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**NOTE**

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From: Presidency

To: Delegations

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Subject: Gender Equality, Youth and Digitalisation  
- Presidency Conclusions

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The discussions in Council have not led to reaching a consensus on Conclusions on Gender Equality, Youth and Digitalisation. However, the Presidency concluded that the text annexed was supported by 26 delegations including the Presidency.

**Gender Equality, Youth and Digitalisation<sup>1</sup>**

**NOTING THAT:**

1. Driven by technological innovations such as the internet, information and communication technology (ICT), artificial intelligence (AI), automation, robotics and Industry 4.0, digitalisation is comprehensively transforming lives, communities and even identities. This process is not gender neutral and can only be understood if it is seen in the broader context of ongoing societal change, including the evolving roles of women and men and advancing gender equality. Digitalisation brings with it many new opportunities in all spheres of life. Yet, it can also help to perpetuate existing inequalities and stereotypes and pose new risks for youth, especially young women and girls.
2. The benefits of digitalisation for children and young people have so far not received sufficient attention from policy-makers and public debate on the subject still tends to focus mainly on the risks and drawbacks. However, a positive approach to digitalisation is also needed with a view to ensuring that children and young people can more fully enjoy its advantages and benefit from the opportunities it offers. In particular, digitalisation has great potential for the empowerment of young women and girls, for example through new forms of civic and political participation via social media and online cooperation and consultation. Online networks and initiatives can also improve the functioning of democracy and strengthen the role of civil society. Meanwhile, the risks and drawbacks also continue to require attention—for example, new forms of online violence, the circulation of harmful digital material, and gender stereotypes linked to sexuality and body image, which are intertwined with offline risks and inequalities for all young people.

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been drawn up within the framework of the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, with particular reference to the critical area of concern "L: The Girl Child."

3. While many young people are "digital natives" with intuitive digital competences and are thus used to navigating online space, guidance and support is needed in order to ensure that they have equal access to the various benefits of digitalisation. The active use of an online space free of gender stereotypes, especially by young women and girls, needs to be further fostered and promoted.
4. In the Trio Presidency Declaration on Equality between Women and Men that they signed in 2017, Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria undertook to bring gender equality back onto the EU's list of priorities, to strengthen gender mainstreaming in all policy areas and to address the impact of digitalisation on gender equality. As the Estonian and Bulgarian Presidencies have already addressed issues such as education, skills and the future of work, the Austrian Presidency decided to focus on *the opportunities arising from digitalisation in areas such as civic and political participation*.
5. When addressing the subject of gender equality, youth and digitalisation, policy-makers should listen to young people themselves, as they are key experts on their current and future lives. In preparing this document, the Austrian Presidency therefore consulted organisations such as the European Youth Forum and the Austrian National Youth Council.
6. Gender equality and youth-inclusion policies should be better integrated and made more future-oriented. The EU Conference entitled "Gender Equality and YOU. Young Voices. Joint Initiative." organised by the Austrian Presidency in October 2018 demonstrated that active cooperation between relevant stakeholders in the areas of gender equality and youth inclusion helps to build effective networks for promoting gender equality. The European Youth Goals developed jointly by young people and decision-makers in the course of the 6th cycle of the Structured Dialogue through a participatory process are an example of successfully mainstreaming gender equality in youth policies and adopting an intersectional approach.

7. NGOs and civil society have a key role to play in shaping the future of gender equality. They should be actively involved in policy-making as their expertise is key to developing and effectively implementing sound gender equality policies.
8. In order to ensure further progress in this field, there is a need for regular and institutionalised dialogue about gender equality at the EU level as well as a need for strategic instruments, for stronger input into the political process by gender experts and for visibility at a high political level. The Joint Declaration entitled "Gender Equality as a Priority of the European Union today and in the future," recently signed by a large majority of EU Member States, calls for a strong network and continuous dialogue between all relevant actors in the area of gender equality and for systematic and effective cooperation between the Member States and the European Union institutions. In this document, the signatories also voiced their commitment to actively facilitate regular exchanges between relevant actors.
9. This document has been drawn up in the context of the review of the implementation by the Member States and EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>2</sup> with particular reference to the critical area of concern "L: The Girl Child." Policies related to gender equality and digitalisation are also vital for the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in the context of the United Nations' Agenda 2030, which takes a dual approach, combining gender mainstreaming with a specific goal on gender equality (SDG 5).<sup>3</sup>
10. This document builds on previous work and political commitments voiced by the Council, the European Parliament, the Commission and other relevant stakeholders in this area, including the documents listed in Annex II.

