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Subject: Overview of the structured dialogue between young people and EU institutions on youth employment
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached an information note prepared by the Presidency on the above subject.

**Overview of the structured dialogue between young people and EU institutions
on youth employment**

The aim of this document is to describe the process and the outcomes of the structured dialogue between young people and EU institutions in the period of 1 January 2010 and 30 June 2011 during the Team Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary on the topic of youth employment.

The goal of the Presidency is to take stock of the knowledge and experience gathered during the implementation of the first work cycle of the structured dialogue between young people and decision makers according to the guidelines of the Council Resolution on the Renewed framework of cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). Outlining the consequences from the execution of the structured dialogue might serve as a basis for further analysis and for the planning of the consultations with young people until 2018, as it's stated in the above mentioned Council Resolution.

Besides highlighting some fact, figures and conclusions regarding the process and organisation of the dialogue, we wish to also put an emphasis on the outcomes of the consultations, as they should feed into policy making that concern young people.

In order to achieve the above described objectives, this document has three main sections, giving an overview of the theoretical and legal background of the structured dialogue between young people and decision makers, providing a description on how the structured dialogue is implemented, highlighting the main policy messages and possible initiatives suggested by the outcomes of the dialogue that took place from the 1st of January 2010 until the 30th of June 2011.

Commission's Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate¹

The Commission's Communication titled Plan D states that "...communication is a dialogue, not a one-way street. It is not just about EU institutions informing EU citizens but also about citizens expressing their opinions so that the Commission can understand their perceptions and concerns. Europe's citizens want to make their voices in Europe heard and their democratic participation should have a direct bearing on EU policy formulation and output."

The Communication also encourages EU institutions to communicate with special target groups, such as young people. The need for a dialogue in a structured manner in the EU is set out by Plan D and young people, whose active participation is vital if they are to feel that the European Union is meaningful for them, are a key constituency for the three Ds

Resolutions of the Council of Ministers responsible for Youth (2005-2007)

To provide a forum for the structured dialogue with young people, the Council of Ministers adopted a Resolution in 2005², which invites both the Commission and the Member States to develop a structured dialogue with young people and their organisations, researchers in the youth field and policy-makers. The need for a structured dialogue was also supported by a Council Resolution in November 2006³ and by the Communication on 'Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society' adopted in September 2007⁴.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. "The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate" [SEC(2005) 985 final - doc. 11547/05].

² OJ C 292, 24.11.2005, p. 5.

³ OJ C 2977.12.2006, p. 6.

⁴ Doc. 12772/07 (COM(2007) 498 final).

The Lisbon Treaty

Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that European Union actions are to be aimed at encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

Council Resolution on the Renewed Framework for the European Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018)⁵

The Council of the European Union has adopted the Resolution on the Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018). This document defines the main areas of the youth policy in the European Union and requests for setting up a dialogue between young people and policy makers about the issues of European youth policy. According to this document the structured dialogue is an instrument to ensure that the opinion of young people is taken into account in defining youth-related policies of the European Union. The structured dialogue is implemented in work-cycles which have common themes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE DURING ITS FIRST WORK-CYCLE (1 JANUARY 2010 – 30 JUNE 2011)

The Trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary made a common decision about executing the structured dialogue on the theme of youth employment during the 18 months of the Trio in 2010 and the first semester of 2011. The work cycle consisted of three rounds of consultations, which were composed by consultations in the member states and followed-up by the EU Youth Conferences where young delegates and decision-makers met and prepared joint conclusions on the theme of the consultation round.

⁵ OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

Stakeholders involved

As it was instructed in the Resolution of the Council adopted in 2009, the EU Presidency Trio of Spain, Belgium and Hungary, the European Youth Forum and the European Commission have established the **European Steering Committee** that is the main coordinating body of the structured dialogue. This Committee decides on the questions to be asked from young people, evaluates the implementation of the dialogue process, launches the call for the consultation in the member states of the EU and collects the results of the national consultations.

The coordinator of the structured dialogue in each EU member state is the **National Working Group** that is composed by different stakeholders of the youth field. Young people are usually represented in the working group by the national youth councils. The ministries responsible for youth issues, the national agencies of the Youth in Action programme as well as researchers are present in the national working groups. The role of the working groups is crucial in the realization of the structured dialogue. It designs the detailed implementation of the national consultations and responsible for reaching the target group at national, regional and local level.

Facts about the three rounds of consultations

Depending on the methods used, youth participation ranged from **15 young people** (intensively and directly) to **700.000 young people** (broadly and indirectly) in the Member States.

During the first round of consultations 19 national working groups conducted a consultation at national level. The second round of national consultations was accomplished by 26 National Working Groups from May to September 2010. By the end of the third phase, each member state has established a national working group and made a contribution for the materials taken to the EU Youth Conference.

Overview of the thematic and methodological approach

1st phase of the 1st work cycle – the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The first phase of the consultations came to an end with the EU Youth Conference in Jerez, where youth delegates and representatives of EU Member States jointly defined priorities about youth employment, based on the national consultations.

The following topics were identified as key areas during the national consultations and the EU Youth Conference:

1. Youth employment and its impact on youth autonomy. Access to labour market.
2. Entrepreneurship and self-employment of young people.
3. Working conditions and equal treatment. Reconciliation of private and working life.
4. Training and education, life long learning and mobility. Innovation, creativity and the use of new ICT.
5. Social dialogue, participation and rights of workers.
6. Social cohesion and inclusion.

2nd phase of the 1st work cycle – the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The second phase of the consultation concentrated on recommendations of young people in relation with priorities described by the conclusions of the EU Youth Conference in Jerez.

