



**COUNCIL OF
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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) / Council

Subject: Europe's young people: what can quality youth work contribute to addressing current challenges?
- Policy debate
(Public debate pursuant to Article 8(2) CRP [proposed by the Presidency])

Following consultation of the Youth Working Party, the Presidency has drawn up the attached discussion paper as the basis for the policy debate on the above subject at the EYCS Council meeting on 16-17 May 2013.

Europe's young people: what can quality youth work contribute to addressing current challenges?

Presidency discussion paper

Europe's Young People - a time of challenge

There are 95.2 million young people aged between 15 and 29¹ in the European Union today. Europe's young people, in the main, are thriving, and actively participating in the employment, training, educational and mobility opportunities that being a young European brings. Young people are continuing to engage in active citizenship. Statistics show that half of the young people in the EU participated in activities of a youth organisation, leisure and/or sports club in the past year, while a quarter took part in organised voluntary activities.² However, this generation of young people also face unprecedented challenges. These challenges are well documented and include youth unemployment and a higher risk of poverty than that of the general population.

EU level responses to the economic and social situation.

Actions are underway in all Member States and at EU level to address the impacts of the crisis on young people. Actions at EU level with a specific focus on young people include:

- The European Commission *Youth Employment Package* (5 December 2012) followed by the *Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee* (28 February 2013) and *Youth Employment Initiative* under the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014 – 2020 involving a fund of €6 bn.
- The *Council Conclusions on investing in education and training* - a response to the European Commission communication *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*).

¹ As of 2011. Page 9, EU Youth Report (Status of the situation of young people in the European Union), a Commission Staff Working Document, 10th September 2012.

² Ibid.

- The proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing ‘ERASMUS FOR ALL’: *the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport*, including the youth chapter.

These actions can have a profound impact on Europe’s young people, their prospects to realise their potential and their contribution to Europe’s goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Youth Policy and its distinct role

Youth policy has a particular role to play in cross-departmental/institutional efforts to address the multi-dimensional challenges that arise for young people. Youth policy measures, as expressed through youth work, contribute to the personal development and well-being of young people. They complement measures in education and training, employment, health and for social inclusion and enhance the impact of such policies in the lives of young people.

This is underscored in the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) which emphasises the importance of youth initiatives for young people and of mainstreaming a youth perspective into other policy fields. In particular, youth work and non-formal learning is highlighted as a means for young people to acquire experiences and competences that promote creativity and entrepreneurship and enhance employability.

What quality youth work offers young people and how it responds to their needs.

As a youth policy measure, youth work responds to the needs and interests of young people. Quality youth work offers a rich and diverse range of non-formal learning opportunities which young people voluntarily access and which stimulate their engagement, development and progression in all aspects of life. It provides open access opportunities for all young people and more targeted supports for at-risk young people.

Quality youth work programmes and activities develop young people's 21st Century skills. These include transversal skills such as learning to learn, social and civic competence, initiative taking, entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression. This learning empowers young people to participate in their communities, in wider society, in education and in employment. This is especially important for young people with fewer opportunities.

Youth work has particular expertise in working with all young people and with those young people who may be marginalised. Quality youth work can engage young people that other policy measures fail to reach and it can have a particular relevance for those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). For some of these young people, engaging in youth work activities can be an important step towards participation in more formalised education and training programmes and in employment.

MINISTERIAL DEBATE - Immediate and practical responses

At European level, we have agreed an agenda to promote quality youth work for young people's development, wellbeing and social inclusion; and we have agreed measures to maximise its contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, in particular in relation to employment and social inclusion.

With this in mind, the central question for the Ministerial debate will be:

What immediate and practical actions can Youth Ministers take to harness the potential for quality youth work to better meet the present days challenges faced by Europe's young people?

In order to provide a stimulating debate, the Presidency will invite the following experts who will provide their perspectives on this central question:

- **Dr Massimiliano Mascherini, Head of Research, Eurofound, Dublin, Ireland.**
- **Dr John Bamber, Centre for Effective Services, Dublin, Ireland.**

(A comprehensive biography on the above speakers and, if possible, copies of their presentations will be circulated in advance of the May Council meeting.)

Ministers will be asked to freely inform and interact with the debate, having regard to the presentations from the external speakers and the key question as set out above.

Ministers will be encouraged to contribute to the debate without scripted interventions, if they so wish, so as to stimulate interactive debate. To ensure that all Ministers have an opportunity to input into the debate, ideally more than once, it is recommended that inputs are brief (not exceeding two minutes) and succinct.

The Presidency will also invite the external speakers to respond to the debate as it unfolds, and to reflect on the points made by Ministers.

A key aspect of this debate will be a focus on identifying key messages and outcomes which can be further progressed.
