



PRESS RELEASE

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Youth Participation and Social Inclusion: EU Youth Conference Kicks Off in Cyprus

Nicosia, Cyprus, 11th September 2012 // “Youth Participation and Social Inclusion” is the thematic focus of the EU Youth Conference hosted by the Cyprus EU Presidency as key event of the third phase of the Structured Dialogue. From 11-13 September, more than 200 national youth delegates, representatives from youth organisations and government officials from EU member states and candidate countries will discuss how youth participation leads to the social inclusion of young people, with emphasis on young people with a migrant background. A set of Joint Recommendations will be adopted at the end of the Conference.

The importance of the participation of young people and youth organisations, especially in decision making, as an important factor for the creation of inclusive, democratic and prosperous societies is at the centre of the youth conference. In the next intense two days, the delegates will participate in 7 joint workshops focused on themes such as the role of information provision and media, quality education for quality inclusion, equal opportunities, intercultural dialogue, better policies for better social inclusion, youth participation in democratic and social life and support to the role of youth organisations.

*“It is very important that young people have a say in shaping the policies that affect their future”, says **European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou** during the opening at the scenic Famagusta gate. She emphasises that “we need to do more to overcome the obstacles that prevent the participation and social inclusion of young people, in particular those with a migrant background. We need to step up our efforts at local, regional, national and EU level to combat discrimination, strengthen solidarity and improve intercultural awareness”.*

*“Seeking ways towards a better Europe is an effort which demands vision, creativity and determination and young people and youth organisations have a lot to contribute in this effort,” says Cyprus Minister for Education and Culture, **George Demosthenous**. “The city of Nicosia has opened its gates to welcome you. I invite you to keep your hearts and minds open and allow for honest and fruitful discussions to take place. We, at the policy making level, promise to have open ears for your recommendations,” he concluded.*

*“The participation of youth organisations and all young people regardless of their background, in social and democratic life, especially in decision making processes, is the focus of the Cyprus Presidency in the youth field,” said **Andreas Vyras, President of the Administrative Board of the Youth Board of Cyprus**. “We commit to work towards a Better Europe; where young people will have their voice heard and the power to influence the youth policies at national and European level,” he stressed.*

*“We believe that youth organisations play an important role in ensuring participation opportunities through volunteering and youth activities for all young people and empower them to fully take part in society as equals,” says **European Youth Forum President, Peter Matjašič**. “As acknowledged in the EU Youth Report 2012, the structured dialogue is now a consolidated tool offering the involvement of young people in shaping policies at EU level that directly affect them and we hope to further improve it by reaching out to more diverse young people”, he concluded.*

Youth delegates and representatives of national authorities will have joint discussions in the workshops *The European Youth Forum is the platform of youth organisations in Europe. Independent, democratic, youth-led, it represents 97 National Youth Councils and international youth organisations from across the continent. The Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own lives, by representing and advocating their needs and interests and those of their organisations towards the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. For more information, visit www.youthforum.org*

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based on the compiled outcomes of vast national consultations carried out in all the 27 EU Member States. The Joint Recommendations will be published on September 13th and will then contribute to the draft Council Conclusions on the topic. Additionally they will provide input to the draft Council Resolution on the second cycle of the Structured Dialogue process on youth participation in democratic life in Europe. Both documents are expected to be adopted in November 2012.

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Notes to the editors:

The EU Youth Conference is organised by the Cyprus EU Presidency in close cooperation with the Cyprus Youth Council and the European Youth Forum and supported by the European Commission.

The European Youth Forum position on the Structured Dialogue can be found [here](#).

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