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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

COUNCIL

Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue

(2021/C 504/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

RECALLING THAT:

1. This resolution builds on the Resolution on the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 ⁽¹⁾, the Resolution establishing guidelines on the governance of the EU Youth Dialogue ⁽²⁾, the Conclusions on fostering democratic awareness and democratic engagement among young people in Europe ⁽³⁾, the Conclusions on strengthening multilevel governance when promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes ⁽⁴⁾, and the outcomes of the previous cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue.
2. The Resolution on the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 sets overall objectives, guiding principles and a basis for further cooperation in the field of youth at EU level. The resolution calls for a greater involvement of young people in the dialogue with decision-makers, and for the engagement of young people from diverse backgrounds and social groups.
3. The EU Youth Dialogue (EUYD) is a participation mechanism for young people in the EU. It serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection and for consultation on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of cooperation at EU level in the field of youth ⁽⁵⁾ between decision-makers, young people and their representative organisations, and that enables a continuous partnership in the governance of these processes at local, regional, national and European level.

⁽¹⁾ Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, (OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council establishing guidelines on the governance of the EU Youth Dialogue - European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 1).

⁽³⁾ Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on fostering democratic awareness and democratic engagement among young people in Europe (OJ C 415, 1.12.2020, p. 16).

⁽⁴⁾ Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on strengthening the multilevel governance when promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes (OJ C 241, 21.6.2021, p. 3).

⁽⁵⁾ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing 'Erasmus': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 COM/2018/367 final - 2018/0191 (COD).

4. Member States are encouraged to enable youth participation in all phases of implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue by involving the youth sector and by giving, where appropriate, the respective National Youth Council (NYC) ⁽⁶⁾ a leading role in the National Working Group (NWG) and in the European Steering Group (ESG).
5. The outcomes of the 8th Cycle of the EUYD are based on the cycle's three EU Youth Conferences, on feedback from national and European qualitative consultations and events from the dialogue phase, on the quantitative results of the EUYD Central Survey, and on the results from the impact phase at national and European level, and contribute to mainstreaming the multi-level and cross-sectoral implementation of Youth Goal #9 'Space and Participation for All'. The cycle was coordinated at European level by the European Steering Group.
6. The aim of this document is to ensure that the outcomes of the 8th Cycle of EUYD are recognised and followed up by relevant stakeholders in the field of national and European youth policies, and to ensure quality and continuity in the implementation of the EUYD process and its outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:

7. The 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue during the German-Portuguese-Slovenian Presidencies over the period from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2021 under the common title 'Europe for YOUth - YOUth for Europe: Space for Democracy and Participation' builds on the European Youth Goals, namely Youth Goal #9 'Space and Participation for All' of the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027.
8. While the Resolution on the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 calls for greater involvement of young people in the EU Youth Dialogue process, it requires sufficient capacity, notably financial and human resources, to reach out and communicate to, and with, all young people at local, regional, national and European level.
9. The contribution of the National Working Groups is important in leading the EU Youth Dialogue processes at national level, including at regional and local level, particularly in reaching out to diverse groups of young people and connecting different national, regional and local stakeholders with the process.
10. The contribution of International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs) is important in bringing a range of perspectives from across Europe to the policy dialogue and in ensuring quality input on the transnational dimension of the EU Youth Dialogue process.
11. One particular feature of the 8th Cycle was the emphasis on the quality of participation and the predominant use of digital tools in the context of the health crisis. The 8th Cycle of the EUYD process ran during the COVID-19 pandemic when most EU countries had social distancing measures in place, which limited the ability to hold physical meetings. On account of the pandemic, all three EU Youth Conferences were organised in close cooperation with the respective National Youth Councils in virtual format.
12. The German Presidency focused on democratic awareness and democratic engagement among young people in Europe under the slogan 'Youth and Democracy'. As a basis for national and European level consultations and events, a set of qualitative questions was proposed to the National Working Groups (NWG) in the Member States and to the International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs), focusing on the seven targets of Youth Goal #9 'Space and Participation for All'.
13. The Portuguese Presidency focused on strengthening multilevel governance by promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes and put particular emphasis on the participation of young people through digital innovation. Attention was also given to youth rights-based approaches to youth policies, and this was the subject of the policy debate held at the Youth Ministers Council meeting on 17 May 2021. As the Portuguese Presidency coincided with the transition from the dialogue phase to the implementation phase, a toolbox with

⁽⁶⁾ Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, (OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, p. 1).

concrete actions was developed to implement Youth Goal #9, taking into account the reports on the qualitative consultations and events, and the discussions held by the Portuguese EU Youth Conference delegates. In addition, the 48-hour Solve the Gap Hackathon was held and resulted in the creation of an online tool to promote the engagement of young people in democratic processes. The tool will feature on the European Youth Portal.