The participants of the EU Youth Conference in Leuven, Belgium prepared 40 recommendations reflecting on the needs of young people in the field of employment and employability, fine-tuning the results of national consultations in the following areas:

1. Information, guidance and support for young people. How to improve information, guidance and support for young people to ease their access to the labour market as an employee or an entrepreneur?
2. Recognition of competences. How to ensure the recognition of the competences gained from non-formal education and mobility experiences?
3. Social protection. How to prevent young people from entering into precarious situations and ensure their access to social protection?
4. Transition from education to the labour market. Which measures should be taken to ensure a smooth transition from education to the labour market, including through quality internships?
5. Combating discrimination. How to combat discrimination in accessing quality jobs, support programmes and information?
6. Participation of young people in social dialogue. How to ensure participation of young people in the social dialogue?

7. Reconciliation of private and working life. Which measures should be taken to help reconciling private and working life?
8. Role of youth work. How can youth work contribute to the implementation of measures in the field of youth employment?

3rd phase of the 1st work cycle – the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The aim of the third phase of the national consultations was to crystallize the core issues of youth employment, working further with recommendations of the EU Youth Conference of Leuven. This stage of the consultation brought about specific proposals of young people to resolve the difficulties young people might face when entering the labour market.

The EU Youth Conference during the Hungarian Presidency finalized a document of specific recommendations and proposals about the key topics of youth employment, such as:

1. Information and guidance
2. Recognition of competences
3. Social protection
4. Transition from education to the labour market
5. Combating discrimination
6. Financial requirements
7. Reconciliation of private and working life
8. Role of youth work

The joint conclusions of the EU Youth Conference that took place during the Hungarian Presidency can be considered as the final outcome of the first work cycle of the structured dialogue. This outcome contains the following recommendations and possible initiatives in the field of youth employment:

1. Career-oriented training and guidance is essential to raise young people's awareness of labour market requirements and prepare them for the world of work, both for employment and entrepreneurship. Therefore, career-oriented training and guidance should be integrated at all levels of education.

Proposed action: Create a consultative institution, which focuses primarily on the provision of career advice within education structures, and undertakes dialogue with relevant stakeholders in order to provide young people with relevant and sufficient career advice.

2. It is of vital importance to safeguard the rights of young people entering into the labour market, as well as throughout the entire working life, through tailored policy measures and enhanced control mechanisms. Since internships are a valuable tool for a smooth transition to the labour market, a quality framework is needed in order to guarantee the educational value of such experience.

Proposed action: Regulate, evaluate and monitor the quality of internship through the establishment of a binding legislative framework within the EU to prevent the fraudulent use of internships.

3. It is important to ensure easier access for all young people to youth-friendly, innovative and engaging labour market information and career path oriented support, through formal and non-formal educational settings. Therefore relevant actors such as youth workers, career advisers and trained teachers must be recognized as a significant source for relevant support.

Proposed action: Provide tailored training for specialized youth workers, teachers and career advisers to deliver employment related information and career counselling.

4. Youth organisations are major providers of non-formal education, informal learning and wider mobility opportunities outside the formal education context. Therefore, sustainable long-term financial support is essential in order for them to equip young people with skills and competences to become active citizens and ease their access to the labour market, which is an important step in achieving the aims of the Europe2020 strategy and building a competitive, knowledge-based and sustainable Europe.

Proposed action: Financially reinforce the Youth in Action programme and continue it as an independent programme, while prioritising strengthening its user-friendliness, flexibility, and the inclusion aspect, so that all young people have access to it.

5. A balance between working life and personal needs allows young people to make full use of their potential in both the labour market and their private lives. To combine employment with further education, training, family life and volunteering, young people need improved voluntary flexibility as well as security together with ensured access to necessary resources.

Proposed action: Improve social security measures to encourage employers and employees to use various flexible working forms, especially telework, part-time work, job sharing and work at home.

6. Mobility is important to gain competences significant for the personal and professional development of all young people. Equality of access to mobility opportunities is achieved by removing social, cultural, political and administrative obstacles with reference to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and particularly the Youth On The Move flagship initiative.

Proposed action: Create a new youth friendly media communication tool in order to provide extensive information about mobility possibilities, value of competences and international skills gained through them on both European and national level through existing institutions (working with youth matters), initiatives, programmes and youth organisations.

7. Youth work provides young people with skills and competences that are useful in employment, education and social and personal development. Recognition of youth work, as an important complement to formal education, requires cooperation among the youth sector, education institutions, employers and authorities at all levels.

Proposed action: Develop a strategic approach to the recognition of youth work and the competences gained through youth work and volunteering - as is being explored at European level with Youth Pass. This should include encouraging and informing young people on how they can best frame these competences for prospective employers.

8. Existing and new generations of EU programmes and funds are important tools to promote learning mobility and other forms of learning and to increase young people's opportunities in the labour market. Therefore it is vital that they are open to all young people, with special attention to young people subjected to discrimination. These programmes have to be strengthened and developed in order to build further the capacity of young people to realise their human rights.

Proposed action: Encourage Human Rights Education (formal and non-formal) in order to make all young people aware of and capable of using their rights.

The methods that led to the above thematic results were different types, depending on the approach of the national working groups. Various methods and their combinations were used during the three rounds of national consultations:

- *Organising meetings on youth employment (dialogue method)*
- *Compilation of existing knowledge, using existing data available*
- *Questionnaires*
- *On-line tools and social media*

Outcomes of the EU Youth Conferences of the structured dialogue on youth employment

Joint conclusions of the Spanish Presidency EU Youth Conference “youth employment and social inclusion”, Jerez, Spain 13-15 April 2010

Youth Employment is the common theme of the three EU Youth Conferences of the current Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU (Spain-Belgium-Hungary, January 2010-June 2011). Basing their work on previously led national consultations, 97 youth delegates and 90 political representatives met during the Spanish EU youth conference, in order to jointly define the priorities on youth employment to be addressed at European level.

