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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 a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018**

(2015/C 417/01)

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

I. INTRODUCTION

1. RECOGNISE that, since the adoption of the Resolution on a Renewed Framework for European cooperation in the Youth field 2010-2018, and the adoption of the EU Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015, the crisis has continued to have a deep and disproportional impact on young people in Europe and their transition into adulthood.
2. RECOGNISE that there is a need for reinforced cross-sectoral cooperation in the youth field at EU level in order to adequately deal with these challenges.
3. TAKE NOTE of the European Commission's intention to prioritise combating radicalisation, marginalisation of youth and promoting inclusion of young people in social, cultural and civic life under the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation on Education and Training ('ET 2020'), the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), the EU Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017) and the Culture Work Plan (2015-2018). ⁽¹⁾
4. TAKE NOTE of the joint Council Commission EU Youth Report 2015 ⁽²⁾, notably its section 5, 'The way forward in EU youth cooperation'.

Consequently AGREE to establish a 36 month EU Work Plan for Youth for Member States and Commission action for the period of 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018, in order to support the implementation of the Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018).

II. PRINCIPLES

5. CONSIDER that the Work Plan, whilst respecting subsidiarity, should be governed by the following guiding principles. It should:
 - build on the achievements of the previous Work Plan for Youth (2014-2015);
 - give impetus and prominence as appropriate to EU level work in the youth field;
 - ensure, through cross-sectorial cooperation, the awareness of other EU policy domains on the specific issues faced by young people;
 - contribute to the overarching priorities of the EU's security, economic and social policy agendas;
 - work towards knowledge and evidence based youth policy;

⁽¹⁾ COM(2015) 185 final.

⁽²⁾ Doc. 13635/15

- remain a flexible instrument which can lead to adequate responses to a changing policy environment in a timely way;
 - promote a cooperative and concerted approach among Member States and the Commission enabling them to create added value on the priority themes set out in paragraph 6 (see below);
 - build on synergies with the Erasmus+ programme, inter alia, by contributing to the identification of youth specific priorities for the Erasmus+ annual work programme;
 - involve young people making use of consultative procedures to ensure that the Work Plan addresses the issues that are relevant to them.
6. AGREE that, in light of current developments, the following themes should be given priority by Member States and the Commission in their cooperation at EU level for the period covered by the present Work Plan up to the end of 2018:

Youth work and cross-sectorial cooperation shall be strengthened with the following aims, in line with the priorities agreed in the joint EU Youth Report 2015:

- A. Increased social inclusion of all young people, taking into account the underlying European values;
 - B. Stronger participation of all young people in democratic and civic life in Europe;
 - C. Easier transition of young people from youth to adulthood, in particular the integration into the labour market;
 - D. Support to young people's health and well-being, including mental health;
 - E. Contribution to addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital era for youth policy, youth work and young people;
 - F. Contribution to responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of young migrants and refugees in the European Union.
7. AGREE that, while Member States and the Commission's action, as set out in Annex I, shall be directed towards all young people, particular emphasis shall be given to the following groups:
- Young people at risk of marginalisation
 - Young people neither in employment, nor education or training (NEET)
 - Young people with a migrant background, including newly arrived immigrants and young refugees.
8. AGREE that the Work Plan may be revised by the Council in light of results achieved and policy developments at EU level.
9. AGREE on a list of specific actions in line with these priority themes and a timetable for their implementation, as set out in Annex I.

III. WORKING METHODS AND STRUCTURES

10. RECOGNISE that:

There is a need to reinforce youth mainstreaming and results-oriented cross sectorial cooperation within the Council in order to ensure, when possible, that policy making in all relevant areas takes into account young people's aspirations, conditions and needs.

11. AGREE that

- The following working methods will, where appropriate, support the implementation of this Work Plan: the Open Method of Coordination as agreed in the Renewed Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field, and notably, knowledge and evidence-based policymaking, expert groups, peer learning activities, peer reviews, studies, conferences, seminars, dissemination of results, the Informal Forum with youth representatives, Directors General for Youth meetings and the Structured Dialogue with young people.

- All methods, including the expert groups, will focus their work on the priority themes outlined in Section II, paragraph 6, and on actions and target dates listed in Annex I. The actions in Annex I may be revised by the Council and the Representatives of Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, in light of results achieved and policy developments at EU level.
- The principles relating to membership and functioning of the expert groups are set out in the Annex II.
- With respect to the right of young people to participate in the development, the implementation and the assessment of policies affecting them, the consultative procedures will allow young people to engage in joint reflection on the priority themes of this Work Plan.
- The informal meetings of Directors General for Youth shall examine strategic issues arising in connection with this Work Plan, as well as those relating more generally to EU youth policy.
- In the first half of 2018, the implementation of the present Work Plan will be evaluated by the Council and the Commission, on the basis of the joint assessment of its implementation, to be carried out in the context of the EU Youth Report.

12. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, INVITE

Member States and the Commission to establish expert groups on the following subjects for the duration of the current Work Plan:

- Defining the specific contribution of youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning to
 - a) fostering active citizenship and participation of young people in diverse and tolerant societies as well as preventing marginalisation, and radicalisation potentially resulting in violent behaviour.
 - b) responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of young migrants and refugees in the European Union
- Addressing the risks, opportunities, and implications of digitalization for youth, youth work and youth policy.

IV. ACTIONS

13. INVITE MEMBER STATES, WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

- work together with the support of the Commission, using the working methods specified by this Resolution;
- continue promoting the active involvement of youth ministries in national policy-making related to the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester, following up on the Council Conclusions on 'Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of Europe 2020 Strategy';
- take due account of the Renewed Framework for European cooperation in the Youth field 2010-2018 and of this Work Plan when developing policy at national and regional level, where appropriate;
- inform relevant authorities, young people and youth organisations on progress made in implementing the EU Work Plan on Youth, in order to ensure relevance and visibility of activities.

14. INVITE THE PRESIDENCIES OF THE COUNCIL TO:

- based on the results of the mid-term evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy, consider appropriate follow-up;
- take into account, in the context of the Team Presidency, the EU Work Plan priority themes when developing their programme;
- inform the Council Youth Working Party on the work carried out by other Council preparatory bodies that has a direct or indirect impact on young people or youth policy;
- take into account, in the context of the Team Presidency, pending elements of the previous Work Plan (2014-2015);
- consider proposing a new Work Plan at the end of the 36 months covered by the present Resolution, on the basis of the assessment and evaluation referred to in point 11;

- provide opportunities for Member States and stakeholders in the youth field to discuss the future of the European cooperation in the youth field after 2018;
- propose to the Directors General for Youth in their customary informal meeting to discuss and take up the results obtained under the Work Plan, to organise extraordinary joint cross sectorial Directors General meetings when appropriate, to widely disseminate the results and to contribute to the assessment of the implementation of the EU Work Plan on Youth.

15. INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

- support the capacity building of youth workers and in youth work, through the implementation of the *Erasmus+ programme*, as one of the key elements for the development of quality youth work in Europe;
- support and work with the Member States in the implementation of this Work Plan, in particular the actions outlined in the Annex;
- inform the Member States on ongoing or planned initiatives and studies in EU youth policy and other relevant policy areas impacting on youth and respective developments in the Commission;
- regularly consult and inform stakeholders at European level, including civil society and youth representatives, on the progress of the Work Plan in order to ensure relevance and visibility of activities.
- encourage better outreach of and synergies within the EU programmes as well as cooperation with other international organisations like the Council of Europe.

16. INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

- continue close cooperation at expert level in accordance with Annexes I and II of this Resolution;
 - take into account the priorities of this Work Plan in the preparations for the annual Erasmus+ work programme in the field of youth, inter alia, regarding the general objectives of the annual Erasmus+ Work Programme, the Partnership Agreement with the Council of Europe, and the Youth Wiki;
 - encourage other sectors to take the youth dimension into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other policy fields, with particular attention to ensuring the early and effective inclusion of the youth dimension in the policy development process;
 - promote better recognition of the contribution of youth policies to the overall goals of European policies addressing young people, considering positive effects on active citizenship, employment, social inclusion, culture and innovation, education and training as well as health and well-being.
-

ANNEX I

Actions, Instruments, Deadlines based on priority themes

Actions based on priority themes

Working method/Instrument	Output and target date	Ref.
<p><i>Priority A:</i></p> <p>Increased social inclusion of all young people, taking into account the underlying European values</p>		
<p>Council and preparatory Bodies</p> <p>The role of the youth sector in preventing violent radicalisation</p>	<p>First Half 2016</p> <p>(poss.) Council Debate</p>	A1
<p>Knowledge and evidence-based policymaking</p> <p>Commission Study on youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European Union</p>	<p>Second half 2016:</p> <p>Handbook for Implementation</p>	A2
<p>Structured dialogue/Council and preparatory Bodies</p> <p>‘Essential life skills and competences of young people in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe for active participation in community and working life.’</p>	<p>First Half of 2017:</p> <p>(poss.) Council Resolution</p>	A3
<p><i>Priority B:</i></p> <p>Stronger participation of all young people in democratic and civil life in Europe</p>		
<p>Expert Group</p> <p>Defining the specific contribution of youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning to fostering active citizenship and participation of young people in diverse and tolerant societies and preventing marginalisation, radicalisation potentially resulting in violent behaviour.</p>	<p>First Half 2017</p> <p>— Report</p> <p>— (poss.) Council Conclusions</p>	B1
<p>Knowledge and evidence-based policymaking</p> <p>Commission Study on the impact of transnational volunteering through the European Voluntary Service</p>	<p>First Half 2017:</p> <p>— Report</p> <p>— (poss.) Council Conclusions responding to the Study</p>	B2
<p>Seminar for youth and sports policymakers:</p> <p>‘Democracy, youth and sport — cross-sectoral approaches for the active participation and engagement of young people in civic and democratic life through sport.’</p>	<p>Second Half of 2017:</p> <p>Seminar report on best practices and recommendations on how cross-sectoral approaches between youth and sport can promote democratic values and civic engagement among young people.</p>	B3

Working method/Instrument	Output and target date	Ref.
Priority C: Easier transition of young people from youth to adulthood, in particular the integration into the labour market		
Peer learning among Member States and Commission/Directors General 'Youth work as a recognised and value added tool for cross-sectoral co-operation in supporting young people's transition to adulthood and the world of work.'	Second half of 2017: Report on best practices and recommendations on youth work as a recognised and value added tool for cross-sectoral cooperation in supporting young people's transition to adulthood and the world of work.	C1
Knowledge and evidence-based policymaking Commission Study on Youth work and youth entrepreneurship	Second Half 2017 — Report — (poss.) Council Conclusions responding to the Study	C2
Priority D: Support to young people's health and well-being, including mental health		
Council and preparatory Bodies Cross-sectoral cooperation on participation to promote young people's health and well-being in the transition to adulthood, in particular for youth with mental health issues ⁽¹⁾ , often related to their transition to adulthood. Focussing on their possible contribution to society instead of their problems.	a) First Half 2016 (poss.) Council Conclusions	D1
	b) Second Half 2017 Cross-sectoral peer learning amongst Member States	D2
Priority E: Contribution to addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital era for youth policy, youth work and young people		
Council and preparatory Bodies New approaches in youth work in order to maximize the development of potential and talent of young people and their inclusion in the society. New, modern and appealing ways of youth work including on-line youth work practices will be highlighted in order to reflect the new trends in young people's lives and the maximizing the outreach of youth work to include more young people in its activities.	Second Half 2016 (poss.) Council Conclusions	E1
Peer Learning New practices in youth work and making the youth work more appealing to young people.	First Half 2017 Report on existing practises reflecting the trends and recommendations on implementation into daily youth work practise	E2

⁽¹⁾ Which includes severe and common psychiatric problems, psychological distress and (temporary) psychological malfunctioning in periods with tempting life challenges or crises.

Working method/Instrument	Output and target date	Ref.
Expert Group 'Risks, opportunities, and implications of digitalization for youth, youth work and youth policy'	Second Half 2017 Report of the expert Group	E3
Knowledge and evidence-based policymaking Commission Study on Impact of internet and social media on youth participation and youth work	First Half 2018 Report	E4
Council and preparatory Bodies Development of innovative methods in youth work, including digital tools, in order to better meet young people's needs and aspirations in more efficient, smart and relevant way and to foster cross-sectoral co-operation.	First Half 2018 (poss.) Council Conclusions, responding, i.a. to actions E3 and E4 above.	E5
Priority F: Contribution to responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of young migrants and refugees in the European Union.		
Expert Group Defining the specific contribution of youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning to responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of young migrants and refugees in the European Union	Second Half 2018 — Report — (poss.) Council Conclusions responding to the Report	F1

Other			
Topic	Instrument/Action	Output and target date	
EU Youth Strategy	Peer Learning (a) Commission proposal for a flexible framework	First Half 2016 Formalisation of Flexible Framework for Peer Learning Activities	O1
	Knowledge and evidence-based policymaking (b) Mid-Term Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Recommendation of the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the European Union	Second Half 2016: (poss.) Council Conclusions responding to the evaluation, including evaluation of the Council Recommendation on Mobility of Young Volunteers across the European Union	O2
	(c) EU Youth Report	First Half 2018: Joint EU Youth Report	O3

Topic	Instrument/Action	Output and target date	
Erasmus+	<i>Knowledge and evidence-based policymaking</i> Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and its predecessor programs	<i>First Half 2018:</i> Response to the evaluation in cooperation with the relevant sectors (Education, Training, Youth, Sports)	O4

ANNEX II

Principles relating to the membership and functioning of expert groups established by the Member States and the Commission in the framework of the EU Work Plan for Youth (1 January 2016-31 December 2018)

Membership:

- The participation of Member States in the work of the groups is voluntary and Member States can join them at any time.
- Member States interested in participating in the work of the groups will nominate experts as members of the respective groups. Member States will ensure that the nominated experts have relevant experience in the relevant field at national level. The nominated experts will ensure effective communication with competent national authorities. The Commission shall coordinate the nomination exercise.
- Each expert group can decide to invite other participants: independent experts, representatives of youth organisations, youth researchers, and other stakeholders, as well as representatives of third countries. Each expert group can propose to add other participants for the whole working period with the requirement that their membership be approved unanimously by the expert group.

Mandate

The mandate of the Expert Group shall be proposed by the Commission in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Work Plan and adjusted in the light of the comments expressed at the Council Working Party on Youth.

Working procedures

- Expert groups will concentrate on delivering a small number of concrete and useable results on the subject requested.
- To implement this Work Plan, each expert group will be responsible for appointing its chair or co-chairs at the first expert group meeting after the adoption of the Work Plan. The election of the Chairs will be conducted in an open and transparent manner coordinated by the Commission acting as the secretariat of the expert groups. Each expert group will prepare a work schedule according to this Work Plan.
- The Commission will provide expertise as well as logistical support to the work of the groups. To the extent possible, it shall support the groups by other suitable means (including studies relevant to their field of work).

