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Accompanying the

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering

A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities

Impact Assessment Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON A EU STRATEGY FOR YOUTH

This impact assessment will accompany the Communication on an EU Strategy for Youth: Investing and Empowering.

Problem definition

A framework for European co-operation in the field of youth (hereafter the Youth Cooperation Framework) has been established in June 2002 with an open method of coordination (OMC) focused on active citizenship of young people, and complemented in 2005 by the European Youth Pact – instrument dedicated to social and vocational integration of young people within the Lisbon strategy. Other elements such as mainstreaming activities, knowledge tools as well as structured dialogue with young people and peer-learning have been progressively developed within the framework.

The current cycle of the youth OMC is coming at an end in 2009, and this year has been since long identified as a year for evaluation and review.

In this context, it is important to identify all the challenges facing young people today and in the coming years, whether they are European-wide challenges which impact on them or problems directly affecting their situation.

As a result of these challenges, young people in Europe suffer from a lack of opportunities: too many are still affected by unemployment, poverty and low education levels. In link with this lack of educational and professional opportunities, young Europeans also experience difficulties of access to social and civic opportunities; they may have to fight against exclusion or marginalisation and health related problems. They may also be excluded or exclude themselves from participating in society, and find themselves quite isolated due to weakened solidarity links.

The current framework could not tackle all these challenges, even if the overall assessment of the results of the Youth Cooperation Framework has been globally positive. The EU cooperation framework in the field of youth has inspired youth-related legislation at national level and helped many Member States develop national strategies. It has raised the visibility of youth and youth policies at national and EU level. The role of the cooperation framework as a platform for exchange of practices and for dialogue has also often been underlined. However, the assessment framework is not clear and coherent enough, and is not enough delivering in some areas, such as the European Youth Pact. The structured dialogue with young people needs to be revised and more inclusive, and the cross-sector nature of youth policy needs more recognition at EU and national level.

Analysis of subsidiarity

Member States have the main responsibility for the policy changes needed to respond to these challenges. All options retained for analysis and presented below respect the principle of subsidiarity; furthermore, they are proportional and leave the implementation of the common objectives and principles for cooperation in the hands of the Member States and/or their sub-national entities.

However, a more pro-active role at EU level is necessary in order to support Member State cooperation. Action by a Member State alone would not achieve the same results than EU cooperation in raising visibility of Youth and youth strategies, definition of common objectives, mutual learning, exchange of practices and experience, access to European wide data, etc.

There is thus a need to review the cooperation framework in order to better take into account the current and future needs of young people.

Objectives of EU initiative

Based on the above challenges, the following objectives are defined for a renewed Youth Cooperation Framework.

In order to enhance the well-being of young people in Europe during the next decade, the general objectives will aim at creating more opportunities for young people in education and employment; at increasing access and full participation of all young people in society; and at fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people (in particular through inclusion, volunteering and actions dedicated at the rest of the world).

The specific objectives of the proposed European Youth Cooperation Framework seek to develop 1) a transversal approach of issues concerning youth, 2) more efficiency of the framework and 3) mobilisation of youth organisations and young people.

The operational objectives aim to develop coordination mechanisms between policies, structured dialogue with young people, better implementation of cooperation tools and knowledge based policy making.

Policy options

Four policy options have been taken in consideration for in depth examination¹:

- Option 1: status quo (whereby the current framework would be extended as it is, and would thus function with the same tools and objectives);
- Option 2: reinforced Youth open method of coordination (reinforcing cooperation instruments while keeping same focus on active citizenship and a few mainstreaming activities);
- Option 3: developed cross-sectoral approach (keeping the same instruments of the open method of coordination, but setting up coordination mechanism for policies with a strong youth dimension);
- Option 4: global strategy (developing at the same time the open method of coordination tools and the cross-sectoral approach, in order to take advantage of synergy effects of both elements).

Assessment of impacts

On the basis of an assessment of potential qualitative impacts regarding social, economic, environmental and human rights issues, it appears that none of the options analysed would have a negative impact. Option 1 would have a more limited positive impact regarding these issues. Options 3 and 4 would have greater social and economic impacts.

Comparison of options

A comparison of options regarding their impact on objectives and their feasibility indicates that while all options are feasible, option 4 is to be preferred in terms of its ability to address the challenges and to achieve the objectives. Option 1 would not bring any improvement to

¹ Three other options have been considered but have not been retained for in-depth analysis: ending the cooperation, adopting a specific approach, or developing a set of more binding tools (see more details in 4.2).

the current situation regarding the objectives, while options 2 and 3 would only bring partial improvement.

Monitoring and evaluation

The mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Youth Cooperation Framework would be mainly triennial joint progress reports, dashboard of existing indicators and benchmarks. A stronger involvement of stakeholders in the monitoring would also contribute to the monitoring. Proposals for improvement of the framework would be done on a regular basis.