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<sup>2</sup> The United Nations' agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment.

<sup>3</sup> SDG5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

11. **WE WELCOME** the report on the Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States entitled "Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation"<sup>4</sup> prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) at the request of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU. This report provides an analysis of the opportunities and risks of digitalisation for girls and boys, with particular focus on civic and political participation online as well as on new forms of online violence. It offers quantitative analysis, as well as insights based on the voices and expertise of young Europeans themselves. **WE WELCOME** the four new indicators<sup>5</sup> proposed by EIGE which focus on *digital skills, self-confidence in using digital technologies, the use of the internet for civic or political participation and cyberbullying*.<sup>6</sup>
12. In the light of EIGE's report, **WE NOTE THAT**, while the majority of young women and men believe they have sufficient digital skills, young women tend to indicate somewhat lower confidence in their digital skills. Thus gender stereotypes can affect young people's lives and occupational choices and lead to gender segregation at school and later in the labour market. Addressing gender stereotypes in relation to the use of digital technologies, and continued investment in young people's transversal and digital skills and competences, particularly among youth from disadvantaged backgrounds and young people in vulnerable situations, is needed. Social media and online news can enable young people to be more active in terms of citizenship and public life; measures to enhance critical and innovative thinking, creativity and media literacy are needed to support this process. Young women engage with social media even more actively than their male peers, yet they participate less actively in online debates and restrict their expression for fear of exposure to abuse and due to continued discriminatory standards concerning public participation. When it comes to digital communication of a sexual nature, young women also face a higher risk of harassment as compared with young men. Gender-sensitive approaches to digital media literacy, legislation and policy are the best way of tackling these risks.

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<sup>4</sup> Doc. 14348/18 ADD 2. An executive summary appears in doc. 14580/18 ADD 1.

<sup>5</sup> New indicators for monitoring critical area of concern L "The Girl Child".

<sup>6</sup> For further details, see doc. 14348/18 ADD 2. A complete list of indicators for monitoring critical area of concern L "The Girl Child" appears in Annex I.

13. **WE RECALL** the Commission's Recommendation advising Member States on measures they may apply to help increase the effectiveness and independence of Equality Bodies.

**WE CALL ON THE MEMBER STATES**, in accordance with their competences and taking into account national circumstances and respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners, **TO**:

14. Support young people in strengthening their digital competences and self-confidence in using digital technologies as well as in improving their online and social media literacy by

- a) Equipping all young people with key competences in areas such as critical online and social media use and online safety through formal, informal and non-formal education, through awareness-raising and by providing funding and necessary technical equipment and learning materials for schools and out of school youth work and by fostering creativity and the development of those competences that are most relevant to young people in their everyday online lives.
- b) Taking steps to create and support an inclusive, safe and non-discriminatory online space for all, to ensure digital access and to foster digital competences for youth from disadvantaged backgrounds and young persons in vulnerable situations, including young people of low socio-economic status, young people from ethnic minorities including Roma, young persons with disabilities, young people in rural areas, young people with a migrant background and young LGBTIQ<sup>7</sup> persons.

15. Foster and promote gender equality and digital competences in formal, informal and non-formal education and vocational training as well as among parents and carers by

- a) Taking appropriate initiatives in the context of education and training, covering not just the technical aspect (digital skills) but also the broader social dimension (digital competences), with a focus on critical and innovative thinking, empowerment, positive engagement and equal opportunities as well as risks.

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<sup>7</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons.