Reporting and information

The Chairs of the expert groups will report to the Working Party on Youth on progress made and outcomes produced. If appropriate, the Council Working Party on Youth will provide further guidance to the expert group, in order to guarantee the desired outcome and timeline. Directors General shall be kept informed on the outcomes produced.

The meeting agendas and meeting reports of all groups will be available to all Member States, irrespective of their degree of participation in a given area. Outputs of groups shall be published.

Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe

(2015/C 417/02)

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

RECALLING THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THIS ISSUE, IN PARTICULAR:

1. The Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) ⁽¹⁾ which identifies participation as one of the fields of action and its aim to support young people's participation in representative democracy and civil society at all levels and in society at large; and which defines the general initiative of encouraging and supporting the involvement and participation of young people and youth organisations in policy making, implementation and follow-up by the means of a continuous structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations.
2. The Resolution of 20 May 2014 of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015 ⁽²⁾.
3. The Joint Recommendations of the fourth work cycle on structured dialogue, defined at the EU Youth Conference organised by the Luxembourg Presidency, 21–24 September 2015 ⁽³⁾.

UNDERLINE THAT:

4. Democracy, pluralism and active citizenship are fundamental values of the European Union. They include the values of freedom of expression and tolerance ⁽⁴⁾ and aim for the inclusion of all European citizens. Democracy is not to be taken for granted and needs to be preserved and fostered constantly.
5. Young people in Europe show overall support and belief in the system of democracy and its representative bodies, but are critical of the way the system is operated in practice and the results produced ⁽⁵⁾.
6. They often find it increasingly hard to identify with traditional channels of political participation such as political parties and trade unions but engage in alternative forms allowing for greater individual choices such as campaigns, petitions, demonstrations and instant events that aim at advocating for a specific cause and a tangible change in their life ⁽⁶⁾.
7. Information and communication technologies, in particular social media and their mobile use offer new opportunities for involvement in and information about political processes, speed-up the diffusion of information and accelerate the development of alternative participation forms.

REGARDING THE PROCESS OF STRUCTURED DIALOGUE, ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

8. The structured dialogue is an instrument within the framework for European cooperation in the youth field to involve young people in the development of EU policies. The outcome of the fourth 18-month work cycle on the overall thematic priority 'youth empowerment addressing access to rights and the importance of political participation of young people' ⁽⁷⁾ is based on the results achieved by the consultations with young people before and during the Italian, Latvian and Luxembourg Presidencies as well as the EU Youth Conferences in Rome in October 2014, Riga in March 2015 and Luxembourg in September 2015 ⁽⁸⁾.
9. The results of the dialogue among young people and policy representatives constitute important input for this resolution, including perspectives of young people, youth workers and other experts in the field of youth and facilitate the development of evidence-based and effective EU policies.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 5.

⁽³⁾ 12651/15.

⁽⁴⁾ '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. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.'

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, article 2.

⁽⁵⁾ Youth participation in democratic life — Final Report, London School of Economics, EACEA 2010/03, February 2013.

⁽⁶⁾ Political participation and EU Citizenship: Perceptions and behaviours of young people, EACEA, European Commission, 2013.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 1.

⁽⁸⁾ Documents 14429/14, 8095/15 and 12651/15.

CONSIDER THAT:

10. The European Union relies on young people committed to the principles of democracy and to European values.
11. European policy and policy in general should be responsive to the needs and aspirations of young people. Therefore political issues have to be transparent and communicated to all citizens, including young people. Young people need to understand the issues that are at stake in order to create interest and facilitate the political engagement. Opportunities for youth participation in meaningful decision-making processes should be provided by decision-makers from different policy fields and policy levels and need to have an impact.
12. The concept of political participation includes first of all the representation of young people in the structures of representative democracy, i.e. participating in elections as voters, standing in elections as candidates and participating in political parties. political participation can also take place through membership in (youth) organisations advocating for the interests of young people, political face-to-face or online debates and other forms of opinion-shaping and cultural expression. Political participation can also be experienced in the frame of citizenship and human rights education activities and actions to bring about positive change in society.
13. By participation in political processes, young people can improve their understanding of opinion-building processes and of different interests at stake. At the personal level, they develop social skills, responsibility, self-confidence, initiative, critical attitude as well as communication and negotiation skills, sense of compromise, empathy and respect towards others' opinions.
14. Characteristics of effective and real political youth participation processes include:
 - Relevance of the issue and real impact on the lives of young people
 - Practice and experience of participation in daily life in different contexts such as family, community, school, work place, youth work and local life (political socialisation)
 - Comprehensible feedback and follow-up by decision makers
 - Inclusivity and equal access for all young people with regard to gender, ethnic, cultural, educational and social background, sexual orientation, age and specific needs.
15. Youth policy, youth work and youth organisations play an important role in this regard by the promotion of active citizenship, political participation opportunities and the prevention of marginalization and violent radicalization, especially in local areas, where open youth work and outreach youth work address young people.
16. Physical and mental well-being and the safeguard of the basic needs including aspects of education and training, health, employment, financial security and social integration are necessary for thorough and effective participation of young people.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY TO:

17. Establish, implement or further develop national, regional and/or local strategies, programmes, structures or other relevant mechanisms for enhancing the political participation of all young people, especially young people with fewer opportunities. These mechanisms should be knowledge and evidence based, built on cross-sectoral cooperation and include all relevant stakeholders. The design of effective participation strategies should encompass the involvement of the target group during the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. The strategies could include the following priorities.

Formal education and non-formal learning

18. Foster and promote cross-sectoral cooperation and partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers in order to develop integrated approaches of citizenship education programmes while involving young people, teachers, youth workers, parents and other relevant actors.
19. Enhance sustainable participative structures in formal education and non-formal learning settings in order to promote the development of social skills and competences related to democratic values and human rights such as the freedom of expression and the respect of diversity, through the day to day practise of democratic principles.
20. Promote the establishment and the development of organisations and/or structures at national, regional and local level representing the interest of students vis-à-vis formal education institutions.

21. Promote the development of programmes on media literacy promoting the capacity to critically analyse information in today's knowledge society as well as programmes on ICT literacy aiming at the development of technological user skills that allow to access, manage, assess and create useful online information.

Local and regional participation opportunities

22. Enable and facilitate the development of participation processes such as youth councils in close collaboration with local and regional public authorities in order to give young people the opportunity to have their say in local and regional decision-making processes.
23. Develop and provide information and training opportunities for policy-makers on suitable and youth tailored communication and participation methods and tools in order to facilitate openness and receptiveness towards young people.
24. Consider the appropriateness of lowering the voting age for the elections of local and regional public authorities to 16 years with respect to national circumstances and national legal frameworks.

Alternative forms and e-Participation

25. Recognise and support young people, youth work and youth organisations in developing diverse forms of political participation including petitions, demonstrations, campaigns as well as the use of culture, arts and sports, given that these instruments allow for a diverse expression of opinions and diverse access to political participation, especially when addressing young people with fewer opportunities.
26. Develop digital tools for political participation of young people combined with face to face elements and develop adequate trainings for teachers, youth workers, trainers and multipliers that work with different target groups within formal education and non-formal learning settings in order to reach out to young people at all levels; recognise and involve existing channels of youth information and youth information providers at European, national, regional and local level.
27. Involve the youth field in the implementation of the digital single market strategy for Europe, tackling topics such as digital skills and expertise, safer online use and the fight against illegal contents such as racism, xenophobia and calls for violence.

Dialogue with political decision-makers

28. Support, where appropriate, information and communication processes and tools that enable young people's understanding and appropriation of public policies, highlighting the aspects relevant for young people and making effective use of different media tools and ICT.
29. Explore and expand opportunities for dialogue at local, regional and national level between young people and policy makers from all policy fields that affect young people.
30. Encourage the participation of young people in elections and within the formal structures of representative democracies, such as political parties, so that political parties have a greater interest in developing policy proposals that respond to young people's needs.
31. Support information campaigns and events for young people at the occasion of local, regional, national and European elections by using interactive online and streaming tools as well as specific outreach programmes targeting first time voters and young people with fewer opportunities.
32. Develop a decision-making culture at all levels of government that supports youth-led bottom-up participation processes and is responsive to informal youth initiatives.
33. Promote and ensure that EU programmes supporting young people, such as Erasmus+ support:
 - the dissemination of youth-friendly information on current political developments that affect young people at local, regional and national level,
 - the realisation of youth targeted information campaigns during national and European elections,

- the creation and development of youth advocacy platforms and youth organisations that represent and lobby for the interests of young people,
- the involvement of operational information providers such as national youth information structures and European platforms like ERYICA, EYCA, Eurodesk and the European Youth Portal,
- the transnational youth initiatives and the Structured Dialogue.

Youth work and youth organisations

34. Support and further develop tailor-made youth work initiatives that focus on citizenship education, human rights education, intercultural and interfaith education, by the use of non-formal learning and peer to peer methods, in order to foster young people's integration into society and to counter extremist tendencies, violent radicalisation and hate speech; exploit good practices resulting from existing cooperation networks in the field of youth policy, such as the European knowledge centre for youth policy (EKCYP) and the SALTO Youth Participation Centre.
35. Strengthen the capacity of youth information providers in order to enable the dissemination of information regarding political participation opportunities especially for young people that do not belong to organised youth movements or youth organisations.

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

36. Make available information on good practices and success stories of projects in the Member States in the context of the Erasmus+ programme on initiatives aiming for the political participation of young people; take account of other research studies and initiatives in this area and disseminate their results.
 37. Establish a summary report of available research studies including i.a. those of the Pool of European Youth Researchers, on e-participation and the range of different digital media and online tools as well as an analysis on how these tools are used by young people, in order to have an overview on existing and effective methodologies.
 38. Define the specific contribution of youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning to fostering active citizenship and participation of young people in diverse and tolerant societies as well as preventing marginalisation, and radicalisation potentially resulting in violent behaviour.
 39. Publish through easy-to-access communication tools, youth tailored information that clarifies and/or explains developments across different EU policies and EU decisions that particularly affect young people, in order to make these transparent and comprehensible.
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ANNEX I

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which states in article 165 that Union action shall be aimed at 'encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe'.
 2. The Convention on the rights of the child of the United Nations which outlines the right of children and young people to express their views freely in all matters affecting them.
 3. The Communication of 28 April 2015 of the Commission on the European Agenda on Security stating that youth participation has a key role to play in preventing violent radicalization by promoting common European values, fostering social inclusion, enhancing mutual understanding and tolerance.
 4. The Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015 of the European Union Education Ministers on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.
 5. The Resolution of 20 May 2014 of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the overview of the structured dialogue process including social inclusion of young people which stated that the overall priority for the 18 months cycle from 1 July 2014 – 31 December 2015 is youth empowerment addressing access to rights and the importance of political participation of young people.
 6. The Declaration of the second European Youth Work Convention (Brussels, 27-30 April 2015) which stated that participation is one of the main principles of youth work, the Convention being convinced that the development of youth work can only be taken further when young people get actively involved from the beginning at all levels — European, national, regional and local.
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ANNEX II

**PRIORITY FOR THE EUROPEAN STRUCTURED DIALOGUE IN THE YOUTH FIELD DURING THE PERIOD
1 JANUARY 2016 – 30 JUNE 2017**

The youth field has a well-established practice of Presidency cooperation in the context of the Structured Dialogue between public authorities and young people. The overall thematic priority for European cooperation for the Structured Dialogue in the youth field for the period 1 January 2016 – 30 June 2017 will be 'Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe — Ready for Life, Ready for Society'. This theme reflects the EU Youth Report and takes into account the feedback of the pre-consultation phase, which the upcoming trio presidencies have conducted. This theme will be the common thread that will ensure the continuity and consistency in the work of the three Presidencies, in line with the EU Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018.

ANNEX III

**PRINCIPLES FOR THE EUROPEAN STRUCTURED DIALOGUE IN THE YOUTH FIELD DURING THE PERIOD
1 JANUARY 2016 – 30 JUNE 2017**

1. The simplified 18-months architecture in the framework of the trio presidencies cooperation on Structured Dialogue should be maintained and further developed to ensure continuity of the overall thematic priority and to allow for a better time management for National Working Groups in consultations with young people.
 2. In order to improve the representativeness and the diversity of young people in the process, further efforts should be invested in the outreach to the different target groups that are affected by the overall priority, including the use of online consultations combined with face-to-face meetings, methods that combine different ways of expression and local consultation events involving local NGOs, youth (information) organizations, local authorities and national working groups.
 3. In order to enrich the quality of the Structured Dialogue outcomes, youth workers, youth experts, academic experts, professional youth service providers and relevant youth organisations affected by the overall priority should participate in the consultations and, where relevant, in the EU Youth Conferences.
 4. In order to facilitate the follow-up of the Structured Dialogue outcomes, the trio presidencies should inform young people having participated in the consultation processes and at the EU Youth Conferences, by the means of an explanatory note or other means of communication, on the extent to which the final Structured Dialogue outcome has been considered by the Council and the Commission in the third phase of the cycle.
 5. In order to ensure effective impact of the Structured Dialogue, the Trio Presidencies should involve, where relevant, other EU actors, such as the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.
 6. The overall priority for the following Trio Presidency cycle (1 July 2017 – 31 December 2018) should be defined before the beginning of its term and submitted at the appropriate time for consultation to young people and National Working Groups before its adoption.
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IV

*(Notices)*NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND
AGENCIES

COUNCIL

**2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed
framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18)**

(2015/C 417/03)

Young people's human and social capital is one of Europe's greatest assets for the future. The European Union and its Member States need to invest in the potential that 90 million young Europeans represent in terms of skills, creativity and diversity.

The economic crisis has hit young people particularly hard. It has widened the gap between those with more and those with fewer opportunities. Some young people are increasingly excluded from social and civic life. Worse still, some are at risk of disengagement, marginalisation or even violent radicalisation.

This is why the Commission and the Member States continued working together in the period 2013-2015, to improve young people's employability, their integration in the labour market, their social inclusion and participation. In the face of a growing socioeconomic divide, policy must continue tackling the deep social problems that many young people are facing. We need to identify sustainable solutions to fight youth unemployment, strengthen social inclusion and prevent violent radicalisation. This requires more systematic cooperation across a range of policies at EU and Member State level, such as employment, education, training, non-discrimination, social policy, citizenship (including citizenship of the Union) and youth, but also culture, sport and health.

In 2016-2018, the cooperation framework for youth ⁽¹⁾ should aim to empower more and more diverse young people, especially those at risk of exclusion. It should help them find quality jobs and participate in social life. EU funding under the Erasmus+ programme will complement policy cooperation on youth work, voluntary activities and participation in democratic life. Other instruments, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), will provide funding targeted at the inclusion of young people in the labour market and at developing their human capital.

1. Introduction

The EU supports young people's employment, employability and social inclusion, especially under its agenda for jobs, growth and investment, the Europe 2020 strategy and through EU funds such as Erasmus+, ESF and YEI.

