



# Strategy and Key Objectives for a Youth Policy in the European Union

Second Contribution of the European Youth Forum  
to the European Commission's White Paper on Youth Policy

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## 1 Introduction

*“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth.”*

Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations  
At the 1<sup>st</sup> World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth  
Lisbon (Portugal), 8-12 August 1999

The full and active participation of young people in society is fundamental to both the renewal and functioning of democracy. The development of a Youth Policy in the European Union provides the opportunity to involve young people at all levels in the construction of the European project. Not only can a youth policy address some of the key problems that young people in the European Union face, but it can inspire and involve young people as active citizens. The participation of young people is vital to European democracy and for the sustainable development of our societies.

The European Youth Forum therefore welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to launch a White Paper on Youth Policy, and calls upon the Commission to set ambitious aims in the White Paper for implementation both at Community and Member State level. This present paper builds upon the European Youth Forum's initial contribution to the White Paper<sup>1</sup>, and presents a strategy introducing and implementing an integrated and cross-sectoral youth policy in Europe.

The European Youth Forum congratulates the Commission for the timeliness of its proposal in the context of the commitments that have been made to young people over recent years. Commitments have been made by the Heads of State and Government and the institutions of the European Union to improve the position of young people in

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<sup>1</sup> “Initial Contribution of the European Youth Forum to the European Commission's White Paper: Youth Policy”, October 2000. See [www.youthforum.org](http://www.youthforum.org).

Europe and promoting their ability to participate actively in European society.<sup>2</sup> The European Youth Forum also commends the approach that the European Commission had taken to producing the White Paper. The European Commission has instigated a broad consultation of young people at the European and the Member State level and has involved, inspired and mobilised young people on the issues. Young people from all over Europe now are awaiting the results of this consultation in the White Paper and the implementation of a Youth Policy in the European Union.

The consultations carried out by the Commission in preparation of the White Paper have brought out a wealth of information, ideas and recommendations on a European Youth Policy. These have come from young people themselves, youth organisations and other civil society organisations, national authorities in the Member States and youth researchers and experts.<sup>3</sup> They have also come from the local, regional, national, European and international level. The consultation process has been successfully concluded with the identification of a common set of priorities by all of the actors involved in the process.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Notably: Resolution on a youth policy for Europe adopted by the European Parliament on 12 October 1998 (A4-0100/99); Resolution of Council of Ministers for Youth meeting within the Council of 8 February 1999 (OJ 1999 C42/01); Contribution to the Presidency Report on the European Employment Pact – Memorandum of the German Presidency “Youth and Europe – Our Future”; Vienna European Council, Conclusions of the Presidency, point 46 (11 December 1998), Helsinki European Council, Millennium Declaration (10–11 December 1999), Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States, Meeting within the Council, of 14 December 2000 on the social integration of young people; European Economic and Social Committee's Own Initiative Opinion on the White Paper on Youth Policy, November, CES 1418-2000.

<sup>3</sup> Key documents include the Contribution of Civil Society Organisations to the European Commission's Consultation for its White Paper on Youth Policy, reports from the national consultations, the Recommendations of the 450 young delegates at the European Youth Gathering, Paris 5–7 October 2000, and the researchers reports. See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth/ywp/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> A set of common priorities for the White Paper on Youth Policy was set by young people, youth organisations, youth researchers, representatives of Member States, accession and EEA countries at the meeting on the Conditions for Young People in Europe, Umeå, Sweden, 16–17 March 2001.

The challenge is now how to produce a single document, which does justice to those consulted and their contributions, as well as successfully integrating their proposals and recommendations.

The European Commission should also grasp the opportunity to benefit from the wealth of experience and good practice in the field of youth policy development within the Council of Europe.

In light of Commissioner Reding's intention to issue the White Paper on Youth Policy towards the end of 2001, this contribution outlines a strategic approach to developing an integrated and cross-sectoral Youth Policy in the European Union. This policy should improve the lives of young people and their opportunities to participate actively in society both at the national and the European level. In the following sections of this paper, the European Youth Forum identifies key objectives and proposes methods for implementing them at the European and the Member State level.

## 2 Key Challenges for a Youth Policy in the European Union

### *An Integrated and Cross-sectoral Youth Policy in the European Union*

The development of a Youth Policy in the European Union has become a pressing issue. Furthering European integration requires the substantiation of the concept of European citizenship introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht in order to bridge the increasing gap between the European Union and young people. The Luxembourg process on employment, the Lisbon strategy and the Social Inclusion Process have set policy objectives in areas that directly impact on young people's living, learning and working conditions. From a youth perspective, however, the developments and initiatives remain fragmented and not co-ordinated. Integrated and co-ordinated youth policies at all levels, for all young people, with their broadest possible participation – whether this participation be of institutional, associative or individual nature – are essential to attain these objectives.

In order to develop a Youth Policy in the European Union, a link needs to be established between Youth Policy as such and sectoral policies of the European Union. However the development of Youth Policy cannot be limited to mainstreaming youth aspects into employment, social integration and other policies. A framework for young people is needed at the European level in order to respect the values of youth work and services, in particular their participatory nature, thus making them more than an instrument of social policy, and instead a key to the successful renewal of European democracies. This becomes even more important in the perspective of integrating young people in the candidate and pre-accession countries into the European Union. Youth Policy standards developed in the European Union in partnership with these countries would provide a useful tool in promoting the situation of young people in nearly the whole European region.

### *Demographic and social trends*

Young people constitute an ever-diminishing proportion of the population of the European Union due to declining birth rates. This demographic trend is set to become even more pronounced over the next decade and the generational imbalance will be exacerbated by the growing number of people over 65. It is estimated that there will be 13 million fewer young people aged between 15–29 in 2015, than there were in 1995<sup>5</sup>. The diminishing youth population is also reinforcing a concentration of young people in urban areas, leaving rural areas depopulated and consequently diminishing the choices of young people who wish to stay, and thus forcing them to migrate. Young people will thus become an even more vital resource for renewal and innovation in European societies and economies in the early twenty-first century. Their full and democratic participation in society will be crucial.<sup>6</sup> Society cannot afford to waste the creativity, abilities and potential of young people.

Young people are also becoming autonomous at a later age. Mostly because of the increasing time spent in education<sup>7</sup> but also due to the high cost of living in many countries, the need to finance studying, the lack of social protection, the lack of (or high cost of) housing and problems in entering the labour market. Thus, in some countries, many young people are still not financially independent in their mid-twenties or even early-thirties (this is the case in particular in Southern and Eastern Europe). This has both social and economic implications. Young people cannot fully take on their rights or responsibilities, nor can they be financially self-sufficient.

