

EU Youth Conference of the Irish Presidency

11 March – 13 March 2013, Dublin

Joint Conclusions

The EU Youth Conference is an element of the Structured Dialogue process which brings together young people and policy makers across the European Union to jointly discuss and inform the development of youth policy at national and European level. The Structured Dialogue process was established by the Council of the European Union in its Resolution for a Renewed Framework for cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). The Structured Dialogue process is an important instrument to ensure that the opinions and views of young people are taken into account in the formation of policies in the youth field.

For the 18 month cycle (1 January 2013 – 30 June 2014), the Trio Presidency, Ireland, Lithuania and Greece, in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Youth Forum have agreed that the theme of the Structured Dialogue process throughout the cycle is Social Inclusion. This was subsequently endorsed by the Council in a Resolution adopted in November 2012. Each of the three consultation phases will reflect this thematic priority, with the results from each phase informing the next phase, leading towards a collective outcome at the end of the cycle. Presidency specific priorities will contribute to the overall thematic priority of social inclusion.

The Irish EU Youth Conference is the first conference within the Trio Presidencies of Ireland, Lithuania and Greece, highlighting the theme of the social inclusion of young people. Seven thematic areas drawn from the results of national consultations provided by 27 Member States and 10 International Non-Governmental Organisations were explored at the Conference via joint workshop sessions. Young people and Ministry officials from the 27 Member States have jointly defined the following conclusions. These will inform a *Council Resolution on Social Inclusion* at the end of the 18 month cycle. They will also inform *Council Conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people* to be proposed by the Irish Presidency to the Council of Youth Ministers in May 2013.

1. EMPLOYMENT – Employment Leads to Inclusion

- Young people in employment should have the right to equal and fair treatment, especially the right to decent work and salary, non-precarious jobs, training and promotion opportunities and should not face discrimination based on age.
- To ensure the transition from education to employment, young people should be provided with quality career guidance counselling and job coaching, paid internships and paid apprenticeships of good quality that meet their skills and interests.
- Financial, administrative and other necessary support, as well as entrepreneurial education and training, should be provided to encourage youth entrepreneurship with an emphasis on green and social entrepreneurship.

2. EDUCATION – Inclusive Education for All Young People

- To provide a holistic approach to education, sustainable frameworks that ensure collaboration between formal and non-formal education and learning should be established, whilst platforms between schools, universities, youth organisations and non-formal learning providers are also developed.
- Secure equal access to free and good quality education from primary to tertiary level for all young people, including those with citizenship other than that of the country of residence, and others at risk of social exclusion.
- To build a culture of understanding, acceptance and respect, education systems must promote participation in decision-making, diversity and inclusion rather than focus solely on exams and certificates. This should also be reflected in everyday school practices.

3. PARTICIPATION – Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities to Participate in Civic Life

- International legal provisions grant young people rights. It is essential that all young people have equal access to these rights and are provided with equal opportunities to fully participate in society.
- Young people often experience multiple discrimination on grounds such as age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and gender identity. Therefore an Anti-Discrimination Directive¹ should be adopted by the EU and implemented and evaluated at all levels.
- Young people are demotivated to participate, and under-represented, in democratic life. They should be encouraged and empowered through education, civil society and representative institutions. Existing and new tools should be developed to enhance youth participation in policy making.

¹ See proposed Council Directive of 2008 (426) final:
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0426:FIN:EN:PDF>

4. WELFARE – Access to Welfare

- In order to meet young people's needs and to ensure coherent welfare policies and equal access to welfare systems, cross-departmental and cross-sectoral cooperation on and between local, regional, national and European levels should be strengthened.
- Young people must be guaranteed social rights, in particular equal and free access to mental and physical healthcare and affordable, decent housing.
- Young people should be provided with youth-friendly information, guidance, financial support and training on employment, migration, healthcare, housing, etc. at an accessible "one stop service". This should also serve as a place for dialogue between generations and with social partners.