Furthermore, the EU supports, coordinates and supplements Member States' actions through a cooperation framework in the youth field in accordance with Articles 6 and 165 of the TFEU. The cooperation framework calls upon the EU and the Member States to:

— create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market; and

⁽¹⁾ Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1).

— promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

Through actions including evidence gathering, mutual learning and dialogue with youth, the framework supports action in eight fields: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, and creativity and culture.

This report evaluates progress towards the goals and priorities of the cooperation framework in the period 2013-2015, based on an assessment of young people's situation and policy measures taken at EU and Member State level.

2. Young Europeans today ⁽²⁾

Since 2013, the effects of the crisis continued to resonate strongly on young people. Transitions from child to adulthood have become more complex and individualised, a trend that has risen sharply since 2008. These transitions are marked by key changes — from education to work, from being financially dependent to managing one's own budget — and a need to acquire autonomy which exposes young people to fluctuating economic, social and environmental conditions. Policies should accompany young people in this journey and help them realise their full potential.

The data below provide a snapshot of the situation of youth aged 15-24 ⁽³⁾.

This generation of young people is better educated than any other ...

Education indicators reveal positive trends. Although considerable divergences across the EU remain, early school leaving is now in decline ⁽⁴⁾.

Higher-education attainment rates improved from 33.8 % in 2010 to 37.9 % in 2014 ⁽⁵⁾. Even if the EU unemployment rate increased for those with tertiary education, it is still much lower than for those with the lowest levels of education. Yet, these groups can also be confronted with underemployment and being overqualified for the opportunities in the labour market.

Many young people build social networks combining global connectivity with local roots: 82 % participated in online social networks in 2014. Young people engage in new forms of political participation, often using social media, but tend to vote less than older generations. Still, many remain active members of their local community; about one in two belonged to at least one organisation in 2014; one in four is a volunteer ⁽⁶⁾. This differentiated picture of young people's engagement challenges current understandings of the concept of citizenship.

... but the crisis has created new divisions

Many young people struggle to find quality jobs which seriously hampers their path towards independence. In spite of a decrease in most Member States after its 2013 peak, youth unemployment remains a serious concern: 8.7 million young Europeans cannot find work ⁽⁷⁾ and the proportion facing long-term unemployment or involuntary part-time work remains high.

In total, 13.7 million are neither in employment nor education or training (NEETs) ⁽⁷⁾. Close to 27 million are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Poverty rates are higher for young people than for the overall population and involuntary part-time work or protracted temporary positions expose this generation to a risk of long-term poverty ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽²⁾ For details and data sources underpinning the analysis, see staff working document SWD(2015)169 on the situation of young people in the EU.

⁽³⁾ Unless otherwise indicated.

⁽⁴⁾ Eurostat indicator 'early leavers from education and training', from 13.9 % in 2010 to 11.1 % in 2014 for the age group 18-24 (high percentages persist notably in Spain, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Romania).

⁽⁵⁾ Eurostat, population aged 30-34 with tertiary education attainment.

⁽⁶⁾ Flash Eurobarometer survey 408, 2014.

⁽⁷⁾ Eurostat, 2014.

⁽⁸⁾ *Rising inequality: youth and poor fall further behind*, OECD, 2014.

Inactivity, poverty and exclusion do not strike evenly. Those starting life with fewer opportunities tend to accumulate disadvantages. Young people with a migrant background, low educational achievers or young people with health issues are more likely to become NEETs ⁽⁹⁾. Unemployment among native-born youth with immigrant parents is almost 50 % higher than among other young people in the EU ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The gap is widening between young people who study, are confident of finding a job and engage in social, civic and cultural life, on the one hand, and those with little hope of leading a fulfilling life and who are at risk of exclusion and marginalisation, on the other hand.

These divides threaten to undermine the social fabric and sustainable long-term economic growth ⁽¹¹⁾. Europe's ageing population makes integrating all young people (while respecting their diversity) even more necessary and urgent.

Young people on the wrong side of this divide find it difficult to express their political voice. The less educated or less involved they are in social activities, the less they take part in voting, volunteering or cultural activities ⁽¹²⁾. For instance, NEETs have less trust in public institutions and participate less in social and civic activities than their peers.

No single policy has the solution, but all policies can help

All young people deserve fair and equal opportunities, but this demands long-term investment. In their respective areas of competence, the EU and its Member States need to mobilise all policies that can help improve young people's prospects.

To convert recent signs of recovery into lasting and sustainable growth, the EU has taken action to boost job creation, growth and investment, including efforts to help the young back into quality jobs. The EU and the Member States can build their efforts on the Youth Guarantee ⁽¹³⁾, the European Social Fund and the Investment Plan for Europe.

Jobs are crucial but not always enough to ensure full inclusion. Education and training can provide young people with skills needed in the labour market and help overcome inequalities and promote upward social mobility. The urgent challenge for education and training across the EU is to invest and modernise quickly enough to realise this potential ⁽¹⁴⁾. Youth policy, operating outside the classroom, can also help young people acquire the right mix of skills to prepare them for life and work.

Young people should be able to grow up in inclusive and pluralist communities, based on European democratic values, the rule of law and fundamental rights. To safeguard tolerance, diversity and mutual respect, the EU Security Agenda involves action to address the root causes of extremist violence and prevent radicalisation, including by promoting inclusion and participation of young people ⁽¹⁵⁾. This year's terrorist attacks, starting in Paris and Copenhagen, have brought new urgency to these complex challenges. In a declaration adopted in Paris in March 2015, EU education ministers and the Commission committed themselves to taking further action to preserve European values.

3. EU and Member State action in 2013-2015 ⁽¹⁶⁾

3.1. EU action: employability, inclusion and participation

Action across EU policy areas

Youth employment and employability remained top priorities throughout 2013-2015.

⁽⁹⁾ 'NEETs', Eurofound, 2012 and OECD, 2015.

⁽¹⁰⁾ *Indicators of immigrant integration — Settling in 2015*, joint OECD and European Commission study.

⁽¹¹⁾ *In it together: why less inequality benefits all*, OECD, May 2015.

⁽¹²⁾ Flash Eurobarometer survey 408, 2014.

⁽¹³⁾ Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee (OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Education and Training 2020 Joint Report, COM(2015) 408.

⁽¹⁵⁾ COM(2015) 185.

⁽¹⁶⁾ More details are provided in the staff working document (SWD(2015)168) on the results of the open method of coordination in the youth field; http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/report_en.htm.

To improve educational outcomes, Member States took action under the European Semester to bring down early school leaving and promote higher-education attainment to reach the Europe 2020 headline targets. Their efforts were underpinned by the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training as well as the Erasmus+ programme. Since 2012, following the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, Member States are starting to introduce measures to allow young people make the most of what they learn outside formal education.

The EU and Member States undertook to reduce youth unemployment by easing transitions from education to work. In 2013, the Youth Guarantee was introduced as a structural framework to offer young people a job, an apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed. The ESF and the YEI set aside at least EUR 12.7 billion for youth activation and employment. Around EUR 27 billion of ESF funding will be spent on education measures from 2014 to 2020. Young people will also benefit indirectly from around EUR 11 billion of ESF funding for other initiatives such as modernising employment services or supporting self-employment. Actions under the YEI are expected to foster cooperation across different institutions and services to assist especially NEETs in an integrated way.

Since 2013, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships has drawn support from the private sector, while since 2014 the Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships ⁽¹⁷⁾ aims to facilitate quality learning and fair working conditions. The Commission improved information for young jobseekers under the EURES system for information-sharing on job offers and launched 'Your first EURES job' to help young people find a job abroad.

Further to the EU Security Agenda and the Paris Declaration, Member States undertook to step up efforts to foster the inclusion and participation in society of all young people. Through actions including the European Youth Week, the Commission mobilised civil society to work on inclusion, citizenship and intercultural dialogue. All these areas will enjoy greater funding under Erasmus+. These efforts complement the work of the EU-funded Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) which points to the preventive role of education and the teaching of critical thinking and democratic values in tackling radicalisation. In this context, the Commission has been emphasising the importance of encouraging young people to think critically about extremist messages ⁽¹⁸⁾ and stressing the potential of Erasmus+ in supporting learning mobility and partnerships between stakeholders, which can ultimately help youth develop resilience to extremist views ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Specific youth policy actions

EU cooperation focused on social inclusion and youth empowerment, including access to rights and political participation. The Council called for a greater contribution from youth policy to the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy and confirmed its intention to better include NEETs and promote youth entrepreneurship.

Youth work has been high on the EU youth agenda since 2013. A Commission study showed the value of youth work for young people in different aspects of their lives ⁽²⁰⁾ and in 2015, the Second European Youth Work Convention identified the most urgent challenges and called for a European agenda for youth work ⁽²¹⁾. Furthermore, the Council invited the Commission to consider making a proposal for a Council Recommendation on Youth Work, in the light of the results of the relevant studies and work of the expert group.

In light of concerns about young people's withdrawal from traditional forms of participation, the Commission gathered evidence ⁽²²⁾ that they are still keen to participate, but that they ask for more and *different* channels of participation. The challenge to policy-makers will be to work out how best to respond. The 2015 Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe provides a framework to answer this challenge.

⁽¹⁷⁾ OJ C 88, 27.3.2014, p. 1.

⁽¹⁸⁾ COM(2013) 941 'Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response'.

⁽¹⁹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-prevent/index_en.htm

⁽²⁰⁾ Study on *Value of youth work in the EU*, 2014; expert group reports on the creative and innovative potential of young people and quality approaches in youth work.

⁽²¹⁾ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8491-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

⁽²²⁾ Study on *Youth participation in democratic life*, 2013.

From policy to change on the ground: Erasmus+

In 2014, the EU launched the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport. With a budget of EUR 14.7 billion for the period to 2020, Erasmus+ supports the learning mobility of four million young people and educators, with 10 % of the budget reserved for youth activities, which fund an estimated 400 000 participants in youth exchanges and 100 000 in the European Voluntary Service (EVS). This represents an 80 % increase in funding as compared with the previous Youth in Action programme.

Erasmus+ better links policy and programme than before. It funds strategic partnerships between education providers, stimulating cross-sectoral cooperation. Youthpass ⁽²³⁾ continued to support the recognition of non-formal and informal learning: National Agencies for youth have delivered nearly 250 000 certificates since its inception. To widen the impact of Youthpass, the Council proposed to introduce in other sectors and to support the use of national recognition tools inspired by it.

Widening outreach

Using both online and offline tools, the Commission undertook to better inform young people about the opportunities offered by EU policies and programmes. More importantly, it sought to listen to their views and ideas. With 1.5 million unique visitors in 2014, the European Youth Portal has become the pillar of these activities, advertising opportunities for cross-border volunteering and connecting to EURES information on job and traineeship offers. In 2015, the Commission collected ideas from young people in 'Ideas Labs' during the European Youth Week, which overall reached 137 000 people in events and 1.2 million via social media.

The Commission will further improve the design and functionality of the European Youth Portal and other online platforms. It will work more closely with networks in direct contact with young people, such as the Eurodesk network with its 1 200 information specialists.

3.2. Action by Member States

Member States increasingly pursue transversal youth policies, with employment, social and civic inclusion as primary concerns. They have taken many measures to integrate young people into the labour market, often as part of Youth Guarantee schemes and backed by EU funds available under the ESF and the YEI. In addition, 18 small scale pilot projects were carried out in 2014 with direct Commission support. All Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans. Progress on their implementation is assessed within the European Semester. Most Member States involved youth organisations, and two thirds involved youth services in the partnerships set up in the context of the Youth Guarantee.

In response to concerns about the growing social exclusion of young people, nearly all Member States took measures to enhance the inclusion of NEETs. Most undertook to improve young people's access to quality services and 80 % supported youth work and youth centres. However, youth work has suffered from budget cuts across Europe ⁽²⁴⁾, while the growing share of youth at risk of poverty and exclusion increases the demand for intervention.

As to participation, 27 Member States developed mechanisms for dialogue with young people; 25 provided public support for youth organisations and two thirds promoted the use of online media and provided greater opportunities for debate. Although Member States have sought to involve young people across the socioeconomic spectrum, given the persistently lower participation among some groups, policy-makers at all levels can still do more to involve under-represented groups.

4. Governance and implementation of the youth cooperation framework in 2013-2015

Member States' reports on the implementation of the cooperation framework provide a solid basis from which to continue EU youth cooperation. The framework helped advance national youth agendas and cross-sectoral cooperation in support of young people, backed by relevant evidence and exchanges of experience.

⁽²³⁾ Youthpass is a recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work; it is used for projects funded by the youth part in Erasmus+. <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/>.

⁽²⁴⁾ Study on *Value of Youth Work in the EU*, 2014.

To make the framework's implementation more effective, the Commission and Member States could improve the sharing of relevant data and other evidence outside the youth field. At the same time, they could use these as a basis for more output-oriented youth policies. Both should support uptake of youth concerns in other policies. At EU level, mutual learning can be diversified, for example by creating additional opportunities for peer learning tailored to different needs of Member States. The Structured Dialogue with youth should be made more inclusive.

The main activities and instruments are reviewed in detail below.

The framework as an agenda setter

The framework gave a strong impulse to national youth agendas. Nearly all Member States have introduced initiatives or tools in this field since 2010. In two thirds, the framework reinforced national youth policy priorities and in one third it influenced the local and regional level. 11 Member States reoriented their national youth policy in line with the framework.

The framework encouraged cross-sectorial cooperation. Nearly all Member States have institutionalised mechanisms to ensure a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy, such as inter-departmental structures and regular inter-ministerial meetings.

The first Council EU Work Plan for Youth (2014-2015) aimed at boosting the framework's implementation, and most Member States took part in its activities. Twenty-three felt that the Work Plan succeeded in its aim and reflected the national priorities well, but some warned of risks of incoherent or parallel approaches to the nine-year framework.

Evidence-based policy-making: quantitative and qualitative developments

The situation of young people in the EU is measured regularly on the basis of a dashboard of 41 indicators on conditions affecting young people ⁽²⁵⁾. Member States are increasingly using these indicators, even if this has not yet produced systematic output-oriented youth policies.

The indicators and further evidence from Eurostat, Eurofound and the partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe, notably through analysis by the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR), will help Member States and the Commission to discern new trends and adapt priorities accordingly.

The Commission and the Member States need to share this evidence — beyond the remit of youth policy — with others working with young people. At EU level, the new youth monitor ⁽²⁶⁾ provides user-friendly online access to data. As of 2016, a new youth wiki will provide up-to-date information on national policies, legislation and programmes in the youth field. This will be complemented by a new Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee, for which first data will be expected end 2015.

