



Policy Paper on  
Social Inclusion through  
Youth Participation

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Adopted 28-29 April 2006

This policy paper builds upon previous policy initiatives of the European Youth Forum in the field of social inclusion<sup>1</sup>. Very much concerned with the difficult social situation of many young people in Europe, the European Youth Forum makes a proposal on how to promote a more inclusive Europe for all young people.

This policy paper however not only presents the policy analysis of the European Youth Forum on young peoples' social inclusion, but also started to assess the contribution of youth organisations in Europe to social inclusion and use this gathering of experiences to identify guidelines for youth organisations to improve and develop their work on social inclusion. This internal process may only succeed, should youth organisations be recognised as key partners in the improving and implementation of our policies that promote young peoples' social inclusion. This recognition should be accompanied by a stronger commitment from public authorities, policy makers and social partners at all levels to embark with youth organisations on coordinated and integrated policies on young peoples' social inclusion.

The European Youth Forum is closely working with several international institutions on the issue of social inclusion. This policy paper will encompass the fruits of the European Youth Forum's institutional dialogue with the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

## **Young people and social inclusion**

Social inclusion is a term with no generally agreed definition and one which can be used to express a variety of ideas. As a process, social inclusion seeks to ensure that everyone, regardless of their circumstances and background, has the possibility and means to participate more fully in society (e.g. commonplace economic, civic and cultural activities). As a result social inclusion policies or strategies are commonly designed to prevent or reverse the marginalisation and/or exclusion of individuals and communities, particularly members of the most vulnerable groups in society. If successful, such processes should lead to a more inclusive society: a society characterised by open and accessible structures and services; reduced inequality; respect of human rights; and increased social cohesion. "Feeling" included is as important as being "included" and social inclusion is necessarily concerned with the way in which individuals and communities can relate to their society more positively. In this light, social inclusion is strongly linked to the promotion of active citizenship. Furthermore, it will be strategic for the European Youth Forum and its member organisations to start a debate regarding the impact of migration in social policies.

The European Youth Forum aims to promote a broad understanding of social inclusion which incorporates all of the above elements. We are concerned by the growing trend of policy makers to restrict social inclusion policy to the idea of "social integration" through better access to the labour market. Improving young peoples' access to the labour market is indeed a very important concern not only for the European Youth but also at the global level, with young people between 15

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<sup>1</sup> 0406-05 Bureau position paper on the green paper on demographic change, September 2005; 0280-05 Position Paper on the European Youth Pact, April 2005; 0052-04 Policy Paper on youth autonomy, April 2004; 0516-03 Position Paper on the Revised European Employment Strategy, November 2003; 0552-99e European Youth Forum Policy on young people and social exclusion, November 1999; 0092 - 99e European Youth Forum Policy on the European Employment Strategy and Young People, March 1999.

and 24 being three times as likely as adults to be out of work worldwide<sup>2</sup>. Improved employment policies are necessary in order to promote social inclusion, they are not in any way exclusive and must be complemented by other social measures.

When considering young people and social inclusion we are struck by the fact that young people in general face many challenges in order to fully participate in society. As a whole, Young people experience a significant degree of marginalisation in virtue of their age and circumstances. For example, young people's lack of political representation due to voting age restrictions, or the hidden discrimination they face in the labour market because of "lack of experience", or indeed broader discrimination of young people regarding access to facilities and services, this often accompanied by a lack of financial and legal autonomy. Young people can also have difficulties relating to mainstream society, where they are often ignored and sometimes represented by media as a threat to society. Young people's positive contribution and value to society needs to be more strongly emphasised and supported.

Youth is a critical period of transition in life which effects and shapes the rest of adulthood. Today young people face greater challenges and longer transition to autonomous life. This transition from education to work is more complicated and precarious than ever before. As research has noted, "instead of following a linear sequence of transitions steps: finishing education, getting a job, establishing an independent housing and forming a family, young people are experiencing simultaneous and often reversible combinations of doing bad paid jobs and studies, a pluralisation of relationship forms and housing situations"<sup>3</sup>. A first consequence from this is the fact that youth transitions are becoming prolonged, more complex and individualised. Secondly, it results in a constellation of structural disadvantages, in which early school leaving, youth unemployment and precarious working conditions can be seen as threats to young peoples' social inclusion and full participation as citizens in our societies. This "de-standardisation" of youth transitions is poorly taken into account in policy responses and it is essential to design and implement policy responses that answer the needs of every young person.

