



Social Europe:

**More Freedoms –
More Opportunities for All**

A THEME POLITICAL PROGRAMME OF YEPP

Oslo, October 2004

1 **Preamble**

2
3 This theme political program about European Social Policy is adopted by YEPP's
4 Council in Oslo, 9th October 2004.

5
6 This program has been initiated to promote YEPP's views on issues that we feel
7 crucial to the agenda of strengthening social integration in Europe. Key topics for the
8 future of Europe will be to secure the sustainability of our social protection systems
9 and our overall welfare and pensions. A European Social Policy Program should not
10 aim at assimilating solutions, but rather build partnerships and coalitions to fight
11 poverty and social exclusion.

12
13 YEPP do not believe in moving every pressing, national or local, issue to the EU
14 institutions. Never the less, when realising that we face so many problems alike
15 YEPP sees the opportunity to use our European Community to help achieve the
16 Social Europe were aiming at, with more freedoms and more opportunities – for all.

17
18 Amidst us, there are no defined visions of a final and everlasting "System"
19 establishing the optimal society. Such ideas and ideologies have failed brutally.
20 YEPP and all our national member organisations represent another approach to
21 securing welfare. It is rather values based approach that Christian Democrats,
22 Liberal-Conservatives, Centre-Right and Popular Parties all over Europe represent.
23 This approach is never fundamentalist, totalitarian or system oriented. The value
24 based approach focuses on basic values, traditions and the Universal human rights,
25 aiming at preserving and protecting these ideals. Aspiring this we must constantly
26 accept the needs for reforms.

27
28 It is our systems and not our values that needs to be adapted through the changing
29 times and new realities. By constant development, re-shaping and re-orienting of our
30 approach, we believe it is possible to be ever more effective at realising the
31 potentials of our societies.

32
33 This Social Policy Program focuses specially on sustaining welfare and pensions,
34 providing employment especially for young people and immigrants. It focuses on
35 common public health issues like increased mental health problems, obesity,
36 physical passivity and alcohol and drug abuse. These problems often hit Europe's
37 young generations harder than any other groups. We also see severe social, ethnical
38 and geographical diversities that are all intolerable. Therefore this program also
39 presents our positions on how the fight against poverty and social exclusion can be
40 better fought.

42	<u>CONTENTS</u>	
43		
44		
45	Chapter One	Increasing opportunities - the value based approach
46	Chapter Two	Reforming to secure welfare
47	Chapter Three	Mobility, Education and Employment
48	Chapter Four	Immigration and Integration
49	Chapter Five	European Public Health
50	Chapter Six	Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion
51		
52		

CHAPTER ONE – INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES – THE VALUE BASED APPROACH

The realisation and protection of values and interests like human dignity; freedom and security; sustainability and prosperity are amongst the very core ambitions of our European Political Project. Moreover, the European Union (EU) is the strongest embodiment of such ambitions for our region, in our time. Not perfect - because no Man made system can be - but continuously we are striving for more freedoms – more opportunities.

Freedom values and human rights are taken for granted in our European societies. Despite our knowledge of vast chasms between different parts of both the European Union and the Wider Europe surrounding, we know of more wealth today than ever before. Still millions of people live their lives with boundaries like poverty, long-term unemployment, lack of treatment or support to illnesses or handicaps and racism or xenophobia in our surroundings. All this and many other factors contribute to social exclusion. Formal freedoms are not enjoyed because they are not transferable to real opportunities in our Europe. This is not tolerable.

It is YEPP's view that the success of the European Project will be judged by it's success in providing more freedoms and more opportunities to the many and not just the few. Much responsibility lies upon citizen's alike and local, regional and national governments alike. Nevertheless, there is also clearly an opportunity to do more in co-operation, on the European level. YEPP also realise the irreplaceable role of civil society partners in all aspects of fighting poverty and social exclusion. No government or public based system alone can solve these problems.

With this European Social Policy Program YEPP, wants to promote policies that can deal more efficient with common threats and challenges. The role of the EU, and of the Commission in particular, is not to substitute national or local authorities in the design or implementation of social policy, but rather to transform that potential in strength, by giving direction to common efforts and by promoting the exchange of good practice across Europe.

