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## COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND MEDIA

### Young people's access to fundamental rights

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#### Draft report

##### A. Draft recommendation

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is firmly convinced that unhindered access of young people to fundamental rights is an essential element in building a culture of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and is concerned that youth policies in the Council of Europe member States do not sufficiently safeguard these rights.

2. The Assembly therefore reiterates its call for a binding legal framework at European level in order to secure young people's access to fundamental rights.

3. Conscious of the challenge that the preparation of a binding instrument in this field will involve, the Assembly calls upon the Committee of Ministers to prepare as a first step a recommendation on "improving young people's access to fundamental rights", instructing the European Steering Committee for Youth, the Advisory Council on Youth and the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice, in cooperation with the European Committee for Social Cohesion, to draft this recommendation. This should bring together and complete the *acquis* of previous Committee of Ministers' recommendations, also building on: the text adopted by the Youth Assembly held in Strasbourg on 5-7 October 2012; key proposals put forward by Youth sector representatives at the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth held in St. Petersburg on 24-25 September 2012; and relevant resolutions and recommendations of the Assembly.

4. The Assembly also recommends that the Committee of Ministers take action to enhance member States' capacity to evaluate young people's access to rights, prevent the violations of these rights, provide adequate follow-up and redress and consider innovative ways to empower young people in accessing their rights. To this aim, the Committee of Ministers should:

4.1. Reinforce the cross-sectoral and rights-based approach to youth policy throughout the Organisation asking different Council of Europe bodies to consider thoroughly young people's rights in the development of standards, programmes and monitoring activities, and to explore measures to improve the access of young people to these rights;

4.2. Instruct specifically the Steering Committee for Human Rights and its Gender Equality Commission to pay due attention in their work to the situation of young people in each and every Council of Europe member States;

4.3. Reinforce the programme of international reviews of national youth policies, under the responsibility of the European Steering Committee for Youth, paying particular attention to the establishment of mechanisms ensuring effective access of young people to their rights, with corrective action as necessary;

4.4. Urge the Joint Council on Youth, in co-operation with other sectors of the Council of Europe, to conduct a thorough study concerning young people's access to rights, to identify difficulties and good

practice in this area, and to prepare a handbook of instruments, programmes and policies on youth rights;

4.5. Make use of existing platforms, particularly the North-South Centre, to promote, facilitate and improve cooperation between educational institutions and NGOs from the EU27/EEA and other members of the Council of Europe and neighbouring countries including southern Mediterranean countries;

4.6. Initiate a project to develop transversal policies aimed at supporting the effective exercise of social and economic rights by young people, in line with the results of the 2nd Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion "Building a secure future for all" held on 11-12 October 2012 in Istanbul;

4.7. Consider the appointment of an ombudsperson at the Council of Europe level to ensure that the rights of young people are respected and protected.

## Explanatory memorandum by Mr Connarty, Rapporteur

### 1. Introduction

1. Following a request submitted by Mrs Maury Pasquier, Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development and Mr Flego, Chairperson of our Committee, the Bureau of the Assembly, meeting on Thursday 29 November 2012 in Andorra la Vella, decided on a reference to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for report* on “Young people’s access to fundamental rights” and to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for opinion*. The Committee appointed me as rapporteur on 19 December 2012 and asked me to prepare the present report with the highest priority, in order for it to be presented at the part-session of April 2013 in a joint debate with the report by Ms Polonca Komar on “Young Europeans: an urgent educational challenge”.

2. Taking note of the outcomes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (St. Petersburg, 24-25 September 2012) and of the Youth Assembly held in Strasbourg on 5-7 October 2012, the Chairperson of our Committee, Mr Flego, and the Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, Ms Maury Pasquier, proposed to hold a joint meeting of the members of the two committees on 21 January 2013 to discuss future actions to enhance young people’s access to fundamental rights. At this meeting, the members of the two committees held an exchange of views with Ms Maria Paschou, Chairperson of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), Ms Laurence Hermand, Vice-Chairperson of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and Mr Håkon Haugli (Norway, SOC), General Rapporteur on the rights of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender Persons (LGBTs)<sup>1</sup>.

3. Giving proper consideration to young people’s expectations and fully meeting their needs are key challenges for our European societies: both our present and our future are at stake. It is not just today we discover the crucial importance of securing young people’ access to fundamental rights: indeed, this issue was on the agenda of the Council of Europe for the last 40 years. Section 2 and 3 will recall main achievements and more recent developments in this domain. Section 4 will seek to identify further steps that should be envisaged to improve youth policy at national and European levels.

### 2. Progress in youth policies driven by the work of the Council of Europe until 2010

4. The 2012 Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth was the latest in a series of conferences held by the Council of Europe on Youth-related matters since 1985<sup>2</sup>, which triggered significant developments<sup>3</sup>.

5. Within the Council of Europe, intergovernmental co-operation in the youth field was reinforced, and a co-management and co-decision procedure was established, which allows for joint decision making by the Advisory Council on Youth (representing young people in Europe through Youth organisations) and the European Steering Committee for Youth (representing government authorities responsible for youth policies).

6. Other important achievements were: the establishment of the European Youth Foundation which includes a Youth Mobility Fund, the establishment of the Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest and increased cooperation in the field of Youth between the Council of Europe and the European Union. In addition, the work of the Council of Europe intergovernmental sector led to the adoption of a number of

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<sup>1</sup> The Minutes of this meeting appear in the Appendix IV to the minutes of the meeting of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media held on 22-24 January 2013 (AS/Cult (2013) PV 01).

<sup>2</sup> These were the following:

1<sup>st</sup> ministerial Conference (Strasbourg, 1985) on “Youth participation”

2<sup>nd</sup> Conference (Oslo, 1988) on “the strategies for European youth policies towards the year 2000”

3<sup>rd</sup> Conference (Lisbon, 1990) on youth mobility in Europe

4<sup>th</sup> Conference (Vienna, 1993) on “Young people in Greater Europe”, which took place in the context of the enlargement of the Council of Europe to new member States

first informal Conference (Luxembourg, 1995) on the building of a multicultural Europe

5<sup>th</sup> Conference (Bucharest, 1998) on “Young people: active citizens in a future Europe. Human Rights – Participation – Solidarity”

6<sup>th</sup> Conference (Thessaloniki, 2002) on “Young people building Europe”

7<sup>th</sup> Conference (Budapest, 2008) on “Human dignity and social cohesion: youth policy responses to violence”

8<sup>th</sup> Conference – organised in Kiev in 2010, on “The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020”.

<sup>3</sup> For more details see the Summary of conclusions of previous Council of Europe conferences of ministers responsible for youth (20/08/2012) – document presented at the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth held in St Petersburg, 24-25 September 2012.

Committee of Ministers' Recommendations on youth policies<sup>4</sup>, providing guidance on important topics such as citizenship and democratic participation, integration, information and counselling, mobility, non-formal education and others.

7. Efforts at European level were reflected by progress in youth policies of the Council of Europe member States. Main achievements include:

- the development of youth policies at local, regional and national levels, stressing in particular the need for better social and professional integration of young people, notably girls and young women, as well as the disadvantaged and marginalised youth;
- the establishment of national youth centres in all Council of Europe member States;
- the Development of national action plans to combat racism, religious sectarianism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and all forms of exclusion following the launch of the "all different, all equal" campaign;
- Increased participation of young people in decision making at national level.

