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ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH

28th meeting

**European Youth Centre Strasbourg
12-14 November 2012**

REPORT OF THE YOUTH EVENT held in St Petersburg on 22-23 September 2012

The Youth Event on “Young people’s access to rights: development of innovative youth policies” was held on 22-23 September at the Ambassador Hotel, St. Petersburg, prior to the 9th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth held on 24-25 September at the Corinthia Hotel, St Petersburg, on the same theme. The programme appears at Appendix I.

A one-minute silence was held in memory of Denis Barinov, Chair of the NYCR and member of the Advisory Council on Youth, who had passed away suddenly on 1 June 2012.

The Youth Event was co-funded by the European Youth Foundation (EYF) and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. It was organised jointly by the Advisory Council on Youth, the European Youth Forum and the National Youth Council of Russia (NYCR). It brought together some 100 youth representatives (including national delegation representatives and representatives from national youth organisations, national youth councils, international youth NGOs and AC members). The complete list of participants appears at Appendix II.

A joint working group (AC Bureau, YFJ and NYCR) on the Youth Event was set up at the 27th meeting of the Advisory Council and followed all preparations for the Event.

The Event provided an opportunity to discuss and formulate opinions about young people’s access to rights and after some heated debates, the participants drew up a list of concrete proposals which they presented as the Youth Event Final Conclusions (see Appendix III) at the end of the Event which was closed by Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy. The Conclusions were then presented at the Ministerial Conference.

Working methods and outcomes

The aim of the Youth Event was to produce an Outcome Document, a paper reflecting the young participants’ ideas, innovations and thoughts on the topic of the Event and the Ministerial Conference. The work was divided into plenary and working group sessions with five sub topics related to the general topic of the Event. The five working groups were:

- Social Inclusion of Young People
- Democracy and Participation
- Living Together in Diverse Societies
- Youth Mobility
- Access to Rights and Youth Information

The working groups, facilitated by facilitators from the YFJ Pool of Trainers, had the task to produce statements and recommendations on their topic during Saturday afternoon. Participants then returned to an Opinion Boulevard on Sunday morning to comment on other working groups' results. A second session of working group discussions took place before lunch on Sunday where the groups finalised their recommendations.

Alongside the working groups, the facilitators and organisers of the Youth Event worked in a drafting group. The drafting group worked during Saturday night and Sunday lunchtime to combine, integrate and consolidate the working group recommendations.

Plenary discussion

In the opening session, keynote speaker, Mr Luca Volonté (PACE rapporteur) [presented](#) PACE Resolution 1885 (2012) and Recommendation 2002 (2012)¹ on “The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis” during the Youth Event. Showing statistical figures on the current difficult condition of youth in Europe and denouncing the bad approach of considering young people as a problem instead of an opportunity for Europe, Mr Volonte stressed the importance of investing in youth through concrete measures at European and national level.

Dr. Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy, University of Glamorgan, focused his contribution on the [access to social rights](#), underlining the big challenges that affect young people in accessing their rights and the new pressures on their shoulders. One of the proposed possible ways out was to extend the offer of opportunities for young people, moving from problem solving (drugs, school dropout) to empowerment. The “entitlement approach” suggested would also avoid a hard political debate rising from a pure legal approach.

Mr Ulrich Bunjes, Head of the Youth Department, took the opportunity to stress the importance of the co-management system and how this contributes to effective and participatory youth policies. Recalling the political environment in which both the Youth Event and the Ministerial Conference were taking place he suggested some crucial indications regarding young people's access to rights: promotion of youth information, including through formal education and training channels, establishment of soft and hard monitoring tools of youth rights, the pivotal role of civil society and youth organisations, the possible public-private cooperation in this field.

Working groups

All the participants were divided into 5 groups according to their preferences and discussed the topics of social inclusion of young people, democracy and participation, living together in diverse societies, youth mobility and access to rights and youth information.