5. SUPPORT – Social and Youth Services for Young People

- Youth services, social services and formal education institutions should work together with young people and their families to prevent the social exclusion of young people.
- Quality psychological support and counselling in formal and non-formal education settings, including youth centres, information and counselling centres, should be enhanced and tailored to the specific needs of youth groups, especially those who are socially excluded.
- All media, traditional and social, should be better utilised to increase visibility of, access to and awareness of youth work in order to engage more diverse groups of young people.

6. YOUTH ORGANISATIONS – Youth Organisations and Social Inclusion

- In order to reach out to more diverse groups of young people, especially those at risk of social exclusion, youth organisations should create and continuously update their support structures, working methods and channels of communication.
- Youth-led organisations and democratic, representative youth structures should be actively involved at local, regional, national and European level, from the initiation, in the creation, deliberation, implementation and monitoring of policies that affect young people's lives.
- Youth organisations should be recognised for their contribution to the social inclusion of young people through non-formal education and learning, which provides necessary skills and competences for active citizenship.

7. QUALITY – Assuring Quality in Youth Work to Ensure Social Inclusion

- Recognition of youth work should be ensured at EU and national level through participatory policy development, sustainable financial support, an institutional framework and development of evidence in order to acknowledge the impact of youth work on social inclusion and across different policy fields.
- To foster social inclusion, the development of self-assessment frameworks for quality assurance in youth work should be encouraged. Such frameworks should be progressively implemented, supported and communicated, and involve all stakeholders in the youth field.
- Young people should always have a decisive role and voice in shaping youth work, as a safe and inclusive space for them to be empowered, co-decide, grow and contribute to social change.



Lithuanian Presidency
of the Council of the
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EUROPEAN UNION YOUTH CONFERENCE OF LITHUANIAN PRESIDENCY

9-12th September 2013, Vilnius

JOINT CONCLUSIONS

The EU Youth Conference is an element of the Structured Dialogue process which brings together young people and policy makers across the European Union to jointly discuss and inform the development of youth policy at national and European level. The Structured Dialogue process was established by the Council of the European Union in its Resolution for a renewed framework for cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). The Structured Dialogue process is an important instrument to ensure that the opinions and views of young people are taken into account in the formation of policies in the youth field. For the 18 month cycle from 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2014, the trio Presidency (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece), in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Youth Forum have agreed that the theme of the Structured Dialogue process throughout the cycle is Social Inclusion. Each of the three consultation phases reflects this thematic priority, with the results from each phase informing the next phase, leading towards a collective outcome at the end of the cycle. Specific priorities of Presidency contribute to the overall thematic priority of social inclusion.

The Lithuanian EU Youth Conference was the second conference within the Trio Presidencies of Ireland, Lithuania and Greece, highlighting the theme of the social inclusion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

The goal of the Lithuanian Presidency EU Youth Conference was to come up with conclusions from the workshops, on the basis of the compiled results of national consultations. The outcome of the Lithuanian Presidency EU Youth Conference is a list of conclusions that can serve as a basis for possible inclusion in policy documents to be progressed through the EU Council of Youth Ministers:

- *Council Conclusions on the enhancing of social inclusion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs);*
- *Council Resolution on Structured dialogue with young people on social inclusion.*

Seven thematic areas drawn from the results of national consultations provided by 28 Member States and 17 International Non-Governmental Organisations were explored at the Youth Conference via Joint workshop sessions. Young people and Ministry officials from the 28 Member States have jointly defined the following conclusions.



1. ADAPT Education to the Needs of Young People and Demands of the Labour Market

- EU Member States should increase the number of social scholarships as well as improve means-tested financial support for covering study-related costs (i.e. text books, school equipment, meals, etc.) and develop learning infrastructure, including access to affordable transportation.
- EU Member States should ensure that education systems are tailored to individual learners in order to develop active citizens with social values, general knowledge, life skills and professional skills. The education systems must facilitate open and flexible transitions between different phases of education.
- Inclusion and diversity training should be ensured for all educators as well as engaging learning environment for all learners. Interactive tools, modern equipment, quality facilities and a variety of learning methods should be provided by the relevant authorities.

