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(Information)

COUNCIL

Declaration by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council

of 24 November 1997

on the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism in the youth field

(97/C 368/01)

The process of European construction is based on the principles of tolerance and respect for other people. The phenomena of racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism pose a significant threat to this process. The Council and the Representatives of the Government of the Member States acknowledge that these phenomena have to be combated by long-term national policies to fight first and foremost intolerance in all spheres of society.

Recognition of the value of Europe's cultural diversity is essential for the active participation of young people in a caring European society.

On the occasion of the European Year against Racism, the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States stress the importance of socio-educational measures taken within informal education in the context of existing programmes to promote those principles and to encourage their recognition by young people, and by youth groups and organizations, including sports organizations. These measures can also help to raise awareness among young people of the dangers of exclusion, including racism and xenophobia.

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States welcome the initiatives taken in 1997 by Member States and by the Commission to enable young people and those working with young people to make the best use of existing possibilities to fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism, including, among others, the possibilities offered by the Youth for Europe programme.

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States welcome the creation of a European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States share the desire expressed by the European Parliament in its Resolutions on racism and xenophobia constantly to renew efforts to combat intolerance. They consider it essential to build on the achievements of the European Year and to take steps to ensure an appropriate follow-up after 1997.

The Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States therefore call on the Member States and the Commission to adopt the necessary measures, in the framework of actions and programmes aimed at young people, to promote pilot projects and projects establishing specialized networks to fight intolerance. They call on the Member States to ensure that the training of youth workers and others working with young people enables them to deal with questions of good ethnic relations and to combat racism.

In this context, drawing on the experience of the European Youth Campaign against Racism launched by the Council of Europe, the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States also invite the Member States and the Commission to take measures to encourage and support specific activities aimed at raising awareness among young people of the value of tolerance and the dangers of racism and xenophobia on 21 March each year.

Finally, the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States call on the Commission to present a report, before the end of 1998, on the impact of and prospects for Community measures in the field of informal education of young people to promote tolerance.