



**European Youth Forum
Position Paper on
Council Resolution on Strategies and
Guidelines for Future Cooperation in Youth-
related issues**

**Adopted by the Bureau of the European Youth Forum on
5th April 2002**

Background

At the beginning of 2002, the Spanish Presidency of the European Union announced its intention to work towards agreeing a Council Resolution on 'Strategies and Guidelines for Future Cooperation in Youth-related Issues' at the Council of Ministers meeting on 30th May 2002. The Resolution will act as the follow-up to the European Commission's White Paper 'A New Impetus for European Youth'. In order to prepare this Resolution, the Spanish Presidency has taken a number of initiatives. It sent out a questionnaire to all Member States in January in order to facilitate a discussion on the key issues to be tackled. The Council meeting of 14th February and the meetings of the Council Working Group on Youth and the Murcia meeting of the Director Generals for Youth also provided an opportunity to move towards a consensus on the follow-up to the White Paper. Young people had an opportunity to make a contribution on a number of areas included in the White Paper at the Murcia Youth Gathering.

The European Youth Forum's response to the White Paper was adopted by its Bureau at the end of January 2002. It stresses the need to introduce 'fixed concrete objectives with defined aims, a time-frame and policy proposals to achieve them' under the open method of coordination. Furthermore, in order to take 'youth into account in other policy areas, it calls for the identification of a broader range of policy areas than those listed in the White Paper and defined mechanisms at both the Community and the Member State level for ensuring a genuine 'mainstreaming' of youth issues at the European, national, regional and local level. This position paper seeks to complement the European Youth Forum's response to the White Paper by focusing on the elements that the European Youth Forum would like to see included in the Council Resolution in order to ensure that this initiative to develop a European Youth Policy makes a genuine difference to the opportunities and situation of young people in Europe.

Annexed to this position paper is a draft proposal for a Council Resolution including the key points contained in this paper.

I - An Open Method of Coordination for Youth Policy

The European Youth Forum calls for the inclusion of youth policy guidelines in the Council Resolution to be agreed on the 30th May 2002, and the initiation of the implementation of these guidelines from 2003 onwards. These guidelines should take the form of four pillars, reflecting the key themes proposed by the European Commission's White Paper: information, voluntary service among young people and a greater understanding of youth. The guidelines should be agreed annually by the Council, thus allowing for alterations in accordance with the developments and needs of youth policy.

The annual cycle of the open method of coordination in the youth field should include the following elements:

- Adoption in the autumn by the Council and the Parliament of the annual youth policy guidelines for the following year;
- The implementation of the guidelines at the Member State level;
- The submission of an annual youth report from each Member State to the European Commission and the Council;
- The analysis of these reports by the Commission and the adoption of a Joint Youth Report by the Commission and the Council, with approval by the Parliament, including an assessment of the efforts made by each Member State and the achievements at the European level. The report should establish benchmarks for youth policy and include examples of best practice.

The work of the Council and the Commission in this field should be supported by the establishment of a Youth Committee. This Committee would be composed of representatives from each Member State, the European Commission and youth organisations. In accordance with the European Youth Forum's response to the White Paper on Youth Policy, the consultation of the representative structures of young people both at the national and the European level should be fundamental to this annual process.

The candidate countries should be encouraged to shadow the process in order to facilitate their involvement in it as soon as they accede to European Union.

The European Youth Forum proposes the following fifteen guidelines for 2003:

European Youth Policy Guidelines 2003

Pillar I - Participation

Promoting the Participation of Young People through their consultation in Decision-making structures

In order to ensure a high level of participation of young people in society through their involvement in decision-making at the local, regional national and European level, Member States will ensure that young people have the opportunity to contribute their perspective, knowledge and ideas by:

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2. The involvement of young people and youth organisations in the development, implementation and assessment of policies and services for young people.
3. Promoting equality in participation to ensure that young people who suffer from discrimination also have the opportunity to be involved and to contribute to the fight against racism and discrimination.
4. Recognising democratic national youth councils as representative bodies of youth and providing a legal framework for youth initiatives and youth organisations to function in an autonomous way.

