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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering

A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities

Impact Assessment

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List of main abbreviations

EU: European Union

EKCYP: European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy

EuNYK: European Network of Youth Knowledge

OMC: open method of coordination

Modifications following the Opinion of the Impact Assessment Board

Following the opinion of the Impact Assessment Board several changes have been made to the impact assessment.

In particular, the problem definition and the baseline have been further developed in section 2. Operational objectives expressing in concrete terms expected policy outcomes have been developed in section 3. Concrete information regarding proposed actions has been added in section 4. Information on indicators has been added in section 7. An annex providing a summary of the public consultation main outcomes has been added.

1. PROCEDURAL ISSUES AND CONTEXT SETTING

1.1. Historical background of the Youth Cooperation Framework

1.1.1. General context

Youth cooperation is a developed EU policy area¹. EU programmes for youth have been in place since 1988; the policy process is more recent. An open method of coordination was developed on the basis of a 2001 European Commission White Paper² and was complemented by the European Youth Pact in 2005.

The Council of the European Union established a framework for European co-operation in the field of youth (hereafter the Youth Cooperation Framework) in June 2002³. The framework included the four priority themes for cooperation proposed in the White Paper:

- Encouraging young people's participation in the exercise of active citizenship and civil society
- Enhancing the information addressed to young people
- Promoting voluntary activities among young people
- Encouraging greater understanding and knowledge of youth.

The Member States decided to use the open method of coordination (OMC) in order to implement these priorities. They agreed on common objectives⁴ for each one of the four priorities, and were responsible for the implementation of the common objectives. They reported regularly on what they have done to implement them, and on the basis of these reports, the Commission prepared progress reports which were presented to the Council.

At the end of 2004, Heads of State and Government from France, Germany, Sweden and Spain decided to launch the idea of a European Pact for Youth in the context of the Lisbon Strategy revision. The aim of this Pact, endorsed by the European Council in March 2005⁵, was to improve education, training, mobility, employment and social inclusion of young people, while helping to achieve a work-life balance. The European Youth Pact was then

¹ See Annex 1 listing main EU policy documents related to the cooperation framework.

² 'A new Impetus for European Youth', COM (2001) 681, 21.11.2001

³ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [2002/C 168]

⁴ See Annex 2 for list of Common objectives

⁵ Annex 1 of Presidency Conclusions of the European Council, Brussels, 22 and 23.3.2005 (7619/05)

integrated in the Youth Cooperation Framework through a November 2005 Council resolution⁶.

This same Council resolution called on the Commission and the Member States to evaluate the framework for European cooperation in the youth field in 2009. Council conclusions of 25 May 2007 on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy also contributed with a set of proposals on future thematic and structural perspectives⁷.

The White Paper on Youth also proposed a mainstreaming approach for “taking better account of the ‘youth’ dimension in other policy initiatives”. Apart from the areas covered by the European Youth Pact, this approach has been developed in a few fields such as anti-discrimination and more recently health.

The September 2007 Commission Communication "*Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society*"⁸ was another milestone of the current cooperation framework. It stressed the need for a cross-cutting approach to youth issues in order to enhance young people's active participation in education, employment and in society. The Commission proposed to reinforce the partnership between EU institutions and youth representatives and to prepare every three years an EU report on youth.

These different elements, coming one after another, have resulted in a complex structure, based on three pillars:

The open method of coordination dedicated to active citizenship of young people,

The European Youth Pact aiming at promoting social and vocational integration of young people, and

The mainstreaming activities.

Other tools have been progressively developed in order to support the Youth Cooperation Framework.

A structured dialogue with young people has been set up since 2005. Structured dialogue means that governments and administrations, including EU institutions, discuss chosen themes with young people, in order to obtain results which are useful for policy-making. Structured dialogue cycles around different themes have already been organised. The dialogue is structured in terms of themes within a specific timeframe. Debates are organised at local, regional and national levels. Events where young people can discuss the agreed themes amongst themselves and also with EU politicians are also organised on a regular basis (in particular 'Youth Events' twice a year, and a European Youth Week every 18 months).

In order to acquire a greater understanding and knowledge of young people (which is both a priority of the Youth OMC and a base of the whole cooperation framework), some tools have also been set up at European level. A European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP) has been developed jointly by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The EKCYP is a knowledge management system that aims at providing youth policy-makers and other interested stakeholders with a single entry point to retrieve information on the realities of youth across Europe. A European Network of Youth Knowledge (EuNYK) was set up by

⁶ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe — implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship [2005/C 292/03]

⁷ [Official Journal C 314/24 of 22 December 2007]

⁸ Commission Communication 'Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society', COM (2007) 498, September 2007.

the Commission in 2006 to exchange good practice on developing national youth knowledge networks between policy-makers, young people and researchers and thereby facilitate the implementation of the common objectives for a better knowledge and understanding of youth.

The Commission also tried to facilitate peer learning exercises. A specific peer-learning cycle about participation of young people with fewer opportunities has been carried out in 2007-2008 with various experts meetings taking place as well as a conference where policy makers met youth workers and NGOs to discuss and share experiences on this issue⁹.

During all the period, Youth Programmes have been acting beyond their financial role as policy laboratories where concrete ways to mobilise young people through international projects have been experienced. The current Programme (Youth in Action – 2007-2013) includes a whole strand dedicated to supporting European cooperation in the Youth field.

1.1.2. Specific context

A number of important policy documents have recently highlighted the need for a renewed youth strategy.

In the November 2007 Social Vision Communication, the Commission provided an overview of the social realities on the basis of the then ongoing Social Reality Stocktaking exercise. It noted that European societies are undergoing fast-moving, profound changes in both the economic and social spheres, and that these changes are directly affecting the chances of young people in life¹⁰.

This vision was supported by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers report "*Investing in Youth – an empowerment strategy*"¹¹ which drew attention to the need for early investment in human and social capital. The conclusions of this report underline that "An EU consensus now exists on the need to take action to back up young people with education, employment and civic participation. (...) An across-the-board policy vision and investment strategy in youth is needed to fully develop the potential contribution of young people to growth, jobs, and the future of Europe.(...) The EU can help to improve this policy approach on investment in youth by highlighting the issues, mobilising knowledge and actors on the question of youth across Europe."

Following this, the Renewed Social Agenda has been adopted in July 2008. It aims to create more opportunities for EU citizens, improve access to quality services and demonstrate solidarity with those who are affected negatively by change. A mix of different policy tools is presented to achieve the objectives set out in the Agenda.

A main priority among seven priority areas is youth and children: "Europe's future depends on its youth. Yet, life chances of many young people are blighted- they lack the opportunities and the access to education and training to realise their full potential."

The Social Agenda Communication¹² mentions that "later in 2008/2009 the Commission will issue a Communication on developing the open method of coordination on youth, with a particular focus on young people with fewer opportunities".

⁹ Good practices identified thanks to the peer-learning exercise are available at http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1084_en.pdf.

¹⁰ Commission Communication 'Opportunities, Access and Solidarity: Towards a New Social Vision for 21st Century Europe', COM (2007) 726, November 2007.

¹¹ Bureau of European Policy advisers, April 2007

¹² COM (2008) 412 final

The Lisbon Treaty has added to political expectations, as its legal entry into force would give a new youth dimension to the EU action as well as more visibility to youth at EU level—under a newly modified Article 149, Community action shall be aimed among others at "encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe".

1.2. Consultation of interested parties

The consultation requirements have been met, throughout various consultation exercises conducted since April 2008.

1.2.1. Internal consultations

The existing Youth Inter-service Group has met twice in order to discuss main orientations of the future Cooperation Framework as well as this impact assessment. All relevant Commission services have been invited to these meetings and representatives from the following Directorate-Generals participated: Secretariat General, Bureau of European Policy Advisers, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG, Justice, Freedom and Security DG, Health and Consumers DG, Research DG, Development DG, External relations DG, Europeaid DG, Humanitarian Aid DG, Information Society and Media DG and Communication DG. Complementary bilateral contacts have also taken place with some Directorate-Generals like Secretariat General, Employment, Health and Consumers, Enterprise and Industry, External relations or Bureau of European Policy advisers.

1.2.2. Consultation of Member States

Member States have been asked to report by mid October 2008 on their evaluation of the current cooperation framework and their ideas for the future cooperation. Directors General for Youth of the Member States have also had the opportunity to discuss these issues in several meetings which took place in 2008 and early 2009. Member States have highlighted achievements as well as a range of difficulties in the cooperation cycle¹³, as developed under section 2.1.2. Among the achievements, it has often been mentioned that the cooperation framework increased the visibility of 'Youth' in Europe and allowed for a better incorporation of 'Youth' in EU policy. At national level, it has had influence on the development of many Youth strategies. The role of the cooperation framework as a platform for exchange of practices and for dialogue has also been often underlined.

