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"The European Youth Forum is a platform of 99 youth organisations in Europe, working with the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations to promote the interests of young people."

ARE YOUR EP CANDIDATES AWARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS?

THE YFJ LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN ON ITS MAIN EXPECTATIONS OF THE NEXT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION.

On 20 March, the YFJ launched its campaign for a "New Youth Agenda for the EU", a collection of fifteen proposals, adopted by the YFJ Member Organisations, for the next European Parliament and Commission. A dedicated website, www.youthagenda.eu, gives a clear overview of the YFJ's proposals in the fields of education, civil society and citizenship, participation and youth policy mainstreaming, human rights, employment and social affairs, and offers candidates running for the European Parliament the possibility to express their support to specific proposals or the New Youth Agenda as a whole.



Xenia Constantinou, YFJ Vice-President, presenting the New Youth Agenda for the EU

ARE YOUR CANDIDATES ALREADY THERE?

The New Youth Agenda for the EU includes a range of proposals that could improve the lives

of young people or create new opportunities for the younger generations to participate in their community, in society and shaping the EU. In order to ensure that these proposals will be taken up by the next European Parliament, the YFJ and its Member Organisation want to ensure that the newly elected MEPs will have the New Youth Agenda in their briefcase. Also you can contribute by sending a postcard, forwarding a link to the web page, or talking to the EP candidates from your country or region. You can raise attention to specific proposals, or to the New Youth Agenda for the EU as a whole. Just take a peek at the website and tug the sleeve of your EP candidates.

IT'S NOT OVER AFTER THE ELECTIONS

After the EP elections, the process to select a new Commission will also begin. The European Parliament will organise hearings for the designated new Commissioners around the end of the year, and the new Commissioners will outline their ideas for their mandate. The YFJ will continue its campaign for the fifteen proposals of the New Youth Agenda for the EU throughout this period, to ensure that the youth expectations are clear when also the Commission's agenda is set. Afterwards, the New Youth Agenda for the EU will continue to serve as an advocacy tool throughout the next mandate of the EU Institutions and as a yardstick for the evaluation in 2014.

YOUTH VOTES!

GET OUT THE VOTE IN PORTUGAL

The Portuguese National Youth Council (CNJ) decided to accept the challenge launch last year by the European Commission and applied with a project to increase the participation of Portugal young people in the coming European election.

CNJ expects that during the next few months CNJ will be able to contribute to have more young people aware of their role as young European Citizens. CNJ expects that more young people in Portugal will vote but also will vote with awareness that they influence and that they have the responsibility to continue influencing the direction that the European Union will follow in coming years.

Since from CNJ recognises that young people today belong to very diverse groups, CNJ decided that the best way to approach this diversity was to train multipliers, this is youth leaders, youth workers and young people directly involved with as many possible target groups existing in our diverse society.

During April and May CNJ will be implementing the regional seminars that will cover all of the country. In the events the national youth council will have the opportunity to train 175 young people that will become the campaign multipliers, bringing the debate back to their

organizations and communities. In the seminars CNJ will offer the opportunity to discuss the current European issues in debate, the reasons why today young people are not involved and why they should be, and in a second part of the seminar there will be a preparation so that the group will transfer the campaign to their realities.

It is time for young people to bring the European debate to our friends and the friends of our friends, to our organisations and all the others, to our communities, etc. Its time for us to contribute to help more young people to see that if it is not us, young people, who decides what we want for today's European Union others will continue to do it for us!



 **Youth Votes!**
EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: IT'S YOUR CHOICE

Posts Comments

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European Youth Forum



The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is a platform made up of 99 National Youth Councils and international youth NGOs from across Europe. The YFJ works to empower young people to participate actively in society and improve their living conditions by representing their interests towards the European Institutions, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and other partners active in the youth field. More information can be found by clicking on www.youthforum.org.

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Introduction



Between **4 and 7 June 2009**, the citizens of the EU will, for the 7th time, directly elect their representatives in the European Parliament. The European Parliament is playing an ever more important role in EU decision-making and is becoming a true co-legislator, co-deciding on a wide range of legislation that affects EU citizens. However, since the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, turnout numbers have consistently fallen, to below 50% in 2004. In many countries, even smaller percentages of young people found their way to the polling stations. **It will be important to reverse this trend: a higher turnout of young people at the upcoming elections will be of crucial importance, both to strengthen democracy in the EU and to add force to the voice of youth in the**

European Union.

