



**European Youth Forum
Position on
A Renewed and Updated European Youth Pact**

Introduction

The European Youth Pact is a cross-sector policy instrument which was adopted in 2005 and which ensures that a set of policies and measures which concern the needs of young people are a fully integrated part of the Lisbon Strategy. As the Lisbon Strategy will be revised in 2010, young people in Europe want to make sure that youth related policies will still be integrated in the renewed Lisbon Agenda. Throughout this document, the European Youth Forum points out the significance of having a renewed and updated European Youth Pact, which must be an integral part of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy.

Background

The European Youth Pact was adopted in the European Spring Council of March 2005 by Heads of State and Government as one of the instruments contributing to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives. Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment in Spring Councils in 2006 and 2007.

The Pact had been proposed in 2004 by French President Jacques Chirac, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero and Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. In their letter to the President of the European Council, they pointed out the higher vulnerability of young people in society as well as the decreasing number of young people on the labour market due to the ageing population and proposed a "European Youth Pact", to be included in the Spring Council Conclusions. Also in November 2005², the European Youth Pact was recognised as one of the three strands of the framework for cooperation in the youth field, which had been established by the Council of the European Union in June 2002.

The European Youth Pact stresses the need for a set of policies and measures which benefit young Europeans, to form a fully integrated part of the Lisbon Strategy. It aims to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young people, and to facilitate the reconciliation of working and family life. It proposes the following lines of action for Member States to draw upon in three main fields:

- employment, integration and social advancement
- education training and mobility
- reconciliation of working life and family life.

The European Youth Pact states that its success depends on the involvement of all parties concerned; first and foremost national, regional and local youth organisations as well as

¹ In 7619/05 ANNEX I, Presidency Conclusions – Brussels, 22-23 March 2005

² Resolution of the Council 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 292/5 of 24.11.2005]

the European Youth Forum (YFJ), regional and local authorities and the social partners. Additionally, it includes the ambition to ensure the overall consistency of initiatives in these areas and to provide a starting point for strong, ongoing mobilisation on behalf of young people.

The European Youth Pact was incorporated in the Integrated Guidelines of the Lisbon Strategy. In response to the Spring Council conclusions, the European Commission adopted integrated guidelines on 12 April 2005. This package of guidelines, comprising on the one hand a recommendation for Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, and on the other hand a proposal for a Council decision on Employment Guidelines, aimed at serving as a basis for the national reform programmes for the next three years, to be drawn up by the member states.

In the introduction to the guidelines, the importance of involving the relevant stakeholders in the Lisbon Strategy is underlined, and it is stated that member states as well as the EU should take every opportunity to involve regional and local governments, social partners and civil society in their implementation.

While the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines concentrate on the contribution of economic policies to achieving the Lisbon goals, the Employment Guidelines relate especially to the European Employment Strategy and aim to coordinate the employment policies of the member states. The Employment guidelines specifically reference the European Youth Pact, and incorporate some of the Pact's action lines.

Two guidelines in particular reflect the content of the European Youth Pact:

Guideline No 17 includes building employment pathways for young people and reducing youth unemployment, better reconciliation of work and private life and childcare facilities:

Guideline No 22 includes reducing the number of early school leavers, increasing access to initial vocational, secondary and higher education, including apprenticeships and entrepreneurship training.

Also, **guideline No 23** includes broadening the supply of education and training tools, developing frameworks to support the transparency of qualifications, and reinforcing their effective recognition and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. At the end of the employment guidelines, it is repeated that member states should establish a broad partnership for change by involving parliamentary bodies and stakeholders, including those at regional and local levels.

A Renewed and Updated European Youth Pact

Objective

With a view to the process of the Lisbon Strategy revision, the European Youth Forum aims at maintaining a youth strand in the post-Lisbon framework through the adoption of a renewed and updated European Youth Pact, which is an integral part of the new EU Strategy for Social and Sustainable Development as a follow-up to the Lisbon Strategy, at the Spring European Council in 2010³.