Young people experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage should be of particular concern for policy-makers and society at large. The European Youth Forum believes that young people have a better chance to overcome these "yo-yo" transitions<sup>4</sup> if they are adequately accompanied and supported in their immediate environment. Unfortunately across Europe, many young people, and especially those with the fewest opportunities, often feel alienated by public as well as non-for-profit social service providers put in place to support them. The fact that many of these services and structures are very bureaucratic, inflexible, badly integrated and often under political pressure to achieve statistical results means that they often fail to provide for the individual needs of young people in difficult situations.

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<sup>2</sup> See the International Labour Organisation "Global Employment Trends" for 2006, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2006/1.htm>

<sup>3</sup> See A.Pohl and A.Walther 2005 "Tackling disadvantage in youth transitions, a thematic study on policy measures concerning disadvantaged youth", report funded by the EU action Programme to combat social exclusion, Contract n° VC/2004/0139.

<sup>4</sup> See «Youth Policy and Participation, potentials of participation and informal learning in young people's transitions to the labour market, funded by the European Commission under the 5<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, key action: "improving the socio-economic knowledge base", December 2004.

They are poorly equipped to give the personal and collective mentoring, reassurance and encouragement that young people need. These services would be much more effective at targeting social inclusion if young people were involved in developing services to address their needs. To do so, sufficient financial resources need to be attributed to these service providers.

Because youth organisations do not believe that “closing doors” can be an option, they often fill the vacuum left by public services. Through non formal tools, many youth organisations are working hard to accompany disadvantaged young people and help them find their future; a future of hope, self-confidence and realisation. This increasing role of youth organisations in the promotion of young peoples’ social inclusion needs to be recognised and built on by policy makers. Furthermore, if the social inclusion of young people is to be seen as a broader process, which promotes active citizenship, then youth organisations and the youth work they carry out are fundamental to its realisation. First and foremost youth organisations are motivating and empowering young people to play an active part in their societies.

Much more also needs to be done in order to understand the life situation of young people and the particular forms of disadvantage, exclusion and discrimination they may be facing. More research needs to be carried out in partnership with youth organisations, youth workers and young people themselves if policy aim is to be better informed and be more effective.

### **Recognising Youth Organisations as key actors for young peoples’ social inclusion**

Youth organisations are key actors in promoting and enabling youth participation and active citizenship, and therefore are an important resource for the inclusion of young people in general. Many youth organisations already give priority to reaching and engaging young people with fewer opportunities through their activities, and some are specialized in working with particularly vulnerable groups. However, more needs to be done to support and develop the contribution that youth organisations are making to social inclusion.

Youth organisations welcome young people whatever their social backgrounds and we always represent the first place, inside and outside of the formal education system, where young people can actively participate and contribute to the social and cultural life of their community. Youth organisations also provide a space where young people can develop and express their social, political and environmental consciousness. And through the power of non-formal education and mobility, youth organisations broaden horizons and build personal capacities. Locally run youth projects carried out by such organisations can have considerable success in remotivating and reconnecting young people who have fallen through the net of statutory services with society<sup>5</sup>.

The European Youth Forum does not believe that the role that youth organisations play in the social inclusion field has yet been fully recognized. Considering that the mobilization of all relevant actors is an important principle in participative policy making and good governance at the European level, this lack of recognition is of great concern. Partnerships need to be formed between everyone involved in

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<sup>5</sup> i.e. young people who are neither in education, employment or vocational training, so called “zero status” youth.

the youth sector: between institutions; government; civil society including the social partners, youth organisations and young people. Genuine youth participation on social inclusion would allow and encourage structured dialogue and collaboration between youth organisations and other social partners at all stages of the policy making process: research; formulation; implementation and evaluation. At least some partnerships have materialized quite well in those countries where a co-management system<sup>6</sup> has been set up between youth organisations and other relevant public bodies.

