



THE YOUTH FORUM RESPONSE TO THE
COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON LIFELONG
LEARNING
30 MAY 2002

(Adopted by the Youth Forum Bureau,
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INTRODUCTION

The European Youth Forum welcomes the Council Resolution of 30 May, 2002 as a positive step forward from the Commission Communication on Lifelong Learning, November 2001. Youth Forum took part in the consultation on the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and drafted a response to the Commission Communication. The Youth Forum welcomes the recognition by the Council of *'the importance of the contribution of the youth sector towards defining global and coherent strategies on lifelong learning by highlighting the value of non-formal and informal learning in the youth field and by defining the priorities for lifelong learning in this context.'*

The European Youth Forum represents 91 national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations and is therefore an excellent channel of communication and consultation with young people in Europe on lifelong learning matters. We would very much like to be involved in helping to define these global strategies and in helping to highlight the value of non-formal learning for young people.

The Youth Forum welcomes the Council definition of lifelong learning as covering *"the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning."* Non-formal learning is extremely relevant for the Youth Forum since youth organisations are one of the main providers of non-formal education for young people. However, we regret that the term 'lifewide' is not used instead of 'lifelong' which tends to be associated with learning later in life rather than learning from different contexts when one is young.

It is clear from the Resolution that the responsibility for the *development* and *implementation* of lifelong learning strategies lies with the Member States of the EU. The role of the Commission is limited to *promoting* and *co-ordinating*, exchanging good practice and recognition and encouraging co-operation with other international institutions and candidate countries.

The Youth Forum regrets that a greater role is not given to the EU institutions to develop and implement strategies. Due to the fact that the youth sector is already quite 'Europeanized' in nature (with ever-increasing transnational mobility and exchange among youth organisations) it would seem more appropriate for the youth sector to contribute to defining strategies at European rather than at national level. After all, the non-formal skills and competences that young people need to acquire to live and work in a globalised world of rapid social and technological change include foreign languages, multi-cultural awareness, adaptability and tolerance and respect for other cultures are all best promoted at European level.

This response is written from the perspective of young people, analyzing the Council Resolution to see what prospects it gives for the development and recognition of non-formal learning opportunities. In order to continue our contribution to the development of lifelong learning policy in the EU, we would like to suggest appropriate measures that could be taken to implement the recommendations made.

¹ http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/c_163/c_16320020709en00010003.pdf

I. PRIORITIES OF THE COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Access to Lifelong Learning

The European Youth Forum welcomes the fact that priority is given to "*providing access to lifelong learning opportunities for all, regardless of age.*" We believe that access to lifelong learning for all is a basic human right.

Guidance and Counseling

The European Youth Forum also welcomes the fact that the Council calls for "the high quality and broad accessibility of target group specific information, guidance and counseling concerning lifelong learning opportunities and their benefits." We also believe that more information on existing guidance and counseling services should be made available to young people in the Member States.

The Youth Forum suggests that young people should be represented on the European Guidance Forum which the Commission plans to set up in 2002 so that the real needs of young people can be taken into consideration in the work to be undertaken by the European Guidance Forum.

The Youth Forum also welcomes the fact that the Council wishes to encourage "*the representation of relevant sectors including the youth sector, in existing or future networks and structures, working in this area.*"

Youth Forum asks that young people be consulted at regional, national and European level in the creation of future policies on lifelong learning.

Validation and Recognition

The European Youth Forum welcomes the fact that the Council has given priority to the "*effective validation and recognition of formal qualifications as well as non-formal and informal learning, across countries and educational sectors through increased transparency and better quality assurance.*"

Youth Forum calls for studies aimed at identifying the personal, social and professional skills and competences acquired by young people in youth activities, both in their own countries and in other countries through their participation in EU exchange programmes.

The Forum on the Transparency of Qualifications will co-ordinate the process of systematic exchange of experience and good practice in the field of identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning. The European Youth Forum requests that the Forum takes a broader view of non-formal learning so that a deeper analysis can be made of the learning that takes in environment other than the workplace. It urges the Forum to work on the identification, evaluation and recognition of non-formal learning achieved in youth activities, actions and programmes and within youth associations and voluntary organisations. The Youth Forum would also like to see more work done of this kind on national level.

