



EU Youth Strategy

European Implementation Assessment

STUDY

EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

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Ex-Post Evaluation Unit

PE 615.645 – February 2018

EU Youth Strategy

Study

On 4 September 2017, the coordinators for the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) decided to request authorisation for an implementation report on the EU Youth Strategy. Authorisation was granted by the Parliament's Conference of Presidents on 26 October 2017.

This triggered the automatic production of this European Implementation Assessment. It has been drawn up by the Ex-Post Evaluation Unit of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value, within the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services. Its aim is to facilitate the debate on future developments in EU youth policy, by providing an independent assessment of the Youth Strategy in its current form.

This assessment builds on in-house research and analysis, especially of the data provided by national reports within the framework of the Youth Strategy's monitoring mechanisms, as well as the evaluation exercise run by the European Commission, and the Youth Wiki portal launched in December 2017.

Abstract

The EU Youth Strategy is a cooperation framework established through a Council Resolution of 27 November 2009, based on previously existing mechanisms for coordinating Member States' policies on young people. It covers the period from 2010 to 2018, during which its tools and operation also underwent significant review and improvement.

A number of implementation instruments were used at national and European level to facilitate evidence-based policy making and share best practice. Specific priorities were agreed by Member States in order to advance towards the overall objectives of the Youth Strategy and take into account the most pressing circumstances in the EU.

While the Member States were not under any legal obligation to take action in all of the initiatives listed under the jointly-agreed policy fields, they have introduced measures of multiple kinds (legislative, financial, institutional) to improve the situation and perspectives of young people in education, employment and other relevant areas. In addition, numerous supportive instruments were created at the EU level, including research, networking and funding.

With the overall objectives of the Youth Strategy constituting ambitious goals that may never be reached, monitoring of efforts made could still be improved in order to better use the experiences gathered through specific projects in Member States. The special character of structured dialogue, as well as other forms of youth consultation, should be integrated into policy-making at all levels so that young people's perspectives and interests are effectively mainstreamed in all EU policy.

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This paper has been drawn up by the Ex-Post Evaluation Unit of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value, within the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services of the Secretariat of the European Parliament.

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: EN

This document is available on the internet at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank>

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Manuscript completed in February 2018. Brussels © European Union, 2018.

PE: 615.645

ISBN: 978-92-846-2647-2

DOI: 10.2861/221832

CAT: QA-01-18-126-EN-N

Note on methodology

The present paper is the result of desk-research and analysis of the available documents, supported by targeted verification of data and opinions with the European Commission and youth organisations.

The EU Youth Strategy (YS) has been subject to an extensive evaluation exercise, which concluded with the Commission staff working document published in July 2017.¹ The evaluation was based on an external study covering the period from 2010 to 2014/2015, and an additional consultation with stakeholders and young people in general. It is important to note that all elements of the external study (relevance and coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, EU added value and sustainability) were mostly based on the results of a series of interviews and surveys, and are thus a reflection of the opinions of those persons, organisations and institutions, rather than of measurable facts or figures. The same can be said with regard to the additional public consultation managed directly by the European Commission, in which 94 organisations and 175 individuals took part.

Rather than following the structure of the above-mentioned evaluation, the present analysis is organised according to the content of the Council Resolution establishing the Youth Strategy,² as explained in Chapter 1. The introduction to this study briefly describes the background and the European Parliament's previous assessment of the YS (especially the resolution adopted in October 2016).

Chapter 2 reflects the main problem with the evaluation of the Youth Strategy: the overlap in the scope of suggested initiatives, the relatively general character of many points, and difficulty in finding appropriate ways to measure their implementation. The list of general initiatives in Annex I a of the Youth Strategy is complemented by selected elements from the 2015 Youth Report's general overview and the section on governance on the newly-established portal, Youth Wiki.³

The presentation of data for the specific fields of action, as listed in the Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 (Annex I b, Chapters 3-10) in a way that is easy-to-comprehend (using tables with simplified indications), should not be read as a typical 'traffic-light' system used for measuring Member States' performance in transposing or implementing EU law. It is rather an illustration of the variety of ways in which specific countries manage youth policy according to the supporting measures jointly agreed at the European level. Additionally, a separate chapter (Chapter 11) focuses on the structured dialogue.

¹ SWD(2017) 281 final.

² OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

³ NB: five Member States are still expected to provide information to this new database: Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Greece and Italy. Three countries (Cyprus, Poland and Croatia) have so far provided information on five out of nine chapters (which are arranged differently from the Youth Strategy action fields, and are preceded by 'Governance').

Even if data on the situation of young people is mostly based on the Commission staff working document accompanying the Youth Report 2015, policy developments and actions taken in 2016 and 2017 are also taken into account whenever possible.

The conclusions presented in this paper constitute a selection of reflections, especially when comparing the stated objectives of the Youth Strategy and its implementation in practice.

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List of acronyms

EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
ESC	European Steering Committee
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EVS	European Voluntary Service
EYE	European Youth Event
EYF/YFJ	European Youth Forum
NEETs	young persons not in education, employment or training
OMC	open method of coordination
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative
YG	Youth Guarantee
YS	Youth Strategy

Executive summary

The EU Youth Strategy, established through a Council Resolution for the period 2010-2018, is first and foremost an instrument facilitating Member States' coordination of their youth policies, with the additional possibility of supporting actions taken at the European level and managed by the European Commission and other bodies and organisations. The strategy, the result of the evolution of such cooperation over previous years, also continues to evolve throughout its operation. Extensive experience with the functioning of the strategy's implementation instruments, mechanisms for establishing specific priorities in subsequent work cycles, and effectiveness of initiatives suggested in separate policy fields should be taken into account when the new framework of cooperation is discussed and agreed for the near future, before further assessment and revision to build further practice and match the present and future challenges.

This study deliberately follows the structure of the 2009 Council Resolution, in order to assess the relations between its parts, and their take-up so far by the main actors of the EU youth policy. In view of the data available in various documents and sources on the implementation of the Youth Strategy (YS), this paper presents a compilation of findings – hopefully allowing the reader to understand how much has been done so far, and the lessons to be learned.

In comparison with standard legislative acts, the overall objectives of the EU Youth Strategy (creating educational and employment opportunities for and promoting young people's active participation in society) should only be read as general goals. The real substance of the cooperation framework is – on the other hand – a very broad range of practices that Member States are free to apply voluntarily in order to move towards these goals. Reflecting the need to ensure efficient focus in practical actions, the first among these practices is the mechanism for setting up more detailed priorities, already combined with an option to consult young people along the way. This process resulted in numerous Council resolutions and conclusions, some of which contained the outcomes of the structured dialogue undertaken throughout the European Union. In addition, a periodical indication of priorities, in the form of a Work Plan for Youth made it even more complex to establish the main areas of action at a given moment of time.

The YS formulated a number of implementation instruments that were to allow the advance towards set objectives. When examined closer, some of them (such as knowledge building, progress reporting, dissemination of results, and monitoring of the process), are closely linked and/or overlap with each other. The way in which research, and information activities, as well as reporting and monitoring were supported and carried out from 2010 onwards, shows a significant evolution, not only in technological terms but also in the will of Member States to learn from each other and undertake joint projects.

Education and employment remain at the top of EU and Member States' agendas, and the desire to support young people to transit successfully from the former to the latter is clearly seen in the respective parts of the YS. The placing of specific provisions on youth work and voluntary activities (with the integration of the 2008 Council

Recommendation), and the separate listing of initiatives for social inclusion, could be reconsidered, to better acknowledge the direct links between those issues and the two areas mentioned above. Health-related matters are covered through a selection of youth-relevant topics, whereas the necessary attention for appropriate protection of minors in the digital sphere should rather result in a proper integration of the youth perspective in the relevant act and policies on the modern economy. Young people's participation and global awareness are also different categories and some of the initiatives set out in those fields could rather fit within the youth consultation instruments (with special attention given to the formal exercise of the structured dialogue) and general education requirements, as shown in the data provided by Member States and EU initiatives. Finally, the encouragement of young people's cultural activity and support for creative actions has also been covered in the YS, with a set of proposals aimed at strengthening skills useful in education, employment, and intercultural dialogue.

