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(Information)

COUNCIL

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the implementation of the European Pact for Youth

(2006/C 70/01)

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

HAVING REGARD to:

1. the objective, set by the Lisbon European Council on 23 and 24 March 2000 and reaffirmed by the Stockholm European Council on 23 and 24 March 2001, of making the European Union *'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'*;
2. the White Paper entitled *A new impetus for European youth*, adopted by the Commission on 21 November 2001⁽¹⁾, which recognises that *'this strategy sets new goals for different policy fields which are closely related to youth, such as education, employment, social inclusion, information and civil society'*;
3. The Green Paper of 21 March 2005 entitled *Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations*, which underlined that greater efforts are needed to integrate young people into the labour market and to support them as they pursue 'non-linear' careers, alternating between employment, study, unemployment and retraining or the updating of skills;
4. the conclusions of the European Council of 22 and 23 March 2005 adopting the European Pact for Youth as one of the instruments contributing to the achievement of the Lisbon objectives of growth and jobs, aiming to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans, while facilitating the reconciliation of working life and family life;
5. the Commission Communication of 30 May 2005 on European policies concerning youth entitled *Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe — implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship*⁽²⁾;
6. the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2005-2008)⁽³⁾, proposed by the Commission and endorsed by the Council, that should be taken into account by Member States and reported on in their national reform programmes;
7. the Commission Communication of 10 November 2005 entitled *Modernising education and training: a vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe*⁽⁴⁾;
8. the Council Resolution of 15 November 2005 on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe — implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship⁽⁵⁾;
9. the Commission Communication of 22 December 2005 entitled *Working together, working better: a new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the European Union*⁽⁶⁾;
10. the Commission's Annual Progress Report of 25 January 2006 on implementing the Lisbon Strategy, and its annexes, based on the national reform programmes of the Member States presented to the Commission in autumn 2005;

UNDERLINE:

11. that young people constitute a valuable resource for both the present and the future, and contribute to the creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship that Europe needs in order to fulfil the aims of the Lisbon Strategy;
12. that young people face many challenges, particularly in accessing the labour market, with youth unemployment on average double the overall rate within the EU;

⁽¹⁾ Doc. 14441/01 — COM(2001) 681 final.

⁽²⁾ Doc. 9679/05 — COM (2005) 206 final.

⁽³⁾ Doc. 8008/05 — COM(2005) 141 final.

⁽⁴⁾ Doc. 13415/1/05 REV 1 COM(2005) 549 final.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 292, 24.11.2005, p.5.

⁽⁶⁾ doc. 5070/06 — COM(2005) 706 final.

13. the importance of a youth perspective in the Lisbon Strategy and the key contribution which implementation of the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme, the open method of coordination in the field of social protection and social inclusion, the Structural Funds, the European Research Framework Programmes and other relevant programmes, such as the Lifelong Learning, Youth and future 'Youth in Action' Programmes, can make towards achieving the objectives of the Youth Pact;
14. the need to promote the social inclusion of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities, so as to foster social cohesion;
15. the importance for young people of policies aimed at balancing work and family life, particularly given the challenges posed by demographic change;
16. the relevance of non-formal and informal learning and young people's mobility, supported by instruments such as the Youth Programme and the future 'Youth in Action' Programme 2007–2013, to helping young people develop a wide range of skills and competences;
17. the importance of promoting a structured dialogue with young people, youth organisations and those active in the youth field at all levels;

CONSIDER that:

18. as outlined in the Commission's 2006 Annual Progress Report, the response to the Youth Pact in most Member States has been encouraging, but that urgent action is still required to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market in line with the Pact;
19. the adoption of the European Pact for Youth has strengthened the involvement of ministries responsible for youth in the Lisbon process, leading to better internal coordination and reinforced mainstreaming of the youth dimension when developing policies on employment, social inclusion, education, training and mobility, in line with the mandate from the European Council;
20. while many Member States refer explicitly to the Pact in their national reform programmes and others include measures that are consistent with it, better implementation of the objectives of the Pact and improved visibility of the Pact in the national reform programmes and in the Commission's Annual Progress Report would lead to more coherence, greater effectiveness and clearer monitoring of measures for young people, and would help to develop knowledge and expertise on the different areas of the Pact and the links between them;
21. while progress has been made, the European Commission and the Member States need to reinforce measures to implement the Pact by:
 - improving the employment situation of young people through strengthening employability and entrepreneurship and providing support for the transition from education and training to work;
 - ensuring that young people with fewer opportunities are a priority in terms of national employment and social inclusion policies;
 - reducing the numbers of early school leavers and developing closer cooperation on transparency and recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning;
22. Member States and the Commission should also develop and support measures in other areas of the Pact by:
 - taking measures that encourage young people's mobility, in particular by removing existing obstacles, taking into account the important role that mobility plays in developing young people's potential and in bringing the European Union closer to young people;
 - allowing young parents to reconcile work and family life, in particular by expanding the child care network and developing innovative forms of work organisation.

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL to:

23. encourage further progress with regard to measures for young people by implementing the European Pact for Youth in the Lisbon strategy;
24. invite the Member States to reinforce links between policies on education, training, employment, social inclusion and mobility, so as to develop more effective cross-sectoral strategies for young people;
25. invite the Member States, when preparing their national reform programmes, and the Commission, in its Annual Progress Report, to report more systematically and more visibly on the Pact within the Lisbon strategy, in order to facilitate monitoring of the progress made;
26. reiterate its request to the Commission and the Member States to involve young people and youth organisations at all levels in the implementation of the European Pact for Youth.