Many youth councils and youth organisations across the EU are committed to ensuring that young people will make their voices heard during the European Parliament elections in June. They are running campaigns and organising a multitude of activities to raise awareness of upcoming elections and to encourage young people to vote. The YFJ is supporting and contributing to these campaigns, and is providing a common umbrella for the **get-out-the-vote effort of youth organisations**. At the same time, the YFJ is working with the European Parliament and the European Commission, in order to contribute to the institutional campaigns.

On these web pages, you can find information about—and links to—the initiatives of youth organisations and youth councils across the EU. All are aimed at showing one thing in June: **young people vote!**

YFJ Member Organisations

Different Members Organisations of the YFJ are developing campaigns to get out the vote. **Visit the page with the different campaigns here.**

- AEDEE
- CNJ
- YEF Europe
- Mjarc

European Institutions Campaign

- European Parliament
- MTV8EU

EP Elections News

- EUObserver
- Euronews
- EurActiv
- EU4Journalists

Archives

Can you hear me Europe?

ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

YOUNG PEOPLE KICK OFF THE GLOBAL YOUTH MOVEMENT FOR THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

The 2nd Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilisations (UN AoC) which was held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 6-7 April 2009, saw an increased participation of youth organisations from the Regional Youth Platforms all over the world and from International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations.

Last year, at the first forum in Madrid, the youth dimension to the Alliance of Civilisations initiative was already announced with the concrete step of the first call for a youth solidarity fund which benefited youth-led pilot projects in the field of intercultural dialogue. However, thanks to the efforts of the European Youth Forum and its regional and institutional partners, this year in Istanbul youth organisations were widely recognised among the key stakeholders in the AoC.



Diogo Pinto, YFJ Secretary General at the Alliance of Civilizations in Istanbul

WHAT IS THE UN ALLIANCE OF CIVILISATIONS?

The Alliance of Civilisations was launched in 2005 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey. The UN AoC seeks to address widening rifts between societies by reaffirming a paradigm of mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious traditions and by helping mobilise concerted action toward this end.

REGIONAL YOUTH PLATFORMS IN THE DRIVING SEAT: THE AOC FORUM YOUTH EVENT

This year in Istanbul, a pre-Youth event was held on 4-5 April as an integral part of the Second Forum of the UN AoC. The Event was organised in cooperation with the European Youth Forum (YFJ) and the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICYF-DC) as well as the Latin American Youth Forum (FLAJ), the Asian Youth Council (AYC) and the Pan-African Youth Union (PYU).

The main outcomes of the youth event were:

- The establishment of a global youth movement of the AoC aiming to enhance visibility of their actions and facilitate networking with governments; academia, corporate and foundations.
- The final round of consultations on the UN AoC Youth Strategy with the aim to foster, support and advance youth participation in decision-making processes.
- The development of the terms of reference for the Youth Advisory Committee of the Alliance of Civilisations. The participants agreed to have Regional Youth Platforms as main representatives of this consultation and co-management body.

YOUTH WAS NOT LEFT OUTSIDE CLOSED DOORS: THE 2ND UN AOC FORUM

After the Youth event, youth participants were not left outside the rooms where Heads of States and Government representatives met for the 2nd UN AoC Forum.

Young people actively participated in several debates and workshops, the outcomes of the pre-youth events were delivered at the opening plenary session and a specific round-table on the contribution of young people to intercultural dialogue saw the participation of many people, not only coming from the youth field.

For more information www.unaoc.org/

WORKING GROUPS

PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH MAINSTREAMING

WHEN? WHERE? WHAT?

The first meeting of the Working Group on Participation and Youth Mainstreaming took place on April 4 and 5, in Brussels at the office of the European Youth Forum. This Working Group, composed by eight highly motivated participants will assist the YFJ Bureau in steering the work of the YFJ and its Member Organisations on the issues of participation and youth policy mainstreaming during the 2009-2010 period, as outlined in the current Work Plan.

PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH MAINSTREAMING?

As a core issue of youth policy, youth participation in society and in the shaping of the European Union and EU policies is one of the priorities of the European Youth Forum. Participation is about having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support, to participate in and influence decisions, to engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.

