



## Youngsters “Speak Out!”

### **The Youngsters’ Declaration**

#### **on the new European Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering**

*December 15<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009*

#### **Preamble:**

*We, the participants of the “Speak Out” youth exchange gathered in Craiova, Romania from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2009 debating about the new European Strategy for Youth issued by the European Commission on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2009, being aware of the fact that youth policies are an important domain within European construct and aiming to empower youngsters to play an active role in the decision making process in local, national and international level.*

*Taking into account that we are an important actor in the structure dialogue and acknowledging the value of our contribution, we came up with proposals on eight fields of action of the new European Strategy for Youth. These proposals from our point of view identify the needs of young people in the globalized world.*

#### **Action 1 – Education**

Even “education for everybody” is a part of our constitutions and our rights, we, young people, still see some gaps in its system and structure. Here are some of our proposals for improving the system and for developing education accessibility for all young people in EU:

- Teachers should have seminars in order to develop non-formal education opportunities for youngsters;
- The implementation of non-formal learning in formal education can be implemented through making teaching more flexible;
- Young people need more information about EU educational policies in order to fully use the range of tools established at EU level;
- More attention should be paid to visa issues in order to be able to promote international studying atmosphere among youngsters;
- Implement Human Rights and intercultural learning into formal education systems;
- Cooperation to share good quality experiences between different educational institutions should be encouraged;
- In educational institutions access should be improved for disabled people;
- Special programs for school drop-outs should be implemented.

Different education systems in EU countries raise different perspectives that need to be improved, but we believe that these steps could start a way for improving it. By touching these points we want to pay attention more to individuals then to pupils or students as a numbers of educated people and we believe that implementation of non-formal education into our education systems could be a good methodology for reaching good results.

## **Action 2 – Employment**

Financial crisis that affected most of us is a big issue, especially when we talk about youth employment. In this period we, young people, really need a big support and fast reaction on ongoing situation from government and its institutions. Here are some of our proposals in order to improve employment situation from the short and also from the long terms perspectives:

- Better cooperation between business sector and education institutions should be encouraged;
- The possibility of youngsters to gather work experience after finalizing their studies is needed;
- Youngsters need more knowledge about the possibilities of working abroad in order to develop their abilities in this field;
- Financial support for NGOs should be provided in order to enable them to develop career orientation programs for youngsters.

These are just a few of our proposals that we believe could help us, young people, in solving employment problems. Information accessibility and cooperation between youth, business sector and decision makers are the main objectives that could be a big step forward for reaching the best results for all sides.

## **Action 3 – Health and sports**

Health problems are considered to be one of the most important issues in twenty first century's life. Due to the common health problems sport becomes more and more promoted as a route to a sustainable way of living. These objectives aim to raise youngster's awareness about a healthy way of living in their early age at school. Additionally, it is important to inform the society about possible alternatives of a healthy way of living.

- Create additional interactive health lessons in schools which should raise awareness of youngsters about importance of health and sports in daily life;
- Introduce healthy food cooking lessons in schools that could include information about bio products and ways of preparing healthy food;
- Improve school lessons about sexual protection by making it more interactive and interesting through workshops and film productions for youngsters;
- Rearrange the food menu in schools by banning unhealthy products such as chips and soft drinks from cafeterias' menu. This should also apply to products sold in food automats;
- Raise public awareness about health damage, that could appear after using the computer too much;
- Build more playgrounds in order to encourage youngsters to choose an active style of life instead of playing computer games;
- Raise public awareness about ways of relaxing without alcohol, smoking or using drugs;
- Create special lockers in schools in order to decrease the risks of possible back damages of young children by carrying too much weight;
- Include more various sports lessons in schools' schedule;
- Promote sport activities throughout mass media, public events and youth organizations;
- Create more public sport facilities open for everyone;

Implementation of these objectives would be only the first step in changing the style of living of the existing society. To begin with children would help to build a proper stage to continue realizing “healthy” steps in order to create a sustainable future.

#### **Action 4 – Creativity and Entrepreneurship**

Creativity is an important part of creative industries and it contributes to each country’s economy. Creative work tends to receive high results, so it’s necessary to promote creative activities among working people. These objectives are aimed to young people that can use the innovative tools (know how) and create a dynamic and competitive market.

- Improve educational system by implementing innovative ways of teaching – in order for youngsters to take more responsibilities and risks in starting their own business;
- Create special business start-up programs for youngsters on government level by implementing lower taxes for newcomers in the field of business;
- Create special mentoring programs for youngsters who start their own business by providing assistance from experienced entrepreneurs;
- Create more opportunities throughout business incubators;
- Create additional interactive lessons such as theatre improvisations, workshops and brainstorming, in schools, that should teach youngsters how to think, act and live creatively;
- Renew the methodology of formal education by including more creative and innovating ways of learning.
- Create interactive public projects such as workshops, seminars and sessions to inform the youngsters about ways of using creativity as a tool in daily life.