In each of the policy areas, as different as they are, certain initiatives aim at encouraging young people towards being active, while others support taking youth aspects into account when planning or implementing EU and/or national legislation or actions. It needs to be stressed it is worth paying attention to the indicators accompanying a brief overview of activities undertaken at national and EU level in each area as relevant information on the context and not necessarily as evidence of the direct outcome of youth policies in a given country or Europe as a whole.

Due to the assumption that they qualify for use in each of the eight policy fields in the Annex to the Council Resolution, the separate list of general initiatives, which preceded the policy fields could probably be replaced by a clearer separation of tools to be used in mainstreaming youth policy from the specific policy objectives, possibly supported by illustrative or indicative benchmarks or best practices. The stakeholders' appreciation of the European coordination of youth policy is highest in respect of the added value of mutual learning, as well as the gradual improvement of structured dialogue also at national level, although the paths of inspiration are not easily traced and recorded.

The limited possibility of attributing change in the situation of young people to the actions taken in accordance with the YS was well understood before its adoption. The reporting exercise which led to the publication of Youth Reports in 2012 and 2015, as well as the evaluation report published by the European Commission in 2017, nevertheless constitute a valuable way to complete the forms on Member States' cooperation in youth policies with substantial content. The Youth Wiki already serves as an additional tool for providing and exchanging detailed information on national practices. Together with the long-standing and newly-established networks that allow stakeholders to influence the policy-making processes, as well as existing and planned programmes and projects that set best practices and provide the necessary funding for specific initiatives to help young people develop, the open method of coordination can indeed contribute to the development of youth policies in the European Union. The main responsibility for this area remains however with the governments of the Member States. Following this period of growth, the time is right for choices to be made to simplify and focus the Youth Strategy, so that the efforts made do not fail to match the high expectations and relatively modest means available at EU level.

Introduction

The European Union (EU), in accordance with Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), has competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States inter alia in the area of **education, vocational training, youth and sport**. Two specific articles (165 and 166) constitute the legal basis for possible measures – explicitly excluding harmonisation of laws – to be taken by the European Parliament and/or the Council with regard to education and sport, as well as vocational training, with the development of youth exchanges and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe listed among the Union aims.

The **limited EU competences with regard to youth policy** nevertheless allowed the development of various programmes implemented since 1988, and a subsequent Council resolution of 27 June 2002, followed by the [European Youth Pact](#)⁴ adopted by the European Council in March 2005. The evaluation of these instruments led to the conclusion that 'European cooperation on youth issues [before 2010] showed positive impacts but did not always prove effective'⁵ and the European Commission proposed a renewed approach in its communication 'An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering' in April 2009.⁶ The renewed open method of coordination (OMC) to address youth challenges and opportunities was intended to 'create favourable conditions for youth to develop their skills, fulfil their potential, work, actively participate in society, and engage more in the building of the EU project'.⁷ A clear desire to address young Europeans' concerns (understood in most of the cases as being between 15 and 30 years old, although no joint definition of 'youth' yet exists) was expressed in a time of challenging circumstances, such as those resulting from the financial crisis.

The **European Commission proposal** for the present Youth Strategy (YS) was based on an impact assessment of four different options, with the most extensive (by establishing a global strategy) suggested as the best option to strengthen the cross-sectoral approach to youth issues. It is important to note that 'the OMC was expected to produce indirect effects on young people's employment and education, on economic growth and fundamental rights. However, these effects cannot be verified, as they are too remote from what the EU Youth Strategy can concretely achieve'.⁸ The last part of this statement constitutes a realistic basis for the intended assessment of the EU YS.

In accordance with the requirements on progress-reporting laid down in the Council resolution that established the current framework,⁹ two **Youth Reports** were drawn up in

⁴ See Annex I to the Presidency Conclusions from the European Council meeting in Brussels on 22 and 23 March 2005.

⁵ SWD(2017) 280 final, p. 2.

⁶ COM(2009) 200 final.

⁷ COM(2009) 200 final, p. 2.

⁸ SWD(2017) 281 final, p. 7.

⁹ Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), referred to hereafter as 'the Council Resolution'.

2012 and 2015 by the European Commission, on the basis of national reports and other sources. While the specific data and findings presented in these documents are referred to in the following chapters, it is important to note that the European Parliament reacted to both Youth Reports, adopting (in September 2013 and October 2016 respectively) resolutions on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012¹⁰ and on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015.¹¹ The latter resolution, as acknowledged in the Commission's official response, had a broader remit than the YS itself, and contained numerous general recommendations, as well as suggestions with regard to employment, education and financial resources.

It is worth stressing that the present EU YS, covering the period from 2010 to 2018, is an **expansion of the previously established mechanisms**. Two elements from an otherwise easily overlooked point 4 'Recognises that...' from the Council's Resolution,¹² are thus the main 'indicators' of its potential, even before discussing the formally agreed objectives (in Chapter 1.1.1 below):

1. Is the **renewed** framework for cooperation efficient and effective?

Answering this question would normally require a comparison between the cost and benefits, preferably in quantitative terms, as well as direct evidence of the causality between the measures undertaken and their claimed results.

2. Does it bring **increased** benefits to young people in the EU?

Ideally, measuring the increase would need to be based on data concerning the situation before the establishment of the YS, as well as the attribution of benefits to its implementation.

In July 2017, the European Commission published an **evaluation** of the EU YS,¹³ based on an external report finalised in March 2016 by an external contractor,¹⁴ and additional public consultation.¹⁵ In a moderately justified attempt to provide legitimate answers to questions on relevance, coherence, EU added value, effectiveness and efficiency, the European Commission stressed inter alia that:

- a vast majority of respondents found at least some YS topics relevant, while Member States exist with even more advanced policies and practices;
- EU priorities for youth policy were largely consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy and most Member States' approach at national level;

¹⁰ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0364.

¹¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0426.

¹² Nota bene: the purely formal structure of this act, with the numbering of points re-starting from one under multiple parts that are not numbered themselves, is confusing and should not be repeated.

¹³ SWD(2017) 281 final.

¹⁴ ICF final report:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/youth/youth-strategy-2016_en.pdf.

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/evaluations/2016-youth-policy-cooperation_en.

- the YS had significant added value in the form of knowledge, leverage and opportunities;
- the EU YS led to substantive changes at national level in some Member States, often serving as a source of inspiration (especially with regard to the structured dialogue and the use of funds);
- the results were delivered at comparatively low cost, with limited national resources possibly hampering greater use of the strategy's potential;
- the mechanisms established under this framework have a high level of sustainability, with the structured dialogue being the most visible example.

Even if responses were accompanied by figures quantifying the number or percentage of respondents, the evaluation was qualitative, assessing the efficiency of the EU YS being challenging, as it is 'hard, if not impossible' to quantify its outcomes.¹⁶

The difficulty in assessing the implementation of the YS is also due to the fact that its application led to numerous additional policy documents being adopted at EU level, such as Council resolutions and conclusions (especially those establishing changing priorities), legislative initiatives, funding programmes, and others. These will be referred to below in the respective chapters, according to their relevance within the YS structure.

Of the policies that were adopted or introduced most recently, the following three are a clear example of the varied nature of youth policy at EU level:

- The European Commission presented a youth initiative package in December 2016, including a proposal for a **European Solidarity Corps**, the legislative arrangement for which is currently being negotiated between the European Parliament and the Council.
- In June 2017, the **EU Council** adopted its [conclusions](#) on strategic perspectives for European cooperation in the youth field post-2018, supporting the development of a new framework emphasising a cross-sectoral approach with a clear added value at EU level;
- An **online compendium on national youth policies**, [Youth Wiki](#), which was announced in the 2015 youth report, was eventually launched on 12 December 2017 with the aim of remedying the gaps in reporting mechanisms.¹⁷

¹⁶ [ICF Final Report](#), p. 18.

