European youth: opening up decision-making process to young people. White Paper

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by its rapporteur Lissy GRONER (PES, Germany) on European Youth policy. Parliament welcomed the White Paper, but considered that it could not be regarded as optimum. It can be used constructively if it is seen as part of a process about participation and in connection with, for example, the White Paper on Governance. Whilst the open method of oordinattion is an appropriate way of improving cooperation at European level in the specific field of youth policy, the procedure for applying the method needs to be defined more precisely with regard to the following: -the Commission should propose priority areas, common guidelines and objectives to Council and Parliament before their adoption by the Council, and -the Commission should monitor implementation and regularly report to the Council and Parliament. Participation should first and foremost take place within young people's immediate environment, within the local community and above all in schools. Political parties should also play a role in promoting participation by young people, above all by encouraging them to stand for political office. In the area of information, the White Paper, which is geared mainly towards measures related to the Internet, involving the creation of an electronic portal and forum, does not go far enough, as significant differences remain in Internet use according to geographical area and gender and consequently, there is a danger that many people could be excluded from the provision of information. With regard to voluntary service, this is an important form of non-formal learning, for which a diploma should be created. The Commission needs to bring forward concrete proposals for certifying non-formal education with a view to establishing an appropriate legal and social protection status for volunteers. In addition to voluntary service, voluntary civil involvement in a wider sense is very valuable and the promotion of such involvement should be an important aspect of youth policy, with youth associations and NGOs and sports associations playing an important role. With regard to other policy areas, Parliament reminds the Commission about the specific importance of health, given the comparative research showing alarming tendencies towards a worsening state of health in young people; the Commission needs to come forward with indicators based on comparable data aiming to improve the health of young people. Finally, the Convention on the future of Europe should examine in depth the issue of the status of young European citizens and send a clear signal on involving young people actively in the process of building a more democratic Europe.