The importance of a renewed European Youth Pact

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) calls for a new EU strategy for social and sustainable development as a follow-up to the Lisbon Strategy which must be encompassing and take in consideration the needs and the expectations of European citizens. The YFJ wants to highlight that in order for it to be successful it should be more than a mere economic strategy, which it has sometimes claimed to be, but a strategy that encompasses all areas of life and that leads to real and sustainable growth in welfare.

Many young people today lack opportunities and social support. The economic and social crises add to the uncertainty young people experience in their lives, which are clearly less stable with longer transition periods than in the life of the previous generations. The recent crisis has worsened the unemployment situation for young people, which was already severe: youth unemployment rose from levels of 15% up to 18,7%⁴. This makes young people increasingly dependent on the older generations.

This is creating a demanding situation which includes not only an economic, but also social and cultural dimension, and which is endangering the opportunities and the future of an entire generation. Climate Change further adds to this challenge.

This is why young Europeans need political decision-makers' will to change this and to renew the European Youth Pact. To increase their independence young people need to have the necessary support, resources and opportunities to lead an autonomous life. Young people need an intergenerational agreement that works both ways.

The adoption of a European Youth Pact by EU Heads of State and Government in 2005 gave Youth Ministers and the entire youth field a clear stake in the Lisbon Strategy and effectively raised the visibility of Youth on the EU agenda. In order to maintain this, the European Youth Pact needs to be further followed up within the Renewed Youth Framework⁵ ensuring

³ See 0718-08 YFJ proposals for a New Youth Agenda for the EU

⁴ Eurostat, Harmonised unemployment rates by age, class 15-24, June 2009

⁵ In «An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering: A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities» pp. 2, 3, 6

that the aims contained in both policy documents are mutually supporting, it also needs to be renewed and updated as an integral part of the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

It is also crucial for European and national authorities to clearly define an implementation plan to turn the political commitment into concrete outcomes.

Key policy areas: what we do call for?

Education and lifelong learning:

- YFJ proposes that each Member State should commit to reducing early school leaving by a strong policy, sustaining access to education free of charge

- YFJ stresses the role of non-formal education and involvement of the youth and NGO sector, which provide a space and opportunity to develop many crucial social and personal skills. In this sense, YFJ demands structural support for the Non-Formal Education sector, especially for the NFE providers

Employment, training and entrepreneurship:

- YFJ calls for the reduction of youth unemployment: a European Youth Employment Strategy needs to be fully integrated also with the European Employment Strategy. In this regard YFJ also welcomes a further involvement from the side of European Social Partners

- YFJ calls for the improvement of working conditions of young people, fighting precariousness with a special focus on unpaid and/or low-quality internships and short-term contracts

- YFJ calls for active measures aiming at the reduction of the average transition period between education, training and paid work through intensive guidance provided to young people in their search for a job as well as through an effective strategy of active inclusion of young people in the labour market

- In order to provide more opportunities to young people and to empower them as active citizens in the society, YFJ considers also a priority to widen the access to entrepreneurial and self-employment initiatives. Special attention should be paid to the rights of self-employed young people. In this regard, YFJ calls for the fostering of European programmes which support youth entrepreneurial activities and can increase in the amount of young entrepreneurs, for instance, through the support of the European Investment Fund.

Reconciliation of working and private life:

- In order to achieve a fair balance between working and private life, child-care facilities, fair maternity, paternity and parental leaves and special measures for younger and single parents are needed. Furthermore, measures aimed at fighting against gender stereotypes and at encouraging equal share of responsibilities between parents are also crucial

Mobility

- YFJ believes it is crucial to enhance the mobility of young people both in the education and in the employment field

- YFJ believes it is key to increase the information about mobility exchanges as well as to enhance the development of language skills

- YFJ calls for the mutual recognition of degrees and professions and for the better compatibility of national social security systems