¹⁷ SWD(2017) 280 final, p. 3.

1. The instruments of the EU Youth Strategy

The European Commission and the Council of Europe recent published a joint paper with the following introduction: 'A word of caution: youth policy is complex'.¹⁸

This chapter follows the structure of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field on the basis of the Council Resolution of 27 November 2009, to present a brief assessment of its elements.

NB: the Council Resolution was addressed to (as is reflected in its final paragraphs):

- the Member States – to enhance European cooperation in the youth field, and adopt national measures 'which can contribute to achieving the overall objectives', and
- the European Commission – to support the Member States, examine the meeting of objectives (including through a working group), launch relevant studies, and report to the Council.

This approach is consistent with the standards of OMC, with the main responsibility on the side of the Member States. In effect, the objectives, priorities and implementation instruments that were agreed for use in all fields of action, should be understood more as guidelines for national choices and European support measures, rather than legally-binding targets and obligations (a standard for EU legislative acts).

1.1. Objectives

1.1.1. Overall objectives

Although elsewhere in the Council Resolution two aims were already set for the renewed European cooperation in youth policy (namely: efficient and effective cooperation for the benefit of young people – see Introduction above) the following overall Youth Strategy objectives are detailed in point 1 of the section beginning 'Accordingly agrees that...':

To create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market. (Hence the continued focus on education and employment).

To promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people. (Hence the focus on mechanisms for youth participation in policy-making).

It is clear that these objectives are broad and ambitious, especially due to the double use of the word 'all'). Assessing whether they have been met is difficult, as both opportunities for and participation of young people in Europe depend on many factors related to the socio-economic situation in respective countries. It might be legitimate to claim that both

¹⁸ Youth policy essentials, available at <http://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/other-publications>.

goals (also in view of the use of such terms as 'more', 'equal', and 'active') are a moving target that needs to be pursued, even if completion might never be reached.

The underlying philosophy was best presented in the 2015 [Joint Report](#) of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field: 'All young people deserve fair and equal opportunities, but this demands long-term investment. In their respective areas of competence, the EU and its Member States need to mobilise all policies that can help improve young people's prospects'.¹⁹

1.1.2. Dual approach

In accordance with point 3 of the section headed 'Accordingly agrees that...' in the Council Resolution, achieving the above-mentioned overall objectives implies the development and promotion of two elements:

1. Specific initiatives in the youth field, encouraging young people towards such activities as youth work, voluntary activities, non-formal learning, participation, mobility and information.
2. Mainstreaming initiatives, to ensure that youth issues are duly taken into account within policies and actions in other fields, such as education, employment or health and wellbeing.

The Council Resolution acknowledged that many of the fields of action covered by the YS have their own overall objectives and priorities. These are outlined in separate cooperation frameworks and strategies, and are addressed within their respective open methods of coordination. Moreover, it was underlined that suggested initiatives can be taken by Member States and/or the European Commission within their respective competences and with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity.

Given the possibility of some overlap between the specific fields of action, the Council Resolution encouraged initiatives to enable a cross-sectoral approach to be used in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the relevant policies that have a significant impact on the lives of young people. Similar to the previous integration of the European Youth Pact within the Lisbon strategy, a youth dimension was to be continuously taken into account under the relevant ongoing EU strategies and programmes.

Social (and vocational) integration was one of the three pillars of the youth cooperation framework in the previous period (2002-2009), but the impact assessment (SEC(2009)545) indicated that apart from employment matters the coordination of youth policy was not sufficiently developed in many Member States.

The external report on the evaluation of the YS identified its objectives as generally relevant to and coherent with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. However, it also

¹⁹ COM(2015) 429 final, p. 4.

underlined that this was thanks to the broad topical coverage of the youth cooperation framework rather than efforts to align the two strategies. Additional efforts were suggested to strengthen the contribution of EU youth policy to broader EU policy aims and to mainstream a youth focus in other relevant policy fields.²⁰

In May 2015, Council [conclusions](#) on enhancing cross-sectorial policy cooperation aimed at effectively addressing the socio-economic challenges facing young people in Europe. The Member States and the Commission were – inter alia – invited to envisage the cross-sectorial approach as one of the implementation principles in the future EU level youth policy, including a possible future EU Work Plan for Youth (following that adopted by the Council in addition to the Youth Strategy framework for 2014-2015 - see below under Priorities) and envisage concrete measures in the post-2018 framework for cooperation in the youth field.

The EU Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018 contains numerous provisions regarding mainstreaming, from its guiding principles (ensuring awareness of other EU policy domains on the specific issues young people face), through suggestions for the Council Presidencies (to inform the Youth Working Party on the work carried out by other Council preparatory bodies that impacts young people or youth policy), to specific recommendations addressed to the Member States and the European Commission. The last element is worth presenting in full because of its broad scope: 'encourage other sectors to take the youth dimension into account when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other policy fields, with particular attention to ensuring the early and effective inclusion of the youth dimension in the policy development process'.²¹

1.2. Priorities

To facilitate the focus of actions throughout the whole period of the Youth Strategy's implementation, a mechanism for establishing specific priorities was established, with three work cycles of three years – each also split in two 18-month periods – to be based on choices made by the Member States in the Council.

These priorities, further developed in policy documents that combined existing and additional YS initiatives with comments and actions applicable to the current situation, were:

- January 2010-June 2011 (as set out in Annex II to the Council Resolution 2009): **social inclusion, youth work and participation** (each to be highlighted in a six-month period) – all contributing to the overall priority of tackling youth unemployment.
- Under the Spanish Presidency, the Council adopted a [resolution](#) on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty and, under the Belgian Presidency, a [resolution](#) on youth work. Under the Hungarian Presidency, the Council adopted a [resolution](#) on encouraging new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life.

²⁰ [ICF Final Report](#), p. 30.

²¹ EU Work Plan 2016-2018, point 16, third indent.

- July 2011 - December 2012: **youth participation in democratic life**. Under the Polish Presidency (with a specific focus on Youth and the world), Council conclusions addressed the [Eastern dimension](#) of youth participation and mobility; under the Danish Presidency, on fostering the [creative and innovative](#) potential of young people; and under the Cypriot Presidency, on the [participation and social inclusion](#) of young people with emphasis on those with a migrant background.
- Interestingly, the employment aspect of youth participation was also considered, as acknowledged in the 2012 Youth Report, which underlined that in addition to increasing citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity among young people, it also helps them to acquire valuable skills that add to their employability.²²
- January 2013-June 2014: **social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities**. Council conclusions on the contribution of [quality youth work](#) to the development, wellbeing and social inclusion of young people were agreed under the Irish Presidency; on [enhancing the social inclusion of NEETs](#),²³ under the Lithuanian Presidency; and on [promoting youth entrepreneurship](#) to foster social inclusion of young people when the EU Council Presidency was held by Greece.
- July 2014-December 2015: **development of youth work and non-formal and informal learning, enhanced cross-sectorial cooperation within EU strategies, and empowerment within and outside the EU**.
- Under the Italian Presidency, Council [conclusions](#) on promoting access by young people to rights in order to foster their autonomy and their participation in civil society were adopted. Under the Latvian Presidency, the Council adopted [conclusions](#) on enhancing cross-sectorial policy cooperation to effectively address socio-economic challenges facing young people and on [reinforcing youth work to ensure cohesive societies](#). The Luxembourg Presidency prepared the adoption of the Council [resolution](#) on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. Additionally, a detailed [EU Work Plan for Youth](#) was established for this period, containing two annexes with a list of specific actions based on priority themes and principles relating to the membership and functioning of expert groups.
- The subsequent [Work Plan](#), this time for the full three-year period (2016-2018) introduced 'particular emphasis' for young people at risk of marginalisation, NEETs, and with migrant background (including refugees).
- During the period from January 2016 to June 2017 (under the Presidencies of the Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta, and an overarching theme of **enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe – ready for life, ready for society**), specific Council conclusions were adopted on the role of the youth sector in an integrated and cross-sectorial approach to preventing and combating [violent radicalisation](#) of young people, on promoting new approaches in youth work to uncover and develop [the potential](#) of young people, and on the role of youth work in supporting young people's development of essential [life skills](#) that facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life.