### 3. Actions taken in 2011 and 2012

#### 3.1. *Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1978 (2011)*

8. The Assembly, in its Recommendation 1978 (2011) "Towards a European framework convention on youth rights", takes stock of what was achieved so far and sets objectives for future actions, including the proposal to move towards a European framework convention on youth rights. The Committee of Ministers did not agree to this proposal, considering "that in the present situation priority should be given to the effective implementation of existing instruments."

9. In its reply to our Recommendation 1978 (2011) the Committee of Ministers agreed however on the idea of a study which should "*lay emphasis on the systematic encouragement of policies to improve the access of young people to their rights. These policies could include making more effective use of the tools the Council of Europe offers, and developing further activities and programmes that take into account the specific needs of young people as manifested in society.*"

10. Therefore on 28 June 2012, following a request of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, its Chairperson, Mr Flego, discussed with Mrs Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy, the possibility to launch such a study and to prepare a handbook of instruments, programmes and policies on youth rights. Mr Flego asked Mrs Samardžić-Marković to look into the possibility of including this work into the programme of activities for the biennium 2014-2015. We have to follow this up to make sure that, indeed, these proposals be included in the programme of activities of the Council of Europe.

#### 3.2. *Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1885 (2012) and Recommendation 2002 (2012)*

11. In the Resolution 1885 (2012) and Recommendation 2002 (2012) on "The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis", the Assembly underscored that the persisting economic instability across Europe has exposed young people to unprecedented hardship. Unemployment, underemployment, socio-economic inequalities, poverty and exclusion disproportionately affect the young generation, whose autonomy, dignity, well-being and access to rights are rapidly eroding.

12. The Assembly proposed a series of measures for ensuring the smoother integration of young people into society through active citizenship, social dialogue, improved access to rights and sustainable employment. This notably implies strengthening youth policies and participation through the provision of financial support to youth-oriented projects, programmes and organisations<sup>5</sup>, fostering job creation,

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<sup>4</sup> The list is the following:

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)8 on youth information
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)11 on the European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions or measures
- Recommendation Rec(2006)14 on citizenship and participation of young people in public life
- Recommendation Rec(2006)1 on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development
- Recommendation Rec(2004)13 on the participation of young people in local and regional life
- Recommendation Rec(2003)8 on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people
- Recommendation Rec(97)3E on youth participation and the future of civil society
- Recommendation Rec(95)18E on youth mobility
- Recommendation Rec(92)11E on social and vocational integration of young people
- Recommendation Rec(90)7E concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe

<sup>5</sup> Resolution 1885 (2012), item 6.1.5.

improving life-long learning opportunities and social protection through the implementation of “youth guarantee” schemes<sup>6</sup>, stimulating youth entrepreneurship through advisory services, tax facilities, grants and microcredits designed for young people<sup>7</sup>, and building public-private partnerships between social partners. The Assembly reiterated its proposal to draft a European Framework Convention on the Rights of Young People<sup>8</sup>.

13. In its reply to Recommendation 2002 (2012) the Committee of Ministers, as regards the Framework Convention, referred back to their reply to Recommendation 1978 (2011). The Committee of Ministers did, however, agree to the importance of involving young people in the “formulation, implementation and follow-up” of youth policies. The Committee of Ministers also referred to the importance of quality education in preparing young people for life as citizens and for their integration in the labour market.

### 3.3. 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, 24-25 September 2012, St. Petersburg

14. This Conference (which PACE President Mignon, Mr Flego Mr Volontè and myself attended) was meant as a major opportunity for young people to make their voices heard and to ensure that their recommendations are part of policies and strategies for Youth in our member states. Youth representatives put forward very interesting proposals, which Ministers were invited to adopt as an appendix to the Ministerial Declaration.

15. The draft Declaration listed a series of steps to be taken by public authorities, including *inter alia*:

- a critical and profound knowledge-based analysis of any problems faced by young people in accessing rights – which should involve representatives of youth organisations with policy makers, experts and other civil society organisations – and a regular review of progress made in this area;
- a review of existing and planned legislation, and adoption of legislative measures intended to remove legal obstacles to young people’s access to their rights;
- a modification of the structure and practice of existing institutions catering for young people, in order to support them more effectively and to address equally the needs of all groups of young people, in addition to the improvement of the qualifications of staff working in these institutions;
- regular consultation with youth policy stakeholders, in order to improve this policy as necessary;
- an effective information system (readily accessible to all groups of young people, especially those who are discriminated or socially excluded) to raise young people awareness of their rights and of the possibilities to seek redress if these rights are withheld or violated;
- adequate and equitable financial support for youth work and non-formal education activities aimed at informing young people and engaging them in the promotion of fundamental rights ;
- stronger attention paid by the formal education sector and social policy to young people’s access to rights;
- an approach in the development and implementation of youth policy, which is sensitive to issues of gender and sexual orientation.

16. The draft Declaration concluded with a list of actions to be taken by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe aimed at improving young people’s access to rights. Unfortunately, Ministers did not agree on the Declaration. As a result, young people’s proposals did not get Ministers’ endorsement.

17. Young people’s recommendations must be taken into account in the Council of Europe future work. Ministers and their representatives cannot call for more political and civil participation of young people while ignoring at the same time what they have to say. The Committee’s attention is, therefore, drawn to the conclusions of the Youth event held in St. Petersburg on 22-23 September 2012 just before the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth; they appear in Appendix 1 to this Memorandum.

### 3.4. Youth Assembly, 5-7 October 2012, Strasbourg

18. Based on the initiative of President Mignon, the Parliamentary Assembly organised in cooperation with the Youth sector of the Council of Europe the second Youth Assembly as a contribution to the World Forum for Democracy held in Strasbourg on 5-11 October 2012.

<sup>6</sup> “Youth guarantee” schemes imply that no young person should be out of employment, education or training for more than four months against their will. See Resolution 1885 (2012), article 6.3.1.

<sup>7</sup> Resolution 1885 (2012), item 6.2.5.

<sup>8</sup> Recommendation 2002(2012), item 3.2.

19. The Youth Assembly participants prepared their contributions to the World Forum for Democracy both through on-line exchanges prior to their Assembly and in fruitful debates held in Strasbourg. The conclusions of the Youth Assembly appear in the Appendix 2 to this Memorandum. The delegates from the Youth Assembly were recognised as having made significant contributions in the seminars of the World Forum for Democracy revealing a genuine inter-generational dialogue. This was also recognised in a two-way dialogue meeting with the President of the Assembly, Jean-Claude Mignon.

#### **4. Steps towards stronger recognition and more effective implementation of young people's fundamental rights**

##### *4.1. Re-thinking national youth policies*

20. It is essential that our member States re-think youth policies to render them more comprehensive as regards young people's access to fundamental rights.

21. To streamline national strategies aimed at young people's empowerment and their access to rights – as well as implementation policies -- member states should aim, as a priority, to strengthen young people's capacity:

- to build their own identity,
- to become more influential actors of social and economic development, and
- to participate in policy discussion processes and decision making.