YEPP only promotes the adoption of joint EU policy in areas where we believe this could help us better tackle our problems, then leaving it to the member states, regions, local communities or citizens alone. Ideas for sharing of best practices are also presented, since much of the action connected to social policy must be seen locally and nationally, and not Europe wide.

In the Social Area the new EU Constitutional Treaty represents progress by the recognition of combating social exclusion as on of the major objectives of the Union; by the integration of the Charter of Fundamental Rights; by the recognition of the role of civil dialogue; and by the adoption of clauses reinforcing policy co-operation in the areas of social inclusion, social protection, health and education, based on the experience of the open method of co-ordination.

The EU is truly a social project based on common values and freedoms and rights. It encompasses social justice, solidarity, social cohesion – and even beyond this it is about embracing high living standards, high levels of employment and social protection, improved working conditions, the promotion of social dialogue, equality

104 between women and men and the combating of discrimination. All these elements
105 are an important part of the “acquis communautaire”.

106

107 Taking values, rights and freedoms for granted can easily lead us into forgetting that
108 these could be lost. However, we are not going to forget. For YEPP’s fundament will
109 always be to hold on to the Freedom Values: The citizen’s freedom, the families’
110 freedom, and the freedom of enterprise, the freedom of communities and the
111 freedom of nations. These are the true European Freedoms, and our concern is to
112 ensure the translation of these freedoms into real European Opportunities for all
113 citizens.

114

115 **CHAPTER TWO: REFORMING TO SECURE WELFARE**

116

117 It is foreseeable that over the next few decades the fall in the population and the
118 overall ageing of society will be accompanied, above all, by a reduction in the
119 proportion of the population in work.

120

121 Young people will no longer be able to rely on older people, but older people will
122 depend increasingly on young people. Therefore the older generations must also
123 have an interest in ensuring that young people can cope with the burdens placed on
124 them by demographic developments. We need young and old to work together for
125 the future in a spirit of partnership.

126

127 Older people are gaining ever-greater potential to *influence* in society in the course of
128 this demographic transformation. By contrast, the concerns of subsequent
129 generations are often given insufficient consideration, for instance when it comes to
130 public debt, education and the pension system. Inevitably, less account is taken of
131 the interests of the younger generation of voters who will be most affected by the
132 parliamentary and government decisions being taken today and their long-term
133 consequences.

134

135 In order to raise awareness of intergenerational justice and the consequences of
136 decisions for future generations in the legislative process, YEPP is calling for the
137 introduction of a generation account. This is a procedure that is added to the law
138 making process that will show the medium and long-term different kind of effects of
139 policy decisions. Every item of expenditure that implies an increase in public debt
140 should be examined, justified and explained. The generation account should become
141 a basic part of politics in the EU and all its member states. This would shift the long-
142 term consequences of current decisions to the centre of attention. However, the
143 generation account is only an instrument that can examine goals that have been set
144 or be used to define goals. Drawing up generation accounts alone will not improve
145 policy. It will merely make it more transparent. Nevertheless, this would force
146 politicians to think long term.

147

148 Children are the key to Europe's future. Future generations will form a work force
149 whose productivity is supposed to economically secure the later years of the strongly
150 growing proportion of retired citizens. Undoubtedly, the necessary economic and
151 social policy reforms can still offset some of the problems caused by the ageing and
152 shrinking of the European population over the short and medium term, but they will
153 not overcome these difficulties over the long term. One of the most important
154 possibilities to challenge the future is that more children will be born in Europe.

155

156 In accordance with our basic principles, children must be recognised as valuable by
157 our society. If people have the willingness to have children, bring them up, and care
158 intensively for their welfare and prepare for their journey through life they need to
159 have social and political recognition. This requires a clear commitment from
160 politicians to the social model of the family and belief in the younger generation's
161 responsibility for the future of our society. The decision to have children must
162 therefore never put people at risk of poverty. Every euro invested in favour of families
163 with children is an investment in the future of Europe. The taxation and social welfare
164 system should generously reflect the burden placed on families of raising children,
165 and the value these children will add to society in future generations.

