

IV

(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

COUNCIL

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2012 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18)

(2012/C 394/03)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council Resolution on the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18) ⁽¹⁾, also known as 'EU Youth Strategy', requires an EU Youth Report to be drawn up at the end of each three-year cycle, with a dual objective: namely to evaluate the progress, and to serve as a basis for establishing a set of priorities for the coming work cycle.

The draft Joint EU Youth Report is accompanied by two Commission Staff Working Documents: one which reviews the situation of young people in the EU and one which analyses actions taken under the renewed framework.

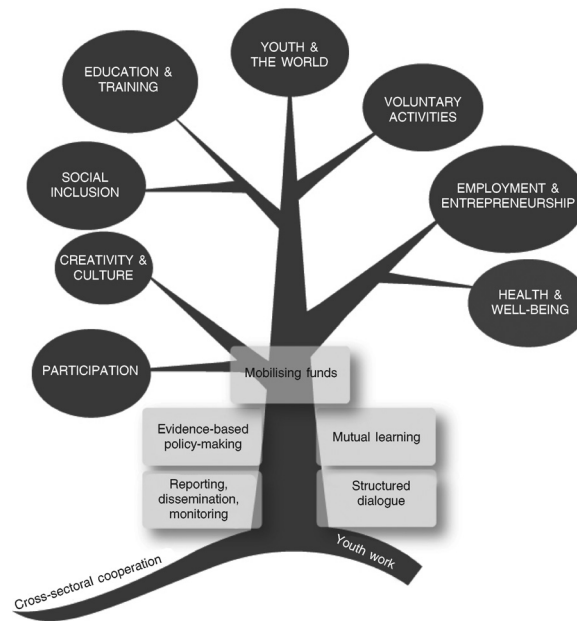
2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RENEWED FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION

In 2009, the Council endorsed a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18), based on the Communication 'EU Youth Strategy: Investing and Empowering'. By reinforcing cooperation and sharing good practices, the renewed framework's two overall objectives are to:

(i) create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market, and

(ii) promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.



The renewed framework is action-based. As illustrated by the tree diagram, it branches out into eight policy areas ('fields of action'): education & training; employment & entrepreneurship; social inclusion; health & well-being; participation; culture & creativity; volunteering and youth & the world.

The framework is rooted in the following instruments: evidence-based policy-making; mutual learning; regular progress-reporting, dissemination of results and monitoring; structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations and mobilisation of EU programmes and funds. This framework sees youth work ⁽¹⁾ as a support to all fields of action and cross-sectoral cooperation as an underlying principle.

3. EUROPE 2020 — SUPPORTING YOUTH IN A CONTEXT OF CRISIS

Europe is undergoing a crisis that has hit young Europeans with unprecedented levels of unemployment and the risk of social exclusion and poverty. Europe 2020, the EU strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, sets the framework for a coordinated European response in order to emerge stronger from the crisis and to improve the long-term prosperity of Europe's citizens.

Europe 2020 focuses strongly on young people, with a headline target of reducing early school-leaving and increasing tertiary attainment. Two other headline targets also share a clear youth dimension — to reduce the risk of poverty and to increase the share of the population in employment.

⁽¹⁾ Youth work covers a large scope of social, cultural, educational or political activities by, with and for young people. It is about 'out-of-school' education and leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. It is based on non-formal learning and voluntary participation.

Furthermore, the flagship initiative entitled Youth on the Move⁽¹⁾ promotes youth mobility, while young people are also included in An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs⁽²⁾ and A Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion⁽³⁾. In this regard, the Council has developed these initiatives further by adopting conclusions on the Youth on the Move initiative — an integrated approach in response to the challenges young people face⁽⁴⁾ and on the social dimension of education and training⁽⁵⁾.

[On 26 November 2012 the Council also reached political agreement on a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.]

In the second European Semester of economic policy coordination, the European Commission emphasised the need to act towards reducing the unacceptably high rate of youth unemployment. The Annual Growth Survey 2012, which sets out priorities for action at EU and national levels in order to boost growth and jobs, called on Member States to support youth employment. Concrete recommendations included promoting quality apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as entrepreneurial skills. It also called for reforms in employment legislation and in education and training. Expressing concerns that the social tissue of the EU is being put to the test, the Commission also called on Member States to protect the vulnerable, with regard to social protection, inclusion strategies and access to services ensuring integration in the labour market and society⁽⁶⁾. Country-specific recommendations⁽⁷⁾ have been adopted according to the particular situations of individual Member States.

