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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
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Subject:	Draft Council conclusions on promoting young people's access to rights in order to foster their autonomy and participation in civil society

Delegations will find attached a draft set of conclusions drafted by the Presidency on the above topic in preparation for the Youth Working Party on 31 October 2014.

Bold and [...] are used to indicate changes to the previous version.

Draft

Council conclusions on promoting young people's access to rights in order to foster their autonomy and participation in civil society

The Council,

RECOGNISING THAT:

1. The Council, in the framework of European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015¹, established the theme of **youth** empowerment as the overall priority of the [...] trio **presidency** (IT, LV, LU), focusing on access to rights, autonomy, **political participation** and active citizenship.
2. Young people continue to be **heavily** affected by the economic and social crisis that has characterized the past few years. Demographic changes, youth unemployment and [...] **employment** under precarious conditions, have **consequently** made it more difficult for [...] **them** to achieve autonomy and exercise **effectively** their rights.
- 3a. High levels of youth unemployment have **contributed** to the spread of poverty, marginality and exclusion, as well **as** a loss of confidence in the future [...]. **Researches also show that an increasing number of young people are not in employment, education or training (NEETs)² and that there is a strong link between socio-economic status and political participation: NEETs are less likely to vote, have less trust in political organisations and are less engaged in civic participation, compared to the rest of the population.**

¹ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a European Union Work Plan for Youth.

² Study of EUROFOUND – “[NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1254.htm)” - <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1254.htm>

3b. Nevertheless, young people represent a valuable source for society, and their skills, competencies and creative and innovative capacity should constantly be taken into consideration when implementing strategies for youth policies at European, national and local level.

AWARE:

4. **That** there is considerable evidence to indicate that young people are becoming autonomous³ at a later age than in the past. [...]
 5. **That** the [...] economic downturn, **has exacerbated** intergenerational inequalities [...] **and might** have long-lasting effects on the social cohesion **and solidarity** of our societies.
 6. **That** the increasing youth mobility in Europe, also due to the [...] **search for employment in other countries**, needs adequate attention, in order to make it a real opportunity of **personal and professional** growth for young people. **In this regard, the Erasmus+ programme plays a comprehensive role in promoting both greater autonomy and participation in social life for young people through mobility as well as the development of skills and competences to improve employability.**
- 6a. Of the joint conclusions of the EU Youth Conference, 13-15 October 2014, Rome⁴.**

³ Preliminary condition for youth autonomy implies that young people have the necessary support, resources and opportunities to choose to live independently, run their own lives, have full social and political participation in all sectors of everyday life, and be able to take independent decisions. The ability of young people to become autonomous is not only embodied in the work sphere, but it also covers the ability of young people to develop their potential, make their own choices and live in an independent way having the tools to participate in a critical and active way in the social, political and economic life of their own communities.

⁴ **Doc. 14429/14.**

RECOGNISING THE FOLLOWING KEY CHALLENGES:

7. The combined action of the factors caused by the economic crisis, such as a **difficult** access to **loans**, income reduction, **lack of jobs** and greater job instability [...] **and restrictions in access to** welfare measures, has diminished young people's capacity to become autonomous⁵.
8. It is now therefore necessary [...] to develop **appropriate measures and policies to** [...] support **young people's autonomy and their transition** to adulthood. This involves not only acting on policies that favour the transition from **education** to work, but also on related areas such as access to **loans**, housing, **health and** well-being or the **political and civic participation** , in order to provide the necessary tools to help young people to attain autonomy and participation in social life.
9. With the aim of **ensuring** young people's access to rights, **the EU** [...] needs to focus on job creation, **diminishing the mismatch between the skills that young people acquire and those required by the labour market** [...].

IN THIS REGARD CONSIDERS THAT:

10. Young people **and youth organisations represent a valuable resource to society and consequently** have a considerable potential and **an important** role in the building of Europe **and [...]** in the development of our societies **is also crucial**.

⁵ <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1404.htm>

11. In the context of **cross-sectorial** [...] cooperation in [...] youth policy, **the** EU and Member States, with the aim of setting out an effective strategy on access to rights, should pursue the following priorities:

- **supporting young people's autonomy, focusing on specific areas (such as access to education, culture, employment, loans, housing, health and well-being of young people) and** tackling and preventing **all** forms of discrimination faced by many young people [...];
- investing in raising awareness among **and with** young people about their rights [...];
- supporting the involvement of young people in the **political** decision-making process at all levels also via the recognition of youth organisations as an important channel for participation and the **development of** active citizenship;
- continuing the path taken towards the [...] recognition of youth work as an instrument to encourage participation and the acquisition of skills **and competences** important to achieving autonomy;
- [...]
- boosting the opportunities for participation in the life of the community, **also through media and information technology**, particularly with regard to decisions that concern young people directly and the development of systematic [...] **interventions to enable young people to participate**;
- supporting media and digital literacy **development** as a means of making young people critical and active citizens in today's society and of helping them to acquire the necessary digital skills **and competences**;
- **supporting recognition and validation of skills and competencies acquired through informal, non-formal learning and volunteering.**