²² Youth Report 2012, p. 22.

²³ Young people who are not in employment, education or training.

- During the period from July 2017 to December 2018 (under the Presidencies of Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria) the focus is on deliberating the possible answers to one pertinent question, in view of the current Youth Strategy coming to an end: **Youth in Europe – what's next?** In addition, the Council [conclusions](#) on smart youth work, adopted in December 2017, stressed the empowering character of digital media and technologies.

It is clear that this prioritisation led to regular and visible activity at the European level, including the adoption of numerous policy documents by the Council, and organisation of events (especially those involving youth representatives, such as the structured dialogue that contributed to the establishment of cycle priorities). At the same time, the broad range of suggested initiatives and existing overlap, as well as repetition or rephrasing of similar aspects in subsequent resolutions and/or conclusions, pose a significant challenge for the clarity and coherence of consistent implementation of the YS.

Periodic review of priorities is allowed for integration of additional topics, such as preventing radicalisation, integration of migrants, and digital matters. It remains to be decided if such elements are simply added to the relevant fields of action in the future framework. In a very recent proposal for the EU YS, the European Youth Forum (which is the most important umbrella organisation active in the interests of young people) suggested establishing fewer priorities, divided in two groups of fixed and flexible issues.²⁴

In addition to the mechanism for the establishment of specific priorities, the Council Resolution drew special attention to the importance of **youth work** – in point 5 of the section headed 'Further agrees that...'. This statement gives political support to actions that help the transition of young people from education to employment. It also acknowledges the variety of advantages that youth work can bring to individuals and society at large, as shown in very specific issues 'to be discussed' – set out in the YS: appropriate training, recognition of skills, mobility support, and the promotion of innovative approaches and services. The existing expert groups on youth work, and a long list of relevant policy documents (some of which were already referred to above), studies and reports,²⁵ show the effectiveness of this point.

Additionally, the EU YS incorporated the previously adopted Council [Recommendation](#) on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU, which was also based on earlier European developments in support of cross-border volunteering.

1.3. Implementation instruments

The Council Resolution establishing the YS set out a number of instruments (listed under point 3. iii of the section headed 'Further agrees that...'), to be used at national and European level to implement the framework of cooperation effectively. Although they might appear self-evident, each is accompanied by specific references or institutional

²⁴ [The EU Youth Strategy beyond 2018: a focused strategy with a coordinated management](#), EYF publication, December 2017.

²⁵ Especially those available at https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/work_en.

arrangements for practical application. Looking at the implementation of these provisions might lead to a number of reflections concerning the possible future structure.

1.3.1. Knowledge building

Gathering and analysis of relevant information is a *sine qua non* condition for evidence-based policy-making. The YS stressed that proper knowledge about the living conditions, values and attitudes of young people should be gathered and shared appropriately, and that cooperation between authorities, researchers and young people themselves (including their organisations) should be promoted.

At the European level, a number of institutions and tools are used to that effect, including Eurostat,²⁶ the Commission departments for Communication, Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Research, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency ([EACEA](#)). Examples of studies and surveys are available on the European Commission website, alongside the links to the institutions involved.²⁷ A well-established example of the cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe is the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, which aims to provide the youth field with a single entry point to access knowledge and information on the realities of youth across Europe.²⁸ Additional information is often also available on specific fields of action, such as [Eurydice](#) for education; the [Youth Wiki](#) now covers all policy fields with information provided directly by national correspondents. Finally, the Council Resolution also called for support for youth networks, as well as for the promotion and cooperation between various stakeholders.

Each of the two Youth Reports (published in 2012 and 2015 – see point 1.3.3) was accompanied by a separate staff working document on the situation of young people in the EU, prepared by EACEA, inter alia on the basis of the indicators agreed in 2011 (see point 1.3.5 below). Insight into the updated situation is available online at the [Youth Monitor](#), and selected figures will be provided as background information at the beginning of each policy chapter below.

1.3.2. Mutual learning

As the EU Youth Strategy is essentially an OMC (open method of coordination), it also relies on the exchange of information and experience between the EU Member States. The Council Resolution envisaged the mutual learning would be carried out through peer learning, conferences and seminars, forums and expert groups, as well as through studies and analyses and web-based networks. In addition to stressing the link with the priorities established for specific periods, it also required these initiatives to be 'developed with clear objectives and on the basis of clear mandates, time schedules and planned outputs'.

The two Work Plans for Youth that were established for 2014-2015 and 2016-2018, formalised the activities of the expert group, and its work is coordinated by the European

²⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth/data/database>.

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/policy-making_en.

²⁸ <http://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/ekcyp-detailed>.

Commission. The experts – nominated by Member States – subsequently worked on the following matters under the relevant sub-groups:

- mobility of young volunteers across the EU;
- indicators in the youth field;
- peer-learning on the creative and innovative potential of young people;
- contribution of youth work to addressing young people's challenges;
- youth work quality systems in EU Member States;
- youth work for active citizenship, preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation;
- youth work for young migrants and refugees;
- risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy.

Their group's mandates and reports, as well as additional material such as information sheets are available through the dedicated website.²⁹ Detailed information, including meetings' agendas and minutes, can be consulted via the publicly-available [register](#).³⁰

With regard to the peer-learning exercises, a number of examples³¹ indicate that Member States appreciate and support opportunities to exchange best practices, not limiting these to the regular meetings in Brussels.³² This exchange is also supported by outreach to third countries and international organisations (especially the Council of Europe³³, OECD and the United Nations), in accordance with the second paragraph of the relevant passage of the Council Resolution. Mutual learning amongst the youth organisations should also be mentioned, and appreciation of the YS as 'a platform for discussion' was indicated during the [stakeholders' conference](#) in May 2017.

1.3.3. Progress reporting

A separate provision in the Council Resolution introduced the Youth Reports methodology for evaluating progress towards the overall objectives, recent priorities, and identifying good practices. As already mentioned in the introduction above, the European Commission duly presented the reports in 2012 and 2015.

In accordance with the Youth Strategy requirements, a political part (a joint report by the Council and the Commission – first published as a draft in the form of a Commission communication)³⁴ is accompanied by analytical (describing the results of the OMC in the relevant three-year cycle)³⁵ and statistical sections.³⁶

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/peer-learning_en.

³⁰ [Expert Group in the Youth Policy fields](#) (E02547) .

³¹ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/policy/documents/youth-peer-learning-2010-15_en.pdf.

³² See for example the seminars held in Luxembourg and Riga (Latvia) in 2015: [peer-learning seminars on cross sectorial youth policy](#).

³³ See <http://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership>.

³⁴ For 2015, it was COM (2015) 429.

³⁵ SWD (2015) 168.

³⁶ SWD (2015) 169, in 6 parts.

While acknowledging the effort put into preparing these documents, their size and content might not necessarily correspond to the original intentions or present expectations:

- **Do the Youth Reports evaluate the progress made towards the overall objectives and work-cycle priorities?** Not really. They describe the process of transposing those priorities into specific actions, but there are no criteria for measuring the real achievement of objectives.
- **Do they identify good practices?** Yes, but the multitude of references provided by Member States in their national reports, often very general, are difficult to compare.

In addition to the short but concise overview of policy context and instruments addressing youth matters, the Youth Reports provide descriptive assessments of specific actions taken at national and European level, and a large compilation of statistical data which is difficult to match with the previous sections (apart from some illustrative references).

