



Ms Petra Schott  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and  
Equal Opportunities  
Unit G.2, Equality, Action against  
Discrimination: Legal questions  
European Commission

Brussels, 14 March 2008

Dear Ms Schott,

**RE: Consultation of European NGOs on reconciliation measures**

With this letter, The European Youth Forum would like to give its response to the European Commission Consultation of European NGOs on reconciliation measures.

The European Youth Forum is an umbrella organization consisting of more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organizations, which are federations of youth organizations in themselves. It brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe, organized in order to represent their common interests. The European Youth Forum defends the interests of all young people in Europe. As a platform, it is the representative body of its member organizations towards institutions and partners active in the youth field aiming at empowering young people to participate actively in the shaping of Europe and the societies in which they live, and in improving the living conditions of young people as European citizens in today's world.

The European Youth Forum very much welcomes the Consultation of European NGOs on reconciliation of professional, private and family life measures. This is a subject which we consider of highest relevance. Nevertheless, we consider that the questions asked are too technical on certain points and do not allow our organization to express its views on more general concerns on this particular topic. Therefore we address such concerns in this letter which we hope is a valuable contribution to the consultation opened by the European Commission.

The European Youth Forum believes that it is of utmost importance to create a "caring society", through the development of a culture of reconciliation. The development of a culture of reconciliation should aim at maximizing the participation of Europeans, focusing on the inclusion of women, in the labour market, while offering the services, work arrangements and rights which will allow European citizens to have the number of children that they wish to. In 2006 facilities could allow parents to take a job leave for a fixed period of time, but in reality such facilities are not being used. The first reason might be that paternity leave is not easily compatible with the still used perception that the man is "bringing home the money" and the woman stays at home which often creates problems for the woman when returning to work after maternity leave. The European Youth Forum



believes that this imbalance between existing legislation and reality is unacceptable and therefore calls upon the European Commission to develop strategies in order to establish a culture of reconciliation between work, private and family life in Europe. The European Youth Forum furthermore urges Social Partners at all levels to continue and deepen their work on reconciliation.

Additionally, the European Youth Forum believes that further action of the European Institutions is needed in order to agree on a common framework for Member States to organize reconciliation services and mechanisms. Tools should also be developed to allow systematic and regular exchange of good practices between Member States when it comes to the design and implementation of reconciliation policies.

Moreover, the European Youth Forum also calls upon the European Union and Member States to work more specifically on the financing of reconciliation policies, assuring that the universality and affordability of reconciliation services. Information campaigns on reconciliation should also be developed in close collaboration with the social partners and civil society and in particular youth organisations.

Furthermore, the European Youth Forum believes that Youth Autonomy is a precondition for reconciliation policies. Indeed, the first step to reconcile work, private and family life is to increase youth participation into decent employment and offer young people a significant level of autonomy in their lives. To that end, the European Youth Forum urges the European Commission to mobilize the existing instruments at their disposal that could help achieving greater autonomy for young people. In fact, since the adoption of the White Paper “a new impetus for the European Youth” in 2001, almost no action has been undertaken by the European Commission to implement its chapter on Youth Autonomy. In this sense, the European Youth Forum urges the European Commission to ensure a proper follow-up to the Youth Autonomy chapter of the White paper on Youth.

In addition, any work on youth autonomy should be developed in close cooperation between the work of the European Union and its Member States to implement the European Youth Pact and European Policy makers have to ensure that young people have access to affordable housing, transport and healthcare services. In order to make progress towards greater youth autonomy, the European Youth Forum believes that the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion should also be used. The European Youth Forum additionally urges the European Commission to allocate more funds via the European Social Fund in order to finance projects aimed at increasing youth autonomy in Europe at local and regional level.

Additionally, the current method of offering precarious contracts to young people puts them in very insecure positions which do not allow them to take decisions such as creating a family and therefore to reconcile professional and family life. In this regard, the European Youth Forum calls upon the European the Commission to take measures that can provide young people with more secure contract solutions. Moreover, the reality in Europe has been that employers are more and more recruiting graduates as interns without offering them



any labour law protection and often without any or very limited financial compensation. In this context, the European Youth Forum is ready to play its full role in order to assist the European Commission in developing a European Quality Charter on Internships.

Moreover, the European Youth Forum believes, that young people should be in a position to consider a career where they become self-employed or entrepreneurs. Therefore, we consider it as very important that administrative procedures are simplified and that young people are given the financial support in order to start up their own businesses. Furthermore an entrepreneurial education should be developed and reconciliation measures concerning self-employed people should be tackled by the European Commission.

We very much hope that our comments can be taken on boards when it comes to enhancing reconciliation of professional, private and family life.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

**Bettina Schwarzmayr**  
**President**