Another social trend to be taken into consideration is the increasing number of immigrants coming to the European Union. National immigration laws can bring marginalisation of this part of the

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<sup>5</sup> Communication from the Commission “Towards a Europe for All Ages”, COM (1999)221 final, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> “Youth Voter Participation: Involving Today's Young in Tomorrow's Democracy”, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1999

<sup>7</sup> In OECD countries, a fifteen-year-old could expect to stay in education for a further 6 years in 1998. This figure had risen by over one and a half years since 1985. “Education at a Glance”, OECD, 2000.



population, a majority of which is young. Concrete measures should be taken to tackle the problem of marginalisation.

### ***The challenges***

Young people face challenges in a number of key areas of their lives. However, the picture is not a uniform one throughout the European Union, or even within Member States. There are huge differences between countries, regions and between urban and rural environments. Nor can young people be regarded as a single, homogenous group. Rather they are individuals who encounter many of the same problems and have many of the same needs because of their age. Thus, it is the key areas that effect the lives of the majority of young people, which particularly need to be addressed.

### ***Youth participation***

The consultation of young people from all over Europe in preparation of the White Paper showed how strongly young people feel on a vast range of issues, and how positively they respond when consulted. Youth organisations play a vital part in promoting the active participation of young people in many aspects of society, and demonstrate the importance of empowering and motivating young people. However, youth participation is important both for young people and society and a Youth Policy in the European Union must take participation and consultation as a foundation stone for ensuring the success of the Youth Policy as a whole and as a means of promoting young people's role in society. At the same time, we can see that participation in elections has declined over recent years, especially among young people.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Although the decline in participation in elections has been common to all sections of the population, a focus on motivating young people to participate more actively in society would help to ensure their continuing involvement throughout their lives as well as preventing alienation at an early age.

### *Young people as volunteers*

One major way of youth participation is the voluntary commitment of young persons. Volunteering is a key element for most youth organisations and therefore it strengthens the development of civil society. Young people are involved in all steps of daily youth work, thus empowering them as main actors.

### *Education*

Education is a basic part of young people's lives, especially in consideration of the trend towards young people spending an increasing amount of time in education. Nevertheless, society is still lacking a holistic approach to the various channels and environments for learning. Education also has a profound impact on the rest of young people's lives in terms of their self-development, social inclusion, participation in democratic life, and it strongly affects their chances of employment, mobility and participation in Lifelong Learning. Particular problems are emerging in relation to the quality and type of formal education that young people receive. This is particularly evident in the 'skills gap', with young people lacking the skills required by the labour market. However, formal and non-formal education should not only be determined by labour market pressures, but rather go beyond it and aim at providing complementary aptitudes to promote social transformation in the context of globalisation. Despite an increasingly globalising world and an "ever closer Union", the opportunities for young people to study, learn languages to a high level or work abroad are limited. Within the European Union a new emphasis has been placed on improving the quality of education and training, and expanding access to Lifelong Learning, but action and clear quantitative as well as qualitative targets such as benchmarks are needed quickly to tackle these challenges. Youth organisations can contribute to these new needs, by helping to shape the changes and reforms needed within formal education structures and practices and through the provision of non-formal education which is a fundamental

part of their work.<sup>9</sup> They offer environments for individual development, which are often missing from formal educational structures. A recent study on non-formal education stated that "if we want education to be effective in the new millennium, education must become more open and use a wider range of resources than those that are currently employed in the existing infrastructures".<sup>10</sup> A rethink of both educational structures and methods will be vital to the ability to respond to the needs of individuals and of society. Education, whether formal or non-formal, is a common good for which public authorities have a primary responsibility. Therefore public authorities should support education. Furthermore, with regard to formal and non-formal education, a critical review of the knowledge and skills needed in order to live a fully developed life is necessary. Following this, decisions must be taken with regard to how and where these skills can best be learned. It is likely that much of what is currently taught within formal education settings would be more appropriately learned through non-formal methods.

### ***Employment and the social condition of young people***

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<sup>9</sup> "Non-formal education is organised educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives", in: "National Youth Policies", a working document produced by the Chief Executive Officers of World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, World Young Women's Christian Association, World Organisation of the Scout Movement, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Award Association, Geneva/London 1999, p.6. The European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (SEC) 2000 - 1832 describes three basic categories of "purposeful learning activity": formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. It points out that non-formal learning "may be provided in the workplace and through activities of civil society organisations and groups (such as youth organisations, trade unions and political parties)." Cf. also the recent CEDEFOP publication "Making Learning Visible - Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe" (2000)

<sup>10</sup> Pasi Sahlberg "Building Bridges for learning: the recognition and value of non-formal education in youth activity", European Youth Forum, 1999.

The transition from education to employment is also a key part of youth.<sup>11</sup> The success of this transition allows young people to be autonomous and independent. Average youth unemployment has declined over the last few years in the European Union, yet youth unemployment rates are still higher than the average rates for the rest of the population. Moreover, youth unemployment is a serious problem in many Member States, with high numbers of young people unemployed for a considerable period of time. There are also glaring inequalities in the labour market. Young women are still more likely to be unemployed than young men, and young people from ethnic or religious minority backgrounds, young homosexuals and the young disabled all suffer discrimination in the labour market. The transition from education to employment also has specific associated risks. Young people generally have low levels of income at this time, and if they fail to make a smooth transition to employment they risk poverty, and in more extreme cases, social exclusion. Reductions in the level of social protection and a tightening in the rules of eligibility have meant that some young people can be without a source of income. Even when young people have gained their first foothold in the labour market, their position is not secure due to the precarious character of much youth employment.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the period of the transition can be a very vulnerable time for young people, and in many countries a very long one until they have gained a firm footing in the labour market.

### ***Equality and rights***

Discrimination and inequality are issues which young people face in many aspects of their lives. While young women are now participating for longer than young men in education, this has not translated into success in the labour market. There are still many professions that are male dominated and young women's earnings are lower than those of

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<sup>11</sup> Katy Orr "From Education to Employment: The Experience of Young People in the European Union", in C. Groth & W. Maenning (eds.) *Zukunft schaffen: Strategien gegen Jugendarbeitslosigkeit*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

<sup>12</sup> See ETUC Youth contribution to the Civil Society Hearing on the White Paper on Youth Policy.

young men.<sup>13</sup> Also there is still a difference in young women's participation in most parts of Europe, mainly highlighted by lacking participation in decision-making bodies. Young people often face discrimination on the basis of their age, as well as on the basis of 'sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, ...or sexual orientation'.<sup>14</sup> Human Rights and Fundamental Rights are often applied to young people in an inconsistent manner. They have the rights of adults in some areas, but not in others. Promoting human rights, fundamental rights and equality for young people are crucial for tackling inequality and discrimination in society.