These priorities will allow to continue the process of structured dialogue between young people and the institutions under the Belgian and Hungarian presidencies, with the aim of proposing concrete actions and political commitment to address youth employment issues.

The discussions took place in six thematic working groups, allowing the identification of a range of priorities for youth employment. These priorities are thematically presented below, together with a short reasoning explaining their relevance.

Youth employment and its impact on youth autonomy. Access to labour market.

Priority 1: To Recognize Non-Formal Learning Outcomes.

Non-Formal Learning for a young person, boosts self-Esteem and confidence, makes skills visible, helps to get a job.

For an employer, Non-Formal Learning organises knowledge on the employee’s potential, optimises the match between the person and task, makes his company perform better productivity with less input.

For Society, it reduces mismatch unemployment, it increases social inclusion, and improves the economy.

Priority 2: Access of young people to long-term jobs fairly paid with secure working conditions.

Youth is the most vulnerable category on the labour market especially at the times of financial crisis: youth is often forced to accept precarious jobs with low salaries, temporary contracts and without (sufficient) social security.

Precarious contracts do not allow sustainable insertion in the labour market and limits young people's autonomy.

Access of young people to long-term jobs fairly paid with secure working conditions would also promote active citizenship and participation.

Priority 3: Secure a smooth transition from education to the labour market through the promotion of support measures such as quality internships, counselling schemes, and effective and balanced interaction with labour policies.

The transition to the labour market is becoming more and more challenging for young people: statistics show that unemployment rates are skyrocketing and many times young people are not able to find a job matching their qualifications and expectations. At the moment the effective interaction between stakeholders does not exist, being it the key factor in increasing the level of skills gained in educational process. Increasing the quality and quantity of internships can ensure market-needed qualifications for graduates.

Priority 4: A youth friendly labour market.

A youth friendly labour market is a sustainable labour market. The current labour market rules do not reflect today's challenges because of old ways of communication and old economy regulations (for example unequal job requirements with flexible employees but rigid employers). A new agreement between generations is needed to provide equal access to social benefits. A youth friendly labour market would increase economic independence and prevent poverty and social exclusion.

Priority 5: Provide young people with access to income support, pension schemes and other services (childcare facilities, housing, transportation etc.), to promote youth autonomy and security.

The lack of security and autonomy contributes to poverty and social exclusion.

Priority 6: In order to decrease the rate of school drop-outs, especially among disadvantaged youth, Member States are invited to rethink their financial support measures and the effectiveness of their education systems.

The main causes of school drop-outs are lack of financial means, unattractive and irrelevant curricula, and/or outdated pedagogical methods. Decreasing the rate of school drop-outs would allow better autonomy for young people and increased participation in the educational process.

Entrepreneurship and self-employment of young people.

Priority 1: Entrepreneurship should be encouraged and all young people willing to become an entrepreneur should have equal opportunities to do it.

This priority should be understood as the horizontal approach that affects different policy domains. There are some tasks that can be done in the fields of Non-Formal and Formal Education, legislation, programmes and promoting entrepreneurship.

Non-Formal and Formal Education are good environments to foster creativity and skills for entrepreneurs.

There should be adequate legislation that establishes an entrepreneurship friendly environment.

Programmes should be developed focussing on particular groups of young people dealing with their specific needs or existing programmes should be used more effectively.

Spirit of entrepreneurship should be encouraged on different levels and by different actors: government, NGOs, entrepreneurs etc.

Priority 2: Procedures linked to entrepreneurship should be simplified.

The main problems that young people face in establishing a new entrepreneurship most of the times deal with the code of laws and bureaucracy. New technologies should be used not only in creating a new business or venture, but also during its operational lifetime. It is also needed to simplify tax systems and create a competitive tax rate within Europe. An action of cost reduction at the beginning and during the initial growth of youth entrepreneurship should take place together with the fight of bureaucracy. The creation of effective laws can facilitate the process for young people to develop entrepreneurial initiatives. Finally, the promotion of a European system of sharing good practices in different areas can establish a policy of benchmarking.

Priority 3: Better information on entrepreneurship and support programmes is needed.

There is a need to use Formal Education but changes in the curriculum are needed in order to be more practice oriented. Non-Formal Education should be changed as well –learning by doing, motivation on entrepreneurship, and a connection with internships should be fostered.

Information should be provided in a way suitable for young people.

Support should be provided when starting a business and should involve experienced entrepreneurs.

Priority 4: There is a need to support new ideas and provide access to loans and EU funding programmes.

Motivation, a good idea and financial support are the key elements which encourage young people to start up entrepreneurial activities.

Access to loans and EU funding is crucial due to the fact that young people have less opportunities to get support from the private financial sector or to have their own personal financial resources.

If EU funding programmes for young people are tailor-made, transparent and easily accessible, then they will boost up the set up and sustainability of entrepreneurial initiatives.

The accessibility of EU grants could be directly linked to the trust of private financial institutions, granting loans to potential young entrepreneurs when setting up their own business.

Supporting youth entrepreneurship is in line with the overall values and strategies stated in Agenda 2020. In addition, Member States are obliged to inform young people in relation to the availability to EU funding.

Priority 5: There is a need for specific training and support in going through the complex procedures.

Education for entrepreneurship should promote practical experiences together with theory and post-training overview to overcome the lack of connection between basic education and practical knowledge.

