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Subject: The cross-sectoral approach to youth policy as a tool to better address socio-economic challenges and have more targeted policies for young people
- *Policy debate*
[Public debate pursuant to Article 8(2) CRP [proposed by the Presidency]]

Following consultation of the Youth Working Party, the Presidency has drawn up the attached discussion paper as the basis for the policy debate at the EYCS Council meeting on 12 December 2014.

The cross-sectoral approach to youth policy as a tool to better address socio-economic challenges and have more targeted policies for young people

Presidency discussion paper

The current socio-economic challenges for young people

In the six years from 2008 to the present, young people across the European Union have suffered the worst consequences of the economic crisis.

Although in many Member States there has recently been an improvement in the employment situation of young people between 15 and 24 years, their rate of unemployment (21.6% in August 2014) continues to be more than twice the rate of overall unemployment in the EU. In addition, 40% of young workers have a temporary contract, and nearly a quarter of young people are working part-time. Moreover, the percentage of young people who are unemployed and out of education systems and/or training (NEET) has increased from 11% in 2008 to almost 13% in the period 2010-2014¹.

¹ European Commission, EU employment and social situation, Quarterly Review, September 2014.

The negative effects of the crisis on young people extend beyond their situation in the labour market, leading to a loss of confidence in the future, an increasing risk of poverty and social exclusion, increased disengagement from participation in civil society, as well as greater difficulties in conducting a life independent from their families. In many Member States the number of young people living with their parents has grown over recent years².

The possible contribution of the cross-sectoral approach of youth policy

For this reason, it becomes more and more necessary in Europe, at all levels, to develop strategies and policies that are able to give concrete answers to the needs of young people, enabling them to participate actively in the social, economic and political life and that at the same time support them in their natural progression towards adulthood.

To meet this challenge, it is necessary to develop a new vision of youth policy, highlighting the cross-sectoral approach as the decisive factor.

The Italian Presidency is of the view that youth policy should focus on the individual, i.e. actions/measures should be defined according to the recipients, rather than according to the content of the intervention or the policy sector concerned.

This means changing the perspective of youth policy, overcoming the idea that saw it confined to one small sector, in order to ensure the integration of the "youth" dimension in other related policies.

² Eurofound (2014), Social situation of young people in Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

In fact, this is not a new approach. In recent years UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Commission have all made efforts to promote this cross-sectoral approach. However, it is certainly an approach that has not yet developed to its full potential in the European Union.

It's therefore important that the actors in youth policy at national and European level become promoters of the development of mechanisms and tools that place the youth dimension at the centre of policy measures and the subsequent development of more dialogue and coordination with the different policy areas. In particular, the policies of education, employment, housing, health and well-being of young people, participation and social inclusion seem to be those with a particular relevance.

Actions underway to promote a cross-sectoral approach

The Member States have committed themselves to putting in place a series of measures to ensure the mainstreaming of youth issues in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and interventions in other related areas.

Over the past few years, the Council has repeatedly expressed its support for the promotion of the development of a cross-sectoral approach for youth.

The "Council conclusions on maximizing the potential of youth policy to address the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy", in fact, point out that the adoption of a cross-sectoral approach and an inter-institutional coordination at national and EU level is essential both for the implementation of effective youth policy, and to address the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for young people.

The "Council conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training"³ also highlight the need to ensure holistic and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The recent Work Plan for Youth (2014-2015)⁴ states that it is necessary to extend the knowledge of the specific problems faced by young people to other areas (e.g., employment, education, social services and health care). In addition, this Work Plan highlights the need to strengthen the integration of youth and cross-sectoral cooperation in the Council, in order to ensure that the policy takes into account the conditions and needs of young people.

Ministerial debate

The Italian Presidency would like to make further progress on making a more cross-sectoral youth policy a reality. With this in mind, a policy debate will take place at the Council.

In this context, the Ministers are invited to reflect on the following questions:

- 1) **Which are the most urgent socio-economic challenges of young people today that can be most effectively addressed by cross-sectoral cooperation at European, national, regional and local level ?**

- 2) **What are the possible measures and instruments that the EU and Member States should use, in order to make a cross-sectoral approach more concrete?**

³ (2014/C 30/03).

⁴ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 20 May 2014 on a European Union Work Plan for Youth 2014-2015 (2014 / C 183/02).