Against this backdrop, the European Commission proposed a dedicated Youth Opportunities Initiative (YOI)⁽⁸⁾, which aims to mobilise resources and increase efforts to drive down youth unemployment and develop employability of young people. In this context, the Commission urged Member States to make better use of the European Social Fund to support young people. Commission action teams are assisting eight Member States⁽⁹⁾ where youth unemployment rates are above average. Furthermore, the recent 'Employment Package'⁽¹⁰⁾ includes a first progress report on the YOI and a consultation on a new quality framework for traineeships. The Council has dealt with youth unemployment and social inclusion by adopting a Resolution on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty⁽¹¹⁾ and promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives⁽¹²⁾.

The Commission is also endeavouring to lift obstacles that EU citizens, including the youth, encounter when invoking their rights as EU citizens, notably their right to free movement within the EU, including for volunteering, study or work.

Efforts to boost the employability, learning mobility and participation of young people are supported through the current Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action programmes, which — from 2014 onwards — will be succeeded by a new EU programme targeting education, training, youth and sport.

4. THE FIRST CYCLE OF THE RENEWED FRAMEWORK (2010-12)

Nearly all Member States report that the renewed framework has reinforced existing priorities at national level, with several Member States emphasising its direct impact. Lithuania, for example, mentions the renewed framework as a guiding document for developing its own National Youth Policy Programme, Austria mentions that the link between youth policy and labour market policies has been strengthened, and dialogue with youth has been further developed in the Flemish Community of Belgium.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2010) 477.

⁽²⁾ COM(2010) 682.

⁽³⁾ COM(2010) 758.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 326, 3.12.2010, p. 9.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 2.

⁽⁶⁾ COM(2011) 815.

⁽⁷⁾ COM(2012) 299.

⁽⁸⁾ COM(2011) 933.

⁽⁹⁾ Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain.

⁽¹⁰⁾ COM(2012)173, SWD(2012)98, SWD(2012)99.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ C 137, 27.5.2010, p. 1.

⁽¹²⁾ Doc. 11838/11.

The renewed framework advocates a cross-sectoral approach at all levels in implementing the youth policy framework. Most Member States report having a national youth strategy or a cross-sectoral plan targeting youth. All but two Member States have an inter-ministerial working group on youth or some other institutionalised mechanism. While some National Youth Reports set a good example, such groups often consist of different actors and stakeholders in the 'core' youth policy field, with little or no involvement from other government ministries, thereby limiting their cross-sectoral nature.

Against this background, it is recommended that the Commission and the Member States put a greater focus on developing cross-sectoral cooperation in particular with a view to examining how the approaches and methods of youth policy and youth work can be made use of in other relevant sectors. The creation of new cross-sectoral partnerships and development of joint projects and initiatives in the youth sector should be supported.

Youth work supports many fields of action. A majority of Member States report that they have taken measures to recognise, support and further develop youth work in line with the Council Resolution on youth work⁽¹⁾. In July 2010, a European Convention on Youth Work was held under the Belgian Presidency, bringing together policy-makers and youth stakeholders from across Europe resulting in the adoption of a declaration addressing priorities and actions for youth work in the coming years.

4.1. Implementing the eight fields of action

In each of its fields of action, the renewed framework proposes initiatives for the Member States and/or the Commission. Below is an overview of measures taken at EU level and those reported by Member States for the work cycle 2010-12⁽²⁾.

Education & Training

The Commission and Member States are working together to improve education and training through the 'ET2020' framework⁽³⁾. In this context, the Council adopted conclusions in response to the Commission communication that presented a strategy for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems in 2011⁽⁴⁾, and the Commission is preparing an initiative on 'Rethinking education: Investing in skills for better socioeconomic outcomes', which is due to be launched later in 2012 to support policy development on skills and competences.

The renewed framework focuses primarily on non-formal and informal learning as a complementary tool, in order to acquire the cross-cutting skills⁽⁵⁾ that are much appreciated in the labour market⁽⁶⁾. The Commission proposed a draft Council recommendation on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in September 2012⁽⁷⁾, and is also working on tools to make it easier to record the skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Both the Commission and Member States actively support youth organisations as an important provider of non-formal learning opportunities. Many Member States⁽⁸⁾ emphasise the role of youth work in reaching out to early school leavers and helping them to get back into education or work. In this context, they have recently taken action to raise awareness of non-formal and informal learning and to recognise learning outcomes at national level.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 327, 4.12.2010, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Activities in the Strategy's fields of action are further described in the Staff Working Document accompanying this Communication.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011; COM(2011) 567.