Mutual learning: exchange of experience

Member States have learned from each other, primarily through participating in expert groups. In 2013-2015, experts addressed ways of supporting the creative and innovative potential of young people, the contribution of youth work to young people's challenges in the crisis, and youth-work quality. The findings fed into work in the Council as well as into discussions in the Education, Training and Youth Forum ⁽²⁷⁾. The 2015 report on quality youth work ⁽²⁸⁾ informed Council conclusions on reinforcing youth work to ensure cohesive societies ⁽²⁹⁾, which called for a reference and guidance tool on quality for national youth work organisations.

Member States also learned from each other through activities organised in partnership between the Commission and the Council of Europe; smaller groups of Member States organised specific exchanges on matters of common interest, such as local youth work.

⁽²⁵⁾ SEC(2011) 401.

⁽²⁶⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/dashboard/index_en.htm.

⁽²⁷⁾ Council resolution on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015, 20 May 2014.

⁽²⁸⁾ Quality Youth Work — A common framework for the further development of youth work, http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf.

⁽²⁹⁾ May 2015.

To make the most of the various mutual learning activities, the next work plan should include the development of a flexible framework to facilitate access to information and the outcomes of the activities. It should encourage uptake of findings and help match partners with shared interests.

Structured Dialogue: increasing outreach and anchoring dialogue in the policy agenda

The EU Structured Dialogue between policy-makers, young people and their representatives is widely seen as a promising tool for listening to young people. Its first 18-month cycle, which ended in 2011, helped to shape subsequent EU initiatives on youth unemployment. In 2013-2015, the Dialogue addressed social inclusion and youth empowerment and its recommendations have subsequently been addressed in the Council.

The Structured Dialogue has evolved since 2013 and is better anchored in the youth policy agenda. The number of participants has more than doubled and some 40 000 young people responded in the last cycle, many of them on behalf of larger groups. Also, national dialogue processes are taking inspiration and beginning to emerge.

The Structured Dialogue has yet to fulfil its full potential: It still fails to reach a wider group of young people with fewer opportunities and a weaker political voice. The Commission encourages greater outreach through Erasmus+ grants in support of national efforts and an online consultation tool launched in 2014. A further challenge is to monitor the uptake of the Dialogue's results in EU and national policy. Finally, in the interest of accountability and to motivate young people to stay engaged, policy-makers at all levels should provide better feedback on their responses through the European Youth Portal and national working groups. The findings of the 2015 EU Youth Report and of the ongoing interim evaluation of the EU cooperation framework for youth can inspire future improvements of the Structured Dialogue.

5. The way forward in EU youth cooperation (2016-2018)

Equal education, job and participatory opportunities in inclusive communities

On the basis of the EU's political priorities, Member States' reports on the implementation of the Framework, data and evidence gathered, the future work cycle of the cooperation framework should prioritise:

- increased social inclusion of all young people, taking into account the underlying European values;
- stronger participation of all young people in democratic and civic life in Europe;
- easier transition of young people from youth to adulthood, in particular the integration into the labour market.

With regard to these priorities, and while Member States and the Commission's action shall be directed towards all young people, particular emphasis shall be given to the following groups:

- Young people at risk of marginalisation
- Young people neither in employment nor education or training (NEET)
- Young people with a migrant background, including newly arrived immigrants and young refugees.

The Commission and Member States will take action in these areas, including through the EU Work Plan for Youth, the framework's instruments and cooperation with other policies as appropriate, to promote:

- social inclusion and outreach practices to reach young people of diverse backgrounds, especially those suffering from disadvantages, to ensure their full participation in social and civic activities;
- the capacity of youth work, youth organisations and networks to act as forces of inclusion by assisting young people to engage, volunteer and drive positive social change in communities;
- the recognition of quality youth work, building its capacity for outreach and responsiveness to emerging societal, behavioural and technological changes;
- new forms of participation in democratic processes and access to political decision-making through both online and offline tools;

- evolving skills demands, including citizenship, media and digital literacy, critical judgment and intercultural understanding;
- young people's access to their fundamental rights and of the practice of non-discrimination and intercultural understanding; and
- volunteering, including through EU programmes such as the EVS and the new EU Aid Volunteers Initiative, as a way of combining learning with civic engagement ⁽³⁰⁾; greater complementarity between national and international actors to scale up cross border volunteering and better link national volunteering with the EVS.

Reflecting these priorities, the EU Structured Dialogue with youth should promote the inclusion of all young people in tolerant, diverse and democratic societies. The next Dialogue must reach a much wider audience of youth groups, especially those that have not engaged in the Dialogue so far, among others by using lighter engagement tools tailored to the needs and habits of young people.

Youth policy within a broader EU agenda

Youth policy cannot work in isolation. Cooperation and complementarity with policies such as employment, education, training, health and well-being, culture, digital media, sustainable development, citizenship and sport is essential.

The cooperation framework can underpin such cooperation through its mechanisms. Through the EU Work Plan, the Commission and Member States can further implement and refine cross-sectorial structures and working methods. This contributes to reaching the overall objectives in the youth field: to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market and promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

European cooperation in the youth field should be part of a broader political agenda for young people. To have real impact, policy-makers at EU and Member State level must work together with practitioners, service providers, educators and businesses on the ground to mobilise resources and funds to reach a critical mass of young people. They should aim to deliver innovative solutions to the complex phenomena that are marginalisation, exclusion and lack of participation.

Ultimately, there is an urgent need to scale up efforts. To offer more young people the genuine prospect of becoming full and engaged members of their communities, we need a comprehensive approach to match the challenge ahead. This requires a coherent policy agenda, backed by Erasmus+, the Youth Guarantee and EU funding instruments with greater outreach, such as the ESF or the YEI. National and regional resources must support these efforts where possible.

⁽³⁰⁾ At EU level, in spite of doubling the number of beneficiaries under EVS, cross-border volunteering remains modest.

2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)

New priorities for European cooperation in education and training

(2015/C 417/04)

1. CONTEXT

Europe is facing a number of urgent tasks: restoring job creation and economic recovery; achieving sustainable growth; bridging the investment gap; enhancing social cohesion; coordinating a response to the migration flow; giving priority attention to preventing radicalisation and violence. At the same time, Europe must address long-term challenges such as ageing, adjusting to the digital era and competing in the global, knowledge-based economy.

Europe's policy response under the European Commission's Political Guidelines, 'A new Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change ⁽¹⁾' marks a fresh start. There is a strong economic case for education and training as a growth-friendly sector to play a critical role under this new Agenda. Investment in human capital is money well spent. Good education and training help promote sustained economic growth, as well as sustainable development: they fuel R & D, innovation, productivity and competitiveness. Member States should make the necessary investment in all education and training systems in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in raising the skill and competences of the workforce, thereby allowing them to better anticipate and meet the rapidly changing needs of dynamic labour markets in an increasingly digital economy and in the context of technological, environmental and demographic change. Member States should step up efforts to improve access for all to quality lifelong learning and implement active-ageing strategies that enable longer working lives.

The tragic outbursts of violent extremism at the start of 2015 sent a stark reminder that our societies are vulnerable. Education and training have an important role in ensuring that the human and civic values we share are safeguarded and passed on to future generations, to promote freedom of thought and expression, social inclusion and respect for others, as well as to prevent and tackle discrimination in all its forms, to reinforce the teaching and acceptance of these common fundamental values and laying the foundations for more inclusive societies through education — starting from an early age ⁽²⁾. Education and training can help to prevent and tackle poverty and social exclusion, promote mutual respect and build a foundation for an open and democratic society on which active citizenship rests.

At the same time, education and training systems face the challenge of ensuring equal access to high-quality education, in particular by reaching out to the most disadvantaged and integrating people with diverse backgrounds, including adequately integrating newly arrived migrants ⁽³⁾, into the learning environment, thereby fostering upwards social convergence.

Against this background, education and training make a substantial contribution to several EU strategies and initiatives, including the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Youth Guarantee, the Youth Employment initiative, the Digital Single Market initiative, the European Agendas on Security and Migration and the Investment Plan for Europe, while the competence of Member States for their education and training systems is fully respected. ET 2020 cooperation complements national action and supports Member States through peer exchanges, mutual learning, evidence and data collection, in pursuing reforms to further improve their results.

Education and training provide individuals with the knowledge, skills and competences that enable them to grow and to influence their situations, by broadening their perspectives, equipping people favourably for their future lives, laying the foundations for active citizenship and democratic values, and promoting inclusion, equity and equality.

⁽¹⁾ Presented by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 15 July 2014.

⁽²⁾ Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, Paris, 17 March 2015.

⁽³⁾ The following shall apply wherever reference is made in this text to migrants:

This is without prejudice to the legal situation on access to education and training for different categories of migrants, as defined in the applicable international law, European Union law and national law.

The Commission's 2015 Education and Training Monitor shows that serious challenges remain:

- Across the EU, 22 % of 15-year-olds underachieve in mathematics. Among pupils with low socioeconomic status, this is a worrying 36.6 %. In addition, 18 % of the EU's 15-year-olds score poorly in reading and 17 % underachieve in science. Underachievement in these study fields is about 60 % more prevalent amongst boys than it is amongst girls ⁽⁴⁾;
- One in four adults in Europe is caught in a low-skills trap — one that limits access to the labour market while simultaneously closing avenues to further education or training. Only 4.4 % of the 66 million adults with at best lower secondary education attainment participate in adult learning ⁽⁵⁾;
- Early school leaving ⁽⁶⁾ now stands at 11.1 %. While good progress has been made towards the common Europe 2020 headline target, there are still more than 4.4 million early school leavers across Europe, and about 60 % of these are either inactive or unemployed, which means higher risks of social exclusion and lower civic engagement;
- Higher education attainment ⁽⁷⁾ continues to improve and now stands at 37.9 %. Again, good progress has been made towards the common Europe 2020 headline target, but the employability of graduates remains stagnant across the EU.

The comprehensive mid-term stocktaking of the ET 2020 strategic framework carried out in 2014, involving Member States and key stakeholders, and providing the basis for this Report, led to three main policy conclusions:

- The value of an integrated framework covering education and training at all levels was confirmed. Today's need for flexibility and permeability between learning experiences requires policy coherence from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training and adult learning, thereby upholding the principle of lifelong learning.
- The ET 2020's four strategic objectives (and current EU benchmarks) remain valid as they were formulated in a comprehensive and forward-looking manner in the ET 2020 Council conclusions of 2009, providing a solid basis for ET 2020 activities up to 2020. However, the policy focus needs to be re-calibrated to include both the pressing economic and employment challenges and the role of education in promoting equity and inclusion and in imparting common European values, intercultural competences and active citizenship.
- ET 2020 is an important contributor to the overall EU agenda for jobs, growth and investment, including the European Semester. In this respect, the evidence base and mutual learning around reform challenges could be strengthened as well as the country-specific relevance of the framework, where appropriate.

Against the challenges and policy conclusions set out above, and in order to better align ET 2020 with the EU's political term and priorities, this Joint Report proposes to steer European cooperation under this framework up to 2020, thus increasing its work cycle from 3 to 5 years.

2. MAIN CHALLENGES DETERMINING THE CHOICE OF FUTURE PRIORITIES

On the basis of the stocktaking, and whilst recognising differences between Member States, this chapter presents the main developments and challenges in European education and training which have led to the identification of the new **priority areas** and **concrete issues** for further work up to 2020.

The new *priority areas* are:

- Relevant and high-quality knowledge, skills and competences developed throughout lifelong learning, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, innovation, active citizenship and well-being;
- Inclusive education, equality, equity, non-discrimination and the promotion of civic competences;

⁽⁴⁾ OECD's 2012 PISA results: Excellence through equity.

⁽⁵⁾ The Survey of Adult Skills: Implications for education and training policies in Europe, European Commission (2013).

⁽⁶⁾ The share of the population aged 18 to 24 with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training.

⁽⁷⁾ The percentage of those aged 30 to 34 who have successfully completed tertiary level education (Eurostat).

- Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era;
- Strong support for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other educational staff;
- Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility;
- Sustainable investment, quality and efficiency of education and training systems.

These priority areas, and the concrete issues related to them, are outlined in the Annex hereto.

2.1. *The quality and relevance of learning outcomes are key to the development of skills and competences*

Europe's low levels of basic knowledge and skills hamper economic progress and severely limit individuals in their professional, social and personal fulfilment. To enhance employability, innovation and active citizenship, and building on the 2006 Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on key competences for lifelong learning, basic skills must go hand in hand with other key competences and attitudes: creativity, entrepreneurship and a sense of initiative, digital competences ⁽⁸⁾ competence in foreign languages, critical thinking including through e-literacy and media literacy, and skills which reflect growing needs, such as those in the green economy and in the digital and health sectors.

The quality of learning outcomes to be stimulated in a lifetime perspective. While a majority of Member States have put in place comprehensive lifelong learning strategies, all countries should develop such strategies and ensure the permeability between various forms and levels of learning and from education and training to work. This requires continued efforts of coordination and partnership between different learning sectors and between education institutions and relevant stakeholders.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is the starting point and one of the most efficient means of raising proficiency in key competences, but it faces a double challenge of broadening access and enhancing quality. The provision of services for children under 3 years is particularly problematic in some countries. As suggested in the Quality Framework for ECEC developed by experts of the Member States during the previous work cycle, key issues for further work could include the improvement of access, focusing on the disadvantaged, the professionalisation of staff and efficient governance, curricula, funding and monitoring systems.

Measures aimed at reducing early school leaving have been introduced by all Member States, but do not always add up to comprehensive strategies, as required by the 2011 Council Recommendation ⁽⁹⁾, or to equivalent evidence-based policies. A successful response requires long-term commitment and cross-sectoral cooperation, focusing on the right mix of prevention, early intervention and compensation measures. School-based early school leaving policies should include collaborative approaches, the active involvement of parents, partnerships with external stakeholders and the community, measures to support the well-being of pupils and high-quality guidance and counselling, ensuring that each pupil has an equal chance to access, participate in and benefit from high-quality education and enabling all learners to reach their full potential.

Higher education systems should boost the knowledge economy and respond to society's needs. Higher education needs to respond effectively to the demands of a changing society and labour market, raising Europe's skills and human capital, and strengthening its contribution to economic growth. To achieve this, it should ensure that modernisation focuses on synergies between education, research, innovation and employment, creating links between higher education institutions and the local environment and regions, implementing innovative approaches to improving the relevance of curricula, including using information and communication technologies (ICT), improving transitions to employment and strengthening international collaboration. While reducing drop-out rates and increasing graduation rates remain a challenge for many Member States, especially among disadvantaged groups, the need to ensure that all forms of higher education provide students with relevant high-level knowledge, skills and competences that prepare them for their future careers is a priority. Higher education must also help to prepare students for active citizenship based on an open attitude and critical thinking, as well as support personal development, while playing its full role in transmitting and producing knowledge.

⁽⁸⁾ Learning and acquiring digital competences go beyond pure ICT skills and involve the safe, collaborative and creative use of ICT, including coding.

⁽⁹⁾ The United Kingdom voted against this Recommendation.