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

12. Progress towards the **identification** of [...] barriers to the participation of young people in social and political life, [...] **considering also the introduction of measures to remove these barriers.**
13. Endeavour to promote that young people have access to quality jobs with a fair wage and social protection, allowing them to be autonomous and run a secure and dignified life.
14. Dedicate [...] **in the youth policy** particular attention to [...] the development of equal opportunities and gender equality strategies in all spheres of social, economic and political life as well as in the conciliation of work and family life.
15. Invest in **prevention and intervention measures for reducing** early school leaving [...], especially by framing policies aimed at providing **equal access to** quality-education and offering targeted support to improve school environments. Attention should also be paid to removing obstacles to [...] **young people achieving their full potential in education.**
16. Promote youth work, **taking into account** the findings of the “Study on the value of youth work”, as a fundamental tool in allowing young people to develop their own initiatives and supporting the **transition** of young people to adulthood.
17. Consider the development of social housing schemes with special attention on young people with low incomes, such as students and trainees and unemployed youth.
18. **Promote** the establishment of **ad hoc** [...] guarantees [...] to young people with the aim of supporting their [...] **entrepreneurial and social housing projects.**
19. [...]

20. Increase young people's awareness [...] **of their** access to rights and in the event of violations, **support and promote** assistance for their recognition. Special emphasis should be placed on young people with [...] **fewer opportunities**.
21. Support the development of youth information **services** that can help inform young people about their access to rights **including** relevant, youth-friendly online information services.
- 21a. Support young people in developing a critical mind and their cultural expression in public space in order to help them to contribute, at their level, to the construction of a more cohesive society.**

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, AND WHILE RESPECTING MEMBER STATES' RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUTH POLICIES, TO:

22. Continue investing in the promotion of autonomy for young people through the development and support of **youth policies and** youth work and, where appropriate, through adequate support and funding for independent and youth (-led) organisations.
23. **Promote** that the autonomy and participation of young people is regarded as an important aspect to be taken into account in the development of social and economic strategies in the EU.
24. **Support** campaigns **and** educational **programmes** [...] aimed at raising awareness on human and social rights and on how young people can fully enjoy such rights, **using also existing networks such as EURODESK**.

25. Promote, using existing opportunities within the ERASMUS+ programme, training for teachers and youth workers on economic, **cultural**, social **and** human rights so that they can act as multipliers in their education and trainings institutions.
26. Ensure that the EU Work Plan for Youth is implemented promptly via genuine cross-sectoral cooperation and **through** the involvement of young people.
- 26a. Promote the Youth Guarantee as an EU structural reform and the exchange of good practices among the Member States about the monitoring of its implementation in relation to young people's transition to employment.**
- 26b. Establish a Peer learning process among Member States to analyse and discuss the situation of young people regarding their autonomy and well-being and develop the necessary improvements at all levels.**

CALLS ON YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS TO:

27. Make the fullest use of the opportunities afforded by the ERASMUS + programme **and facilitate easier access to the programme in order** to equip young people with skills and competences, supporting their autonomy and encouraging them to take part actively in society.
28. Inform young people about their access to rights in general and more specifically within the context of their activities and establish **concrete** initiatives in order to raise awareness on the issues related to **their** autonomy and access to rights.

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

29. Analyse the situation and barriers faced by young people in accessing to rights **within the instruments of the renewed framework, including the** forthcoming EU Youth Report **and the expert groups foreseen in the EU work plan for youth (2014 -2015)**. This review, based on contributions from Member States, should also involve experts, policy makers, representatives of youth and other civil society organisations. In addition, **this analysis** should be regularly reviewed so that it would also help Member States to exchange experiences and good practices.
30. Reinforce the cross-sectoral approach to youth policy and make sure that the Commission takes into account young people's access to rights in the development of policies and programme, where relevant.
31. Raise awareness on issues related to young people's participation, including autonomy and access to rights, through the European Youth Portal **and EURODESK network**.
32. [...]
33. Propose and develop measures aimed at encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. In this regard, consideration should be given to the work conducted by the Council of Europe **and the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth**.
34. **Take into account the work underway, in the agreed framework for the** “Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth”, on social inclusion with a focus on outreach, access to social rights, and fighting new forms of xenophobia and discrimination [...].