22. Young people's capacity to build their own identity depends on the effective exercise of fundamental rights, such as the right of access to culture and to take part in cultural life, the right to education and training, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression and of association. Member States have a duty to guarantee not only the effectiveness of these rights, but also the conditions for young people to fully develop their potential. This entails, among others, that member States:

- prevent and counteract all forms of racism, sectarianism, and discrimination on any ground;
- ensure that young people are effectively entitled to maintain their cultural heritage and promote visibility of minorities in the media;
- foster peaceful living together between different groups by inter-cultural education and dialogue (e.g. namely by the introduction of multi-cultural topics in pre-primary and primary education);
- ensure the sustainable provision of quality non-formal education opportunities, including volunteering opportunities;
- support unrestricted access to Internet and override censorships on the Internet and media.

23. Young people's capacity to become more influential actors in social and economic development depends on the access to social rights, including employment and training, housing, social protection and health care. To support the development of such a capacity, member States should:

- Develop active employment policies that facilitate the entry of young people into employment;
- Develop tax and financial incentives to encourage companies to recruit young people into agreed training programmes with on-the-job certification, which could facilitate the transition between education and the labour market;
- Prevent the excessive use of unpaid work experience or low paid employment, and encourage businesses to help young people's transition from insecure contracts to stable jobs;
- Promote equal access to health care and conduct health-awareness campaigns directed at young people about health risks and their avoidance, including practical information on access to treatments.
- Introduce targeted financial schemes and / or incentives to facilitate young people's access to decent, affordable housing.

24. To reinforce young people's capacity to participate in policy discussion processes and decision making, member States should become more pro-active and ensure regular discussions with and involvement of young people in the design and implementation of youth policies and create opportunities for vulnerable young people (disadvantaged, minority groups, LGBTs) to get involved. In this respect, member States should:

- Develop electronic democratic participation systems (e.g. e-voting, participatory budgeting, municipality council platform for online video conferences) and take advantage of new information and communication technologies, including new social media, in order to enhance political participation of young people;
- Promote the participation in democratic processes of young people from disadvantaged groups (such as people with disabilities, the socially excluded, or minority and migrant communities);

- Enhance democratic governance in schools, which should offer students practical experience of participation from an early age and throughout their years in education;
- Create opportunities for dialogue between Youth NGOs and public authorities;
- Improve the visibility of migrant communities' contribution to social development and political life, and support inclusion through targeted mentorship programmes which should include volunteers from the local society, organising cultural and sport events with an emphasis on cross-cultural access and participation.
- Take into consideration the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity and the rights of Youth in this area,

25. Young people's active participation in political life is also dependent on a positive attitude from political parties which have a crucial role in this respect. They should be encouraged to:

- develop better communication of political programmes towards young people;
- support young people in standing for election to civil society organisations, local authorities and national parliament and possibly establish quotas of young people on the political lists, promoting also inclusion of young representatives from vulnerable groups.

#### 4.2. *Specific actions aimed at ensuring effective access to fundamental human rights*

26. In the design of their youth policies, Member States should pay more attention to different kinds of measures that may have a significant impact on young people's access to fundamental rights. They have to explore concrete ways to remove the existing barriers, to raise awareness, to create new opportunities and to provide incentives and support. A few examples below could provide initial ground for further reflection:

27. *Remove barriers* – Member States should encourage and support the development of mobility and exchanges among young people within the member States of the Council of Europe and with neighbouring countries. They should consider abolishing administrative barriers, such as travel visas, for youth NGOs representatives, making it easier for youth to participate in international youth organisations. They should also launch support programs and mitigate financial barriers such as enrolment and registration fees. Finally, they should provide free legal advice and representation to young people with inadequate finance, who seek such services, to improve access to human rights protection through litigation.

28. *Raise awareness* – Member States should take a series of actions to raise awareness amongst all stakeholders, including young people themselves about the access to fundamental rights for young people. They should produce a set of information documents accessible to young people on human rights protection instruments, which are already provided by existing international legal instruments (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter). The existing legal and monitoring tools of the Council of Europe could be used to identify and better address violations of rights of particular relevance to young people. The compilation of case-law could be made available in order to inform on the status of violations of young people's rights and the extent to which they are protected by the existing legal tools.

29. *Create opportunities* – Youth offices should be established and situated in schools, community and tertiary education structures (which should provide a space for them to be accessible in and out of teaching hours throughout the year). They could be run on a voluntary basis by students and serve as an open and flexible space, which will connect together teachers, parents and children. They could allow for students from different social and ethnical groups to gain experience, including developing work-related skills, and help linking the local community and the minorities, NGOs and cultural centres.

30. *Provide incentives and support* - Supporting young people to become active citizens is a central element of youth policy. The Council of Europe member States should provide political and financial support to youth organisations and other non-formal education providers, and promote sustainable cooperation between formal and non-formal education. It is important to ensure long term sustainable funding for youth organisations and to guarantee transparency in financing of youth projects.

#### 4.3. *Council of Europe support to enhance national youth policies*

31. Member States efforts should be encouraged and accompanied by stronger Council of Europe action in this area. Among the initiatives to be taken, the following should be considered as priorities.

32. The Joint Council on Youth, in co-operation with other sectors of the Council of Europe, could conduct a thorough study concerning young people's access to rights and to identify difficulties and good

practice in this area, taking into account the work undertaken in the framework of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2012-2015 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

33. Existing platforms (e.g. the North-South Centre) should be used to promote, facilitate and improve cooperation between educational institutions and NGOs from the EU27/EEA and other members of the Council of Europe and neighbouring countries including southern Mediterranean countries.

34. A new project should be initiated to develop transversal policies aimed at supporting the effective exercise of social and economic rights by young people, in line with the results of the 2nd Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Social Cohesion "Building a secure future for all" held on 11-12 October 2012 in Istanbul.

35. Work with the youth sector should be intensified and the European youth centres and the European Youth Foundation could be further supported to promote young people's access to rights. It should also be considered in which way the co-decision procedure, which the Council of Europe applies, could be implemented at national level, e.g. in schools and educational institutions.

36. The Council of Europe should consider the appointment of an ombudsperson at European level to ensure that the rights of young people are respected and protected.

37. Last, but not least, there is a need to consider further the drafting and adoption of a binding instrument, such as a framework Convention, which should better recognise and guarantee young people's access to fundamental rights. As a preparatory step, the Committee of Ministers should instruct the European Steering Committee for Youth, the Advisory Council on Youth, the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice, as well as other relevant committees to draft a recommendation, which should bring together and complete the *acquis* of previous Committee of Ministers' recommendations, also building on:

- the text adopted by the Youth Assembly held in Strasbourg on 5-7 October 2012;
- key proposals put forward by government and Youth sector representatives at the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth held in St. Petersburg on 24-25 September 2012;
- relevant resolutions and recommendations of the Assembly.

## 5. Conclusions

38. The rise in youth unemployment and the difficulty for young people, particularly those from socially disadvantaged groups, to access education, health care and housing are amongst the stark examples of European societies' incapacity to meet the needs of young people and secure their rights, which are also severely threatened by a tendency of public policies to charge future generations with the weight of a growing public debt.