⁽⁵⁾ See also framework on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ L 394, 30.12.2006).

⁽⁶⁾ Eurobarometer survey 'employers' attitudes to skills'.

⁽⁷⁾ COM(2012) 485, 5.9.2012.

⁽⁸⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 14.

Employment & Entrepreneurship

Youth employment was the overall thematic priority of the first Trio Presidency after the entry into force of the renewed framework. During this period, the Council adopted resolutions on the active inclusion of young people ⁽¹⁾ and the role of youth work in promoting employability of young people.

According to National Youth Reports, several Member States have changed their labour laws or applied tax incentives to improve access to the labour market for young people. These are frequently combined with programmes to allow young people to gain work experience, including abroad. Many young people benefit from counselling, offered by education institutions, employment services or youth information services. Many countries offer targeted support, courses, counselling or work placements, to unemployed or vulnerable young people. Traineeships are frequently available as part of formal education and several countries have dual track education systems combining classroom teaching with apprenticeships ⁽²⁾.

The first cycle of Structured Dialogue also focused on youth employment. Young people also recommended concrete actions, which fed into a Council Resolution ⁽³⁾ highlighting the need for access to labour market information, non-formal learning, a quality framework for internships, focus on flexicurity and equal access to mobility. The recommendations and the best practices from Member States inspired subsequent Commission initiatives, such as the draft recommendation on non-formal and informal learning and in the wider context of the Youth Opportunities Initiative.

Entrepreneurship education is being increasingly promoted in most European countries. To date, eight countries have launched specific strategies, while 13 others include it as a part of their national lifelong learning, youth or growth strategies ⁽⁴⁾.

At EU-level, youth entrepreneurship was given a more visible profile during European Youth Week, raising awareness of the value of entrepreneurial skills and of starting a business as a career option. Also, a number of actions are currently being taken to support entrepreneurial learning at all levels of education.

It is recommended that Member States and the Commission maintain their joint efforts to fight youth unemployment and further develop cross-sectoral initiatives in this field.

Health & Well-being

At EU level, young people are a particular target group of EU health initiatives put in place to tackle smoking, alcohol related harm, nutrition, obesity and drug-use.

All but two Member States report that they have taken concrete measures to follow up the Council Resolution on the Health and Well-being of Young People ⁽⁵⁾. Many Member States ⁽⁶⁾ mention initiatives that focus on specific issues, such as alcohol, tobacco or healthy nutrition, or emphasise the value of peer-to-peer education in promoting healthy lifestyles.

Social Inclusion

EU initiatives to combat youth unemployment also make important contributions to the social inclusion of young people. A majority of Member States ⁽⁷⁾ also addressed youth as a specific target group during the European Year of 2010: Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. These initiatives stress the need to fight poverty from an early age in order to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 137, 27.5.2010, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 27.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 164, 2.6.2011, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe, European Commission, 2012.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 1.

⁽⁶⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 57.

⁽⁷⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 51.

Many Member States ⁽¹⁾ confirm the importance of a cross-sectoral approach to social inclusion, linking it with education, employment or health policies, for example. Many of them report on specialised training programmes for youth workers, youth leaders and young people to develop intercultural awareness and combat prejudice. A number of Member States ⁽²⁾ cited examples of youth-targeted support measures related to housing.

Consequently, it is recommended for Member States to issue knowledge and evidence-based reports on young people's social situation and living conditions. In this regard, the Member States could also be encouraged to take measures to combat transgenerational poverty and exclusion through using cross-sectoral cooperation.

Participation

Youth participation has figured prominently on the EU youth policy agenda in recent years. Participation is key to youth policy in all Member States and many activities have been carried out, including the development of structures for involving young people in decision-making and review of the quality of participatory mechanisms. Activities were also undertaken to promote wider involvement of youth in participation, including production of relevant information material and room for more dialogue online.

The Council confirmed its dedication to this field by making 'youth participation in democratic life' the overall priority of the second Trio Presidency in the youth field (mid 2011-12), in line with Article 165 TFEU. The Council also adopted a resolution on new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life in Europe ⁽³⁾. Structured Dialogue has become an increasingly influential instrument for involving young people in decision-making. All Member States have set up National Working Groups to organise consultations with young people in their countries and to feed into EU-level debates.