Facilitators of each group used similar methods in order to reach the desired result. First, the participants were asked to present themselves and their organisations. Then the AC's views on the topic were presented as a starting point for the discussion. The participants had an opportunity to identify the main issues connected to the discussed topic and work in smaller groups to understand the main challenges existing in each area. After the challenges were identified and presented to the whole group (all the participants had an opportunity to provide their input) the smaller groups started their work once again – this time on the solutions and actions for every challenge that were afterwards shared with the whole group as well.

After the first day of work the drafting group aggregated the input of each working group and prepared the first draft of the Final Conclusions that was presented during the Senior Officials meeting on the next day. The condensed provisions served also as a basis for the work during the second day of the Youth Event. First, each provision was presented in the Opinion Boulevard where every participant had an opportunity to share his or her opinion on each of the provisions (not being limited to the chosen working group). After this exercise the participants once again came back to their working

groups to finalise the recommendations that they wanted to present to the Ministers responsible for youth.

The drafting group once again incorporated all the input of the participants and prepared a second draft of the Final Conclusions of the Youth Event.

Presentation and follow-up of results

A final plenary discussion took place in the afternoon on Sunday, 23 September. First the results of each working group were introduced and a short discussion took place after each presentation. Participants had had the chance to comment on many of the issues already, which resulted in relatively few disagreements in the plenary. One discussion concerned recommendation 19 on the establishment of an international day of youth rights. It was suggested that the title of the day should be international day of rights of young people so as not to confuse the overall discussion of a concept of separate youth rights. Several participants looked at this from different points of view and in the end consensus emerged to keep the name as was proposed, mainly for the reason of promoting the concept and notion of youth rights, already well established in international youth policy discussions. Thus, after the general discussion the Final Conclusions were adopted by all the participants of the Youth Event by consensus.

All participants of the Youth Event took part in the Ministerial Conference where they had an opportunity to exchange views with Ministers. 3 panellists and 3 working group rapporteurs were selected from among the Advisory Council members participating.

At the beginning of the Ministerial Conference the representatives of the organisers of the Youth Event (Sergey Bagrov, vice-chairman of the National Youth Council of Russia, Matti Niemi, Bureau member of the Advisory Council, and Peter Matiasic, President of the European Youth Forum) had an opportunity to present the results of the Youth Event to all the participants of the Ministerial Conference. The Final Conclusions of the Youth Event were disseminated to all interested parties, including the CDEJ, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly committees and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe so that the important topic of young people's access to rights will remain on the Council's agenda.

Moreover, one of the important achievements of the Youth Event is the fact that the most prominent provisions of the Final Conclusions were mentioned in the Chair's conclusions, once again stressing the importance of the input given by young people in order to identify the future of youth policy in Europe.

APPENDIX I PROGRAMME

Thursday 20th September 2012

Arrival of the facilitators and secretariat

Friday 21st September 2012

9.30 Facilitators' preparatory meeting

Afternoon Arrival and registration of participants

19.30 - 23.00 Welcome dinner at a restaurant
combined with the introduction session

Saturday 22nd September 2012

09.30 Opening session with addresses by:

- Ms Maria Paschou, Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth
- Mr Peter Matjasic, President of the European Youth Forum
- Mr Vladimir Kharchenko, Acting Chair of the National Youth Council of Russia
- Mr Sergey Kondratyev, Deputy Head of the Department of Additional Education, Training and Youth Policy, Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.
- Mr Ulrich Bunjes, Head of the Youth Department, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Council of Europe

11.00 Coffee break

11.30 **Keynote speakers:**

“Young people’s access to social rights”

Dr Howard WILLIAMSON, Professor of European Youth Policy, University of Glamorgan

11.50 **“The young generation sacrificed”**

Mr Luca VOLONTÉ (Italy, EPP/CD) – Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis” (Resolution 1885 (2012) and Recommendation 2002 (2012) adopted by the Assembly on 26 June 2012)

12.10 Discussion

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Presentation ‘Ivanovo- 2015 European Youth Capital Candidate City’

14.30 Working groups on:

- Social Inclusion of Young People
- Democracy and Participation
- Living Together in Diverse Societies
- Youth Mobility
- Access to Rights and Youth Information