The knowledge from all the Member States should be reflected upon and good practices openly shared to combat inefficient State coordination.

Furthermore, strategically-organised training programmes that work in connection with knowledgeable bodies, such as NGOs, Trade Unions, etc. should be implemented to prevent company or government investment diminishing/decreasing.

Working conditions and equal opportunities. Reconciliation of private and working life.

Priority 1: Remove discrimination on hiring and working conditions related to young people.

The youth unemployment rate is twice as high as for the rest of the population. When recruiting, employers need to acknowledge and value the specific attributes that young people can offer to the market. By employing young people, growth and competitiveness can be sustained and expanded. Employers need to recognise the right of young people to work in fair conditions.

Priority 2: The protection of young people against precarious contracts in order to promote equal working rights, employment security and autonomy.

According to the European studies and statistics, 50% of 15-24 year olds and 25% of 25-29 year olds are in precarious employment situations. This has a big impact on the independence of young people – including their possibility to access housing. There is also a big demographic challenge linked to this, as having children appears to be a difficult option.

The first negative employment experience also diminishes the opportunity to further develop qualifications and skills, while staying out of the labour market or being in a situation of “under” or “hetero” employment can cause the loss of skills previously acquired.

Precariousness, as a result, increases the vulnerability of young workers in regards to working conditions and rights, while it also worsens the general working rights and conditions of the whole labour force.

Priority 3: Promote equal opportunities for young women and men to reconcile their private and family life with their working life.

Youth unemployment in the EU is 21,4% (more than twice as high than among the general population). We can not afford to waste the resource that young women and men constitute. Therefore, it is important to develop inclusive labour markets and promote social inclusion as outlined in the EU 2020 Strategy.

There is a need to improve opportunities for young women and men to have easy access to affordable childcare services, better parental leave, as well as possibilities for flexible working conditions (tele-working, part-time work and flexible working hours). There is also a need for better child benefits. The balance between private and working life also contributes to better performance at work.

Priority 4: Internships should be a relevant learning experience where fair labour market conditions apply.

Currently internships often replace “real” jobs and are considered as cheap labour with no or little pay, no contract or social security payment, no relevant learning experience.

This problem should be addressed to make internships a valuable learning process both for personal development and the acquisition of skills and competences which meet the needs of the labour market.

Thus, internships will be a positive first contact with the labour market and increase young people’s employability and motivation.

Priority 5: Promote gender equality for young people on and in the labour market and in education.

The gender-pay gap is 17,4% across Europe. Every young person should have the same opportunities when in the labour market regardless of gender. Jobs within the same field of work should be paid the same. There are feminised/female-dominated jobs which are paid less. Parental leave should not have an effect on pensions. Employers should keep in mind that gender equality contributes to and promotes growth.

Training and education, life long learning and mobility. Innovation, creativity and the use of new ICT.

Priority 1: Recognition of Non-Formal Education and the value of synergies and complementarities of Non-Formal Education, Formal Education as well as e-learning.

Non-Formal Education is effective in developing competencies (skills, knowledge, attitude) of young people and it provides them with the chance to plan their learning according to their needs, placing them as the basic actors of their own learning, bearing in mind the broad concept of education and its social role.

The complementary values and methods of Formal Education, Non-Formal Education as well as e-learning enrich young people's development and learning outcomes. Synergy of these different concepts ensures the inclusion of all young people and their diverse realities in order to prevent early school leaving.

Priority 2: To ensure equal access for all young people to Formal Education, Non-Formal Education, Life Long Learning, training and mobility.

Lots of young people face all forms of discrimination when accessing educational systems, in breach of their human rights. Lacking equal opportunities and social integration within society is increasing social discrepancies as well as youth unemployment. A long-term sustainable funding of education and training is not guaranteed today.

Priority 3: Develop opportunities for work experience through a cross-sectoral approach between educational system public and private sectors, NGO's as well as increasing awareness and validation of Vocational Education and Training.

One of the reasons why young people are facing high unemployment rates is the lack of experiencing a broader education based on skills and competencies. Cross-sectoral opportunities need to be developed in order to provide young people with relevant work experience and to make them suitable for the labour market. Through an exploitation of young people doing internships, equal opportunities are not given. There is also a need to ensure a youth-rights based approach. Better cooperation involving all actors is expected.

Priority 4: Invest in youth friendly guidance and information on the already existing mobility and educational tools.

Many of the existing tools are not suitable to ensure equal access as well as equal opportunities for all, lacking a focus on minorities that have special needs (i.e. migrants). Very often these tools are not promoted or are wrongly promoted and do not reach their real target groups.

Priority 5: Support creativity and innovation in all forms and all stages of education.

Negative standardisation is one of the issues the educational system is facing today. The system is neither flexible enough, nor changing fast enough to keep pace with today's society. Also, all processes related to education are lacking the input and participation of all stakeholders (i.e. young people).

Priority 6: Increasing access to ICTs and raising awareness about their impact of the individual and society.

ICTs are a crucial part of today's society and economy. They give opportunities (i.e. e-democracy or modern ways of communication etc.), but as well as challenges and dangers (i.e. exploitation of personal data etc.). Without understanding and having necessary skills to handle ICTs, young people face huge problems to access and succeed in the labour market.

Social dialogue, participation and rights of workers.

Priority 1: Both employed and unemployed young people do not get enough information, knowledge, skills and encouragement to participate in the working environment and social dialogue.

Youth needs more information for career decisions and active guidance. Working conditions for young people (instability, temporality, insecurity) are not encouraging their participation in the working environment and social dialogue. Formal Education fails to provide youth with competences for participation in the social dialogue, whereas Non-Formal Education, which does, is not sufficiently recognised.

