



Adopted resolution

Youth Mobility and Visa Policy - Time to Make a Stand

Although freedom of movement is widely recognised as a fundamental human right, we, Green Party of Ukraine supporting Green Youth of Ukraine together with CDN – Cooperation Development Network of Eastern Europe, have concluded that this right is at present grossly and universally violated. In our opinion, visa regimes are a fundamental source of such violations. Youth has a right to take an active part in society, to learn from other cultures and to develop its skills through both formal and non-formal education. However, young people face severe obstacles to mobility in their every day lives, which limit their possibilities to fulfil these objectives.

Allowing youth to move freely is of great importance for fostering tolerant, pluralistic and open societies. It is only by getting directly into contact with societies and cultures different from our own that we can overcome our prejudices and our fear of the unknown. Therefore, mobility is an essential instrument in the struggle against xenophobia, racism and discrimination. It also yields substantial economic benefits by allowing youth to enhance their knowledge and professional, social and linguistic skills. Furthermore, the free movement of people is a prerequisite for the construction of a strong civil society, both at the national and the international level. This is especially important for youth, which plays a fundamental role in strengthening democratic processes. Taking all these factors into consideration, we are convinced that youth mobility is an essential part of conflict prevention.

Unfortunately, many governments do not acknowledge these benefits and substantially limit our movement by inaccessible, non-transparent, incoherent, expensive and time-consuming visa procedures that often involve various types of discrimination and serious human rights abuses, such as violations of the right to information or the protection of privacy. Moreover, current visa procedures are surrounded by corruption and characterised by the abuse of power at all levels.

In an increasingly globalised world founded upon knowledge-based economies, visa regimes are simply outdated and harmful: they not only conflict with the flexibility, liberty of choice and independence required to function in present-day information society, but they also prevent a more balanced globalisation in which the free movement of capital is complemented by the free movement of people. After all, visa regimes are one of the many products and means of perpetuation of socio-economic inequalities. Current visa policies do not have any exemptions for youth or civil society activists and in this way they severely limit the possibility of creating trans-national civil society networks and fostering non-formal education. This strongly contradicts the European Union's professed commitment to promoting civil society and non-formal learning opportunities both within and outside of its territory. We can therefore only conclude that current EU visa policy is a relict of the past and utterly hypocritical.

Given the great importance of youth mobility in promoting the “European Values” of tolerance, democracy and diversity, we call upon the EU and national governments to take all necessary measures to remove the obstacles to this mobility, in accordance with the European Youth Forum's Guidelines adopted in April 2004¹. Furthermore, we urge European and national authorities to

¹ 'Guidelines for the removal of legal obstacles to Mobility in Youth Work', European Youth Forum, Council of

completely overhaul existing visa procedures in order to make them more transparent, uniform and accessible by lowering their prices, enhancing their quality and simplifying and de-bureaucratising them.

Such increased accessibility also means the possibility to obtain a visa for a specific country in the Schengen zone from consulates and embassies of all the signatory countries as well as the duty to provide clear and sufficient information about visa procedures in native languages. Additionally, we recommend that human rights education be compulsory for those carrying out the visa procedures in order to combat the discrimination and humiliation that are so often part of the visa-issuing process. We also strongly urge governments to drastically increase their accountability for visa procedures especially by making appeal procedures more accessible. Finally, we think it is essential to introduce visa waivers for all categories of youth and civil society activists.

A far-reaching reform of current visa policy is a must for enabling youth to exercise their fundamental right to freedom of movement. And the goal to abolish the visa regimes in the future has to be an important demand for European Greens.