Empowering Young People to Active Citizenship

Recent studies confirm that young people are becoming increasingly disillusioned by traditional democratic structures of government, a fact reflected in low voter turn-out rates among young people. Member States will promote the active citizenship of young people and reduce their exclusion from society by introducing the following measures from an early age by:

5. Requiring the consultation of democratic structures representing school and university students by school and university authorities on issues which affect students.
6. Promoting citizenship education in schools, with particular attention paid to promoting democratic participation in elections.
7. Empowering young people to participate in decision-making structures and recognition of the role of youth organisations in promoting citizenship.
8. Supporting youth civil society organisations through the provision of resources, in particular to contribute to the development of representative youth structures at the local, regional and national level.

Pillar II - Information

All too often, young people do not have access either to information which is essential to certain areas of their lives and to information which would provide a broader understanding of issues that affect them. Member States should aim to provide greater information to young people by:

9. Developing coherent national strategies for the distribution of information to young people. Ideally this should consist of a one-stop national youth portal providing information to young people on their rights and on opportunities in such areas as education, employment and voluntary work. The same information should also be made available in other formats and disseminated to young people through information channels and educational and leisure institutions.

At the Community level, an inventory will be made of existing information policies, programmes and channels targeting young people with a view to developing and implementing a comprehensive and measurable strategy on information aimed at young people. This strategy should be developed in co-operation with all actors in the field.

Pillar III - Voluntary Service among Young People

A key means of promoting youth participation and the development of civil society is by engaging young people in voluntary work. Volunteering offers an opportunity for young people to develop social values, establish a stronger individual identity, and gain experience and skills not normally provided within the formal education or professional training sector. Volunteering is open to all regardless of their academic, economic, or social background and, as such, can play an important role in social inclusion.

Member States should strive to ensure that **all** young people have the opportunity to volunteer in their local communities or in another region or country in civil society organisations and other non-profit projects on a full-time or part-time basis.

In particular, Member States should:

10. Promote volunteering as a means of non-formal learning and active participation in civil society among young people, through co-ordinated effort at national, regional and local levels.
11. As a follow-up to the Mobility Recommendation and the Action Plan on Mobility, Member States should identify all obstacles existing on national level that prevent young people from volunteering locally, nationally or transnationally in order that the Commission can draw up a report that identifies how national legislation can promote transnational volunteering and tackle the obstacles to it.
12. Increase the financial and administrative support for voluntary sector organisations that are engaging and supporting young volunteers. Member States should report on these efforts on a yearly basis.
13. Promote discussion on the appropriate means of recognising voluntary service among young people. The Council and the ministers should invite the Commission to draw up a report on the various forms and possibilities for recognising learning in the context of volunteering and voluntary service.

Pillar IV - A Greater Understanding of Youth

Young people today live in a very fast-changing world and there is frequently a lack of quantitative and qualitative information on them and their situation. Member States are therefore requested to:

14. Ensure that statistics include comparative indicators for the 15-24 age-group. The resulting figures should be presented in an annual national youth report that is submitted to the European Council. The report should also include a more qualitative assessment of the social situation of young people.
15. Consult young people themselves in order to have a better understanding of their perspective. Information not only on the experiences but also on the opinions of young people should feed into the development of definitions of quality in areas such as education and training and the establishment of benchmarking.

II - Taking More Account of Youth in other Policy Fields

The European Commission's White Paper 'A New Impetus for European Youth' proposes that more account of youth should be taken in education, lifelong-learning and mobility; racism and xenophobia; employment; social integration and autonomy. The European Youth Forum believes that this list should be extended to include the additional policy areas of gender equality and discrimination. Furthermore, youth should be taken into account in a more comprehensive manner than that proposed in the White Paper, both at the European level and the Member State level.

The European Youth Forum calls on the Council Resolution to include as section on mainstreaming youth, taking into account the following:

Mainstreaming Youth

Many policy areas impact upon the lives of young people. In order to ensure that the needs of youth are taken into account in these policy areas it is proposed that youth should be mainstreamed at the Community level, with a similar mechanism implemented nationally.