Youth Mainstreaming can be used as a tool to take youth issues better into account in the different policy areas of the European Union and its Member States.

The first working Group Meeting aimed at discussing the Participation project, Volunteering and the New Framework of European Cooperation. Although focusing on the three above-mentioned main themes, the Working group was also encouraged to take into account the future Youth pact revision, foreseen in 2010, the developments of the Youth Agenda for the next mandate of the European Parliament and Commission, and the new ways of participation such as e-participation.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

After this first weekend of intense briefing sessions the group of experts got to know each other and each participant dedicated him or herself to contribute to one project or policy area for the next two years. The members of the working group are going to continuously and proactively support the YFJ in between the working group meetings.

YOUTH WORK DEVELOPMENT

YFJ selected the members of the new mandate of the Youth Work Development Working group (YWDWG), its first meeting took place in Brussels 27-29 March, 2009.

The work was divided in different sessions according to the areas that covered; YWD in Europe, Global YWD and the tailored

support to Member Organisations. The meeting had a purpose of introductions of the YFJ to members and their team building, and getting to know each other. The group discussed YWD in Europe with a special focus on the establishment of NYCs and national youth NGO platforms in countries specified in the Work Plan, and tried to already identify ways in which YFJ could further support and assist youth NGOs in those countries in their work on strengthening national networks. Apart from the YWD in Europe, the WG discussed the Global YWD through the main issues that this area focuses on like Africa, a YFJ priority, the cooperation with Latin America, the 1% solidarity fund; cooperation with Asia and the ICMYO follow up.

In terms of tailored support, the WG discussed the need for the YFJ to become more accessible and reachable to its members and convey the message of its contributions and tools to the MOs. The WG took up the work with enthusiasm and eagerness and already divided tasks amongst the members.

EDUCATION

The newly formed Working Group on Education was very eager to start working and so they met as one of the first WG's at the end of March in Brussels. The YFJ was glad to see that so many experts applied for the Working Group and finally selected a very diverse group with experts from YFJ Member Organisations.

Such a diverse group has great enriching potential for the YFJ policy development and implementation, but only if there is common ground and a common understanding on terms and vision. The WG started off by doing that, elaborating a common 'utopian' vision on education and finding out about each member's strengths and interests.

Once common ground was found, the programme focused on the implementation of current Policy Papers of YFJ and how the WG could contribute. On the second day the YFJ work on the new OMC in Education was discussed and several focus groups worked on Internships, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Quality Assurance Project for NFE.

Based on their work for two days, three Action Teams were formed: on Global Education, on Mobility and on NFE. These will support the YFJ structures in further implementing the policies and looking into further developing the policies. The Working Group will meet again in September and December.

EMPLOYMENT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

WORKSHOP «UPGRADING OF SKILLS, MATCHING OF LABOUR MARKET NEEDS»

YFJ has participated in the Workshop “Upgrading of skills, matching of labour market needs”, which took place in Madrid on 15 April.

The Workshop was organised in the context of the Czech Presidency of the EU in cooperation with the European Commission and is a preparatory workshop for the Employment Troika Summit which takes place on 7 May, gathering Ministers of Employment of EU in order to discuss (Un)Employment in Times of Crisis.

YFJ participated actively in this workshop as part of the Social Platform delegation and was represented by José Luis Arroyo, Vice-President of the Spanish Youth Council (CJE). YFJ called upon EU Member States to agree on coordinated enhanced measures and policies, which include a strong investment in youth, and young people’s education, training and entry into employment.

YFJ strongly believes that the EU should not run the risk of a “lost generation” engendered by the current crisis and therefore strongly advocates for a full recognition of the competences that young people can acquire through non-formal education and volunteering activities as well as through vocational training. YFJ has also stated that a key importance is to recognise the value of and to promote professional guidance, that is: orientation tools and better interaction between educational providers, social partners and the professional sector. YFJ also underlined that internships must not replace paid work and that it is crucial to foster the mobility of young workers as well as investing in entrepreneurship education.

Our message was clear: **in times of crisis invest in youth!**

YFJ IN PRESS DEBATE TO LAUNCH THE FIRST ‘EUROPEAN DAY OF SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS’



29 April 2009
**European Day of Solidarity
between Generations**

YFJ has participated in the press debate to launch the first “European Day of Solidarity between Generations”, which took place on the 27 April, in Brussels.