39. At the Youth Assembly held in Strasbourg on 5-7 October 2012, youth representatives from all over Europe echoed the discontent but also the hope of the young Europeans; their recommendations should be considered a benchmark for the current youth policies and an important starting point for closer and more constructive dialogue between national decision makers and young people. The Assembly itself has recently put forward concrete proposals on how to enhance youth policies in its Recommendation 1978 (2011) "Towards a European framework convention on youth rights" and in its Resolution 1885 (2012) and Recommendation 2002 (2012) "The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis".

40. On this basis, we, as parliamentarians, should urge Council of Europe member States to develop coherent national strategies designed to secure young people's access to fundamental rights; these rights are interdependent and demand a holistic approach in policy design to ensure their implementation. To streamline such strategies and policies, member States should set as priority goal to empower young people and ensure their capacity to build their own identity and be active stakeholders in the political, social and economic life of our societies.

41. Member States should assume pro-actively their duty to guarantee the condition for young people to fully develop their potential, to implement effectively young people's social and economic rights, and to promote real opportunities for vulnerable young people (disadvantaged and/or minority groups) to get involved in social and political life.

42. To this aim, member States should take action, seeking to achieve concrete, visible results in terms of youth empowerment through measures intended to raise awareness of youth rights; remove existing legal



and administrative barriers to the enjoyment of such rights; create new opportunities for young people to contribute to the life of our societies and to build our common future; provide tailored incentives and support to young people's initiatives which are aimed at strengthening their role within our societies.

43. The Council of Europe has a key role in supporting this process and the meaning of the draft recommendation is to urge the Committee of Ministers to take immediate action in this direction. In addition, the Assembly should promote genuine inter-generational dialogue and direct participation of youth in its work. To this aim it would be important to invite systematically the representatives of the Advisory Council on Youth to the meetings of the Assembly committee and sub-committee responsible for Youth. Other committees with responsibility for relevant policy areas should also consider inviting participants from the Advisory Council on Youth to attend and participate in their meetings.

## Appendix 1



## The Conclusions of the Youth Event

The youth representatives gathered at the Youth Event held in St. Petersburg on 22-23 September 2012 prior to the 9th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth,

### *Considering that:*

- (a) youth policies should ensure the inclusion of young people in society ;
- (b) the current economic and social crisis in the Council of Europe's member states is having a crucial effect on the lives of young people;
- (c) in order to avoid exclusion and alienation the issue of youth participation has become even more important;
- (d) rights are not always known and easily accessed by young people;
- (e) youth policies need to be adapted to changes in society;
- (f) mobility is one of the core freedoms and learning opportunities for young people;
- (g) embracing diversity can ensure peaceful cohabitation in today's diverse societies,

### *Concluded that:*

#### **Social Inclusion of Young People**

1. We strongly encourage Member States to invest in quality and inclusive education that can promote retention and reengagement in learning, support personal development, appreciation of diversity and facilitate a quality transition from education to the labour market. In this framework a better interaction between formal and non-formal education/learning is fundamental as well as the promotion of tools such as entrepreneurial education and quality internships.
2. The inclusion of young people with migrant background should be further promoted. Member States should set up free programmes aimed at introducing these young people to the new culture, language, law and services in line with the Council of Europe recommendations and guidelines.
3. Access to social rights should be facilitated by strengthening the implementation of the Social Rights Charter provisions. It is crucial to make people more aware about the mechanisms available to protect social rights. Projects such as ENTER 2 represent a valuable platform to link policymaking and work at local level and to increase capacity building in this regard.
4. Continued participation of young people is needed in setting up strategies and action plans regarding the promotion of equality of opportunities and inclusion in relation to for example gender, disability and rurality highlighting the significant role of youth workers in supporting pathways to social inclusion.
5. A "youth guarantee" should be established within all social protection systems to ensure employment, further education or training for all young people after a certain period of being unemployed or out of education and training.

#### **Democracy and participation**

6. To ensure meaningful participation of young people in the creation of youth policy, co-management mechanisms should be introduced at local, regional, national, European levels. All parties of the mechanism should be defined through a democratic transparent process and have equal power and responsibilities. Society should have the opportunity to contribute to the work of co-management structures as well as visibility of the process and the outcomes should be ensured.

7. We recognize youth organisations and National Youth Councils as a channel of participation and involvement of all young people. In this view Member States are asked to set new and improve existing schemes for information and awareness raising in this regard. Therefore, we demand sustainable and accessible financial support mechanisms.

8. The Council of Europe in cooperation with Member States and NGOs, should improve existing tools or establish new tools in order to systematically assess the implementation of adopted policy documents.

9. We call on the Member States to further the recognition of non-formal education and youth work through the implementation and recognition of common mechanisms ensuring NFE quality standards.

10. We call for lowering the voting age and the age needed to stand as a candidate in elections to the age of

### **Living together in diverse societies**

11. The Council of Europe should develop and implement a specific action plan in order to prevent and combat hate motivated violence and incitement of such violence affecting young people, by issuing policy suggestions and supporting the work of the Member States, raising awareness through cooperation with youth organisations and using monitoring mechanisms to assist Member States' efforts in developing effective legislation and policies.

12. The Council of Europe and the Member States should ensure cooperation between the governmental structures and youth organisations and remove bureaucratic and political barriers in the implementation of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

13. There is a need to actively involve the PEYR in order to provide not only data on concepts of diversity, but also approaches to working with it and models of successful practices to provide evidence for the development of youth policy.

14. (Post) conflict trauma should be acknowledged and peace building and dialogue should be promoted and prioritized by the Member States of the Council of Europe, the international community and youth organisations in (post) conflict regions by using programmes and instruments, including mass media, in order to facilitate the re-establishment of a peaceful environment.

15. The Council of Europe and the Member States should ensure that Protocol no.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights against discrimination is effectively implemented. We also demand that the Council of Europe urges Member States that are not yet party to this protocol to ratify it.

### **Youth mobility**

16. The process of obtaining visas is expensive, complex and time consuming, resulting in lost opportunities for young people. Thus we call for the member states of the Council of Europe:

a) to grant free, multiple entry and long term visas for study and youth programmes through a simplified application system which requires neither logistical costs nor personal presence to embassies (e.g. online application system).

b) to encourage greater cooperation between Member States regarding visa issues thus reducing bureaucracy.

We ask for the implementation of the proposed actions before the next Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

17. We further call the Member States to increase their efforts in implementing the Bologna process and establish frameworks in terms of qualifications and competences recognition in all formal and non-formal education levels, increasing mobility and youth employment opportunities.

18. We call on the Member States to continue promoting a common and cross-cutting action plan for European mobility in order to provide equal access to mobility for young people regardless of their country of origin and background, including through wider recognition of the youth card system.

### **Access to rights and youth information**

19. In order to promote awareness of rights of young people, we recommend the establishment of an International Day of Youth Rights and a public campaign.

20. Human rights education tools such as “Compass” and “Composito” should be made compulsory in formal education curricula of the Member States.

21. Member states should provide qualitative and professional information on the rights of young people and make it accessible to all, with a special focus to the needs of young people with fewer opportunities.

22. We urge the Member States to provide free legal advice and representation to all young people who cannot afford it.

23. We ask the Council of Europe for a compilation of rights related to young people which are already provided by existing international legal documents such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, European Convention on Human Rights and European Social Charter. Identified gaps shall be addressed by the Council of Europe and the Member States.