The limitations of the current mechanism were also referred to in the mid-term evaluation, where 'the reporting progress was reported as being particularly burdensome and could benefit from improvements to streamline the process'.³⁷

1.3.4. Dissemination of results

The subsequent implementation instrument mentioned in the Council Resolution is entitled 'dissemination of results', and encourages sharing of 'the outcomes of cooperation' among all relevant stakeholders and, 'where appropriate', discussion at the level of Directors General or Ministers. This formulation might be considered slightly archaic, because if taken literally, only hard-data information would be transmitted in one way or another to the interested parties, and of course the relevant national authorities. The real aim however, as clearly indicated at the beginning of this point in the Council Resolution, is to enhance visibility and impact of the YS at local, regional, national and European level.

The European Commission evaluation report provides a few separate examples as to how the results achieved through EU youth policy cooperation (without defining what constitutes 'results') are disseminated through publications, presentations, and regular stakeholder discussions. However, since the stakeholders, especially the representatives of national governments, are involved in youth policy per se, it could well be that their knowledge is already ensured by their interest. Greater visibility of the YS will only be achieved if efforts are made to reach out to other actors, namely the young people themselves.

Accordingly, and with the expansion of the digital environment, a number of dedicated internet portals were established. The [European Youth Portal](#) (powered by Eurodesk, and

³⁷ Future of the EU Youth Strategy, [Towards a more effective delivery of results](#), European Commission, 2017, p. 1.

including an additional platform on volunteering) offers information on opportunities that could be of interest to young people who are living, learning and working in Europe. The [EU youth website](#) also remains active as part of the European Commission's website for the general public. It is important to note however, that online communication will never be able to fully replace direct contact, especially with regard to young people who are not actively looking for this information.

One could indeed understand the 'dissemination of results' as the need to increase visibility for the opportunities created for young people by the YS, and any actions taken by the EU and/or Member States with regard to the numerous initiatives that the Council Resolution (and subsequent policy documents) contains. In the area of learning mobility and active citizenship, the EU-funded [Eurodesk network](#) provides comprehensive and accessible information on and off-line throughout Europe.

Following the 2015 Youth Report, which recommended the development of a flexible framework to facilitate access to information and the outcomes of the activities,³⁸ the EU Work Plan for Youth envisaged a proposal (listed as Q1) to be made in the first half of 2016. Following discussions with the Member States, the European Commission set up an online collaboration platform (a restricted Yammer group) for government representatives, and developed informal guidance based on existing evaluations of peer-learning activities and mutual learning programmes.³⁹

1.3.5. Monitoring of the process

In accordance with the Council Resolution of 2009, the existing indicators were to be used to assess the situation of young people in Europe, with the clear possibility of developing new indicators, which took place in 2011.

Interestingly, the external study prepared for the European Commission during that process came to the conclusion that 'it is not possible to formulate, monitor and evaluate policy in fields related to youth solely on the basis of indicators. In particular, in-depth qualitative research, including consultations with key stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, practitioners) and target groups are seen as fundamental complements to indicators in evidence-based policy making'.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, following the work of an expert group (mentioned above under 1.3.2.), 41 indicators (jointly called the dashboard, or the Youth Monitor)⁴¹ were established, with three contextual indicators (number and rate of youth population, and the mean age of young people leaving their parents' home), with the rest attributed to the eight fields of action set out in the YS.⁴² Some illustrative figures from this database are presented at the beginning of Chapters 3-10 below.

³⁸ Youth Report 2015, p. 14.

³⁹ Information obtained directly from European Commission officials.

⁴⁰ [Assessing practices for using indicators in fields related to youth](#), Ecorys report, February 2011.

⁴¹ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/dashboard_en.

⁴² The raw data is available on Eurostat: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth/data/database>.

Although this compilation of data on the situation of young people in the European Union can show the differences between Member States instantly in multiple areas, it does not claim to illustrate the effectiveness of policies and actions implemented on the basis of the YS, and no mechanism measuring all countries against any benchmarks is set. In its resolution adopted in October 2016, the European Parliament thereby urged the Member States 'to agree on clear indicators and benchmarks in order to allow for monitoring of the progress made'.⁴³

The Commission evaluation discovered that, because of the broad objectives and many actions formulated in the YS, clear monitoring of its progress and contribution is not possible.⁴⁴ Instead, a declaration to be looking 'openly' at the Strategy's influence of changes at national level led to the evaluation's general finding that the YS was 'successful in triggering concrete changes at national and organisational level, leading to the adoption of common approaches and principles across the Member States'.⁴⁵

1.3.6. Consultation and structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations

This implementation instrument, although listed almost at the end, constitutes the most concrete measure encouraged by the EU YS. The Council Resolution specifically called for a 'continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the youth field', its alignment with the overall objectives and cyclical priorities, as well as an inclusive character and development at various levels. A few concrete aspects of the dialogue's implementation at EU level were set out in Annex III of the resolution.

As in other elements of EU cooperation on youth policy, the structured dialogue was also based on previous experiences and reflections, including for example the European Youth Pact adopted by the European Council in March 2005. The call made therein to consult youth on the development of national reform programmes for the Lisbon strategy and on follow-up action, was then taken up by the European Commission. The latter aimed to involve young people and the already existing European Youth Forum, *inter alia*, via a Youth Assembly, which the Commission was hoping to help to establish regular annual meetings.

With more details on the functioning of the structured dialogue under the YS presented and analysed in Chapter 11, it is important to acknowledge here that efforts made at the European level resulted in an established practice that was subsequently copied (if not yet existent) within the particular Member States. Nevertheless, the wording of the evaluation report, on the national dialogue processes that 'are beginning to emerge',⁴⁶

⁴³ P8_TA-PROV(2016)0426, point 2.

⁴⁴ SWD(2017) 0281 final, p. 10. An acknowledgement that direct assignment of YS benefits is not possible follows on page 12.

⁴⁵ SWD(2017) 0281, p. 22.

⁴⁶ SWD(2017) 0281, p. 17.

was somewhat limited in enthusiasm, although the European Commission underlined the evolution and growth of this instrument since 2010.

A number of initiatives to reach out to young people have also been established by the European Parliament, including the EP Ambassador School Programme which started in Ireland in as a pilot project in 2015, youth projects in the Parliament's Information Offices in the Member States, and the European Youth Event (EYE). The EYE, which will have its third edition in 2018, provides an opportunity for young people to discuss a number of policy areas and subsequently influence discussions within the relevant parliamentary committees.⁴⁷

1.3.7. EU programmes and funds

Although the YS as such is not a financing programme, and the majority of actions to be undertaken were and are covered by national budgets,⁴⁸ the Council Resolution also contained strong support for the appropriate use of available EU funds to make youth policy successful. The specific programmes listed therein (in 2009) were mostly replaced by new ones, in accordance with the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020, and the Youth in Action/Erasmus+ programme is mentioned as the main funding programme to support structured dialogue at national level, improve evidence-based policy making and other initiatives.⁴⁹ Multiple research projects concerning youth were also financed under the FP7 and Horizon 2020 programmes, contributing to the knowledge-based aspect mentioned above.

Important conclusions on funding were drawn in the European Commission evaluation report.⁵⁰ A comparison was made between the resources planned for 2014 for knowledge-building and evidence under the EU YS (€562 250) and two other policy areas subject to the open method of coordination: education and training (€17.8 million) and employment (€16.2 million), although the scope of the YS also overlaps with these two policy areas (and others). The positive assessment of YS efficiency was based on the stakeholders' view that changes in national practices were achieved with a relatively low budget, and the cost-effectiveness of participation in EU activities. On the other hand, the limited resources provided at national level were mentioned as a challenge for further development of youth policies and activities.

Following the creation of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in December 2013, established to support eligible Member States with the implementation of the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, a significant amount of financial resources (€6.4 billion, recently increased further) was committed from the EU budget to support young persons not in education, employment or training (NEETs).⁵¹

⁴⁷ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/european-youth-event/en/home/home.html>.

⁴⁸ A number of examples are provided in the 2015 Youth Report, pp. 30-32.