To celebrate the first European Day of Solidarity between Generations, a collation of European Social NGOs launched a joint campaign to encourage their members (older people’s associations, youth groups, women networks, mutual benefit societies and other civil society groups) and the public at large to plan activities to mark the EU Day on 29 April 2009.

With this awareness-raising campaign, the aim is to attract the attention of politicians at European, national, regional and local

levels who should work together with civil society groups on how to rethink and redefine the concept of solidarity between generations, and on how to support civil society initiatives on intergenerational cooperation.

The demographic changes in Europe, characterised by an ageing population and at the same time by a decrease of fertility rates, are challenging the sustainability of the European social model as well as Europe’s future economic development. They, more specifically, challenge the current social and pension systems, putting at stake also an autonomous future of young people in society. Such changes impose challenges on people of all age groups across Europe. YFJ believes that an approach based on solidarity between generations is the sustainable way forward for a more equal and fair society, especially in a period of crisis.

During the press conference, the European Commission presented its Euroflash survey on the EU citizens’ views on intergenerational solidarity, as well as broadcasted their television documentary on intergenerational solidarity.

VOLUNTEERING

A EUROPEAN YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING 2011 LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN!

The European Commission is currently working towards a European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) is a strong partner in the "European Year of Volunteering 2011 alliance"¹, representing young volunteers within this alliance of 19 NGOs. After an intensive two and a half year campaign the Youth Forum is happy to see that the European Commission has taken up a civil society initiative. The Commission will announce its official decision on an EYV 2011 on 26 May, after the inter service consultation period is closed. Most likely the European Parliament and the Member states will be consulted on this issue.



WHY A YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING?²

Volunteers contribute to many diverse EU policies. Volunteering supports those in need, preserves our environment, campaigns for human rights, supports various activities of sports organisations - Volunteering is an expression of active citizenship!

The European Youth Forum believes that volunteering and participation in youth organisations lies at the heart of democracy, that it is a dynamic force for social inclusion and active citizenship and the basis for the work of all member organisations of the European Youth Forum. Since volunteers contribute to so many EU policies, we welcome the recent developments towards a European Year of Volunteering 2011, a move to acknowledge, celebrate and promote their engagement.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A EUROPEAN YEAR?

The YFJ wants to underline that the volunteers and volunteer organisations at the national, regional and especially local level should take this chance to make their voice heard. We want to celebrate volunteering, but we want also to raise awareness, to gain recognition for volunteering from policy makers, business and civil society organisations.

The YFJ wants to make sure that an EYV 2011 celebrates, supports and empowers the 100 million European volunteers and the diverse volunteer organisations where it is needed – at the local level. Volunteers all over Europe need to claim the ownership of the preparations and implementation of this Year and support the developments towards a European Year of Volunteering 2011 within their networks.

The European Youth Forum was very active in supporting the adoption of the written declaration in the European Parliament in July 2009, the organisation of an expert group in December 2009, regular meetings with its Alliance partners and working meetings with the Commission. Even if YFJ is looking back on intense meetings and advocacy work, there is still a need to continue these efforts. In order to make a "European Year of Volunteering 2011" a sustainable success, cooperation between all partners, as well as realistic budget are needed.

¹ Among others, this includes the European Volunteer Centre- CEV, the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations- AVSO, Red Cross – European Union office, WOSM, Volunteurope, European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation- ENGSO, ENGSO Youth, Caritas Europa, AGE- the European Older People's Platform, Solidar, ENGAGE, and Johanniter International

² Resource : Policy Paper on Volunteering/ European Youth Forum/ Adopted by the General assembly, 11-13 November 2004 – Madrid, Spain

THE NEW COMMUNITY CODE ON VISAS: WILL IT ENHANCE MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE?

On 2 April, the European Parliament voted the Community Code on Visas (CCV), aimed at establishing a framework for the issuance of short-term visas (up to three months) to non-EU country nations.

The European Youth Forum (YFJ) has been striving to bring improvements to the original legislative proposal made by the Commission in 2006. To this aim, the YFJ liaised with MEP Henrik Lax, the Rapporteur appointed by the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs on this issue.

