



JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY EU YOUTH CONFERENCE ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

LEUVEN / LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE, BELGIUM, 2-4 OCTOBER 2010

The EU Presidency Trio Spain-Belgium-Hungary together with the European Commission and the European Youth Forum took up the challenge to develop a structured dialogue on youth employment between young people and policy makers, for the period January 2010- June 2011.

In the frame of the Structured Dialogue, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU organised an EU Youth Conference in Leuven from the 2nd to the 4th of October 2010. This EU Youth Conference is the second one in a series of three Youth Conferences at European level.

Previous to the Youth Conferences, the Member States set up national working groups to consult young people and youth organisations at local, regional and national level. The results of the national consultations are brought together at the EU Youth Conferences, organised in turn by the three Presidencies, and the next steps in the process are prepared.

The EU youth conference in Leuven built upon the process and the results previously achieved under the Spanish Presidency. During the Spanish EU Youth Conference, youth delegates and political representatives jointly defined priorities on youth employment. These priorities feed into the process of structured dialogue between young people and the institutions under the Belgian and Hungarian presidencies. Before the EU Youth Conference in Leuven a new round of national consultations in the 27 EU Member States was organised to identify concrete recommendations on youth employment. The results of the consultations have been compiled before the Leuven Conference and served as a starting point for the workshop discussions.

The conference in Leuven brought together young people, (representatives from) Directors General for youth affairs, representatives of the National Agencies for the Youth in Action Programme from the different member states and representatives of European Institutions

All the participants worked together in thematic workshops with the objective to fine-tune the recommendations from the national consultations and to address them towards the appropriate level or institution (EU, Members states, young people and their organisations,...) and to investigate what the contribution of youth policy can be.

During its EU Presidency, Belgium will submit the interim results of the structured dialogue process to the EU Council which will free the way to political results during the Hungarian Presidency in the first semester of 2011.

These joint recommendations identified in Leuven by young people and policy-makers are the following:

Information, guidance and support for young people

1. Formal education institutions should promote cooperation with the private sector and the employment agencies to ensure that its provision is reflecting current labour market trends.
2. Existing EU information dissemination tools (e.g. Eurodesk, Eures, Eryica, Euroguidance, ...) should coordinate their work on European and national levels to provide comprehensive employment information for young people.
3. Youth workers and career advisers should have a more important guidance role in informing and supporting young people on labour market issues through the use of non formal education and with the help of new exciting tools, information and support structures.
4. EU and Member States should enable formal education curricula to promote and support creative thinking and entrepreneurial skills in young people.
5. EU and Member States should better target financial resources to ease the access of young people to the labour market, especially for long-term unemployed, first-time job seekers and disadvantaged young people.

Recognition of competences

1. EU and Member States should promote the formation of national task forces to ensure the recognition at national level of competences gained through non- formal education and mobility experiences.
2. Member States, in collaboration with youth NGO's and others active in the youth field, should develop an information strategy in the formal education system to raise awareness among young people about the benefits of all forms of non-formal education.
3. As the major providers of non-formal education, there needs to be a concrete focus on the sustainable long-term financial support for youth organizations, with increased collaboration between the EU and Member States .
4. EU and Member States should ensure a legal framework for volunteers and voluntary service providers, applicable in all EU Member States, that includes social security, health insurance, duties, rights and responsibilities.
5. EU, Member States and youth organisations should simplify access to mobility opportunities by removing obstacles of a social, cultural, and political nature (e.g. lack of information, visa problems,....) and particularly by supporting young people with fewer opportunities.

Social protection

1. EU and Member States should increase and improve control mechanisms to prevent violation of labour rights and possibly through training programmes in schools assure that young people are aware of these rights.
2. EU and Member States should use fiscal leverage to make precarious working arrangements more expensive and incentives for hiring young people under quality and stable conditions.
3. EU and Member States should establish a European framework on labour contracts in full agreement with the social partners.
4. Member States should ensure a rights based approach to social protection to achieve autonomy for young people such as those in volunteer work, on short term contracts and who are self employed or (long term) unemployed.
5. The EU should establish a quality framework for internships to enhance educational experiences.