166
167 YEPP recognizes that family policy is a crucial pillar of social policy and a means of
168 safeguarding our future as well. The family is the nucleus of social life. The family
169 passes on values, promotes social skills, creates the foundations for democratic
170 consciousness and so contributes a great deal to the development of our children
171 into responsible members of our polity.
172
173 YEPP wants that people can combine family and career. Particularly at a time when
174 we face a foreseeable lack of qualified workers, conditions need to be created under
175 which parents no longer have to make a decision between career and children, but it
176 is possible to combine both.
177
178 Because of the demographic developments taking place, Europe needs systems of
179 provision for old age, to which the following principles should apply. These systems:
180
181 • Should include all groups in society comprehensively.
182
183 • Should cover the risk of poverty in old age for all in future.
184
185 • Must offer strong incentives for people to provide for themselves.
186
187 • Must be organised in a spirit of solidarity and reflect the contributions paid in.
188
189 • Must be conducive to economic growth.
190
191 • Allow people to continue in the workplace as long as they feel able to contribute,
192 irrespective of old age. We do not see old age as a barrier to work and propose
193 the ending of mandatory retirement ages.
194
195 YEPP would like people's personal responsibility to be strengthened. Social security
196 systems must be limited to assistance that is really necessary. Claims on the wider
197 community must remain at a low level. Where possible, we should develop ways of
198 helping people to help themselves.
199
200 To a considerable extent, we should provide for our old age based on capital-funded
201 private pension schemes. Our pensions will therefore be linked to the contributions
202 paid in. This will give the individual the ability to determine for themselves the level of
203 their provision for old age. By setting a low general burden of deductions, the state
204 will place its citizens in a position to assume greater personal responsibility.
205
206 Because of the increasing proportion of older people in society strongly rising levels
207 of expenditure in the field of social security will, if the institutional framework remains
208 unchanged, also make it more difficult for private households to build up savings,
209 something people do for the most part in the second half of their working lifetime. If
210 this happens, an increase in the average propensity to consume is not to be
211 expected, as this is highest in the phase after people establish a household and start
212 a family. The general propensity to consume might even fall if those in work lose trust
213 in the state pension system.
214
215 In order to preserve the financial scope for consumption and the formation of savings
216 throughout Europe in future, the volume of social transfer benefits must be limited
217 and the long-term formation of savings for old age guaranteed. Reducing the burden

218 on the working population by using returns on the capital market and expanding the
219 capital stock will result in growth effects that will make it easier to cope with the
220 strains imposed by the ageing of the population.

221
222 The pensions for which people will be personally responsible will be supplemented
223 by a guaranteed benefit. This guaranteed benefit will secure the minimum people
224 need to live on in old age. Depending on the contributions paid in; the level of benefit
225 will range from a guaranteed subsistence income to a capped maximum sum. These
226 guaranteed benefits are to be funded from the income of all citizens.

227
228 For YEPP, personal responsibility, sustainability and neighbourly care are the key
229 points as how we can better live in our common future. We want to demonstrate that
230 the younger generation is prepared to shape its own future, to put forward its own
231 ideas and to work for their implementation. We are prepared to take on the
232 necessary responsibility. We will do our bit to ensure that our future society is one
233 worth living in.

234

235 **CHAPTER THREE: MOBILITY, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

236

237 **Mobility, education and employment**

238

239 Employment and education are key factors affecting people's living standards. The
240 value of participation through being employed or a self made entrepreneur, or in
241 other way being allowed to take part in constructive activities, is also essential to all
242 citizens feeling of appreciation. Agendas for social inclusion cannot avoid facilitation
243 of active participation.

244

245 Lack of competence and skills are identified as the main obstacles – or so-called
246 “minus factors” – for the unemployed. Educational and programs for training of skills,
247 as well as lifelong maintenance of ones competence, are thus of vital importance to
248 welfare policy. Full employment is not the most important for all those excluded, but
249 rather the duty and opportunity to active and constructive participation as responsible
250 and committed citizens.

251

252 YEPP believe that it is of special interest to increase the participation of women and
253 senior citizens, as well as unemployed youth and immigrants. Increased mobility is
254 the most effective value added by the EU to these agendas and interests. It is of
255 direct relevance to all citizens and the well being of our common social and
256 economical development.

257

258 **Mobility**

259 Free mobility of goods, services, capital and people is a founding principle of the
260 European Union. In particular the mobility of people is essential for breaking down
261 barriers between Europeans. This will enable us to live in a more tolerant,
262 harmonized and effective society.