2. INFORM and GUIDE Young People in their Transitions

- The EU Institutions and Member States should make it a youth policy priority to improve quality, outreach and capacity of information and guidance services for young people on all levels, specifically regional and local, and to cooperate with information networks.
- The EU Institutions and Member States should ensure ring-fenced funds for specialised information and guidance services and diversity training for practitioners to facilitate the transition of socially disadvantaged youth into education, employment or training.
- The EU Member States should support cooperation between families, educators, schools and information service providers to deliver cohesive information and guidance to young people in transitions in order to help them make informed decisions.

3. FACILITATE the Transition from Education to Employment

- Formal and non-formal education providers should proactively build sustainable partnerships with employers in order to integrate practical job-related experiences into education and to offer more opportunities for quality internships and apprenticeships, structured and monitored training schemes, available for all young people.
- Governments in cooperation with employers and non-formal education providers should develop and promote tools for assessment and self-evaluation of the competences acquired through non-formal education in order to guarantee the recognition of such competences in the labour market and to develop the employability and self-confidence of young people.



- The EU Institutions should adopt a binding framework to ensure that all internships in the European Union are of quality and sufficiently remunerated. Member States should offer tax or other incentives to employers for providing such internships.

4. IMPROVE the Labour Market for Young People

- EU Member States should ensure that their legal frameworks prevent discrimination against young people, based on age, and that young people are entitled to the same employment conditions, remuneration and rights as other workers, therefore leading to strengthening intergenerational solidarity.
- Governments should support entrepreneurship by simplifying administrative procedures through establishing a one-stop shop and online services, and enabling access to free legal advice, as well as providing financial support and tax relief to young entrepreneurs, and incentivising private investments¹ into start-ups.
- Governments should increase youth employment by putting in place tax incentives for employers to create quality jobs under the following conditions: jobs should respect the guidelines from ILO Decent Work Agenda²; should be based on long-term contracts and should not replace already existing jobs.

5. SUPPORT for Young People's Autonomy

- EU Member States should develop and implement national policies on access to affordable and decent housing for all young people, including NEETs, students, employees, among others, in order to ensure their autonomous life.
- EU Member States should guarantee easy access to youth-friendly welfare services in order to support the autonomy of young people, in particular those at risk of social exclusion.
- EU Member States should provide and coordinate social integration services and programmes from information and guidance to tailored training for young people. This should be implemented in cooperation with educational institutions, local authorities and youth organisations.

¹ Examples of incentivising private investments are angel investors, seed funds and venture capital, among others.

² International Labour Organisation. *Decent Work Agenda*. <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/decent-work-agenda/lang--en/index.htm>



6. ENHANCE the Role of Youth Organisations

- EU Member States should establish or develop national coordinating bodies for the Youth Guarantee involving representatives of youth organisations and other social partners in designing the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee scheme on national level.
- EU Institutions and Members States should invest in youth organisations to ensure that all young people have access to non-formal education, especially young people who are socially excluded, NEETs and young people from remote areas.
- Decision-makers at all levels should recognise the representative role of youth councils and youth organisations by establishing a clear legal framework through which their independence and involvement in the decision-making process will be ensured.

7. DEVELOP Cross-Sectoral Cooperation

- To enhance social inclusion of NEETs, European Commission and Member States should improve coordination and implementation mechanisms of cross-sectoral cooperation based on evidence and practical knowledge, mutual interest, exchange of information, shared responsibility and adequate resources for implementation and follow-up.
- Governments should ensure multi-stakeholder quality cooperation through developing joint goals and implementation mechanisms while guaranteeing youth participation in decision and policy making processes by involving national youth councils and other relevant youth representatives.
- European Commission in cooperation with Member States should produce a study on existing practices of cross-sectoral cooperation in order to increase the quality of youth policies.