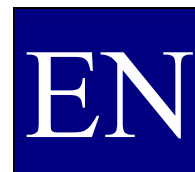




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people

*3164th EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE and SPORT Council meeting
Brussels, 10 and 11 May 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL:

HAVING REGARD TO:

- The Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for cooperation in the youth field (2010 – 2018) which calls for support to ensure young people's participation in representative democracy and civil society at all levels and in society at large and furthermore to support development of young people's talent and entrepreneurial skills with a view to enhancing their employability and future job opportunities and promoting personal development, enhanced learning capabilities, intercultural skills, understanding and respect for cultural diversity as well as the development of new and flexible competences and skills for future job opportunities.
- The Europe 2020 Strategy and its flagship initiative "An Agenda for new skills and jobs" and "Youth on the Move", and especially the headline target on employment (*aiming to raise to 75% the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, including through the greater participation of young people, older workers and low-skilled workers and the better integration of legal migrants*) and the headline target on education and training (*improving education levels, in particular by aiming to reduce school drop-out rates to less than 10% and by increasing the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%*);

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- The Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on promoting creativity and innovation through education and training;
- The Council conclusions of 27 November 2009 on promoting a Creative Generation: developing the creativity and innovative capacity of young people through cultural expression by promoting wider access to culture and cultural expression through both formal education and non-formal learning, in particular through structured and strategic partnerships at institutional and policy level;
- The Council Resolution of 19 November 2010 on Youth Work "stresses the importance of ensuring that youth work is fully incorporated into the Youth on the Move initiative. It must equip all young people, in particular those with fewer opportunities, with the relevant skills and key competences needed for the society and economy of 2020".
- The Council resolution of 19 May 2011 on encouraging new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life in Europe which recognises that young people have valuable contributions to make to the development of society;
- The Council Conclusions of 29 November 2011 on cultural and creative competences and their role in building intellectual capital in Europe;
- The Statement of the Members of the European Council of 30 January 2012 which calls for efforts to stimulate employment, especially for young people, including by promoting their first work experience and their participation in the labour market.

RECOGNISE THAT:

- the European Union faces a considerable number of challenges, including the economic and social consequences of the global economic and financial crisis leading to insufficient growth and progress, high youth unemployment and restricted opportunities for young people, as well as a lack of social inclusion and cohesion;
- the current youth unemployment rate in Europe at over 20% is twice as high as for the whole working population and is likely to have serious short-term and long-term implications for the young people affected, including young people with additional or specific needs or fewer opportunities who may have limited qualifications;

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- there is a growing demand for creativity, innovation, adaptability and advanced communication skills in the labour market and in social life as well as a need to develop entrepreneurial skills;
- young people's participation in formal democratic processes such as elections is often lower than that of the population as a whole.

CONSIDER THAT:

- creative and innovative potential of young people through entrepreneurship is one of the keys to achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;
- entrepreneurship education can encourage young people to have a more positive attitude towards education, have higher ambitions for their future education and career, feel they can contribute to society and have a more optimistic outlook on the future;
- young people's active engagement in society e.g. through youth work, voluntary activities and civic organisations can harness their creativity and innovative capacity and thereby their active citizenship and increase their prospects on the labour market and for creating self-employment opportunities;
- non-formal and informal learning, as well as formal education and training are indispensable to develop competences and skills for employability, achieve better inclusion of young people on the labour market and in society in general;
- youth work and youth organisations are channels for developing skills and competences of young people, including young people with fewer opportunities;
- acquisition of cultural competences is fundamental to the development of young people's intellectual capital and promotes the formation of their creativity and their innovation capacity;
- young people's creative use of social media should be further stimulated, alongside efforts to strengthen their ability to access media and to understand, critically evaluate, create and communicate media content, with the purpose of enhancing their participation in society as a whole, including building social capital through linking communities and individuals online and at the same time giving society the benefit of their competences and skills.

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AGREE THAT:

- participation of young people in the labour market is essential to benefit from their creative and innovative potential as well as to ensure active citizenship and social inclusion;
- young people's creativity, innovative capacity and entrepreneurial skills as tools for active participation in society, and increased employability should be fostered, through appropriate funding and by developing partnerships between relevant sectors aiming at stimulating innovation;
- competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning should be better promoted and preferably validated in order to strengthen young people's capacities and future role on the labour market e.g. as employees or entrepreneurs;
- youth initiatives - as currently supported by the Youth in Action Programme - are an important instrument to inspire and to support creative youth entrepreneurship.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

1. support young people's creativity, innovative capacity and talent aiming at ensuring sufficient opportunities for personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning, voluntary activities, active citizenship, intercultural cooperation and youth work e.g. by ensuring appropriate and sustainable funding where possible;
2. stimulate strategic partnerships between youth organisations, authorities at local, regional and national level as well as the private sector to organise projects and events led by young people;
3. facilitate and improve the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning;
4. encourages initiatives to promote co-ownership with young people on youth-related issues through a dialogue in which all actors can express ideas to engage young people in democratic decision-making procedures at all levels;
5. promote and disseminate information about young people's creativity, innovation capacity and talent through exchange of good practice.

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INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

1. establish a thematic expert group with the participation of national experts appointed by Member States under the principle of the open method of coordination and in accordance with the principles set out in the Annex with the following objective:
 - to share best practice on how to promote the creativity and innovative capacity of young people by identifying competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning relevant for employability;
2. address the creativity and innovative capacity of young people as well as their active citizenship and social inclusion through the priorities of the Youth in Action Programme and, without prejudice to on-going negotiations, possibly other existing and future EU programmes and funds, including the European Social Fund;
3. consider initiating research on media use in relation to democratic participation at national and European level in order to support increase of democratic participation via tailored, youth-friendly and transparent communication;
4. make optimal use of the 2013 European Year of Citizens¹ with a view to focusing on the free mobility and full participation of young people in European society; and strengthen the awareness of their rights and responsibilities as EU citizens, cohesion and mutual understanding of one another.

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

1. report back to the Youth Working Party on the results of this thematic expert group at the latest by the end of 2013;
2. disseminate the results of the up-coming study on “Youth participation in Democratic Life in Europe”, with a special focus on its possible implications for employability of young people;
3. make a proposal for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning as announced under the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives "Youth on the Move" and "An Agenda for new skills and jobs".

¹ Subject to the formal adoption of the proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013), doc. 13478/11.

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Principles relating to the membership and functioning of the thematic expert group established by the Member States and the Commission

Membership:

- The participation of Member States in the work of the group is voluntary and Member States can join them at any time.
- Member States interested in participating in the work of the thematic expert group will ensure that the nominated experts have relevant experience at national level and will ensure effective communication with competent national authorities. The Commission will coordinate the nomination exercise.
- The thematic expert group can decide to invite other participants: independent experts, stakeholders and representatives of European third countries.

Working procedures

- The thematic expert group will be responsible for appointing its chair or co-chairs at the first expert group meeting. It will also prepare a work schedule with a view to delivering concrete and useable results on the subject requested.
- The Commission will provide expertise, as well as logistical and secretarial support to the work of the thematic expert group. As far as possible, it will support the group by other suitable means.
- The thematic expert group will meet in Brussels as a main rule, but can organise meetings outside Brussels when invited by a Member State."

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