The Commission took steps to strengthen the evidence base on participation through the Eurobarometer on 'Youth on the Move' ⁽⁴⁾ and a forthcoming study on changing patterns of youth participation. It furthermore initiated two processes that will come to fruition in the next three-year cycle: namely redeveloping the European Youth Portal ⁽⁵⁾ as an interactive platform for online engagement, and a 'Youth on the Move Card' which would further enable youth mobility and participation through incentives, information and support services.

Young people's participation in political processes is taking place in new ways, e.g. through signing petitions, making statements online and in social media etc.

Consequently, Member States and the Commission should identify which forms of participation meet the demands of young people and provide them with diverse forms of support.

Voluntary Activities

Member States and the Commission have worked together to implement the Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU ⁽⁶⁾ in an expert group. Around half of the Member States ⁽⁷⁾ report that they have raised awareness about opportunities for mobility of young volunteers further to this recommendation. Alongside the European Voluntary Service, a number of Member States report having bilateral or multi-lateral exchange programmes.

Several Member States ⁽⁸⁾ report that they have developed national volunteering schemes or have established a new civic service. Many Member States quote the Youth in Action programme, particularly the European Voluntary Service (EVS) as an important, if not the main source for youth volunteering in another country.

⁽¹⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 45.

⁽²⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 47.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 169, 9.6.2011, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ Youth on the Move — Analytical reports, target group age 15-30.

⁽⁵⁾ <http://europa.eu/youth>

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8.

⁽⁷⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 75.

⁽⁸⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 69.

A number of countries conduct bi-lateral or multi-lateral exchange programmes. In a number of countries, prevention of exclusion is part of broader youth strategies and funding schemes, also covering volunteering.

Member States actively undertake efforts ensuring that the value of volunteering experiences is duly recognised, through e.g. Youthpass, outreach to the labour market or social recognition. Also, a number of Member States pursue strategic approaches to promoting youth volunteering for example to achieve social goals. The European Year of Volunteering (2011) involved young people and youth organisations in emphasising its youth dimension.

Given that overall, data show that participation in cross-border voluntary activities still concerns a minority of young Europeans, the Member States are invited to take note of the potential barriers to volunteering and consider possible actions/measures to tackle these barriers ⁽¹⁾.

Culture & Creativity

Member States and the Commission cooperate closely in this area through a European Agenda for Culture ⁽²⁾. The Council emphasised the importance of creativity, culture and the role of young people in a number of its conclusions ⁽³⁾. Under the renewed framework, a study on youth access to culture in Europe from 2010 ⁽⁴⁾ included good practices and proposals to address obstacles such as cost and distance.

Although the Member States acknowledge the links between culture and creativity and youth policy, the National Youth Reports do not report many activities in this field of action.

Youth & the World

Through the youth partnership with the Council of Europe, the Commission organised and contributed to high-level youth policy symposia in its Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods ⁽⁵⁾. The Council adopted Conclusions on the Eastern Dimension of Youth Participation ⁽⁶⁾ designed to reach out further into Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Moreover, a decision was taken to set up an Eastern Partnership Youth Window to fund more opportunities for youth partnerships and cooperation under the Youth in Action programme. Activities were organised in Europe and China throughout the 2011 EU-China Youth Year. The Commission also contributed to the UN Year of Youth and its youth summit in Mexico in 2011; it also co-organised two policy conferences as part of a bilateral cooperation agreement with Canada.

Member States report that they had been active in this field of action prior to 2010, and they continue to underline its relevance. Almost half of the Member States ⁽⁷⁾ report that they have addressed this issue in their education curricula or as part of youth policy strategies. Most Member States provide opportunities for young people to exchange views with policy-makers on global issues.

4.2. Implementation instruments

The renewed framework applies a set of dedicated instruments to pursue activities in the eight fields described above. The following paragraphs assess to what extent these instruments have been used successfully in order to achieve the overall objectives of the strategy, based on the Commission's assessment and inputs from the national reports provided by Member States.

⁽¹⁾ Council Recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union (OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8).

⁽²⁾ OJ C 287, 29.11.2007, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 326, 3.12.2010; p. 2; OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 19; OJ C 169, 15.6.2012, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ Interarts, EACEA/2008/01.