⁴⁹ See Anna Zygierewicz, [The Erasmus+ Programme \(Regulation EU No. 1288/2013\) - European Implementation Assessment](#), European Parliament, July 2016.

⁵⁰ SWD(2017) 281 final, pp. 26-27.

⁵¹ A European Implementation Assessment of YEI is available [here](#).

Additionally, the European Social Fund (ESF) in general continues to be used for capacity-building projects, also serving organisations working for youth.

1.4. Principles

In between the agreed fields of action and working methods, the Council Resolution underlined the following guiding principles to be observed in all policies and activities concerning young people:

1. Promoting gender equality and combatting all forms of discrimination, with a reference to Articles 21 and 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;

Article 21 (Non-discrimination):

1. Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.
2. Within the scope of application of the Treaty establishing the European Community and of the Treaty on European Union, and without prejudice to the special provisions of those Treaties, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited.

Article 23 (Equality between men and women):

Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.

The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex.

It should be noted that this element is also specifically covered in one of the initiatives under education and training (see Chapter 3). The reference to the international system of human rights has also been prominently picked up in the European Youth Forum proposal on '8 Standards for a quality youth policy'.⁵²

2. Taking account of possible differences in the living conditions, needs, aspirations, interests and attitudes of young people due to various factors, especially persons with fewer opportunities;

This was already mentioned above, in the context of online communication, and plays a major role in the policy field of social inclusion.

3. Recognising all young people as a resource for society, and upholding the right of young people to participate in the development of policies affecting them.

This principle is covered by the initiatives on participation (Chapter 6) and the structured dialogue on European, national and local level.

⁵² See <http://www.youthforum.org/8-standards/>.

1.5. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

The structure of the Council Resolution of 2009 is complicated and challenging, beginning from the formulation of the ambitious objectives, overlapping implementation instruments, and separate inclusion of cross-sectoral issues (such as youth work).

Taking into account the broad range of possible initiatives suggested in numerous policy fields (listed in Annex I and presented below in the respective chapters), the YS mechanism for establishing priorities in successive work cycles should be acknowledged, as it allowed the Member States to focus on specific issues throughout the period covered by the strategy. At the same time, further addition of elements might add to the difficulty in maintaining a coherent and clear policy at the European level, while flexibility will in any case need to be maintained for national implementation and young people's activities in specific countries.

Establishing the additional framework of a structured dialogue was instrumental in ensuring a minimum of real consultation with representatives of young people, and its overview is analysed further below. The structured dialogue and the mobilisation of EU funds were considered the most influential tools among the EU youth cooperation instruments⁵³ as well as, to a certain extent, mutual learning and knowledge-building. With regard to the latter, overcoming the confusing separation of such elements as progress reporting and monitoring of the process could be recommended, especially if the existing monitoring framework did not fully capture the achievements of the EU cooperation and could not properly evaluate its impacts.

Apart from the actions increasing the visibility of YS throughout the EU, the indicators concerning the situation of young people (ensuring that European cooperation in the youth field is evidence-based) should be separated from efforts to measure and compare the results of specific policies and projects. Ideally, these results would positively influence the indicators, but their use as best practices is probably more attractive for the Member States in their ongoing policy-making.

With regard to the mainstreaming of youth policy, the YS did not fully succeed in creating an integrated approach to young people at EU level. In order to achieve better coordination between different institutions, Member States and other partners, the EYF proposed to establish a cross-sectoral Coordination Working Group⁵⁴ with a direct link to the Youth Working Party in the Council. Mutual learning between Member States could also certainly continue in this respect, so that the future influence of any policies on youth takes the views of young people into account.

⁵³ SWD(2017) 281 final, p. 25.

⁵⁴ [EYF proposal for the governance of the EU Youth Strategy](#), 14 December 2017, p. 5.

2. General initiatives

As already mentioned in the note on methodology at the beginning of this study, the Youth Strategy listed (non-exhaustively) aims and suggested initiatives in eight specific fields of action (covered in the subsequent chapters), but also a number of general initiatives to be considered in all of the policy fields.⁵⁵ Since this list has not been explicitly covered in the recent reporting mechanisms, it is presented below with brief comments building on the relevant parts of the Youth Reports (especially the general overview of youth policy), as well as the point on governance in the Youth Wiki.⁵⁶

2.1. Youth Strategy list

1. **Developing and strengthening cooperation between policy makers in the respective fields of action and youth policy makers, inter alia through improved dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and expertise.**

This initiative, apart from underlining the importance of sharing the relevant information (which in itself is one of the implementation instruments considered under point 1.3 above) could be qualified as a crucial element of mainstreaming youth policy. In practical terms, cross-sectoral cooperation was reported to have been developed by almost all Member States (apart from Cyprus and Denmark) by the time of the 2015 Youth Report.

2. **Encouraging and supporting the involvement and participation of young people and youth organisations in policy making, implementation and follow-up.**

The relevant information on this major horizontal aspect of youth policy is covered by the policy field on participation (especially with regard to overall dialogue and debate, as well as support for youth organisations - see Chapter 4 below), but the principles of consultation mechanisms are reflected in the implementation instruments and in the structured dialogue (see Chapter 11).

3. **Providing quality guidance and counselling services.**

This initiative is literally repeated (with the addition of 'career') under the action field 'Employment and entrepreneurship' (see Chapter 4), but could also constitute a reference point for services in any other policy area. Without undermining the importance of maintaining a high level of quality in any public action, its inclusion as a separate 'initiative' can be easily overlooked.

4. **Improving access to quality youth information and disseminating information through all possible channels at local, regional, national level, as well as**

⁵⁵ Sections b) and a) of Annex I to the Council Resolution, respectively.

⁵⁶ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/1-youth-policy-governance-overview>

through Europe-wide organisations such as Eurodesk,⁵⁷ ERYICA⁵⁸ and EYCA⁵⁹ and other European networks.

Similarly to point 1 above, the incentive to disseminate information (which is of course much more valuable if that information is of good quality) might seem to overlap with the implementation instrument on the evidence-based youth policy, as well as the one on dissemination of results. It is thus important to underline that 'youth information' referred to here does not cover the youth policy as such, but rather the access of young people to news and data that allow them to make informed choices in private and public life.⁶⁰

The non-governmental organisations mentioned in the YS are supported by the European Union, and actively complement actions managed directly by the EU institutions at pan-European level.

5. Strengthening cooperation with local and regional authorities.

According to the Youth Report 2012, the EU YS had little impact on local and regional youth policy, as the open method of coordination focused on cooperation between the EU and Member States. Further implementation at regional and local level was expected to require more time.⁶¹ The Youth Report doesn't report much on the assessment of YS implementation below the national level, but numerous examples of projects involving regional authorities are mentioned under various policy chapters.

NB, three points in the Council [resolution](#) on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe, adopted in December 2015,⁶² were explicitly focused on local and regional participation opportunities and called for:

- Enabling and facilitating the development of participation processes such as youth councils in close collaboration with local and regional public authorities;
- Developing and providing information and training opportunities for policy-makers on suitable and youth tailored communication and participation methods and tools;
- Considering the appropriateness of lowering the voting age for the elections of local and regional public authorities to 16 years.

6. Supporting the development of better knowledge about the situation of young people, for instance through support to youth research, research networks, specific studies, etc.

⁵⁷ <https://eurodesk.eu/>

⁵⁸ European Youth Information and Counselling Agency - <https://www.eryica.org/>

⁵⁹ European Youth Card - <https://www.eyca.org/>

⁶⁰ See <https://www.eryica.org/what-is-youth-information/>

⁶¹ Youth Report 2012, p.36.

⁶² OJ C 417/10, 15.12.2015, points 22-24.

The implementation instrument aimed at knowledge building (see point 1.3.1 above) already covers this initiative. The development of indicators on the situation of young people in the European Union (as described in point 1.3.5) resulted in the provision of a significant amount of data within the regular Youth Reports, and specific studies are also contributing to policy-making at EU level in respective policy fields.