However, EU youth cooperation has also shown some limits according to the Member States assessment: the framework is not clear and coherent enough, and is not enough delivering in some areas, for instance, the implementation of the European Youth Pact. The structured dialogue with young people needs to be revised and more inclusive, and the cross-sector nature of youth policy needs more recognition at EU and national level. Several Member States have stressed the particular importance of having coherent policies regarding youth, family and children.

A common letter from 5 countries (France, Czech Republic, Sweden, Spain, and Germany) has also been sent in October 2008 to all Youth Ministers and European Commission in order to present a common position of these five countries. This document underlines the need for a single youth policy framework merging mainstreaming efforts, in particular related to the Youth Pact and the open method of coordination, which embodies all of the youth policy priorities.

¹³ Ecotec-Ecorys summary of national reports, January 2009, under the Framework contract EAC/03/06 on Evaluation, Impact assessment and related services.

Even before the consultation phase, the Council conclusions on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy adopted in May 2007¹⁴ pointed out the need to adapt the strategies in view of the demographic changes (ageing of population, need for inter-generational solidarity).

1.2.3. Consultation of young people and youth organisations

In the framework of the structured dialogue with young people, a whole cycle dedicated to future challenges for young people has been launched in April 2008. Youth organisations have been invited to organise conferences on this topic to contribute to the definition of the new Youth Cooperation Framework of the next decade and Commission has received feedback from these debates. The debates culminated during the European Youth Week in November 2008, with the adoption of Conclusions which underlined among others the need for a clear structure for dialogue between youth and decision makers, as well as a comprehensive cross sector policy for youth.

A specific and regular consultation of the European Youth Forum (EU main stakeholder in the youth field, representing around 100 umbrella organisations) has also been organised via several meetings.

A public consultation called 'Strategic Choices for Young Europeans' which adhered to the Commission's minimum standards has been launched on-line from 22nd of September until 25th of November 2008¹⁵. 5426 responses have been provided, covering both individuals (88.5%) including half of youth or social workers, and organisations (11.5% that is to say over 600).

When asked about the key challenges for young people in the coming decade, the respondents have mainly indicated youth unemployment, reform of education systems, environment and sustainable development, social integration and active participation in society. A majority of the respondents would like to see more done by the EU to help young people play a more active role in society, to develop opportunities or young people to live, work and travel throughout Europe, and to help young people find a job.

Most of the consultations conducted among young people and youth organisations indicate a will for a pursued and reinforced action in the citizenship related fields, together with a strong request for a developed youth cross-cutting policy. These expectations can be found in the main orientation papers of the European Youth Forum¹⁶, in the conclusions of the 2008 European Youth Week or in the results of the on-line consultation.

1.2.4. Consultation of experts

A special meeting of researchers of the European Network of Youth Knowledge (EuNYK) has been organised in October 2008. The participants stressed the need to reinforce youth better knowledge tools in order to reinforce evidence-based policy making, not only for youth policies but also to provide other policies with a clearer youth perspective.

The national agencies of the Youth in Action programme also provided a contribution underlining the need to develop a stronger linking of the national and the European level. This contribution also requested that youth cooperation act for the benefit of all young people (not only specific target groups, and with the aim of reaching out young people who are not

¹⁴ See reference in footnote 7.

¹⁵ See annex 5 for a summary of main outcomes. The details of the on-line consultation outcomes will be published as a background document on http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm.

¹⁶ Website of the European Youth Forum: <http://www.youthforum.org/>

touched enough by existing measures), as well as a stronger support of youth work. The following issues have also been mentioned by the national agencies as particularly important for young people: mobility, innovation and entrepreneurship, links with children policy, health, culture, volunteering, participation and information.

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

2.1. Problems

The problem needs to be defined both in terms of the challenges directly faced by young people, and of how to address these challenges via the Youth Cooperation Framework.

All this takes place against a backdrop of new or persisting European-wide challenges, which directly or indirectly impact on young people.

2.1.1. Global challenges

Globalisation brings new competitive forces on the world market: notwithstanding its positive effects on growth, jobs and prosperity and the need to enhance European competitiveness further through structural change, globalisation may also have negative consequences for the most vulnerable and least qualified workers such as the young people.

Demographic changes are also a major challenge for the European countries to cope with: Most Member States are experiencing a declining number of births and are among the most aged countries in the world¹⁷ with a shrinking workforce, and this has progressive effects on intergenerational solidarity. Youth has become a scarce resource in Europe. According to Eurostat population projections, the percentage of people aged 15–29 in the total population will be 15.3 % in 2050, whereas they currently represent 19.3%. The Council conclusions on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy adopted in May 2007 point out the need to adapt the youth strategy in view of these demographic changes.

Climate change is affecting the way we live and work, with a demand for new skills ('green jobs') as well as an increasing urge for sustainable behaviours and ways of life.

Social changes impact heavily on youth. Europeans are living longer lives, facing unprecedented changes in family patterns¹⁸, making progress towards gender equality and adjusting to new patterns of mobility and diversity. At the same time, evidence shows that individual life chances are often set by the time a child reaches school, with family background and neighbourhood environment playing a key role.

Most Member States are now experiencing migratory phenomena and are confronted with integration challenges. While many immigrants in the European Union are well integrated, there are, nevertheless, growing concerns in a number of countries about the situation of young migrants and of the young people from 2nd and 3rd generation. In several countries, over 10% of 15 year-old have parents who were born abroad. Children and youth from migrant background tend to have lower school results than other pupils.¹⁹

¹⁷ EU 2008 Demography Report

¹⁸ Commission Communication 'Promoting solidarity between the generations' COM (2007) 244

¹⁹ Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration, COM (2007) 512; Green Paper "Migration & Mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems", COM (2008) 423.

The consequences of the current economic and financial crisis are not yet well known, but it is likely to affect firstly the most vulnerable groups, including low-skilled young people²⁰, especially when considering employability and initial access to the labour market.

2.1.2. *Problems affecting the situation of young people*²¹

Beyond global challenges affecting European societies, other challenges more specific to youth are often mentioned. These problems have also direct consequences on the implementation of the core objectives of the European Union and its Member States in the already mentioned context of declining demographics.

- Lack of opportunities

The Renewed Social Agenda stressed the fact that young people are not getting the best start in life: despite the fact that young people in the EU currently enjoy a wealth of opportunities, today's young generation are in a particularly fragile situation. Too many young people are not able to develop their full potential and to successfully enter the job market, and leave school without a formal qualification.

While the educational attainment level of the working age population in the EU (15 to 64 year olds) has risen during the last decade, almost 1/3 of this population still have a low educational attainment level and every sixth young person (18 to 24 years old) still leaves school with only compulsory education attainment level or below²². The rate of early school leavers stands at 14.8%²³, and is even more severe among males and young people with migrant backgrounds. The young people are the segment of the European population that work mostly in low-quality jobs which require low qualifications and are poorly paid²⁴.

Another key challenge is linked to youth unemployment and poverty. Unemployment affects twice as many young people as adults in Europe. Youth, and the early school leavers in particular, find it difficult to get access to the labour market, with fewer unskilled jobs available and very uneven access to lifelong learning. One-fifth of those aged between 16 and 24 in Europe were at risk of poverty in 2006²⁵, against 14% for people aged 25-49. Such a situation is often combined with low social mobility, with young people coming from homes with multi-generational unemployment and/or poverty, as well as intergenerational transmission of educational disadvantage.

This lack of opportunities is not only affecting disadvantaged young people. For instance, even highly educated young people may well face difficulties of access to stable and quality jobs as well as a lack of financial autonomy vis-à-vis their family. By not always making the best of youth potential, European societies risk creating many frustrations and lack of

²⁰ Such consequences were already visible in many countries as underlined by the Commission Lisbon strategy recommendations presented in January 2009, COM (2009) 34.

²¹ The situation of young people in Europe will be described in detail in the future EU Report on youth, to be presented as a Staff Working Document at the same time as the Communication.

²² Impact assessment accompanying the Commission Communication about an updated strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and Training, December 2008

²³ 2007 figure. Within the Education and Training Cooperation Framework, the benchmark set in 2003 – to be achieved by 2010 – was to have not more than 10% early school leavers. The 2000 figure was 17.3%.

²⁴ Young women experience even higher unemployment rates than men and are more often in low quality, part-time and fixed-term jobs.

²⁵ Being at risk of poverty meaning that the disposable income of the household in which these youngsters live, adjusted for household size, was below 60% of the national median income – 'Youth in the EU - figures', Eurostat, November 2008.

incentives among all categories of young people and increasing the gap between them and the main social institutions.

- Difficulties of access and participation in society

All young people are not always adequately equipped to deal with all the rapid changes occurring in the European societies and some of them are particularly affected. Disadvantaged young people are often excluded from opportunities to participate fully in society and to enjoy the benefits of education, employment and social welfare. Without any of these opportunities, young people might sometimes face marginalisation or radicalisation, when placed in extreme situations from an economic or social point of view.