The Commission Communication calls on the Member States to " encourage universities, education/training institutions and other relevant organisations to systematically implement measures aimed at the assessment and recognition of non-formal learning".

The European Youth Forum calls for the development of methods and rules for evaluating non-formal learning in the youth field, with youth associations, voluntary organisations and youth workers being involved in the process.

Training of Trainers and Teachers

The Youth Forum also welcomes the call for "*training, recruitment and updating of teachers and trainers for the development of lifelong learning*".

The European Youth Forum would like to see a greater provision of quality training for youth workers.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEMBER STATES

2. Funding

The Youth Forum is skeptical about the provisions made for funding in the Council Resolution. While the Council makes reference to the youth sector in other parts of the Resolution, none of the three possible sources of funding mentioned by the Resolution would be suitable for funding youth organisations, important providers of non-formal learning.

The European Youth Forum calls on the Member States to develop new sources of funding for youth organisations at national level to insure that they can continue their work and extend their activities to engage a greater number of young people including minorities and marginalised groups.

5. Links Between Formal and Non-Formal Learning

The Youth Forum welcomes the Council's call to "*encourage cooperation and effective measures to validate learning outcomes, crucial for building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning*". The Youth Forum calls for the development of methods for evaluating non-formal learning in the youth field, with youth associations, voluntary organisations and youth workers being involved in the process. It is important to note that many of our member organisations oppose any formal standardised assessment of their work. They believe that due to the diversity of youth, the different learning experiences that occur require a differentiated approaches to assessment. However, they strongly believe that partnerships between formal and non-formal learning agents provide the best means of increasing the status of non-formal education.

8. Participation in Lifelong Learning

The Youth Forum welcomes the Council's call to '*improve active participation in lifelong learning, including young people*'. We welcome the inclusion of '*young people*' in this sentence since the term '*lifelong*' often leads to confusion since young people believe it refers to learning later in life rather than earlier. Youth Forum has published a policy paper on '*Lifewide Learning for Active Citizenship*'. In it we highlight the fact to our member organisations that "in order to be able to contribute to the development of society, citizens must learn to learn throughout their lives in order to be able to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. Young

people must learn to make use of the opportunities around them to learn continuously."

The European Youth Forum call on the Member States to develop methods of validating the learning achieved outside formal education institutions in order to encourage young people to participate in the lifelong learning process.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSION

2. Exchange of Good Practice

The European Youth Forum welcomes the invitation by the Council to the Commission to *'stimulate quality incentives and the exchange of good practice to foster efficient performance in all sectors involved in formal, non-formal and informal learning including by setting up a European database on good practices in the field of lifelong learning.'* The Youth Forum will contribute to the database set up by the Forum for the Transparency of Qualifications. However, we urge the Forum to take a broader view of non-formal learning so that greater analysis can be made of the work done by voluntary organisations and civil society. We call on the Forum to help us work on the identification, evaluation and recognition of non-formal learning achieved in youth activities so that quality standards can be created and maintained.

3. Framework for the Recognition of Qualifications

The Youth Forum also welcomes the Council's invitation to Member States to *"develop a framework for recognition of qualifications, building on the achievements of the Bologna process and promoting similar action in the area of vocational training."* The Youth Forum supports such a framework and would like to become actively involved in its development.

The European Youth Forum asks that the framework be developed to take into account not only the recognition of non-formal vocational qualifications but other forms of non-formal learning such as that achieved in youth organisations.

5. Candidate Countries

The Youth Forum supports the call for the *"participation of the candidate countries in the development of lifelong learning strategies"*. Many of our member organisations come from Central Eastern Europe.

The Youth Forum asks that the process be extended to countries of South Eastern Europe and co-ordinated with the EEA countries.

7. Progress Report

The Youth Forum supports the idea of a Commission progress report on developments in the area of lifelong learning before 2004.

The Youth Forum asks that indicators to measure young people's participation in youth organisations be created and included in the report.

CONCLUSION

The Youth Forum welcomes the Council Resolution and especially the broad definition it takes of lifelong learning which highlights its relevance for young people. As a representative body for young people in Europe, we would like to actively contribute to defining global and coherent strategies on lifelong and life-wide learning. We support the initiatives proposed by the Council to value non-formal learning in this respect. However, we regret that a greater role is not given to the EU institutions to develop strategies at European level to promote transnational non-formal learning opportunities, highly relevant for the world young people live and work in today.