

## I

*(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 encouraging new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life in Europe**

(2011/C 169/01)

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

1. RECALLING THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THIS ISSUE AS SET OUT IN THE ANNEX, IN PARTICULAR THAT:

1. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides for European Union action to be aimed at encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.
2. The Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) <sup>(1)</sup> refers to the promotion of young people's active citizenship among its overall objectives, and identifies participation as one of its eight fields of action. The Resolution states that recognising all young people as a resource to society, and upholding the right of young people to participate in the development of policies affecting them by means of a continuous structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations, are among the guiding principles that should be observed in all policies and activities concerning young people.

2. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT:

1. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union states that 'the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'. Article 10(3) of the Treaty on European Union recognises every citizen's right to participate in the democratic life of the European Union.
2. Articles 11 and 12 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union state that everyone has the right

to freedom of expression, to peaceful assembly and association. Article 24 declares that children may express their views freely, and stipulates that such views shall be taken into consideration on matters that concern them in accordance with their age and maturity.

3. RECOGNISE THAT:

1. Young people face multiple challenges today relating to unemployment, its link to the risk of poverty, and lower educational attainment and early school-leaving in particular areas <sup>(2)</sup>. In some Member States, participation of young people in elections is below average.
2. Young people have valuable contributions to make to the development of society. Their involvement in finding responses to societal problems and challenges is essential in order to allow all young people to make full use of their abilities and to find practicable, meaningful and sustainable solutions.
3. The findings of public consultations and the EU Youth Report show that young people regard their contribution to shaping societal development as a key priority, via the channels and tools of participatory democracy <sup>(3)</sup>. Recognising the voice of young people in all policy and decision-making processes that affect them is vital.
4. Better understanding is needed of the reasons behind the decline in traditional memberships of organisations and the low average participation of young people in the mechanisms of representative democracy.
5. Young people's increased participation can contribute to social, political, cultural and economic development, and, if a larger number of people and ideas are represented in the public sphere, decisions will be better grounded.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

<sup>(2)</sup> SEC(2009) 549, Chapter 2.1.

<sup>(3)</sup> SEC(2009) 549, Chapter 3.1.5.

6. Both representative and participatory democracy are increasingly linked to the use of media and e-participation that can improve access to in-depth information and widen the scope for involving a higher number of people in opinion-building and decision-making processes; it can also provide more young people with the opportunity to produce, rather than simply consume, information.

#### 4. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

1. The participation of young people in democratic life provides real opportunities for involvement in decision-making. It calls on decision-makers to take the opinions expressed by young people into consideration, encouraging a general climate of dialogue within society, encompassing social justice, critical thinking, active contributions and expressions of opinion, using the tools, means and opportunities provided by representative and participatory democracy at all levels of society.

2. Providing support and encouragement for young people, both individually and collectively through youth organisations, informal youth groups and activities and initiatives of other kinds, is essential to achieving the full participation of young people in democratic life.

3. The 'Youth in Action' programme provides a valuable tool for promoting young people's participation, not the least among young people with fewer opportunities, stimulating their involvement in local, regional and international projects, reflecting on their needs and ideas, as well as fostering their sense of responsibility.

#### 5. CONSIDER THAT:

1. To achieve active and successful participation in society, widespread knowledge on how to participate and on the respect for human rights and non-violence is crucial.

2. Voluntary activities as a form of participation play a key role in society and provide opportunities and tools for improving personal skills and a sense of solidarity and of social responsibility.

3. Adequate information and learning opportunities in formal education and non-formal learning are essential to enhancing participation of young people. Participation must be considered as a process which starts from an early age and continues throughout life. Therefore, participation should take place in all areas of life, for example in the family, in formal education, non-formal and informal learning as well as training, in out-of-school activities and in employment.

4. For effective participation in society, young people must acquire and develop key competences necessary for lifelong learning, especially communication skills, e-skills, learning to learn, social and civic competences, as well as cultural awareness and expression; participation also encourages the acquisition of key competences. Society should place great emphasis on the promotion of equal and open access to lifelong learning for all young people.

5. Participation in democratic life is a mutual and continuous process. Young people should be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies that affect them. Providing regular feedback to young people on the outcome of structured dialogue, public consultations or other forms of participation is critical. Similarly, it is important to provide information about the decision-making process and implementation of measures in areas that young people consider relevant.

#### 6. EMPHASISE THAT:

1. Access to information is key to participation. Despite the existence of different European information structures, networks and channels, a significant number of young people do not have access to the information necessary for participating in democratic life. New information and communication technologies (ICTs) can provide tools to connect young people with their communities and democratic structures and encourage their participation.

2. New media can be complementary to and interlinked with traditional participation processes and information channels. They can offer quick and attractive user-friendly tools for young people not only in their everyday communication but also in terms of encouraging their participation in democratic life. Using new or traditional media for delivering messages to and by young people in relation to participation in community life and representative democracy can be an appropriate way of adjusting to the needs of young people, since many of them use new ICTs regularly in their daily life.

3. Given that a large number of citizens have access to ICTs and the capacity to use them, ICTs can make mass consultations, large-scale, transnational debates and widespread participation possible and, depending on the methods used, they can contribute to making involvement in democratic decision-making more transparent all over Europe.

