, where appropriate, mechanisms for monitoring strategic and coherent measures specifically dedicated to young people in order to ensure a better follow-up of the common objectives and to develop the youth dimension in the reformed Lisbon Strategy.

 - (3) The urgent need to invest in youth should be reflected in the renewed youth cooperation framework as well as in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. Empowering young people and creating favourable conditions for them to develop their skills, to fulfil their potential, to work and to participate actively in society is essential for sustainable growth and development as well as social cohesion in the European Union.
-