24. Ombudspersons should be appointed at national and European levels to ensure that the rights of young people are respected and protected.

25. A specific chapter on young people’s rights should be introduced in the country reports of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

26. We urge the Member States to fully ratify the revised European Social Charter and the optional protocol with regard to the collective complaint procedure.

27. The European Court of Human Rights at European level and Member States at national level shall promote regular case-law compilations to better know the status of violations of young people’s rights and to what extent they are protected by the existing legal tools.

28. The Council of Europe shall promote specific research and studies on young people’s access to rights in Europe with the objective of designing better evidence-based policies. This should involve Member States and include a comparative analysis of the gap between duties and rights.

29. In order to ensure the full protection of young people’s rights we ask for the promotion of a legal framework at European level.

### **Implementation and follow-up**

30. We wish to emphasise that promoting effective youth policy is a collaborative effort of society. Public authorities, the private sector and the civil society should facilitate enhanced cooperation with regard to the development and implementation of innovative youth policies, including the funding of youth programmes in areas such as mobility, employment and youth information.

31. We call upon the Council of Europe Joint Council on Youth and the Youth Department to follow up on the results of this Youth Event and to report on the progress to the next Ministerial Conference and related Youth Event.

23rd September 2012

Appendix 2



**YOUTH ASSEMBLY 2012<sup>9</sup>**

**“Youth and democracy: the young generation sacrificed?”**

**STRASBOURG, 5-7 October 2012**

**CONCLUSIONS<sup>2</sup>**

**Thematic working groups conclusions and recommendations:**

1. Democracy and religion
2. Democracy and globalisation
3. Democracy and new social media
4. Democracy and access to social rights
5. Democracy and youth participation
6. Democracy and the role of youth work/ youth organisations
7. Democracy and migration
8. Democracy and the inclusion of minorities
9. Democracy and citizenship education

**Statement at the World Forum for Democracy**

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<sup>9</sup> The Youth Assembly was organised in the context of the World Forum for Democracy

<sup>2</sup> Synoptic texts edited by the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly

## Thematic working groups conclusions and recommendations

### 1. Democracy and religion

#### Key issues

- Is democracy sometimes corrupted by the misuse of religious messages?
- What happens if you mix politics with religion and vice versa? Are they most likely to misuse each other?
- Let's not get into absurd conflicts, we have to know each other, and in order to know each other, we have to promote and support as much as possible the intercultural and interreligious dialogue.
- Secularization of public space helps better coexistence and allows some balance between freedom of speech and freedom of religion. The working group agreed that as long as you do not find a better alternative to democracy, you only have one choice: help and promote democracy while challenging it every day in order to improve it.
- Freedom to choose if you want to study religion – one in particular or none at all.
- Ensure that the religious minorities are not excluded from political decision making.
- Youth can contribute to promoting interfaith dialogue.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

1- Governments should remain impartial with regards to confessional and non-confessional beliefs and ensure that no representative religious and non-confessional organisation is excluded from the political decision-making process.

2- Social workers, teachers, confessional and non-confessional representatives, and youth organisations should be included in any dialogue with governments, with a gender-equality perspective.

3- There must be no legal obligation or pressure from governments to study religion(s).

4- The creation or expansion of non-denominational schools and the provision of non-religious ethics classes /courses (which include/foster critical thinking as well as philosophy, social/cultural studies) or courses of multiple religion studies, are essential.

- This should be implemented by the member States of the Council of Europe.
- Young people can initiate reforms, but they always need recognition and support.

Young people should be assisted to promote inter-faith dialogue and mutual respect through youth exchanges and gatherings, which they themselves run.

Young people should encourage and promote interaction between different cultures through the use of social media and online learning platforms which will provide free and easy access.

### 2. Democracy and globalisation

#### Key issues

On the one hand, people, governments and non-governmental organisations are working together; a great step towards collaboration and peace. Increased mobility enables us to work and meet on an international level. This interconnectedness can break stereotypes, build global friendships and contribute to the very valuable exchange of knowledge; people have never been able to learn so much from each other.

On the other hand, globalisation has resulted in a certain contamination of responsibility. When it comes to multi-nationals and the financial sector especially, there is a vacuum in the law system which makes regulation and control of these sectors difficult. This interdependence and the lack of regulation can lead to very severe repercussions, as we have experienced during the crash of 2008.

We notice there has been a shift to higher levels of power, which gives the grassroots less power and which influences the level of democracy. So, we can identify the emergence of stronger hierarchy in international politics. Decision making on higher levels diminishes democracy and transparency, leaving the people at the grassroots level with less power and insight of the current developments. We also express our concerns about cultural imperialism; a rather big threat to the richness of cultural diversity.

As regards the impact of globalisation on democracy, there is both a positive and a negative impact, depending on one's point of view. Main positive things: it really contributes to peace and collaboration, the international contacts break stereotypes, which is a big strength and contributes to peace.

Our opinion on the basics of globalisation differs. We had a discussion about the question whether to put emphasis on competition or collaboration. Competition develops competencies and leads to achieving higher quality. However, there are also negative consequences: inequality. How can we compete when we don't all start off on an equal footing? Is it fair to have global competition when some countries have more means than others in order to succeed? Moreover, competition influences the marginalized and people with a rather weak position in society.

The majority is in favour of global "competition", which should improve competencies and contribute to development, wealth and growth. A small minority was in favour of global "collaboration", taking in consideration that the current structures do not allow an equal chance for developed and developing countries to compete: "we should collaborate and help each other rather than wanting to be better than everyone else. Evolve together!"

We could not come to a consensus on where to put the emphasis, but all agree about giving a fair chance and aid to developing countries, in order for them to overcome poverty. We also realize that these matters are all a matter of perception and personal experience with these very concepts.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

- Since information, education and critical thinking are essential for providing opportunities for everybody in the globalised world, education should not face financial cuts anywhere in the world in both the formal and non-formal settings; everybody should have free access to education and information, which would contribute to development of young minds.
- Mobility with an emphasis on increasing youth competencies by means of employment, internships, traineeships should be encouraged. Therefore, it is crucial to launch supporting programs and frameworks and mitigate financial and administrative barriers such as visas, enrolment and registration fees..
- Subsidiarity of decisions has to be strengthened, decisions at all levels ought to be transparent and governments have to provide real-time monitoring systems, so that citizens feedback can be heard.
- All decisions should be taken with a long-term perspective, re-ensuring solidarity as well as equality. At the same time, decisions must protect the interests of future generations, which should be guaranteed through institutional protection at all levels of governance.
- Cooperation has to be fostered at all levels - local, national and international - in order for global institutions to become more democratic and gain more power. International justice has to become mandatory to ensure and supervise implementation of international treaties and common decisions, regarding global security, economy, justice, etc.

In Chinese, the definition of challenge equals the definition of opportunity. Therefore, we consider the current challenges we face as opportunities to create better ways and form a true international community based on mutual solidarity.

### **3. Democracy and new social media**

#### **Key issues**

Social media provides a big opportunity for an unlimited number of people to come together and debate. This is a direct link to democracy. Though, on the other hand, it very often happens that the online campaigns are conducted via social media, but they do not reach their goals.