### ***European Union, Europe and the world***

The ongoing process of globalisation is bringing people into contact with many different cultures and societies, as well as highlighting the broad gulf between North and South, and the differences in Europe between East and West. The early twenty-first century will see the expansion of the European Union with the accession of the candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Young people in the European Union look beyond the boundaries of the Member States and young people from the other continents in the world are looking for further opportunities to overcome the barriers to mobility and to promote co-operation between young people throughout the world.

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<sup>13</sup> In 1995, the average monthly wage of women aged 25-29 in the European Union was 87% of the average for young men in the same age group. European Commission "The Social Situation in the European Union 2000".

<sup>14</sup> Article 13 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community.

### **3 Developing and Implementing a Youth Policy in the European Union**

#### *The key areas of a Youth Policy in the European Union*

There are a number of key areas, which are fundamental to a Youth Policy in the European Union. In the following sections the European Youth Forum outlines the objectives which it believes should define Youth Policy. The broad consultation that the European Commission undertook in preparation for the White Paper has resulted in very rich sources of information. This current submission is too short to do justice to the many contributions, particularly those from civil society organisations, that have emerged from this consultation, so instead it aims to address the key areas and the objectives that it believes could lead a Youth Policy.

#### *The challenges in developing a Youth Policy in the European Union*

The development and implementation of a Youth Policy in the European Union poses particular challenges due to the cross-sectoral character of youth policy and the different levels – local, regional, national and European – of decision-making involved. At all levels there are existing policies in sectors which impact upon young people, and some Member States have youth ministries and very developed youth policies. Young people's concerns vary from country to country, from region to region and even from locality to locality. In some countries the problems that young people face are more acute than in others. Thus the development of a European Union youth policy has to be dynamic in order to respond to varying circumstances and the changing needs of young people, as well as being sufficiently flexible to incorporate developments in other policy areas. Given these realities, the key question becomes how a coherent and comprehensive youth policy for young people in Europe can be developed.

***Youth Policy and recent and future political developments  
in the European Union***

A White Paper on Youth Policy must take recent developments in the European Union, particularly the decisions taken at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, both as a starting point and as the key to promoting a cross-sectoral youth policy. The Lisbon Summit established ambitious objectives for the Union and extended the 'open method of co-ordination' to a number of new areas.<sup>15</sup> The Heads of State and Government of the European Union committed to making Europe a 'dynamic and competitive area, based on innovation and knowledge, able to boost economic growth levels with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' by 2010. The realisation of the vision for full employment, economic reform and social cohesion outlined in Lisbon will require major progress in the economic and employment sectors. To make these aims reality, the European Council took on an enlarged role. It defined the 'open method of co-ordination' and endorsed its initiation in the areas of social inclusion, SME and research. The Lisbon Council also agreed on a reporting mechanism to an annual spring European Council on the progress made in achieving the objectives of the Lisbon strategy. Thus, not only were ambitious goals agreed, but also the use of 'soft law' in achieving these goals was extended. The Lisbon European Council also committed to an increasing role for civil society organisations. In light of this and of the forthcoming White Paper on Governance and the initiation of a new Inter-Governmental Conference in 2004, the European Youth Forum calls for a clarification of the Treaty articles on youth, and an enlarged role for civil society organisations in decision making.

The future enlargement of the European Union with the accession of the candidate countries will also bring considerable challenges to the Union. In many of these countries the transition from communist to democratic regimes, and from planned economies to market economies has had a precarious affect on the situation of young

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<sup>15</sup> As defined in the Lisbon European Council Conclusions, point 37.

people.<sup>16</sup> The adoption of the *acquis communautaire* by the accession countries will have a considerable impact on the lives of young people, but the development of a Youth Policy in Europe would help to co-ordinate action in support of the young.

In this context, the development of a European Union Youth Policy would contribute to achieving goals embodied in the Lisbon Strategy and related to enlargement of the Union. The new knowledge society will depend on a larger, better-educated and more highly trained workforce. The generation of young people making the transition from formal education to the labour market in the next ten years will be crucial to achieving this move towards the knowledge-based society and will assist in the success of the enlargement of the Union.<sup>17</sup> The risk that a part of the population will have difficulties to participate equally in the knowledge society needs to be tackled. Young people are a vital resource in the renewal and innovation of European societies, and their full and democratic participation will be crucial. Moreover, many of the areas, in which an open method of co-ordination has been, or will be, established are directly relevant to young people. The European Employment Strategy has included specific measures to improve the employability of young people and ease the transition from education to employment. The Social Inclusion Process will reinforce action to prevent social exclusion, and the proposed open-method of co-ordination in the field of education will have an impact on an area of crucial importance to young people. Thus, recent policy-making developments have effectively increased the European Union's activities in areas central to young people's lives

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<sup>16</sup> See Dr Siyka Kovacheva, "Sinking or Swimming in the Waves of Transformation – Report on Young People and Social Protection in Central and Eastern European Countries", European Youth Forum, 2000

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in the preparation for the Lisbon summit, the Portuguese Presidency noted that: "Europe's population, and young people in particular, must have access to basic skills, such as being able to learn and resolve problems, develop scientific, cultural and technical skills, use information technologies, speak foreign languages, develop a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and be active, free and responsible citizens." Document from the Presidency "Employment, Economic Reforms and Social Cohesion – towards a Europe based on innovation and knowledge", Council of the European Union, 12 January 2000.



as well as making the role of young people even more crucial to the future.

***A two-tier policy for improving the situation of young people***

A Youth Policy in the European Union must have as a primary aim the improvement of the situation of young people living in Europe. It therefore has to reinforce existing policies and actions at the Community level, but also encourage the promotion of youth policy in the Member States. Many aspects of a cross-sectoral youth policy are competence of the Member States. The existing articles of the Treaty Establishing the European Community therefore need to be clarified in order to allow the Commission to support the Member States and supplement their action in the development of youth policy.<sup>18</sup> Areas such as the participation of young people in civil society and key areas of education, employment and social policy and policy relating to equality and discrimination are all decided by national or even regional governments. These areas are vital though to developing a coherent and co-ordinated youth policy across the European Union. The European Youth Forum therefore believes that a two-tier approach is necessary to develop youth policy effectively throughout the Union. Such a two-tier approach would involve the co-ordination of action at the Community level and at the Member State level.

***The participation and consultation of young people***

Central to the development of a youth policy in this way is the participation and consultation of young people. The European Youth Forum believes that youth policy should be developed in accordance with young people and their needs, aiming to improve their situation by addressing the whole range of social, cultural and political issues affecting them through integrated action and policy co-ordination<sup>19</sup>. At all levels, youth policy should co-ordinate measures to serve the

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<sup>18</sup> The existing articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty establishing the European Community deal with education, vocational training and youth.