⁽⁵⁾ Sharm-al-Sheikh (2010), Odessa (2011), Tbilisi (2012), Tunis (2012).

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 10.

⁽⁷⁾ Doc. 13707/12 ADD 1, p. 86.

Evidence-based Policy-making

Further to the renewed framework, the Commission — together with experts nominated by Member States and youth stakeholders — developed a dashboard of EU Youth Indicators, which was released in 2011 ⁽¹⁾. This dashboard presents 40 indicators covering all eight fields of action.

During the first work cycle of the renewed framework, the Commission carried out two studies ⁽²⁾ and conducted a Flash Eurobarometer-survey on youth. The EU-CoE youth partnership also contributed to strengthening the evidence-base for youth policy in Europe through the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCY) and its National Correspondents and the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR).

Mutual Learning

Further to the renewed framework, a number of different events contributed to mutual learning, including through peer learning activities, conferences and seminars, high level fora or expert groups as well as through, studies and analyses.

Aside from opportunities to exchange experience during conferences and at meetings of Directors-General for youth, a Commission study ⁽³⁾ documents the fact that the development of EU Youth Indicators has not only improved the recognition and visibility of youth policy, but has also triggered positive developments in Member States, both in pursuing cross-sectoral cooperation and in applying an evidence-based approach. Expert groups with national representatives are in place to review the Dashboard of Indicators and to implement the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU. Mutual learning was also achieved through a specific peer-learning activity on cross-sectoral cooperation ⁽⁴⁾.

A new expert group on peer-learning on the 'creative and innovative capacity of young people and their skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning relevant for employability' was set up in May 2012 ⁽⁵⁾. This is a useful measure to further develop mutual learning in the context of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field in a more structured manner.

It is recommended that the coordination of the peer learning activities is further developed. The Commission and the Member States should consider how the data and examples of best practices in Member States could be better used to produce more effective mutual learning exercises in the future.

Regular Progress-reporting, Dissemination of Results and Monitoring

For this reporting exercise, the Commission developed an online questionnaire which addressed specific concrete action lines mentioned in the renewed framework. This made it possible to conduct a comparative assessment of the National Youth Reports submitted by all Member States, Norway, Switzerland, Montenegro and Croatia ⁽⁶⁾. Input was also provided by the European Youth Forum, the representative platform of international non-governmental youth organisations and national youth councils.

In addition to releasing the Staff Working Document to the EU Youth Report, all National Youth Reports are made public on the Commission's website. This Report should be properly distributed on the national level within the Member States. This is in line with the renewed framework, which calls for broad dissemination of the results of the reporting exercise.

⁽¹⁾ SEC(2011) 401.

⁽²⁾ Studies on youth access to culture (InterARTS, 2010) and youth participation in democratic life (London School of Economics, 2012).

⁽³⁾ *Assessing practices for using indicators in fields related to youth*. Final report for the European Commission, DG Education and Culture (Ecorys, 2011).

⁽⁴⁾ Organised under the Spanish Presidency.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 169, 15.6.2012, p. 1.

⁽⁶⁾ These four non-EU countries responded to the Commission's invitation to EU candidate countries and EFTA states to submit National Youth Reports on a voluntary basis. Separate contributions were submitted by Belgium's three language communities.

The Commission and the Member States should consider how the indicators, data and examples of best practice in Member States could be better used with a view to producing more comprehensive EU youth reports in the future.

Structured Dialogue with Young People and Youth Organisations

The Structured Dialogue with young people provides a good framework for consultation, peer learning and the sharing of experience among national policy-makers and young people in the youth field. Every six months, EU Youth Conferences are organised by the country holding the Presidency, with the support of the Commission. These conferences bring together young people and policy-makers from across the EU to discuss the results of the Structured Dialogue and to make joint recommendations which are fed into the process through which the Council adopts resolutions or conclusions.

All Member States established National Working Groups for Structured Dialogue with young people early in the first cycle. The Structured Dialogue — which is an elaborate and formal method of consultation with young people — has become a vibrant and integral part of youth policy-making. The consultations during the first Trio Presidency (2010-11) resulted in valuable joint recommendations between youth policy-makers and young people on the most pressing employment issues.

In 2011, a second cycle of Structured Dialogue started with the theme of youth participation. A great number of youth leaders and young people were directly involved in the process.