Knowing that fruitful cooperation is already happening in some cases, the European Youth Forum urges European Policy makers from the local to the European level to take concrete steps towards working together with youth organisations on projects aiming to promote young peoples' social inclusion. Such cooperation would reflect and reinforce a cross sectorial approach towards youth and social inclusion, producing more coordinated and better integrated policies as a result.

However, in order for youth organisations to fulfill their potential as actors of social inclusion we need more resources and stability. Many youth organisations are operating within an inconsistent and unpredictable funding framework and a lack of security and sustainability as a consequence. In particular, youth organisations need to be ensured adequate core funding<sup>7</sup> for their activities over the long-term.

### **For a European Participatory democracy: Listen to your people!**

The European Union has been progressively moving from a top-down political construction, in which governments were the main actors shaping the European Union to a broader political construction in which citizenship, civil society and social partners participate in the definition of political priorities as well as in the implementation of European policy initiatives. Besides, the European Youth Forum strongly believes that the principle of good governance should be spread beyond the EU and should find its support in the countries, which should be equally concerned with youth policies in the continent.

In July 2002, the European Youth Forum organised a Youth Convention to allow the young people of Europe to directly participate and contribute in the creation of the Constitution Treaty for Europe. This mechanism of 'Youth Convention', that could be improved, should be anyway remembered as a good practice example of how to involve youth organisations and young people in important reflections regarding the future of Europe. We strongly believe that the Conventional method used to draft the European Constitution has marked the beginning of a new era in the European Integration process. Civil society organisations have indeed shown that we were essential stakeholders to be involved, should the European Union develop policies relevant to Europeans' wishes and expectations.

It is essential that a real civil and social dialogue materialises as soon as possible. Only such an open decision making process can help building a genuine European participatory democracy. A strong and constructive civil dialogue will only be

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<sup>6</sup> Co-management systems allow youth NGOs or National Youth Council representatives to participate in the decision making process regarding youth policies on an equal footing with governments or international organisations' representatives. In that, co-management systems are institutionalising youth participation.

<sup>7</sup> Youth Organisations are very often funded through the projects we implement and do not have a secured yearly budget ensuring the continuous functioning of their structure.

possible if European policy makers develop an ambitious legal framework in this regard.

On the one hand, youth organisations should be associated to decision making process when the decisions taken directly or indirectly affect them or young people. On the other hand, youth organisations should be listened from the global to the local level when contributing on all subjects where youth feels concerned. Working with youth on a daily basis is why youth organisations can bring their expertise as the main providers of Non Formal Education<sup>8</sup> in Europe. We are able to reach out young people and promote active citizenship. To that end, the establishment of a structured dialogue between the European Youth Forum and the European Union institutions is needed<sup>9</sup>.

## **The Social situation of young people in Europe in 2006: Obstacles, challenges and expectations**

### ***The European Social Model***

In light of the unsuccessful Constitution ratification process, and as part of a broader reflection on the place of Europe in a changing global context, an important debate has been opened on the definition of the European Social Model.

The main characteristics of the European Social model are “a basic commitment to social cohesion and solidarity and to combating social poverty and discrimination; general access to health care and education systems; a broad coverage of social protection systems and a significant role of the public sector in the provision of the required infrastructures”<sup>10</sup>.

The Hampton Court Summit of Heads of States and Governments<sup>11</sup> has been an important time for European Policy makers to launch a debate and address issues critical to the future of Europe. This however did not allow a dialogue between European Policy Makers and Civil Society Organisations.

This reflection on the European Social Model should be further elaborated as far as a collective agreement is found on how best to reform the European Social Model in today's world. The European Youth Forum supports the materialisation of a broad debate through which European Policy Makers embark on transparent discussions with European Citizens on this issue and at all levels. Because young people are directly concerned with the future of the European Social Model, the European Youth Forum asks for the inclusion of youth organisations in this ongoing debate. This debate should eventually lead to the definition of a renewed ambitious agenda for the benefit of the European Union and its citizens.

