

Subject: Briefing on the campaign for a written declaration on devoting more attention to youth empowerment in EU policies
For: Member Organisations
From: Bureau
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In accordance to the YFJ work plan and the Resolution of the YFJ Council of Members for a Youth Proofing Campaign (0298-06), the YFJ proposed a written declaration on “devoting more attention to youth empowerment in EU policies” in the European Parliament and wants to mobilise full support for this campaign during the spring of 2008.

This briefing note first explores what kind of youth mainstreaming is proposed within the written declaration. Secondly, it develops the institutional requirements of the European Parliament to adopt a ‘written declaration’. Thirdly, this briefing note tries to convince its readers to mobilise support within their organisations and within their network of MEP to get the written declaration adopted.

What is the declaration about?

In policy measures outside vertical youth policy, youth is often a neglected target group. It would be useful that the concerns and needs of young people are also taken on board when taking initiatives in policy fields which are of particular importance for youth. Therefore, the written declaration calls on the Commission to consider the impact on youth when designing legislative proposals and ensure that this impact is taken into account. At the same time, the written declaration asks the Commission to build on the results of the structured dialogue with youth organisations (a dialogue that is currently under development).

The written declaration, in its recital A, also mentions a number of policy fields of particular importance to young people, taken from the 2001 White Paper on youth: education and lifelong learning, employment, social integration, health, youth autonomy, mobility, fundamental rights and non-discrimination. While not exhaustive, these are priority areas, which should be taken up in the structured dialogue with youth organisations and in which youth needs should be taken into account.

Finally, the declaration also includes a reference to the European Youth Pact, which introduced a focus on youth in the Lisbon Strategy, covering especially the policy areas of employment, social inclusion and lifelong learning. While the Youth Pact raised the profile of youth issues at EU level, there is a need for this focus on youth to be translated into national policies when implementing the Lisbon agenda. Therefore, the written declaration calls on the EU Member States to focus on youth when implementing the Lisbon National Reforms Programmes and take youth into account in relevant policy fields.

What is a written declaration of the European Parliament?

The European Parliament can adopt written declarations to take stance on particular issues. A written declaration can be submitted by up to five MEPs and

half of the MEPs + 1 should sign this declaration within a fixed period of only three months. As this is particularly ambitious, only few written declarations go through. Those adopted can thus make the difference!!!

Why support a written declaration on youth mainstreaming?

A written declaration, even though it is not legally binding in any way, can be an important political signal when adopted, and is a useful tool to raise an issue among all MEPs (and not just those dealing with youth issues). However, in order to be successful, the written declaration will need the active support of Member Organisations, in order to give visibility to the initiative and encourage MEPs to sign. National Youth Councils can promote the declaration with the MEPs from their country or region, as representatives of youth organisations and young people in their constituencies. Likewise, International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations can contact their networks in the European Parliament to do the same.

With a joint effort of all Member Organisation, there is a good chance of success for the written declaration. This campaign would also be an opportunity to increase the visibility of the YFJ and its Member Organisations in the European Parliament.

When the written declaration gets through, it is a major call for the Commission to actually develop a strategy to “youth proof” all their legislative initiatives in policy areas relevant for youth, using the structured dialogue. This would be of additional value for the follow-up of the White Paper on youth and the implementation of the European Youth Pact.

5 good reasons to sign!

1. It is a formal recognition of the need of a horizontal youth policy, as identified in the White Paper
 2. It is a concrete action implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed and ratified by all EU Countries
 3. It is a major breakthrough in the recognition of youth as a specific target group, with needs differing from other groups in society
 4. It increases participation of young people in European decision-making and the relevance of the EU for young people
 5. It would strengthen civil society and a more participative democracy in the EU
- ... and so many more....