

# German Presidency of the Council of the European Union

## 1 January – 30 June 2007

### ① EU Council “Youth” discusses perspectives and new instruments of European youth policy

By stepping up know-how transfer on good practices and introducing a European youth report the quality of life of young people in Europe. “Regular European-level reports will condense important information and knowledge about young Europeans and provide us with the basis for sustainable youth policy in Europe. We aim to provide fair opportunities to as many young people as possible,” said the president-in-office of the Council, German Minister for Youth Affairs, Ursula von der Leyen, during the adoption of Council conclusions on future youth policy cooperation in Europe at the EU Youth Council meeting in Brussels on 25 May 2007.

“We have to go down to grass roots level if we want to discover the opportunities and problems associated with the vocational and social integration of young people. We then have to ensure the cross-border availability of the knowledge that we gain in this process if we want to support an integrated Europe,” continued von der Leyen. “I’m delighted that the Youth Council has agreed to the proposal that a stable framework for these activities will be created over the next few years.”

The Youth Council has also adopted a resolution on “Equal opportunities and unrestricted participation in society for all young people.” Federal minister von der Leyen pointed out, “Europe has to offer positive prospects for all young people. Demographic change and the need to promote social cohesion make this one of the biggest social challenges in Europe today.”

The Youth Council believes that young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged by a disability or their socio-economic, cultural or geographical background, should be put in a position that gives them equal opportunities to participate in society. The Council emphasised the necessity to promote equality to a greater extent in youth-relevant areas of the EU and its Member States. The resolution also refers to the results of the youth event that was organised by the Council Presidency in Cologne this April.

The Federal Minister for Youth Affairs was joined by her Finnish, Slovenian, Portuguese and French colleagues, as well as EU Commissioner Ján Figel, to talk with a group of young people from various European Member States in advance of the council meeting. They discussed the outcome of the first European Youth

Summit in Rome and the Council Presidency's youth event in Cologne for around one and a half hours. Germany is the second presidency after Finland to organise this kind of structured dialogue that involves young people in the process of policymaking to a greater extent.

### **② Diversity Dialogue Solidarity: The first Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament**

The Euro-Mediterranean conference of foreign ministers in Barcelona in 1995 marked the beginning of a new partnership between the EU states and their partners south and east of the Mediterranean.

During the German EU Council Presidency 2007, the first Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament has set the goal to examine and promote the Euro-Mediterranean partnership from the perspective of young adults, and to overcome prejudice and build bridges.

The German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Goethe Institute and the Heinz Schwarzkopf Foundation, in cooperation with the European Commission and the Anna Lindh Foundation for the dialogue between cultures, have invited young adults to discuss current political and social issues. At the first Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament (EMYP) from 26 May to 3 June 2007 in Berlin, about 100 participants from 38 countries met in order to support organising and developing the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in a qualified way in collaboration with representatives of the European Youth Forum, SALTO and Euromed Youth Platform.

The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament continues the idea of the "European Youth Parliament" supported by the Heinz Schwarzkopf Foundation in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

In his welcome note the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier underlined: "I am delighted that the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament will convene for its first session during the German EU Presidency." The Federal Minister pointed out: "But the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership should not remain the sole province of politicians and experts. It must make its way into the hearts and minds of our citizens. For it is mutual understanding, respect and joint action that will make the Barcelona Process a success. I am counting above all on the young generation, which will assume responsibility for our common existence in the not too distant future. I am confident that the Euro-Med Youth Parliament can make a crucial contribution, and hope that the participants will still have plenty of time to get to know one another on the sidelines."

European Commissioner Ján Figel expressed in his welcome note: "The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament gets young people involved in real intercultural dialogue, to discover the richness of cultural diversity and to dismantle barriers of prejudice, stereotypes and misconceptions. It is our belief that the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament fosters mutual understanding and trust between

both sides of the Mediterranean, empowering the young, and giving them the opportunity to express their concerns and needs.”

The goal of the first Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament was to practice parliamentary forms of discussion and to discuss future topics beyond cultural and geographic borders. Like in a “real” parliament, the participants worked in committee groups to find solutions for these issues which then resumed in common resolutions. During the Session, the participants discussed the following issues:

1. Migration
2. Employment
3. Internationalisation of the arts and culture
4. Can globalisation be made to serve society?
5. The importance of energy for a modern economy
6. What kind of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation do we need?
7. Combating corruption and its causes
8. Young people and politics
9. The role of the Media
10. The way we perceive each other

On the last day of the meeting in the Parliamentary Assembly the debate of the resolutions of the committee groups took place. The participants also developed follow up projects on the basis of their own ideas and suggestions and using the network of people present at the meeting.