In addition, there is a growing recognition that health problems among young people represent an increasing key challenge for public authorities: there are specificities of the youth population regarding issues such as obesity, life style, addictions and mental health. Injuries – often in link with risk-taking behaviours – are the number one killer of young people, claiming the lives of 20,000 young people aged 15-24 each year in the EU27. According to other recent estimates, one fifth of children and adolescents in the EU suffer from developmental, emotional or behavioural problems and one in eight have a mental disorder. Improving the health condition of young people and promoting a healthy lifestyle and a culture of prevention among them has thus become an important challenge²⁶.

The available information regarding the implementation of participation objectives (one of out of the four priorities in the current framework) shows that there is still room for improvement, particularly regarding specific objectives such as greater participation by young people in the mechanisms of representative democracy or learning to participate. Young people are still not involved enough in society and in civic life.

- Weakened solidarities

As explained in the 2007 Commission Communication 'Promoting solidarity between the generations'²⁷, inter-generational solidarity relationships are more complex than in the past. Greater life expectancy, population ageing and increasing geographical mobility impact the relationships between the generations and the availability of family support networks²⁸. While young adults live under their parents' roof for longer, the parents have increasingly often to support dependent elderly people. And this is not always easy to reconcile with the weakening of family structures, combined with trends to individualisation²⁹.

At the same time, new risks of generation divide are emerging between younger and older generations – in a broader sense than solidarity within the family – in terms of pay, pensions, job security and access to housing for instance³⁰.

These various trends directly affect the situation of children and young people and their place in society; on one hand, there is a growing focus on the individual; on the other hand, the young people tend to rely more on new solidarities outside family or other traditional institutions (for instance, development of virtual communities such as Facebook, etc). This is not a problem in itself but might become such when the young people choose extreme forms

²⁶ Commission White Paper 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013', COM(2007) 630

²⁷ COM(2007) 244 final

²⁸ EU Demography Report 2008 - meeting social needs in an ageing society, SEC(2008) 2911

²⁹ Social reality stock taking exercise - Commission Communication COM(2007) 726.

³⁰ Communication COM (2007) 726 .

of solidarity in order to find identity and protection (such as gangs or other violent communities).

In link with new family patterns, many children now grow up with a single parent. Around one-third of these single parent families are at risk of poverty – twice the proportion for the population as a whole. This often leads to a vicious cycle of childhood deprivation, unhealthy lifestyles, academic under-achievement and social exclusion. Young parents themselves can be particularly affected by these weakened solidarities.

2.1.3. *Assessment of the current cooperation framework*³¹

The assessment of the results of the current cooperation cycle by the different actors involved in the process has shown some positive impacts. However, it has also highlighted a range of difficulties or limitations in the cooperation cycle, particularly when tackling the above mentioned problems affecting young people.

- Assessment of the Youth open method of coordination

*Priorities*³²

- Encouraging young people's participation in the exercise of active citizenship and civil society

Participation was the first priority proposed in the White Paper. Good progress has been achieved in policies at national level, although there is still room for improvement. Youth parliaments or youth councils are established in the majority of countries. Most countries provide financial support for greater participation. It appears that the downward trend in participation by young people in the mechanisms of representative democracy is continuing, although at the same time more efforts are taken to consult young people. Specific initiatives in terms of learning to participate still seem to be limited.

At European level, initiatives have also been successfully taken. For instance, the Youth in Action programme funds projects which are designed to encourage a sense of active European citizenship in young people and encourage young people to become more involved in the democratic process at regional, national and European level.

- Enhancing the information addressed to young people

Progress has been made on improving young people's access to information in terms of the number of countries having an information strategy. Together with the European Youth Portal, national youth portals have been established and many Member States started setting up Youth Information Centres. However, most countries have not yet developed standard methods to assess the quality of the information.

- Promoting voluntary activities among young people

National strategies for young volunteers still have to be developed, although there have been a number of recent developments in several Member States to revise legislation in order to better support volunteering among young people.

Real progress has been achieved at EU level. The Youth in Action programme offers several opportunities for volunteering. One of them is the 'European Voluntary Service', through

³¹ A more detailed assessment of the current cooperation framework by member States is published as a background document on http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm (Ecotec-Ecorys summary of national reports)

³² See annex 2 for the list of current priorities and objectives of the open method of coordination

which young people can be full-time volunteers for up to one year in another country. A Council recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union³³ has also been recently adopted in order to encourage youth cross-border volunteering.

- Encouraging greater understanding and knowledge of youth

This priority is characterised by weak implementation at national level. While progress has been made since the adoption of the common objectives in 2004 and lots of good practices exist, much is still to be done in this field. The major challenge for Member States seems to be how to develop a coordinated approach to youth research that brings all the actors in the field together in a joint effort to identify and streamline youth research³⁴.

Processes

More generally, the public authorities for youth³⁵ in many Member States have acknowledged that the EU cooperation framework in the field of youth has inspired youth-related legislation at national level and helped many Member States develop national strategies. National laws and strategies have been very much influenced by European common objectives and priorities either in the "old" Member States³⁶, or in the Member States that have joined the European Union since 2004. More and more countries involve youth organisations in their policy-making and the youth policy field is increasingly structured in a manner similar to or consistent with the EU framework at local and regional level³⁷.

While a majority of stakeholders feel that the main instruments of the cooperation framework remain appropriate, they also demand that the OMC tools should be further improved on and the quality of cooperation should be increased.

Some Member States have for instance underlined that there is a lack of understanding of the diversity of 'youth' in the cooperation cycle, and some have also criticised a lack of representativeness of the youngsters involved in the structured dialogue.

It has also been suggested that the definition of 'Youth' – oriented towards the 15 to 25 age group – is too narrow in the past cooperation cycle, and that not enough attention is given to children (and children's rights).

Some stakeholders also highlighted the fact that there is a low awareness of EU youth policy. More generally, some youth organisations consider that the OMC also still needs to be genuinely implemented in all Member States. In this sense, the current cooperation framework has not always proved its efficiency and its capacity to deliver.

It has often been underlined that youth work – a set of activities outside schools, developed by young people, youth organisations or local authorities and managed by youth workers or youth leaders – has not been recognised and supported enough by the current cooperation framework. In particular, youth work has recently been evolving from activities traditionally focused on leisure time to activities dedicated to fight unemployment, educational failure, marginalisation and social exclusion; these last ones are often qualified as non formal education activities in the youth field. So far, this shift has not been sufficiently analysed.

³³ OJ C319/8, 13.12.2008

³⁴ 'European Research on Youth' available at http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/library_en.html

³⁵ Summary of national reports prepared by Ecotec-Ecorys, January 2009

³⁶ For example, the Finnish Youth Policy Development Programme 2007-2011 is presented in official documents as a national implementation of the European Youth Cooperation Framework.

³⁷ Many Member States actively promote the creation of local/municipal youth councils: 850 in Greece, in 200 out of 350 municipalities in Finland, half of the municipalities in France, Charter on participation of young people in local and regional life in Bulgaria, etc...)

The assessment of the past reporting cycle and of other documents also clearly indicates that there are important gaps in the information supplied by Member States, and more generally the field suffers from a real lack of data at European level, which contradicts the need for evidence based policies.

- Assessment of the European Youth Pact

The adoption of the European Youth Pact has been welcomed and its three strands (employment and social integration, education, training and mobility, as well as reconciliation of working and family life) are considered as very important areas for youth.

Priorities

- Employment, integration and social advancement

Some progress has been achieved on youth employment and integration after this became a priority of the Lisbon strategy since 2005. The Pact has particularly helped to develop a transversal approach of youth issues regarding employment.

The implementation of the European Youth Pact, however, still needs work at EU and national levels, and the current economic crisis brings risks of relapse. The analysis of the National Reform Programmes for 2008 shows that youth unemployment is around 15.5%, that is to say 2 points less than in 2007, but remains however twice the global unemployment rate. It has not changed much since 2000, when the youth unemployment rate was 16.1% and the general rate 8.4%. Moreover, young people are likely to be particularly vulnerable in the deteriorating economic situation³⁸.

- Education, training and mobility

These are still issues, particularly concerning the high rate of drop-outs from the school system and the lack of recognition of non-formal and informal education, despite some progress achieved at EU level with Youthpass and Europass. Furthermore, mobility is only possible for a limited part of the young people in Europe.

- Reconciliation of working life and family life

This priority has not been characterised by much progress. However, there is a growing awareness of how crucial child-friendly policies are for tackling many of the issues arising among youth and for addressing demographic change.

Processes

At national level, the profile of youth as a priority area in employment policies has increased since 2005. However, youth ministries are not always enough involved in that process, and coordination on the youth issues between the relevant policies is insufficient in many Member States. Moreover, the involvement of youth organisations in the implementation of the Pact, as foreseen in the European Council conclusions themselves, varies according to the countries.

