

8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth

Kyiv, 10-11 October 2008

Closing address by Mr Ralf-René Weingärtner,
Director of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe

Elements

1. *[Address]*
2. In early versions of our programme you may have seen the name of the Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, **Mrs Battaini-Dragoni**, as the person to formulate the final conclusions of this Conference. Mrs Battaini-Dragoni regrets very much that she cannot be with us today, because the Secretary General has entrusted her with a very delicate and important task in the Caucasus region. She has asked me to communicate her thanks to our Ukrainian hosts and her confidence that this Conference was a success.
3. We are coming to the end of a great Conference. Over the last two days, we had the good luck to be able to exchange views among the **ministerial delegations** from the states party to the European Cultural Convention. We had many hours of discussions with **youth representatives** who had come to Kyiv as members of the national delegations or under the auspices of the European Youth Forum. We profited from the input by many eminent **researchers and experts**, here in plenary and in the panels. And we enjoyed the presence and advice of many guests representing **other international institutions**, first and foremost the Commission of the European Union with whom we are co-operating very closely in the context of the “Partnership Agreement”.
4. Yesterday, in his keynote address, the President of the Republic of Ukraine pointed out that **“youth policy is an integral and essential part of European integration”**. I think this puts our debate in exactly the right context. Europe as a continent based on shared values - on human rights, democracy, the rule of law, peace, solidarity, intercultural dialogue - has no future without the active commitment of the young generation. This has been pointed out by the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mrs De Boer-Buquicchio, by Minister Sabuni and many other speakers [and it was an underlying theme in several of the panel discussions].
5. The **“Agenda 2020”** with its **three main themes** spells out what youth policy needs to do now and in the next decade.
 - Under the title of **human rights and democracy**, the “Agenda” covers key issues like the full enjoyment of human rights and human dignity by every young woman and man, the promotion of participation of all young people, democratic citizenship and sustainable development. Many of the speakers underlined the crucial role played by non-formal learning and peer education in this context.
 - Focussing on **cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue**, the “Agenda 2020” raises the issues of racism and discrimination, the need to support conflict prevention

and conflict management in particular for and with among young people, the need to address the situation of particularly vulnerable young people coming with a different cultural identity, and to promote global solidarity. But on the other hand, as Professor Filippov phrased it in his keynote address, “young people are...the best placed when it comes to learning the intercultural skills and attitudes that are necessary for ensuring that our diversity becomes a source of mutual enrichment”.

- And in its part on the **social inclusion of young people**, the “Agenda 2020” addresses the themes of insecurity, precariousness, the erosion of job security, the experience of poverty faced by young people. “What is youth policy doing about the risk society in action”, Gavan Titley asked yesterday. Many answers were brought out in the panel discussions, thus laying the foundation for action in favour of social inclusion. [...]
6. This Conference was possible because of the **good cooperation between all stakeholders**. The recent European Youth Campaign “All different – all equal” was the highlight of this co-operation. This “Youth Alliance” has been successful, and I think it will be successful in the implementation phase of the Agenda 2020.
 7. Particular thanks go to the **Advisory Council members** ending their term. I thank you for a co-operation which I regard, in spite of shortcomings in communication, as quite successful. As mentioned in the recent meeting of the Joint Council: technical shortcomings will be repaired quickly and efficiently. All of us must watch over the co-management system; no one is allowed to let it erode. I am convinced that your successors - both in the Advisory Council and in the **European Youth Forum** - will continue the good co-operation as you know it and have always experienced it. My door is always open for you.
 8. Most importantly, however, I would like to express our **gratitude to the government of Ukraine** for hosting our Conference. I want to thank particularly the Minister of Family, Youth and Sport, Yurii Pavlenko, and the Deputy Minister, Ilya Shevliak. Without your energy and commitment - and without the organising skills of your collaborators -, the Conference would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the Chairs of the **Steering Committee on Youth and the Advisory Council**, Jan Vanhee and Georg Boldt, who over many months managed the preparatory process.
 9. We are at the end of the Conference proceedings. The period of implementation and follow-up starts today. I thank you for your attention and wish you all a safe and pleasant journey home. On behalf of the Council of Europe, I **close the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth**.