In the future, the organisers want to continue to support the network of new initiatives and projects in the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean. The impulses from the youth parliament were taken to the home countries of the participants. One of the main recommendations of the participants in Berlin is to provide support for setting up a permanent Euro-Mediterranean Youth Parliament.

For more information visit: [www.goethe.de/ges/eur/prj/ejp/enindex.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ges/eur/prj/ejp/enindex.htm)

### **🇪🇺 European Alliance for Families EPSCO Council Decides on the First Implementation Steps**

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council, meeting in Brussels on 30 May 2007, adopted a conclusion under the German Presidency to establish a European Alliance for Families. “This decision to establish the alliance shows the Member States’ commitment to more family-friendly policies in Europe,” said the President-in-Office of the Council, Federal Minister Ursula von der Leyen.

Against the background of demographic change in Europe, the European Union’s Heads of State and Government had already approved the German Presidency’s proposal to establish a European Alliance for Families at their Spring Summit on 8

and 9 March 2007. Today's decision marks the beginning of the implementation of this alliance. This decision marks the start for the implementation of the Alliance. One aim of the discussion was to clearly delineate the national aspects in structuring the alliance and, at the same time, to promote know-how transfer between Member States and put existing instruments and alliance partners to better use.

The ministers also adopted equal-opportunity conclusions on the situation of men and women at universities and during their transition from education to employment. They agreed on selected indicators on the progress made in the area of equal rights in education, and that there should be a greater focus on the equality aspects of "lifelong learning" and the "educational situation of migrants" in the future. "Education is a human right and an important instrument for achieving the objectives of equality, development and peace." The EPSCO Council under the German Presidency is picking up on this statement made by the Platform for Action at the 1995 World Women's Conference in Beijing.

Although women in the European Union have caught up with men in terms of school graduation, and in some cases they have even overtaken the men, there are still striking gender differences in tertiary education. This applies to the women's choice of university course, academic careers and employment rate.

The conclusions call for measures

- ▶ to combat gender stereotypes in education and to extend the role models for men and women,
- ▶ to improve the reconciliation of family life and general or vocational education and/or employment,
- ▶ to promote the equal participation of men and women at decision-making level in education and research,
- ▶ to ensure a consistent gender mainstreaming in education and vocational training, and to guarantee a prejudice-free education environment and prejudice-free curricula.

The Council also discussed an interim report of the Social Protection Committee on Social Services of General Interest. The report is based on a survey of all Member States relating to the Commission's Communication which was published last year on "Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme – Social Services of General Interest in the European Union".

In this context, Federal Minister Ursula von der Leyen clearly stated: "The German Council Presidency believes that social services are an indispensable element in ensuring European cohesion and social security." Numerous changes such as the demographic transition, the socio-structural changes to living conditions and lifestyles as well as changes to the economic and fiscal frameworks require a modernisation of social services.

#### **④ Celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome First EU Youth Summit in Rome adopted the “Rome Youth Declaration”**

A Youth Summit in Rome was held parallel with the meeting between Heads of State and Government in Berlin on March 24-25th 2007. Youth representatives from all over Europe, more than 200 young delegates from the EU's 27 member countries, discussed their future, first with each other, then with the European Council in Berlin, through a live image transmission. This link also connected the meeting with the celebrations in Brussels on March 24th, organised by the Belgian authorities.

The Youth Summit provided an opportunity to reflect about the participation of young people in the democratic life of the Union and initiated debates at the national, regional and local level which are organised by NYCs/INGYOs in cooperation with representation offices of the European Commission, the European Parliament information offices and the National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme.

The First EU Youth Summit in Rome adopted the “Rome Youth Declaration”

The 50th anniversary marks the opening of a new chapter for the EU, said Bettina Schwarzmayer, president of the European Youth Forum. The declaration announces that the younger generation is ready and willing to take responsibility for helping shape the Europe of tomorrow.

To download the Rome Youth Declaration visit:

[www.youthforum.org/youthsummit.htm](http://www.youthforum.org/youthsummit.htm)

#### **⑥ Meeting of the General Directors for Youth**

In the framework of the German Presidency of the EU Council, a European meeting of the General Directors for Youth in the ministries responsible for youth of the EU member states was held in Cologne from 15 to 17 April 2007 on the subject of “Equal Opportunities and Social Participation for All Children and Youth”.