Vocational education and training play a key role in developing the relevant skills. Graduates from vocational education and training already show good employment rates in most Member States. This is also thanks to measures aimed at improving the performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training that were taken in the period 2011-2014 in order to implement the deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué under the Copenhagen process. Further reforms should follow, along the lines of the medium-term deliverables defined in the Riga conclusions of 22 June 2015 (see Annex). Relevant skills development should be pursued by further promoting all forms of work-based learning, such as traineeships, apprenticeships and dual schemes for vocational education and training, reinforcing the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, developing further partnerships with all stakeholders at local, regional and national levels and strengthening the anticipation of skills needs. At the same time, the initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors should be strengthened, including by means of placements in business and industry to keep abreast of developments in the field.

Adult learning as the basis for up-skilling, re-skilling, active citizenship and social cohesion. Recent surveys ⁽¹⁰⁾ showing the low levels of basic skills in adults, together with the impact of globalisation on skills needs and high unemployment rates, make it necessary to reinforce implementation of the Renewed European Agenda for adult learning. Priorities should include more effective governance, significant increases in supply and take-up, more flexible provision, broader access, closer monitoring and better quality assurance (see Annex). Adult learning provides recently arrived migrants and people with a migrant background with an opportunity for further education or re-training and increases the opportunities for these individuals to establish themselves in the labour market and integrate into society.

2.2. Education and training are essential for promoting social cohesion, equality, non-discrimination and civic competences

Inequality is at its highest level in 30 years in most European and OECD countries and has a negative impact on educational outcomes, since education systems tend to reproduce existing patterns of socioeconomic status. Breaking the intergenerational cycle of low qualifications must therefore be a priority. A majority of Member States have taken measures to improve access to education for disadvantaged learners. Nevertheless, a significant educational gap persists and access to good quality education and training, starting with early childhood education and care, remains a challenge in several parts of the EU. Effective action to respond to diversity in all its forms and to provide inclusive education and training for all learners is needed, focusing on disadvantaged groups such as learners with special needs, newly arrived migrants, people with a migrant background and Roma. The Youth Guarantee should be fully mobilised (i.e. job market placements, apprenticeships and second-chance education and training).

Gender gaps in education and training, which are also based on the continuation of gender stereotypes, must be tackled and gender differences in educational choices addressed. Bullying, harassment and violence in the learning environment, including gender-related, cannot be tolerated. Learning institutions and teachers, trainers, school leaders and other educational staff must be equipped and supported for learners to experience inclusion, equality, equity, non-discrimination and democratic citizenship in their learning environments. Open learning environments, such as public libraries, open adult education centres and open universities, should be empowered as a means of promoting social inclusion.

The Paris Declaration of Education Ministers of 17 March 2015 called for action at all levels to reinforce the role of education in promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination, strengthening social cohesion, and helping young people become responsible, open-minded and active members of our diverse and inclusive society ⁽¹¹⁾. Education is important to prevent and tackle marginalisation and radicalisation. The follow-up to the Declaration is a key priority in the new work cycle. It will take the form of joint analysis, peer learning, meetings, dissemination of good practices and concrete measures underpinned by funding from the Erasmus+ programme, in line with the four areas identified in the Declaration: (i) ensuring that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination as well as active citizenship (ii) enhancing critical thinking and media literacy (iii) fostering the education of

⁽¹⁰⁾ See in particular the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills, conducted under the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

⁽¹¹⁾ Non-formal education is important to promote the social and democratic participation of young people, which is a priority under the EU cooperation framework in the field of youth (2015 EU Youth Report).

disadvantaged children and young people and (iv) promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.

The importance of the above-mentioned areas of action is reinforced by the current inflow of migrants into Europe. The arrival of people with diverse backgrounds is creating a challenge for the education and training sector and its stakeholders throughout Europe. For those migrants that stay in our countries, their integration into education and training is a crucial step towards their social inclusion, employability, professional and personal fulfilment, and active citizenship. In this context, facilitating the effective acquisition of the language(s) of the host country is a first priority. Furthermore, the successful integration of migrants also depends on the development of intercultural skills among teachers, trainers, school leaders, other members of educational staff, learners and parents so as to ensure a greater readiness for multicultural diversity in the learning environment. The European dimension of migration underlines the pertinence of fully supporting the Member States in their integration actions, e.g. through including joint analysis, peer learning, conferences and the dissemination of good practices.

2.3. *Relevant and high-quality learning requires ...*

A more active use of innovative pedagogies and tools for developing digital competences: Education and training — at all levels — can benefit from the introduction of well-tested innovative pedagogical practices and didactic materials that have demonstrated their capacity to contribute in a concrete manner to inclusive, engaged learning for diverse learners. Several Member States report initiatives to increase teachers' and learners' digital competences and one third have introduced national strategies for the digitalisation of education. Nevertheless, huge challenges remain. Societies are becoming increasingly digital, thus boosting demand for digital competences. Education and training must address this need, which requires investment in infrastructure, organisational change, digital devices and digital competences of teachers, trainers, school leaders and other members of educational staff, as well as the creation of digital (and open) educational resources and high-quality educational software. Education and training should reap the benefits of new ICT developments and adopt innovative and active pedagogies, based on participatory and project-based methods. Open learning environments — such as public libraries, open adult education centres and open universities — can help collaboration between educational sectors, including for disadvantaged learners.

Strong support for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other members of educational staff, who play a key role in ensuring the success of learners and in implementing education policy: Many Member States report measures for enhancing teacher training and emphasise the initial education and continuing professional development of teachers and trainers should be fit for purpose, combining subject matter, pedagogy and practice. Equipping the relevant staff at all levels and in all sectors of education and training with strong pedagogical skills and competences, based on solid research and practice, remains a priority. They should be trained to deal with learners' individual needs and growing diversity in terms of their social, cultural, economic and geographic backgrounds, to prevent early school leaving and to use innovative pedagogies and ICT tools in an optimal manner, while enjoying 'induction' support early in their careers.

Staff shortages increasingly hinder quality instruction in many countries, while interest in teaching careers is largely in decline. Therefore Member States should take measures to increase the attractiveness and status of the teaching profession ⁽¹²⁾. Comprehensive long-term policies are required to make sure that the most suitable candidates are selected, with diverse backgrounds and experience, and that teachers have attractive opportunities for career development, also with a view to offsetting the existing strong gender bias.

Facilitating learning mobility at all levels: The first Mobility Scoreboard (2014), produced in follow-up to the 2011 Council Recommendation on learning mobility, reveals that the environment for learning mobility varies greatly between Member States, with significant barriers remaining in terms of information, student support and recognition. Actions on transparency, quality assurance and the validation and recognition of skills and qualifications have to be tracked and pursued. Better data are needed for evidence monitoring on mobility.

Supporting internationalisation in higher education and vocational education and training will remain a priority. This could include policy cooperation with other regions of the world on quality assurance and promoting learning outcomes, the development of strategic partnerships and joint courses, and the promotion of mobility of students, staff and researchers, as well as work towards facilitating the use of qualifications acquired outside the EU.

⁽¹²⁾ Policy Measures to Improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe, European Commission (2013).

Strengthened and simplified EU transparency and recognition tools, and greater synergy between these: Transparency and recognition tools are essential for mobility, employability and lifelong learning. Some of them, such as Europass, are used widely. To ensure greater transparency, most Member States have developed National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and have referenced these to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Several Member States have implemented the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

Further work should promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as well as facilitate the transparency and the comparability of qualifications across Europe. With regard to newly arrived migrants, existing transparency instruments could also help a better understanding of foreign qualifications in the EU, and vice versa. Adequate recognition and validation can support the uptake of open and innovative learning practices, including those using digital technology.

Further work should also focus on implementing the EQF and NQFs more effectively and on further developing the EQF in order to enhance the transparency and comparability of qualifications. Use of the EQF and NQFs can support existing recognition practices and thus make the process of recognition easier.

Particular attention should also be given, after a preliminary impact assessment, to simplifying and rationalising existing EU instruments such as tools, portals and other services on skills and qualifications aimed at the wider public with a view to strengthening outreach.

Filling the investment gap: Effective investment in quality education and training is a source of sustainable growth. Yet since the crisis, public budgets have remained tight and several Member States have cut their education and training expenditure in real terms. This suggests the need to support Member States in designing reforms that deliver quality education and training more efficiently, within a broad societal context. The Investment Plan for Europe, Erasmus+, the European Structural and Investment Funds, including the Youth Employment Initiative, and Horizon 2020, can help to stimulate investments and support ET 2020 policy priorities, whilst ensuring strong links with policies.

3. GOVERNANCE AND WORKING METHODS

Since the 2012 Joint Report the governance of ET 2020 has improved, in particular by strengthening evidence building (the Education and Training Monitor) and the operational character of Working Groups, and by developing regular platforms for exchanges between key stakeholders such as the Education, Training and Youth Forum. The stocktaking indicates a consensus on the following approach for the next work cycle:

- **Strong analytical evidence and progress monitoring** are essential for the effectiveness of the ET 2020 framework, and will be carried out in cooperation with Eurostat, the Eurydice network, Cedefop, the OECD and other organisations.
- **Streamlining and rationalising reporting** within the ET 2020 framework remain a priority and will be aided by the extension of the work cycle to 5 years. Optimal use will be made of the analytical and up-to-date facts and figures provided, for example, through the Eurydice network and Cedefop (ReferNet). In addition, in the country-specific chapters of the Education and Training Monitor, up-to-date national data will also be taken into account, if methodologically sound.
- **Stronger links between education, business and research, as well as the involvement of social partners and civil society**, will strengthen the impact of ET 2020 and the relevance of learning systems to increase Europe's innovation capacity. Knowledge Alliances and Sector Skills Alliances under Erasmus+, Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology under Horizon 2020 are trend-setting in this respect. Engagement with stakeholders will also be stimulated through the Education, Training and Youth Forum, the European University-Business Forum, the VET-Business Forum and Thematic Fora in Member States. Cooperation with European civil society and European social partners will be pursued in order to allow an optimal use of their expertise and outreach capacity.

The ET 2020 tools have proved their worth, but have not always had an effective impact at national level, notably due to a lack of synchronisation of activities, shortcomings in dissemination and low national awareness of the usefulness of results. The ET 2020 toolbox will be strengthened:

- To improve the transparency and coherence of ET 2020 activities, the Commission — in cooperation with the Member States (including the trio of Council Presidencies) — will prepare an **ET 2020 indicative rolling Work Plan**, integrating and providing a clear overview of key activities and peer learning events planned for the informal meetings of senior officials, i.e. during the meetings of the Directors General for schools, for vocational education and training and for higher education ('DG meetings') and the High-Level Group on Education and Training, the ET 2020 Working Groups, the EQF Advisory Group and the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks.
- As of 2016 a new generation of **Working Groups** ⁽¹³⁾ will work on **ET 2020 concrete issues** listed in the Annex. Their mandates will be proposed by the Commission and adjusted in the light of comments expressed by the Member States, in particular through the Education Committee. The Groups will report regularly to the relevant informal groups of senior officials (i.e. the DG meetings and the High-Level Group on Education and Training) which provide steering, and to the Education Committee which brings relevant outputs to the attention of the Council. Innovative working methods will be encouraged and the outputs of the Groups will be better disseminated so as to enable real knowledge-sharing, as well as to facilitate follow-up work.
- **ET 2020 peer learning activities**, usually conducted within Working Groups, will be strengthened and enable Member States sharing similar policy challenges to work in clusters. **Peer reviews**, organised in implementation of the 2012 Joint Report on a voluntary basis and focusing on country-specific challenges, have proved useful in the context of the informal DG meetings but require more preparation and interactive dialogue. Tailor-made **peer counselling** can also be used to support a particular national reform agenda ⁽¹⁴⁾.
- **The dissemination of good practices** and lessons learned, using international evidence when relevant, will be enhanced through thematic events, policy learning exchanges and any arrangement for knowledge transfer and exchanges on what works in education. To facilitate an effective take-up of certain key ET 2020 outputs by education and training stakeholders, special attention will be given to the dissemination of the essential messages in the EU's official languages, as resources allow. In addition, dissemination arrangements will be included in the mandates of the ET 2020 Working Groups and will be reflected in the rolling Work Plan.
- The **Education and Training Monitor**, synchronised with the European Semester and providing up-to-date thematic and country-specific evidence, will be used systematically to inform policy debates at Council level, as well as the European Parliament, in discussions on education challenges and reforms.
- Full use will be made of the potential of the **Erasmus+ programme** to increase the impact of the ET 2020 tools, including by anchoring the preparation for policy experimentations in the Working Groups and using evidence gathered through excellent projects.
- While positive steps have been taken to promote cooperation on education and training with the Employment Committee in follow-up to the 2012 Joint Report, there is still scope to explore ways of improving and better structuring this relationship, for instance by encouraging more evidence-based debate on human capital issues in line with the Council (EPSCO) conclusions of 9 March 2015.
- Enhance cooperation both within the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council and with other Council formations.

⁽¹³⁾ These working groups — first established by the Commission under the Education and Training 2010 work programme in order to implement the Open Method of Coordination in education and training — offer a forum for the exchange of best practices in these fields. They bring together — on a voluntary basis — experts from the Member States.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Peer counselling is an instrument which brings together, on a voluntary and transparent basis, professional peers from a small number of national administrations to provide external advice to a country in the process of a significant policy development. It is intended to go beyond information-sharing and provide a forum for finding solutions to national challenges in a participatory workshop.

ANNEX

PRIORITY AREAS FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The mid-term stocktaking confirmed the relevance of the four ET 2020 **strategic objectives** set by the Council in 2009, namely:

1. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
2. Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
3. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
4. Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

Within these strategic objectives, the stocktaking exercise highlighted the common objective of Member States to streamline the current priority areas for action. The table below proposes a reduction from 13 to 6 **priority areas**, each of which can contribute to one or more strategic objectives for the period up to 2020, fully coherent with and contributing to the EU's overall political priorities.

In the table below, the priority areas are declined into **concrete issues**, in response to the Council's request for a more concrete indication of topics for future work. These areas will be followed-up through the ET 2020 working methods and its tool box; they (i) reflect a common challenge for the Member States; and (ii) show the added value of tackling them at European level. The *concrete issues* will form the basis for the mandates of the next generation of ET 2020 Working Groups.

Member States will select, in accordance with national priorities, those areas and issues for work and cooperation in which they wish to participate.