The European Youth Forum strongly believes that the Council of Europe needs to be associated to these reflections on the European Social Model. The European Social Model was built over the years and generations following a rights-based approach

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<sup>8</sup> 0716-05 Policy Paper on “recognition of non formal education: Confirming the real competencies of young people in the knowledge society, November 2005.

<sup>9</sup> 0119-06 Policy Paper on EU Youth Policy, April 2006.

<sup>10</sup> In Austrian Presidency Input paper on “Flexicurity - Flexibility through Security” - Informal Council of Ministers of Employment and Social Policy, Villach, 19-21 January 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Informal Meeting of the European Union Heads of State and Government devoted to discussions on the European Economic and Social Model, Hampton Court, United Kingdom, 27-28 October 2005.

to social policy. Council of Europe Member States have recently showed their will to “strengthen the cohesion of European societies in its social, educational, health and cultural dimensions”<sup>12</sup>. When it comes to social policy, the Council of Europe is looking for common definitions and solutions which could be effective in fighting poverty and exclusion, ensuring equitable access to social rights and protecting vulnerable groups. This expertise should be used by the European Union. The European Youth Forum finds it crucial that a dialogue materialises on social issues between the European Union and the Council of Europe.

### ***The Lisbon Strategy***

2005 has been a crucial time in the European Union history of integration. One year after the enlargement of the European Union to 10 New Member States, a deep assessment of the Lisbon Strategy’s capacity to deliver has been performed and the decision has been taken to refocus the Lisbon strategy on “Growth and Jobs”.

The European Youth Forum strongly believes that the market orientation that the European Union took in 2005 through the “Growth and Jobs” strategy should be challenged in 2006 at the occasion of the Streamlining of the Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection. The reasons having justified in 2000 to design the Lisbon strategy as a strategy in which each of its three economic, social and environmental pillars interact and are mutually reinforcing, still remain in 2006. The European Youth Forum welcomed the European Council decision to provide the newly designed Open Method of Coordination on social inclusion and social protection with the means required to feed in and influence the Lisbon strategy on growth and jobs.

Furthermore, real investment in Life Long Learning policies can play a fundamental role in order to avoid precariousness and promote active citizenship. The European Youth Forum will therefore continue to call European and national institutions for the implementation and further development of the goals set in ‘education and training 2010’.

The Lisbon strategy is mainly running under the Open Method of Coordination. The European Youth Forum welcomes the Open Method of Coordination as a tool to promote exchange of knowledge between Member States. However the Open Method of Coordination being a rather loose type of cooperation, it is essential that civil society organisations contribute to the discussions being held in this framework.

In this regard, as part of deeper reflections on available solutions to adapt the European Social Model to the changing global economic context, European Union Member States have identified the Danish model of “flexicurity”<sup>13</sup> as a possible solution to combine economic efficiency and social equity. The European Youth Forum encourages Member States to further reflect in conjunction with the social partners<sup>14</sup> and representatives of youth organisations, on the transferability of this

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<sup>12</sup> Council of Europe Summit of heads of state and government in Warsaw, may 2005

<sup>13</sup> Flexicurity can be described as a comprehensive political strategy of coordinated measures to promote, on the one hand, flexibility in the labour market as well as the modernisation of work organisation and labour relations and on the other hand job security and social protection taking into account of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the labour market.

<sup>14</sup> Social partnership at the EU level is considered to involve solely employer organisations and trade unions. The YFJ considers that social partnership at the EU level should include youth organisations and other NGOs in the development of policy as is the case in some Member States.

model in different national contexts, as it may be beneficial for employers, employees and the society at large. People in precarious work conditions already show a great amount of flexibility without any kind of social security, flexicurity can only be imagined as a model for Europe if we refer to the International Labour Organisation concept of decent work. It is especially hard for young workers who generally face particular hard working conditions. The primary aim of social protection policies must be to guarantee social justice, social cohesion and fundamental rights within the shifting social and economic context.

The role of youth organisations should become paramount in the process of adapting the European Social Model so as to ensure a Model which is truly reflective of the needs of the European Citizens.