7. Supporting the development of youth work and recognising its value.

Youth work is dealt with in a number of parts of the YS, especially under Education and training (see Chapter 3 below). As correctly stated in the EU Youth Report 2012, it has contributed to young people's development and has the potential to do more in all fields of action.⁶³

8. Making effective use of, and facilitating access of young people to, available EU funds and programmes.

Mobilisation of EU programmes and funds is the last of the implementation instruments mentioned above (point 1.3.7), as set out in the YS. Apart from the attempts to assess the efficiency of each and every one of them, the concern that is often raised when some initiative are being introduced, is that the resources available for actions already established should not simply be transferred to the new measures (such as in the case of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps).⁶⁴

9. Supporting development of experimental projects and programmes to try out new and innovative ideas and to exchange good practices.

This general initiative partly overlaps with mutual learning (see point 1.3.2), whereas supporting innovation is specifically covered by the policy field on culture and creativity (see Chapter 10).

10. Recognising the value of bilateral and multilateral cooperation for European cooperation in the field of youth policy.

In addition to the fact that the YS itself is a genuine framework for cooperation in the youth field, the Members States have engaged in a number of cross-border projects under specific policy fields. This matter is now covered explicitly - with a distinction between cooperation with other European countries and broader, international platforms and agreements - by point 1.8 in the Youth Wiki, described below.

11. Including, where appropriate, a children's policy dimension, having regard to their rights and protection taking into account that the life and future prospects of young people are significantly determined by the opportunities, support and protection received during childhood.

⁶³ Youth Report 2012, p. 18.

⁶⁴ See for example <http://illplatform.eu/news/eu-solidarity-corps-not-funded-erasmus-budget-urge-culture-meps/>

The influence of childhood on later years could seem obvious, but enlarging the scope of youth-oriented measures beyond the focus on the group between 15 and 30 years of age (with due regard to the existing differences in defining youth between EU Member States) might also put the efficiency of the YS at risk. The only policy field, where children are explicitly mentioned among the specific initiatives, is the one on health and wellbeing - but only in relation to the new media.

2.2. General governance aspects

There are a few institutional issues at the basis of an efficient Youth Strategy that merit comment, beyond considerations on the substance of the EU youth policy and its effects on specific areas, and the various implementation instruments that constitute the varied forms of cooperation among the Member States. The 2009 Council Resolution did not really deal with them, but in order for the whole framework to operate in practice, it is necessary to clarify which national authorities are competent in the matter of youth policy, what legislative and/or other acts are regulating the matter, and how much support (especially financial) is devoted to the cause.

The Youth Report 2012 found that a majority of Member States had legislation specifically pertaining to young people, and national youth strategies (some of them adopted in recent years, that is after the YS was adopted).⁶⁵ The cross-sectoral approach of the EU YS was identified in existing structures for cooperation between government ministries, working groups and advisory bodies, as well as in relations with researchers at national level. The overlap of age categories, with 'children' often used for persons up to 18 years old, was also noted, as well as some countries' arrangements where the competences in regulating youth policies is attributed to regions.

The Youth Report 2015 acknowledged that most countries maintained or introduced legislation on the needs and/or rights of young people during the period 2010-2014. 'No youth law' was indicated by then in the national reports of eight Member States (Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Cyprus, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden). National youth strategies were reported in all but two countries (Cyprus and Greece), and 80 % of them were said to have been developed after 2010, with a greater cross-sectoral emphasis of the more recent ones. ⁶⁶ Institutionalised and regular cooperation between the ministry responsible for youth and the research community was by then common practice in around two thirds of the countries, and the estimates of budgetary allocations were presented by 22 Member States (including allocations from EU programmes).⁶⁷

Thanks to the Youth Wiki, which was launched in mid-December 2017, a lot of information on the organisation of youth policy in EU Member States is now easily available online. The newly established portal, which is still being filled-in with the

⁶⁵ Youth Report 2012, p. 32.

⁶⁶ Youth Report 2015, pp. 21 and 28.

⁶⁷ Youth Report 2015, pp. 32-34; the last category only containing a short reference to Youth Guarantee from Slovakia.

country-relevant descriptions and appropriate references, introduced a slightly modified structure of the governance section in comparison with the Youth Reports. As the differences in policy fields defined in the Council Resolution are mentioned in respective chapters below, it is important to note that 'Youth Policy Governance' only partly covers the issues mentioned above under general initiatives - as listed in point a) of Annex I of the resolution - but it sets the relevant factual and legal context.⁶⁸

The national legislation and strategies on youth are often presented in detail to the extent that they exist. However, the definition of 'young people' varies between Member States). In addition to the elements of decision-making in policies concerning young people, the institutional arrangements for a cross-sectoral⁶⁹ approach and for cross-border cooperation are provided, with only (in comparison with the YS, as analysed in Chapter 1) two points on specific implementation instruments - evidence-based approach and funding. The last section in Youth Wiki - repeated for all subsequent parts⁷⁰ - is called 'current debates and reforms', which creates space for up-to-date information on current challenges and forward-looking perspectives.

Member States who already provided information to Youth Wiki⁷¹, usually did so in an extensive manner, presenting the national systems of competences (especially in federal structures), legislation on children and youth, and links to the relevant institutions and statistics. All of the insertions are in English, while some of the official websites or documents linked are obviously limited to national languages in some of the cases. State funding for research in the youth field is presented separately from financial support for youth policies in general, and the absolute annual figures - if available - are given. The activities of the national youth councils and other forums for young people's participation in policy-making at national level are also described.

It is worth noting that the scope and form of data provided under this part of Youth Wiki differs from one country to another (with some national correspondents providing extensive background information, links and graphs, while others focusing on a descriptive explanation of the state of play), which significantly limits the possibilities of making comparative analysis. Only in a few cases the national plans for youth policy are structured similarly to the EU YS, but the existing links to EU programmes are being clearly highlighted. The need for more efforts to support young people after the financial crisis is often underlined. It is also interesting to notice comprehensive policy objectives (which, as for example in France,⁷² can be listed quite differently than in the YS) and other national specificities, such as the first youth policy objective in Finland for the period 2017-2019: *Every child and young person has the possibility to engage in at least one free-time hobby of their choice.*⁷³

⁶⁸ See <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/1-youth-policy-governance-overview>

⁶⁹ The website uses 'cross-sectorial'.

⁷⁰ Each of the following ones starting with a 'General context' and 'Administration and governance'.

⁷¹ See footnote 3.

⁷² <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/13-national-youth-strategy-france>

⁷³ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/13-national-youth-strategy-finland>

2.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Since the YS maintains its principle characteristic as an open method of coordination, there is a variety of cooperation instruments that can be arranged in order to achieve the set objectives. In the introductory paragraph of Annex I of the Council Resolution, it was stated that efforts are needed to ensure that a youth perspective is suitably maintained in each of the policy fields described thereafter. The list of general initiatives that appears first is a compilation of different aspects that were not clearly attributable to only one of the specific areas of action, but their often broad scope also means that assessing their implementation is very difficult. In addition, they largely correspond to the implementation instruments covered in the main text of the resolution (especially related to gathering and sharing information and practices), or its other parts (such as the separate point on youth work).

In view of that, it was understandable that the two Youth Reports published so far by the European Commission did not explicitly cover the general initiatives set out by the YS, and instead described the overview of youth policy with a special focus on the legal framework and the national environment. The Youth Wiki improved the situation by presenting the relevant information under an introductory part on youth policy governance, albeit covering also - in a simpler form than the list dealt with in Chapter 1 above - the national implementation instruments (especially with regard to gathering information and funding).

The future YS could benefit from a clear separation of institutional arrangements and cooperation mechanisms (suggesting *how* youth policy should be done) from substantive objectives with regard to the situation of young people (describing what aims are to be achieved). The content of the following chapters will further explore this reflection.