Priority 2: Labour legislation and social protection do not cover adequately youth specific situations such as internships, part-time employment, parental leave etc.

In the current economical environment, new ways of labour relations are becoming more and more common. The lack of legislation of these particular labour relations and social protection often leads to exploitation of young people. Quality internships and jobs have crucial importance for young people becoming autonomous and starting their family life. EU legislation in this area fails to be fully implemented in all EU Member States.

Priority 3: Corporate environment does not encourage young employees to participate in the decision-making concerning their working environment.

Companies tend to favour short-term employment in the current economic climate. Fear of unemployment leads young people not to commit themselves to advocate for their rights. There is a lack of co-decision for youth related issues within companies. Companies may not encourage young employees to participate, because they presume it is not in the company's best interest. Additionally, there is a lack of a legal framework to guarantee young people's right to participate in decision-making in the working environment.

Priority 4: The situation of young people on the labour market is precarious, as young people's interests are not fully represented in the social dialogue.

Young people are not fully represented in the social dialogue and therefore their influence is very limited and their voices are not heard. Trade Unions fail to represent interests of young employed and unemployed people. There is a lack of infrastructure and financial means to support participation of youth in the social dialogue. There is a lack of cooperation among youth NGOs and lack of awareness about this being a problem.

Priority 5: Relevant information doesn't reach all young people.

Special attention needs to be paid to disadvantaged groups of young people in order to increase their participation.

Social Cohesion and Inclusion.

Priority 1: Voluntary activities must be supported, promoted and recognized as a means for social inclusion, Non-Formal Education, mobility, preparation for the labour market.

Voluntary activities allow young people to gain responsibility, improve their social skills and help them to create social networks. They also broaden young peoples horizons, enable them to fully participate in society and help to create a positive image of youth. Voluntary activities give young people the experience to take autonomous decisions and give young peoples life a purpose.

Priority 2: There should be full accessibility for all young people, specifically young people with fewer opportunities.

Young people with fewer opportunities should have full access to society in general. In addition to access to employment, young people need access to: Information, Training (non-formal), Education, Networks / contacts, Opportunities to gain valuable experience, Volunteering, Participation and representation opportunities.

Young people need more than A job, they need adequate professional realisation.

If this dimension is not a priority and it is not dealt with adequately there is a danger of increasing exclusion and its consequences.

Young people are the engine of society. They have the energy, creativity, will, ideas etc.

Priority 3: Minimising early exclusion, already at an early age, not having the same opportunities as your peers and facing obstacles which prevent you to reach your full potential in life.

When you are excluded at an early age you are more likely to remain excluded. Problems, obstacles are best prevented or addressed as early as possible. Tackling (the risk of) exclusion at an early stage is important for the individual but also beneficial for the society as a whole. Active intervention breaks the vicious intergenerational cycle of exclusion and stops the negative spiral.

Priority 4: Youth work -which is characterised by voluntary participation, structured Non-Formal Learning and offers informal learning opportunities provided by voluntary organizations and public bodies -is an invaluable contribution to the successful integration of young people into society, particularly those with fewer opportunities.

Despite obvious progress to date, there is a continuing need to further improve youth work to fulfil its vital role in ensuring the social inclusion of young people. Ways of further improving youth work include: more funding, better qualified youth workers, defined quality standards, taking full use of research results (evidence-based youth work and sharing of good practice).

**Joint Recommendations of the Belgian Presidency EU Youth Conference on
Youth Employment**

Leuven / Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium, 2-4 October 2010

The EU Presidency Trio Spain-Belgium-Hungary together with the European Commission and the European Youth Forum took up the challenge to develop a structured dialogue on youth employment between young people and policy makers, for the period January 2010- June 2011.

In the frame of the Structured Dialogue, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU organised an EU Youth Conference in Leuven from the 2nd to the 4th of October 2010. This EU Youth Conference is the second one in a series of three Youth Conferences at European level.

Previous to the Youth Conferences, the Member States set up national working groups to consult young people and youth organisations at local, regional and national level. The results of the national consultations are brought together at the EU Youth Conferences, organised in turn by the three Presidencies, and the next steps in the process are prepared.

The EU youth conference in Leuven built upon the process and the results previously achieved under the Spanish Presidency. During the Spanish EU Youth Conference, youth delegates and political representatives jointly defined priorities on youth employment. These priorities feed into the process of structured dialogue between young people and the institutions under the Belgian and Hungarian presidencies. Before the EU Youth Conference in Leuven a new round of national consultations in the 27 EU Member States was organised to identify concrete recommendations on youth employment. The results of the consultations have been compiled before the Leuven Conference and served as a starting point for the workshop discussions.

The conference in Leuven brought together young people, (representatives from) Directors General for youth affairs, representatives of the National Agencies for the Youth in Action Programme from the different member states and representatives of European Institutions

All the participants worked together in thematic workshops with the objective to fine-tune the recommendations from the national consultations and to address them towards the appropriate level or institution (EU, Members states, young people and their organisations,...) and to investigate what the contribution of youth policy can be.

During its EU Presidency, Belgium will submit the interim results of the structured dialogue process to the EU Council which will free the way to political results during the Hungarian Presidency in the first semester of 2011.