Often hired in precarious low paid jobs and very likely to be discriminated against in the labour market, young people are the first victims of States' deregulation measures and restrictive Active Labour Market Policies, instruments that should however be developed to encourage youth participation in employment. In addition, the risk of social dumping between Member States is a very worrying evolution for many Young Europeans. Very concerned with these trends, the European Youth Forum urges the European Union institutions and its Member States to develop its legislation and enforcement procedures in order to safeguard minimum standards<sup>15</sup> of protection in the labour markets for all European workers, and especially young workers.

The European Youth Forum believes that traineeships can be useful in bridging the gap in experience of young people which can be a barrier to gaining decent work. However, because we are said not to be experienced, young people are often the victims of 'disguised work' where they are used in place of paid staff. A European wide solution should be found and a status should be developed to ensure that trainees are respected and their expenses, including living expenses, are not borne by the young person to ensure young people without sufficient means are not excluded.

In addition, the existing legislative framework to fight against age discrimination<sup>16</sup> should be further elaborated. Although it acknowledges the efforts that are currently made by the European Union and the Council of Europe through the organisation of two important Campaigns<sup>17</sup> on the fight against discrimination and the promotion of diversity in 2006, the European Youth Forum strongly believes that the European Union should already be engaged in the further development of the existing legislative framework. In particular, a new directive is necessary to cover the issue of age discrimination beyond the scope of the labour market and especially in the access at facilities and services.

### ***The European Youth Pact***

As part of the refocused Lisbon agenda, youth has finally been recognised as a particular vulnerable group within the European Society and the decision has been made by the European Council to develop the European Youth Pact. Behind this initiative, European policy makers have importantly committed themselves to

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<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in the European Social Charter

<sup>16</sup> Council directive 2000/78/EC "establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation"

<sup>17</sup> The Council of Europe Campaign "All Different - All Equal", <http://alldifferent-allegal.info>; European Union Campaign "For Diversity - Against Discrimination", <http://www.stop-discrimination.info/>

promote a better social situation for the European youth. Now that the tool exists, it is crucial to transform this political initiative into concrete results for all young people at all levels: European, regional and more important, local level.

The European Youth Pact's implementation mainly lies in the hands of the European Union Member States. Although the European Youth Forum acknowledges the strong need to leave Member States free of adapting the Pact to the realities faced by their Youth, we regret that the preparation phase of the first Lisbon National Reform Programmes in many cases did not allow National Youth Councils to contribute on the implementation of the Pact.

Despite repeated assertions in European political texts that the European Youth Pact should be developed through a process leaving full room to the representatives of the civil society, the European Youth Forum can only deplore the fact that until now and after a year of existence, no real dialogue has been embarked on with youth organisations on the European Youth Pact. Youth organisations want to contribute to the policy responses that will be developed in application of the European Youth Pact. The European Youth Forum therefore reiterates its demand to have youth organisations involved in the European Youth Pact's implementation and to that end calls for the creation in each national government of a Mr/Mrs Youth Pact, whose role would be to launch the dialogue with relevant stakeholders, assuring the participation of the National Youth Councils and when necessary regional and local ones, and link the civil society with the various Governmental organisations involved in the implementation of the Youth Pact.

As evidenced in this policy paper, young people urgently need determined action to improve their social integration within the society. The European Youth Pact may only be successful if it is used to develop an ambitious working agenda. With only one explicit mention of the Youth Pact in the Commission's annual progress report on the Lisbon strategy to the Spring European Council 2006, ambition is clearly lacking<sup>18</sup>. Now that the European Council conclusions<sup>19</sup> reaffirmed the European Union commitment for the European Youth Pact, we expect a lot from the European Union Member States as regards its implementation.

The European Youth Forum believes that one year after the launch of the refocused Lisbon strategy, the time has come to really associate youth organisations to the European Youth Pact's implementation and to develop in this framework an ambitious roadmap.

## **Conclusion**

The European Youth Forum has identified several times the urgent need to develop a space for exchange between youth organisations and policy makers from the local to the European level. Following the adoption of the European Youth Pact and the development of the Plan D, the European Youth Forum strongly believes that the

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<sup>18</sup> The only commitment based on the Youth Pact that the Commission accepted to assume in the Lisbon Annual Progress Report 2006 is to "offer by the end of 2007 a job, apprenticeship, additional training or other employability measure within six months to every young person who has left school and is unemployed". This commitment very much looks like the initial Lisbon commitment in 2000 to "offer every young person a new start before reaching six months of unemployment by the end of 2002".