263

264 Through opening up the member countries and letting people with other nationalities
265 backgrounds and cultures the acceptance and the understanding for what is
266 unknown or experienced as different increases. YEPP believes that educational
267 mobility will influence the integration positively.

268

269 Related to the historical enlargement of the union, May 1st 2004, it is important to
270 state that the four freedoms, including the freedom for free mobility for the people
271 have to be valid for all member countries. There should be no periods of transition
272 hindering people from one or more countries to be full worthy members of the
273 European Union. This must also be the principle for upcoming future enlargements.

274

275 While working for securing the free mobility within the union it is also of great
276 importance to make sure that we do not only open up the borders between our
277 countries. It is also important that the same kind of barriers, which are removed
278 inside the union, will not be built up around the union. Open borders are not only
279 important inside the union it is also essential to tare down barriers around the union.
280 YEPP does not want a fortress Europe.

281

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286 **Education**

287

288 Education is a key for economic growth, human development, social integration and
289 prosperity. Therefore access to the educational and training systems should be
290 ensured for all young Europeans. The European Union have this far had successful
291 co-operation within the education area and there are many young Europeans who
292 have taken the chance to study at a school or a university in another European
293 country than where the live. The existing programmes, such as Erasmus, Socrates;
294 Leonardo da Vinci and others must continue and be further developed. Some of
295 these programmes should be integrated to the Eastern European Region and should
296 be a strong bridge between young people outside and inside the European Union.
297 YEPP underlines that the Bologna process is leading in modernizing and reforming
298 educational Europe.

299

300 YEPP strongly believes that investments in education lead to a more dynamic and
301 competitive Europe. To be a competitive and dynamic region on the global market it
302 is important to prioritise education and research so that the European citizens are
303 highly educated and well qualified. The European Union should encourage co-
304 operation and make it easier to move between educational operators, research
305 institutions and business corporations. It is urgent to strengthen the quality of
306 education on European universities, because of the poor position in relation to the
307 American and Asian universities.

308

309 In education like in other areas it is important that the idea of mobility is fulfilled. The
310 valuation of grades and qualifications between different countries must be simplified.
311 We must also work for a development where education from different countries is
312 more negotiable in others. Therefore YEPP calls for an European student card
313 accepted in all member states and a reduction of the bureaucratic barriers.

314

315 Education supports social integration. Exchange through educational, social and
316 cultural programmes will lead to a more integrated Europe. Important is to develop a
317 stage programme for more young people and to limit the mass high education to
318 prevent youth unemployment. Also learning foreign languages can contribute to a
319 Europe in which integration through education is centralised.

320

321 **Employment**

322

323 The labour market is based up on freedom. The possibilities for people to work
324 anywhere in the region and the advantages for employers to recruit new workers
325 from a larger group of people are positive for the future of Europe. Therefore YEPP
326 calls for a labour market with higher flexibility all over Europe. We strongly believe in
327 the right for all citizens to seek employment and work wherever they like within the
328 Union.

329

330 To make the free mobility on the labour market successful some changes by the
331 individual member states in order to create a more flexible market are demanded.
332 Also the taxes on labour must be reduced. Given that the basic rules and regulations
333 on the labour market are a national competence, it is our opinion that so called
334 sympathetic measures or strikes by trade unions should not be allowed cross
335 borders. Neither do we believe that collective agreements should be made on the
336 European level.

337

338 Through the efforts to create a single market some difficulties and problems have
339 occurred. This is problems that occur when the division of responsibility is unclear
340 and can and has to be sorted out. Among the problems that have been discovered
341 are rules connected to compensation by unemployment and the varying rules for
342 pensions in different countries.

343
344 A functional enterprise labour market is essential. No job opportunities will be created
345 without progressive and growing companies. Therefore these factors are crucial for
346 economic growth and welfare. Employment will always be a key to participation and
347 integration.
348

349 **CHAPTER FOUR: IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION**

350

351 The nations of Europe have had widely different experiences of immigration and
352 integration. Some nations have decades of experience in these areas, while for
353 others this is a new phenomenon. Recognition of these differences are essential for
354 dealing with the current challenges presented in this area.