These joint recommendations identified in Leuven by young people and policy-makers are the following:

Information, guidance and support for young people

1. Formal education institutions should promote cooperation with the private sector and the employment agencies to ensure that its provision is reflecting current labour market trends.
2. Existing EU information dissemination tools (e.g. Eurodesk, Eures, Eryica, Euroguidance, ...) should coordinate their work on European and national levels to provide comprehensive employment information for young people.
3. Youth workers and career advisers should have a more important guidance role in informing and supporting young people on labour market issues through the use of non formal education and with the help of new exciting tools, information and support structures.
4. EU and Member States should enable formal education curricula to promote and support creative thinking and entrepreneurial skills in young people.
5. EU and Member States should better target financial resources to ease the access of young people to the labour market, especially for long-term unemployed, first-time job seekers and disadvantaged young people.

Recognition of competences

1. EU and Member States should promote the formation of national task forces to ensure the recognition at national level of competences gained through non- formal education and mobility experiences.
2. Member States, in collaboration with youth NGO's and others active in the youth field, should develop an information strategy in the formal education system to raise awareness among young people about the benefits of all forms of non-formal education.
3. As the major providers of non-formal education, there needs to be a concrete focus on the sustainable long-term financial support for youth organizations, with increased collaboration between the EU and Member States .
4. EU and Member States should ensure a legal framework for volunteers and voluntary service providers, applicable in all EU Member States, that includes social security, health insurance, duties, rights and responsibilities.
5. EU, Member States and youth organisations should simplify access to mobility opportunities by removing obstacles of a social, cultural, and political nature (e.g. lack of information, visa problems,....) and particularly by supporting young people with fewer opportunities.

Social protection

1. EU and Member States should increase and improve control mechanisms to prevent violation of labour rights and possibly through training programmes in schools assure that young people are aware of these rights.
2. EU and Member States should use fiscal leverage to make precarious working arrangements more expensive and incentives for hiring young people under quality and stable conditions.
3. EU and Member States should establish a European framework on labour contracts in full agreement with the social partners.
4. Member States should ensure a rights based approach to social protection to achieve autonomy for young people such as those in volunteer work, on short term contracts and who are self employed or (long term) unemployed.

5. The EU should establish a quality framework for internships to enhance educational experiences.

Transition from education to the labour market

1. Member States and educational institutions should ensure that career-oriented training and guidance is integrated at all levels of education in preparation for career search, both for employment and entrepreneurship for all young people.
2. The right of young people to access social security benefits (e.g. 6 months) on leaving education if they undertake internships should be recognized.
3. Internships should be based on an agreed contract outlining the rights and responsibilities, and the aims of the internship, its relevance and how it will benefit the intern.
4. Member States and educational institutions should consult with social partners to ensure curricula which enable youth's self-development and equip them with relevant knowledge and with transferable skills gained inter alia through practical experience in various fields.
5. Member States should cooperate with the EU to establish a "social guarantee framework" which provides all unemployed and willing young people with opportunities to be employed, to pursue further qualifications or, for those seeking to be self-employed, with financial and technical support.

Combating discrimination

1. Existing tools should be used and strengthened to promote competence-focused mobility experiences for disadvantaged and unemployed young people through the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes and the European Social Fund.
2. In order to avoid collective discrimination, the public sector must be required to provide employment for people with fewer opportunities (e.g. work, internships) and to combat individual discrimination individual rights have to be reinforced (e.g. using a clear and adapted language, taking into account the specific needs of young people, and using mentorship to guide and support disadvantaged young people).

3. Ensure, monitor and assess the implementation of anti-discrimination laws in Member States to achieve equality for all the groups and identify best practices.
4. Human Rights education should be implemented in both formal and non-formal education systems by using all existing tools at national and European level and methodological approaches (e.g. Youth In Action and Lifelong Learning Programmes) to achieve more visible and a decrease in discrimination in a long term.
5. Effective policies combating discrimination in the formal and non-formal education and training field, especially that which is gender based, and multiple discrimination, should be sustainably and adequately funded to deliver a full scope of rights, with a focus on young people, youth work and youth policies and managed by young people and policy makers.

Participation of young people in social dialogue

1. EU and Member States should ensure young people equal spaces, by providing them possibilities for participation, in public debates and existing communication channels relating to employment and social policies.
2. EU and Member States should ensure the participation in social dialogue of National Youth Councils and other youth organizations and young people through a strengthened and sustainable structured dialogue (through e.g. creating youth advisory councils) on all levels and in all processes related to employment and social policies.
3. EU, Member States and civil society should pay special attention to the inclusion of non-organised youth and young people with fewer opportunities in social dialogue through wider dissemination of information in their own environments, using various methods (e.g. non-formal education and focus groups in youth representation structures).
4. A broad and active participation of young people in the social dialogue can be achieved through comprehensive education and empowerment, awareness raising programmes and campaigns, a legal framework that ensures the equal access of young people to formal democratic processes and by lowering the voting age for all elections.
5. Member States should provide the conditions for young people to influence social dialogue, public debate and policy outcomes through education for global citizenship and active student democracy in formal education institutions.

Reconciliation of private and working life

1. EU and Member States should ensure sufficient, available quality child care facilities, adapted to the needs of children and parents (e.g. services available at places of work and study, matching working times).
2. EU and Member States should identify and publicize good practices in the reconciliation of private and working life to stimulate employers and trade unions to implement them.
3. Member States should provide better access to information and advice specifically about social support, family benefits, health care options and working legislation (e.g. through a one stop information and counselling service).
4. EU and Member States should encourage flexibility and security (flexicurity) in working conditions (e.g. work in various teams, job-sharing, working at home, (international) mobility at work, part-time work, educational leave, sabbatical leave, combination of work and voluntary work).
5. EU and Member States should develop standards on paternity leave and promote the use of parental leave by fathers (to ensure that the father really takes up the non-transferable period of parental leave).

