Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 12016
14 September 2009

Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1844 (2008)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1844 (2008) on "Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe" and wishes to thank the Parliamentary Assembly for its commitment to the Council of Europe youth policy. The Committee of Ministers has brought the recommendation to the attention of member states so that they can draw on it when framing and developing their youth policies. It has also forwarded the recommendation to the Steering Committee for Education (CDED) and the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), which have provided comments reproduced in Appendices 1 and 2 to this reply.

2. In its recommendation, the Assembly refers to the "proposals of the European Youth Ministers' meeting in Kyiv in October 2008", calling on the Committee of Ministers to give a favourable response to their proposals. In this connection, the Committee of Ministers points out that it has noted with interest the final declaration adopted by the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, held in Kyiv (Ukraine) on 10 and 11 October 2008. It incorporated the guidelines contained in the declaration in its Resolution CM/Res(2008)23, which to a large extent addresses the Assembly's concerns. The resolution underlines the fundamental role of young people in promoting the Council of Europe's core values. It identifies the priorities for the Council of Europe's youth policy and action for the coming years, placing particular emphasis on the full enjoyment of human rights and participation in the democratic process, on living together in harmony in diverse societies and on the social inclusion of young people. It recommends a series of approaches, methods and instruments for the implementation of these priorities and stresses the key role of the Council of Europe youth sector within the Organisation, providing greater transparency, flexibility and efficiency in the implementation of the Organisation's youth policy.

3. The Committee of Ministers notes the effectiveness of the Council of Europe youth sector's unique system of co-management by youth organisations and governments and encourages the continuation of this method which makes for broader participation by young people in an area of particular relevance to them. It also encourages all Council of Europe sectors, in co-operation with the youth sector, to take account of the youth dimension in drawing up and implementing their programmes of activities. It supports in particular the principle of stepping up co-operation between activities relating to children and those relating to young people and informs the Assembly that on 27 May 2009, it set up an Ad hoc Advisory Group on child and youth participation, whose terms of reference reflect this approach.

4. With regard to the activities of the Council of Europe's Schools for Political Studies, which the Assembly would like to see developed further, the Committee of Ministers wishes to stress their importance and notes their impact among young people in European societies. Developing training programmes for young political leaders is a means of helping create a new political class with which young people can more easily identify, encouraging them to become more involved in democratic processes.

5. Co-operation with other international organisations and youth policy stakeholders is also a means of helping ensure the practical implementation of the Council of Europe youth policy. In this connection, particular reference should be made to the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European

1. adopted at the 1064th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (9 September 2009)

Commission in the youth sector. This long-standing co-operation, endorsed by the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union, contributes to the training of youth workers and trainers, Euro-Mediterranean co-operation and the establishment of policies and research in this field. Similarly, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the Alliance of Civilisations, as part of the general action to promote intercultural dialogue, includes co-operation in the youth field amongst the priority areas. The agreement with the Alliance of Civilisations seeks to promote increased youth participation without discrimination in intercultural dialogue and decision-making processes, to foster the development of youth policies with a particular emphasis on intercultural dialogue by encouraging co-operation between policy-makers, researchers, young people and youth workers, and to facilitate youth exchanges. The Committee of Ministers also wishes to draw the Assembly's attention to the Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF), which it adopted on 20 May 2009. This agreement seeks to develop co-operation in youth work on issues relating to youth policy, youth and civil society, training of youth workers and youth leaders, human rights education for young people, intercultural and inter-faith dialogue and the role of young people in this dialogue.

Appendix 1 – Comments by the Bureau of the Steering Committee for Education (CDED)

The Bureau of the Steering Committee for Education (CDED):

Having taken note with great interest of Recommendation 1844 (2008) of the Parliamentary Assembly on "Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe";

Reaffirms the importance of the measures proposed for the development of national, regional, and local policies based on the principles listed in paragraph 7of the recommendation;

Recalls that the young people are a privileged group in its intergovernmental programme of activities in the field of formal education and in this framework it should be underlined that specific policies for the promotion of education for democratic citizenship and participation of young people in the democratic functioning of European societies have been and will continue to be developed;

Endorses the proposal made in paragraph 7.3 and points out the need to pay special attention when devising its future programme of activities on the newly marginalised people in society, brought about by the aggravation of economic problems and in particular on young people who leave the formal education system without qualifications;

Fully supports the recommendations set out in paragraphs 9.7 and 9.8 on the strengthening of co-operation across different bodies and sectors of the Council of Europe and inform the Committee of Ministers that specific cross sectoral working methods are being used within the framework of its project on "Education for democratic citizenship and human rights", and CDED wishes to further develop them;

Informs the Committee of Ministers that its in-service training programme for teachers regularly uses the facilities of the European Youth Centre in Budapest and the newly renovated European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, contributing at the same time to the promotion of the work of the youth sector of the Council of Europe.

Appendix 2 – Comments by the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)

The preparation by the Parliamentary Assembly of a report on refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe and the adoption of Recommendation 1844 (2008) took place in the context of the elaboration, by the co-managed bodies of the youth sector, of the Agenda 2020 for the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (Kyiv, 10-11 October 2008).

On the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly, an exchange of views between members of the Assembly and members of the Joint Council on Youth was organised prior to the debate on youth which resulted in the adoption of Recommendation 1844 (2008). During this exchange of views, the members of the Joint Council had the opportunity to propose amendments to the draft recommendation, which they did. The Assembly Sub-Committee on Youth and Sport also actively participated in the Kyiv ministerial conference.

It goes therefore without saying that the members of the CDEJ and the Advisory Council on Youth unanimously support the proposals contained in Recommendation 1844 (2008). They underline the crucial role and contribution, past and present, of the Assembly to the youth policy and the action of the Council of Europe in the youth field, and re-affirm their commitment to continue and enhance co-operation with the Assembly in the further implementation of the Agenda 2020, which has now been formulated in the Committee of Ministers' Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 adopted on 25 November 2008.