- b) Taking appropriate steps to ensure that all teachers, youth workers and educators are provided with adequate competences in the areas of gender equality, digitalisation, and online media literacy and that they can update their competences throughout their careers.
  - c) Taking concrete measures to address gender gaps in digital competences, including in terms of self-confidence; these may include the use of gender-sensitive, age-appropriate and up-to-date digital curricula and of teaching content better tailored to meet all children's and young people's needs and interests.
  - d) Framing digitalisation in a broad and positive context, focusing not just on marketable digital skills but also on the opportunities that digitalisation offers in areas such as innovation, active citizenship, political rights, diversity, equal opportunities, gender equality and empowerment of all young people.
  - e) Taking steps to prevent and to combat gender stereotypes and gender segregation in education and vocational training and to promote positive role models for all, including young women and men and girls and boys, and raising awareness about the empowering potential of digitalisation.
16. Encourage and facilitate the engagement of all young people in political and democratic decision-making processes, including through online political participation, giving particular attention to fostering the equal participation of young women and men and girls and boys.

**WE CALL ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES**, in accordance with their respective competences and respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners, **TO**:

17. Bring gender equality back onto the EU's list of priorities, especially by institutionalising regular exchanges as well as systematic and effective co-operation between relevant actors at Member State and EU level, including meetings of the Ministers for gender equality and dialogue between the political level and expert bodies in the fields of gender equality, youth and digitalisation.

18. Mainstream the gender perspective, taking an intersectional, comprehensive and inclusive approach when designing and implementing future gender equality policies and legislation in all areas relevant to digitalisation, including formal, informal and non-formal education, media and culture, civic and political participation, skills and employment, social and economic inclusion, non-discrimination, research and development. Consulting and actively involving all stakeholders, including civil society and Equality Bodies, is vital in this context.
19. Undertake research, take measures and provide funding to actively shape digital change and use the potential of digitalisation in such a way as to promote gender equality as well as the empowerment and participation of all women, girls and youth, including through the following specific actions:
  - a) Taking concrete steps to undertake gender mainstreaming and gender impact assessment in the context of youth and digitalisation, including the promotion of gender equality in all relevant policies and strategies, especially by including a gender equality perspective in all legislative proposals, budgetary discussions and programmes and by improving cooperation between different Commission services, EU agencies and expert bodies.
  - b) Supporting digital youth work initiatives that focus on citizenship and human rights education, including especially the gender dimension of these issues, and supporting youth information providers in their efforts to disseminate information about civic and political participation opportunities.
  - c) Taking steps to empower young people of all backgrounds, particularly young women and girls, so as to enable them to regularly and actively participate in social debates and decision-making, including by supporting their engagement in new forms of political and civic activism such as e-participation, with a focus on equal access for all.
  - d) Consulting and involving youth organisations and young people themselves in the design, implementation and evaluation of digital policies including internet governance.

- e) Supporting civil society organisations and in particular youth organisations and women's and girls' organisations in their efforts to give voice to the views of all children and young people, in particular girls and young women, as well as in their important role in enabling young people to develop, articulate and share their views on social, economic, cultural and political issues.
- f) Combating gender stereotypes and fostering positive role models for all, with a view to empowering young people and encouraging the positive use of online space.
- g) Preventing and combating all forms of online discrimination and online violence, including by empowering young women and girls, by combating gender stereotypes and the objectification of young women and girls.
- h) Undertaking awareness-raising about the various forms of online violence, its consequences and its unacceptability, including by improving digital literacy of all young people and raising awareness in society about respectful online behaviour.
- i) Further supporting initiatives promoting safe and respectful use of the internet, raising awareness of the impact of gender-based violence, and involving men and boys in combating violence against women and girls, including in the prevention of online violence, in order to bring on full digitalisation benefits not only to women, but to society as a whole.
- j) Enforcing legislation protecting all citizens, in particular girls and young women, against gender-based online violence, including cyber bullying and cyber harassment.
- k) Taking steps to facilitate and encourage the reporting of all forms of online violence, including hate crime.
- l) Ensuring the provision and access to high quality counselling for all young people.