For the improvement of the consultation process and its monitoring, the participation of other experts at local, regional, national and European level in the National Working Groups should be promoted, depending on the relevant thematic priority of the Structured Dialogue. Moreover, the results of the Structured Dialogue should be disseminated to cross-sectoral stakeholders. There should be a clear role for youth researchers in the process.

The EU Youth Conference should be strengthened as a forum for Structured Dialogue between all young people, youth organisations and policy-makers with a view to reaching tangible political outcomes. Where possible, the involvement of youth researchers should be promoted.

Mobilisation of EU programmes

The Youth in Action programme is a key instrument to support the renewed framework. Alongside the Lifelong Learning programme, it has contributed to the learning mobility of young people. It focuses on non-formal learning activities for young people, youth workers and youth organisations. In line with the renewed framework, it promotes a sense of citizenship and solidarity among young people and places the emphasis on youth work, volunteering and civic activities as a suitable environment in which to acquire transversal skills. This programme involved around 150 000 and 185 000 participants in 2010 and 2011 respectively, which was a noticeable increase compared to the beginning of the programme (111 000 participants in 2007).

Almost all Member States report having used other sources of EU funding, such as the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and/or PROGRESS to integrate young people into the labour market. The cohesion funds have also been used to support the development of active citizenship, participation and competences of young people.

It is recommended that the Youth in Action Programme and the future EU programme for education, training, youth and sport support the implementation of the renewed framework without prejudice to negotiations on the future Multiannual Financial Framework.

5. THE NEXT CYCLE OF THE RENEWED FRAMEWORK (2013-15)

Strengthening the link between the renewed framework and Europe 2020

According to the Council Resolution on the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, a number of priorities for European cooperation will be set for each work cycle to contribute to the fields of action identified under the framework. The priorities for the next cycle are to be adopted on the basis of the current EU Youth Report.

The EU presidencies focused in the first cycle on 'employment and entrepreneurship' and 'participation'. The renewed framework and its fields of action together encompass the full range of issues that concern young people in transition, albeit affecting them to differing degrees. More importantly, the renewed framework acknowledges and reinforces inter-relationships between these fields and among stakeholders, to deliver effective instruments to achieve policy coordination and synergies.

The EU and National Youth Reports confirm the robustness and relevance of the renewed framework and its two overall objectives: (i) creating more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market, and (ii) promoting citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. Both tie in well with Europe 2020, the Annual Growth Survey 2012, Youth on the Move and the Youth Opportunities Initiative.

The priorities for the next work cycle should reflect the current overall priorities and activities under Europe 2020. Youth employment will remain high on the EU agenda. Building on the Annual Growth Survey 2012 and possible reviews of priorities under the upcoming Annual Growth Survey 2013, and on the Youth Opportunities Initiative, Member States should in particular target young people who are not in employment, education or training, and therein make full use of available EU funding. They should undertake more efforts to increase young people's access to work, apprenticeships and traineeships and improve their employability.

The Commission supports the efforts of Member States with new EU initiatives, such as Your first EURES job, which helps young people find a job abroad, support to the development of Youth Guarantees⁽¹⁾ and a quality framework for traineeships, in which youth work can play a valuable role in partnership with education institutions and employment services. It has also increased possibilities for learning mobility through the Lifelong Learning⁽²⁾ and Youth in Action⁽³⁾ programmes. Furthermore, the cross-cutting tools developed under the Renewed Framework can serve to foster partnerships between different actors involved in delivering support to young people in all the different aspects of transition, including employment services, education institutions, youth work, social services, employers and young people themselves.

Stronger cooperation on the ground can be beneficial in offering tailor-made approaches, especially to young people with more complex life situations or that are hard to reach through conventional methods. The renewed framework can also play a role in the promotion and recognition of non-formal and informal learning through youth work and in encouraging participation in youth organisations as means to gain transversal skills. It can thereby contribute to strengthening synergies between different forms of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The situation on the labour market and unemployment has related social effects. The Annual Growth Survey 2012 refers to clear signs of increases in the number of people at risk of income poverty, notably child poverty, and social exclusion, with acute health problems and homelessness in the most extreme cases. A growing group of young people are at risk of social exclusion.