The subject of “Social and Vocational Integration of Young People” determines the youth policy agenda of the European Union until mid-2008. Germany, Portugal and Slovenia have agreed to adopt this issue as the youth policy focus of their 18-month trio presidency. With this decision, they also comply with one of the target specifications of the European Youth Pact.

The participants from 27 member states were given an opportunity to engage in a more detailed discussion on this field of action, to exchange information on developments in the member states, and to present current projects. The programme also gave a priority to the participation of young people themselves.

In the framework of the structured dialogue between youth and decision-makers in the youth policy sphere, the General Directors had an intensive exchange of opinion with young people from all over Europe – they were participants of the Youth Event, which was held simultaneously with this meeting – and obtained information on their projects. At the end of the Youth Event, they received the Action Plan, which had been drafted by the young participants.

### **⑥ Youth Event “Equal Opportunity and Social Participation for all Children and Youth”**

More than 160 youth from 32 countries discussed challenges and perspectives of European youth policy on the occasion of the youth event hosted by the German EU presidency from 13 to 16 April 2007 in Cologne. Together, the young participants from EU member states, EFTA states, Turkey, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia drafted an action plan on “Equal Opportunity and Social Participation for all Children and Youth” which was presented to the 27 European Executive Directors for youth policy who met in Cologne during the same period.

Young participants saw a special need for action to improve equal opportunities and social participation with respect to youth information, school dropouts, youth unemployment, volunteer services, local participation, and the active involvement in civic society. Furthermore, the action plan calls for the sustainable integration of youth policy as an interdisciplinary effort for local, regional, national and European policy-makers.

On behalf of the German EU presidency, the youth event was organised by the Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. IJAB and Youth for Europe – the German National Agency for the EU’s youth in action programme – were responsible for coordination activities.

More information is available at: [www.youth-event-germany.de](http://www.youth-event-germany.de).

### **⑦ Outcomes of the Meeting of EU Drug Coordinators in Berlin**

The national drug coordinators from the EU countries met at their half-yearly meeting during the German Presidency of the EU Council in Berlin on 14 and 15 May 2007. As Ms. Sabine Bätzing, the German Federal Government’s Drug Commissioner, stated: “Drug and abuse problems do not stop at national borders. Germany is therefore actively involved in designing drug and abuse policies on the international level. In Europe, we have to take a decisive step forward from co-existence to cooperation. I therefore support the initiative taken by Mr. Piotr Jablonski, the Chairman of the Council of Europe’s Pompidou Group, to invite the bodies responsible for drug policy in Europe to a meeting in Warsaw in the autumn of 2007.”

At the beginning of this meeting, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Antonio M. Costa, explained that, thanks to numerous efforts, it has been possible since the mid-1990s to stabilise the drug problem. "On a worldwide scale, the production, trade and consumption of drugs have not increased since." The Executive Director proposed that the EU Drug Commissioners create a central European drug research agency based on the American model or link the existing facilities in a European drug research network.

Furthermore, the worldwide "treat.net" network initiated by the United Nations shall be further expanded. This project ensures an exchange on different treatment approaches in various countries. This network shall be expanded to include several thousand facilities.

The Drug Commissioners of the 27 EU member states agreed that the cooperation and coordination of European drugs policies has already reached a high level. Improvements are nonetheless necessary.

Another emphasis of the meeting was the cannabis problem in Europe. Cannabis is the most frequently used illegal drug in Europe, the number of addicted users continues to grow. In both prevention and therapy, it is necessary to step up the efforts. It was mentioned as a favourable development that more and more countries make counselling and treatment programmes available for cannabis addicts. The diversity of these programmes was clearly highlighted at the meeting of the National Focal Points of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) in Berlin in March 2007.

### **④ More intensive cooperation of the EU Ministers for Integration**

Under the chairmanship of Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, the German Federal Minister of the Interior, the ministers and delegations responsible for integration issues in the European Union and Mr. Franco Frattini, the Vice-President of the European Commission, agreed at their informal meeting in Potsdam on 11 May 2007 on a more intensive co-operation on integration issues. The ministers responsible for the intercultural dialogue also agreed to expand their cooperation in this area.

The ministers agreed that a successful integration policy is an important prerequisite for future immigration. Integration is a mutual process. On the one hand, successful integration depends to a large extent on the immigrants' preparedness to participate in society and to make their host country their home. Immigrants must make their own efforts towards integration. Above all, they must learn the language of their host country and accept the living conditions and the value system of their host societies. On the other hand, societies must be prepared to host immigrants and to support them in this process by promoting their access to education, to the labour market, public services, political institutions and the media as well as their participation in these institutions. The ministers underlined the need for a uniform set of values which ultimately guarantees the citizens' freedom in a modern society.