With the use of social media people restrict themselves in democratic expression. As an example, politicians, parliamentarians are playing online during sessions in social media.

Social media has, of course, made democratic practice easier and offers different opportunities, but on the other hand, there is less and less interaction in social media nowadays. People are just sharing links, but the discussions are not following. There is too much information and people are not able to digest it.

What about content being shared in social media. Is it just one person creating the content? The other people, who like and share the messages, are perhaps just tools for the leaders to achieve their goals. This is a real manipulation. People sometimes don't even know what they are sharing.

Sometimes people become the victims of fake postings in social media inciting them towards actions which give unexpected outcomes.

The link between social media and democracy is not always positive. From some points of view, the democratic actions, which are being carried out through social media, are not always representative and inclusive. They exclude those who are not online, those who do not have access to internet, etc.

The social media can provide a fake overview of certain developments. As an example, the campaigns, where people/organisations, which have 500 fans on Facebook, cannot gather even the half of their fans when needing support from them during a protest or a demonstration. Another opinion was expressed: even if you just click "like" and you don't provide any other concrete action for the cause in social media, your "like" puts the cause to the forefront of the search engines.

We should call for engagement by Council of Europe on the provision of privacy of the users on social media.

E-voting is easy to manipulate as is access to voting results. A software can easily be created to be used to hack and access the e-voting platform. On the other hand, normal elections cannot guarantee transparency and freedom from being attacked, but what is important, is that youth participation in politics could be activated positively if voting could be made accessible online.

The statements on social media, hate speech or freedom of expression: where is the line drawn? Who is defining the limits of freedom of expression and when this is perceived as hate speech? When should censorship be permitted?

Violation of human rights in a social media statement/post may justify censorship.

Freedom of expression cannot be limited to any country, it is universal. An opposite opinion was raised, that freedom of expression should depend on the local context and reality.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

### **1. Influence of the social media in social changes**

In order to increase the turnout of young people, governments should consider implementing modern technologies such as secured and independently observed electronic democratic participation system (e.g. e-voting, participatory budgeting, etc.).

### **2. Free internet vs. Censorship**

We believe there should be a way of overriding censorships that violate human rights on the internet, social media and media (e.g. an independent panel where you can produce your case).

### **3. Education related topics**

Every educational institution in a country should take steps in order to provide e-learning tools for its students about the basic internet skills.

4. **Setting up a Test municipality council platform** for online video conferences replacing actual meetings.

### **4. Democracy and access to social rights**

## **Key issues**

In the introductory discussion, participants tried to connect the concepts of democracy and social rights to each other, identifying points where they overlap and where they oppose each other. The following issues were raised:

1. the ongoing financial crisis in the EU and its effects (via austerity measures) on social protection;
2. the trend towards lessening social protection and retreating social rights;
3. worsening social conditions, particularly in countries such as Greece and Spain, and the reactions to them (strikes, demonstrations);
4. the problems faced by young people, such as lack of jobs and high unemployment as a consequence of both the crisis but also of the flexibility of labour market, which causes the precarity of employment;



5. young people are more and more financially dependent on their parents and cannot plan their future.

After the resource people shared their views on relevant issues concerning the crossroads of democracy and social rights, participants entered into a debate, with the following four objectives:

- to share the realities of access to social rights and examples of youth work practice and policy initiatives;
- to deepen the understanding of access to social rights and the role of youth ensuring it;
- to explore the link between democracy and access to social rights; and
- to formulate concrete key points and proposed actions for improved access to social rights.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Participants touched upon numerous issues relevant to the topic of Democracy and social rights. Firstly we made a tour de table, in which we explained what each of us does in our organisations regarding access to social rights.

In relation to youth (un)employment, we discussed non-paid internships as a particularly brutal way of exploitation of young people, who due to lack of jobs, are willing to work for free in hope that the accumulated experiences will help them to find a job. We concluded that this type of modern slavery is unacceptable and that governments should regulate it as well as attempt to reach full employment, which is not an utopia, but a policy choice.

In relation to youth unemployment and access to the labour market (important social right), challenges to self-esteem and competencies of youth were discussed. More and more young people are becoming desperate, retreating from active life, becoming apathetic and passive. Events in Greece and Spain have shown that there is a direct correlation between youth unemployment and youth suicide rates and between economic deprivation and psychological problems. We believe that these trends must be reversed and that young people should have a more active and meaningful role in their societies.

As the rights to health and education are two of the most important social rights, we discussed them in detail. With education and healthcare becoming more and more expensive and negative ratio between active and passive citizens, the notion of individual responsibility is becoming more important than ever. We agreed that equal access to healthcare and education must be assured, but disagreed on issues like free tertiary education vs. tuition fees, fees for visiting a doctor, etc.

### **5. Democracy and youth participation**

#### **Key issues / Challenges that young people are faced with (small groups' conclusions)**

1. One of the first limits was access to information at local, national or European level. The lack of information about everything - even the activities organised by the institutions - is pointed out as a huge limit to Youth Policy. The format of information is not adapted to youth. There is a gap between citizens and institutions, leading to demotivation and disillusionment of young people.

2. Another limit is the underestimation of youth capacities and the lack of transparency of the deciding organisms, young people being put farther and farther away from decision making. There is a need to give consideration to the needs of discriminated minorities and to give a place for reflexion for young people so they do not fear police brutality anymore.

3. The loss of faith in politics and its corruption bring disillusion to young people and disinterest. Youth is feeling powerless to make changes; there is no space for them to act. Even if you are motivated, you cannot do anything about it: in schools too they should encourage young people not only to vote but to think by themselves for themselves!

4. The lack of motivation is linked to the fact that youth takes democracy for granted. Putting the blame on the government is not a solution: we have to fight for democracy; we have to involve young people. But there is a lack of recognition, a lack of long term sustainable funding and the lack of direct democracy. Educational methods are obsolete: we need experiences at school with more participative education.

#### **Youth participation in the political process – proposed actions:**

Political parties should encourage young people to join their parties. Have a minimum percentage of young people on the political lists (quota). "Young people political party" without a political programme. Objective =

to make politicians to realise the power of young people. Have a better communication of a political programme towards young people – often non understandable. Enable 16 years old to vote. Limit one mandate for each in order for more turnover. Educate young people on politics, how policy process work + experience (theory and practice). Decisions at school should be taken by a representative group (by %) (more students in the Administrative Councils). Make sure by law that politicians have to involve youth population in the parliament. Have “student parties” at school to experience a political process. Involve in an equal way youth organisations in the decisions about youth issues (co-management).

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

### **1. Education**

#### *Formal Education*

School should not only be a place to convey knowledge but also a place to construct a future citizen. In order to introduce democracy and political education at school, it is important to:

- Train teachers on a new pedagogy on democratic principles;
- Introduce pupils to new ways of expression and experimentation;
- Have an equal representation in educational decision making bodies (teachers, pupils, parents).

#### *Non Formal Education*

In the building of a lifelong and life-wide learning society and in building of democracy, Europe cannot afford anymore to keep Non Formal Education invisible. Therefore Council of Europe, EU and member States should ensure the sustainable provision of quality Non Formal Education opportunities, including volunteering opportunities, by providing political and financial support to youth organisations and other Non Formal Education providers.

