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THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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REPORT

from : Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
to : Council

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Subject : Evaluation of the current framework for European cooperation in the youth field
and on future perspectives for the renewed framework
– Adoption of the conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the
Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council
[Public debate, pursuant to Article 8(3) CRP (proposed by the Presidency)]

At its meeting on 29 April 2009 the Permanent Representatives Committee noted that there was now unanimous agreement on the text of the above draft conclusions.

The Council is accordingly invited to adopt the conclusions on the basis of the appended text.

**Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments
of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the evaluation of the current framework
for European cooperation in the youth field and on future perspectives for the renewed
framework**

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

HAVING REGARD TO:

- 1) The Commission's White Paper of November 2001 entitled "A new impetus for European youth"¹, which was endorsed by the Council in its Resolution of 27 June 2002² establishing a framework for European cooperation in the youth field which includes the application of the open method of coordination and mainstreaming of youth issues into other policies;
- 2) The conclusions of the European Council of 22 and 23 March 2005³ 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;
- 3) The Council's invitation⁴ 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;

¹ 14441/01 – COM(2001) 681 final.

² OJ C 168, 13.7.2002, pp 2-5.

³ 7619/1/05.

⁴ Resolution of the Council and 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).

- 4) The Council's invitation⁵ to evaluate in 2009 the general framework for European cooperation in the youth field which was agreed in 2002;
- 5) The Council conclusions of May 2007 on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy⁶ which contributed a set of concrete proposals to the reflection process on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy that has intensively continued since;
- 6) The Renewed Social Agenda presented in July 2008 which puts children and youth – tomorrow's Europe – among its seven priority areas⁷, 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 Agenda⁸, highlights the importance of solidarity and cohesion 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;
- 7) The 2009 key messages to the Spring European Council on the European Youth Pact and European cooperation in the youth field⁹, which point out that young people are likely to be particularly vulnerable in the deteriorating economic situation, and that the urgent need to invest in youth should be reflected in the renewed youth cooperation framework.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 8771/07.

⁷ Commission Communication "Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe", COM(2008) 412 final.

⁸ 16495/08.

⁹ 6669/09.

TAKING NOTE OF the Commission Communication of 27 April 2009 on an EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities ^{10 11}

AGREE THAT:

- 1) The current framework for European cooperation in the youth field has proved to be a valuable platform for the Member States in addressing youth related issues. The open method of coordination (OMC), the mainstreaming of youth issues into other policy areas and the European Youth Pact, have facilitated a flexible approach in a manner suited to the youth field, with due regard for the competencies of the Member States and the principle of subsidiarity.

Against the background of the overall objective of promoting active participation of young people in society and their social and professional integration, this form of cooperation has produced a wide range of concrete results. More specifically:

- common objectives have provided a solid ground for cooperation in the youth field;
- the development of national youth policies has been supported;
- the visibility of youth issues at national and European level has increased;
- the exchange of best practices and experience and sharing of information on existing policies among Member States has been facilitated;
- knowledge about the living conditions, values and attitudes of young people has improved;
- the European Youth Pact has contributed to the implementation of the Lisbon objectives for growth and jobs, and has strengthened the mainstreaming of youth issues into other policy areas and programmes, both at national and EU level;

¹⁰ 9008/09.

¹¹ The intention of the incoming Swedish Presidency is to continue work towards formulating the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, notably on the basis of the Commission Communication in question.

- 2) The thematic priority areas identified for the application of the open method of coordination, namely participation, information, the promotion of voluntary activities and greater understanding and knowledge of youth, have served to highlight policies that are relevant to the situation of young people and have helped focus efforts to that effect at national level;
- 3) The structured dialogue with young people, their organisations, researchers and other stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level has confirmed the importance of actively involving young people and their organisations in devising policy actions affecting them.

