



Brussels, June 2008

Structured Dialogue: New thematic priority on "Future challenges for young people"

1. Background

The structured dialogue is a means of mutual communication with young people in order to implement the priorities of European youth policy cooperation and to make young people's voice heard in the European policy-shaping process.

This approach is based on the White Paper on youth of 2001 and on the Council's agreement on common objectives, particularly in the area of enhancing young people's participation and active citizenship. It is also a contribution of the youth field to the implementation of the Commission's Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate.

The Ministers for Youth, in November 2006, adopted a Resolution¹ establishing a structured dialogue with young people, those active in youth work and youth organisations aimed at ensuring a timely and effective contribution by young people towards the formulation of policies relevant to young people's lives.

The structured dialogue is organised in thematic cycles. Last April, a new thematic cycle of the structured dialogue has been launched on the topic "**Future challenges for young people**". The European Commission attaches great importance to the debate on this new theme because it will give young people the opportunity to make their contribution to the definition of the new European youth policy cooperation framework for the next years.

The current European policy cycle in the field of youth will come to an end in 2009. New proposals will have to be gathered until then and political priorities will have to be identified

The new proposals in the field of youth at the European level will be presented by the Commission in spring 2009. The Commission proposals will be discussed under the Czech and Swedish Presidencies of the EU and finally, the new policy cycle will be launched in 2010.

In order to prepare the proposals for the future, extensive consultations on the future youth strategy for Europe will take place in the months to come. A questionnaire has been sent to the Youth Ministries of the Member States already in February, an on-line consultation will be launched to consult young people and their organisations, and, of course, the structured dialogue is used as a tool to bring in young people's voice. The proposals of the Commission will be based on the outcomes of the different consultations.

¹ Resolution of the Council on participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship, JO C 297 of 7.12.2006

In this context, young people have an important role to play. Through the new thematic cycle of the structured dialogue they can make their own contribution to the preparation of the new cooperation framework. Youth organisations are invited to organise conferences at national and regional levels on the theme "Future challenges for young people". Young people are invited to participate in the debates.

2. Context and theme

General context

Young people are facing today complex challenges in the context of globalisation, knowledge-based and ageing societies. Social tensions do appear at several levels - local, regional, national and European – with variable intensity. Young people are particularly exposed to the problem of unemployment and poverty. They are subject to different types of discrimination. Our societies have difficulties to integrate young people coming from a migratory background. The new thematic priority on "future challenges for young people" is based on this complex background.

"Future challenges for young people"

An important element to take into account in our reflection is that the new youth policy cycle will be implemented from 2010 onwards under a renewed EU framework. In this context, the new Treaty currently under ratification has to be mentioned, as it emphasises the citizenship and participative democracy dimensions by specifying that Community action shall be aimed at ..."encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio educational instructors and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe". Other elements which will play a role are the "post" Lisbon Strategy for competitiveness, employment and inclusion, the future financial perspectives and the evolution of other policies such as education, migration, etc...

Core questions

All debates organised within the new thematic priority on "Future challenges for young people" will have to reflect on the future direction of EU youth policies beyond 2009 and address the following core questions:

- *What are the main challenges to be tackled by youth policies in the coming years?* and
- *Which of these challenges are of a European dimension and should become a priority for future youth policies at European level?*

It is important that the two core questions are answered with a view to streamlining national debates and ensuring comparable and consistent outcomes.

Beside that, it is very important that young people do not focus their debate on instruments and tools (Open Method of Coordination, structured dialogue), but on the contents of the future youth policy cooperation.

How to answer the core questions?

For young people organising debates on "Future challenges for young people" it may be useful to break down the above-mentioned core questions into more detailed questions, as for example:

- *What according to your analysis are the main social, economical and political challenges for youth to be tackled by youth policies in the coming years?*
- *Among these, could you identify the challenges of a European dimension?*
- *And what could be the priorities of a future EU cooperation framework in the field of youth in order to deal with these challenges?*

Without prejudging the results of future consultations and the ideas coming directly from young people and youth organisations, some issues seem to deserve particular attention. The following questions could be used to discuss these issues:

- *How can we encourage the social and professional development of young people with fewer opportunities?*
- *How can we encourage the active citizenship of young people beyond current practice?*
- *How can we improve the employment situation of young people?*
- *How can we reinforce the mobility of young people?*
- *How can we strengthen creativity and the spirit of enterprise of young people with a view of contributing to innovation?*
- *How can we improve the lifestyle and health of young people?*
- *Which role youth work can play in this context?*

The following non-exhaustive list of possible priority themes could be used as a basis for the discussion:

- *Poverty problems of young people,*
- *Employment of young people,*
- *Formal and non formal education of young people,*
- *Economic independency of young people,*
- *Active participation of young people in society,*
- *Transitions from school to the labour market,*
- *Integration of young migrants,*
- *Promoting creativity and cultural diversity among young people,*
- *Fight against discrimination*
- *Globalisation*
- *Environment /sustainable development*
- *Lifestyle*
- *Work/life balance*
- *Health of young people,...*