At EU level, the youth dimension is more visible in main reporting documents, and the Youth Council presents every year key messages to the Spring European Council.

³⁸ Council Key messages to the Spring European Council on the European Youth Pact and European cooperation in the youth field, 16 February 2009.

The already mentioned 2007 Communication about "Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society"³⁹ went a step further in listing many concrete actions in the field of youth education, employment, inclusion and participation.

- Assessment of mainstreaming activities

Priorities

Mainstreaming activities have been developed since 2002 in few areas like the fight against racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination or since 2008 health and well-being on which a Council resolution has recently been adopted⁴⁰.

Fight against discrimination has been characterised by a strong youth involvement in European campaigns such as 'For Diversity-Against Discrimination' or 'All different, all equal'⁴¹.

Although we are at the beginning of the EU level mainstreaming process regarding health, the growing youth dimension of health strategies is very promising⁴².

Processes

There is a consensus for asking more recognition of the cross-sector nature of youth policy and a broader scope for this cross-cutting approach as already illustrated in Council Conclusions of November 2007 on a transversal approach to youth policy⁴³ and in the European Parliament Declaration on youth empowerment⁴⁴. However, the current framework is not coordinated enough in order to tackle all the necessary issues.

All in all, there is also a general feeling that the 'Youth' resource (youth organisations, youth networks, youth workers, youth leaders, and young people themselves) could be better valorised and used in order to tackle main EU challenges.

2.2. Affected groups

This initiative will affect primarily the young people. The Europeans between 15 and 29 are around 20 % of the current EU population, that is to say 96 million people.

Another affected group will be Youth non-governmental organisations. These organisations are present at every level of decision making, from the local level to the European Union. Youth organisations or councils are generally very structured and represent a whole range of youth groups.

The initiative also concerns people working with young people such as youth/social workers. Youth administrations at all levels will also be affected by this initiative, as they would implement it.

³⁹ See full reference in footnote 8

⁴⁰ See for instance Council Resolution of 20 November 2008 on health and well-being of young people.

⁴¹ See <http://www.stop-discrimination.info/> and <http://alldifferent-allegal.info/>

⁴² See also footnote 27

⁴³ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 16 November 2007 on a transversal approach to youth policy with a view to enabling young people to fulfil their potential and participate actively in society, [2007/C 282/16]

⁴⁴ The European Parliament adopted in September 2008 a written declaration on youth empowerment, with 433 MEPs signing a text calling on the Commission and Member States to take into account the needs of young people when developing policies that affect them and to develop a more horizontal youth policy.

2.3. Baseline Scenario

As already explained in chapters 1.1.2 and 2.1.3, a framework for European co-operation in the field of youth (Youth Cooperation Framework) was established in June 2002 by way of an open method of coordination (OMC) focusing on active citizenship of young people, and complemented in 2005 by the European Youth Pact – an instrument dedicated to social and vocational integration of young people within the Lisbon strategy. Other elements, such as mainstreaming activities (taking account of the ‘youth’ dimension in other policy initiatives), knowledge tools, structured dialogue with young people and peer-learning, have been progressively developed within the Youth Cooperation Framework.

The current Youth Cooperation Framework has three pillars: the OMC dedicated to active citizenship of young people, the European Youth Pact aiming at promoting social and vocational integration of young people, and mainstreaming activities.

The current cycle of the open method of coordination will come to an end in 2009 with an assessment of the implementation of the fourth and last priority (better knowledge of the situation of young people) and with an evaluation of the whole cycle, as foreseen in Council resolutions.

No other work is planned under this current framework, which means that the cooperation between Member States would cease regarding citizenship of young people without specific action being taken: extension of the current OMC beyond 2009 would hence also require a specific proposal by the Commission and endorsement by Council. The possibility of ending the cooperation has not been retained for further analysis (*as explained below in section 4.2*), and this extension scenario has been chosen as a status quo option under section 4.

2.4. Legal basis and subsidiarity

The legal basis for this initiative can be found in Article 149 of the EC treaty.

Member States have the main responsibility for the policy changes needed to respond to the challenges identified in Section 2, and most of the policies concerned are areas where the EU has only competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States. However, a more pro-active role at EU level is necessary in order to support Member State cooperation. Action by a Member State alone would not achieve the same results as described in the assessment of the current cooperation framework such as raising visibility of Youth and youth strategies, defining common objectives, developing mutual learning, exchange of practices and experience as well as structured dialogue with young people at a European level, , access to European wide data, etc.

Moreover, stakeholders and Member States have found that the current OMC has provided added value (in particular by acting as a catalyst in relation to supporting development of national strategies) and have expressed keen interest in continued cooperation on key issues. As described in section 1.2, they see the need to strengthen the effectiveness of the OMC in certain ways to achieve better outcomes. The added value of the EU in implementing interlinked policies has also been underlined.

All the options examined below fully respect the principle of subsidiarity. These options envisage setting up common objectives and cooperation principles, but national competences as well as diversity of national situations regarding youth and youth strategies are fully respected, as the framework will leave implementation of these objectives and principles in

the hands of the Member States⁴⁵. Since the Youth Cooperation Framework is based on the voluntary cooperation of the various stakeholders, including the local and regional levels is also very important for achieving the common objectives.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1. General objectives

On the basis of the problem definition and challenges listed above, the next European Youth Cooperation Framework will aim to enhance the well-being of young people in Europe during the next decade, by investing properly in youth and in empowering young people for contributing in a more competitive, cohesive and sustainable EU society.

The general objectives of the proposed framework are in line with its strategic orientations listed above and with the problems affecting young people themselves:

- *Creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment* – Helping young people to develop their potential, particularly in terms of formal and non-formal education, employment (employability, flexicurity and work/life balance) as well as creativity.
- *Improving access and full participation of all young people in society* – Ensuring access to social and civic opportunities for all young people in their diversity, particularly in terms of health and participation.
- *Fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people* – Promoting both solidarity of society towards youth and of young people towards other generations or other young people, in particular through volunteering or solidarity with the rest of the world.

3.2. Specific objectives

- The specific objectives of the proposed European Youth Cooperation Framework seek to improve its coherence and its efficiency: To **develop a transversal approach** of issues relating to youth, in order to address these issues in a comprehensive way;
- To **improve efficiency** of the cooperation, so as to answer the concerns expressed by most of the actors;
- To **mobilise** youth organisations and young people, in order to develop youth empowerment.

3.3. Operational objectives

The operational objectives of the proposed European Youth Cooperation Framework should enable the revised framework to tackle the issues addressed in the assessment of the current cooperation. They are the following ones:

- To develop coordination mechanisms between policies;
- To reinforce structured dialogue with young people;

⁴⁵ As most coordination processes, the youth framework is mainly aimed at initiating or facilitating reforms to be conducted at the national level.

- To improve implementation of cooperation (particularly via simplified reporting and peer-learning processes);
- To develop knowledge based policy making.

3.4. Consistency of these objectives with other EU policies

These objectives will help to meet the challenges mentioned in Section 2, as well as the core objectives of the European Union.

They will contribute to implementing the Renewed Social Agenda, as already outlined in Section 1, as well as the goals of the Lisbon Strategy and probably the future post Lisbon objectives. Youth strategies have a key role to play for social cohesion, access to opportunities, inclusion, health or intergenerational dialogue.

European competitiveness highly depends on efforts for education, training and youth employment (for instance, flexicurity).

Participation and commitment are key words for youth strategies, in order to develop active citizenship of the young Europeans.

There is also a strong link between these Youth strategy objectives and recent actions undertaken by the European Union regarding children's rights⁴⁶ and families.

Youth strategy has also to do with integration policy, including actions aiming at facilitating access to employment, raising the educational attainments, promoting equal opportunities for all, fostering intercultural dialogue and increasing civil, cultural and political participation of immigrants. Insofar as mobility of third country nationals (students, trainees, volunteers) is concerned, Youth and immigration policies are closely interconnected.

⁴⁶ Commission Communication 'Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child', COM(2006) 327

4. POLICY OPTIONS

4.1. Global analysis

In relation to the objectives identified, four policy options have been considered; they can be briefly differentiated according to the policy scope or to the instruments chosen.

4.1.1. Possible scope

The scope could vary along two main scenarios.

A specific approach characterised by a narrow scope would be focused only on active citizenship of young people, participation and commitment directly connected to Youth policy, supporting traditional youth work.

A transversal approach characterised by a holistic scope would encompass all policies which concern young people, namely education, employment, inclusion, health, justice, including a renewed youth policy regarding active citizenship as well as mobilisation of young people).