<sup>19</sup> See the European Youth Forum press release on the European Council conclusions 'European Council strengthens the European Youth Pact'.

tools for dialogue on social issues already exist and that it is absolutely necessary to define together with our institutional partners how we want to use them. This dialogue is indispensable to improve the social situation of young people in Europe. It is time for ambition, implementation and common action. Youth organisations are more than ready to contribute.

## **IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED, THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM CALLS**

### **▪ THE EUROPEAN UNION**

- To associate youth organisations in the development of youth policies, especially in the framework of the European Youth Pact and the Plan D.
- To consult youth organisations on issues affecting them, such as the European Social Model, the European demographic change, the Lisbon strategy and the Streamlined OMC on Social Inclusion and Social Protection.
- To develop a structured and regular dialogue between the European Youth Forum and the European institutions.
  
- To mobilise the European Employment Strategy and the Social Inclusion Open Method of Coordination for the implementation of the European Youth Pact and invite youth organisations at all levels to contribute to these processes, as decided in the Commission Communication on Youth Policies in Europe on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2005.
- To promote better coordination of work between all relevant European institutions on the European Youth Pact and ensure that the European Youth Forum is invited to contribute to this work.
- To develop a Youth Pact European implementation plan with the European Youth Forum.
  
- To develop a European legal status for trainees in Europe.
- To complement the Council directive 2000/78 "establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation" by a new legislative instrument widening the current scope of legal protection against age discrimination.
  
- To undertake research on particularly vulnerable young people and mobilise all relevant European Programmes to that end, including the Youth in Action, PROGRESS and the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme on Research.
- To address the specific needs of vulnerable youth during the "2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for all".
- To develop the legislative framework to ensure the protection of minimum labour standards and guard against mass social dumping.

### **▪ THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

- To set ambitious goals for young peoples' social inclusion and integration in the labour market.
- To develop enforcement procedures to uphold minimum labour standards and protect young people in the labour market, who are often in vulnerable situations.
- To involve all stakeholders in the development of the Lisbon National Reform Programmes through the creation of a coordinating structure inside each government, namely a Mr/Mrs Youth Pact.

### **▪ THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

- To ensure full implementation of the Council of Europe Programme for social cohesion and inclusion of young people for 2006-2008.
- To coordinate the work done on young peoples' social inclusion between the different Directorates of the Council of Europe, notably between the

Directorate for Youth and Sports and the Directorate General III on Social Cohesion.

- To develop its work on young peoples' social inclusion and increase the funds available for youth organisations' projects through the Programmes, notably the European Youth Foundation and the Youth Centres.
- **THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND ITS MEMBER STATES**
  - To ensure full implementation of the European Social Charter in national and local social policies.
  - To consolidate the Council of Europe's work on disability issues and support the adoption and implementation of a ten-year action plan designed to make decisive progress in ensuring equal rights for people with disabilities.
- **THE UNITED NATIONS**
  - To make significant advances in implementing the Millennium Development Goals while paying specific attention to the United Nations employment and fight against precarious work agenda.
  - To build upon the Youth Employment Network and make sure that good practice examples on young peoples' social integration in employment are included in National Action Plans developed by the Youth Employment Network lead countries and shared around the world.
  - To achieve better knowledge on the link between youth employment, development and collective security through the effective implementation of the International Labour Organisation project on "Youth Employment and Collective Security".
  - To make sure that the alarming finding by the International Labour Organisation in the Global Employment Trends 2006 that young people between 15 and 24 are three times as likely as adults to be out of work is not a single statement but the basis for ambitious action at the global level to improve young peoples' integration in the labour market.
  - To promote and embark on international research activities assessing young peoples' social situation and policy responses to youth unemployment around the world.

## **Annex 1: Guidelines to youth organisations on how to promote their work on social inclusion**

This Policy Paper is the fruit of two-year collaboration between the European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations to identify good practice examples on how to improve youth organisations' work on social inclusion.