4. Improving key competences and media literacy of young people to enable them better to decode, use, influence and produce media is key to their being able to participate properly in democratic life. Both formal education systems and non-formal learning play an

essential role here, and establishing further contacts between the two areas would therefore be beneficial for both sides. Youth work is important for imparting information and developing media literacy and e-skills in order to enhance effective participation.

7. THEREFORE INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE TO:

- (a) use the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth with 'Youth on the Move' as one of its flagship initiatives to enhance civic engagement and democratic participation of young people. Skills acquired by young people in this context, such as leadership, communication, self-management, problem solving and using their own initiative, are useful for them both when entering the labour market and when seeking involvement in representative and participatory democracy;
- (b) strengthen the overall youth dimension, the role of youth work and youth participation in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the 'Youth on the Move' flagship initiative and widen the concept of youth mobility to all young people and youth workers, thereby facilitating the improvement of their personal skills and motivating them to achieve full participation in the education system, in the labour market and in community life;
- (c) continue to develop the key activities aimed at promoting young people's participation agreed upon in the Resolution on the renewed framework of European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018);
- (d) enhance digital and media literacy education in both non-formal learning and formal education in order to provide young people with the necessary skills to be increasingly actively involved in e-participation as outlined in the Europe 2020 Strategy's flagship initiative 'A Digital Agenda for Europe';
- (e) increase information to children and young people about their democratic rights and democratic values in general, promoting human rights as set out in the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and international conventions;
- (f) ensure and facilitate access for all children and young people to democratic life at local, regional, national and European levels, e.g. by providing more information about the possibilities for participation, by motivating them to participate and by developing existing and new fora for youth participation, paying special attention to young people with fewer opportunities and those not belonging to organised groups (associations, NGOs);
- (g) promote learning opportunities on democracy, participation and human rights for professionals working with and for children and young people; and support policymakers at all levels with the relevant information and knowledge on good practices in terms of innovative youth participation;
- (h) widen the scope and the range of opportunities for stakeholders in formal education and non-formal learning to act together to increase participation and civic involvement of young people and support various forms of 'learning to participate' from an early age;
- (i) take into consideration the cross-sectoral approach and the horizontal nature of policies affecting young people's living conditions when creating concepts, strategies, policies or tools promoting the active and responsible participation of young people by considering evidence and research in the youth field as a basis for policies relating to active citizenship and participation, as well as the opinions of young people;
- (j) reflect on the participation of young people in democratic life in the new Youth Report in 2012, analysing possible differences in participation between young women and young men as well as the participation patterns of young people with fewer opportunities;
- (k) examine, monitor and evaluate the methods already used for the participation of children and young people and, if necessary, develop further existing tools or introduce participation-related quality standards, guidelines, new technologies and methods;
- (l) set up a process of mutual learning within the open method of coordination in the youth field;
- (m) promote the involvement of young people and youth organisations in the development of concepts, strategies or action plans regarding youth participation in democratic life in Europe;
- (n) consider how to encourage all young people to take an active interest in the democratic process and, for those who are eligible, to use their vote;
- (o) provide support to youth organisations and initiatives at local, national and European level, promoting bottom-up ideas and opportunities for young people to participate in democratic life;
- (p) facilitate mobility of all young people through measures such as enhanced implementation of the Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU. This would enhance young people's personal and professional skills and competences as well as their employability.

## 8. INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

- study, consult on and reflect further on the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe,
  - develop further the statistical indicators on youth participation in democratic life in the Dashboard of youth indicators,
  - restructure the European Youth Portal in line with young people's needs for easy access to information,
  - ensure that young people's views continue to be taken into account when developing the next generation of the EU youth programme.
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## ANNEX

1. Council Resolution of 25 November 2003 on making school an open learning environment to prevent and combat early school leaving and disaffection among young people and to encourage their social inclusion (2003/C 295/02) <sup>(1)</sup>. In this Resolution the Council approved common objectives and identified participation by and information for young people as priority issues.
2. Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of 24 May 2005 meeting within the Council on implementing the common objectives for youth information (2005/C 141/03) <sup>(2)</sup>.
3. Decision No 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing the 'Youth in Action' programme for the period 2007 to 2013, which strongly supports the participation of young people, including various forms of volunteering <sup>(3)</sup>.
4. The Resolution on implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship adopted by Ministers for Youth in November 2006 <sup>(4)</sup>.
5. Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 22 May 2008, on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities <sup>(5)</sup>.
6. Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on a European approach to media literacy in the digital environment <sup>(6)</sup>.
7. Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth <sup>(7)</sup>.
8. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — Youth on the Move: An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union <sup>(8)</sup>.
9. Council conclusions of 19 November 2010 on the 'Youth on the Move' initiative — an integrated approach in response to the challenges young people face <sup>(9)</sup>.
10. Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 19 November 2010, on youth work <sup>(10)</sup>.
11. Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU <sup>(11)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 295, 5.12.2003, p. 6.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ C 141, 10.6.2005, p. 5.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 30.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 297, 7.12.2006, p. 6.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ C 141, 7.6.2008, p. 1.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 140, 6.6.2008, p. 8.

<sup>(7)</sup> COM(2010) 2020.

<sup>(8)</sup> COM(2010) 477 final.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ C 326, 3.12.2010, p. 9.

<sup>(10)</sup> OJ C 327, 4.12.2010, p. 1.

<sup>(11)</sup> OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8.