4.1.2. Possible instruments

As far as the instruments are concerned:

- The Youth open method of coordination (citizenship focused scope) could be either based on the current tools or an improved one, with new mechanisms for reporting, monitoring, knowledge and dialogue with the stakeholders.
- The necessary cross-sectoral coordination could also be either:
 - based on light mechanisms (such as now, with some mainstreaming activities in a few policies)
 - Or improved by stronger, more global and integrated mechanisms:
 - Identifying how youth policy can contribute to other policies and with which tools;
 - Checking if and how the current youth needs are considered in these policies at the right level (monitoring);
 - Ensuring a certain level of cooperation-coordination;
 - Mobilising young people and youth organisations for implementing the relevant policies.
- Another way of action could be to develop a set of more binding tools in order to complement national policies.

4.2. Policy options not retained for analysis

4.2.1. Ending the Cooperation

Without any explicit extension of the OMC – which is the core of the current framework – the cooperation would cease on citizenship priorities beyond 2009. In this area, the situation would be quite similar to the one before the 2001 White Paper: the main cooperation activities would be centred on the implementation of the Youth programmes.

The European Youth Pact would go on within the Lisbon strategy framework, at least until the revision planned in 2010. The few other mainstreaming activities developed under the Youth Framework might be at risk as they will lose the leverage effect of the Youth OMC.

Under this option, most of the 'acquis' obtained through the cooperation and policy development since 2001 would thus risk being lost or diminished. It would send a negative message to the young people, at a particularly difficult moment for them from an economic point of view.

4.2.2. *Specific approach (narrow scope)*

Restricting the scope of the EU Youth Cooperation Framework to the citizenship area would be in contradiction with all the requests for more cross-sectoral approach coming from the various stakeholders in the field, including the Member States themselves.

It would also be counter-productive as it would compromise an important 'acquis' (European Youth Pact, mainstreaming). With all the limitations described under section 2 above, the European framework has nevertheless encouraged the development of cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms, which are particularly relevant for better taking into account the youth dimension in other policy domains⁴⁷. Since 2005, the European Youth Pact has become a key tool of European action for youth. In this context, the specific dimension of youth life-transitions is more taken into account when adopting new measures related to the labour market.

Moreover, a narrow approach would not be in line with the policy line advocated in the September 2007 Communication.

4.2.3. *Development of a set of more binding tools*

Within the holistic approach, the main involved policies are based on open methods of coordination or other non-binding instruments. Although the use of 'soft law' might be appropriate in specific cases (such as recently done with success under Article 149 EC in order to adopt a Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across European Union), wide adoption of binding tools would be in conflict with the subsidiarity principle. Furthermore, it would only be possible to adopt such acts in areas expressly covered by Treaty provisions and would not make possible to achieve the objectives identified under section 3, particularly regarding the necessary development of a transversal approach.

4.3. Options retained for analysis

Option 1: Status quo

Option 2: a reinforced youth OMC

Option 3: a developed cross-sectoral approach

Option 4: a global strategy

These policy options can be briefly described as follows.

4.3.1. *Option 1: Status quo (baseline scenario)*

Under this option, continuation of the current OMC beyond 2009 would be based on a specific proposal by the Commission and endorsement by the Council. The extended Youth Cooperation Framework would then function on the basis of the current tools and objectives, and the framework would remain divided in three pillars.

⁴⁷ In Latvia, for instance, eight ministries are involved in an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Minister of Children, Family and Youth affairs. These ministries have to report on how they include youth dimension in their activities.

The OMC would keep its four 'active citizenship' priorities. It should be noted that the current youth OMC does not foresee the adaptation of these priorities. Thus, new challenges as mentioned in the problem definition above could not be highlighted as specific priorities under this extended framework. Every two years, one of the four priorities of the OMC would be reported about by the Member States. Tools such as peer-learning and structured dialogue could continue to evolve on an experimental basis.

The European Youth Pact would continue to exist within both the Youth Cooperation Framework and the Lisbon Strategy at least until this process is revised in 2010.

The current mainstreaming activities would go on in the current limited way, without more cooperation instruments than ad hoc ones.

4.3.2. Option 2: a reinforced Youth open method of coordination

In this option, the priority would be given to improving the active citizenship of young people in Europe, as it was the 2001 Commission White Paper, with some mechanisms for mainstreaming of youth in other policies besides this. The Youth OMC should be reinforced while keeping its active citizenship orientation. Besides the reinforced OMC, other tools (such as mainstreaming) would remain the same than today.

In order to implement the reinforced OMC, the following tools could be developed.

It is proposed to keep and develop peer-learning processes, possibly via clusters between some Member States (meetings of experts at technical level) or high level seminars when political cooperation is essential.

Structured dialogue with young people should be reinforced, possibly complemented with ad hoc dialogue with social partners.

In order to develop monitoring tools, the reinforced OMC could be based on indicators, to be decided later on the basis of the results of a special working group.

The current tools for better knowledge of young people (such as Eurostat data, national reports, the Knowledge Centre) would have to be complemented mainly regarding citizenship of young people. On this basis, one could probably reinforce the networking of researchers in order to support the analysis.

Another tool of the reinforced OMC would be a triennial presentation and discussion of Commission/Council joint reports, on the basis of national reports. This triennial report – dealing also mainly with citizenship of young people – would also be the time for evaluating the framework and if necessary updating the priorities chosen for implementing the objectives.

Besides this reinforced OMC, the cooperation framework would not have stronger tools than today for mainstreaming youth in other policy fields.

4.3.3. Option 3: a developed cross-sectoral approach

In this scenario, the main focus would be put on cross-sectoral approach in policies being of first importance for young people, such as employment, education, inclusion, health, etc. The OMC would keep its current tools and objectives without any reinforcement, considering that it is not necessary to go further in the development of tools for active citizenship of young people.

The cross sectoral approach would be developed along the following lines:

- Through developed coordination mechanisms for policies with a strong youth dimension (such as employment, inclusion or health for instance) at EU and national level whenever

possible, in order to ensure a priority to youth in other policies whenever relevant; the principle of a cross-sectoral approach at national level could be agreed, and the way to implement it should be left to the Member States responsibility. At EU level, Commission should also devise coordination mechanisms such as developing Youth Interservice group and Council could envisage setting up ad hoc cooperation between Council formations when dealing on transversal youth issues.

- Via mobilisation of youth as a resource in policies where youth actors, young people and youth organisations can play a role and/or provide expertise. Young people and especially youth organisations and youth leaders have a specific role and responsibilities in some areas such as environmental awareness⁴⁸, creativity and innovation, solidarity (intergenerational, with young migrants, with young people with fewer opportunities, with rest of the world), the fight against discriminations, etc..

4.3.4. *Option 4: a global strategy*

This option would be characterised by a general evolution, both in the tools and in the issues covered by the framework. The main instruments of the future framework would be a reinforced open method of coordination as well as a developed cross sectoral approach. Both tools have already been described above, in options 2 and 3.

In this scenario, the cross sectoral approach would furthermore also benefit from the tools used in the reinforced OMC, such as reporting, structured dialogue, and knowledge. This option is the most ambitious one as it plans an upgrading in terms of priorities and tools. It would embrace the different aspects of the life of young people, whether at school, at work, at leisure time or outside these environments.

Within this option, synergies between youth OMC and cross-sectoral approach could be developed, by using tools developed in the framework of the OMC such as structured dialogue with young people, better knowledge instruments, peer-learning and mobilisation capacities in order to contribute to the implementation of other policies.

In terms of structure, this option would favour an integrated approach rather than maintaining the fragmented three pillar one. The new structure would, in particular, fully integrate the issues addressed by the European Youth Pact.

⁴⁸ See for instance Commission campaigns directed at children and young people, at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/campaign/index_en.htm

5. ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS

The impact of the current Youth Cooperation Framework is not easily measured in quantitative terms, and the same will also apply to other policy options in the field. Although the final aim of all the options is to improve policy outcomes for young people, it is difficult to assess the direct impact of the framework due to the multitude of contributing factors. The analysis below is thus more an assessment of potential qualitative impacts of the various options, regarding social, economic and environmental outcomes, as well as impact on human rights.

The microeconomic aspects (such as administrative costs mainly) are duly taken into consideration when comparing the “feasibility” of the various options.

5.1. Social impacts

None of the options considered would have a negative social impact, but not all would be equal as to potential consequences on social outcomes.

Without any revision of the cooperation framework as planned in option 1 (status quo), the existing cycle would risk being out of touch with current and future needs of the young people as well as the main renewed Social Agenda orientations.

All other options are in line with the renewed Social Agenda and would have a more positive social impact. Option 2 (a reinforced Youth OMC) would put an emphasis on an increased civic participation and more solidarity of young people. However, options 3 (a developed cross-sectoral approach) and 4 (a global strategy) would have the most important social impact, by setting up tools in order to develop efficient strategies specifically dedicated to encourage employment, inclusion and general well-being of young people, as well as reinforcing participation and solidarity for option 4.

5.2. Economic impacts

As for social impacts, none of the options considered would have a negative economic impact, but not all would be equal as to potential consequences on economic outcomes.

