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| Subject: | Council conclusions on the role of youth in addressing the demographic challenges within the European Union |

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the role of youth in addressing the demographic challenges within the European Union, adopted by the Council at its 3617th meeting held on 22 May 2018.

Council conclusions on the role of youth in addressing the demographic challenges within the European Union

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING

1. The political background to this issue, as set out in the Annex to these conclusions.
2. That one of the four overall priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU is 'The future of Europe and young people - economic growth and social cohesion'.

TAKES NOTE OF

3. The political initiatives within the European Union, such as the Renewed framework for European cooperation in the field of youth (EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018), Erasmus +, the Youth Guarantee, the Youth Employment Initiative and the Youth-Partnership with the Council of Europe, that illustrate the various approaches towards building a society in which the potential of all young people is developed and where they gain the skills needed to succeed both as citizens in a democratic society and in their working and private lives, regardless of their background.
4. The European Council conclusions of December 2017, where the Heads of States and Governments invited Member States, the Council and the Commission inter alia to 'step up mobility and exchanges' in the EU.
5. The 2016 Annual report on intra-EU labour mobility published in May 2017.

RECOGNISES THAT

6. The European Union is facing demographic challenges, in part as a result of increasing mobility in and between countries, an ageing population and due to regional instability and the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis.
7. The demographic challenges may affect in particular young people. Currently youth unemployment is still considerably high¹ in some European Member States, despite the efforts, such as the establishment of the Youth Guarantee, undertaken both at EU and national levels to address this problem. Young people may decide to leave their native region in order to study or work abroad, for various reasons such as the consequences of the economic crisis, youth unemployment or their personal choice, seeking better personal and/or professional development.
8. Free mobility of young people is a fundamental principle within the Union and a key instrument in promoting mutual understanding and partnership, since it equips young people with the relevant knowledge and skills that could help them have a broad understanding of the diverse attitudes towards life and the different situations they might face. Furthermore, it also adds to the understanding of European identity and values.
9. It is crucial to further build on the existing partnership among stakeholders within the youth sector and beyond, when and where possible, in order to foster resilience, balance and equity within the Union. In that context, it is important to further promote common European values as the core principle for fostering social cohesion, and the well-being of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics

ACKNOWLEDGES THAT

10. Mobility of young people is significant for their professional and personal development. It supports their intercultural understanding and expanding the perception of young people so as to allow them to live in a harmonious and equal society. At the same time free movement could have in-country impact, such as low youth population in some rural areas.
11. Learning mobility could further strengthen young people's understanding of active citizenship and solidarity, their rights and responsibilities, their recognition and respect for democratic values and cultural diversity and their guarantee of freedom of expression and belief, though the acquisition of the necessary life skills is essential.
12. Whether or not young people are deciding to stay in the host country or return to their native region, they should be enabled to live in an inclusive environment, where they can easily contribute to society with their new skills gained through their free movement within the European Union. This could be beneficial for their personal and professional development and their active role in the society they decide to live in.

STRESSES THAT

13. Professional guidance plays an important role in helping young people to identify their competences and make informed decisions. It is important to equip young people with relevant skills, such as communication and language and intercultural competences, so they can adapt more easily in their native region or host countries. In that context, youth work is crucial as one of the instruments for developing the key life skills needed to address the economic, political, social and cultural challenges that could emerge through the increased mobility of young people. It could also have an impact on their access to quality employment, social inclusion and active citizenship.
14. Youth work and non-formal and informal learning should help young people maximise their potential and support them in achieving and sustaining fulfilling and productive personal, social and working lives, regardless of whether they decided to stay in the host country or return to their native region.
15. More sufficient information and data on the challenges young people are facing as a result of increased mobility would help to get a more detailed picture of the circumstances.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO:

16. Encourage cross-sectoral partnerships and opportunities in order to provide, as appropriate, effective inclusion and/or integration of young people in the host country or when returning home.
17. Foster the contribution of youth work and working for and with young people in developing young people's life skills, including communication and language competences, to facilitate their participating better in civic and civil life in a European context.

18. Consider including and further expanding the discussion on the impact of the demographic challenges that young people are facing in the Union.
19. Promote the attractiveness of disadvantaged areas, including education and employment opportunities and the facilities and services for young people.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE TO:

20. Facilitate the access and distribution of data as well as the exchange of good practices in addressing the demographic challenges as a consequence of the free mobility of young people via various channels, including the EU Youth Report, the Youth Wiki and other established channels and platforms.
21. Consider organising an international event for further exploration of the impact of the demographic challenges through free movement of young people between interested Member States and stakeholders.
22. Continue to work together to ensure that these conclusions are acted upon in the context of ongoing work on strategic perspectives for European cooperation in the youth field and beyond.
23. Promote the attractiveness of disadvantaged areas, using European Regional Funds, where appropriate.

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

24. Examine the possibility for fostering all forms of dialogue between young people living outside their native region and also with young people from host countries with the support of the international youth network, EURODESK across the European Union or through other established networks.
 25. Maintain and further develop the preparatory stage (including language training and intercultural awareness) of EU Mobility programmes for young people.
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In adopting these conclusions, the Council RECALLS in particular the following:

1. Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning - OJ L 394, 2014
2. Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning - OJ C 398, 2011
3. Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, wellbeing and social inclusion of young people - OJ C 168, 2013
4. Council conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training - OJ C 30, 2013
5. Council conclusions on reinforcing youth work to ensure cohesive societies - OJ C 170, 2015
6. Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe - OJ C 147, 2015
7. Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18) - OJ C 41, 2009
8. The 2016 Annual report on intra-EU labour mobility, published in May 2017
9. Council conclusions of December 2017, Heads of States and Governments - EUCO 19/1/17
10. Council conclusions on the role of youth work in supporting young people's development of essential life skills that facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life – OJ C 189, 2017
11. New skills agenda
12. Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee - OJ C 120, 2013