



CONCLUSIONS OF THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE EXERCISE OF THE FIFTH EUROPEAN YOUTH WEEK 2011

In November 2009, the Council of the European Union adopted the Resolution on the Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018). This document outlined the principles of the structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations, with the aim of ensuring that the opinion of young people is taken into account in the formation of EU youth policy.

The Trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary agreed on the procedures for the implementation of the structured dialogue on the thematic priority of youth employment during the Trio Presidency. A multi-level consultation mechanism built around the EU Youth Conferences and involving a European Steering Committee and National Working Groups, has been created at EU level and in Member States.

The first cycle of consultation of Structured Dialogue has shown a strong commitment from the National Working Groups with regular contributions to EU youth policy.

With the aim of issuing recommendations on the future conduct of the process, the European Commission hosted a structured dialogue exercise during the European Youth Week 2011. Young representatives of the National Working groups and representatives of national authorities in charge of youth affairs were invited to debate, in joint workshops, and subsequently issued the thematic recommendations listed below.

"Technicalities of the consultation process"

Timing

- ➔ The European Steering Committee shall provide the National Working Groups with a precise timetable and clear objectives for the whole 18 months process, well before the beginning of a Trio Presidency.
- ➔ All the stakeholders of the current and incoming European Steering Committee should start meeting at least one year before the next Trio Presidency starts in order to define timetables, priorities and questions as well as goals and outcomes.
- ➔ The European Steering Committee should issue guiding questions as early as possible before the EU Youth Conferences. If guiding questions are not directly linked to the previous Youth Conference, six months is a convenient period of time.
- ➔ Adequate time for an optimal preparation of the consultations (at least 3-5 months) should be provided before each EU Youth Conference.
- ➔ National consultation rounds during holiday periods should be avoided.

Format and strategy of consultation

- The European Steering Committee should provide main guidelines for the National Working Groups, including good practices on strategy, methodology, and consultation to allow them to reach a broader range of young people from different backgrounds and enable them to compile, analyse and synthesise the results of their consultations.
- The European Steering Committee should provide guidance to the National Working Groups on how to conduct the consultation in a more youth-friendly way. The guiding questions it issues should be more simple and concrete.
- There should be a framework for more communication and exchange between National Working Groups at EU level. An annual meeting allowing for the exchange of experiences should be organised.
- The EU and Member States should provide a concrete mechanism, which would allow National Working Groups to meet some six months after the end of the Trio Presidency to share their best practices of implementing the results of the previous Structured Dialogue cycle and to monitor the practical results at national levels.
- The core ideas of the Structured Dialogue should be better promoted at national level. National Working Groups should be empowered to be stronger and more autonomous in developing and implementing the Structured Dialogue while taking into account their specific national contexts.
- National Working Groups should adapt their communication and questions to the national context; as well as to the different target groups, including young people with fewer opportunities.
- A continuous process of consultation throughout each cycle of Structured Dialogue; as well as continuity in National Working Groups and in their representation at EU Youth Conferences, should be ensured.
- The European Steering Committee and the National Working Groups should make sure that existing evidence-based expertise and research is integrated into the process of the Structured Dialogue to enhance the relevance of the process.

Financial implications

- The objectives of the Structured Dialogue should be matched by adequate financial resources.
- Means to provide financial support for permanent staff to work on Structured Dialogue should be ensured.
- The current and future Youth in Action programme requires major restructuring in order to meet the needs of the Structured Dialogue in terms of application deadlines, eligibility of other expenses such as staff costs, and recognition of in-kind contributions and volunteering time as eligible elements of co-funding.
- Member States should provide adequate financial support or resources for the activities of National Working Groups to reach a broader range of young people from different backgrounds and to enable National Working Groups to compile, analyse and synthesise the results of their consultations.

The composition of National Working Groups and support structures

- ➔ To increase the effectiveness of communication between National Working Groups and the European Steering Committee, there should be regular feedback from National Working Groups, a dissemination of minutes of the European Steering Committee meetings to National Working groups and regular face to face meetings of representatives of National Working Groups and the European Steering Committee should be organised.
- ➔ In order to ensure good communication between national and European level, clear guidelines on the channels, frequency and methods of communication should be created by the European Steering Committee in consultation with the National Working Groups. These guidelines should also clarify the responsibilities of all parties involved.
- ➔ The European Steering Committee should create and administrate a user friendly website to ensure continuity and the sharing of information and good practices among members of National Working Groups and the European Steering Committee. This website should include:
 - background and introductory documents
 - outcomes of the EU Youth Conferences
 - compilation of various consultation processes
 - exchange platform for the National Working Groups, including national reports
 - evaluations
 - calendar/time frame
 - other relevant documents and presentations
- ➔ National Working Groups should ensure that young people and their representatives have a voice at all stages of the consultation process, including its design, implementation and evaluation.
- ➔ To ensure a dialogue throughout the whole process, all National Working Groups should be led by National Youth Councils and composed of a balanced representation of institutional representatives and youth representatives with a clear task division among all members. This is already recommended in the annex III of the Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, where Member States are invited to establish National Working Groups composed of *"inter alia representatives of Ministries for Youth Affairs, National Youth Councils, local and regional youth councils, youth organisations, those active in youth work, diverse young people and youth researchers"* ensuring the lead role of National Youth Councils.