The same analysis than for social impacts is valid regarding option 1: the existing cycle, characterised by a limited flexibility, would risk being quickly (if not already) out of touch with the everyday problems of the young people, such as the high unemployment rate of young people and its macro-economic consequences. This also goes for option 2 which would not change the efficiency and scope of the current transversal actions regarding other policies.

Options 3 and 4 would have a greater positive impact on competitiveness and would positively feed into the Growth and Jobs Strategy: the development of cross-sectoral approach which they foresee aims at reinforcing the positive consequences of the Youth cooperation on the employment and education levels of young people, and would also allow taking better into account the future needs of youth and of European societies in this area.

For options 2 and 4, the impact on the administrative burden would be quite positive, as this scenarios include a triennial reporting obligation rather than a more frequent one as today.

The various options have no impact on the EU budget.

5.3. Environmental impacts

None of the assessed option would have direct environmental impacts. In the long run, no option among those proposed would have a negative impact on the environment.

Options 2 and 4 could have secondary positive environmental impacts.

Option 2 (a reinforced Youth OMC) could be used for inviting young people to consider environmental issues as important.

Option 4 (a global strategy) would combine youth work and citizenship focused strategy with cross-sectoral approach. Environment is one of the areas where above mentioned synergies between the youth OMC and the cross-sectoral approach could be developed. By using tools developed in the framework of the OMC, mobilisation capacities of young people can contribute to the implementation of policies such as environment, energy or transport.

5.4. Impacts on fundamental rights

All the options are compatible with the obligation to respect fundamental rights as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights that have a particular link with youth issues are Article 24 (Rights of the child) as well as Article 21 (Non-discrimination – including based on age) and Article 32 (Prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work).

Other provisions of particular interest for this field are Article 7 (Respect for private and family life), Article 14 (Right to education), Article 15 (Freedom to choose an occupation and right to engage in work), Article 23 (Equality between women and men) and Article 33 (Family and professional life).

Generally speaking, all options would have a positive impact on the rights of children and young people. Options 3 and 4 would have more positive impacts on the fundamental rights connected with family and professional life, as they would offer the possibility to develop a transversal approach for youth in these areas.

6. COMPARING THE OPTIONS

The four options have been compared on the basis of their **impact on the objectives** to be achieved and on the basis of their **feasibility**.

In this context the concept of feasibility refers mainly to political acceptance of the options, availability of human resources and financial means, and administrative burden.

The ranking of impacts (compared with the baseline scenario) is defined in the table below:

Table 1 – Ranking criteria

	++	+	0	-	--
Impact compared with baseline scenario	Positive impact	Small positive impact	Neutral impact	Small negative impact	Negative impact
Feasibility/ Implementation	feasible	more or less feasible	feasibility difficult to assess	slightly difficult	difficult

Table 2 – Comparing the options with regard to the impacts on the objectives

	Option 1 (status quo)	Option 2 (A reinforced Youth OMC)	Option 3 (a developed cross-sectoral approach)	Option 4 (a global strategy)
<i>General objectives</i>				
Objective 1 <i>Creating more opportunities</i>	0	0	+	+
Objective 2 <i>Improving youth access</i>	0	+	-	++
Objective 3 <i>Fostering mutual solidarity</i>	0	+	-	++
<i>Specific objectives</i>				
Objective 4	0	-	+	++

<i>Transversal approach of youth issues</i>				
Objective 5 <i>Improve the efficiency of the framework</i>	0	+/0	+/0	+
Objective 6 <i>Mobilisation of young people</i>	0	+	+/0	++

Table 3 – Comparing the options according to rating of feasibility/implementation

	Option 1 (status quo)	Option 2 (a reinforced Youth OMC)	Option 3 (a developed cross-sectoral approach)	Option 4 (a global strategy)
Feasibility / implementation	++	+	+	+

Based on the description in table 2 and 3 regarding impacts on objectives and feasibility, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the four options.

6.1. Option 1: status quo

6.1.1. General objectives

This option will not lead to creating more opportunities and improving access and participation than now, as this option only foresees an extension of the current approach. As already discussed, it does not appear as an appropriate answer to tackle challenges enumerated above under section 2.

6.1.2. Specific objectives

This option would suffer from a lack of interaction and in particular of coordination between policies. It would also be difficult to mobilise young people and their representatives with such an option.

6.1.3. Feasibility /implementation

This option would be straightforward easy to implement as it is an extension of the current situation. However, political acceptance might be an issue as it would not provide a sufficient answer to the message both of Member States in favor of a more efficient OMC and of a stronger transversal approach. It would not make administrative burden lighter, as the current reporting cycle would continue to apply.

6.2. Option 2: a reinforced OMC

6.2.1. General objectives

This option would reinforce mainly access to civic and volunteering opportunities, a limited even if important part of the specific objectives, and would not have more positive impacts than with the current cooperation on the creation of opportunities for employment and education. The general effects on inclusion of young people would be quite limited, as it would not include real developments in the cross-sectoral approach.

6.2.2. Specific objectives

This option could bring some improvements in the implementation of youth cooperation and youth work at the European and national levels (dialogue with young people, exchange of practices, etc...), and allow greater participation and mobilisation of youth for society, in line with the modification of Article 149 proposed by the Lisbon Treaty (as mentioned above, under modified Article 149, Community action shall be aimed among others at "encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe").

However, this would enable developing only a partial knowledge of the situation of young people in Europe. Moreover, no improvement would be obtained regarding interaction between policies.

6.2.3. Feasibility /implementation

Based on the experience of other OMCs (social, education, culture, etc.), proposed improvements are certainly realistic. This option would be appreciated by ministries responsible for youth as far as the improvement in OMC mechanisms would maintain a reasonably light approach. However, it does not fit with the demand for more coordination expressed by the same ministries for youth and by Member States in general.

6.3. Option 3: a developed cross-sectoral approach

6.3.1. General objectives

This option could provide a good answer to tackle some essential objectives very important for young people in terms of education, employment, social inclusion, health, justice. However, taking on board more policies without upgrading instruments would limit the potential impacts regarding these areas, as tools would not match the objectives.

It also runs the risk of minimizing within the cooperation framework the role of policies which have been developed by youth ministries in supporting youth work for non-formal education, active citizenship, volunteering and creativity of young people.

6.3.2. *Specific objectives*

This option could provide a good interaction and coordination between policies.

However, in this scenario, youth policy itself would suffer from a lack of efficiency due to the fact that the OMC tools would not be upgraded, which would cause disappointment of stakeholders dealing with young people outside the formal infrastructures. This option would enable developing only a partial knowledge of the situation of young people in Europe, even if not the same knowledge than in option 2.

This option would also include limited tools to mobilise young people themselves for dealing with other policies as planned under options 2 and 4 with a reinforcement of youth OMC. It would also have limited effects on solidarity purposes, as the cross-sectoral approach would not include a reinforcement of tools for youth volunteering.

6.3.3. *Feasibility /implementation*

This option would be more difficult to implement particularly at the national level, due to the necessary respect of the subsidiarity principle and the diversity of national situations, with some Member States where coordination is not a strongly developed practice; at the European level there are already some mechanisms of coordination like the European Youth Pact and regular inter-services consultations in all domains of interest for youth. All in all, such a development of the cross-sectoral approach seems absolutely necessary in order to achieve a quantum leap improvement of the situation.

As mentioned for option 1, maintaining the current tools of the OMC might not be politically well accepted in particular by Member States.

Focusing the strategy on developing cross-cutting activities while keeping a somehow low profile on the youth policy area itself might also be a challenge for public authorities in charge of youth, who generally have their main competences in the area of youth work and citizenship.

6.4. Option 4: a global strategy

6.4.1. General objectives

This option would be the best one for creating opportunities for young people in acting through different fields and policies: education, employment, youth work, entrepreneurship, etc...

This would also be the best one for working towards a better involvement of all young people in the society, either in terms of social inclusion or citizenship, in acting through different fields and policies: inclusion, health, and participation.

Finally, it seems also the best option to capitalise all the potential of the framework for solidarity purposes, and to mobilise young people in activities such as volunteering. In this regard the synergy effects expected from using some OMC tools for other policies, such as development aid or environment for instance, could be very helpful.

6.4.2. Specific objectives

This would be the most advanced option for achieving interaction and coordination of all policies able to properly invest in youth.

In acting holistically (transversal approach), it would be the most efficient approach to create synergies between youth policies and other policies.

Option 4 would also benefit from synergy effects due to global impact of instruments (coordination tools, structured dialogue, exchange of practices, better knowledge of the situation of young people), which would allow for a better efficiency.

This would also be the best option to empower young people, while illustrating that their concerns are taken into account in a global perspective, also in line with the modification of Article 149 proposed by the Lisbon Treaty of which it could make a more global use, based on the interconnection between policies affecting youth.

6.4.3. Feasibility /implementation

This option would globally face the same challenges and opportunities as the option 3 (a developed cross-sectoral approach), regarding the development of cross-sectoral cooperation mechanisms.