In particular, lowering visa costs and easing the administrative procedures were identified by the YFJ as core issue in order to ensuring the mobility of young people and eventually promoting their participation. Indeed, while the YFJ is aware of the fact that visa regulations should respond to security concerns and control of migration flows, it believes that time-consuming and expensive procedures for young people willing to actively take part in the cultural and social life could lead to unacceptable differences of treatment on the ground of nationality.

Consequently the YFJ has been advocating for reducing the cost of visa from €60 to €35 and for waiving this cost for young people involved in exchanges or taking part in cultural activities, conferences, sports activities etc. Furthermore, the YFJ promoted the issuance of multiple-entry visas as the general rule within the new Community Code and the opportunity to lodge a visa application to the representation of any EU Member State, should the country of destination not have consular representation in the applicant's country of residence.

The text approved by the European Parliament resulted in a compromise with the Council of the European Union (who has still to vote on the CCV), watering down some of the improvements put forward by MEP Lax. For example, visa fees are set at €60 and they are waived only for students involved in exchanges (excluding all the exchanges taking place in other contexts than formal education) and representatives of non-profit organisations up to 25 years taking part in seminars, conferences (excluding participants to such events for whom fees only may be waived).

Nevertheless, some of the provisions included in the new Code might better ensure the mobility of young people, although the text draws categories of young people for whom the application of the new rules are different. Therefore, it is crucial to closely monitor the implementation of the new Code in order to collect best practices adopted by different Member States, as they still can choose whether to introduce or not some of the provisions, such as the one related to the waiving of visa fees for participants in activities organised by non-profit organisations, as well as flaws in the implementation of the rules which Member States have the obligation to introduce.



THE YFJ DELEGATION TO THE ADVISORY COUNCIL MET TO COORDINATE THE 2009 ACTIONS

The members of the Advisory Council on Youth elected by the YFJ General Assembly met on the 22 March 2009 at the CEULAJ, in Mollina (Spain), to discuss the priorities and the action plan of the year.

The main topic for discussion was the campaign for a Convention on Youth Rights. The campaign will involve a lobbying campaign following the tabling of a motion to the PACE as well as a youth event celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Council of Europe that will focus on a rights-based approach to the future of youth policy. A Lobby Group will be established to follow this process closely. Two members from the Advocacy Group were chosen to be representatives for the Lobby Group – Nicole Gantenbein and André Pardal. Jaan Urb was chosen to be substitute.

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Other items that were discussed were the Directorate of Youth and Sport budget for 2009 and 2010, with specific emphasis on the increase in the percentage going out from the co-management system to the Partnership on Youth between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, as well as the youth event that will be held prior to the 1st Ministerial Conference on the Media and New Communication Services in Reykjavik in May 2009.

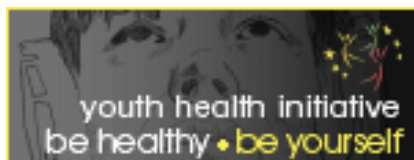


The Council of Europe is an institution that has been in the avant garde of youth policy development since 1968. What the institution now really needs is braveness and capacity to look in the future. The Youth Forum CoE Advocacy Group gives a new space for the European Youth Forum Members to find new solutions on how to improve the quality of life for young people in our continent and in the world; - Johan Ekman, YFJ Bureau Member

The Advisory Council on Youth is made up of 30 members, out of which 20 are delegates elected from among the 99 YFJ Member Organisations at the General Assembly of the YFJ to represent the Organisation in the Advisory Council on Youth and to promote the mainstreaming of youth policy within the Council of Europe.

The next meeting of the Advocacy Group will be held in October of this year.

HEALTH YOUTH INITIATIVE - THE EU GETS INTERACTIVE!