14. The Slovenian Presidency explored the importance of civic spaces for youth participation and ways to safeguard them. It also looked at the quantitative results of the EUYD Central Survey and the results from the set of guiding questions introduced under the Portuguese Presidency, using them to explore good practices for the implementation of Youth Goal #9 and its targets, and turning these practices into Youth Actions. The barriers to their implementation and the way forward have been identified.

CONSIDER THAT:

15. Each EUYD cycle builds on previous cycles, on EU Youth Conferences and on the work of the EU Council presidencies in the field of youth. It emphasises the role and importance of the unity of the presidency trio in reaching the objectives of each EUYD cycle and in contributing to reaching the targets set in the Youth Goals, by linking up successive cycles.
16. The National Working Groups used a variety of methods, such as participatory visual methods and participatory action research methods, round table events and online youth dialogue events. INGYOs facilitated roundtable events involving policy makers and young people at European level.
17. The European Steering Group proposed the EUYD Central Survey as a way of exploring other segments of youth participation in order to include as broad as possible a range of voices and as a way of encouraging National Working Groups and INGYOs to focus more on qualitative and on more meaningful formats for participation in the dialogue process, and thus to bring added value to the consultations at EU level.
18. Meaningful cooperation and co-creation between the three EU presidencies involved and their respective National Youth Councils, the European Youth Forum and the European Commission were among the core principles guiding the implementation of the 8th EUYD Cycle.
19. Putting young people and youth organisations at the core of the design, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of the cycle and all its activities, for example by ensuring that the presidency's National Youth Councils have the right to co-chair the European Steering Group, was a key aspect in the success of the 8th EUYD Cycle.
20. Further recognising the involvement and contribution of INGYOs in the EUYD process is important for ensuring that the dialogue has a strong European dimension; sustainable, structural and sufficient funding and political support at European and national levels should be secured so that both National Working Groups and INGYOs can carry out their activities within the framework of the official EUYD process.
21. EU Youth Conferences are a meaningful part of the youth dialogue process, creating safe spaces where participants have the knowledge and opportunities needed to contribute, and should bring together decision-makers to take part in the dialogue in a meaningful way, exchange views with young people on an equal footing, co-create with them the outcomes of the Conferences, and integrate the outcomes, when possible, into their political decision-making in order to ensure a meaningful youth participation process.
22. Organising all events related to the EU Youth Dialogue in the most sustainable way possible, and considering the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability is an important element in making the process more meaningful for young people and for decision-makers.
23. Focusing on the implementation of Youth Goal #9 in order to turn its targets into Youth Actions has brought an important new dimension to the EU Youth Dialogue process by bringing about the changes that are needed to improve the lives of young people in Europe, and could be adopted by future EUYD cycles as a good and inspiring practice.

RECOGNISE THAT:

24. Young people are the present and the future of a sustainable, social, climate-neutral, prosperous and democratic Europe that is fit for the digital age. Their participation is vital when shaping the present and the future of Europe, ensuring that all its citizens enjoy personal fulfilment and well-being, and empowering them to engage in active and responsible citizenship.
25. The COVID-19 pandemic and the exceptional measures taken to counter the pandemic have had a severe impact on the participation of young people and on civic spaces for young people, which have been increasingly shrinking and could be proactively safeguarded. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of further exploring and developing new forms of participation and civic engagement, especially within the context of the digital participation of young people, while at the same time acknowledging and addressing existing digital divides and the limits of digital participation (7).