As for option 2, this option would be appreciated by ministries responsible for youth as far as the improvement in OMC mechanisms would maintain a reasonably light approach. It would also enhance the visibility of youth strategies.

On the basis of the assessment above and in tables 2 and 3, the preferred option is Option 4.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation of the Cooperation framework would take place via triennial joint progress reports and adaptations would be made on a regular basis. Emphasis on monitoring by the stakeholders (in particular via structured dialogue with young people) will also be put in the new framework.

On the basis of results of evaluation, proposals for improvement would be done on a regular basis.

A possible way of evaluating success of the Youth Cooperation Framework could be by looking at:

- Successful consensus building on coordination between policies with an important youth dimension;
- Identification of policy developments in Member States linked with the implementation of key priorities at EU level;
- Regular dialogue with European stakeholders;
- Involvement of the regional and local levels in youth strategies;
- Awareness of policy priorities by national stakeholders (National Youth Councils and other youth dedicated organisations);
- Triennial reporting about implementation of priorities and situation of youth in Europe;
- Dashboard of existing indicators or benchmarks from other policy areas relevant for youth (such as early school leaving rate, child poverty, or youth unemployment rate) in order to illustrate the level of knowledge of the field;
- Development of tools describing youth work activities; a working group to discuss possible descriptors could be set up.

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF DOCUMENTS LINKED WITH THE CURRENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

1. Open method of coordination

European Commission White Paper of 21 November 2001 - A new impetus for European youth [COM (2001) 681 final - Not published in the Official Journal].

Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [Official Journal C 168 of 13.07.2002].

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of 24 May 2005 meeting within the Council on the evaluation of activities conducted in the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [Official Journal C 141/01 of 10 June 2005]

1.1 Information and participation

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Commission staff working paper - Analysis of Member States' replies to the Commission questionnaires on youth participation and information [SEC/2003/0465 final - not published in the Official Journal].

Council resolution of 25 November 2003 on common objectives for participation by and information for young people [Official Journal C 295 of 05.12.2003]

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of 24 May 2005 meeting within the Council on implementing the common objective "to increase participation by young people in the system of representative democracy" [Official Journal C 141/02 of 10 June 2005]

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of 24 May 2005 meeting within the Council on implementing the common objectives for youth information [Official Journal C 141/03 of 10 June 2005]

Communication from the Commission to the Council on European policies concerning youth participation and information [COM(2006) 417 final - Not published in the Official Journal].

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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 [Official Journal C 297 of 7 December 2006]

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 25 May 2007 on creating equal opportunities for all young people — full participation in society [Official Journal C 314 of 22 December 2007]

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Government of the Member States meeting within the Council of 22 May 2008 on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities. <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st09/st09133.en08.pdf>

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Communication from the Commission to the Council, of 30 April 2004 - Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth - Proposed common objectives for voluntary activities among young people in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [COM(2004) 337 final - not published in the Official Journal].

Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 15 November 2004 on common objectives for voluntary activities of young people

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/04/st13/st13996.en04.pdf>

Commission Staff Working Document accompanying document to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society"

Analysis of national reports from the Member States of the European Union concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people, SEC(2007) 1084.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st12/st12772-ad01.en07.pdf>

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Council recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union, OJ C319/8, 13.12.2008

1.3 Better knowledge

Communication from the Commission to the Council of 30 April 2004 - Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth. Proposed common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth, in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field [COM (2004) 336 final - Not published in the Official Journal].

Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of November 2004 on common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/04/st13/st13997.en04.pdf>

2. European Youth Pact

Conclusions by the Council of 21 February 2005 on Youth in the framework of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy [Official Journal C85 of 7 April 2005]

European Youth Pact (Annex 1 of Presidency Conclusions of the European Council, Brussels, 22 and 23.3.2005 (7619/05)) http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc423_en.pdf

Commission Communication of 30 May 2005 on European policies concerning youth: Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe - implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship [COM (2005) 206 final - Not published in the Official Journal].

Council resolution of 24 November 2005 on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe - implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship [Official Journal C 292 of 24.11.2005].

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the implementation of the European Pact for Youth [Official Journal C 70 of 22 March 2006] .

Contribution of the Council (in the field of youth policy) to the Spring European Council on the implementation of the European Pact for Youth – Key messages to the Spring European Council, February 2007

Contribution from DG EAC to the preparation of Commission's December 2007 Annual Progress Report (internal document)

Commission's December 2007 Annual Progress Report

http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/european-dimension/200712-annual-progress-report/index_en.htm

Contribution of the Council (in the field of youth policy) to the Spring European Council on the implementation of the European Pact for Youth – Key messages to the Spring European Council, February 2008

European Council Conclusions, 13-14 March 2008

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3. Future perspectives

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 25 May 2007 on future perspectives for European cooperation in the field of youth policy [Official Journal C 314/24 of 22 December 2007]

Questionnaires sent to the Member States by the Commission on future perspectives, February 2008 – Answers from the Member States

4. Others

Communication from the Commission of 5 September 2007 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on

Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society [COM(2007) 498 final - Not published in the Official Journal]

Commission staff working document on youth employment in the EU - Accompanying document to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society {SEC(2007) 1084}

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 16 November 2007 on a transversal approach to youth policy with a view to enabling young people to fulfil their potential and participate actively in society [Official Journal C 282/16 of 24 November 2007]

Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 20 November 2008, on the health and well-being of young people

European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) country sheets:

<http://www.youth-partnership.net/youth-partnership/ekcyp/countryinformation.html>

ANNEX 2 – PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

4 Priorities – 14 Common Objectives

Participation

- (1) Increase young people's participation in the civic life of their community
- (2) Increase young people's participation in the system of representative democracy
- (3) Provide greater support for various forms of learning to participate

Information

- (1) Improving young people's access to information services
- (4) Increasing the provision of quality information
- (5) Increasing young people's participation in youth information, for example in the preparation and dissemination of information

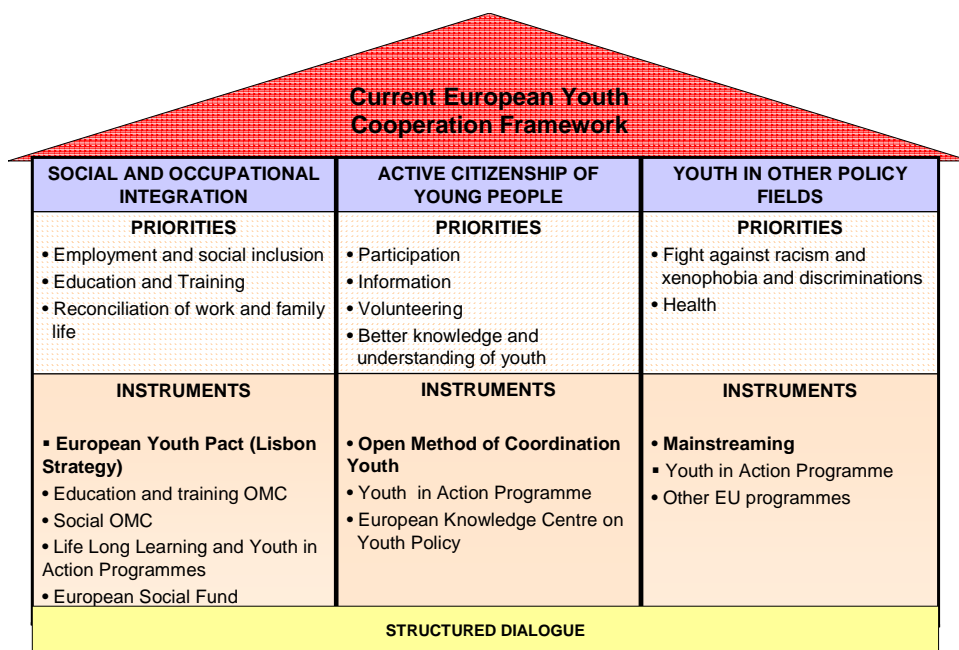
Volunteering

- (1) Develop voluntary activities with the aim of enhancing the transparency of the existing possibilities, enlarging their scope and improving their quality
- (6) Make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities by removing existing obstacles
- (7) Promote voluntary activities with a view to reinforcing young people's solidarity and engagement as citizens
- (8) Recognise the voluntary activities of young people with a view to acknowledging their personal skills and their engagement for society

Greater understanding and knowledge of youth

- (1) Identify existing knowledge in priority areas of the youth field (participation, information and voluntary activities) and implement measures to collect, analyse and update this information and facilitate access to it
- (9) Determine existing knowledge in further priority areas of interest to the youth field (e.g. discrimination, education and training, employment, social inclusion and health) and implement measures to collect, analyse and update this knowledge and facilitate access to it
- (10) Ensure quality, comparability and relevance of knowledge in the youth field by using appropriate methods and tools
- (11) Facilitate and promote exchange, dialogue and networks to ensure the visibility of knowledge in the youth field and to anticipate future needs.