355

356 Despite their different backgrounds and status, immigrants are often mixed together
357 and labelled as a problem. This is far from accurate and it does not help solving the
358 strains that mass immigration causes in Europe today.

359

360 Immigration and asylum policies must address both the fundamental human rights of
361 those in need on protection, the demands of the European labour markets and the
362 capabilities of the European societies to successful integration. Beyond the
363 necessary differentiation between the reasons for immigration, as they are laid out in
364 YEPP's Main Political Program (The Hague 2003) and EPP's Action Program (2004-
365 2009), Europe faces a tremendous challenge that can only be handled efficiently if
366 the member nations act coherently. YEPP therefore wants Europe to reform its
367 asylum and immigration policies.

368

369 Immigration helps fill important gaps in the European labour market. Moreover,
370 reports from the European Commission and Eurostat show that even a doubling of
371 immigration rates and simultaneously doubling fertility rates will not, on their own,
372 secure sustainable labour markets and pension systems. It is therefore evident that
373 we need radical reform, with a special focus on increased participation for women
374 and older workers if we are to sustain our welfare. In any case trying to present
375 immigration as a threat to our welfare is totally against all good knowledge.

376

377 **Integration**

378 Integration is a dual process. The governments have to be a good host and create a
379 climate of tolerance, while people have the responsibility to become an active
380 participant in the society.

381

382 Refugees and job-seeking immigrants should be encouraged to build their future in
383 Europe through their own efforts. Integration must be a domestic task for the member
384 states. However, it is crucial to ensure coherent procedures in dealing with
385 immigrants. Given the free and open market of our Union, it is important that member
386 states reform their economic and social policy so as to prevent inequalities in the
387 treatment of immigration between states.

388

389 Europe's wealth is based on equal rights and security given to all. Immigrants must
390 be ensured the same rights once their status is defined. It is especially important to
391 reduce the unemployment among immigrants in order to ensure legal working status
392 and to promote social integration. If Europe rise to the challenge and co-operate in
393 better management of immigration this will enrich and strengthen our communities. If
394 Europe fails to do so, the results might be even more social division.

395

396 It is important that immigrants are give the tools to fully participate in the social and
397 economic life of their new homes. Language education and opportunities to work
398 experience is urgent. Such programs should be mandatory for all refugees and
399 persons granted on humanitarian protection, and for family members reunited with
400 them. Main objectives should be to provide basic skills in local language, insight into

401 their new society and knowledge about the rules and laws, and preparation for
402 employment, self-employment or further education. One of the most effective means
403 of integration is participation in social life and employment. Allowing people to work
404 and thereby provide for themselves is the very a basis of YEPP's appreciation.

405

406 Asylum applications should be processed rapidly, in order to clarify the status of
407 asylum seekers as soon as possible. Rapid settlement of refugees and asylum
408 seekers is also important to prevent them living in ghettos or ending up the street.
409 Special efforts must be taken to clarify the status of 100.000s illegal immigrants in
410 many member countries.

411

412

413 **CHAPTER FIVE: EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH**

414

415 Looking at the living conditions of all Europeans it is clear that health must be seen
416 as a key indicator to social development and welfare. Together with education and
417 income, health constitutes the very basis of people's freedoms and opportunities. We
418 therefore want to address health, and especially broad-based public health, as an
419 issue relevant to European Social Integration. YEPP also see that several trends
420 related to public health compose an overall set of European challenges that could be
421 better managed if addressed at a European level. The EU has a role to play in
422 protecting and promoting public health interests and in ensuring proper consumer
423 protection.

424

425 The youth ages are times when lifestyles are chosen and set, often with strong
426 permanence for the rest of the life. Early interventions that can prevent unhealthy or
427 risky habits might bring much better success to the overall public health agenda than
428 repairs of lifestyle related diseases. YEPP therefore calls for a special youth
429 dimension to the local, national and European public health strategies.

430

431 **Personal and Public Responsibilities**

432 All citizens capable of so hold in YEPP's opinion a personal responsibility to take
433 care of their mental and physical health. All national governments carry the role of
434 ensuring equal access to sufficient health services for all citizens. Being part of the
435 universal human rights also protects these rights.