The aim of this section is to briefly present the results of this consultation that was led by the European Youth Forum Working Group on Social Inclusion in Youth Participation, mandated by the Bureau of the European Youth Forum as well as its Member Organisations to take this role.

The Information and Networking day on Social Inclusion in Youth Participation and the Consultation of youth organisations on good practice examples on social inclusion in youth participation have been two important channels of information for the European Youth Forum in order to elaborate these guidelines.

This consultation showed that many youth organisations want to do more to work inclusively. A clear demand is to put young peoples' social inclusion higher in the institutional agendas as well as in youth organisations' ones.

### **HOW CAN THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM HELP?**

1. By developing a Policy Paper on Social Inclusion.
2. By interacting with European and international institutions.
3. By asking to these institutions for more researches, data and statistics, always involving knowledge and expertise of young people and youth organisations.
4. Because it interacts with European and International Institutions, the European Youth Forum structures often use an "institutional" language which is not understandable by all young people. Efforts need to be done to make the European Youth Forum's work and language more accessible to all young people.

### **GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES AND DEMANDS FROM YOUTH ORGANISATIONS**

1. Do not complicate things => they are complicated enough...
  - o Develop more friendly application forms.
  - o Use language as a tool of communication: plurality of accents and different ways of speaking is something normal and rich, do not discriminate upon accent or lack of master of language.
  - o Remain flexible with deadlines when possible and attending specific contexts.
  - o Acronyms are not inclusive at all. We are used to identify our organisations through its acronyms but it is generally not known by all. Let's specify their meaning and try to avoid them as much as possible.
  - o Sometimes youth work is too much hierarchical - we need to work as a team and not as much individually. This team work can better favour the development of social skills.

2. Build on young peoples' diversity: promote a good and open environment.
  - Develop understandable work materials by consulting all present views
  - Not all of us have the same viewpoints or perceptions of reality. Youth work should respect and include all views.
  - Once you understand each other, common language and relationships based on reciprocal trust can arise easily.
  - Let's be natural.
  - Understand others' situation => Develop Non Formal Activities to allow young people to feel what vulnerable groups feel when they are discriminated against. This will naturally help better understanding and working more inclusively.
  - Get closer to young peoples' diverse realities and encourage free expression of ideas and feelings.
  - Sometimes conflicts are unavoidable. Developing conflict management skills is a useful asset when engaging in social inclusion activities.
  
3. Youth Programme: We need more friendly and efficient National Agencies...
  - Have more user-friendly and more efficient National Agencies.
  - In order to reflect better the needs of young people in the design and management of the Youth in Action Programme, National Youth Councils should be more involved in the National Agencies.
  - Make "Youth in Action" a reality and not just a will!
  - Facilitate and establish national partnerships between the relevant social players and the institutions working on project with and for young people. This will raise the quality of projects, it is a reality that together we are stronger!
  - Another important issue is that youth work with young people with fewer opportunities also takes place in their own environments. Consider more Youth spaces such as schools, streets, bars, pubs, sport places.
  
4. Non-formal education as a tool.
  - Recognition of non-formal education should be ensured from the European level to the local level!
  - Work more on the reasons on social exclusion - Only then we would work on social inclusion. This work will help preventing the materialisation of exclusion.
  - Youth organisations can share information on how to avoid exclusion, e.g. gender and intercultural education.
  - Pay specific attention to the selection of target groups.
  - Young people with fewer opportunities need to be motivated. Having fun together is motivating.
  - Open question: participation for all - What is the reality today?

#### Conclusions:

1. As Youth organisations we know that our action cannot solve the social problems faced by many Young Europeans. We are however convinced that our work with young people with fewer opportunities could help these

vulnerable groups of young people overcoming their situation of social exclusion.

2. Today, a lot can be done to improve youth work on social inclusion. Youth organisations need to learn more about the social exclusion experienced by many young people, notably by joining them in their life environment.
3. Before embarking on social inclusion work, we should ask ourselves the following questions: How to reach the excluded? How to avoid ghettos? Do we really consider all groups as equal?