<sup>19</sup> "Youth Forum's European Youth Policy", adopted by the European Youth Forum Executive Committee in Vilnius, Lithuania, 3-5 April 1998 (D98-176).

interests of young people and involve them in shaping social, economic, political and cultural life. It is vital that young people are at the heart of youth policy, contributing to it as actors in a dynamic process. Within the two-tier process proposed by the European Youth Forum, young people and their organisations should be consulted at the Community level and the Member State level on all policy developments. National Youth Councils should be formally recognised as social and civil partners in the development of youth policy at the Member State level.<sup>20</sup> This civil dialogue should occur on a formal basis, and be related to the steps at the Member State and Community level in producing the annual report on youth policy.

### ***Youth Proofing***

Youth proofing should be introduced in all relevant sectors and at all levels as a means of monitoring the impact of legislative proposals and other political initiatives (originating in policy areas other than youth policy). This would ensure that the impact of these measures is not detrimental to young people and that the concerns of young people are more fully taken into account. It would also enhance the capacity of youth policy makers to develop a truly cross-sectoral youth policy.

### ***The Education and Youth Council of Ministers and an annual Youth report***

The role of the Education and Youth Council is crucial to the development of Youth Policy. An enlarged role for the Education and Youth Council would allow it to consider the youth aspects of other policies, notably social inclusion, employment, equal opportunities and development policy in addition to the areas it has traditionally covered. Specifically, the Education and Youth Council should be made responsible for submitting an annual report on youth policy to the Spring European Council. This report would consist of two parts and follow an agreed standard set of monitoring and evaluation criteria. The first part would evaluate policy achievements and developments

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<sup>20</sup> The National Youth Council of Ireland is a recognised social partner, sits on numerous parliamentary working groups and is consulted on all policies relevant to young people by the Government of Ireland.

relevant to young people in Community policies in the previous twelve months. It would also analyse the situation of young people in that period, collecting together key statistics in fields such as employment, education, equality, social inclusion and social protection for each Member State and for the European Union as a whole. Based on this evaluation and analysis, it would make suggestions on how policies could develop in the future. In the second part, the progress of Member States in developing a coherent and co-ordinated youth policy at the national level would be considered. This would be based on individual reports from the Member States, and an element of peer review would be introduced in the form of recommendations from the Council on how to improve national progress. A formal mechanism, based on the experiences with the open method of co-ordination, should be put in place. The mechanism should facilitate consultation with key actors in the youth field including national youth councils, youth organisations, youth researchers and other parts of civil society organisations with a youth interest on the realisation of a comprehensive annual report.

### ***Youth Policy Agencies***

The annual report would not involve duplication of work at either the Community or the national level, but would rather act as a monitoring mechanism and a means of promoting youth policy. In order to support this development of youth policy, it is proposed that an agency should be established at the Community level to provide technical support to the European Commission in the expanded field of Youth Policy. It would co-ordinate the collection of data and information for the annual report through national youth policy agencies. Both at the European and the Member State level, the agencies would be responsible for pulling the various strands of youth policy together and to obtain an overview of the situation of young people. The agencies would also act as an engine for change by carrying out youth proofing, analysing and drawing conclusions from evaluations of the programmes for young people, identifying innovative projects and providing opportunities for the exchange of good practices. By highlighting the difficulties of young people in certain areas or the lack of active support in others, they would

actively support decision-makers in developing and promoting youth policy. Where currently the sectoral treatment of various aspects of youth policy leads either to weak co-ordination between ministries or government departments (and Directorate-Generals in the European Commission), an agency, could highlight areas in which policies were inadequate and propose means to develop policy. At Community level, the European Youth Forum should be involved in the Programming Committee of such an agency and at Member State level, National Youth Councils, and youth organisations should be part of the governing board of such agencies, as well as instrumental in the work of the agencies.

### *An objective-led policy*

Youth Policy in the European Union should be objective led. Its objectives, both at the European and the Member State level, should be decided in consultation with young people. The objectives should be the result of an initial consultation process, but they should also be flexible, allowing the introduction of new measures in response to need. The fixing of objectives at the European and Member State level is particularly important in the context of the differing national situations, because of the cross-sectoral nature of youth policy, and the fact that the Community has competence in some areas, which are of particular importance to young people, while in other areas decisions are taken either nationally or by regional authorities. The following section proposes key objectives for a European Union youth policy and elaborates a method for implementing them.

## 4 The Objectives of a Youth Policy in the European Union

*There are a number of key areas, which are fundamental to a future Youth Policy. In the following sections the European Youth Forum outlines the objectives which it believes should define the future Youth Policy and the method in which they should be implemented at the Community level and Member State level in the two-tier approach.*

### **4.1. A European Union for its Young Citizens**

- **Key Objective I: To ensure a high level of participation of young people in society through their involvement in decision-making at the local, regional, national and European as well as global level.**

Central to a Youth Policy in Europe should be a framework for the participation and consultation of young people.<sup>21</sup> The framework would recognise existing representative youth structures, such as national youth councils and INGYOs and provide spaces for participation at every level, spaces that should be developed in regular consultation with young people, so that they are youth friendly and really bring decision-makers closer to young people. The framework would allow for the participation of young people whether they lived in urban environments or isolated rural areas. The framework would promote the participation of young people in the areas of Community competence and encourage Member States to develop their own policies at the Member State level. The Framework would include a number of elements in order to involve young people in participative and democratic structures and ensure their representation from an early age and at all levels of decision making. The framework would be

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<sup>21</sup> The National Youth Council of Ireland proposes such a framework in its written contribution to the White Paper

backed up by support measures to facilitate the increased participation and regular consultation of young people.<sup>22</sup>

**Formal Education** institutions can provide a first opportunity for youth participation in the form of independent student councils<sup>23</sup>. National Governments and authorities responsible for education should support existing councils and promote the development of such councils in all educational institutes such as schools, vocational training colleges, colleges and universities as a means of providing an early introduction to participation, thus ensuring structures that involve students in decisions which impact on their lives. These councils would allow students, to have a real influence and role in all aspects of educational life.<sup>24</sup> Just as important as participating in formal decision-making bodies is the fact that all students must have real influence and power over their individual learning processes. Member States would also be encouraged to introduce education for active European citizenship into the school curriculum.