RECOGNISE THAT:

- 1) An improved framework for European cooperation in the youth field - building on the progress made and experiences gained to date - could further enhance the efficiency of such cooperation and provide increased benefits to young people in the European Union, especially in the context of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy;
- 2) In this context, special consideration should be given to questions of central importance, such as the added value of European cooperation in the youth field; the coherence and efficiency of working methods and structures at the EU level as well as a more active role of the Council in setting, alongside the Commission, the goals and agenda for this field;
- 3) Maximising the effectiveness of initiatives and the impact they have on young people would require improved links with other policy areas that affect young people as well as closer cooperation between the relevant services within the EU institutions and EU Member States.

ON THE BASIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION IN THE YOUTH FIELD AND WITH A VIEW TO AGREEING ON THE RENEWED FRAMEWORK, CALL ON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING:

IN RESPECT OF THE OVERALL FRAMEWORK:

- 1) development of a long-term strategy for youth which includes short-term priorities for more flexibility;
- 2) clearer definitions of and interlinkages between various instruments and tools in order to simplify the overall structure of the cooperation framework and increase its effectiveness, coherence and political visibility;
- 3) clear objectives and a limited number of priorities within an agreed timeframe, closely linked to the overall objectives of the EU and the needs of young people;
- 4) enhancement of evidence-based policy making by better use of existing youth research structures and networks; envisaging ways of better understanding and monitoring the existing situation, mapping trends in the needs and aspirations of young people in line with the clear objectives and priorities agreed at EU level, and experimental testing of innovative ideas and solutions;
- 5) improved follow-up of the implementation of the objectives and priorities as well as simplified and streamlined reporting using the new European Youth Report;
- 6) stronger practical dimension of the European co-operation to make better use of the contributions by local, regional and national youth-policy stakeholders to policy development at EU level;

- 7) clearer articulation of the particular contribution that youth work provision can make to the improvement of young people's lives;
- 8) continuation of effective cooperation with the Council of Europe;
- 9) closer cooperation between Member States in various bilateral and multilateral networks which could facilitate the sharing of good practices in the youth field;
- 10) visible links between the objectives and priorities of the cooperation framework and EU programmes for young people, especially the Youth in Action programme;

IN RESPECT OF THE INSTRUMENTS AND TOOLS MORE SPECIFICALLY:

OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION:

- 1) more opportunities for peer-learning and exchanging good practices as an integral part of the method;
- 2) increased availability, transparency and better use of the information collected and analyses conducted in the course of the exercise;

THE EUROPEAN YOUTH PACT:

- 3) ways of more effectively implementing and following up this important political agreement, the purpose of which is to highlight the importance of youth issues in the context of the Lisbon Agenda, especially by mainstreaming the youth dimension into other policy areas and programmes as well as by developing youth-policy based working methods in connection with the OMC;
- 4) possible lines of action for young people with fewer opportunities and their participation in society when implementing the European Youth Pact;
- 5) ways of best promoting a continued inclusion of the youth dimension in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy through the Youth Pact as a key tool to facilitate the social and professional integration of young women and men;

MAINSTREAMING/A CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH:

- 6) development of effective mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation within and between the EU institutions concerning youth issues as well as at local, regional and national level, with due regard to national circumstances;
- 7) stronger interface between youth policy and other policy areas that affect the lives of young people and children *inter alia* by contributing to and evaluating the relevant policy decisions in terms of their implications for these groups;

STRUCTURED DIALOGUE:

- 8) better integration in the overall cooperation framework by aligning the themes discussed in the course of the dialogue with the key issues on the overall youth policy agenda at the EU level, while taking into account the needs of young people;
 - 9) definition of clear objectives and establishment of realistic procedures to ensure continuity and coherent follow-up;
 - 10) an improved structured dialogue that is as inclusive as possible and developed at local, regional, national and European level and involves young people, those active in youth work, youth organisations, national agencies, youth researchers and relevant stakeholders throughout the policy cycle, across policy areas, based on a broad bottom-up approach that includes also various forms of active citizenship and involves young people with fewer opportunities.
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