WELCOME:

26. The active participation of young people in the national and European qualitative consultations implemented by National Working Groups and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, and their active engagement in the Central EUYD Survey launched by the European Steering Group, as well as their active involvement in the implementation phase. The consultations and the implementation phase involved a varied and innovative use of smaller-scale surveys, focus groups, large youth dialogue events, workshops, participatory action research, participatory visual methods, roundtables and digital youth dialogue events.
27. The activities and measures proposed and being carried out by NWGs and INGyOs in circumstances made difficult by the pandemic, as part of the process of turning Youth Goal #9 into Youth Actions.
28. The successful cooperation and equal partnership within the European Steering Group throughout the cycle, building on the recommendations of the previous EUYD cycles for multi-level and cross-sectoral implementation of the EUYD.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, IN LINE WITH THE SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE AND WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, TO:

29. Consider the outcomes of the 8th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue, including the recommendations of young people attached in Annex I, when designing and implementing future youth policies, in synergy with all policies affecting young people, and explore further ways of implementing the European Youth Goals and the targets out therein.
30. Strengthen and improve the EU Youth Dialogue process by considering and, where possible, applying best practices from the 8th Cycle of EU Youth Dialogue and the principles that guided its successful implementation, in particular by putting young people and youth organisations at the core of the process and ensuring that the EU Youth Dialogue is a youth-led process where young people and decision-makers have a constructive solution-seeking dialogue with real impact. The National Youth Councils, where applicable, should therefore continue to be the leading stakeholders in the National Working Groups and be given the necessary political and financial support to perform this role.
31. Recognise and prioritise the role of the National Working Groups (NWGs), their indispensable commitment to the process, and their importance regarding outreach and diversity of perspectives.
32. Prioritise and give visibility to the EUYD in national and EU-level events and promote youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels, and support and strengthen cooperation between different stakeholders, namely the European Steering Group, National Working Groups, the European Youth Forum, National Youth Councils, International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, and other relevant stakeholders.
33. Provide necessary support, including adequate financial resources, and youth-friendly participation tools needed to reach out and communicate to, and with, more young people from a wide range of backgrounds and social groups at all levels in order to achieve the ambitious goals set for the EU Youth Dialogue process in the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027.

(7) Youth Partnership: Tomaž Deželan and Laden Yurttagüler (2021), Pool of European Youth Researchers, Shrinking democratic space for youth.

34. Ensure a more sustainable and strategic approach to EUYD communication and outreach, implementing an overarching internal and external communication strategy at European level, and provide National Working Groups with additional support, where relevant, to enhance their own EUYD communication, co-created by youth organisations, in line with the European communication strategy, created under the co-leadership of youth organisations, including a common EUYD logo, labelling all EUYD actions, at European, national, regional and local level.
35. The European Commission and the Member States should ensure the strengthening of a long-term institutional memory and continuity of work between the EUYD cycles. Regular exchanges and coordination that is youth led and adequately supported between the Presidency trio, the last presidency from the preceding trio, the first presidency from the next trio, the Commission and the European Youth Forum shall be organised. The documentation of the European Steering Group should be made public in the European Youth Portal.
36. Provide continuous feedback to young people and youth organisations involved in all stages of the EUYD process in order to ensure meaningful dialogue and youth participation at all levels.

AND FURTHER NOTE THAT:

The overall topic priority of the next trio presidency (France, Czech Republic and Sweden) is 'Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe'.

ANNEX I

JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 8TH CYCLE OF THE EU YOUTH DIALOGUE**'Europe for YOUth - YOUth for Europe'**

The ideas and opinions of young people shared at the EU Youth Conference in September 2021 were focused on Youth Goal #9 Space and Participation for All, and provide recommendations on how to implement Youth Goal #9. These recommendations of young people concern all seven targets of Youth Goal #9. The recommendations reflect the process that started with the German, continued with the Portuguese, and ended with the Slovenian Presidency.

The recommendations do not impose any formal requirements as regards national youth policies. However, they can serve as a source of inspiration for Member States.

Target 1: 'Ensuring young people have influence on decision making'

- a) We request that both the Member States and the European Commission always give concrete feedback to young people whenever they involve them in their decision-making process and ensure evaluation process with young people in order to make sure that the participation is real.
- b) We recommend the Member States to adopt or further develop the legislation for securing the sustainable youth co-management systems in decision and policy-making processes at national and local levels, among others to protect and expand the youth civic spaces.

Target 2: 'Ensuring equal access to participation'

- a) We recommend the Member States and the European Commission to increase the diversity in participation structures and tackle the lack of inclusion by providing easy accessible information for minority groups.
- b) Encourage all Member States to support local stakeholders in providing extracurricular activities for young people with fewer opportunities.

