



Cardiff Declaration

Adopted by the General Assembly held in Salzburg,
Austria, 1-4 October 1998

This declaration was drafted during the conference 'Fighting for our Future' which took place on the eve of the Summit meeting during the UK Presidency. The declaration reflects the discussions and issues that were raised during the conference and were formulated into a declaration which was presented during a press conference on the final day attended by Douglas Henderson MP representing the British Government.

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Introduction

Across the European continent young people are twice as likely to face the debilitating effects of unemployment than older people. At the same time a forthcoming study by Dr. David Green for the Youth Forum shows that young people already face a lower level of social protection and a degree of discrimination significantly higher than older workers. The "Fighting for our Future" conference of one hundred young people from twenty European states meeting in Cardiff from the 11th to the 14th of June 1998 calls on the European Council, meeting in Cardiff to consider our conclusions.

Participation

It is only by harnessing the full potential of the younger generation that the problems of long term and inter-generational unemployment will be solved and the social consequences of youth unemployment and disillusionment will be eradicated. This process should be initiated by regular communication between the European Commission and the Youth Forum to evaluate the YOUTHSTART Programme and to implement subsequent programmes. This practice should not only be restricted to the European level but must be continued within a national and local framework, starting with the education system.

Young people themselves must be actively involved in the search for solutions.

Equal Opportunities

Europe's young people are vital to the success of the European economy. Young people provide a willing and responsive labour force. Young people face the same costs as other members of the work force and in many cases they may even face greater social costs caused by the move away from their parental home. We regret that the recently announced minimum wage in the United Kingdom will have a lower level for workers under the age of twenty-one. If it is wrong for an employer to pay a female employee less than an equivalent male employee then it must be equally wrong to pay a twenty-year-old less than a twenty five-year-old for the same work. It is important that the principal of equal pay for equal work is implemented across the entire European labour force.

Young people as a group are severely disadvantaged within the labour market but even within this group there exists a complex picture. Many young people face further barriers to entering the labour market.

For example a young French woman of Algerian origin from a deprived area of Marseilles will face not only the same problems as any young person seeking work but will also have to deal with discrimination on the basis of her gender, ethnic origin and residential location.

It is therefore vital that any approach to tackling youth unemployment must take account of discrimination on the basis of the outlined conditions outlined in article thirteen of the Treaty of Amsterdam; age, disability, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and religion. We welcome the inclusion of this anti-discrimination clause in the Treaty and are puzzled that at a time when the Union has prioritised tackling unemployment yet is cutting back on programmes dealing with these groups. Equal opportunities legislation, where it is not already in place, should be immediately introduced and implemented nationally. Implementation of such legislation could be monitored by ombudsman's offices operating on a regional and national level.

Training for Work

We welcome the recent initiatives by member states in the field of youth training and recognise that this must be an important element in any package dealing with youth unemployment. Such supply side measures can never provide the total answer. In many areas the demand for jobs also needs to be stimulated. Some of the answers can be found through community projects,

co-operatives, business programmes, the use of new technologies and the development of the green economy.

If training is to be successful then it must be *real* training with long-term objectives and not simply an attempt to take young people out of the unemployment statistics. We call for an independent task force to examine the various programmes dealing with youth training and to evaluate their effectiveness, not only to the European taxpayer but also to the people the training is designed to help. It is important that this process fully involves the participants in the programmes as well as the social partners.

We are concerned with the worrying trend towards workfare where young people are forced into training schemes or employment which they have not chosen by the threat of removing already inadequate social protection. If training is to be truly effective young people must be motivated and this clearly will not be the case if their wishes have not been considered in its provision. It is strange that at the dawn of a new millenium, young people are facing an updated version of the deserving and undeserving poor and this is viewed not only as acceptable but also as an advance. Our society can only be successful if all members of the community have the same opportunities and are given the same respect regardless of the social circumstances in which they find themselves.

Developing Initiative

Young people are a rich source of initiative and innovation but frequently lack the financial means and skills necessary to conceptualise their ideas. Support for these ideas will harness valuable potential and provide the young people involved with motivating employment. Organisations such as the Prince's Youth Business Trust (UK) demonstrate the contribution that can be made to the economy even by those to whom traditional financial support was denied. This would require the provision of adequate financial support, professional advice and the matching of equal social benefits as those in employment, to help share start-up risks through networked and integrated entrepreneurial facilities. This would be available for a minimum of six month before setting up the business and for three years afterwards, provided by the state, private and third sector altogether. To ensure that such a system reaches all potential candidates, young people must be provided with access to information and guidelines so that they can take advantage of every help available whether from the state, NGO's or the private sector. All governments should ensure that a comprehensive and regularly updated information system is available.

Education, directly and indirectly concerning entrepreneurship should begin during compulsory schooling.

Adaptability

In an uncertain labour market all actors, particularly young people must be able to adapt to changing circumstances. It is therefore important that they are provided with the necessary skills. While welcoming the member states commitment to improving the adaptability and flexibility of the European economy, we are concerned that the total costs are being borne by the employees. The reality of today's labour market particularly for many young people is short-term contracts, part time work and repetitive, insecure employment. If the European economy is to be successful then employers and the state must also be flexible in contributing to the adaptability of its workforce through a variety of different schemes including child care, parental leave, study leave etc.

It is clear that the demand for jobs outstrips supply. The re-distribution of work and a reduction of working time must also be considered as part of the mid- and long-term solution to structural unemployment. The public sector has an important part to play in the implementation of these aims and to set an example.

Young people have proven that they are ready to make a dramatic contribution to their societies. It is up to the Heads of States to come up with a targeted action plan to face the challenge.