### **2. Funding**

- Insure long term sustainable funding for youth organisations;
- Multi-level and transparency in financing of youth projects who wants to support democratic initiative and projects, for example by making the administrative process easier.

### **3. Co-management**

Young people should be involved and consulted in the creation of youth policies and also involved in decision-making processes at all levels (Youth needs to be seen as a resource). Local politicians and young people should organise seminars and debates to talk and listen to each other; for example, the Youth Assembly should become an annual event - organised and attended by young people. The Council of Europe and European Commission should invite member States to start initiatives, such as setting up a voting age commission, in order to stimulate a debate about lowering the voting age to 16 and about the active participation of youth. Promote and support young people to stand for election to local authorities and national parliament.

## **6. Democracy and the role of youth work / youth organisations**

### **Key issues**

The group debated on two issues. The first one was presented in the statement: “Young people can affect democratic processes only if they are organised.” The opinion of the group divided half with disagreeing and agreeing on the argument. The second debated argument was “Youth organisations are the most relevant places for young people to practice democracy.” There were slightly more people who disagreed than agreed with this statement. It was clearly identified that there are, indeed, other places for youth to practice democratic processes. The group which agreed claimed that the youth organisations have the clearest democratic processes. The group which disagreed saw the local community as the most relevant place for the youth. It was also pointed out that not all youth groups are democratically organised. Finally, the group looked into “the challenges of youth work and youth organisations”, and came up with the following categories: Youth work and participation, youth work and support structure, youth work and promoting education, youth work and diversity and intercultural values. When trying to organise the post-it session to present findings, there were some interesting questions which came up. The one that was debated was: how to implement democracy and informal education in school. On this topic, the arguments were that with democracy in school we will reach a large audience vs. democracy only in organisations where you don't reach such a large audience. At the same time, will you plant many seeds or do you want to grow a really strong tree?

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

There is a need for deeper sustainable cooperation between formal and non-formal education, where non-formal education is the key factor. This can be achieved through drafting policies with enhanced legal framework allowing exchanges and transfer of know-how to create new educational products, build on added value of life experiences and resources. We must identify the three factors of this solution. Formal education, non-formal education and research. Formal and non-formal education work in a two-way cooperation, where both actors share their knowledge.

#### **A. Youth work should be accessible to everyone:**

- Stronger promotion of diversity is needed. Among team members, volunteers and target groups; in local, regional, national and international levels.
- Cooperation. Groups working with youth must cooperate (NGO's, youth organisations, public bodies and informal groups). Networking, partnerships and knowledge and exchanges of experience must be supported.
- Education for achieving diversity and equality is needed. Learning from each other in intercultural groups must be fostered. There should be a wider variety of resources, including through non-formal learning training courses. Ex. intercultural group work and organisational management.

#### **B. Co-management:** Include the youth in the decision making concerning youth

- Building partnerships with young people to include them in the decision-making processes.
- Inter-sectional cooperation -> important to co-management on all levels in the member States. Promote child/youth assembly on the local/national level.
- Adapt the youth organisations to the new realities of our societies, promoting open meetings with people which are usually not involved in youth work.
- Establishing youth quota in international bodies whenever there is a need for decision making. Especially on the subject of youth).
- Opening up the channels for communication.
- Ensuring that the information reaches the right people.
- Youth work should start from an early age (primary socialisation).
- Promotion of co-management in schools/educational institutes.
- Successful people (politicians etc.) should be invited to meet with students, sharing knowledge and giving advice.

It is important to have cooperation between the politicians and youth in a constructive way. This cooperation can help with the promoting of youth organisations at all levels (local, regional, national and international). In addition it is important to start the democratic work from an early age.

- Facilitate processes of getting visas for youth work (lobby).
- The recognition of youth work on the policy level in order to increase the mobility of youth work.
- Sustainable long term funding possibilities (including administrative costs) and decrease the level of bureaucracy (e.g. easier visa procedures, user friendly applications). This is to make it easier for youth to participate in youth organisations.

## **7. Democracy and migration**

### **Key issues**

#### ***Economy and unemployment***

- Integration factors: the language
- Use Sport as a good practice
- Training for unemployed

#### ***Identity crisis***

- Proposal of an official statement
- Recognising that French citizens are French, no matter of nationality (this approach has been criticised because of lack of actual meaning).
- Government promotion of good example and successful migration (however, it was argued this might lead to segregation)
- Creating a "minister of migration" Austrian Model (it was criticised as it could lead to separating migration and national identity)

#### ***Participation and the local society***

- **Challenges:** Dialogue between migrants and society and administrative obstacles.
- **Solutions:** Actions at the local level, intercultural events, sports, empowering migrants to represent themselves (should the community integrate migrants, or just give them the chance to prove they are different)

### **Migration – Global Vision**

- Globalisation has complex effects on migration worldwide, solutions to these problems need to be found by each state (a universal treatment applicable to everyone does not exist)
- Governments should enhance academic mobility worldwide (e.g. Erasmus must keep running and be taken as an example of good practice of mobility)

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

1. Example of the Ambassador programme (Austrian and Norwegian practice where successful migrants tell their stories in schools). The Ambassador's programme is a government-sponsored programme where ambassadors with an immigrant background promote their achievements in order to raise awareness with young migrants and create an understanding of migration issues in the society.
2. Learning the language is a very important factor for integration. Learning the language leads to education: when you are educated it leads to integration. Also, language gives the sense of togetherness. Proposals made: governments should approach second-generation migrants and provide support to adult migrants (for example, through evening classes).
3. Mobility should be encouraged by the government. Two remarks were added to the initial statement: the institutional framework should concern academic exchange, as well as the worldwide recognition of diplomas; states should adopt similar higher education standards (in order to have the same visions on academic structures).
4. Both migrants and the host society have to work for integration. Final statement: there should be more visibility of migrants, and more opportunities for dialogue with them. Recommendations for this: establishment of a mentorship programme which will include volunteers from the local society, organising sport/art events.
5. Should integration policies be more restrictive or more open? After analyzing the feedback coming from the members working in other groups, the group concluded that immigration policy of each country should be clear, transparent, and information about immigration rules should be accessible for everybody. Also, bureaucratic processes of residency for young people should be simplified (the process has to be transparent and to reach interested, prospective migrants).

## **8. Democracy and the inclusion of minorities**

### **Key issues**

The group started with attempts to discuss what our focus will be and trying to define terms like “inclusion”, “minority” and related concepts. There were disagreements in these discussions and it was decided to establish a common understanding of the word rather than defining it as such. Since the topic is so broad and there is a wide variety of minority groups – starting from national, ethnic, linguistic, through to religious, LGBT, and including persons with disabilities – and after vivid debates, the group decided to move on towards coming up with some more concrete key points related to the situation and problems faced by all the minority groups. Another topic that was raised by the group was the concept of identity and identification of minority groups' members. The group decided to focus mainly on the topics of education (broadly defined) and media, and discuss what can be done and proposed by youth in these areas. The group also discussed and underlined the importance of providing people with opportunities of direct encounters with members of minorities.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

We found that only a long-term strategy would deal with the problems, therefore we would propose the creation of an international programme with short-, mid- and long-term objectives for the inclusion of minorities entitled “Unity in diversity”. As a first step of this programme, we propose that the Council of Europe should recommend its member States to launch a national campaign with the active involvement of decision-makers and civil society on the inclusion of minorities entitled “European Campaign of Living Together” with the main message “I am, because we are.” As part of the strategy we propose introducing changes in the educational system to address the issues related to minorities from an early stage.