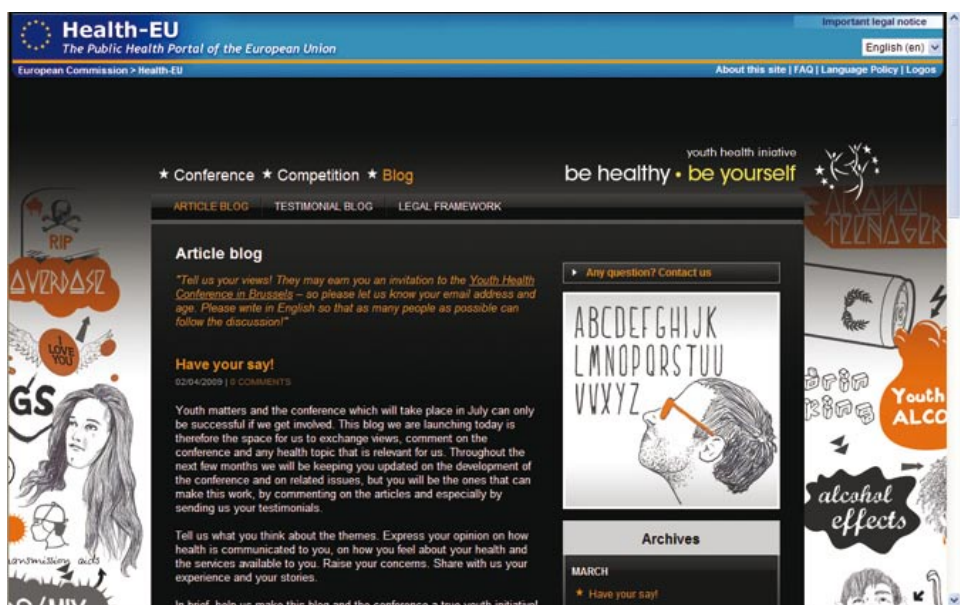
The European Union's Commissioner for Health, Androula Vassiliou, officially launched the Web site of the Youth Initiative

mid-April. The initiative will lead up to the Conference on Youth and Health which will take place on 9-10 July 2009, in Brussels and the aim of the Web site is to engage young people mainly through the competition and the blog.

The European Youth Forum is the main partner of the Commission on this project and is in charge of the moderation of the blog. The YFJ will be updating the homepage, posting articles, informing you of the latest developments on health and with regards to the conference. However, the blog's main features are the testimonial pages where young people will be able to write about their experience, express their opinion on the way they think health issues are being communicated to them, how they feel about what are considered risky behaviours, and many other things. The themes are divided along the lines of the issues addressed in the conference and the best testimonials could grant their authors a trip to Brussels to attend the Youth Initiative conference and be able to meet other young people interested in health, as well as policy makers at national and EU levels, and non-governmental organisations with strong expertise. This is a unique opportunity for youth to give their opinion to key policy makers, but this is also a sign that the Commission is opening to civil society and highly values young people's

contribution as it is crucial they be involved in the policies which regard them and are empowered to make healthy lifestyle choices. The testimonials will be very useful to learn about young people's lives and how they perceive and live their own health, and they will hopefully help design efficient and effective health policies and diverse stakeholders' initiatives to enhance young people's health in Europe. Other activities could take place on the blog, such as a chat session with Ms Vassiliou, and the blog will comprise links, videos, photos which can also be sent by any reader. It will only be a success if young people really engage with it and contribute to its content.

In parallel, an online competition is also organised and consists of a photo, video or poster/drawing illustrating health issues with regards to the six themes addressed in the conference. The best submissions



could win a video camera, a Wii or a photo camera. Some of the best works will be presented during the conference itself.

Another major element of this initiative is the youth camp which will take place just before the conference, starting on the afternoon of the 8th. Various activities are planned for the 150 young people who will be attending the entirety of the conference. The objective is to prepare them for the conference, by for instance, drafting youth positions, but also to learn more about health in general, network, have fun and get empowered!



AGENDA

AGENDA 2009

MAY

- 8-9 Council of Members
Brussels, Belgium
- 15-16 Information and Networking days - the future framework on cooperation
in the youth field
Brussels, Belgium
- 16-17 Pool of Trainers Meeting
Patra, Greece
- 26-27 Youth Event prior to the Ministerial Conference 'A New Notion of Media?'
Reykjavik, Iceland
- 28 -29 Conference of Ministers responsible for the Media and New
Communication Services 'A new Notion of Media?'
Reykjavik, Iceland

JUNE

- 2-5 Youth Event - Czech Presidency
Prague, Czech Republic
- 18-19 Press and Communications meeting
Bern, Switzerland
- 24-25 European Employment Week
Brussels, Belgium
- 25 YFJ Open Doors
Brussels, Belgium

For more information
on our events have a
look at our calendar



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