Social Inclusion

- YFJ believes it is key to support policies and measures, which can foster the autonomy of young people such as affordable housing and access to quality services for all

- YFJ calls for a European active inclusion strategy targeting young people with the aim to fight poverty and promote youth autonomy without any social, geographic or other discrimination

- YFJ fully sees the need to design special measures addressing the needs of specific groups of young people facing discrimination and social exclusion: young women, young migrants, young people with disability, young LGBT people, young people from ethnic and religious minorities, as well as young people with fewer financial means

Sustainable development & climate change

- YFJ believes that the EU must integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions in order to be truly sustainable

- YFJ would encourage the EU to fully integrate the sustainable development perspective into the European Youth Pact. The know-how and new skills gathered by young people during their education should be used in order to create a labour force able to meet the needs of modern technological developments. This would foster the creation of a new green and more sustainable economy

- YFJ urges for the EU to take appropriate action in tackling climate change to ensure a sustainable future for young people in Europe. The EU should strive for a low carbon

economy, put emphasis on developing green jobs and a green economy and take measures to significantly reduce the Green House Gas emissions of EU countries

How does the European Youth Pact need to be improved?

The situation of youth in employment, education and society has not significantly improved or has even worsened, in the case of employment for young people since the launch of the Youth Pact in 2005, which clearly demonstrates that there was a serious lack of implementation measures. Therefore, YFJ believes that there is the need for a broad debate and a serious evaluation on why the strategy has not succeeded, including an assessment of the instruments for cooperation envisaged by the Pact.

YFJ calls for more clarity on who takes the responsibility of implementing the European Youth Pact (at the European and the National level): there should be specified National Youth Pacts at national level that would be followed up on.

In this regard YFJ also considers fundamental the role and the responsibility of civil society and social partners in implementing the pact at all levels in the framework of the overall EU Strategy for Social and Sustainable Development as a follow-up of the Lisbon Strategy.

YFJ also calls for an improved cooperation of policy makers and other relevant stakeholders both at political and administrative levels.

YFJ further calls for clear implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the European Youth Pact such as:

- the inclusion of a separate chapter on the European Youth Pact implementation in the renewed Lisbon National Reform Programs
- the nomination, within each National government, of a Mrs/Mr Youth Pact who would be responsible for envisaging a better monitoring of the Pact.

The European Youth Pact implementation should also be monitored within the Renewed Youth Framework. YFJ fully believes that youth organisations should be continuously associated to the work of the European institutions and of Member States related to the European Youth Pact implementation through the structured dialogue in the youth field both at European and national levels.

YFJ calls for the priorities of the European Social Fund to be designed in line with the strategic priorities of the European Youth Pact. Additionally, YFJ fully believes that ESF should be much more easily available at all levels to youth organisations working in related areas.

YFJ calls for EU to widen the scope of the European Youth Pact to neighborhood and accession countries of the EU as these countries are strongly affected by youth

unemployment and the policies and measures contained in the European Youth Pact would be highly beneficial for all young Europeans.

YFJ would welcome a joint Council of General Affairs, which the Lisbon Treaty brings, and a joint Council formation of Employment, Education and Youth Ministers, which would be set up in order to discuss the further implementation of the European Youth Pact.

YFJ would encourage the EU to fully integrate the sustainable development perspective into the European Youth Pact and into the follow-up of the Lisbon Strategy.

Conclusion

The European Youth Pact is not only a crucial cross-sector policy instrument for young Europeans, by ensuring that policies which concern the needs of young people are a fully integrated part of the Lisbon Strategy, but it is also an important instrument for the success of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy. The YFJ fully believes that investment in youth is one of the foundations that will make the renewed Lisbon strategy a successful one. Therefore, in view of the revision of the Lisbon Strategy, young people in Europe need to make sure that policies which match their concerns and proposals will be fully integrated in the renewed Lisbon Agenda.

For this reason, the European Youth Forum calls for the European Youth Pact to be updated and renewed as an integral part of the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy.