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Towards a European framework convention on youth rights

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1978 (2011)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers attaches great importance to the integration and participation of young people in society, as well as to their access to rights. It supports the work carried out by the Council of Europe's youth sector to this end. In the reform of intergovernmental structures, the Committee of Ministers has retained the sector's distinctive co-management system and ensured the allocation of the resources necessary for it to operate effectively.

2. The youth sector's activities cover the recommendations put forward by the Assembly, particularly in the field of education for democratic citizenship through non-formal learning and the provision to young people of information on instruments, programmes and policies relating to the rights of young people in Europe. In this context, particular mention should be made of the information available on the youth sector's web portals, as well as of the close co-operation of the Council of Europe with the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) and the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERIYCA), both organisations being highly specialised in this area.

3. The Committee of Ministers has taken due note of the principles laid down by the Assembly as a basis for a possible European framework convention on youth rights. It underlines that several provisions of the European Social Charter are of particular relevance as they protect the rights of young people in different areas. It also wishes to point out that the Council of Europe has instruments and mechanisms other than conventions at its disposal. The Committee of Ministers considers that in the present situation priority should be given to the effective implementation of existing instruments. The study recommended by the Assembly should therefore rather lay emphasis on the systematic encouragement of policies to improve the access of young people to their rights. These policies could include making more effective use of the tools the Council of Europe offers, and developing further activities and programmes that take into account the specific needs of young people as manifested in society. Recommendation 1978 (2011) could serve as an important reference document in this context.

4. Recommendation 1978 (2011) will also be included in the file for the 9th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (St Petersburg, September 2012). The title of this conference will be "Young people's access to rights: development of innovative youth policies". The Committee of Ministers informs the Assembly that, in the context of the preparation of this conference, the parameters of a systematic approach to policies aimed at promoting young people's access to rights at local, national and European level are currently under discussion among the member States. The Assembly will be invited to address the conference.

5. The Committee of Ministers recalls and appreciates the work of the youth sector in co-operation with the European Union under the Youth Partnership Framework Programme, which is in place until 2013. The co-operation arrangements could be reviewed in due course in consultation with the bodies concerned. The youth sector was also involved in certain aspects of the International Year of Youth 2010 and could, if appropriate, play a part in the regional follow up to the International Year, within the limits of the available resources. Finally, the Council of Europe and the European Commission are co-operating in a joint

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programme designed to devise policies to facilitate young people's transition to active life through employment, entrepreneurship, education and active citizenship. The final conference of this programme will take place in June 2012 and will point to possible follow-up action to strengthen young peoples' rights by finding solutions for problems such as unemployment, youth indebtedness and social unrest.