



Czech Republic
Ministry of Education,
Youth and Sport



France
Ministry for Health,
Youth, Sports and
voluntary Organisations



Federal Ministry for
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth

Germany
Federal Ministry for Family
Affairs,
Senior Citizens,
Women and Youth



Spain
Ministry for Equality



Sweden
Ministry of Integration
and Gender Equality

Dear colleagues,

France, the Czech Republic and Sweden as the “Trio” in the EU Council Presidency, along with Spain and Germany as further Member States who proposed the adoption of a European Youth Pact in 2004, have held informal discussions on the future perspectives for European co-operation in the area of youth policy.

These discussions have taken place against the backdrop of the current evaluation of the framework of cooperation. In the process we discovered that we share not only some of the assessments of the co-operation undertaken since 2002, but also a number of wishes and hopes for its further development.

The aim of this letter is to share with you some of the opinions and thoughts which crystallised in the course of these discussions. It should be underlined that these opinions are no finalized national positions, but could perhaps prove helpful in the ongoing debate or for your own reflections.

In our view, the central task of co-operation on youth policy should be to achieve improvements which contribute to the wellbeing of young women and men, both by means of specific political instruments and procedures and by cooperating with other areas of policy to promote the mainstreaming of a youth perspective.

An essential achievement of the Commission's 2001 White Paper and the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) is that good foundations for youth policy co-operation at the European level have been laid since 2002. Our collaboration has led to a sharpened focus on young people and to improved knowledge about them. In some Member States, it has succeeded in strengthening an already well-developed national policy. In others, it served as an important reference point in the conception and implementation of national policies. The fact that the European Youth Pact helped to insert a youth policy element into the Lisbon Strategy in 2005 strikes us as a further milestone in the collaboration. Furthermore, this also made it possible to gain access to additional financial resources, not least from the European Social Fund.

We believe that the following aspects should be preserved and/or further strengthened in the future:

- The **overarching priorities** to promote the active citizenship and the social and professional integration of young people are still relevant. The **OMC** has opened up key areas for action in youth policy co-operation which should serve as a point of orientation in the future, highlighting young people's active

citizenship. From a methodological point of view, this specific youth policy work constitutes the foundation of increasingly successful youth mainstreaming efforts. The **Youth Pact** on its part described topics which are of primary interest to the young people of Europe, and which should be shaping our thematic work in the coming years as well, especially when it comes to achieving the social and professional integration of as many young people as possible.

- We should reflect on how the OMC can become more efficient, more beneficial for the Member States and how its implementation can gain increased political visibility. In addition, the hitherto mainly political character of the Youth Pact should give way to more concrete work. To our mind, the merging of our mainstreaming efforts, in particular related to the Youth Pact and the OMC into a **single youth policy framework**, which embodies all of the youth policy priorities, would be very useful in achieving our goals.
- To achieve a more focussed working model, it might be useful to concentrate on a limited number of **“core objectives”** which are closely aligned with the EU's overall treaty goals. With this limitation on a more ‘exemplary work’, we might succeed in giving our co-operation a sharper profile and impact. We should discuss, whether underpinning some of the core objectives by quantitative targets can contribute to both efficiency and a sharpened profile.
- As it seems increasingly important to take account of specific incidents and phases in the young person's development more comprehensively, thought should be given to the **age scope** of the European co-operation in the field of youth.
- Member States' **reports** within the new framework could be made leaner by gearing them towards the core objectives. The capacity thus freed will allow the reporting apparatus to better fulfil its main function – that of mutual learning. The reporting process could also be made more transparent by, for example, facilitating access to the reports for all Member States so that they can become the object of focused examination and debate.
- It should be discussed if and how the co-operation could be enriched by adding a practical dimension. It could be a platform on which players from relevant projects as well as decision-makers from national, local and regional organisations and authorities can conduct an exchange with one another, in order to strengthen the real impact of decisions and debates at European level. Whilst the themes of such **peer learning opportunities** should be based on the core objectives, it should also be possible for the interested Member States to shape them freely in decentralized 'clusters'. This would make it possible to distil knowledge from the practical exchanges for the policy development undertaken by both the Commission and the Council.
- In promoting such exchanges and providing a framework for its preparation, implementation and evaluation, the **'Youth in Action' programme** could contribute to the development of youth policy priorities.
- A focal point of the processes could be the triennial **European Youth Report** which would visibly bring together existing information from different EU processes, data from youth research networks and experiences in the Member States, collected through OMC and peer learning. With appropriate methodology, focussed content and key messages, the report should enable the Council to use it as a highly political tool in youth related debates both at national and EU levels.
- The **Structured Dialogue** can make a significant contribution if it is integrated into the new framework in the form of a sensible consultation mechanism with clear objectives and realistic procedures, that ensures continuity and a coherent follow-up. In order to be effective, it, too, should be oriented towards the agreed core objectives and the priorities of the Trio Presidencies..
- Through the instrument of **Trio Presidencies** the Council can pursue a coherent mid-term work programme on the basis of the agreed objectives. At the same time, within the set framework, the Trio Presidencies should be allowed the space to introduce specific areas of emphasis so as to give a more 'political' contour to the youth field.
- We believe that, on the whole, the **Council's profile**, as a political engine behind co-operation, should be enhanced by involving it in the vital decisions which will have to be taken with the new framework (priorities, objectives, youth report, ...). In its relation to other Council formations, the “Youth Council”

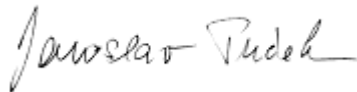
should also become a key player of an improved 'youth mainstreaming' process, e.g. by sharing up-to-day knowledge about the living conditions, values and attitudes of young people, and by serving as a support and a partner for dialogue.

- At the practical level of co-operation, we deem the most efficient co-operation possible with the **Council of Europe** to be important.

In this important phase in shaping the future of our European collaboration, we are looking forward to the upcoming discussions with our partners, as well as to the Commission communication announced for next spring, and we hope that you will find our remarks useful in this process.

Yours sincerely,

Director of the Department
for Youth Affairs



Jaroslav TUCEK

Director of the Department of
youth, non formal education
and voluntary organisations



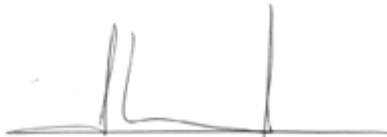
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