



To be checked against delivery

**Ministry of Integration and Gender  
Equality Sweden**

**8<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for  
Youth  
Kyiv/Ukraine, 10-11 October 2008**

*Address by Ms Nyamko Sabuni,  
Minister for Integration and Gender Equality, Sweden  
representing the Swedish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers  
of the Council of Europe*

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Deputy Secretary General,  
Mr/Mrs Chairman,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure I am here today to take part in the 8<sup>th</sup> Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth. This is also my first visit to your country and it gives me a particularly pleasant feeling to realise that your capital Kiev is such a beautiful city.

On behalf of the Committee of Ministers, I would like to thank our host for this conference, the Government of Ukraine, for its kind invitation and warm hospitality.

As the current holder of Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, Sweden welcomes this Kiev Conference of youth ministers for various reasons.

My government attaches strong importance to youth issues. Therefore, we have included this among the priorities of our chairmanship. We will do our utmost to promote the implementation of the priorities and strategies set out in the Warsaw Action Plan adopted by the Heads of State and Government in 2005.

Today, three years after the Warsaw Summit, we will have the first opportunity to - at ministerial level - evaluate what has been achieved. Also at this meeting we will discuss what we all can do, to adapt our youth policies in the ever-changing political landscape, in order to meet the needs of young people.

Like in many other European countries, our Swedish society is ageing. The percentage of the population made up of boys and girls, young women and men is decreasing, and that makes the young generation even more important. Investing in youth today is a vital ingredient in all future-oriented policies.

The Council of Europe is the organisation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. They are our core values. However, respecting human rights, practicing democracy and strengthening the rule of law is not a matter of legal standards and their enforcement alone.

It is equally a matter of comprehension and commitment. The Swedish Chairmanship believes that an active involvement of our youth is crucial to the struggle in maintaining our core values. Without the innovative and stimulating force from our civil societies -particularly within youth organisations — we will not be able to successfully face challenges to come. This is why youth policy must remain in focus on the agenda of the Council of Europe.

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Bearing in mind the purpose of our upcoming Conference, I would like to stress a few important points.

Ten days ago I had the opportunity to visit the Strasbourg Youth centre, one of the two European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe. The occasion in Strasbourg was its inauguration after important renovation works of the centre.

Both these youth centres are unique instruments of youth co-operation in Europe and they need our continued support.

And why are they unique?

- First of all, the Centres represent “intercultural dialogue in action”. (I need not underline the importance of intercultural dialogue – this has been done forcefully by the White Paper of the Council of Europe, which our Ministers of Foreign Affairs launched in May this year.)
- Secondly, every year, the Centres receive several thousand young women and men who are highly active in youth organisations all over our continent. The experiences and knowledge gained by these young people are further spread amongst them after they have returned home. The effect of the Centres is therefore multiplied many times over. We have seen that a large proportion of these young people subsequently assume positions of high responsibility in their countries and we of course all hope this will continue.
- And third; the principle of co-management and the practice of co-decision, established in the 1970s, represent a valuable model of best practice in partnership and participation. The programme of the Centres — as well as the grants provided through the European Youth Foundation — are decided jointly by member state governments and youth organisations.

I would also like to mention the intergovernmental co-operation, particularly the process of international reviews of national youth policies; the contribution of youth research to an evidence-based youth policy; and the excellent co-operation with the European Commission in the framework of the “Partnership”, which celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary a few days ago. All these facets of youth policy are important and will play a role in our discussions at this Conference.

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Youth policy is a cross-sector domain. It concerns the lives of children and young people in all aspects. Gender equality, cultural diversity, social inclusion, health, education, housing, employment and more. Therefore youth policy cannot be conducted in splendid isolation from other areas. On the contrary, we need more attention to youth aspects in relevant policy fields; in other words we need “mainstreaming”. Within the Council of Europe the youth sector must play an important and leading role in the mainstreaming process.

The transition from childhood to adulthood has changed considerably over the last decades. Our children become more mature at an earlier age, and yet they tend to study longer and stay longer in their families of origin. Therefore, working with young people in promoting the core values of the Council of Europe nowadays also should include “children”. The Council of Europe youth policy should take this into account, for instance by establishing closer co-operation between the activities for and with children and those directed to youth; particularly with regard to their right of participation.

Madam/Mrs Chair

This Conference is expected to adopt the “Agenda 2020”; a declaration of principles and priorities, which will inspire the youth policy of the Council of Europe for many years to come. I can inform you that the Swedish Chairmanship has already announced its intention to transmit the Agenda 2020 without delay to the Committee of Ministers. Based on this, the Swedish Presidency will prepare a Committee of Ministers resolution regarding the youth policy of the Council of Europe, which we hope and expect, will be adopted within the near future.

~~Dear colleagues,~~

Dear colleagues,

Our achievements and institutions will not remain for long, without the engagement of present and future young generations, and their values of which we all are inspired.

The Council of Europe gives us a unique platform from which to exchange ideas and experiences, as well as an opportunity to learn from each other while developing our cooperation.

Now time has come to begin our deliberations, time to converse, to discuss, to agree and also to disagree. And tomorrow we will summon up, conclude our work and adopt our new youth strategy - the Kiev Declaration, Agenda 2020.

Thank you.