



RESOLUTION

A Framework for the next Structured Dialogue cycle: Enabling All Young People to Engage in a Diverse, connected and inclusive Europe

COUNCIL OF MEMBERS/
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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This Resolution falls within the scope of the Structured Dialogue topic on “Enabling All Young People to Engage in a Diverse, connected and inclusive Europe” during the Council of the EU Presidency of the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta. It also reflects the European Commission’s renewed focus on inclusion of young people, highlighted through the EU Youth Report, as well as the changes European societies are facing in light of current challenges such as the integration of refugees. This Framework aims to define the key topics and actions that young people wish to see reflected in the process.

The rate of change in Europe’s societies has never been more rapid. It is an exciting but challenging time to be young. In today’s multilayered and complex societies, young people are innovating and leading creative change in their communities in response to huge challenges of social exclusion, discrimination and inequality.

Today in Europe, many traditional defined social structures are giving way to societies consisting of an increasing variety of backgrounds. This should be a time for Europe to empower its young people and harness this creativity for the benefit of society. However, instead social and education policies and systems are lagging behind and failing to empower young people with a sense of common humanity, belonging and purpose to be active, self-aware empowered and autonomous citizens¹.

Europe’s formal education systems often fail to consider how these skills and competences could be developed in a comprehensive way throughout the life of young people. Beginning at school, teaching methods do not appropriately engage or encourage young people’s participation and do not cater for their specific needs and talents. Instead these methods promote competition and do not promote success for all. When young people engage in youth organisations or civil society organisations, they are hampered by the organisation’s underfunding and limited support for empowering young people. The Youth Forum’s shadow Youth Report revealed that only 50% of responding National Youth Councils received sufficient funding to ensure their independence and sustainability. Although the shadow Youth Report focused on NYCs, this trend is reflected in International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations.

Young people in Europe today

Young people, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds are exposed to unprecedented economic and social challenges that are increasing their risk of marginalisation and are hampering their transition to becoming autonomous citizens and accessing their rights. Finding a sense of belonging within different communities can be especially challenging, particularly for excluded groups.

Focusing on the development of personal, interpersonal and intercultural competences and skills is essential for empowering and recognising young people as positive actors of change, and enabling them to find common grounds between different beliefs and cultural backgrounds.

Enable all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe

The Youth Forum considers the following skills as crucial elements for young people’s engagement in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe:

¹ 2013 Youth Forum Policy Paper “Quality Education”

- The ability to lead a self-determined life:

The ability to shape one's life according to their own capacities, opportunities and dreams is the basis for young people's engagement and their active participation in society. Young people need creative spaces and time to develop their potential, but we see that this is becoming increasingly difficult due to the manifold demands of changing societies, changing school routines or social and economic pressures.

- Intercultural competences and the ability for critical thought:

The ability to live and argue with other people, to respect them and to be able to reflect critically upon life, also with regard to the environment and humanity is crucial for living in diverse societies. This includes democratic awareness and a sense of self-worth.

- The ability to learn in a comprehensive way:

The ability to use one's senses and intellectual capacities is the basis of learning. In an ever-changing environment, young people need the tools to learn how to learn, to develop critical thinking and the ability to adapt to different environments.

Apart from family, friends, communities and civil society, the education system plays an essential role in developing young people's full potential. We believe a more learner-centered approach in the formal education sphere is a very effective way to help young people fulfill their potential through acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to fully exploit today's opportunities and learn to live together² in a positive, free, safe and inclusive environment. Therefore, formal education should focus more on transversal skills and personal development using proven pedagogical complementary tools and methods, and innovative pedagogical approaches inspired by non-formal education (NFE).

Secondly the key educational role of youth organisations, youth work and volunteering needs to be recognised by formal education institutions as well as by policy-makers and society at large. Youth organisations offer a space where:

- Young people can acquire skills and competences that will be useful for their personal and professional life;
- Young people can evolve in a group, in a community and where they learn how to better work and live together through collective intelligence;
- Young people can develop a feeling of being part and responsible of the development of their community, country and Europe through taking positive actions;
- Young people can build self-confidence and develop a sense of initiative through responsibility-taking and creative risk-taking in a safe environment.

The European Youth Forum, through its research³ found that the skills developed in youth organisations can include interpersonal, organisational, conflict and problem

² Delors Report « Learning : The Treasure within », Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, 1996

³ 2012 Study "The Impact of Non-formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's employability

solving skills, intercultural awareness, teamwork and leadership skills, self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Approaches: change the situation

Structural reforms of education systems

- A shift by formal education providers toward holistic education that focuses on developing individuals as persons, valuing their strengths and capacities.
- An increased focus from Member States towards education policies that develop personal and transversal competences. (including self-management, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, self-esteem problem-solving, communication and confidence) and implementing key competences' framework in to education reforms.⁴
- A comprehensive change in focus of school curricula toward integrating more learner-centered skills development using methods used in NFE. On local and regional level, joint projects should be encouraged that bridge NFE and youth work into the school environment.
- Learning environments that are free, safe, inclusive and supportive for all young people.

More support and recognition of the value of youth organisations

- Recognition by public actors at all levels, including in terms of funding and cross-sectorial valorisation, of the role of youth organisations and youth work in their role providing space at local, regional, national and European levels for young people to develop skills, to be part of multiple communities and to relate positively with other people from different backgrounds. Full recognition of youth organisations means as well actively engaging them in youth related decision-making and supporting them thus in policy participation on all levels of public sphere.
- Recognition by society, including employers, of the skills acquired through volunteering and youth work. The European Commission could facilitate the process of better integrating recognition of volunteering into the EU's Europass & Skills passport as a first step.
- National validation systems for learning outcomes gained through non-formal education should also take into account competences gained through involvement in youth organisations.
- A stronger legal framework for youth workers and volunteers implementing the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (PAVE) recommendations of the Alliance of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, in order to strengthen learning opportunities for young people through volunteering and the conditions of youth workers and volunteers providing learning to youth.

Citizenship education, intercultural learning and social inclusion

- Member States should integrate citizenship education into curricula in schools and to support youth organization-led citizenship education programmes. Citizenship education should focus on developing knowledge, skills, values and attitudes for inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies. These include critical thinking, intercultural communication, human rights education, mutual respect and solidarity, active participation in local

⁴ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC).

communities, freedom of thought and respect for diversity. Citizenship education is best provided in participatory environments and therefore formal and non-formal education providers are invited to work together to achieve this.

- There should be a focus in all spheres of education, on developing intercultural learning and competences and ensuring that young people from all backgrounds can learn to understand and accept each other. Young people should be empowered to take action together for social transformation and social inclusion.

- A greater recognition by public authorities at national and European level, of the role that learning mobility plays in the development of interpersonal and intercultural skills. More mobility opportunities should be offered within Europe and beyond for young people from different backgrounds in order to develop intercultural understanding and enhance intercultural dialogue. The private sector should also play a role and provide support for these activities.

- Strong support from national and European public authorities towards policies that support initiatives specifically designed to build bridges and partnerships in society focused on the inclusion of marginalised youth.

- Recognising that social inclusion is a process which ensures that all young people gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a decent standard of living and well-being, we emphasise the need for structural changes in social protection systems targeting youth and social security systems in general.

- Income support, activation measures and services must be concerned with preventing, managing and overcoming the situations that adversely affect especially young people's well-being.

- Efforts should be made to include excluded groups of young people and done in a way that includes them in deciding what they want and need in order to be active citizens.