The **local and regional level** represents the first level of government that young people come into contact with. Support for the development of local youth organisations and initiatives is a crucial means to engage young people in their own communities and in the democratic process. The consultation of young people and youth organisations by local and regional authorities through the promotion of local and regional youth councils should be encouraged. The recommendations of the European Charter on Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional life should be used as a standard

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<sup>22</sup> Vienna European Council, Conclusions of the Presidency, point 46 (11, December 1998)

<sup>23</sup> OBESSU, the Organising Bureau of School Students and ESIB, the National Unions of Students in Europe advocate strongly for the development of students councils and unions as can be seen in their submission to the Civil Society Consultation on the White Paper on Youth Policy.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid* OBESSU.

guideline for their development, with support given to the recommendations included therein.<sup>25</sup>

The majority of decisions affecting young people are taken at the **national level**. Member States should promote the consultation of young people at the national level by extending financial support and providing full legal recognition of the role of youth organisations and National Youth Councils as a fundamental part of society. National Youth Councils should be given a key role as the main point of reference for consultation on the development and promotion of national youth policies and resource should be made available for them to carry this out. All ministries and government departments taking action on issues relating to young people should consult with National Youth Councils.

At the **European level**, formal recognition of youth NGOs should occur. The European Youth Forum should be recognised as the chief interlocutor at the European level on the development of the European Union youth policy. The enlarged role of civil society organisations foreseen by the Lisbon European Council should be implemented through the formal and structured consultation of youth organisations. The access of young people and youth organisations to the Community programmes should be improved. Furthermore, the European programmes that affect young people, whether implemented at the Community or Member State level, should include a consultation of young people in the decision-making structures employed for implementing the programmes.<sup>26</sup>

It is central that young people are equally represented in decision-making bodies throughout the European Union. It is essential that all European citizens including young people have full voting rights in the country where they live. Young people should be supported in running

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<sup>25</sup> NYCI, MIJARC in the submissions on the White Paper and the European Charter on Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, 1992.

<sup>26</sup> This should include the youth programme and the European Social Fund, as well as consultation on national action plans under the European Employment Strategy and the Social Inclusion Process.

for election at the local, regional, national and European level, and appointments to institutions such as the European Economic and Social Committee should include representatives of youth civil society organisations.

Policies to promote participation need to be backed up by **support measures at all levels**. Youth organisations and youth representative structures play a fundamental role promoting democratic values by engaging and offering spaces for young people to participate in society. However, to do this youth organisations need access to resources such as training, as well as facilities to be able to take initiatives such as campaigns to promote young people's further participation, using the internet for example.

At the European level, International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations need adequate funding. The European Youth Forum considers it necessary for the budget-line A3029 of the General Budget of the European Union to be increased to 3 million Euro by 2003. This would allow youth organisations to maintain and, where possible, expand their services to young people. Finally, the creation of a European legal status for associations including youth would help overcome the legal problems, which hamper the development of European civil society.

At the **global level**, attention must also be paid to involving young people. The European Union often acts in international fora with one voice and the opinions of young people must be integrated into the external relations' work of the European Union, not confined to a sub-section on youth. Young people are often the targets of global trade or environmental legislation and programmes. Therefore, a European Union level consultation mechanism must be developed to ensure young peoples' views are taken into account on all issues affecting their development and the development of young people in the developing world.

- **Key Objective II: To increase the impact of information, by developing and implementing a coherent strategy for its design and distribution**



At Community level, an inventory should be made of existing information policies, programmes and channels targeting young people with a view to developing and implementing a comprehensive and measurable strategy on information aimed at young people. This strategy should be developed in co-operation with all actors in the field.

#### ***4.2 Lifelong and Life-wide Learning in today's Europe<sup>27</sup>***

- **Key Objective I: To promote open access to high quality formal education for young people at all levels, ensuring that they have a say on what they learn and how they learn, while at the same time offering learning opportunities which will provide young people with the skills they need in the fast-growing knowledge society.**

The European Council of Stockholm has identified three main objectives of education and training systems in Europe: to increase the quality of education, to facilitate access to education and to open up education and training systems to the wider world (which includes the mobility of learners and the building of bridges between non-formal and formal settings for learning).<sup>28</sup> In line with the objective to increase quality, educational systems must be developed based on the full and active participation of learners in defining the objectives, the methods and the assessment criteria. The Lisbon European Council set the objective that “the number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower level education who are not in further education and training should be halved by 2010”.<sup>29</sup> Efforts should be particularly focused in those Member States where a large proportion leave school early or drop out

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<sup>27</sup> While the term *lifelong* learning refers to the fact that learning is an ongoing process throughout the duration of one's life, *lifewide* stresses the fact that learning takes places in all spheres of life.

<sup>28</sup> The Stockholm European Council of Stockholm 23-24 March 2001 formally adopted the report “The concrete future objectives of education and training systems” agreed upon by the Education Council at its meeting of 12 February 2001, Council Doc. 5980/01 EDUC 23

<sup>29</sup> Point 26 of the Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions

of education. For this purpose, two kinds of measures are necessary: firstly, to guarantee the economic support that ensures success in education and access to all sources of information and culture. Secondly, to transform current educational institutions and approaches into learner-centred systems. It is necessary to give special attention to the access and the needs of immigrants, taking into consideration their different backgrounds, culture and social situation. Quantitative objectives for the proportion of young people completing secondary and tertiary education should be fixed in all Member States with a timetable for achieving them. Participation in education should not be linked to economic upturns or downturns instead it should be regarded as fundamental to the development of the individual and as providing him or her with the skills needed both for employment and participation in society.<sup>30</sup> It is also vital to ensure high quality education and training, as well as encouraging young people to participate in it. This should be supported by more general measures to adapt educational curricula, and to allow young people to choose the subjects that they study. Strong guidance systems should be established in education to provide individualised support to every young person. All of these elements should be incorporated into the open-method of co-ordination proposed in the field of education.<sup>31</sup>

- **Key Objective II: To recognise the value of non-formal education and to support the providers of non-formal learning opportunities in order to establish lifelong and life-wide learning from an early age.**

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<sup>30</sup> Investment in education has frequently reflected the health of national economies, with higher levels of investment during period of economic growth. A recent phenomena which has caused considerable concern in Ireland has been the trend for young people to leave education early in order to take up employment as attractive salaries have resulted from economic growth and labour shortages. This runs the risk of these young people experiencing problems in the employment market at a later date due to lack of education and skills. See NYCI contribution on the White Paper.

