

[Geef tekst op]

Speaking points: **Belgian Youth Councils intervention at the Council of the EU-Youth**

19/11/2010, Brussels

Dear President of the Council of Ministers of Youth,
Dear Ministers responsible for Youth Affairs,

"We really can express our ideas on how to improve the situation of young people? We can say what we think the government should do to make the labour market more youth friendly?"

That is what we heard frequently when consulting young people on youth employment in the framework of the structured dialogue. Thousands of young people contributed via a variety of media at local, regional and national level to the recommendations on youth employment you have in front of you. For many of them it was the first time they could express their ideas on EU policies concerning a very relevant topic.

I am happy now, that I can share the enthusiasm of all the participants of the Youth Conference in Leuven and thousands of all the others who contributed to the joint recommendations. For this opportunity I, representing the Belgian Youth Councils, want to express my gratitude to Minister Pascal Smet, President of the Council.

We believe the structured dialogue is crucial to bring the European Union closer to young people. Still its main added value lies in the possibility to organise discussions between young people and policy makers and draft joint recommendations. Therefore we hope that this participatory approach will be continued, even when another topic will be discussed within the structured dialogue of next Trio Presidencies.

Amongst other things, the participants expressed their wish for a sustainable dialogue between young people, youth organisations and policy makers on all levels and in all processes related to employment and social policies. Although it is not the first aim of youth work to ensure employability of young people, the participants also ask to strengthen and recognise the guidance role youth workers can play in informing and supporting young people on labour market issues.

But where you, Ministers responsible for youth affairs, should play an important role is in raising the visibility, strengthen the awareness and recognise the skills and competences acquired through youth work amongst all stakeholders, both young people and employers and even within formal education.

The Belgian EU Presidency, and the exceptional opportunity to raise our voice as Belgian Youth Councils, will soon be over. But we don't think our role as youth councils ends here. We have already sent the recommendations to the Belgian Members of European Parliament, several Ministries and even set up debates with institutional stakeholders.

"And you, dear Ministers, did you already receive the recommendations from your national youth representatives?" If not, we hope you invite them to present the results. The structured dialogue can indeed only be successful if there is a strong institutional support that you can facilitate.

We also hope that you can reach a strong political outcome of this 18 months process. We therefore wish our Hungarian colleagues good luck and look forward to an even stronger process during the next Trio.

On behalf of all the participants of the EU Youth Conference in Leuven I want to thank you for your attention.