Target 3: 'Participation in elections and representation in elected bodies'

- a) Encourage Member States to establish an EU wide symbolic voting process for EU parliament elections for age groups not yet allowed to vote, in cooperation with local youth centres and National Youth Councils, in order to encourage young people under the currently legal voting age to take an active part in political decision-making processes and thus strengthening a culture of recognition of young people's opinion in politics.
- b) We recommend the European Commission and the Member States to develop strategies to support young people who would like to run for an office at local, national and EU level, by developing a common youth-friendly platform at an European level for young people who are planning to stand for elections, and providing materials to further develop similar structures for national elections.
- c) We recommend the Member States to provide quality citizenship education in schools for all young people in every Member State, and adopt a common EU framework, to make young people confident in their ability for meaningful and representative political participation.
- d) We recommend the European Commission and Member States to strengthen the credibility of political institutions and encourage them to base their actions on scientific facts with the goal of benefiting the whole society in order to avoid youth disillusionment towards decision-making and politics.

Target 4: 'Ensuring physical youth spaces'

- a) We recommend the European Commission and the Member States to raise awareness and promote funding opportunities targeted towards creating and sustaining physical spaces for young people.

- b) Invite the Member States to change national-level educational policies and provide EU-wide monitoring systems to promote youth-friendly safe spaces and initiatives
- c) We recommend the European Commission and the Member States to introduce monitoring of the safeguarding of physical civic spaces for young people in order to ensure young people's rights to keeping their physical spaces safe from various threats such as commercialisation and increasing rents.
- d) We recommend the European Commission and the Member States to make physical youth spaces comprehensive and accessible by providing more youth-friendly and accessible information about them.

Target 5: 'Ensuring Digitalised Youth Spaces'

- a) We encourage Member States to ensure minimum digital standard throughout Europe with regards to infrastructure that includes free Wi-Fi/internet and basic digital tools to be used by young people.
- b) We encourage the European Commission to allocate specific funds to the youth sector to empower and educate young people in developing digital skills with special emphasis on youth with fewer opportunities.
- c) We recommend the European Commission to develop a framework at European level that measures the youth friendliness of virtual spaces, that the existing spaces and tools can be given clear and up-to-date guidelines on accessible language usage and centralising information, in order to remove barriers to young people's active engagement in social and political processes.
- d) We recommend that Member States empower educators in formal and non-formal sectors to ensure youth has the competences and tools necessary to protect themselves from misinformation and hate speech in virtual spaces by stimulating their ability to form judgement in an objective way.

Target 6: 'Ensuring sustainable funding for youth participation'

- a) We recommend that Member States give more visibility to youth work by increasing its accessibility (notably through incentives for mobile youth work in rural and remote areas and with less accessible youth) and its recognition (through formal recognition of the occupation, active partnerships with formal education and local actors).
- b) We recommend the Member States to consolidate the position and role of youth work in societal matters (partnerships in local initiatives, events, competitions and projects) and secure its societal acknowledgment (valorisation of youth work).
- c) We recommend that Member States and the European Commission support and commit to creating a general Youth-Recovery Plan in the EU, with specific actions to be taken at European, national and local level that focus on youth work and youth participation in order to overcome the issues the pandemic has augmented.

Target 7: 'Providing youth-friendly, relevant information'

- a) We recommend that Member States introduce regular media and information literacy lessons in primary and secondary education into national curricula prepared and thoroughly monitored, in cooperation with relevant youth organisations at national, regional and local levels as well as with media practitioners while ensuring regular and nation-wide teachers' training co-funded by the EU budget.
 - b) We invite Member States and the European Commission to include the provision of quality youth information and counselling in accordance with the European Youth Information Charter in their youth strategies and to resource a national youth information coordination body so that young people can access relevant information at the European, national, regional and local level.
 - c) We recommend that the European Commission establish an EU Youth Communication Strategy that provides guidance to Member States on co-creating communications with young people, regarding youth-relevant policies and publications, ensuring these Communications are published on the European Youth Portal where youth discussion and dialogue can take place.
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ANNEX II

References:

Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, p. 1)

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Outcomes of the 7th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue: European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (OJ C 212 I, 26.6.2020, p. 1)

Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council establishing guidelines on the governance of the EU Youth Dialogue — European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 1)

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on strengthening the multilevel governance when promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes (OJ C 241, 21.6.2021, p. 3)

Council conclusions, Youth in external action, General Secretariat of the Council, doc. 8629/20 of 5 June 2020

Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on fostering democratic awareness and democratic engagement among young people in Europe (OJ C 415, 1.12.2020, p. 16)

Council Resolution on the Structured Dialogue and the future development of the dialogue with young people in the context of policies for European cooperation in the youth field, post 2018 (OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 1)

CIVICUS, State of Civil Society Reports 2016, Johannesburg, SOCS2016 (civicus.org).