<sup>31</sup>See "Report from the Commission on the concrete objectives of Education systems," COM (2001) 59 final

Access to lifelong learning should be possible from an early age, and participation in full-time education should not preclude or restrict access to it.<sup>32</sup> Member States should seek to establish a pattern of participation in lifelong learning from a young age so that it becomes an integral part of an individual's life. The role of non-formal education should be supported in the context of lifelong learning programmes. Lifelong learning, including that provided by non-formal education, should be expanded so that young people can continually enhance their knowledge and aptitudes in order to promote self-development, social inclusion and active citizenship, as well as understand the fast changing employment market. The provision of lifelong learning should be regarded as the responsibility of a number of actors, including the public sector, the private sector and civil society organisations, and these actors should be encouraged and supported in the projects and programmes that they develop. Space and time for learning in non-formal contexts, including youth and other community organisations, must be provided for young people whether they are working, taking part in formal education, are in training or unemployed. Youth organisations must be recognized and supported as providers of non-formal education and as space where young people can participate in the building and constant renewal of civil society, at local, regional, national and European level. Formal educational institutions must become more flexible and open in order respond more appropriately to changing and more flexible life patterns.

- **Key Objective III: To increase the mobility of young people through programmes to study at schools, colleges, vocational training institutes and universities in other European countries and beyond, as well as through work experience and training programmes in the workplace and in employment abroad. To improve language learning in order to promote mobility, mutual understanding and enhance the development of European Civil Society.**

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<sup>32</sup> European Commission "Memorandum on Lifelong Learning", op.cit.

The potential to participate in short-term, medium-term and long-term mobility programmes while at school, college, vocational training and university, in employment or as volunteers should be extended.<sup>33</sup> Intercultural learning and mobility should be included in and fostered by educational curricula and methods, in order to overcome obstacles resulting from different geographical and cultural backgrounds. More resources should be allocated to develop mobility programmes at the Community and the Member State level.<sup>34</sup> Concrete quantitative targets for educational mobility, including mobility of students in secondary schools, should be fixed and Member States encouraged to ensure that the figures are met.<sup>35</sup> Especially, disadvantaged young people should be strongly encouraged and supported by the European Union and the national governments, to participate in youth mobility programmes. The objectives of the Bologna Declaration on the mutual recognition of degrees at university level should be fully implemented and the mutual recognition of degrees of other education levels should be improved.<sup>36</sup>

The long-term mobility of school students (six months and longer) should be supported financially through national and European level action. Such initiatives could enhance and complement action on

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. European Youth Forum Resolution on Mobility of Young People in Europe, Assembly 0745-2k-final, adopted at the General Assembly, Brussels 19-21 October 2000

<sup>34</sup> The Memorandum of the German Presidency "Youth and Europe – Our Future" suggested that Member States should increase support for educational exchanges and cross-border training both bilaterally and multilaterally. It also called for the breaking down the barriers to the mutual recognition of qualifications and for the promotion of language skills.

<sup>35</sup> The Council Resolution on the Mobility Action Plan makes reference to "school children" as a target group for enhancing mobility, while the Action Plan itself does not entail concrete actions in this respect nor does it set benchmarks in this respect. Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council concerning an action plan for mobility; Council document EDUC 180/JEUN 78 of 4 December 2000.

<sup>36</sup> The Bologna Declaration on the European Space for Higher Education, Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, Convened in Bologna on 19 June 1999.

national level, which is needed for a better recognition of periods of secondary school education spent in other countries.<sup>37</sup> A Mobility Passport for young people should be established, which could be issued automatically in conjunction with the European Youth Card and International Student Cards. It would both be a tool to promote mobility schemes among young people on the one hand and facilitate the issuing of visas and residence permits on the other hand. The general objective should be that at least 30% of European youth participate in mobility schemes by the year 2010<sup>38</sup>.

The recognition of mobility and awareness of intercultural issues should be promoted by enhancing the mobility of teachers. As a first step, measures could focus on language teachers, who should (by 2006 at the latest) all have the opportunity to live and teach for at least six months abroad. This would also enhance the quality of language learning. In addition, special efforts need to be undertaken to improve the language capacities of those active in civil society organisations and those active in youth work, as language skills and intercultural awareness are crucial in order to develop civil society on a European level.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Measures which enhance the recognition of periods of secondary school education should be developed coherently in all Member States along the lines of the good practice which exists in some Member States (cf. the contribution of EFIL, the European Federation for Intercultural Learning to the Civil Society Consultation).

<sup>38</sup> European Youth Forum Resolution on Mobility of Young People in Europe, Assembly 0745-2k-final, adopted at the General Assembly, Brussels 19-21 Oct. 2000

<sup>39</sup> The (now abolished) language courses, which were developed and run by the Council of Europe can serve as an example of good practice. These language courses "have sought to combine language learning with the promotion of intercultural understanding and the role of youth work in the creation of civil society". "Learning a Language Differently - 30 years of EYC experience", Council of Europe 1997.

### ***4.3. Employment, the Social Situation and well-being of Young People***

- **Key Objective I: To increase employment levels among young people in order to establish full employment for both young men and young women in the labour market.**

In order to **increase employment levels** among young people, the objective of improving activity rates among both young men and young women to 70% should be made and incorporated into the Employment Guidelines as part of the European Employment Strategy. The promotion of quality jobs is a priority. In order to support this objective, the Employment Guidelines in the 2002–2007 cycle should aim to ensure that **all** unemployed young people in the European Union have access to “training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure”. The provision of social protection should not be linked to participation in such a scheme.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, young people should have the opportunity to choose the area of training, education or work experience. Special attention should be paid to those Member States, which failed to implement Guideline 1 in the 1998–2002 cycle of the Employment Strategy. Young people should be guaranteed high quality education and training to improve their ability to gain employment. At the same time, policies to increase the demand for employment have to be pursued in order that employment opportunities exist for young people.

Member States should be encouraged to develop **pathways to employment** for the young socially excluded and those who have the most difficulty in integrating into society. These pathways should consist of a set of integrated measures carefully designed to respond to individual need. By ensuring that young people participate fully in society and employment from the age when they leave education, the risks of them becoming excluded later in life are reduced.

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<sup>40</sup> See the European Youth Forum policy paper “The European Employment Strategy and Young People” adopted at the European Youth Forum Executive Committee meeting from 26–28 March, 1999, in Potsdam, Germany.

- **Key Objective II: To achieve equality in the labour market for all young people and improve the employment conditions of young people in order to end the precarious character of youth employment.**

Programmes and action should be introduced to prevent discrimination against young people in the labour market. These should be based on statistics on youth employment gathered at the Member State level. These should include indicators on employment according to sex, and ethnic or religious background. Statistics should also be collected on the number of young disabled in employment. The European Social Fund and the EQUAL Community Initiative should include specific programmes for young people discriminated against in the labour market, especially young women.

Member States should be more rigorous in ensuring that regulations governing the working conditions of young people are implemented properly and fully. They must prevent discrimination against young people in the labour market on the basis of age, and introduce legislation where none exists to ensure that young people are entitled to the same conditions as other workers and are not used as a source of cheap, dispensable labour. Integrated campaigns should be established for employers, employees and society in general in order to prevent and reduce accidents in the workplace and an adequate use of inspectors should be ensured. Furthermore, young people should be informed of their rights in relation to working conditions.