Role of youth work

1. Member States should involve youth workers and youth organisations in the development and implementation of all measures on youth employment.
2. To better represent the interests of young people and to provide creative solutions for societal problems such as youth unemployment, the quality of youth work and participation opportunities should be enhanced through developing and supporting training possibilities and peer learning.
3. The educational institutions should recognise the added value of youth work through credits and accreditation and allow time flexibility in study structures (e.g. taking time off for youth work).

4. Youth work needs to empower young people to voice their competences and provide them with tools for recognition, with a clear structure and content, that fits labour market terminology.
 5. Member States should cooperate with all stakeholders, including those involved in counselling young people and employers, to raise visibility, strengthen awareness and recognise in the labour market the skills and competences acquired through youth work.
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Outcomes of the Hungarian Presidency EU Youth Conference on youth employment

Gödöllő/ Budapest, Hungary, 2-4 March 2011

The Council of the European Union has adopted the Resolution on the Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018). This document defines the main areas of the youth policy in the European Union and requests for setting up a dialogue between young people and policy makers about the issues of European youth policy. The structured dialogue is an instrument to ensure that the opinion of young people is taken into account in the formation of EU youth policy.

The Trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary made a common decision about executing the structured dialogue on the theme of youth employment during the 18 months of the Trio in 2010 and the first semester of 2011.

The first phase of the consultations came to an end with the EU Youth Conference in Jerez, where youth delegates and directors general of EU Member States jointly defined priorities about youth employment, based on the national consultations.

The second phase of the consultation concentrated on recommendations of young people in relation with priorities described by the conclusions of the EU Youth Conference in Jerez.

The participants of the EU Youth Conference in Leuven, Belgium prepared 40 recommendations reflecting on the needs of young people in the field of employment and employability, fine-tuning the results of national consultations.

The aim of the third phase of the national consultations was to crystallize the core issues of youth employment, working further with recommendations of the EU Youth Conference of Leuven. This stage of the consultation brought about specific proposals of young people to resolve the difficulties young people might face when entering the labour market.

During the EU Youth Conference under the Hungarian Presidency in Gödöllő and Budapest from the 1st to the 4th of March 2011 youth delegates and Directors General finalized a document of specific recommendations and proposals about the key topics of youth employment as it follows:

Joint conclusions

Recommendation

Career-oriented training and guidance is essential to raise young people's awareness of labour market requirements and prepare them for the world of work, both for employment and entrepreneurship. Therefore, career-oriented training and guidance should be integrated at all levels of education.

Proposed actions

1. Create a consultative institution, which focuses primarily on the provision of career advice within education structures, and undertakes dialogue with relevant stakeholders in order to provide young people with relevant and sufficient career advice.
2. Set up a national level programme to promote the importance of every job to various sectors of society, especially to the youth field, highlighting that all jobs are necessary and should be valued in society.
3. Create measures aiming to facilitate cooperation between business and education at local level to provide work experience for young people.
4. Set up a national competition for young entrepreneurs and provide financial support to implement the winning proposals.
5. To implement specific policies offering young people, who are actively looking for work, a job, working experience or training after a specified period of unemployment.

Contribution of young people:

Young people should clarify to their educational institutions the lack of information about education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Stakeholders, especially student- and youth organisations, should mobilise young people in consultative bodies on a democratic basis. Youth participation should be achieved through youth representative structures, by means such as campaigns, lobbying and projects to increase awareness of labour market requirements. Student and youth organisations should provide training on topics dealing with career-orientation and guidance.

Recommendation

It is of vital importance to safeguard the rights of young people entering into the labour market, as well as throughout the entire working life, through tailored policy measures and enhanced control mechanisms. Since internships are a valuable tool for a smooth transition to the labour market, a quality framework is needed in order to guarantee the educational value of such experience.

Proposed actions

1. Regulate, evaluate and monitor the quality of internship through the establishment of a binding legislative framework within the EU to prevent the fraudulent use of internships. This framework should guarantee:
 - a. *a written contract specifying the terms of the internship*
 - b. *no replacement of paid job*
 - c. *individual tailored tutorship*
 - d. *full accomplishment of the training hours*
 - e. *fair remuneration*
 - f. *establishment and strengthening of the inspection bodies for interns' working conditions*
 - g. *support the access to work contracts once the training has ended*
2. Develop financial support for internship providers that offers quality internship opportunities for young people.

3. Promote partnerships between educational institutions and the internship providers to ensure the implementation of the quality framework.
4. Create an EU-wide database about internship opportunities offered in different Member States, including assessments from former interns.

Contribution of young people:

Young people can contribute by assessing their internship experience in a given company and in this way guide potential interns.

Young people and youth organisations should advocate more extensively on the topic of quality internships, putting forward good practices.

Youth organisations should encourage the participation of young people in trade unions and professional organisations.

In order to strengthen the impact of the quality framework on internships, youth organisations should work together with other associations, entities or relevant youth platforms.

The necessary information on the legislative framework should be given to the interns through trade unions and youth organisations in order to raise awareness about their rights and responsibilities.

Recommendation

It is important to ensure easier access for all young people to youth-friendly, innovative and engaging labour market information and career path oriented support, through formal and non-formal educational settings. Therefore relevant actors such as youth workers, career advisers and trained teachers must be recognized as a significant source for relevant support.

Proposed actions

- Provide tailored training for specialized youth workers, teachers and career advisers to deliver employment related information and career counselling.
- Dedicate more space, time and support to youth workers and career advisers in schools.
- Encourage partnership between enterprises and educational institutions by providing structure for high quality internship programmes.

