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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council

to: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) / Council

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Subject : 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"
- Adoption of the Council Resolution

Delegations will find herewith the text of a draft Council Resolution on the above subject, as agreed by the Youth Working Party.

The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to forward the text to the Council for adoption of this Resolution.

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of [...]
Creating equal opportunities for all young people – full participation in society

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

WHEREAS

- (1) the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007¹ pursues the aim of emphasising the value of a just society based on social cohesion and of stimulating a broad debate on how the participation of disadvantaged groups and groups subject to discrimination can be improved;
- (2) in its Resolution dated 18 May 2004² the Council reaffirmed that the social framework conditions in which young people grow up have a direct impact on the success of political strategies and measures for promoting equal opportunities and social and professional integration and that conditions for which young people usually have no responsibility themselves often prevent their participation in society, restrict their ability to exercise their civil rights and stand in flagrant contradiction with the principle of equal opportunities;

¹ Decision No 771/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2006 establishing the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) — towards a just society (OJ L 146, 31.5.2006, p. 1).

² Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on social integration with regard to young people (doc. 9601/04 of 18 May 2004).

- (3) on 18 May 2004¹ the Council underlined the importance of the role of young people in combating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, as well as related intolerance and all forms of discrimination, and their role in promoting cultural diversity, mutual respect, tolerance and solidarity;
- (4) at its 2005 Spring Summit the European Council adopted the European Pact for Youth as an element of the renewed Lisbon Strategy with a view - by means of horizontal political efforts - to fostering education and training for young people, their mobility as well as their professional integration and participation in society, and in so doing, to focusing particular attention on young people with fewer opportunities;
- (5) at its 2006 Spring Summit the European Council described social cohesion and the promotion of equal opportunities for all as a crucial basis for economic and employment policy reforms in the Member States, in line with the aims of the Lisbon Process, and regarded measures to implement the European Pact for Youth as a matter of priority;
- (6) social inclusion is an important priority of the *Youth in Action* Programme² and a strategy has therefore been established to provide access to programme activities, in particular for young people from less-privileged educational, socio-economic, cultural and geographical backgrounds and for those with disabilities;
- (7) in its contribution to the Spring 2007 European Council meeting the Council identified four key priorities for further implementation of the European Pact for Youth, namely: support for young people in the transitions between education, training and work; the need for individual paths towards integration; the need for coherent local and regional implementation strategies for the Pact; and greater embodiment of a youth dimension in the overall implementation of the Lisbon Strategy;

¹ Declaration of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on Racism and Intolerance in relation to Young People (doc. 9405/04 of 28 May 2004).

² OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 30.

- (8) the Spring 2007 European Council invited the Commission to present an interim report in Autumn 2007 with a view to its proposal for the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2008-2011). It called for a reinforced lifecycle approach to work in order to improve access to the labour market. Member States agreed to further develop policies which promote the role of young people, including their transition from school to working life, as active participants in the economy and the labour market, aiming at using their full potential to contribute to the economic and social development of our societies;
- (9) in the framework of the structured dialogue, young people and representatives of youth organisations met in April 2007 in Cologne on the occasion of the German Presidency's youth event and identified a number of political priorities and commitments with a view to improving equal opportunities and participation in society in the shape of an action plan.

NOTE that

1. equal opportunities for participation in society must mean the right of all young people to have access to high-quality education and training, housing, "good work" and all relevant areas of the social security and/or employment systems, in accordance with national law and practices in conformity with Community law, and to participate in social and political discussion and decision-making processes concerning them and not least to enjoy a healthy and autonomous lifestyle with free time in which to pursue their own interests;
2. the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All seeks to make people in the European Union aware of their rights to equal treatment and to launch a debate on the benefits of diversity for both society and the individual. In order to enable young people to exercise their rights, they need tailor-made information and support for their engagement against all forms of discrimination. Such information and support needs to be provided not only by their families, but also by society at large - in particular the education system, those active in the youth field, NGOs, the media as well as administrations at all levels and national anti-discrimination bodies;

3. Member States' and European policies aimed at a better social and professional integration of young people must take account of the particularly high number of problems in disadvantaged urban and rural areas and recognise that youth policies need to press for targeted and cross-sectoral action, in order to ensure equal opportunities for young people growing up in such areas;
4. in order to make equal prospects a reality for young people with fewer opportunities, specific measures are necessary to promote the development of their individual potential and to overcome stereotypes and prejudices within society;
5. in order to implement policies that respect intergenerational equity, structural barriers to equal opportunities and to young people's participation in society need to be eliminated. This also contributes to fighting discrimination against young people not just on the grounds of age, but, as is often the case, discrimination on multiple grounds.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION to