ANNEX 3 - DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK



ANNEX 4 - LIST OF RECENT REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

"Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child", *Communication from the Commission*, 4.7.2006, COM (2006) 367 final

"Investing in youth: an empowerment strategy", *Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA)*, April 2007

"Promoting solidarity between the generations" *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, 10.05.2007, COM (2007) 244 final

"Together for Health: a Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013", *Commission White Paper*, 23.10.2007, COM (2007) 630 final

"Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for 21st century Europe", *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, 20.11.2007, COM(2007) 726 final

"Child Poverty and Well-Being in the EU - Current status and way forward", *Social Protection Committee Report*, January 2008.

"Renewed social agenda: Opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe" *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, 2.7.2008, COM(2008) 412 final

"A renewed commitment to social Europe: Reinforcing the Open Method of Coordination for Social Protection and Social Inclusion", *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, 2.7.2008, COM (2008) 418 final

"Migration & mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems", *Commission Green Paper*, 3.07.2008, COM (2008) 423 final

"Improving competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools", *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, 3.07.2009, COM(2008) 425 final.

Declaration on youth empowerment, *European Parliament*, 2 September 2008.

"Acting now for a better Europe - Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2009", *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, 5.11.2008, COM (2008) 712

"Demography Report 2008: Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society", *Commission Staff Working Document*, November 2008, SEC (2008) 2911

"An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training" *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, 16 December 2008, COM (2008) 865

"New skills for new jobs - Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs"
Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 16 December 2008, COM (2008) 868

ANNEX 5 - GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

1. Background of the public consultation

On 22 September 2008 the Commission launched a two-month online public consultation in the youth field, called "Strategic choices for young Europeans - An EU-wide public consultation on the future of youth policy". The aim of the consultation was to evaluate what the European cooperation on youth policy has achieved since its beginning in the year 2000 and propose new objectives for the decade to come.

The idea of this exercise was to provide the possibility to different stakeholders (organisations, public authorities, individuals) from all Member States as well as from Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Turkey, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to give their opinion on the priorities and the challenges for the future of the European youth policy. The Commission sought answers on how EU youth policy should develop in the coming years and what proposals could be made to EU member countries.

2. Questionnaire

The questions were grouped in five major thematic blocs:

Profile of the respondents;

Addressing key challenges for young people in Europe;

Identifying policy priorities for European Union cooperation;

Specific questions on: education, employment, social issues, citizenship;

Youth and the European Union

Only the answers to the closed questions (which were 18 out of 20) have been examined for this note.

3. Statistics and profile of the respondents

In the period 22 September until 25 November 2008 a total of 5426 responses were received, out of which the majority (88.6%) came from individual persons not representing any type of organisation or public body. This may be perceived as a very positive outcome indicating that the consultations may have reached groups of people which are not professionally involved in the youth field and normally do not participate in social polls in this area.

11.4% of the responses received (over 600) were generated on behalf of different organisations. Many of these entities were small organisations, which are difficult to reach by other methods of consultations. Their participation is a positive phenomenon showing their interest in the area.

The individual respondents were predominantly young people of up to 30 years (61.4%), still studying (43.1% as to 32.9% working and 12.7% other), female (54.7% as to 33.9% of men).

The nationals which were the most involved and provided most input in the online consultations originated from: Italy (13 %), Portugal (11.6%), Germany (8.1%), France (7.5%), Romania (6.7%), Poland (6%) and Spain (5.9%). All Member States are represented.

Almost half of the individual query participants are professionally involved with young people on a regular basis (48%, that is to say around 2000 persons), most of all by means of youth organisations (38.2%), non-governmental organisations (29.8%) or a public authority (17%).

4. Addressing key challenges for young people in Europe

75.9% of all the answers provided in the public consultation indicated youth unemployment as the prime concern and challenge for young people in Europe in the coming decade.

Reform of education systems emerged as the second key priority which will have most direct impact on young people's lives (70.4% of answers).

Over half of the respondents indicated environment and sustainable development as a priority (62.7%). Social integration and exclusion came on fourth place (57.9%). Still over half of the consultation participants marked active participation in society as the most important subject for the coming years. Just a little bit less important were the migration/multi-ethnic/multi-religious issues, youth violence, and discrimination – racism - xenophobia.

Slightly less popular challenges indicated by the query participants concerned: work/life balance (46%), poverty (46.1%) and demographic changes as falling birth rate and aging population (43.6%). Terms like discrimination against women and domestic violence are considered as key challenges in this particular context by only around 19% of the respondents.

5. Identifying policy priorities for European Union cooperation

Taking into account the identified challenges for young people in Europe the participants of the public consultation were asked to indicate what policies should the European Union focus on.

Priority was given to helping young people play a more active role in the society (66.1% respondents), followed by helping young people get a job (62.1% votes).

A lot of emphasis was also placed on providing better standards of life for the youth. Developing opportunities for young people to live, work and travel throughout Europe was marked by 61.6 % of people.

The general idea is that providing higher standards of life is crucial and it can be done by focusing on employment, facilitating travelling, participation in the society, supporting youth organisations and youth leaders, promoting work and life balance, improving young people's health and well-being.

6. Specific questions on education, employment, social issues, citizenship

- 6.1. Education

67% of the queried were not satisfied with the school or higher education system in their country of residence. 47.7% found it the EU's and its member countries' competence to reform the official education systems. In general terms, people tended to think that it was the EU countries which should be responsible for the educational reform (35.8%) rather than the EU (only 10.2%).

In the opinion of 56.4% of the respondents, closer cooperation with the formal education system is the key to ensuring that non-formal learning is properly recognised. 52.1% found it equally important to engage in the spreading of the knowledge of non-formal learning to employers and better promotion at European level (49.8%). The learning happening in youth organisations could be better appreciated if the employers took it into account more (36.7% of votes) and schools gave credits for the learning in youth organisations (31.6%).

- 6.2. Employment

With reference to the employment three top actions to be undertaken in order to prepare young people for finding work were identified: giving more opportunities for internships and training on the job (65.8%), closer partnerships between schools and stakeholders in the

labour market (65.5%) and better matching between learning outcomes and the labour market (49.8%).

- 6.3. Social issues

Even though 60.3% of the queried answered that social integration of young people facing difficulties such as poverty, educational problems, unemployment should be considered as priority, they underline that the European cooperation should rather focus on all young people. Moreover, a greater interconnection between different policy fields relevant to youth is said to be necessary (49.2%), especially with the involvement of young people in the policy making (41.1%). Financial support is recognised to be one of the most important factors supporting the youth organisations, youth workers and leaders (51.2%), followed by more exchanges of good practices and better recognition of the role of youth workers and leaders (45 % and 39.3% respectively).

Apart from employment and education the following issues have also been identified as problematic: alcohol and drug abuse (77.7%), social exclusion (68.9%) and stress and psychological disorders (68.2%). A high position of the last problem relating to health (which was placed even before the "poverty" factor, which usually is indicated as one of the main concerns) may be quite worrying. This is due to the fact that it affects all youth and not only young people from less privileged socio-economical backgrounds.

Awareness raising campaigns were indicated as one of the most important tools to deal with discrimination (53%). Much lower attention was given to stronger laws (24.3%).

- 6.4. Citizenship

As a general rule the respondents perceive that the young people lack ways to make their voice heard in the society. However, the tendency is that at the European level the situation is not good but there are more and more opportunities to do so. On national level the situation is much worse and also the situation is not improving so fast. The best ways to speak up may be found on local and regional level. There, the young seem to have growing opportunities to play an influential role.

The five most effective methods for young people to make their voices heard by policy makers were in the opinion of the consultation participants: joining and being active in political parties, youth organisations, other NGOs or trade unions (68.2%), participating in debates with policy makers (65.6%) and voting in the elections (44.3%).

The youth policies in the opinion of the consultation respondents should recognise the prominent role of young people in social challenges (58.9%), democratic participation (49.9%) and building the EU (43.1%).

Volunteering abroad is very much dependent on knowing where to find more information about the opportunities in other countries (59.7%), knowing that the experience will be recognised and knowing the quality of the volunteering experience (having recommendation from others or having it certified).

7. Youth and the European Union

In the last closed questions respondents were asked to select the terms that they have heard of before in the context of the European Union's work in the field of youth. The term with which most of the participants were familiarised with was the European Voluntary Service (53.1%) and the Youth exchanges in the framework of the Youth in Action Programme (51.5%). 44.2% of the people have heard of the Europass and of the Life-long learning strategy. The least known tool was the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (only 9.7%).

8. How the consultation was taken into account

The problem definition, the general objectives and the chosen policy option reflect the outcomes of the various consultations. As regards the public consultation, this is particularly the case for the challenges identified by respondents and the priorities highlighted as key issues to be tackled by the European Union.