436

437 Lack of exercise and unhealthy nutrition and consumption of alcohol and tobacco can
438 lead to health problems, while increased physical activity, a healthy intake of foods
439 and a reduced use of intoxicants will give less lifestyle-related illnesses. In fact these
440 are the major causes to health problems all over Europe. The increasing number of
441 psychiatric illnesses also demands more attention to better mastering of life, early
442 intervention and prevention of stress and other factors influencing both physical and
443 psychiatric health.

444

445 The European Union should work for the promotion of healthy ways of living and the
446 prevention of physical and psychiatric illnesses, for example through initiating and
447 supporting informational work. This requires co-operation between multiple sectors
448 and with institutions both at the local, national and international level, such as
449 employer organisations and health care institutions.

450

451 **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

452 Strong voices are raised for international laws about Corporate Social Responsibility
453 (CSR), led by the expectations from the society. To be able to introduce CSR in
454 corporate culture, changes in decision-making, mentality, values and behaviour are
455 needed. To tune corporate culture on to CSR-agenda can also be a way of
456 increasing the turnover and thereby raise the profit of companies. It is important that
457 this is seen in the interest of the shareowners. Because the concept of CSR depends
458 on the free will of the companies. To reach the demands for CSR companies has to
459 clearly define their responsibility and explain how to take social responsibility
460 expected by the society.

461

462 Unfortunately there is too often a large scepticism against the market and the interest
463 of profit due to certain, political interpretations of an alleged conflict between
464 profitability and the interest of society. The demands from some of the promoters of

465 CSR are also too often linked to a strange view of how market economy functions.
466 The free, private initiative and market economy are important for reaching social
467 development and a better environment.
468

469 Forcing companies to adopt a lot of regulations may often effect the market in a
470 negative way. We need to recognise that companies can also have other interests
471 than only generating profits. CSR can also be a competitive advantage for many
472 companies. Not implementing CSR could therefore give companies a bad reputation
473 leading to decreasing of profits. Hence CSR can and should be seen as good
474 business.
475

476 It is not strange that many politicians are in favour of CSR. The fact is that an
477 implementation could lead to companies taking on responsibilities that today citizens
478 and corporations already pay taxes for. Short comings of politicians and government
479 should not be handed over to the companies, at least not if this isn't due to the
480 decision that a certain duty rather belongs in the private and not the public sphere.
481

482 Since the well functioning of our common market is both a common interest and a
483 driving force in European co-operation YEPP calls for more social responsibility from
484 the business community. This is especially important for enterprises involved in the
485 production, export, import and distribution of substances with potential health
486 consequences related to their products.
487

- 488 • YEPP states that the concept of CSR depends on the free will of the companies.
489
- 490 • YEPP wants to safeguard and expand the European traditions of greater
491 transparency and consumer protection. This is often a forceful tool to empower
492 citizens to be their own "doctors and health care takers".
493
- 494 • YEPP also believes that the EU should take initiatives in developing trustworthy
495 and standardised certification arrangements for the nutrition level of food
496 products, as to enable consumers to exercise consumer power and actively
497 choose healthy food.
498

499 **Combating abuse of alcohol and drugs**

500 Abuse and addiction of alcohol and drugs represent one of Europe's greatest social
501 problems. Alcohol and drug problems intensify and cause many other serious social
502 problems like crime, unsafe environments for children, poverty, marital problems,
503 vandalism, accidents etc. Such problems can be found in all social layers and social
504 settings. A reduction in alcohol- and drug-related problems will therefore be beneficial
505 in several areas, both for the individual in particular and for society at large.
506

- 507 • YEPP calls upon all the commercial businesses involved in the trade of alcohol
508 and legal drugs to take on shared responsibility and help prevent the potential
509 negative effects of their products.
510
- 511 • YEPP defends the freedom to exercise national pricing and availability policies to
512 regulate the distribution of alcohol and legal drugs.
513
- 514 • YEPP welcomes an open debate about regulations of the commercial promotion
515 of items such as alcohol, pharmaceuticals and tobacco, due to the severe public
516 health risks attached to wrong or high level consumption of these substances.