- 17.00 Coffee break
- 17.15 Working groups (continued)
- 19.30 Dinner at the hotel
- 21.00 – 00.00 Tour of the city (combined bus and walking)
At midnight everyone will be back at the hotel

Sunday 23rd September 2012

[Preliminary draft results submitted to the meeting of Senior Officials for information]

- 09.30 Working groups continued
(participants will switch Working Groups)
- 11.00 Coffee break
- 11.15 Working groups (continued)
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.30 Presentation of results in plenary and discussion
- 16.00 Conclusion, adoption of the Youth Event recommendations

Close of the Event by Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković,
Director General of Democracy
- 16.30 Coffee break
- 17.00 Transfer to the venue of the ceremonial dinner by a high speed boat
- 20.00 Ceremonial dinner hosted by Mr. Dmitry Livanov, Minister of Education and
Science of the Russian Federation (together with the other participants of the
Ministerial Conference) at the Peterhof Palace

Monday 24th September 2012

9th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth
(Corinthia Hotel)

[Results of the youth event presented during the Ministerial Conference at 10.30 am]

Tuesday 25th September 2012

- Morning 9th Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth
followed by a press conference
- 13.40 Lunch at the Hotel Ambassador
- Afternoon Departure of participants

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APPENDIX III

The Conclusions of the Youth Event

The youth representatives gathered at the Youth Event held in St. Petersburg on 22-23 September 2012 prior to the 9th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth,

Considering that:

- (a) youth policies should ensure the inclusion of young people in society ;
- (b) the current economic and social crisis in the Council of Europe's member states is having a crucial effect on the lives of young people;
- (c) in order to avoid exclusion and alienation the issue of youth participation has become even more important;
- (d) rights are not always known and easily accessed by young people;
- (e) youth policies need to be adapted to changes in society;
- (f) mobility is one of the core freedoms and learning opportunities for young people;
- (g) embracing diversity can ensure peaceful cohabitation in today's diverse societies,

Concluded that:

Social Inclusion of Young People

1. We strongly encourage Member States to invest in quality and inclusive education that can promote retention and reengagement in learning, support personal development, appreciation of diversity and facilitate a quality transition from education to the labour market. In this framework a better interaction between formal and non-formal education/learning is fundamental as well as the promotion of tools such as entrepreneurial education and quality internships.
2. The inclusion of young people with migrant background should be further promoted. Member States should set up free programmes aimed at introducing these young people to the new culture, language, law and services in line with the CoE recommendations and guidelines.
3. Access to social rights should be facilitated by strengthening the implementation of the Social Rights Charter provisions. It is crucial to make people more aware about the mechanisms available to protect social rights. Projects such as ENTER 2 represent a valuable platform to link policymaking and work at local level and to increase capacity building in this regard.
4. Continued participation of young people is needed in setting up strategies and action plans regarding the promotion of equality of opportunities and inclusion in relation to for example gender, disability and rurality highlighting the significant role of youth workers in supporting pathways to social inclusion.

5. A “youth guarantee” should be established within all social protection systems to ensure employment, further education or training for all young people after a certain period of being unemployed or out of education and training.

Democracy and participation

6. To ensure meaningful participation of young people in the creation of youth policy, co-management mechanisms should be introduced at local, regional, national, European levels. All parties of the mechanism should be defined through a democratic transparent process and have equal power and responsibilities. Society should have the opportunity to contribute to the work of co-management structures as well as visibility of the process and the outcomes should be ensured.

7. We recognize youth organisations and National Youth Councils as a channel of participation and involvement of all young people. In this view Member States are asked to set new and improve existing schemes for information and awareness raising in this regard. Therefore, we demand sustainable and accessible financial support mechanisms.

8. The Council of Europe in cooperation with Member States and NGOs, should improve existing tools or establish new tools in order to systematically assess the implementation of adopted policy documents.

9. We call on the Member States to further the recognition of non-formal education and youth work through the implementation and recognition of common mechanisms ensuring NFE quality standards.

