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From: General Secretariat of the Council
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Subject: Future EU Work Plan for Youth
- *Policy debate*
(Public debate pursuant to Article 8(2) CRP [proposed by the Presidency])

Following consultation of the Youth Working Party, the Presidency has drawn up the attached discussion paper by as the basis for the policy debate at the EYCS Council on 25-26 November 2013.

Draft Presidency discussion paper

Future EU Work Plan for Youth

Background

The Council Resolution of 27 of November 2009 established a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010 - 2018)¹. This key resolution sets out overall objectives, fields of action and realistic and effective means for implementation and follow-up. The renewed framework of cooperation covers a nine year period (2010-2018), divided into three three-year work cycles, each divided into two sub-cycles of 18 months each. For each work cycle a number of priorities for European cooperation will be adopted by the Council on the basis of the triennial EU Youth Report.

The EU Youth Report was adopted jointly by the Council and the Commission in November 2012. This EU Youth Report, which was based on the reports submitted by the Member States, summarised the developments and results of the first three years of the renewed framework and proposed some priorities for next three year cycle.

Whilst a broad framework for EU co-operation over the long-term is useful, the political climate and situation can change quickly. Since 2008 the economic and financial crisis has shaken dramatically the youth sector and changed the whole environment in which youth policy operates. There is a clear need for the EU and its Member States to focus on the consequences of the current crisis on young people and high youth unemployment rates. It is therefore necessary to have a medium term plan as well as a limited number of key policy initiatives relevant to the political priorities of the moment.

¹ OJ C311/1 of 19.12.2009.

It is for this reason that the Council in May 2013 invited Member States and the Commission within the Conclusions on Maximising the role of youth policy in addressing the goals of Europe 2020 to develop, within the framework of the Renewed Framework for European cooperation in the Youth field 2012 – 2018, a medium-term Work Plan to guide youth policy and youth-related policy work in response to current youth and youth related themes and trends, and especially to strengthen cooperation in the field of youth between the Member States and the Commission as well as collaboration with education and training and employment policies.

Against this background, a first substantial round of discussion on a work plan for youth policy took place during the informal Directors General for Youth meeting in Vilnius on 12 September 2013. The discussions showed a wide support for the idea of a work plan and confirmed, on the one hand, the added value it can bring to the youth policy, and, on the other hand, its potential to promote sharing of the expertise of the youth field with the other policy areas. The future Work Plan is intended to be a flexible framework which will be capable of responding when appropriate to developments in the field of youth. It would establish a structured and transparent framework focusing on a limited number of key priorities and realistic timetables for the completion of these key priorities. These key priorities would be agreed jointly by Member States and the Commission taking into account the wider political and economic environment.

The way forward

A structured framework which envisages priorities for the medium term with concrete actions implemented via specific working methods is envisaged. The plan could specify results in specific youth policy areas to be achieved within a certain timeline. Cross-sectoral cooperation should be strengthened and implemented on all levels. It would also streamline the aims of youth policy within the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The plan would enhance the flexibility to respond, when appropriate, to emerging issues in the youth field in line with Council priorities. The instruments of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field would become more concrete and practical and, through the Work Plan, would feed into the expected priorities and outcomes. Existing and the new peer learning, expert groups seminars, etc. could be linked to desired actions and outputs with the Work Plan's timeframe.

It would guide the youth policy and youth related policy work in response to current youth and youth related themes and trends and contribute to a more coordinated cooperation with the youth stakeholders. The plan would also aim to ensure a better and clearer interaction of the TRIO Presidencies and the structured dialogue priorities, as well as the key activities in other related policy areas (employment, social inclusion, education, health, etc.).

Considering these prerequisites, it would seem appropriate to align the new work plan with the existing triennial EU Youth reporting mechanism under the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field.

The next Youth report is planned to be presented and discussed in 2015. Therefore, the first work plan could cover the period until the end of 2015 (it would include the full next TRIO).

The Youth report in 2015 will be based on evidence and outcomes of peer learning and expert discussions and would provide an overview of the functioning of the first work plan and form the basis for the discussion of the next, second, work plan which could cover the period until 2018, the end of the framework for European cooperation in the youth field.

It will fall to the incoming Greek Presidency to discuss and agree the details of a future Work Plan within the Council. But to prepare this work, it is important to have an idea of what Ministers responsible for youth affairs in the Member States consider to be the over-riding priorities on which EU policy co-operation in the field of youth should focus.

The Presidency therefore invites Ministers to consider and discuss the following questions:

- 1. What are the most critical challenges currently facing young people in your country? Which priorities for EU co-operation in the context of a forthcoming EU Work Plan for Youth could be identified to address these challenges?**
- 2. How could the EU Work Plan for Youth contribute to the improvement of cross-sectoral cooperation and strengthening the role of youth policy in that context?**