Priority areas		Concrete issues	
1	Relevant and high-quality knowledge, skills and competences developed throughout lifelong learning, focusing on learning outcomes for employability, innovation, active citizenship and well-being	i.	Enhancing targeted policy action to reduce low achievement in basic skills across Europe, covering language, literacy, mathematics, science and digital literacy
		ii.	Strengthening the development of transversal skills and key competences , in line with the Reference Framework on Key Competences for lifelong learning, in particular digital, entrepreneurship and language competences
		iii.	Relaunching and continuing lifelong learning strategies and addressing the transition phases within education and training, while promoting, through high-quality guidance, transitions to and between vocational education and training, higher education and adult learning, including non-formal and informal learning, and from education and training to work
		iv.	Fostering generalised, equitable access to affordable high-quality early childhood education and care , especially for the disadvantaged, and taking forward the Quality Framework in this area
		v.	Reducing early school leaving by supporting school-based strategies with an overall inclusive learner-centred vision of education and 'second-chance' opportunities, emphasising effective learning environments and pedagogies
		vi.	Promoting the relevance of higher education to the labour market and society, including through better intelligence and anticipation about labour market needs and outcomes, e.g. tracking the career of graduates, encouraging the development of curricula, more work-based learning and enhanced cooperation between institutions and employers

Priority areas		Concrete issues
		<p>vii. Implementing the Riga medium-term deliverables in VET (see details at the end of the text), while reinforcing the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and strengthening the anticipation of skills needs for the labour market</p> <p>viii. Implementing the Renewed European Agenda for adult learning (see details at the end of the text)</p>
2	Inclusive education, equality, equity, non-discrimination and the promotion of civic competences	<p>i. Addressing the increasing diversity of learners and enhancing access to quality and inclusive mainstream education and training for all learners, including disadvantaged groups, such as learners with special needs, newly arrived migrants, people with a migrant background and Roma, while tackling discrimination, racism, segregation, bullying (including cyber-bullying), violence and stereotypes</p> <p>ii. Addressing the issue of gender gaps in education and training, and unequal opportunities for women and men, and promoting more gender-balanced educational choices</p> <p>iii. Facilitating the effective acquisition of the language(s) of instruction and employment by migrants through formal and non-formal learning</p> <p>iv. Promoting civic, intercultural, and social competences, mutual understanding and respect, and ownership of democratic values and fundamental rights at all levels of education and training</p> <p>v. Enhancing critical thinking, along with cyber and media literacy</p>
3	Open and innovative education and training, including by fully embracing the digital era	<p>i. Further exploring the potential of innovative and active pedagogies such as inter-disciplinary teaching and collaborative methods, to enhance the development of relevant and high-level skills and competences, while fostering inclusive education, including for disadvantaged learners and learners with disabilities</p> <p>ii. Fostering cooperation by stimulating the engagement of learners, teachers, trainers, school leaders and other members of educational staff, parents and the broader local community such as civil society groups, social partners and business</p> <p>iii. Increasing synergies between education, research and innovation activities, with a sustainable growth perspective, building on developments in higher education, with a new focus on vocational education and training and schools</p> <p>iv. Promoting the use of ICT with a view to increasing the quality and relevance of education at all levels</p> <p>v. Boosting availability and quality of open and digital educational resources and pedagogies at all education levels, in cooperation with European open source communities</p> <p>vi. Addressing the development of digital competences at all levels of learning, including non-formal and informal, in response to the digital revolution</p>
4	Strong support for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other educational staff	<p>i. Strengthening the recruitment, selection and induction of the best and most suitable candidates for the teaching profession</p> <p>ii. Raising the attractiveness, for both genders, and the status of the teaching profession</p>

Priority areas		Concrete issues
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. Supporting initial education and continuing professional development at all levels, especially to deal with the increased diversity of learners, early school leaving, work based learning, digital competences and innovative pedagogies, including through EU tools such as eTwinning, the School Education Gateway and the ePlatform for adult learning in Europe (EPALE) iv. Supporting the promotion of excellence in teaching at all levels, in the design of teacher education programmes and in learning organisation and incentive structures, as well as exploring new ways to assess the quality of teacher training
5	Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications to facilitate learning and labour mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Fostering transparency, quality assurance, validation and thereby recognition of skills and/or qualifications, including those acquired through digital, online and open learning resources, as well as non-formal and informal learning ii. Simplifying and rationalising the transparency, documentation, validation and recognition tools that involve direct outreach to learners, workers and employers, and further implementing the EQF and NQFs iii. Supporting the mobility of pupils, apprentices, students, teachers, members of educational staff and researchers iv. Developing strategic partnerships and joint courses, in particular through increasing internationalisation of higher education and vocational education and training
6	Sustainable investment, quality and efficiency of education and training systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Exploring the potential of the Investment Plan for Europe in the area of education and training, including by promoting funding models attracting private actors and capital ii. Encouraging Member States to use evidence-based policy-making, including the evaluation and assessment of education and training systems, to monitor policies and design reforms that deliver quality education more efficiently iii. Encouraging innovative ways to ensure sustainable investment in education and training, examining forms of performance-based funding and cost-sharing, where appropriate

SPECIFIC PRIORITIES FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND FOR ADULT LEARNING UP TO 2020

The sectoral agendas for vocational education and training (the Copenhagen-Bruges process) and for adult learning require a more detailed identification — and endorsement via this Joint Report — of the deliverables/priorities for the period up to 2020.

I. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

The Riga conclusions of 22 June 2015 proposed the following new set of medium-term deliverables ⁽¹⁾ in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020:

— Promoting **work-based learning** in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.

⁽¹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf

- Further developing **quality assurance** mechanisms in VET in line with the EQAVET ⁽²⁾ recommendation and, as part of quality assurance systems, establishing continuous **information and feed back loops to initial VET (I-VET) and continuing VET (C-VET)** ⁽³⁾ **systems based on learning outcomes**.
- Enhancing **access to VET and qualifications for all** through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and making available validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- Further strengthening **key competences** in VET curricula and providing more effective opportunities to acquire or develop those skills through I-VET and C-VET.
- Introducing systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, the **initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors** in both school and work-based settings.

II. ADULT LEARNING

The Renewed European Agenda for adult learning ⁽⁴⁾ which the Council adopted in 2011 outlined a number of priority areas for the period 2012-2014, but set these in a longer term perspective aligned with the four ET 2020 strategic objectives. Specific priorities on which the Member States, with the support of the European Commission, should concentrate up to 2020 in order to achieve the longer term vision of the Agenda, are as follows:

- **Governance:** ensuring the coherence of adult learning with other policy areas, improving coordination, effectiveness and relevance to the needs of society, the economy and the environment; increasing, where appropriate, both private and public investment.
- **Supply and take up:** significantly increasing the supply of high-quality adult learning provision, especially in literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and increasing take-up through effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies which target the groups most in need.
- **Flexibility and access:** widening access by increasing the availability of workplace-based learning and making effective use of ICT; putting in place procedures to identify and assess the skills of low qualified adults, and providing sufficient second-chance opportunities leading to a recognised EQF qualification for those without EQF level 4 qualifications.
- **Quality:** improving quality assurance, including monitoring and impact assessment, improving initial and continuing education of adult educators, and collecting the necessary data on needs to effectively target and design provision.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 155, 8.7.2009.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 324, 1.12.2010, p. 5.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 1.

Council conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school

(2015/C 417/05)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

IN THE CONTEXT OF

- The Europe 2020 target in the field of education to reduce the average European rate of early school leavers ⁽¹⁾ to less than 10 % by 2020 ⁽²⁾;
- The Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 establishing a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020') ⁽³⁾;
- The 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ⁽⁴⁾,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT

- The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽⁵⁾;
- The Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training ⁽⁶⁾;
- The Council conclusions on early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow ⁽⁷⁾;
- The 2011 Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving ⁽⁸⁾, in particular the annexed policy framework, and its call to ensure that Member States have in place comprehensive policies on early school leaving, comprising prevention, intervention and compensation measures by the end of 2012;
- The European Parliament resolution of 1 December 2011 on tackling early school leaving ⁽⁹⁾;
- The Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee ⁽¹⁰⁾;
- The Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education,

AND IN THE LIGHT OF

- The Luxembourg Presidency's symposium *Staying on Track — tackling early school leaving and promoting success in school* held in Luxembourg on 9-10 July 2015, which brought together participants from across the EU in the fields of policy making, research and practice to debate this important topic;
- The Luxembourg Presidency's conference on *Diversity and Multilingualism in Early Childhood Education and Care* held in Luxembourg on 10-11 September 2015;
- The 2013 final report of the ET 2020 Thematic Working Group on early school leaving and the 2015 policy messages of the Working Group on Schools Policy;
- The 2014 report of the ET 2020 Thematic Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care proposing key principles for a Quality Framework in this area,

⁽¹⁾ The share of the population aged 18 to 24 with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education or training (Eurostat/Labour Force Survey).

⁽²⁾ EUCO 13/10, ANNEX I, fourth indent (p. 12).

⁽³⁾ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁽⁴⁾ See page 25 of this Official Journal.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 2.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 175, 15.6.2011, p. 8.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 191, 1.7.2011, p. 1.

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 165 E, 11.6.2013, p. 7.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1.

CONSIDERS THAT

At the midway stage in both the Europe 2020 strategy and the ET 2020 strategic framework, and four years after the Council adopted a recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving ⁽¹⁾, the time is ripe to take stock of the progress made so far, with a view to reviewing, consolidating and improving measures aiming at reducing this phenomenon and promoting success in school for all.

Since adoption of the Council Recommendation in 2011 many earlier findings on early school leaving (ESL) have been refined and supplemented by peer learning and exchanges of good practice between Member States, by further research and by detailed analysis of the policies adopted at national level. The Europe 2020 headline target on ESL has kept this issue high on national policy agendas and has contributed to promoting educational reforms.

Although solid progress in decreasing ESL rates has been made in recent years, still too many pupils continue to leave education prematurely ⁽²⁾. Huge discrepancies remain between and within Member States, and the comprehensive strategies advocated in the 2011 Council Recommendation are still lacking in many countries.

For this reason, the EU and the Member States acknowledge the need to actively pursue efforts to achieve — and, where possible, even exceed — the Europe 2020 target.

EMPHASISES THAT

1. Early school leaving tends to result from a range of frequently interconnected personal, social, economic, cultural, educational, gender-related and family-related factors, and is linked to situations of cumulative disadvantage which often have their origin in early childhood. Groups with low socioeconomic status are affected to a greater extent and early school leaving rates are particularly alarming for certain groups, such as children with migrant backgrounds (including newly arrived migrants and foreign-born children), Roma children and children with special educational needs.
2. The design and quality of education systems also have a strong impact on learners' participation and performance, and certain systemic factors may negatively influence learning progress. In addition, factors such as an unfavourable school climate, violence and bullying, a learning environment in which learners do not feel respected or valued, teaching methods and curricula which may not always be the most appropriate, insufficient learner support, lack of career education and guidance or poor teacher-pupil relationships may lead learners to leave education prematurely.
3. In our increasingly diverse societies, there is an urgent need for inclusive and coordinated responses from both educational and non-educational stakeholders which are aimed at promoting common values such as tolerance, mutual respect, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as fostering social integration, intercultural understanding and a sense of belonging.
4. Ensuring that every young person has equal access to quality and inclusive education ⁽³⁾ and the opportunity to develop his/her full potential, irrespective of individual, family-related or gender-related factors, socioeconomic status and life experiences, is key to preventing marginalisation and social exclusion, as well as reducing the risk of extremism and radicalisation.
5. Completing upper secondary education or vocational education and training tends to be considered as the minimum entrance qualification for a successful transition from education to the labour market, as well as for admission to the next stages of education and training. Since early leavers from education and training face a higher risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, investing to support the educational achievement of young people can help to break the cycle of deprivation and the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality.

⁽¹⁾ The United Kingdom voted against the Recommendation.

⁽²⁾ According to 2014 data, 11,1 % of 18 to 24 year olds have left education and training without completing an upper secondary programme, amounting to around 4,4 million young people (Source: Eurostat (LFS), 2014).

⁽³⁾ For the purpose of these conclusions, the term *inclusive education* refers to the right of all to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, TO

1. Actively pursue implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving, in particular by:
 - (a) continuing the process of developing and implementing comprehensive strategies — or equivalent integrated policies composed of evidence-based prevention, intervention and compensation measures — which are coherently embedded in high-quality education and training, and which benefit from sustained political commitment with a strong emphasis on prevention;
 - (b) ensuring the committed participation of, and long-term cooperation between, stakeholders from all relevant areas (notably education and training, employment, economic affairs, social affairs, health, housing, youth, culture and sport) at and across all levels, based on clearly identified roles and responsibilities and involving close coordination.
2. Alongside the EU early school leaving indicator, explore opportunities for developing or enhancing national data collection systems which regularly gather a wide range of information ⁽¹⁾ on learners, especially those at risk and early school leavers. Such systems, covering all levels and types of education and training and in full compliance with national legislation on data protection, could:
 - (a) enable the regular monitoring of educational progress with a view to the early detection and identification of learners at risk of early school leaving;
 - (b) help to define criteria and indicators for identifying educational disadvantage;
 - (c) help to understand the reasons for early school leaving, including by collecting the views of learners;
 - (d) facilitate the availability of data and information at different policy levels and their use in steering and monitoring policy development;
 - (e) provide the basis for developing effective guidance and support in schools with a view to preventing early school leaving, as well as follow-up measures for young people who have left education and training prematurely.
3. Where relevant, consider setting more ambitious national targets for reducing early school leaving, particularly if existing ones have already been reached.
4. Identify those schools or local environments which present a high risk of early school leaving and high levels of educational disadvantage and which might benefit from additional support or resources.
5. Pursue — as appropriate — the reform of education systems, looking at the whole spectrum of education and training, including non-formal learning and acknowledging the role of youth work, with a view to reinforcing structural, pedagogical, curricular and professional continuity, easing transitions, addressing segregation and inequalities in education systems and promoting measures which support learners' progress and educational achievement and motivate them to complete their education.
6. Ensure generalised, equitable access to affordable, high quality early childhood education and care. The cognitive and non-cognitive skills developed in early childhood education and care can help children to unlock their full potential and provide them with the foundations for life and success in school. Early childhood education and care structures should also encourage the effective acquisition of the language(s) of instruction, while respecting cultural and linguistic diversity. Developing a feeling of belonging and establishing secure and trusting relationships from an early age are crucial for children's further learning and development.

⁽¹⁾ *a wide range of information* means in particular learning more about:

- the age at which discontinuation of education and training occurs;
- the relationship between early school leaving and truancy;
- differences with regard to early school leaving according to gender, academic performance or achieved education levels;
- the socioeconomic background or a proxy, such as neighbourhood information;
- the background and/or mother tongue of the learner.