- **Key Objective III: To reduce significantly the levels of social exclusion among young people, and make sure that young people have access to adequate levels of social protection.**

The problem of young people who are not in education, employment or training and not receiving unemployment benefits must be addressed both at the Member State level and by the Community in the Social Inclusion Process. Furthermore, the Union shall encourage the Member States to create a positive environment for the development of entrepreneurship among young people. The vulnerability of young people during the transition from education to

employment must be recognised by ensuring that young people have access to sufficient social protection to allow them to live autonomously.<sup>41</sup> Social protection should be available to young people notwithstanding their previous or current employment situation in order to prevent social exclusion. Social protection should be provided to the individual in accordance with his or her needs.

➤ **Key Objective IV: To improve the health and well-being of young people**

Although one of the healthiest age-groups of the population, the health and well-being of young people needs to be developed in order to promote health in future life. In this framework, the expertise of the Council of Europe and United Nations has to be taken into account. Moreover, there are specific problems of drug and substance abuse that can be found in the youth population. Systematic health education, including information on alcohol and substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and contraception should be provided to young people. This should be supplemented by the promotion of healthy lifestyles and support and advice to young people facing emotional, psychological or social problems. Furthermore, sporting activities should form an everyday part of young people's lives. Sports activities, when underpinned with pedagogical aims and objectives, contribute not only to health but also to the development of civil society through their role of supporting social integration of young people, in particular disadvantaged and disaffected young people.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See the European Youth Forum policy paper "Social Protection and Young People in Europe", adopted at the European Youth Forum General Assembly in 19-21 October 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers for Youth meeting within the Council of 17 December 1999 on the non-formal education dimension of sporting activities in the European Community youth programmes, OJ (C) 008/2000 (12 January 2000), p.5.



#### ***4.4 Human Rights and Fundamental Rights, Discrimination, Gender Equality***

- **Key Objective I: To promote equality among all young people and fight against discrimination of all kinds.**

The Member States and the Community must make a firm commitment to supporting equal opportunities and combating discrimination in all its forms, as experienced by many young people, in accordance with the definition of discrimination contained in Article 13 of the Treaty. Equal opportunities should be mainstreamed in all 'relevant' policy areas, especially in the fields of education, employment and social protection. The implementation of Community policies should take full account of the discrimination suffered by young people, for example young women, those from minority backgrounds and those physically or mentally challenged. In the existing programmes on anti-discrimination, there should be a particular attention paid to the discrimination suffered by young people.<sup>43</sup>

- **Key Objective II: To improve the human rights and the fundamental rights of young people in the European Union and the accession countries**

The human rights as they are defined in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights must be fully respected to promote the rights of European citizens. The European Charter of Fundamental Rights should be made legally binding. In the field of human rights, the PHARE and TACIS programmes should support youth organisations in the accession countries and in New Independent States in the promotion of human rights and the fight against the discrimination experienced by some minorities such as the Roma. The current and future Member States must respect the

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<sup>43</sup> Community Action Programme to combat discrimination 2001-2006 adopted by the Council on 27 November 2000

'principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental rights' as enshrined in the Treaty on European Union.<sup>44</sup>

➤ **Key Objective III: To promote the participation of young women in society at all levels**

The full participation of young people in all aspects of society is central to democracy. The European Commission's "Social Policy Agenda" sets the objective of promoting the "full participation of women in economic, scientific, social, political and civic life" as a key component of democracy. Ensuring the full participation of women in society from an early stage is crucial to achieving this aim. "Girls and young women have to face today new challenges in order to achieve the equality in reality that they have nearly acquired in rights. Indeed, social structures and employment, stereotypes regarding girls' and boys' roles at school, at home, on the labour market, etc. are obstacles to a full and total participation of young women at all levels."<sup>45</sup> The implementation of Community policies should target the discrimination faced especially by young women. In particular under the EQUAL Community initiative particular attention should be given to actions aimed at promoting the full participation of young women.

**4.5 *European Union and Other Countries in Europe***

➤ **Key Objective 1: To promote multiculturalism and European values in the youth field**

It is important to maintain an awareness that Europe is much bigger than the European Union and that our societies are enriched by increasing multiculturalism. Specific programmes promoting diversity, especially in arts, languages and all cultural aspects of society should involve and target young immigrants and refugees as well as children and young people seeking asylum.

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<sup>44</sup> The respect for rights contained in article 6 of the TEU is fundamental for accession to the European Union.

<sup>45</sup> European Women's Lobby initial statement in the Hearing on "Youth Policy" held in the European Economic and Social Committee on 20 February 2001.

Youth policy must promote European values that have constituted the backbone of European co-operation and integration, such as human rights, respect for diversity, gender equality and high environmental standards.<sup>46</sup> Youth participation and social welfare are also two of these fundamental values. A special focus should be directed towards promoting youth participation.

➤ **Key Objective II: To promote all aspects of mobility between Member States and other countries in Europe**

Visa restrictions are still a major obstacle to mobility for young people in Europe, and restrict the level of co-operation between young people in the Member States and other European countries. In many instances, the obstacles involved for a young person from outside the European Economic Area to take part in voluntary service in a European Union Member State often dissuades them from taking part in exchanges and European Union mobility Programmes<sup>47</sup>. Therefore Member States should create a standard European Union procedure for visa applications within the framework of the mobility, educational and youth programmes, which would reduce both administrative barriers and the cost of obtaining visas for young people participating in these programmes.

However, mobility is also restricted due to a lack of information about existing opportunities for exchange and co-operation through the mobility programmes of the European Union. A European Union youth policy should have a stronger focus of disseminating information about existing opportunities.

➤ **Key Objective III: Promote all aspects of co-operation between Member States and New Independent States (NIS) without creating obstacles for non Member states to co-operate among themselves.**

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<sup>46</sup> Youth Express Network in the Contributions of Civil Society Organisation to the European Union's Consultation for its White Paper on Youth Policy, pp. 254-255.

<sup>47</sup> Association for Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) in the Contributions of Civil Society Organisation to the European Union's Consultation for its White Paper on Youth Policy, p. 31.

A European Union youth policy must promote co-operation between Member States, the New Independent States<sup>48</sup>, and candidate countries. However, it is also important that it does not present obstacles for such countries to co-operate among themselves. In its present form, the YOUTH Programme does not allow for candidate countries and “third countries” in Europe to participate in the same projects together. This obstacle should be eliminated.