1. promote the various forms of structured dialogue with young people and take due account of the outcomes of that dialogue at all levels;
2. improve the coherence of measures to implement the European Pact for Youth aimed at ensuring the sustainable inclusion of young people, as well as ensuring that such measures actually reach their target groups, in particular young people with fewer opportunities, by taking into account their needs, backgrounds and motivation;
3. endeavour, also in consultation with social partners, to develop a well-balanced approach for young people in terms of "flexicurity", facilitate the transitions from school to working life, avoid unemployment and precarious working conditions and contribute to reconciling family, private and professional life;

4. emphasise youth policy aims via the open method of coordination in the field of social protection and social inclusion and make corresponding contributions, as appropriate, to the work of the Social Protection and Employment Committees in order to strengthen the youth dimension and foster the social inclusion of young people and reduce the risk of poverty;
5. emphasise the significance of the four priorities of the open method of coordination in the youth field – participation, information, voluntary activities and greater understanding and knowledge of youth – in terms of a successful inclusion policy, and strengthen the impact of the open method of coordination when shaping policies for equal opportunities and better social and professional integration;
6. broaden knowledge about the quality of life of young women and men in Europe, particularly as regards living and working conditions, attitudes, values, concerns and opportunities for better participation in society, making use of existing research, procedures and data, including the 7th Research Framework Programme, in order to render such data and findings more meaningful and comparable;
7. make full use of the *Youth in Action* Programme in order to provide numerous and extensive opportunities for non-formal and informal learning, with the aim of giving as many young people as possible the chance to acquire the skills and competences necessary for active citizenship and to lead autonomous and healthy lifestyles;
8. in line with the Council Resolution of 19 May 2006¹, extend opportunities for non-formal and informal learning, as well as for voluntary activities, and improve recognition of the outcomes and experience obtained; in particular opportunities for intercultural learning should be strengthened, thereby promoting values such as mutual respect, diversity, equality, human dignity and solidarity. With this aim in mind, young people should be invited to participate in the preparation and implementation of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008;

¹ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field (OJ C 168, 20.07.2006, p. 1).

9. seek, together with youth organisations, young people themselves and other youth policy stakeholders, ways of achieving more active participation of all young people in discussion and decision-making processes concerning them and, in so doing, stimulate new forms of participation for young people in disadvantaged urban or rural areas;
10. give greater emphasis to the concerns of young people in anti-discrimination policies and assist young people and their organisations in combating discrimination, inequalities, social exclusion and intolerance;
11. promote the social dimension of sport and culture as a factor of social integration to fight discrimination and strengthen tolerance among young people;
12. take account of the rights of all young people to equal opportunities and participation in society when developing an EU strategy on the rights of the child;
13. ensure that in the evaluation of and follow-up to the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, young people and a youth policy focus are taken into account at all levels – European, national, regional and local.

INVITE THE COMMISSION

1. in its commitment to equal opportunities and better professional and social integration, to further develop close cooperation between its relevant services in order to reinforce the youth dimension of social inclusion policies and within the framework of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment;
2. to submit for the Council's attention information on the youth-related analyses on the state of implementation of the European Pact for Youth which are conducted regularly in the process of evaluating the national reform programmes.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES to

1. facilitate the development of local and/or regional strategies as part of the further implementation of the European Pact for Youth. Such strategies should include all relevant stakeholders, social partners and young people themselves and should help to put in place individual support measures to promote qualified, easily accessible guidance and counselling services concerning the transitional stages between education, training and employment and suitable conditions to reconcile family, private and professional life;
2. to prioritise the concerns of young people in the national reform programmes and the key policies which affect the quality of life of young people, in particular by enhancing the cross-sectoral cooperation between youth policy and other relevant policy areas (educational, economic and employment, family, social, health and sports policy, policy on the rights of the child, gender equality policy, cultural policy, as well as housing and regional and local planning policy);
3. continue efforts to further reduce the numbers of early school leavers through appropriate incentives and actions, particularly by taking specific measures in order to make full participation in education a reality for young people with fewer opportunities, and by promoting the quality and attractiveness of education and training;
4. utilise the resources of the European Structural Funds, particularly the European Social Fund, to shape and provide measures in line with the European Pact for Youth, so as to further implement the Pact, especially at local and regional level;
5. in accordance with the principle of the structured dialogue, develop or expand the participation of young people in social space planning procedures in disadvantaged urban and rural areas, and disseminate their findings and experiences using the open method of coordination.