Creation of proper background for young people to choose creative ways of thinking and working would lead to an easier way in achieving results and venue. Creative society could be a symbol of next generations.

#### **Action 5- Participation**

Ensuring that youth participation is a sustainable, effective and inclusive process brings specific challenges. To move the participation agenda forward a series of reforms is necessary. We suggest some ways to develop the participation agenda, which gives an indication of the scale of the challenges and potential ways to ensure that the impact of the voice of youngsters is increased and change is created with them and for them.

- Involve youth NGO’s in the structured dialogue to improve quality standards.
- Create a simple political language in order to actively engage youngsters in the democracy building process and in political decision making;
- Remove mobility obstacles for youth to participate on the European level - such as Visa restrictions;
- Establish different interactive platforms on e-democracy which are led by youth organizations on local and national level.
- European and national institutions should provide information about what is done in youth policy and what are the next processes every three months.
- Every municipality should have a body in which youngsters are involved in the decision making processes such as NGO’s, school parliament members or non-organised youth by e-democracy platforms.
- Using media channels to promote information about participation.

- Allocate more funds to NGOs to organise activities to promote participation of youngsters.

These suggestions attempt to highlight tangible and practical ways to break down some of the structural barriers. Many of these suggestions are relatively simple tasks but they require a vision and a strong commitment to participation.

### **Action 6 - Social Inclusion**

The policy improvements came from the recognitions of the young people who have been missed out for various reasons. Some are not socially included, because of their personal circumstances such as disability, while others are excluded because of poverty, their ethnicity, gender, conflict or geographical location. These solutions afflict the situation and provide the basis for further advocacy.

- Governmental bodies should apply certain conditions for employing people for youth coordinating jobs such as practical experience in youth projects and managing projects for and with youngsters;
- Improving the cooperation between governmental structures and youth NGO's when developing social inclusion programs for youngsters
- Extra curriculum should be added to school schedules in order to ensure a cooperation between formal and non-formal education.
- To create social insertion programs for young immigrants.

Social inclusion of youngsters is a topic which requires deeper attention by governments and civil society as well as the process of achieving the goal to involve youth in active participation.

### **Action 7 – Volunteering**

Volunteering must be promoted among youngsters starting with the age of 13, in order to change mentalities and behavior, by interactive presentations in schools such as sharing experience, multimedia exhibitions with photos, music, clips and objects, concerts, famous people volunteering, competitions etc.

- Organizing promotion sessions presented by teachers and youth workers in school meetings with parents and by organizing volunteer actions for parents and their children.
- Volunteering offices should be opened in big cities with aid from the European Union as well as mobile offices should be made available for small communities, such as villages.
- Existing volunteering information, such as websites, should be better promoted and for this, NGOs should receive financial support from different sources such as private companies, municipalities, governments and the European Commission.
- Promote the International Volunteering Day in every local community, by supporting local NGOs to act collectively and ensuring the support of the local authorities.
- Youthpass and Europass must be better promoted among employers as target group, through European and national campaigns.
- After the completion of a European Voluntary Service or another volunteering service alike, a volunteer should receive a professional qualification or certificate.
- European guidelines are needed for volunteering; therefore a Volunteering Directive should be implemented.
- The Volunteering Directive should give directions about minimal living conditions for volunteers in their service and also about a European Volunteer ID Card that should be implemented throughout the whole European Union.

Youngsters should be more interested and engaged in the process of volunteering in the EU, which can be promoted through different activities among them.

### **Action 8 - Youth of the World**

In times, when the youth is more informed than ever before youngsters should think about the world as something that is getting closer and closer together. That is why we suggest a global motto for the youth, which could gather the youngsters around the world. This could be: *“Think global, act local, connect worldwide”*

- We cannot change the world at once, but each of us can make a small contribution. We must encourage the youngsters to be active in making their own small contribution.
- After acknowledging our European Identity, we have to discover the world and show it the good practices from programs such as Youth in Action. We need gates for worldwide communication and networking (conferences, online forums).
- We need opportunities for worldwide projects, with specific targets which envisage the main issues of point 8 – violation of fundamental rights, economic disparities and environmental degradation. We suggest a twin program for Youth in Action called Youth for the World.

After finding and implementing the advantages of the successful programs as Youth in action and Erasmus we can use the good practices and integrate them in future projects, which can have a worldwide scale.

*The Declaration had been adopted unanimously within „Speak Out!“ - Youth Exchange within the Youth in Action frame.*