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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

COUNCIL

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 22 May 2008 on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities

(2008/C 141/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

Whereas:

- (1) The European Council adopted at its 2005 Spring Summit the European Pact for Youth as one of the instruments contributing to the implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy with a view to improving — by means of cross-sectoral strategies — young people's employment opportunities and social inclusion, their education, training and mobility, giving priority to young people with fewer opportunities.
- (2) In its Resolution of 7 December 2006 ⁽¹⁾, the Council suggested that Member States encourage the provision of wide-ranging and equal opportunities for all young people to participate in civic life and that a structured dialogue with young people should involve those engaged in various and innovative forms of active citizenship, non-organised young people and young people with fewer opportunities thus creating conditions for equal participation of all young people.
- (3) In its Resolution of 25 May 2007 ⁽²⁾, the Council invited the Member States and the Commission to improve the coherence of measures to implement the European Pact for Youth and to make sure that '*such measures actually reach their target groups, in particular young people with fewer opportunities, by taking into account their needs, backgrounds and motivation*'.

⁽¹⁾ Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship (OJ C 297, 7.12.2006, p. 6).

⁽²⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council: 'Creating equal opportunities for all young people — Full participation in society' (OJ C 314, 22.12.2007, p. 1).

- (4) In its Communication of 5 September 2007 entitled *Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society* ⁽³⁾ the Commission emphasised that it is in the social and economic interest of Europe that the full potential of all young people is used; reference was therefore made to the importance of achieving social inclusion and equal opportunities for all young people paying particular attention to those with fewer opportunities.
- (5) The Spring 2008 European Council emphasised the importance of strengthening the social dimension of the Lisbon Strategy, of combating poverty and social exclusion, of promoting active inclusion and increasing employment opportunities for those furthest from the labour market, including young people, and urged Member States to take concrete action in order to improve the achievement levels of learners with a migrant background and from disadvantaged groups,

NOTE THAT:

1. work under the German Presidency focussed on equal opportunities and social participation for all children and youth within the framework of the team presidency programme on social and professional integration of young people;
2. the results of the peer-learning activities on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities have shown that such young people require special attention in all Member States and that it is particularly necessary that public authorities at local and regional level, civil society, youth workers, youth organisations and young people themselves work hand in hand to foster their well-being;

⁽³⁾ COM(2007) 498 final.

3. in the framework of the structured dialogue, young people and representatives of youth organisations met on 18-21 April 2008 on the occasion of the Slovenian Presidency's youth event and formulated a set of conclusions regarding the mobility, employment, non-formal learning and competence-building, integration and political participation of young people with fewer opportunities, and the role of young people in intercultural dialogue.

UNDERLINE THAT:

1. while recognising the differences between Member States, the situation of young people with fewer opportunities (such as young women and men from less-privileged educational, socio-economic or geographical backgrounds, or with disabilities) is an issue of concern in many European countries;

2. despite contemporary globalisation and migratory flows that create new opportunities and enrich European diversity, a number of young people with fewer opportunities still face economic and social difficulties;

3. the very cohesion of our societies is endangered by the fact that a considerable number of young people in Europe lack opportunities to actively participate in education, employment and society; therefore, empowering every young person to fulfil his or her potential and to participate actively in community life is essential for the sound and sustainable development of societies and contributes to overall social cohesion by building mutually trusting relationships with other groups of society, including older generations;

4. unemployment, poverty, poor health, cultural, social and economic exclusion and all forms of discrimination are obstacles to the well-being of young people and may hinder their active participation in society;

5. tailored measures targeted to young people with fewer opportunities should be based on cross-disciplinary research on young people and their living conditions. Such a knowledge-based approach is particularly relevant when dealing with issues related to young people with fewer opportunities;

6. the transition and mobility between training and education systems and the labour market is of great importance for the prevention of unemployment and social exclusion of young people;

7. in the context of the Community cooperation framework in the field of education, tackling the problem of early school leavers and educational disadvantage is a major challenge; evidence shows that educational achievement in most

Member States still depends on socio-economic background, and additional efforts and strategies are therefore necessary to address this structural inequality;

8. non-formal and informal learning has a key role to play as an instrument supporting the social and economic inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities; in this context, the work of youth workers and youth organisations with these youngsters is of particular importance;

9. at European level, the Youth in Action Programme is a key instrument for promoting the active participation and social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities;

10. culture, youth work and sports activities play an important role in contributing to the inclusion and well-being of young people with fewer opportunities.

EMPHASISE IN PARTICULAR THAT:

young people with fewer opportunities should be given special attention at an early stage, in order for them to be better integrated in society. They should also be offered every opportunity (through special support or mentoring) to take part in actions open to all young people.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

1. give high priority to young people in the most vulnerable situations when implementing the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and the European Youth Pact, and pay special attention to them in devising their national flexicurity strategies;

2. further develop the transversal approach to youth issues and the shaping of cross-sectoral policies, which is particularly relevant in respect of young people with fewer opportunities;

3. counteract gender stereotypes and promote gender equality in all actions taken to empower young people with fewer opportunities;

4. support young people in adopting a healthy lifestyle and include this specific target within their health policies, with a particular focus on young people with fewer opportunities;

5. act against the intergenerational transmission of unemployment and economic inactivity through, *inter alia*, initiatives aiming at creating good employment opportunities for young people;

6. reinforce as a priority the social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, in particular by promoting equal opportunities for children and young people in the context of the EU social protection and social inclusion process;

7. support the development of the existing forms of participation and encourage the creation of new ones that include young people with fewer opportunities and support the development of innovative and targeted measures to improve their access to ICT, media and information, especially at local and regional level, within the framework of the open method of coordination in the field of youth;
8. pay due attention to the participation of young people with fewer opportunities as such and also to the social benefit of this participation, while developing and assessing programmes targeted at young people;
9. work with youth organisations for developing an inclusive approach in the structured dialogue with young people with fewer opportunities at all levels, and adapt the format of encounters if necessary;
10. broaden awareness of and knowledge and expertise regarding the social, economic and other factors determining the well-being of young people and the situation of young people with fewer opportunities;
11. reinforce the dissemination of good practices at all levels via exchange of data, experiences and networking.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

1. facilitate the development of sustainable strategies or integrated measures in national policy plans aimed at improving the conditions for the involvement and inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in society.

Particular considerations should be given to interdisciplinary and intersectoral early intervention measures to prevent or mitigate the risks of children and young people becoming socially excluded;

2. make available EU funding (EU programmes and Structural Funds) for supporting the social inclusion and active participation of young people with fewer opportunities;
3. provide increased support to youth workers and youth leaders working with young people with fewer opportunities, *inter alia* by enhancing further training and improving recognition of their skills;
4. encourage and support youth and social organisations in their actions on behalf of young people with fewer opportunities;
5. promote tailored information and facilitate access to such information for young people with fewer opportunities;
6. where appropriate, develop and improve mechanisms for vocational guidance and counselling to enable young people with fewer opportunities to find a job;
7. identify the obstacles in the way of participation by young people with fewer opportunities, seek ways to overcome these obstacles and encourage especially the participation of young people with fewer opportunities from the local level up to the national level both within representative democracy and in the youth structures; provide greater support for learning to participate.

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

1. consider possible lines of action at European level, based on good practices identified in cooperation with Member States, to facilitate the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities and their participation in society;
 2. take into account the objectives of the current Resolution when proposing the priorities for the future framework of cooperation in the field of youth.
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