

EU YOUTH CONFERENCE OF THE HELLENIC PRESIDENCY

10-12 March 2014, Thessaloniki

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU Youth Conference is an element of the Structured Dialogue process which brings together young people and policy makers across the European Union to jointly discuss and inform the development of youth policy at National and European level. The Structured Dialogue process was established by the Council of the European Union in its Resolution for a “Renewed framework for cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)”. The Structured Dialogue process is an important instrument to ensure that the opinions and views of young people are taken into account in the formation of policies in the youth field. For the 18 -month cycle from 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2014, the Trio Presidency (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece), in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Youth Forum have agreed that the theme of the Structured Dialogue process throughout the cycle is Social Inclusion. Each of the three consultation phases reflects this thematic priority. Specific priorities of the Presidency contribute to the overall thematic priority of social inclusion.

The Hellenic EU Youth Conference was the third one within this Trio Presidencies, highlighting the theme of youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people.

The goal of the Hellenic Presidency EU Youth Conference was to come up with conclusions from the workshops, on the basis of the compiled results of national consultations. The outcome of the Hellenic Presidency EU Youth Conference is a list of Recommendations that can serve as a basis for possible inclusion in policy documents to be progressed through the EU Council of Youth Ministers:

- *Council Conclusions to promote youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people;*
- *Council Resolution on the overview of the structured dialogue process including social inclusion of young people.*

Seven thematic areas drawn from the results of national consultations provided by 28 Member States and 10 International Non-Governmental Organisations were explored at the EU Youth Conference via Joint Workshops Sessions. Young people and Ministry Officials from the 28 Member States have jointly defined the following Recommendations.

QUALITY EDUCATION – GUARANTEE Equal Learning Opportunities for All

- EU Member States should ensure free access for young people, in particular the disadvantaged youth, to validation of competences gained through non formal education and informal learning as a way to empower them to participate in lifelong learning and enhance their employability.
- Young people should be empowered and supported to take autonomous decisions. Learners, to the extent of their capacities, should (co-) decide on education system, structures and other related matters, including developing curricula and teaching methods.
- Educational authorities, youth organisations and other relevant stakeholders should cooperate to integrate non formal education methods and provide more experiential learning opportunities within formal education in order to strengthen young people's key competences for life and foster their active participation in society.

QUALITY TRANSITION – FACILITATE Young People's Transition to Employment

- EU Member States should fully implement the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training, focusing on bringing innovative technologies, teaching methods, and constant updating of curricula in order to improve the social recognition of Vocational Education and Training.
- EU Member States should make the Youth Guarantee long-term oriented and more accessible for all young people, including those in Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) situation, who should be provided with tailored career guidance, skills assessment services and education and job opportunities, to ensure their individual development.
- In the implementation of the Quality Framework for Traineeships, EU Member States should develop policies based on the guidelines outlined in the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships and focus on the contractual obligations of the employer and the trainee's rights and responsibilities.

QUALITY JOBS – SECURE Quality Employment for Young People

- EU Member States, in cooperation with social partners, must create and enforce a legal framework to prohibit and penalise false self-employment used by some employers to avoid open-ended contracts and to circumvent labour and social security law.

- EU Member States, in cooperation with social partners, must set a non-age discriminatory national minimum wage adjusted to the actual cost of living in the country in which young people work, to guarantee their autonomy and recognise the minimum wage as a social right¹.
- The European Commission and EU Member States should increase the current funding and improve the access to funding for research and innovation to promote change in the industrial model leading to the creation of quality jobs with a social and sustainable impact, notably in green, social and sharing economy².

DIALOGUE AND LEARNING BETWEEN GENERATIONS – ENHANCE Inter-Generational Solidarity

- EU Member States should encourage the development of mentoring schemes that bring together different generations to share their experience and knowledge in employment and other fields.
- The European Commission and EU Member States should develop and implement an ex-ante assessment of the long-term impact of their policies in order to ensure that these policies are fair to all current and future generations.
- In order to develop mutual understanding and enhance solidarity between generations, the European Commission and EU Member States should support intergenerational projects for sharing ideas, knowledge and experiences, by providing EU and national funds as well as regional and local funds, where applicable.

ACTIVE INCLUSION – CREATE Conditions for Full Inclusion of Young People in Society

- EU Member States should implement integrated programmes through formal and non-formal education and learning to promote young people's physical, mental and sexual health, ensuring healthy lifestyles. In particular, sex education must be inclusive and unbiased, taking into account relationships and sexual diversity.
- EU Member States must authorise an institution to guarantee that individualised and professional counseling services do effectively inform and advise young people about their rights to e.g. housing, healthcare, culture and personal and professional development, in order to fulfill their potential and achieve their autonomy.

¹ According to the social rights as defined by the Council of Europe in the European Social Charter:
<http://www.coe.int/T/DGHL/Monitoring/SocialCharter/>

² According to the European Commission Report (2013), *sharing economy* is defined as a "business model for peer-to-peer markets and its user communities. This type of business model is not limited to specific industry sectors, because it can, in theory, act as a broker between consumers, for any consumer owned product or service". See the Report at:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/business-innovation-observatory/files/case-studies/12-she-accessibility-based-business-models-for-peer-to-peer-markets_en.pdf

- EU Member States and the European Commission should ensure and strengthen bottom-up youth participation in policy- and decision-making processes at all levels by engaging young people and youth organisations in setting up plans and actions.

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP – BOOST Entrepreneurship of Young People

- EU Member States should recognise youth organisations as a main provider of non-formal education and learning and thus providing entrepreneurial mindset and skills. Therefore, EU Member States should strengthen the support for youth organisations in providing guidance, mentoring, quality training and simulation programmes.
- EU Member States should support young start-ups in the first years of activity by offering tax and financial incentives, lowering administrative burdens and establishing incubators through partnerships with the formal education providers, youth organisations, private sector and effective support structures.
- In order to foster youth entrepreneurship, EU Member States should support the creation of one-stop-shops³ where aspiring young entrepreneurs can receive relevant information and assistance in a youth friendly way, free of charge and tailored to their individual needs.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP – ENCOURAGE Entrepreneurship with a Positive Social Impact

- EU Member States and the European Commission should set up an expert advisory group to create European and national networks of young social entrepreneurs.
- EU Member States should encourage financial institutions to develop, establish and promote investment guarantee programmes⁴ for young social entrepreneurs. Emphasis should be put on young people with fewer opportunities and those who come from remote areas.
- EU Member States should encourage entrepreneurs, in particular young entrepreneurs, to introduce social and environmental impact assessment in their balance sheets. According to the levels of social and environmental impact, EU Member States should offer support by reducing registration fees and alleviating tax rates.

³ A one-stop shop is an office or a platform where multiple services are offered.

⁴ Investment Guarantee Programmes minimise the risk for young social entrepreneurs as they are based on crowdfunding and guarantee that the financial institution covers the risk, offering crowd funders reimbursement if the project fails.