- Include practical information from employees to provide knowledge and develop competences needed for finding a position in the labour market in training courses for young people.
- Organise seminars on career path orientated support fostering cooperation between youth organisations and national employment services at a European level.

Recommendation

Youth organisations are major providers of non-formal education, informal learning and wider mobility opportunities outside the formal education context. Therefore, sustainable long-term financial support is essential in order for them to equip young people with skills and competences to become active citizens and ease their access to the labour market, which is an important step in achieving the aims of the Europe2020 strategy and building a competitive, knowledge-based and sustainable Europe.

Proposed actions

1. Financially reinforce the Youth in Action programme and continue it as an independent programme, while prioritising strengthening its user-friendliness, flexibility, and the inclusion aspect, so that all young people have access to it.
2. Develop sustainable long-term financial support to youth work, in constant dialogue with youth organisations, rather than financial support based on singular projects.
3. Compile and disseminate best practice models for financing non-formal education among the Member States.
4. Create a non-formal education accreditation system to identify and recognise providers of non-formal education, such as youth organisations.

Contribution of young people:

Young people contribute with their volunteering time to the financial sustainability of youth organisations.

Recommendation

A balance between working life and personal needs allows young people to make full use of their potential in both the labour market and their private lives. To combine employment with further education, training, family life and volunteering, young people need improved voluntary flexibility as well as security together with ensured access to necessary resources.

Proposed actions

1. Improve social security measures to encourage employers and employees to use various flexible working forms, especially telework, part-time work, job sharing and work at home.
2. Provide more types of flexible and affordable child care facilities at working, living and studying places run by qualified staff.
3. Ensure structured dialogue mechanism, including social partners, to regularly evaluate practices of flexible working arrangements for young people, publish and disseminate the results of the evaluation.
4. Launch information campaigns to encourage young families to equally share tasks of private and professional life using flexible working arrangements.

Contribution of young people:

Young people and youth organisations should actively participate in social dialogue for a better cooperation with local, national and European authorities. Young people and youth organisations should emphasise that certain types of flexible working conditions can also be ideal for those who cannot get a job on the 'conventional' labour market due to their present life situation, e.g. distance, illness, pregnancy; inform other young people about it and increase the work force. In general young people and youth organisations should take part in the discussions about flexicurity, by lobbying for their cause. They will be users of existing opportunities in the context of both flexibility and security and have the responsibility of promoting them. Young people and youth organisations should initiate regular evaluations in order to participate in youth research, which can lead to exchange of information on local level and dissemination of good practices useful for them.

Recommendation

Mobility is important to gain competences significant for the personal and professional development of all young people. Equality of access to mobility opportunities is achieved by removing social, cultural, political and administrative obstacles with reference to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and particularly the Youth On The Move flagship initiative.

Proposed actions

1. Create a new youth friendly media communication tool in order to provide extensive information about mobility possibilities, value of competences and international skills gained through them on both European and national level through existing institutions (working with youth matters), initiatives, programmes and youth organisations.
2. Ensure free access, without visa obstacles, for participants in both formal and non-formal youth mobility and voluntary exchange programmes or projects between the European Union and neighbouring countries.
3. Continue removing economic barriers that prevent young people with fewer opportunities from participating in EU mobility programmes through creating a ‘means tested’ element to the application process or providing additional financial support.
4. Create a European Employment Service fostering employment mobility for young people by supporting job search and facilitating all additional procedures, including housing, insurance and linguistic support.

Recommendations

Youth work provides young people with skills and competences that are useful in employment, education and social and personal development. Recognition of youth work, as an important complement to formal education, requires cooperation among the youth sector, education institutions, employers and authorities at all levels.

Proposed actions

1. Develop a strategic approach to the recognition of youth work and the competences gained through youth work and volunteering - as is being explored at European level with Youth Pass. This should include encouraging and informing young people on how they can best frame these competences for prospective employers.
2. Establish a legal framework for volunteers which includes a rights-based approach to volunteering. Such a framework should value both voluntary youth leaders and paid youth workers.
3. Develop time and organisational flexibility in formal education to enable young people to participate in or lead youth work (such as international mobility programmes, and local youth initiatives).
4. Create platforms of exchange between the actors of the labour market and the youth work sector in order to build a common process where there is a mutual interest.
5. Ensure sustained mechanisms of finances at all levels for youth work by programmes – e.g. Youth in Action at the EU level - and by providing other resources such as facilities and transport provision.

Contribution of young people:

Young people and youth organisations should develop self-assessment tools for youth leaders and workers enabling them to present skills and competences in a meaningful way.

Youth organisations should encourage the implementation of different activities (e.g. workshops) in order to disseminate information and raise awareness on the importance of youth work, volunteering and non-formal education. In general, all stakeholders in youth work should recognize the importance of working together.

Recommendation

Existing and new generations of EU programmes and funds are important tools to promote learning mobility and other forms of learning and to increase young people's opportunities in the labour market. Therefore it is vital that they are open to all young people, with special attention to young people subjected to discrimination. These programmes have to be strengthened and developed in order to build further the capacity of young people to realise their human rights.

Proposed actions

- Encourage Human Rights Education (formal and non-formal) in order to make all young people aware of and capable of using their rights.
- Ensure the existence of a separate youth programme in order to combat discrimination and promote the inclusion of all young people on the labour market and in society as a whole.
- Ensure, monitor and assess the implementation of anti-discrimination policies and European Union programmes in the Member States in order to ensure equal opportunities for young people.
- Make European Union funds and programmes accessible for young people and youth organisations; and create support structures to help youth organisations to apply for such funding.
- Ensure that all young people and their perspectives are taken into account when developing next generation of the Youth in Action Programme in order to combat discrimination.