7. Encourage and promote collaborative ('whole-school') approaches to reducing early school leaving at local level, for instance through:
 - (a) greater room for manoeuvre for schools with regard to governance, curriculum issues and working methods, including through increased autonomy accompanied by effective accountability;
 - (b) adequate open and transparent quality assurance mechanisms and school planning and improvement processes, established and implemented with the active involvement of the entire school community (school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, learners, parents and families);
 - (c) effective partnerships and cross-sectoral cooperation between schools and external stakeholders, including a variety of professionals, NGOs, businesses, associations, youth workers, local authorities and services, and other representatives from the community at large in accordance with local contexts;
 - (d) cooperation between schools of different types and levels which are located in the same area, as well as networking and multi-professional learning communities at regional, national and international levels, in order to promote the exchange of good practices;
 - (e) excellence in school governance and leadership, for instance by improving recruitment procedures and continuous professional development opportunities for school leaders;
 - (f) a culture of support and collaboration between pupils, parents, families and school staff, with a view to strengthening young people's identification with the school system, increasing their motivation to learn and encouraging their involvement in cooperative decision-making processes;
 - (g) support for schools in reaching out to all parents and families beyond the formal requirements for participation, and in building a culture of mutual trust and respect in which parents and family feel welcome at school and feel involved in their children's learning;
 - (h) mechanisms to detect early signs of disengagement, such as regular absences or behavioural issues;
 - (i) systematic support frameworks for learners at risk of early school leaving, including mentoring, counselling and psychological support, as well as the possibility of additional support for learners whose native language(s) is/are not the language(s) of instruction;
 - (j) the provision of a wide range of accessible extracurricular and out-of-school activities — for instance, in sport, the arts, volunteering or youth work — that can complement the learning experience, as well as increase learners' participation, motivation and sense of belonging.
8. Whilst encouraging high expectations for all pupils and promoting access to the basic skills and knowledge that will best equip them for the future, explore the potential of more personalised, learner-centred forms of teaching and learning, including by means of digital resources, as well as the use of different assessment methods such as formative assessment ⁽¹⁾.
9. Ensure, with due regard for institutional autonomy, that initial teacher education and continuous professional development provide teachers, trainers, school leaders, early childhood education and care professionals and other staff with the skills, competences and background knowledge needed to understand and tackle educational disadvantage and possible risk factors that might lead to disengagement or early school leaving. Such skills, competences and knowledge could cover issues such as classroom and diversity management strategies, relationship building, conflict resolution, bullying prevention techniques and career education and guidance.
10. Ensure that career education and guidance, more flexible pathways and high-quality vocational education and training of equal value to general education are available to all learners.
11. Provide access to high-quality 'second chance' schemes and other opportunities to re-engage in mainstream education for all young people who have left education prematurely, and ensure that any knowledge, skills and competences acquired by these means, including through non-formal and informal learning, are validated in line with the 2012 Council Recommendation ⁽²⁾.

⁽¹⁾ For the purpose of these conclusions, the term *formative assessment* refers to measures used to accurately identify learners' needs and to provide timely and continuous feedback as part of the learning process.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO

1. Make maximum use of the opportunities available under the ET 2020 strategic framework and via the open method of coordination, including the possibility of strengthening peer learning and, where necessary, of contracting research and studies, in order to strengthen evidence-based policy making and to develop and disseminate examples of successful policy practice.
2. Use the funding opportunities offered by EU instruments such as the *Erasmus+* Programme, the European Social Fund and the European Fund for Strategic Investments ⁽¹⁾ to support measures aimed at reducing early school leaving as part of comprehensive policies and at promoting cooperation in and around schools.
3. Continue to identify, through research and peer learning, examples of the most effective collaborative practices at school and at local level aimed at alleviating educational disadvantage, reducing early school leaving and ensuring more inclusive education. Ensure the wide dissemination of such practices among school practitioners and stakeholders, in particular through the eTwinning community and the School Education Gateway.

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO

1. Continue to follow and disseminate information on developments in the Member States, and to report periodically on the progress towards the *Europe 2020* target and the implementation of Member States' strategies or equivalent integrated policies on early school leaving in the context of the European Semester and of the ET 2020 reporting arrangements, including through the Education and Training Monitor.
2. Develop further cooperation with researchers, Member States, relevant stakeholders, networks and organisations, with a view to supporting the implementation of national and EU policies on early school leaving.
3. Enhance cooperation on this topic with relevant international organisations such as the OECD in collaboration with the Member States.
4. Recall the importance of maintaining a focus on inclusive education and reducing early school leaving in the context of the planned mid-term review of *Erasmus+*.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2015/1017 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2015 on the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the European Investment Advisory Hub and the European Investment Project Portal and amending Regulations (EU) No 1291/2013 and (EU) No 1316/2013 (OJ L 169, 1.7.2015, p. 1).

Council Conclusions on culture in the EU's external relations with a focus on culture in development cooperation

(2015/C 417/06)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. RECALLING that Article 167(3) and (4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) calls on the Union and its Member States to foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, and invites the Union to take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures;
2. EMPHASISING that culture in the EU's external relations, including in development cooperation, is one of the priorities of the European Agenda for Culture ⁽¹⁾ and the subsequent Council work plans for culture ⁽²⁾ and that cross-sectorial cooperation is important to increase coherence between different policies as underlined in a number of recently adopted Council conclusions ⁽³⁾;
3. BEARING IN MIND that according to Article 208 TFEU, Union policy in the field of development cooperation shall be conducted within the framework of the principles and objectives of the Union's external action and that the Union's development cooperation policy and that of the Member States complement and reinforce each other;
4. RECALLING the adoption by the United Nations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ⁽⁴⁾ which contains explicit references to culture in several of its goals as well as the Council conclusions of 16 December 2014 on a transformative post-2015 agenda ⁽⁵⁾, which recognise that culture, including world cultural heritage and creative industries, can have an important role in achieving inclusive and sustainable development;
5. EMPHASISING that the EU is guided by the universality, indivisibility, inter-relatedness and interdependence of all human rights, whether civil, political, economic, social or cultural; ⁽⁶⁾
6. RECALLING that the EU and its Member States have acceded, and thus committed themselves to the implementation of the 2005 Unesco Convention on the protection and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions that emphasises, inter alia, the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in development policies and that cultural diversity can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed;

IS CONVINCED that culture needs to form part of a strategic and cross-cutting approach to the Union's external relations and development cooperation given its substantial capacity to reinforce these policies by contributing to the building of long-term relationships based on people-to-people exchange, mutual understanding, trust and credibility;

WITH DUE REGARD to the respective spheres of competence of the European Union and of the Member States, as well as to the principle of subsidiarity;

UNDERLINES THE FOLLOWING:

Regarding culture in the EU's external relations

7. To realise culture's potential to be an important part of external relations, it is necessary to go beyond projecting the diversity of European cultures, and aim at generating a new spirit of dialogue, mutual listening and learning,

⁽¹⁾ Endorsed by the Council resolution of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture (OJ C 287, 29.11.2007, p. 1).

⁽²⁾ The most recent one being the Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018) (OJ C 463, 23.12.2014, p. 4).

⁽³⁾ The most recent one being the Council conclusions of 26 November 2012 on cultural governance (OJ C 393, 19.12.2012, p. 8).

⁽⁴⁾ The UN Sustainable Development Summit (New York, 25-27 September 2015) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ('Transforming our world'), including a single set of global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁽⁵⁾ 16716/14.

⁽⁶⁾ EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline (doc. 9647/14).

joint capacity building and global solidarity ⁽¹⁾, as recommended by the Preparatory Action on culture in EU external relations ⁽²⁾ and the report on culture and external relations with China ⁽³⁾.

8. There is, however, a need for a better coordination of efforts towards a strategic European approach aiming at the consistent and coherent integration of culture in the EU's external relations and contributing to the complementarity of the Union's activities with those of its Member States. Such an approach would include, inter alia, thematic and geographic priorities, realistic objectives and outcomes, target groups, common interests and initiatives, financing provisions, citizens participation and implementation modalities.
9. A strategic approach at the EU level would also enable current challenges, such as the migratory crisis, radicalisation and xenophobia, the destruction of and threat to cultural heritage and the illicit trafficking in cultural objects, to be addressed more efficiently.

Regarding culture in development cooperation

10. Promoting policy coherence is particularly crucial for development cooperation, given the important role that the Member States and the EU play in this area and with regard also to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
11. Culture is an essential component of the human, social, economic and environmental dimension of development and therefore a key element of sustainable development, given that:
 - dynamic cultural and creative sectors, including cultural heritage, in partner countries can contribute to poverty reduction, as they are important catalysts for growth, employment, social cohesion and local development,
 - culture as well as the promotion and respect of cultural diversity play an important role in conflict prevention, peace building and reconciliation in conflict and post-conflict zones,
 - intercultural dialogue fosters better understanding and facilitates deeper partnerships between stakeholders,
 - an independent cultural and media sector is a fundamental condition for freedom of opinion and expression, cultural diversity, active democratic citizenship and a sustainable democratic development,
 - the adoption of specific culture and development cooperation strategies leads to more effective and sustainable actions in a large number of sectors.
12. Nevertheless, in order to take full advantage of the strong potential of culture for development cooperation, a more integrated approach should be developed that includes the mainstreaming of the cultural dimension in development programmes and an appropriate support to cultural operators on a longer term basis rather than one-off interventions.
13. Such an approach could be based, inter alia, upon the following elements:
 - recognition of the value of culture in its own right and as a vector for development cooperation,
 - definition, on the basis of a common understanding of coherence and consistency, of practical ways to mainstream the cultural dimension when preparing sectorial development programmes,
 - support for a structured and long-term development of the cultural and creative sectors in partner countries, notably in terms of capacity-building, cultural governance and intellectual property systems,
 - the strengthening of efforts to protect and safeguard the world's tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage,

⁽¹⁾ Also in line with the European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2011 on the cultural dimensions of the EU's external actions.

⁽²⁾ Initiated by the European Parliament in 2012, the Preparatory Action on 'Culture in EU External Relations' was carried out in 2012-2013 with the aim to support on-going policy reflection and development on strengthening the role of culture in external relations and to nurture further work in this area. The final report was published in 2014, <http://cultureinexternalrelations.eu/main-outcomes/>

⁽³⁾ A strategy for EU-China cultural relations: report of the expert group on culture and external relations — China (November 2012).

- the promotion of the role of education in fostering pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between men and women,
 - the setting of a realistic number of priority lines that may be regularly reviewed to have a clear understanding of projects' results and their contribution to sustainable development and poverty reduction as well as to social cohesion, growth and jobs,
 - complementarity between existing programmes and financing schemes and instruments of the Union, the Member States and other actors and, when appropriate, the increase of opportunities to support cultural initiatives therein,
 - a bottom-up approach that fosters national and local ownership, involves partner countries and engages all stakeholders, in particular NGOs, civil society and the private sector.
14. A prompt reaction would be particularly important in view of the future implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda ⁽¹⁾ so as to ensure that culture is sufficiently considered and can play its role in that regard.

THEREFORE INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

15. Participate in an ad-hoc task group that will be hosted by Luxembourg. This group shall contribute to the preparation of a concrete, evidence-based, shared and long-term approach on culture and development cooperation.

In order to facilitate coherence of actions between relevant actors on the ground, the group shall collect and exchange best practices on culture and development cooperation and examine the empirical evidence on the impact of culture on development.

The group will meet for the initial period 2016 — 2017, will be informal by nature and voluntary in participation. It will be open to actors from both culture and development sectors, notably Member States (in particular incumbent and future Council Presidencies), the Commission, the European Parliament, relevant international organisations operating in development and culture fields, partner countries, external partners in particular the EU National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), as well as civil society and NGO platforms.

Results of the work of this group shall be presented to the concerned Council preparatory bodies, notably in the field of culture and development cooperation.

AND INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

16. strengthen culture as a specific dimension of intervention in development cooperation,
17. develop and present, jointly with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to the Council a more strategic approach to culture in external relations based on the principles outlined above and which should support, inter alia, artistic freedom, freedom of cultural expression and respect for cultural diversity and heritage.

⁽¹⁾ In particular goals numbers 4 (target 4.7), 8 (target 8.9), 11 (target 11.4) and 12 (target 12.b).

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, amending the Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018) as regards the priority on intercultural dialogue

(2015/C 417/07)

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

RECALLING the conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018) ⁽¹⁾,

IN THE LIGHT OF the European Council's conclusions of October 2015 ⁽²⁾, which state that tackling the migration and refugee crisis is a common obligation which requires a comprehensive strategy and a determined effort over time in a spirit of solidarity and responsibility,

UNDERLINING that after providing for migrants' and refugees' immediate needs, the focus needs to be turned to their social and economic integration,

EMPHASISING that culture and the arts have their role to play in the process of integrating refugees who will be granted asylum status as they can help them to better understand their new environment and its interaction with their own socio-cultural background, thus contributing to building a more cohesive and open society,

RECALLING that intercultural dialogue can help to bring individuals and peoples closer together and help towards conflict prevention and the process of reconciliation ⁽³⁾, and that it has been a focus of European cooperation in the field of culture since 2002 and is currently a priority area of the Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018),

AGREE, in the context of the migratory and refugee crisis and with a view to foster an inclusive society based on cultural diversity, to amend the Work Plan for Culture (2015-2018) by adjusting priority area D3a) on intercultural dialogue as follows:

Priority area D: Promotion of cultural diversity, culture in the EU external relations and mobility

European agenda for culture: *Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue* (3.1), *Culture as a vital element in international relations* (3.3)

Europe 2020 strategy: *Sustainable and inclusive growth* (priorities 2, 3), *Deploying EU external policy instruments*.

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods (incl. if cross-sectorial)	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Commission/ Member States	<p>a. Intercultural dialogue</p> <p>In the context of the migratory and refugee crisis, explore the ways culture and the arts can help to bring individuals and peoples together, increase their participation in cultural and societal life as well as to promote intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity.</p> <p>Links will be established with other EU-level integration networks and databases ⁽¹⁾.</p>	<p>OMC</p> <p>Experts will take stock of the policies and existing good practices on intercultural dialogue ⁽²⁾ with a special focus on the integration of migrants and refugees in societies through the arts and culture.</p>	<p>2016</p> <p>Handbook of good practices.</p>

⁽¹⁾ Such as European Website on Integration: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/pratiques-dintegration>

⁽²⁾ An anthology of existing policies and practices for the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue can be found in the 2014 report of the OMC on the role of public arts and cultural institutions in the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/201405-omc-diversity-dialogue_en.pdf

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 463, 23.12.2014, p. 4.

⁽²⁾ EUCO 26/15

⁽³⁾ Council conclusions on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States (OJ C 320, 16.12.2008, p. 10).

Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, reviewing the 2011 Resolution on the representation of the EU Member States in the Foundation Board of WADA and the coordination of the EU and its Member States' positions prior to WADA meetings

(2015/C 417/08)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES

RECALLING

The Resolution of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on the representation of the EU Member States in the Foundation Board of WADA and the coordination of the EU and its Member States' positions prior to WADA meetings and in particular the fact that by 31 December 2015 the experience gained from the application of this resolution shall be reviewed ⁽¹⁾.

NOTING

The discussions at the Informal Ministerial Meeting for Sport that took place in Luxembourg on 6-7 July 2015, where views about the application of the resolution were exchanged.

AGREE THAT

The representation system and the coordination arrangements as set out in the 2011 Resolution should stay in place.