- m) Stimulating informed public debate about online culture with a view to fostering awareness and promoting gender equality among all young people, to improving accessibility and to encouraging the positive and safe use of online space, especially by young women and girls.
  - n) Fostering partnerships and cooperation with business and business organisations, including especially media and social media companies and the ICT industry, for example, through voluntary engagement and self-regulation, building on good practices such as the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online<sup>8</sup> drawn up in cooperation between the Commission and leading ICT companies.
  - o) Supporting systematic and effective co-operation and mutual learning in the area of gender equality between Member States and the EU institutions, agencies and expert bodies, as well as between the different services of the European Commission, and with civil society, with a focus on digitalisation and youth policies, building on successful precedents such as the appointment of Digital Champions<sup>9</sup>, the work of the Expert Group for Digital Youth Work<sup>10</sup> and the CEF Telecom - Safer Internet Programme<sup>11</sup>.
20. Collect and regularly update statistics disaggregated by sex with a view to improving knowledge of digitalisation, with particular focus on the opportunities that it offers for the pursuit of gender equality, as well as on the risks that it presents.
21. Regularly follow up on the indicators set out in Annex I for systematically monitoring progress, making full use of the work of EIGE and Eurostat. Analyse the results and, where relevant, take further action at both Member State and European Union level.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=54300](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=54300)

<sup>9</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-champions>

<sup>10</sup> <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fbc18822-07cb-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility/cef-telecom/apply-funding/2018-safer-internet>

## **WE CALL ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:**

22. Formally adopt a Commission Communication setting out a stand-alone EU gender equality strategy for the period post-2019, including policies to address the opportunities and risks presented by digitalisation, taking an intersectional, comprehensive and inclusive approach.
  23. Strengthen gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, including all future EU youth and digitalisation policies as well as post-2020 programmes and funding.
  24. Engage actively with businesses and business organisations with a view to ensuring that the online space is safe and empowering for all, especially for women and girls, youth from disadvantaged backgrounds and young persons in vulnerable situations.
  25. Encourage and support the Member States, civil society organisations, the social partners and other relevant stakeholders such as Equality Bodies and actors in their efforts to promote the empowerment and safety of women and girls in the digital space, *inter alia* by providing the necessary funding.
  26. Raise awareness among European citizens of the potential that digitalisation offers for the empowerment of all young people, in particular young women and girls.
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## **ANNEX I to ANNEX**

### **Compilation of all indicators on Critical Area of Concern L: "The Girl Child"<sup>12</sup>**

**Indicator 1:** Sex and relationship education: parameters of sexuality-related education in schooling (primary and secondary)<sup>13</sup>

**Indicator 2:** Body self-image: dissatisfaction of girls and boys with their bodies<sup>14</sup>

**Indicator 3:** 15-year-old girls and boys: performance in mathematics & science<sup>15</sup>

**Indicator 4:** Proportion of all and top performers girls and boys in science aged 15 expecting to work in science-related occupations at age 30<sup>16</sup>

### **NEW Indicator 5: Share of young women and men (aged 16-19) with above-basic digital skills**

This indicator consists of four sub-indicators, which measure digital skills in four specific domains:

- a) Information skills;
- b) Communication skills;
- c) Problem solving skills; and
- d) Software skills.

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<sup>12</sup> For further details, see EIGE's report in doc. 14348/18 ADD 2.

<sup>13</sup> Existing indicator. See doc. 9669/08.

<sup>14</sup> Existing indicator. See doc. 9669/08.

<sup>15</sup> Existing indicator. See doc. 15468/17.

<sup>16</sup> Existing indicator. See doc. 15468/17.

**NEW Indicator 6: Share of girls and boys (aged 15-16) who feel confident performing certain tasks with digital technologies**

This indicator consists of three sub-indicators:

- a) The share of girls and boys who feel comfortable using digital devices that they are less familiar with;
- b) The share of girls and boys who feel that they can start solving a problem with digital devices on their own; and
- c) The share of girls and boys who feel that they can install new software they need by themselves.

**NEW Indicator 7: Share of young women and men (aged 16-19) who use the internet for civic or political participation**

**NEW Indicator 8: Share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have been cyberbullied by messages or by pictures at least once**

This indicator consists of two sub-indicators:

- a) The share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have experienced cyberbullying by messages at least once (i.e. have received mean instant messages, wall-postings, emails and text messages)
  - b) The share of girls and boys (aged 15) who have experienced cyberbullying by pictures at least once (i.e. posting unflattering or inappropriate pictures online without permission).
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**References**

**1. EU Interinstitutional:**

- European Pillar of Social Rights.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf)

**2. Council:**

All Council Conclusions adopted on the review of the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>17</sup> and other Council Conclusions on gender equality, including especially those cited below:

- Council Conclusions of 9 June 2008 on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society (9671/08).
- Council Conclusions of 9 June 2008 on the Review of the implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action (The Girl Child) (9669/08).
- Council Conclusions on Strengthening the commitment and stepping up action to close the gender pay gap, and the review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (18121/10).
- Council Conclusions of 7 March 2011 on the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) (OJ C 155, 25.5.2011, p. 10).
- Council conclusions adopted on 7 March 2011 on The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion (6917/11).
- Council Resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. OJ C C 417/02, 15.12.2015, p. 10.
- Council Conclusions on Moving towards more inclusive labour markets adopted on 9 March 2015 (7017/15)
- Council Conclusions of 18 June 2015 on Equal income opportunities for women and men: Closing the gender gap in pensions (10081/15 )
- Council Conclusions on the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 of 26 October 2015 (13201/15).

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<sup>17</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/statistics-indicators/platform-action/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/statistics-indicators/platform-action/index_en.htm)

- Council Conclusions on Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market (6889/17).
- Council Conclusions of 16 June 2016 entitled Response to the Commission's Strategic engagement for gender equality (10416/16)
- Council Conclusions 8 December 2016 on Women and Poverty (15409/16)
- Council Conclusions of 16 June 2016 entitled Response to the Commission's List of actions to advance LGBTI equality (10417/16)
- Council Conclusions on Smart Youth Work adopted on 20 November 2017 (14205/17).
- Council Conclusions of 7 December 2017 on Enhanced measures to reduce horizontal gender segregation in education and employment (15468/17).
- Council Conclusions of 7 December 2017 on the Future of Work: Making it e-Easy (15506/17).

### **3. Trio Presidency:**

- Trio Presidency Declaration on Equality between Women and Men signed by Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria (19 July 2017).
- Joint Declaration on “Gender Equality as a Priority of the European Union today and in the future”. Proposed by the Austrian, Estonian and Bulgarian Trio Presidency, Informal Meeting of EU Gender Equality Ministers, 12 October 2018, Vienna.

### **4. European Commission:**

- Commission Staff Working Document "Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019" (SWD(2015) 278 final).
- An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering: A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities (COM(2009) 200 final).
- Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on how to overcome occupational segregation  
[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/opinions\\_advisory\\_committee/151125\\_opinion\\_occ\\_segregation\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/opinions_advisory_committee/151125_opinion_occ_segregation_en.pdf)
- Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online  
[http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=54300](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=54300)
- 2018 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union"  
<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/950dce57-6222-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

- Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition under the New Skills Agenda for Europe (COM(2016) 381 final, 10.6.2016)  
<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/european-commission-invites-organisations-attract-more-girls-and-women-digital>
- Expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018: "Developing digital youth work. Policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples"  
<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fbc18822-07cb-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1>
- Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (European Commission) (2018): Developing digital youth work. Policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples for youth workers and decision-makers. (Expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018.)  
<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fbc18822-07cb-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1>
- Commission Recommendation (EU) 2018/951 of 22 June 2018 on standards for equality bodies, OJ L 167/ 28 of 4 July 2018 pp. 28-35.

## **5. European Parliament:**

- European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2013 on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU (P7\_TA(2013)0074);
- European Parliament resolution of 28 April 2016 on gender equality and empowering women in the digital age (P8\_TA(2016)0204).

## **6. EIGE:**

- EIGE's report "Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation" (14348/18 ADD 2)

## **7. Other**

- OECD: Economic Surveys Austria 2017  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco\\_surveys-aut-2017-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-aut-2017-en)
- UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy "Youth Leap into Gender Equality"
- Council of Europe, YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO RIGHTS, Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 28 September 2016 and explanatory memorandum

- Council of Europe, Access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights, Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 21 January 2015
- European Youth Forum 2015, Tomaž Deželan, Young People and Democratic Life in Europe: What Next After the 2014 European Elections?
- European Youth Forum 2018, Tomaž Deželan, Youth and Political Parties: Toolkit for Youth Friendly Politics in Europe.
- Austrian National Youth Council 2016, Position Paper Youth and Internet (Positionspapier Jugend und Internet)
- European Youth Goals as outcome of the Structured Dialogue with Youth 2017-2018  
<http://www.youthgoals.eu/>