

**Opening speech at the conference “Youth in Action – Quality in European Youth Work, 4 – 6 July 2006 at CJD Bonn, Germany, by Dr. Dietrich Rometsch, DG EAC, Youth: Policies**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, and together with my colleagues who are present today we would like to express our sincere thanks to the SALTO-YOUTH Training and Cooperation Resource Centre, and especially Mr. Udo Teichmann, and the Institut für angewandte Kommunikationsforschung in der Außerschulischen Bildung (IKAB – Bildungswerk e.V.), and especially Mr. Hendrik Otten and Mrs. Heidrun Boetzel, for organising this European conference on “Youth in Action – Quality in European Youth Work”. The European Commission highly appreciates the initiative to bring together the relevant actors, namely those politically responsible for the Youth in Action Programme (Commission), those structures responsible for its implementation (Executive Agency, National Agencies, SALTOs) and those using it and transforming it into concrete projects and results (European Youth Forum, NGOs, Partnership COM/CoE, trainers etc.).

Unfortunately Mr. Pierre Mairesse, Director responsible for Youth, Sport and Relations with the Citizen in DG Education and Culture, and Mrs Jutta König-Georgiades, responsible for the Action Team in the Youth Programme Unit of DG EAC, could not come today. They are both very busy, among others with the preparation of the implementation of the new Youth in Action Programme. They told me to apologise their absence.

The moment of this conference is very well chosen. At the European level we are about to reach two important milestones:

1. the adoption by Council and European Parliament of the new Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013
2. the adoption by the Commission of the Communication on participation, information and active citizenship of young people (as a follow-up of the implementation of the common objectives following the White Paper on youth).

Concerning the Youth in Action Programme the situation can be summarised as following:

- Ÿ end of June the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission reached a compromise on the proposal for a Decision on the Youth in Action Programme;
- Ÿ It is now very likely that the Common Position will be approved without amendments in the European Parliament's second reading;
- Ÿ this will be followed by the final adoption by the Council most probably during autumn this year.

The Commission thinks that this development is very positive. It will allow that the new Youth in Action Programme can enter into force as scheduled 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007. Also in terms of the overall financial envelop the result is quite positive: according to the compromise which is now in the process of being adopted the new Youth in Action Programme will dispose of EUR 885 million for the period 2007-2013. This is less than initially suggested (i.e. EUR 915 million) but more than could be expected as a result of the financial perspectives that the European Council adopted end of last year.

Concerning the Communication on participation, information and active citizenship of young people which the Commission will adopt the situation can be summarised as following:

- ÿ the Communication will most probably be adopted during this summer;
- ÿ it is closing the first cycle of the first 2 priorities, namely participation and information, that were adopted by the Council in 2003;
- ÿ it is expected that on this basis the Council of youth ministers will adopt a resolution under Finnish Presidency before the end of this year;
- ÿ the report on the common objectives for “voluntary activities” will be ready in 2007 and the one on the implementation of the common objectives for the “better knowledge and understanding of youth” will follow in 2008.

This brings me to a more general observation which is also important for this conference: we can observe that Programme activities and activities undertaken in the framework of cooperation related to youth (i.e. “youth policy”) move closer together and become interrelated. This is a new feature of the Commission’s approach in the youth field, i.e. that the Youth in Action Programme and “youth policy” are two sides of the same medal.

This is also reflected in the draft legal text of the new Youth in Action Programme which is now under discussion: it refers in the general considerations to the White Paper on Youth, the OMC and the European Youth Pact. The draft legal text explicitly states that *“the priorities and objectives of this*

*programme should be aligned with the Framework of European Cooperation in the field of youth*". Consequently one of the general objectives of the Programme is 'to promote European cooperation in the youth field'. The new Action 5 is particularly designed to enhance this cooperation, especially by supporting

- the structured dialogue between young people, youth workers and policy makers;
- the European Youth Week;
- activities in the framework of the European Youth Pact;
- activities in the field of better understanding and knowledge of youth;
- the cooperation with international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe.

But Action 5 is not the exclusive instrument to promote youth policy cooperation. Also the new Action 1 ('democracy projects') and Action 4 (support of Youth NGOs and the European Youth Forum, innovation and quality, information activities) contain elements that are relevant for youth policy development (Ms. Peggy Genève will elaborate more on this in a moment).

In one word: "policy" and "programme" are complementary to each other.

This idea of complementarity is also stated in the above mentioned draft communication which suggests among others that the policy framework is complemented by the YOUTH Programme which is recognised as a valuable resource for promoting the active citizenship of young people as well as their integration in society. This will be further reinforced in the future 'Youth in Action Programme'.

This conference will certainly allow us to elaborate more on this issue. From the Commission's point of view the conference has at least three objectives, namely

- to inform about the new Youth in Action Programme and youth policy development
- to exchange ideas on the implementation of the Youth in Action Programme
- and to reflect upon the future cooperation between a) Commission / EACEA b) National Agencies / Saltos / Eurodesk / Partnership COM/CoE and c) NGOs / trainers / researchers.

Our expectation is that this conference will contribute to work out concrete proposals on the implementation of the new Youth in Action Programme,

especially as it concerns quality in European youth work and its contribution to the youth policy development at European level.

I give now the floor to my colleague Ms. Peggy Genève who will briefly present the new Action 4; she will be followed by Mr. Artur Payer who will say a few words on the priorities of the Youth in Action Programme and the Commission's expectations with regard to the training strategy; and last but not least Ms. Henar Conde who will briefly explain the role of the Executive Agency.

Thank you for your attention.