The visibility of the Structured Dialogue

- ➔ The Structured Dialogue should be made more visible on the internet/social media at national level and a common visual identity should be used at all levels.
- ➔ Every National Working Group should create a clear communication plan at national level.
- ➔ The European Steering Committee should provide information and questionnaires in a more youth-friendly way. National Working Groups should translate them into their specific national or regional language.

- ➔ The European Steering Committee should produce videos/animations to explain the Structured Dialogue in a youth-friendly way. National Working Groups should translate them into their national language.
- ➔ National Working Groups should use a wide range of communication channels to reach out to different target groups of young people.

Extending the Structured Dialogue

- ➔ Encourage EU Member states, EFTA and candidate countries to share good practices on the way young people influence the decisions that affect them, without imposing specific models of structured dialogue in each country. Open-mindedness is essential for the sharing of best practices with other countries.
- ➔ The national consultations are the core element of the Structured Dialogue. Nevertheless, the gathering of input from INGYOs and other relevant organisations can create added value and help sharing perspectives from specific target groups.
- ➔ Since the themes of the Structured Dialogue mainly cover national competences, national parliaments, relevant ministries, national governmental and non-governmental [youth] organizations, as well as associations, should be consulted and informed about the Structured Dialogue. To this end, an expert network/platform/group for the National Working Group should be established.
- ➔ Relevant committees and intergroups of the European Parliament, Council formations as well as other advisory bodies of the EU, should be informed about the Structured Dialogue. To strengthen the process, cooperation and feedback on both the final outcomes of the process and the conclusions of each EU Youth Conference is essential.

The transmission and follow-up of outcomes of the Structured Dialogue

- ➔ The European Steering Committee, the Presidency and the European Commission should provide time and space for follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the Structured Dialogue process and its results during the consultations, EU Youth Conferences, European Youth Week and in the EU Youth Report.
- ➔ National Working Groups should have ongoing activities and regular consultations with all relevant stakeholders at national level in order to ensure a permanent dialogue on the implementation and follow-up of the results of the Structured Dialogue.
- ➔ All stakeholders should be encouraged to use the results and recommendations from the Structured Dialogue as an inspiration for building and developing projects at all levels.
- ➔ At EU level, the European Steering Committee, the Presidencies, the European Commission and the European Youth Forum should transmit the results and recommendations of the Structured Dialogue to all relevant partners and stakeholders across policy sectors and link them to on-going institutional and policy developments at both EU and national levels. At national level, this responsibility falls on National Working Groups.

- The European Commission should use the European Youth Portal to provide relevant information and knowledge (best practices) on how to use outcomes of the Structured Dialogue in advocacy and policy making, and on how to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the results.

The transition of Structured Dialogue to incoming Trio Presidencies

- The National Working Groups should ensure the possibility for young people to suggest themes for the upcoming structured dialogue cycle during preceding cycle of consultations and the decision should be made by the Council, based on a proposal from the upcoming European Steering Committee.
- The number of consultations should be limited to two and should focus on one common topic. Taking this into account, the first EU Youth Conference of the cycle should be used to launch the consultation process and specify the questions for the overall theme.
- The outcomes of the structured dialogue should lead to a clear political outcome set at the beginning of the cycle.
- Whereas the transmission between National and European level should be ensured, the European Steering Committee should pass on any feedback from the institutions (Council of the EU, European Commission and national governments) and the impact of the outcomes of the Structured Dialogue to the National Working Groups.

The development of the Structured Dialogue

- At national level, relevant government departments from outside the youth sectors should be invited to take part in the Structured Dialogue at the beginning of each cycle in order to ensure that youth perspectives brought up during the process are mainstreamed into other policy areas.
- The process of Structured Dialogue, including its structure, role and goals, as well as the thematic priority and its link to the national priorities, should be discussed at the European Youth Week.
- The European Parliament should be involved in the process of Structured dialogue, for instance during the European Youth Week.
- National Working Groups need to meet more frequently in an informal way, including bilateral and multilateral meetings. Pertinent initiatives should be encouraged and supported.
- National Working Groups from the Trio Presidency countries, supported by their respective ministries, should organise at least one meeting for all National Working Groups during the 18 months process.