Young people are at serious risk of social exclusion and poverty — A headline target of Europe 2020 is to reduce the share of the EU population at risk of social exclusion and poverty by 20 million, or 25 %, by 2020. The share of young people at such risk is higher than that of the general population. Between 2009 and 2010, the increase in the number of young people at risk was significantly higher than for the total population. Also, young people's well-being is under pressure — While high unemployment rates have resulted in more low-income families and jobless households, and with young people being most at risk of

⁽¹⁾ The Commission intends to propose by the end of 2012 a Council recommendation on guidelines to establish youth guarantees.

⁽²⁾ 130 000 company placements in 2012 in other EU countries for university-level and vocational students.

⁽³⁾ 10 000 young people with opportunities through the European Voluntary Service.

poverty and social exclusion, the crisis has also had an impact on the health and wellbeing of young people. Unemployment, impoverishment, inadequate housing conditions and family disruptions significantly increase the risk of mental health problems such as depression, alcohol abuse disorders and suicide. As detriments to health and well-being can often last for life, they have a particularly serious impact on young people.

The renewed framework can play a role in the participation of *all* young people in various aspects of society. It addresses a multitude of challenges linked to exclusion, alienation and young people's efforts in building an independent life and a responsible life. For the coming years, the renewed framework should increasingly focus on social inclusion as well as the health and well-being of young people. To this purpose, it needs to step up its focus on participation in democratic and societal activities, as well as build on youth work in developing young people's life skills, their overall personal development and a sense of belonging to the society in which they live.

In order to better respond to the challenges listed above, the Member States and Commission should explore ways of further developing expertise and availability of examples of best practice in the areas where the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) could be used to create added value. It is proposed that the specific areas of social inclusion as well as the health and well-being of young people could benefit from this type of cooperation.

Taking implementation forward

Cross-sectoral cooperation can be further improved across all policy areas that affect young people. Member States and the Commission should seek to further enhance cross-sectoral cooperation at national and European level. Additional efforts should be made to strengthen the evidence base of youth policy and to share examples of good practice through mutual learning.

Youth policy should continue the dialogue with young people, in order to fully understand the challenges youth face and their expectations towards policy-makers and providers of support services to young people. The Structured Dialogue with young people can be further developed by further evaluation of the process and outcome of the structured dialogue, building on the recommendations from the European Youth Week and the findings from this report, by making the membership of National Working Groups more inclusive and ensuring that decision-makers take recommendations from young people more fully into account.

The Commission will develop the initiative of the 'Youth on the Move Card' in order to make it easier for young people to be mobile across Europe. It will also reach out to, and facilitate dialogue with, *all* young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities, through the new interactive tools of the European Youth Portal. Youth policy will also explore measures to foster the creative and innovative potential of young people when attempting to tackle challenges related to employment, employability and inclusion ⁽¹⁾.

The Youth in Action programme and the future EU programme targeting youth, and other beneficiaries will play a particular role in supporting these initiatives.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the first three-year work cycle of the renewed framework, covering 2010-12, demonstrated that it is both lasting and flexible as a framework for a whole range of actions — by the Commission, Member States and other relevant stakeholders. The renewed framework, with its cross-sectoral and all-inclusive perspective, has been greeted with interest and has inspired not only EU Member States, but also countries outside the EU.

The renewed framework has served as a vehicle to forge links between fields of action, including employment & entrepreneurship, education & training and social inclusion, to develop multi-faceted solutions in support of young people. This has proved relevant for example in looking for answers to address the current high levels of youth unemployment and to support the growing number of young people who are not in employment, education or training. Youth work has contributed to young people's development and has the potential to do more in all fields of action.

⁽¹⁾ Council Conclusions on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people (OJ C 169, 15.6.2012, p. 1).

The participation of young people in democratic life is central to youth policy. Deepening and widening the dialogue with young people not only raises both the quality and legitimacy of youth policy, but also raises expectations for the EU and its Member States to deliver. The EU should do its utmost to encourage its young people to become involved in shaping the EU's future, particularly on those issues which — as successive consultations and opinion surveys have demonstrated — matter most to them. In this context youth organisations and youth work play a key role.

In order to further its contribution to Europe 2020, the second three-year work cycle of the renewed framework (2013-15) should in the first place address the challenges facing young people as a result of the crisis. Emphasis should continue to be placed on employment and entrepreneurship, increasing access to work, along with developing the innovative and creative capacities of young people. It should also increasingly focus on social inclusion, health and well-being.

The current programme Youth in Action is contributing to achieving the objectives of the renewed framework. The future EU programme targeting young people should continue to contribute towards achieving these objectives.