517 **Mental health**

518 Mental health has often been neglected in previous health policies. However, the
519 promotion of psychiatric health is as important as of physical health. The
520 establishment of more cross-sector approaches on education, health prevention and
521 employment must be encouraged. Special attention should be paid to improving the
522 prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of psychiatric illnesses, as this is often has a
523 large relevance for the youth in particular. Stronger focus on fighting drugs and
524 improving treatment programs must also be addressed. These are issues of major
525 importance for too many youth in Europe.
526

527 The economic burden of mental health conditions and their impact on the labour
528 force cannot be underestimated. In the employment field, evidence shows that
529 among the disabled population, people suffering from mental illness have the lowest
530 participation rate in the labour market. Efforts to bring mental health issues into the
531 mainstream of a health-conscious society must be pursued. Member States must
532 provide information on the most effective treatments and continue actions initiated to
533 combat stigma and social exclusion against people suffering from mental disorders.
534

535 Eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, is a common health problem among
536 young people in Europe, especially young girls. This is a problem which is mainly the
537 responsibility of the member states, but where regional measures can be beneficial.
538 YEPP calls for united action within the EU to combat eating disorders, through
539 information programs targeted towards schools and youth organisations.
540

541 **Sexual and reproductive health and rights**

542 The need to promote secure sex life and safer pregnancies is highly relevant to the
543 overall social and economic development in Europe. The responsibility for issues
544 related to sexual and reproductive health concerning prevention, service delivery and
545 treatment rests up on local and national governments. However the promotion of
546 openness and sharing of knowledge and good practises makes European focus
547 relevant.
548

549 Even if the educational and health care systems in most European countries provide
550 for information, relevant services and reasonably good access to efficient means of
551 prevention there are several challenges to the sexual health in Europe. The
552 relevance to fertility, reproduction and over all welfare in society depends on an open
553 and knowledge-based handling of sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.
554 This is especially true when talking about the health and welfare of young people.
555

556 The spreading of sexually transmittable diseases (STD) combined with unwanted
557 pregnancies and abortions highlights the link between youth and sexual health. The
558 teenagers are a period in life where health risks can be quite high and the
559 vulnerability rather constant. Therefore access to relevant information and knowledge
560 about the proper use of contraceptives, and promotion of good attitudes to sexuality,
561 and especially girls rights, alongside with efficient and high quality services for
562 counselling or treatment is crucial. Families, schools and society based programs are
563 important to help young people obtain the information, services and skills that they
564 need to protect their own sexual and reproductive health.
565

566 As a specific concern YEPP acknowledges that young people in average experience
567 insecurity and vulnerability. connected to their own and other people's sexuality. For
568 all young homosexuals these problems are a special concern.

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- YEPP believes that the best method of reducing the numbers of abortions is by avoiding unwanted pregnancies. This demands better access to contraceptives, and knowledge of their proper use.
- YEPP underlines that abortion never is to be promoted as a method of family planning. Decisions about access to abortion services rest upon the national legislators.
- YEPP believes that more needs to be done to develop and secure access to efficient and cheap methods of prevention, especially such that can be controlled by women themselves. Influencing Men’s attitudes to women in general and their knowledge about sexuality and reproductive health are also important.
- YEPP believes that all individuals should be accepted and have the same human rights, independent of how they choose to live their lives. YEPP also believes that more needs to be done to fight the stigma related to homosexuality, transsexuality and gay and lesbian lifestyles.

A single European market for health care

The joint expertise and capacity of the countries within the EU and the EEA could be much better utilised. Still much remains before we can see a single market of health care in Europe. For this to be accomplished, the liberalisation and harmonisation of medical and nursing registration across the Union must be furthered as to increase labour flexibility and make a reality of freedom of movement for health care professionals. Medicines should be licensed for use across the Union, unless their use is prohibited in a certain member state.

As European integration continues, more and more Europeans will travel from one Member State to receive health care. It is important that this is managed in such a way that European can get the best health care in any part of the Union, but also ensures that no member states are fiscally disadvantaged by such movements.

Modernizing and computerizing medical records and communication is vital in establishing a common health market. The work of medical practitioners at all levels is becoming more information intensive as computer applications are more widely used. Further development of eHealth offers the potential to reduce administrative costs, to deliver health care services at a distance and to avoid unnecessary duplicate examinations. Standardized electronic health cards, health information networks and health services on-line with the respect of data protection and privacy should be implemented across the Union.