Transition from education to the labour market

1. Member States and educational institutions should ensure that career-oriented training and guidance is integrated at all levels of education in preparation for career search, both for employment and entrepreneurship for all young people.
2. The right of young people to access social security benefits (e.g. 6 months) on leaving education if they undertake internships should be recognized.
3. Internships should be based on an agreed contract outlining the rights and responsibilities, and the aims of the internship, its relevance and how it will benefit the intern.
4. Member States and educational institutions should consult with social partners to ensure curricula which enable youth's self-development and equip them with relevant knowledge and with transferable skills gained *inter alia* through practical experience in various fields.
5. Member States should cooperate with the EU to establish a "social guarantee framework" which provides all unemployed and willing young people with opportunities to be employed, to pursue further qualifications or, for those seeking to be self-employed, with financial and technical support.

Combating discrimination

1. Existing tools should be used and strengthened to promote competence-focused mobility experiences for disadvantaged and unemployed young people through the Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programmes and the European Social Fund.

2. In order to avoid collective discrimination, the public sector must be required to provide employment for people with fewer opportunities (e.g. work, internships) and to combat individual discrimination individual rights have to be reinforced (e.g. using a clear and adapted language, taking into account the specific needs of young people, and using mentorship to guide and support disadvantaged young people).
3. Ensure, monitor and assess the implementation of anti-discrimination laws in Member States to achieve equality for all the groups and identify best practices.
4. Human Rights education should be implemented in both formal and non-formal education systems by using all existing tools at national and European level and methodological approaches (e.g. Youth In Action and Lifelong Learning Programmes) to achieve more visible and a decrease in discrimination in a long term.
5. Effective policies combating discrimination in the formal and non-formal education and training field, especially that which is gender based, and multiple discrimination, should be sustainably and adequately funded to deliver a full scope of rights, with a focus on young people, youth work and youth policies and managed by young people and policy makers.

Participation of young people in social dialogue

1. EU and Member States should ensure young people equal spaces, by providing them possibilities for participation, in public debates and existing communication channels relating to employment and social policies.
2. EU and Member States should ensure the participation in social dialogue of National Youth Councils and other youth organizations and young people through a strengthened and sustainable structured dialogue (through e.g. creating youth advisory councils) on all levels and in all processes related to employment and social policies.
3. EU, Member States and civil society should pay special attention to the inclusion of non-organised youth and young people with fewer opportunities in social dialogue through wider dissemination of information in their own environments, using various methods (e.g. non-formal education and focus groups in youth representation structures).
4. A broad and active participation of young people in the social dialogue can be achieved through comprehensive education and empowerment, awareness raising programmes and campaigns, a legal framework that ensures the equal access of young people to formal democratic processes and by lowering the voting age for all elections.
5. Member States should provide the conditions for young people to influence social dialogue, public debate and policy outcomes through education for global citizenship and active student democracy in formal education institutions.

Reconciliation of private and working life

1. EU and Member States should ensure sufficient, available quality child care facilities, adapted to the needs of children and parents (e.g. services available at places of work and study, matching working times).
2. EU and Member States should identify and publicize good practices in the reconciliation of private and working life to stimulate employers and trade unions to implement them.
3. Member States should provide better access to information and advice specifically about social support, family benefits, health care options and working legislation (e.g. through a one stop information and counselling service).
4. EU and Member States should encourage flexibility and security (flexicurity) in working conditions (e.g. work in various teams, job-sharing, working at home, (international) mobility at work, part-time work, educational leave, sabbatical leave, combination of work and voluntary work).
5. EU and Member States should develop standards on paternity leave and promote the use of parental leave by fathers (to ensure that the father really takes up the non-transferable period of parental leave).

Role of youth work

1. Member States should involve youth workers and youth organisations in the development and implementation of all measures on youth employment.
2. To better represent the interests of young people and to provide creative solutions for societal problems such as youth unemployment, the quality of youth work and participation opportunities should be enhanced through developing and supporting training possibilities and peer learning.
3. The educational institutions should recognise the added value of youth work through credits and accreditation and allow time flexibility in study structures (e.g. taking time off for youth work).
4. Youth work needs to empower young people to voice their competences and provide them with tools for recognition, with a clear structure and content, that fits labour market terminology.
5. Member States should cooperate with all stakeholders, including those involved in counselling young people and employers, to raise visibility, strengthen awareness and recognise in the labour market the skills and competences acquired through youth work.