10. We call for lowering the voting age and the age needed to stand as a candidate in elections to the age of 16.

Living together in diverse societies

11. The Council of Europe should develop and implement a specific action plan in order to prevent and combat hate motivated violence and incitement of such violence affecting young people, by issuing policy suggestions and supporting the work of the Member States, raising awareness through cooperation with youth organisations and using monitoring mechanisms to assist Member States’ efforts in developing effective legislation and policies.

12. The Council of Europe and the Member States should ensure cooperation between the governmental structures and youth organisations and remove bureaucratic and political barriers in the implementation of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

13. There is a need to actively involve the PEYR in order to provide not only data on concepts of diversity, but also approaches to working with it and models of successful practices to provide evidence for the development of youth policy.

14. (Post) conflict trauma should be acknowledged and peace building and dialogue should be promoted and prioritized by the Member States of the Council of Europe, the international community and youth organisations in (post) conflict regions by using programmes and instruments, including mass media, in order to facilitate the re-establishment of a peaceful environment.

15. The Council of Europe and the Member States should ensure that Protocol no.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights against discrimination is effectively implemented. We also demand that the Council of Europe urges Member States that are not yet party to this protocol to ratify it.

Youth mobility

16. The process of obtaining visas is expensive, complex and time-consuming, resulting in lost opportunities for young people. Thus we call for the member states of the Council of Europe:

a) to grant free, multiple entry and long term visas for study and youth programmes through a simplified application system which requires neither logistical costs nor personal presence to embassies (e.g. online application system).

b) to encourage greater cooperation between Member States regarding visa issues thus reducing bureaucracy.

We ask for the implementation of the proposed actions before the next Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

17. We further call the Member States to increase their efforts in implementing the Bologna process and establish frameworks in terms of qualifications and competences recognition in all formal and non-formal education levels, increasing mobility and youth employment opportunities.

18. We call on the Member States to continue promoting a common and cross-cutting action plan for European mobility in order to provide equal access to mobility for young people regardless of their country of origin and background, including through wider recognition of the youth card system.

Access to rights and youth information

19. In order to promote awareness of rights of young people, we recommend the establishment of an International Day of Youth Rights and a public campaign.

20. Human rights education tools such as “Compass” and “Composito” should be made compulsory in formal education curricula of the Member States.

21. Member states should provide qualitative and professional information on the rights of young people and make it accessible to all, with a special focus to the needs of young people with fewer opportunities.

22. We urge the Member States to provide free legal advice and representation to all young people who cannot afford it.

23. We ask the Council of Europe for a compilation of rights related to young people which are already provided by existing international legal documents such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, European Convention on Human Rights and European Social Charter. Identified gaps shall be addressed by the Council of Europe and the Member States.

24. Ombudspersons should be appointed at national and European levels to ensure that the rights of young people are respected and protected.

25. A specific chapter on young people's rights should be introduced in the country reports of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

26. We urge the Member States to fully ratify the revised European Social Charter and the optional protocol with regard to the collective complaint procedure.

27. The European Court of Human Rights at European level and Member States at national level shall promote regular case-law compilations to better know the status of violations of young people's rights and to what extent they are protected by the existing legal tools.

28. The Council of Europe shall promote specific research and studies on young people's access to rights in Europe with the objective of designing better evidence-based policies. This should involve Member States and include a comparative analysis of the gap between duties and rights.

29. In order to ensure the full protection of young people's rights we ask for the promotion of a legal framework at European level.

Implementation and follow-up

30. We wish to emphasise that promoting effective youth policy is a collaborative effort of society. Public authorities, the private sector and the civil society should facilitate enhanced cooperation with regard to the development and implementation of innovative youth policies, including the funding of youth programmes in areas such as mobility, employment and youth information.

31. We call upon the Council of Europe Joint Council on Youth and the Youth Department to follow up on the results of this Youth Event and to report on the progress to the next Ministerial Conference and related Youth Event.

23rd September 2012.