All EU citizens must be ensured access to a certain minimum quality of health care, wherever they live within the European Union. The treatment must build on respect for the individual and for human value. Patients shall not be illegitimately discriminated against, on the bases of gender, race, sexual orientation or national origin. The benefit of the individual patient and not the economic profit must be the focus of public health policies.

- YEPP is calling for the establishment of a European patient “bill of rights”. This bill must ensure all EU citizens minimum treatment in any member state.

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- YEPP wants standard measurements of the results and quality of medical institutions across Europe, so that patients can be aided in choosing institutions that can offer them the best treatment, thus encouraging institutions to improve their quality.
- YEPP support the introduction of a standard information technology system in health services across the Union. A smart 'health services card' for all EU citizens should also be introduced.

CHAPTER SIX: FIGHTING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Defining poverty is a disputed topic and indicators used to measure poverty are many. In our policies YEPP includes poverty in the larger concept of Social Exclusion, again being part of a whole range of problems related to living conditions and different kinds of exclusion. Still, despite theoretical discussions and different varieties throughout the EU, the EEA or even Wider Europe, it is evident that we face some challenges all over Europe. Demographic changes put public finances under pressure. A tougher labour markets and competence mismatch excludes more and more people. Mass immigration – especially illegal or unregistered – creates informal, “black” markets.

We also face many of the same problems related to especially vulnerable groups such as lone parents, large families, older women living alone, physically or mentally disabled people and certain ethnical minorities like the Rom. We also share the problems and challenges related to groups at extreme risk such as alcohol and drug addicts and their families – especially their children. The same goes for women and children being victims of trafficking – cross border or inter-state.

The European Union in 1975 adopted a definition of poverty whereby individuals or households were recognised as poor if their economic resources are so small that they are excluded from the minimum acceptable lifestyle in the respective member states. Since 1998 the Eurostat has used 60 percent of median income as their preferred statistical limit of poverty. The OECD normally draws the line at 50 percent. In any case the two latter seldom explain the actual situation of every person with income lower than these two percentage lines.

The annual Social Situation Report, (published since 2000) from the European Commission and Eurostat, identify an interdependence of three key components – *education, income and health*. All three are closely linked to periodically or permanent exclusion, or loss of freedoms and opportunities in life, that can be defined as poverty.

Looking closer at poverty as a situation where a person, permanently or periodically, have to live without access or opportunity to exercise his or her rights could also help identify what we need to address with policies aiming at fighting poverty and social exclusion.

YEPP supports a comprehensive view on the fight against poverty and other forms of social exclusion. This is also true to the Lisbon goals, aiming at creating a more dynamic and prosperous Europe at the service of all its citizens. Development of sustainable economies and social welfare for all must go hand by hand. In this respect, YEPP recognises social welfare policy and social cohesion as a productive tool and not simply an item of expenditure.

To effectively address the various social problems and poverty trends and situations, current services and benefits must be better tailored to the people at risk. Our policies must be knowledge-based, and more investments should be provided for relevant research. YEPP also calls for systematic reviews of the functioning of our welfare systems. This means full over haul, in many countries, of public employment services, social security services and other kinds of social assistance services.

684 Improving living conditions of the most vulnerable people demands a strategic
685 approach and concrete actions. First of all these actions must come locally and
686 nationally. YEPP therefore call upon all members to take full account of those who
687 are worse-off and in greater need of solidarity when setting their budget priorities,
688 including the EU Structural Funds.

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690 The importance of National Action Plans (NAPs) to fight poverty in all EU, EEA and
691 the Wider Europe Countries should also be underlined. For the latter the World Bank
692 related concept of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) could be more
693 relevant as tools. YEPP believes that increased political and economical attention
694 and support must be shown, to help promote economic, social and democratic
695 development in these new neighbouring countries. For the authorities in these
696 countries they must adopt more pro-poor policies, and stronger emphasis be put on
697 fighting corruption and the promotion of good governance and human rights.

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699 A better articulation between economic, employment and social policies is essential
700 to ensure that the modernisation of the economy goes hand in hand with the
701 strategies to fight poverty. Raising awareness of both the larger public and the
702 decision-makers to this regard is particularly important.

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704 *Adopted by the YEPP Council, in Oslo, 9 October 2004*