In the area of integration, European cooperation is pursued through an exchange of information and experience. For this purpose, the group of national contact points for integration was established on the expert level. The ministers agreed to enhance the role of the national contact points. The approach for the activities in the national contact points shall focus on issues of participation and equal opportunities especially as regards second-generation and third-generation immigrants, the prevention of the spread of radicalism as well as actions to promote the awareness of the host societies for the phenomenon of ongoing immigration. The national contact points were therefore mandated:

- ▶ to reflect on the various integration concepts, which are currently under discussion, and to analyse to what extent these concepts can contribute to strengthening social cohesion and to improve the immigrants' participation in the country's social and political life;
- ▶ to examine the potential added value of a development of European models for the integration of immigrants while taking into account specific national experiences – with initiation and language courses, for example;
- ▶ to analyse potential common actions to improve the public's perception of immigration and to increase the attention in the media and in public institutions for the migration-induced diversity in society; and
- ▶ to examine the integration programmes and concepts, which could make a contribution towards avoiding segregation and self-isolation not only in EU member states.

The ministers asked the Commission to report on the results of these items for cooperation at the next ministerial conference on integration in 2008. This report shall be used as a basis for the discussion, when the priorities are set for the future.

The ministers welcomed the publication of the second edition of the Integration Manual for Decision-makers and Practitioners by the Commission. This manual provides a summary of the outcomes of issue-related seminars organised and implemented by the member states. These types of seminars shall also constitute the European platform for a future exchange of opinion. Given the urgency and the magnitude of the challenge presented by the integration of immigrants, the ministers consider it necessary to pursue the exchange of information and experience in the EU and with other countries worldwide. The insights gained in this process provide a valuable motivation for their respective national policies.

The ministers responsible for the intercultural dialogue had a first exchange on this issue in Potsdam. Their contributions showed that there are highly diverse approaches to this dialogue in Europe, but many member states are confronted with similar challenges. In the past, the intercultural dialogue has been primarily pursued on the national level.

Over the past five years, numerous member states have started seeking a dialogue with Muslim communities on the national, regional and local level. Despite the



diversity of the approaches taken, these initiatives have a common objective: improving the way in which European citizens live together.

With the German Islam Conference [Deutsche Islam Konferenz (DIK)], Germany started its own initiative for an intercultural dialogue in September 2006. Working together with the German federal states, the Federal Ministry of the Interior intends to create a sound basis for the relationship between the German state and Muslims living in Germany.

### **⑨ Launch of a European education programme as an element of the German EU presidency**

Europe has a new education programme – the Lifelong Learning Programme. Ms. Annette Schavan, the Federal Minister for Education, EU Education Commissioner Ján Figel and Professor E. Jürgen Zöllner, the president of the German Conference of Ministers for Culture and Education [Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)] celebrated the symbolic launch of this new initiative in Berlin on 7 May 2007. At the launch conference during the German EU presidency, 18 projects were awarded the “European lifelong learning award”. The prizewinners also include four projects from Germany.

With a term of seven years, the Lifelong Learning Programme has a total budget of approximately EUR 7 bn – approximately EUR 100 m from the programme is available annually in Germany alone. The objective is to offer up to 80.000 trainees and young employees from all over Europe an opportunity, to obtain qualifications outside their home country and to prepare for the European labour market. As a result, the number of young people studying in another European country with an ERASMUS grant will double: from 1.5 million today to a total of 3 million in 2012. “There is a new, forward-looking generation growing up for the European knowledge society”, said Minister Schavan in Berlin.

Ms. Schavan emphasised that the Lifelong Learning Programme addressed a broader objective than just mobility. “With this programme, we have created the most important tool for the implementation of European education policy”, said the Federal Minister. The programme would make a major contribution towards implementing the agreements of the European Ministers for Education acting in the Bologna Process as regards university education, and in the Copenhagen Process as regards vocational education – in the shape of innovations for the benefit of the people. Consequently, groundbreaking European pilot projects for vocational education have brought within reach a scoring system for vocational education and the European Qualifications Framework. It will bring greater transparency and comparability to the training outcomes of trainees and the skills of professionals.

Approximately 700 education experts from all over Europe discussed in Berlin how the Lifelong Learning Programme can be used to further develop the European Education Space and to jointly confront current challenges. Strengthening lifelong learning – the experts say – is the right approach to come to terms with the consequences of demographic change.