The main objectives of these changes should be breaking stereotypes, promoting balance between minorities and majorities through common understanding, fostering peaceful living together and lightening the feeling of belonging to a „minority” or a “majority”. In this regard we have two proposals:

I. Governments should introduce inter-cultural education in the curriculum through practical face-to-face experiences. This would involve:

- Multi-cultural classes in pre-primary and primary education such as learning through games, storytelling, theatre activities, and debates may be initiated through prompts and flashcards, role-playing, visiting institutions, selection of specific topic-related reading materials, learning dances etc.
- These activities should be coordinated according to age groups. A minimum curriculum should be drawn up and then it is up to the trainers to do further activities. These classes should be taken seriously by education institutions and trainers are demanded to have an open-minded attitude.

II. Youth offices should be established and situated in schools. They will serve as an open and flexible space, which will connect together teachers, parents and children. Moreover, it will serve to link the NGOs, cultural centres, the community and the minorities. The youth offices can be run on a voluntary base by students. Schools need to provide a space for such office in order to foster open-minded attitude among everyone. Students from different social and ethnical groups can do an internship here and gain experience which will be important in the future to help them find a job in a time of rising unemployment. Every school needs to provide training for the youth workers in office. Activities in these offices could include: organizing workshops, trainings, DVD nights and discussion, panel discussions, directed dialogues on different topics regarding breaking stereotypes of minorities (LGBT, gender, Roma etc). These workshops would include students, parents and teachers. These offices will be opened for the community to see the progress achieved. They will serve as an information service for the youth, informing them on the different opportunities they have (scholarships, contests, training, exchanges etc).

Another issue we were discussing was the topic of media. The problem that we notice is a lack of representation of ordinary people from ethnic minorities in the media. This results in a bias where ordinary ethnic minorities are only associated with negativity e.g. crime and violence. As a solution, we suggest the creation of a national, voluntary source list where ethnic minorities can sign up in order to provide journalists with contact information. This will enable journalists to expand their network thus the articles they write on any subject will be more representative of the entire population. And as a general final recommendation, we would recommend governmental bodies and institutions to provide minorities with direct access and participation in the decision making process because they are not politically included enough, although they are an important part of the community. They should have the possibility to represent themselves and be heard by decision makers. A round table with the concerned and interested people and the decision makers would go towards a solution which is more acceptable for everyone.

## **9. Democracy and citizenship education**

### **Key issues**

A democracy can only survive with active citizens. Therefore we need to educate citizens to live in a democracy. Citizenship education helps to fight against political apathy. It plays a fundamental role in developing values. Also, active citizenship education helps to motivate people who aren't participating in democratic decision-making processes. This kind of education has to stimulate critical thinking and enable active citizens to make their own choices.

The way democracy and youth participation is practiced was questioned and pros and cons were seen in the most common ways of participation, such as protest, work with the governmental institutions on the documents, negotiations and etc.

One of the aims of the education as a whole was brought up, as a critical thinking development, which in case of citizenship education should provide people with the possibility to check whether governments' action reflects the needs of the citizens. The importance of non-formal education and its methodology in citizenship education was stressed. Participants agreed on the need to have a lifelong learning process of citizenship education, starting at the youngest possible age, and on the need to practice democracy in the educational process through the involvement of young people in the decision making.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Work of the group has resulted in the development of five key points that were formulated as proposals.

1. First of all, as it has been discovered during the group work that citizenship education is not present in all the member States of the Council of Europe, we have agreed that Council of Europe should encourage its member States to introduce citizenship education as a subject in schools. The subject should be aimed at providing students with the information on how to actively participate and encourage critical thinking, and should give them opportunities to experience interaction with politics and society. This subject should be taught from an early age.

2. Furthermore, it has been concluded that also the way information is provided to students has great importance. There is a need to ensure that already adopted manuals and training materials regarding citizenship education are used in practice. To this end, the materials should be translated and promoted through the web-sites, newsletters and networking; training for education providers (schools, universities, youth organisations) should be held. Finally, the need to ensure quality of this education has also been stressed and the establishment of independent school inspectors was proposed.

3. Afterwards, it has been concluded that democratic governance should be practiced in schools in order for students to experience participation in the early age; therefore the proposal of the group is to include children and young people in the decision-making process. Examples that were given included students choosing the place of their field trip, and design of the room, timetables, events, and the ways of learning.

4. It has been agreed to propose using existing platforms (e.g. Wergeland Centre, North-South Centre) or establish new ones to promote, facilitate and improve cooperation between educational institutions and NGOs from the EU27/EEA (e.g. Netherlands, France) and other members of the Council of Europe (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia) and neighbouring countries including southern Mediterranean countries. This action should enforce sharing of best practices of citizenship education and increase its quality.

5. Finally, we realized that being able to speak a foreign language is very important to promote active European citizenship. Only when knowing foreign cultures and languages are citizens able to work and live together in peace. Therefore, we urge the member States of the Council of Europe to promote the learning of foreign languages (especially in schools) and international exchange programmes as indispensable tools for European Citizenship.

The first, third and fifth points are addressed to the Council of Europe and to the education ministers of the Council of Europe member States. In countries where the national State is not responsible for education the points are addressed to the education ministers of the federal States. The second point is addressed to Council of Europe and the member States. It should make sure that the information is spread to the relevant stakeholders. This fourth point is addressed to the Council of Europe directly.

## **Statement at the World Forum for Democracy**

First, we will like to thank you, Mr Mignon, for your support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Assembly that took place this week-end in Strasbourg.

It would have shown more respect if we were allowed to address this speech after the keynotes speakers, when actually everyone was present in the hemicycle to listen, but, okay, here we are !

150 young people from Europe and beyond...

3 days of brainstorming...

100s of ideas relevant to youth of Europe but also to youth of the world!

So LISTEN to us!

INFORM us!

Young people want to participate!

But we are facing barriers in the access to information on HOW we can actually participate!

Give us opportunities to EDUCATE ourselves!

Democratic process is not something we are born with, it is something we need to have the OPPORTUNITY to learn!

RESPECT us!

Do NOT compromise on human rights!

Young people are not commodities, they are part of humanity!

We strongly believe that youth have a lot to CONTRIBUTE in our world today!

Let us take part in all decision and policy making that will define our future!

Youth should be treated with DIGNITY, which means we must have EQUALITY!

We demand real equality in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability!

The young people here will be attending sessions during the forum.

We believe that our voices contain REAL and CONCRETE ideas that can contribute to realizing our ambition.

You must let our voices be the beginning of the change we all want to see!

Ladies and gentlemen, we, youth, strongly, believe in the idea of the forum but we also strongly call upon you to include youth more actively in this process!

As Mr Mignon has stated in the past in establishing this forum as a Davos of Democracy, let this Davos of democracy include young people at the level they deserve.