Policies in the following areas should take youth into account, with the objective of improving the education received by young people, their socio-economic situation, their opportunities and their autonomy:

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Anex

RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

of 30 May 2002

on Strategies and Guidelines for Future Cooperation in Youth and Education

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

Having regard to the White Paper A New Impetus for European Youth from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the Parliament,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions,

Whereas:

- (1) Article 2 of the Treaty establishing the European Community gave the Community the task of promoting throughout the Community a harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities and a high level of employment and of social protection and the raising of the standard of living and quality of life
- (2) Article 149 of the said Treaty provides for action by the Community to be aimed in particular at encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors.
- (3) Article 136 of the said Treaty assigned to the Community and the Member States the particular objectives of the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions and the combating or exclusion.
- (4) Article 125 of the said Treaty assigned to the Community and the Member States the task of developing a coordinated strategy for employment.
- (5) The Lisbon declaration on youth policies and programmes defined guidelines for developing youth policy, in particular in the areas of education, employment, participation and health¹.
- (6) The European Parliament and the Council, in their Decision No 253/2000/EC of 24 January 2000 establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates'² and their Decision No 1031/200/EC of 13 April 2000

establishing the 'Youth' Community action programme³, and the Council in its Decision 1999/382/EC of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme 'Leonardo da Vinci'⁴, established Community action programmes contributing to the construction of a Europe of knowledge open to all.

- (7) On 8 February 1999 the Council and the Ministers responsible for Youth adopted a resolution on youth participation, which emphasises the importance of young people taking an active part in social, political, cultural and economic life.

(8)

¹ Declaration adopted at the World Conference of ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in August 1998.

² OJ L 28, 3.2.2000, p.1.

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- (15) The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have all urged the Community to strengthen its contribution to efforts in the Member States to promote youth policy.
- (16) The implementation of the strategies and guidelines may vary according to their nature, the parties to whom they are addressed and the different situations of the Member States. They should respect the principle of subsidiarity and the Member States' responsibilities with regard to youth policy.
- (17) In implementing this resolution, the work carried out by other international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe, will be of particular interest.
- (18) Partnership at all levels should be encouraged, including national youth councils and international and European non-governmental youth organisations and with representatives of youth civil society at the regional and local level.

TAKE THE VIEW that the process of European construction cannot succeed without the close involvement of young people.

AFFIRM that, with their wealth of experience, capabilities and critical acumen, young people must be more closely associated with the policies which concern them.

ENCOURAGE the Community institutions and Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, to launch a coordinated youth strategy in the European Union with national and, as appropriate, regional and local youth policies, and INVITE, in this context, the Commission and the Member States, each within its own sphere of competence, to:

- (i) Establish annual guidelines from 2003 onwards to promote youth participation, provide more information to young people, to encourage voluntary service among young people and to promote a greater understanding of youth in accordance with the guidelines proposed. The guidelines can be developed and adapted on an annual basis and will be adopted by the Council in cooperation with the European Parliament, and after consultation of the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and a Youth Committee.
- (ii) Initiate an open method of coordination in the field of youth policy from 2003 based on the implementation of the annual guidelines by the Member States. Each Member State shall provide the Council and the Commission with an annual report on the principal measures taken to implement its youth policy in light of the youth policy guidelines.
- (iii) The Council, on the basis of the reports and having received the views of the Youth Committee, shall each year carry out an analysis of the implementation of youth policy in the Member States in light of the Youth policy guidelines. The Council and Commission shall make a joint annual report to the Council on youth policy in the Community and on the implementation of the youth guidelines.
- (iv) The process will be carried out at the Community and Member State level in consultation with the organised representatives of youth. The process will be complemented by the mainstreaming of youth in other policy areas, namely formal education policy, lifelong-learning, including non-formal education for young people, mobility, tackling all forms of discrimination, employment and social inclusion. Member States will establish cross-sectoral structures with representatives from government departments to ensure that youth is taken into account in other policy areas and will include a section in their annual youth reports on this mainstreaming action.