In addition, existing documents directing the co-operation between the European Union and New Independent States must develop a more clear youth dimension. This goes in particular for the Common Strategies towards the Russian Federation and Ukraine, as well as European Union’s actions in support to the Stabilisation and Association Process in the New Independent States.

- **Key Objective IV: To promote stability and prosperity in South Eastern Europe by integrating young people from the Balkan region and the Member States, as well as promoting mutual co-operation between the different populations in South Eastern Europe.**

The YOUTH Programme must become more flexible and allow for better opportunities for young people and youth organisations in South Eastern Europe to take part in activities and exchanges in partnership with European Union Member States. The European Union should also create opportunities for micro-project support to non-governmental youth organisations in the Balkan region, promoting co-operation between different nationalities, ethnic groups and country populations, as well as providing training methods, information resources and funding.

- **Key Objective V: To promote the development of national action plans on youth policy in the countries of South Eastern Europe.**

In recognition of the fact that youth policies in some of the countries in South East Europe need a strong support from the rest of Europe,

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<sup>48</sup> Countries constituting the former republics of the Soviet Union.

the European Union must take an active part in promoting the recommendations of the Working Group on Young People within the Working Table I of the Stability Pact. This Working Group recommends for countries in the region to develop national action plans on youth policy in co-operation with young people and youth organisations. In this field, the European Union should co-operate closely with Council of Europe Directorate for Youth and Sport.

- **Key Objective VI: To promote the participation of candidate countries in the youth policy development in the European Union**

While involving accession and candidate countries in the development of the White Paper on youth policy in the European Union, special attention should be given to participation. Therefore, we propose to create space for direct consultation between the European Commission and accession countries on the issues directly connected with youth policy.

#### **4.6 *European Union and the World***

- **Key Objective 1: To promote an attitude of co-operation and partnership beyond the borders of the European Union by facilitating opportunities for co-operation between young people from the European Union with youth from other countries around the world.**

The existing YOUTH programme needs to be extended so that there are opportunities for young people in youth organisations from countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP), to participate in activities and exchanges with youth organisations in the European Union. Thus, young people may act as catalysts for development throughout the world.

There is a need to link the YOUTH Programme with the "Cotonou agreement", that is the European Union co-operation agreement with many African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. The Cotonou agreement is a programme that repeatedly cites young people as a focus group, but does not yet include a mechanism to involve youth. A

comparison may be made with the Barcelona agreement, which is the agreement linking the EU with countries from the South and East of the Mediterranean, where a solid financial framework exists (the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Action Programme, managed by the European Commission) for involving young people as a key sector of civil society.

With increasing co-operation between the European Union and Asia and other parts of the world, the existing YOUTH programme should be expanded to facilitate co-operation and exchange between young people in the European Union and these countries.

In parallel to the above point, the European Union is requested to consider in its review of the immigration procedures, barriers that exist with respect to inter-cultural programmes, especially those which involve participants from outside of Europe.<sup>49</sup> Many youth organisations work extremely hard to create international cultural programmes, working with their government departments of education, only to find that access to their country is denied at the last minute due to inflexible visa requirements. Mobility for participants on youth exchange programmes is considered vital and a system needs to be implemented that allows all participants taking part in educational and volunteer projects to be able to move freely.

- **Key Objective II: To apply consistently the principle of youth participation – embodied in a Youth Policy – in the external policies of the European Union; and to recognise young people as actors in development.**

Mechanisms must be developed to promote a common standard in youth participation in all European Union policies. This needs to be achieved in a two-fold manner. Firstly all external policies of the Union related to cultural co-operation need to be assessed in terms of their impact on young people both inside the European Union and for the third countries concerned. Secondly, policies and programmes must

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<sup>49</sup> In accordance with article 62 of the TEC, the Council is requested to adopt measures on the rules relating to visas for third country nationals entering the Union for periods of less than three months by 2004.

aim to reach the agreed standards of youth participation in their implementation, awareness of which should be promoted to the authorities and governments of the third countries.

- **Key Objective III: To ensure young people within Europe benefit from "Global Education", based on understanding and respect of other communities values.**

In an increasingly interdependent world of communications, business and tourism, but also one with environmental problems and social and economic disparities, there is a need to ensure that young people are adequately equipped with the skills necessary to interact in this changing world. Global Education is education which, through its participatory processes as much as through a critical approach to global interdependence, contributes to raising people's awareness of the world as one and of their part in that world. Global education also opens people's eyes to visions of a more just and equitable interdependent world, and empowers them to participate in its emergence. Therefore, it should be included in the general education curricula. "Global Education" encompasses "Development Education", "Human Rights Education", "Education for Sustainability", "Environmental Education", "Peace Education", "Intercultural Education", and the global dimensions of "Education for Citizenship".

Global Education is considered to be the cornerstone of building improved relations between North and South, East and West and should be integrated into all levels of the education curricula. Specific funding opportunities should be made available to youth organisations, which may capitalise on their role as preparing and involving young people as active citizens in their societies and developing a sense of international citizenship.

## 5. Conclusion

The European Youth Forum calls on the European Commission to integrate the key objectives outlined above into its White Paper on Youth Policy and to actively pursue the implementation of these objectives following the publication of the White Paper. The European Commission should promote these issues with the Member State governments in order to develop support for a co-ordinated and cohesive Youth Policy in Europe, promoting the participation and the improved situation of young people.

Fundamental to the implementation of a Youth Policy in Europe will be the clarification of articles 149 and 150 in the Treaty Establishing the European Community in order to provide a legal basis for a two-tiered approach to Youth Policy, with action both at the Community and the Member State level. The clarification of the Treaty needs to be brought onto the agenda already at the Laeken European Council and then included in the Inter-Governmental Conference starting in 2004.

The participation and consultation of young people in the development of the Youth Policy in Europe provides an opportunity to pioneer the involvement of civil society as allowed for in the Lisbon European Council conclusions, and put President Prodi's ideas for bring the European Union closer to the people through a new model of governance into practice. The consultation process for the White Paper has already motivated young people from all over Europe, and this success can be further developed through the systematic participation and consultation of young people in a Youth Policy in Europe.

The consultation process initiated by the European Commission has already met with the support of young people and youth organisations from all over Europe. The enthusiasm for developing a Youth Policy must now be harnessed to ensure the success of its implementation. The White Paper is eagerly awaited, but so is the actual Youth Policy and the improvements it will bring to the lives of Young People throughout Europe.



The White Paper process has introduced new working methods between youth organisations and institutions and has demonstrated new ways to improve young people's participation at European level. All actors involved, including the European Youth Forum, have to take these elements into account for the future.

In many ways the hard work has only just begun and the European Youth Forum calls for the continuing commitment of all parties involved to make a Youth Policy in the Europe Union a successful reality.