RECOGNISE THAT THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS SHOULD BE REINFORCED:

- more regular involvement of the Council Presidency in Council of Europe (including CAHAMA) and WADA meetings;
- more systematic contributions from the Commission in the preparation of the draft EU mandate on the issues of EU competence;
- increasing the scientific expertise among Member States and the Council Presidency e.g. by using the existing informal network of experts;
- improving ad hoc and on the spot coordination meetings as well as preparations for the 'public authority meetings'.

AGREE THAT

By 31 December 2018, the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, shall review once more the experience gained from the further application of the 2011 Resolution and consider whether any adjustments to the arrangements established by this Resolution are needed.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 372, 20.12.2011, p. 7.

Council conclusions on the promotion of motor skills, physical and sport activities for children ⁽¹⁾

(2015/C 417/09)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EU AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF MEMBER STATES

I. RECALLING THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND AS SET OUT IN THE ANNEX AS WELL AS THE FOLLOWING

1. The Council conclusions of 27 November 2012 on 'promoting health-enhancing physical activity. (HEPA)' ⁽²⁾ underlining that *'through its benefits with regard to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, physical activity has benefits at every age'*.
2. The Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors ⁽³⁾, which invited Member States to develop cross-sectorial policies and integrated strategies involving sport, education, health, transport, environment, urban planning and other relevant sectors and underlined that *'Physical education at school has the potential to be an effective tool to increase awareness of the importance of HEPA, and schools can be easily and effectively targeted to implement activities in this regard'*.
3. The second European Union Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017) ⁽⁴⁾, adopted on 21 May 2014, which identified the practice of enhancing physical activity for health as well as education and training in sport as priority themes of the EU cooperation in the field of sport and which set up the expert group on HEPA to propose recommendations to encourage physical education in schools, including motor skills in early childhood, and to create valuable interactions with the sport sector, local authorities and the private sector.

II. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT

4. The importance of play and recreation in the life of every child has long been acknowledged by the international community. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989 explicitly states in Article 31 that 'States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.' All activities for children, including sport activities and physical education, must always be carried out in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
5. The EU Guidelines on Physical Activity ⁽⁵⁾ pointed out that young children's daily habits have changed in recent years due to new leisure patterns (TV, internet, video games, smartphones, etc.) and that this has led to their decreasing physical activity. Furthermore time, social and budgetary constraints, changes in lifestyle or a lack of appropriate sporting facilities in the vicinity may also explain this trend. The EU Guidelines stressed that there was considerable concern as to whether physical activity among children and young people had been replaced by more sedentary activities.
6. Despite the general propensity of children to be physically active, their physical activity has decreased over the past 20 years. This change has coincided with increasing rates of childhood overweight and obesity and health problems or physical disabilities such as musculoskeletal disorders. According to estimates from the WHO's Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI), around 1 in 3 children in the EU aged 6-9 were overweight or obese in 2010 ⁽⁶⁾. This is a worrying increase since 2008, when the estimates were 1 in 4 ⁽⁷⁾. In industrialised countries, for

⁽¹⁾ In the context of the present conclusions 'children' refers to children aged 0-12.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 393, 19.12.2012.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 354, 4.12.2013.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 183, 14.6.2014.

⁽⁵⁾ EU Physical Activity Guidelines: Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Health Enhancing Physical Activity. (2008) were welcomed in the Presidency conclusions of the Informal EU Ministers responsible for Sport. http://ec.europa.eu/sport/library/doc/c1/pa_guidelines_4th_consolidated_draft_en.pdf

⁽⁶⁾ EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity 2014-2020 (http://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/docs/childhoodobesity_actionplan_2014_2020_en.pdf)

⁽⁷⁾ COM(2005)0637.

children below the age of 5 the prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased from 8 % in 1990 to 12 % in 2010 and is expected to reach 14 % by 2020 ⁽⁸⁾. The lack of physical activity also has negative effects on health systems and the economy as a whole. It is estimated that around 7 % of national health budgets across the EU are spent on diseases linked to obesity each year ⁽⁹⁾.

7. In order to prevent these childhood health and developmental problems all children (including children with disabilities) must be encouraged to be physically active. The years in early childhood education and care (ECEC) are important because key skills are developed in that period. Through play and physical activity, children learn and practice skills that they will need throughout their lives. This learning process called motor skill development does not always develop naturally. Therefore the promotion of awareness and the creation of opportunities for children to be physically active are of the utmost importance.
8. The WHO has identified insufficient physical activity as the fourth leading risk factor for premature mortality and disease globally ⁽¹⁰⁾. The benefits of physical activity are well known. Physical activity is one of the most effective ways to prevent non-communicable diseases and combat obesity, and to maintain a healthy lifestyle ⁽¹¹⁾. There is also growing evidence on the positive correlation between exercise and mental health and cognitive processes ⁽¹²⁾.

WHO reports ⁽¹³⁾ have demonstrated that involvement in regular, moderate to intense sporting or physical activity ⁽¹⁴⁾ (at least 60 minutes per day for children of school age and 3 hours for children in ECEC) creates a long-term predisposition towards physical activity that increases during adolescence and adulthood ⁽¹⁵⁾. Studies have also demonstrated that when children begin to exercise from an early age, they tend to perform better academically, have fewer behavioural and disciplinary problems, and can pay attention in class longer than their peers ⁽¹⁶⁾.

9. The education environment plays a particularly important role in this context, as children engage in physical activity and sport in school. For this reason, schools and teachers facilitate children's physical activity, along with educators in ECEC settings and sports clubs. For children, the parents, family and the wider community play an important role too.
10. According to experts, suitable physical activity for children under the age of 12 years should be arranged by age group ⁽¹⁷⁾. Activities at ECEC and primary level include structured and unstructured activities that help children to develop skills such as running, jumping or throwing.

⁽⁸⁾ www.toybox-study.eu.

⁽⁹⁾ EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity 2014-2020.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health, WHO, 2010

⁽¹¹⁾ Lee IM, Shiroma EJ, Lobelo F, Puska P, Blair SN, Katzmarzyk PT, Lancet Physical Activity Series Working Group. Effect of physical activity on major non-communicable disease worldwide: an analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy 2012 Jul. *Lancet*.

⁽¹²⁾ Strong, WB, RM Malina, CJR Blimkie, SR Daniels, RK Dishman, B Gutin, AC Hergenroeder, A Must, PA Nixon, JM Pivarnik, T Rowland, S Trost, F Trudeau (2005), 'Evidence Based Physical Activity for School-Age Youth', *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 146(6):732-737.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Report, 2008. (<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/Report/pdf/CommitteeReport.pdf>)

Study of University Saint-Gallen conducted in 2011.

⁽¹³⁾ Global recommendations on Physical Activity for Health, World Health Organisation 2010 (http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44399/1/9789241599979_eng.pdf),

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Report, 2008. (<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/Report/pdf/CommitteeReport.pdf>)

Study of University Saint-Gallen conducted in 2011.

⁽¹⁴⁾ e.g Department of Health and Aging: National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia; 2014 or UK Physical activity guidelines and National Health Service (NHS) in England: Physical activity guidelines for children (under five years) (<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/physical-activity-guidelines-for-children.aspx>)

⁽¹⁵⁾ G.J. Welk, J.C. Eisenmann, et J. Dolman, 'Health-related physical activity in children and adolescents: A bio-behavioural perspective', *The handbook of physical education*, eds. D. Kirk, D. Macdonald and M. O'Sullivan, London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2006, p. 665-684

⁽¹⁶⁾ Physical Activity May Strengthen Children's Ability To Pay Attention <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090331183800.htm> and 'The Association between school-based physical activity, Including Physical education and academic performance' U.S. Department of Health and human Services July 2010 http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf

⁽¹⁷⁾ Categories proposed by the Canadian concept of Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD).

11. Some Member States have already developed various national strategies, to varying degrees, to encourage the development of motor skills in early childhood and physical and sporting activities for children under 12, mostly in cooperation with the sport sector and sports clubs or federations ⁽¹⁸⁾.
12. In line with its mandate, the Expert Group on Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA XG) proposed a set of recommendations in June 2015 for encouraging physical education in schools, including motor skills in early childhood.

III. CALL ON EU MEMBER STATES TO:

13. Consider implementing cross-sectorial policies, with the education, youth and health sectors among others, to promote physical activities and motor skills in early childhood taking into account, in particular, the following recommendations of the HEPA XG:
 - Raising awareness of the period before attending pre-school and school as a potential opportunity for promoting physical activity for children, namely through the development of basic motor skills and physical literacy.
 - Making all stakeholders in the school and extra-curricular sectors (teachers, coaches, parents, etc.) aware of the importance of developing physical and sporting activities suitable for children.
 - Building relationships between schools and relevant organisations (sport, social and private sectors, and local authorities) to promote and increase the availability of extracurricular activities.
 - Encouraging schools to establish a cooperation framework with sports organisations and other local (national) sport providers with a view to promoting both curricular and extra-curricular activities and ensuring the availability of high-quality, safe infrastructures and equipment for physical education and extra-curricular or after-school activities, and on implementing local awareness campaigns.
 - Consider initiatives to encourage local authorities to create the conditions for developing active transport to and from school.
14. Encourage and support initiatives for all the stakeholders involved (teachers, parents, schools, clubs, educators, etc.) at the appropriate levels aimed at promoting appropriate motor skills and physical activities.
15. Encourage appropriate sport and physical activity from the earliest childhood through to ECEC and primary school, in accordance with the specific needs and ages of the children while providing guiding instructions to instructors/educators.
16. Encourage the use of awareness-raising and provision of information, at national, regional and local levels, to stimulate interest in motor skills and physical education activities for children:
17. Encourage parents, family and the wider community, to actively participate in physical activities with their children using appropriate facilities (e.g. cycle paths and safe playgrounds).
18. Consider supporting initiatives to improve sports infrastructure for children especially within educational institutions, while fostering cooperation between schools and sport clubs on the provision of equipment and facilities for children on the local level.

⁽¹⁸⁾ For example: France and multisport federations (Ufolep, Usep) or unisport federations (gymnastic or swimming) with special training for 0-6 years old children. In the Netherlands special classes are offered for toddlers in sports such as gymnastics and swimming. In Austria, the programme 'Move Children Healthily/Kinder gesund bewegen' aims to build cooperation between sport clubs and kindergartens/primary schools and to promote an active lifestyle by offering physical activity for children between 2 and 10 years old.

19. Consider providing incentives to sports organisations and clubs, schools, educational establishments, youth centres and other community or voluntary organisations that promote physical activities for children.
- IV. INVITE THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE TO:
 20. Take note of the HEPA XG recommendations as a basis for further political action at both the EU and Member State levels, since they provide evidence-based facts and practical paths to follow.
 21. Intensify cooperation between the policy areas responsible for promoting motor skills and physical education for children, in line with the recommendations of HEPA XG, in particular the sport, health, education, youth and transport sectors.
 22. With a view to the European Week of Sport, consider giving special focus to initiatives supporting and promoting school-based and extra-curricular sporting activities.
 23. Promote, where appropriate, the implementation of national monitoring systems, studies or evaluations in order to identify children's levels of physical activity and habits.
 24. Reflect on how the promotion of motor skills development in early childhood and strategies to discourage sedentary lifestyles among children can be addressed more effectively in the context of future work at the EU level.
 25. Encourage financial support for motor-skills and physical education-related initiatives through existing EU programmes, such as Erasmus+, and the European Structural and Investment Funds and welcome additional information from the Commission regarding the application of EU funding programmes for the benefit of sport.
- V. INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:
 26. Promote and support the sharing of best practices on motor skills and physical education for children in the EU context.
 27. Improve the evidence base by supporting the collection of quantitative and qualitative data ⁽¹⁹⁾ related to physical activity, fitness markers and sport participation of children within and outside ECEC or schools, in close cooperation with WHO.
 28. Develop physical activity guidelines for children in ECEC settings, schools and sport clubs, in collaboration with scientific experts including the WHO, targeting in particular policy makers, local authorities, parents, family and wider community.
- VI. INVITE THE SPORT MOVEMENT TO CONSIDER:
 29. Offering a range of non-competitive sporting activities suitable for children, adapted to the appropriate level, with a view to improving their health and personal development.
 30. Supporting the organisation of activities promoting school-based and extra-curricular sporting activities as well as motor skills in early childhood, including in the context of the European Week of Sport.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Based on the monitoring framework defined in the Council Recommendation on HEPA (26 November 2013).

31. Contributing to the development of close partnerships, joint objectives and communication campaigns with the municipalities and communities and the education, youth, health sectors among others, on combating sedentary lifestyles by promoting sport within and outside school.
 32. Making a stronger commitment to promoting sporting and physical activity initiatives which aim at combating the sedentary lifestyles of children through partnerships and cooperation with private and public sectors.
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ANNEX

Political Background

1. The European Year of Education through Sport (EYES 2004), which stressed the role of sport in education and drew attention to the wide-ranging social role of sport;
2. The White Paper on Sport of 11 July 2007, presented by the European Commission, which insisted on the importance of physical activity and indicated that 'Time spent in sport activities at school and at university produces health and education benefits which need to be enhanced' ⁽¹⁾.
3. The strategy for Europe on nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues adopted by the European Commission in 2007 ⁽²⁾ which encouraged physical activity and made children and low socioeconomic groups the priority whilst underlining that '*childhood is an important period to instil a preference for healthy behaviours, and to learn the life skills necessary to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Schools clearly play a crucial role in this respect*' ⁽³⁾.
4. The European Parliament report on the role of sport in education of 30 October 2007 ⁽⁴⁾ and the eponymous resolution that followed and called on 'Member States and the competent authorities to ensure that greater stress is placed on health development in school and preschool teaching programmes by encouraging specific forms of physical activity suitable for the later age group'.
5. The European Commission Communication 'Developing the European Dimension in Sport', dated 18 January 2011, which recognised the need to '*support innovative initiatives under the Lifelong Learning Programme relating to physical activity at school*' ⁽⁵⁾.
6. The 'Declaration of Berlin' (MINEPS V) adopted by the Sport Ministers Conference on 28-30 May 2013 '*Highlighting that physical education is a an essential entry point for children to learn life skills, develop patterns for lifelong physical activity participation and health life style behaviours*' and fostering '*the important role of inclusive extracurricular school sport in early development and educating children and youth*'.
7. The EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity 2014-2020 launched by the European Commission in 2014 ⁽⁶⁾. Among the 8 key areas for action the European Commission highlighted the promotion of healthier environments, especially in schools and pre-schools, and the encouragement of physical activity.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2007) 391 final.

⁽²⁾ COM(2007) 279 final.

⁽³⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/documents/nutrition_wp_en.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ A6-0415/2007.

⁽⁵⁾ COM(2011) 12 final.

⁽⁶⁾ 24 February 2014 (updated 12 March and 28 July 2014).