3. Education and training

Four indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:

- Early leavers from education and training: Share of population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education that is no longer in education and training. This share has been in a general decline since 2000, and fell from 13.4 % in 2011 to 10.7 % in 2016. The Europe 2020 benchmark of 10 % seems realistic.
- Low achievers in reading, mathematics, science: Share of 15-year olds who get a score of 1 or below (on a scale from 1 to 5) in PISA tests. While this indicator is not directly linked to the YS initiatives listed below, the concern is that the current and stable level of 20 % is far from the objective of 15 % by 2020.
- Tertiary education attainment: Share of population aged 30-34 with tertiary education attainment. Although the situation varies among Member States, the EU average increased from 34.8 % in 2011 to 39.1 % in 2016.
- Young people having completed at least upper secondary education: Percentage of the population aged 20-24 having completed at least upper secondary education. The average has increased from 79.7 % in 2011 to 83.1 % in 2016, while a number of countries have already passed 90 %.

3.1. Youth Strategy list

The specific aim of initiatives in this action field is to support equal access for young people to high-quality education, training and lifelong learning opportunities. Moreover, promotion of non-formal learning and improving its links with formal education, as well as facilitating the transition from education and training to the labour market was indicated by the Council Resolution, and the intention of reducing early-school leaving.

The following initiatives were suggested⁷⁴:

1. Support the development of youth work and other non-formal learning opportunities as one of a range of actions to address early school leaving,
2. Fully use the range of tools established at EU level for the transparency and validation of skills and the recognition of qualifications (Europass),
3. Promote learning mobility of all young people,
4. Address gender and other stereotypes via formal education and non-formal learning,
5. Use formal education and non-formal learning to promote cohesion and understanding across different groups, promote equal opportunities and narrow the gaps in achievement,
6. Develop participative structures in education as well as cooperation between schools, families and local communities,
7. Encourage formal education and non-formal learning in support of young people's innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship,
8. Make a broader public aware of the value of non-formal learning outcomes.

Additionally, the European Commission was tasked with further development of the Europass.

⁷⁴ In this and the following chapters, the numbering of columns in the tables correspond to YS list.

The Youth Wiki data-base corresponds to the list from the Council Resolution, although with slightly reformulated points, and the notable addition of 'Media literacy and safe use of new media' (point 6.8.),⁷⁵ which is considered below under Chapter 5 on health and wellbeing.

3.2. State of play

3.2.1. National level

In response to the first four points from the list of suggested initiatives, a majority of Member States indicated in the Youth Report 2012 that measures were taken before the entry into force of the YS, and that for the last one (making the broader public aware of the value of non-formal learning outcomes) - introducing measures afterwards was dominant. Further development materialised in a variety of legislative acts, policy documents and specific projects, selected examples of which were provided in the Youth Report 2015.

The diversity can also be observed in the specific focus of the cohesion-oriented measures: in some countries they are addressed to economically disadvantaged pupils, while in others - to those with migrant background, and elsewhere - to people with disabilities. Developing participatory structures and increasing public awareness of the value of non-formal learning outcomes, are the categories with most of 'no data' provided by national reports.

⁷⁵ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/6-education-and-training-overview>

Table 1 – Education and training

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	Project and objective	NQF	Erasmus+	Project	Legislation	Legislation	Project	Website
Belgium-German speaking Community	Strategy	Project	Erasmus+	No data	Legislation	Project	Project	No data
Belgium – French speaking Community	Projects	Project	Erasmus+	Programme	Policy and project	Legislation	Project and funding	Youth associations
Bulgaria	Projects	NQF	Erasmus and strategy	Policy	Project	Project	Strategy	Legislation
Czech Republic	No specific measures	Project	Erasmus+, Eurodesk	Project	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	National Conference on Youth
Denmark	Projects	Guidelines	Policy	Project	Project	Policy	Strategy	Regulation
Germany	Projects and regulation	No data	Erasmus+, programmes	Guidelines	Regulation	Regulation	Projects	Strategy, Youth offices
Estonia	Development Plan	Project	Erasmus+, programmes	Programme	Projects	Programme	Project	Websites
Ireland	Projects	No data	Erasmus+	No data	Project	Projects	No data	Project
Greece	Planning and projects	NQF	Policy	Project	Project	Projects	Organisation support	Project
Spain	Decree	Legislation and project	Erasmus+	Project	Programmes	No data	Projects	Action Plan

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
France	Policy	NQF	Erasmus+	Projects	Projects and funding	Project	Programme	Website
Croatia	Planning	NQF	Youth in Action	Project	Projects	Association at universities	Project	Legislation
Italy	Planning and projects	Legislation	Guidelines	Policy	Legislation, guidelines	Guidelines	Strategy	No data
Cyprus	No data	Europass	No data	Project	Project	No data	Project	No data
Latvia	Institutions and guidelines	Guidelines, policy	Erasmus+	Lifelong learning	Youth in action	No data	Youth centre	Eurodesk
Lithuania	Policies	Legislation	Erasmus+	Legislation	Strategy	Programme	Strategy	Youth centre
Luxembourg	Specific programmes	Europass, Youthpass	Erasmus+	Project	Curriculum	Regulation	Programme	Website, Youth centres
Hungary	Programme	Legislation, NQR	Erasmus+	No data	Programmes	No data	Project	Strategy
Malta	Programme	National Commission for Further and Higher Education	Projects, Erasmus+	Policy	Strategy	Project	Programme	Website
Netherlands	Policy	Europass	Policy	Policy	Programme	Project	Erasmus+	Youth organisations
Austria	Projects	NQF	Erasmus+	Project	Action Plan	Project	Project	Website
Poland	Projects	Europass	No data	No data	Project	No data	No data	No data
Portugal	Programme	Project	Erasmus+	Strategy	Legislation, programme	No data	Project	No data
Romania	NGO	NQF	Erasmus+	No data	Strategy	Legislation	Strategy, Erasmus+	No data

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Slovenia	Programme	NQF	Erasmus+, Programme	Paris Declaration	Guidelines	Legislation	Strategy	Youth Office
Slovakia	Projects	NQF	Erasmus+	Project	Programme	Legislation	Project	Youth Institute
Finland	Legislation	Legislation	Organisation support, Erasmus+	Programmes	Legislation	Legislation	Project	Public authorities
Sweden	Specific projects	No regulated framework yet	Organisation support, Erasmus+	Legislation	Programme	No data	Strategy	Programme
UK	Guidance in England, funded programme in Northern Ireland, SCQF in Scotland, strategy in Wales	QCF in England, NVQ in Northern Ireland, SCQF in Scotland, CQFW in Wales	Strategy, Erasmus+ in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland	Legislation in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales	Legislation in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales	Strategy in Scotland	Programme in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales	Local authorities in England and Scotland and Wales, libraries in Northern Ireland

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki; NQF = National Qualification Framework (QCF, NVQ, SCQF and CQFW are regional equivalents in the UK).

The summary presented by the Youth Report 2015 confirms that encouraging formal education and non-formal learning (point/column 7 in the list/table above) was the most popular area of measures taken by Member States (29), while those remaining were reported by a large majority of countries (25-27)).

3.2.2. EU level

European action in support of education and training has been further developed since the adoption of the YS, covering most of the points listed above. The main reference point in this area is the EU strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), also established in 2009,⁷⁶ as described in detail by the Youth Reports.

A number of policy documents were adopted by the European institutions, especially with regard to informal training and youth work.

In November 2012, the European Commission presented a Communication on Rethinking Education – Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes, which called for action in delivering the right skills for employment, new ways of teaching and learning, as well as new approaches to funding and partnerships.⁷⁷ The Council [recommendation](#) on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, adopted in December 2012, invited the Member States to put in place appropriate arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning by 2018. A special report on recognition of non-formal learning was presented within the framework of the YS expert group in January 2014, and stressed that all possible methods and resources should be used to introduce non-formal learning and its outcomes to public discourse.⁷⁸ In addition to the exchange of best practices between Member States, coordinated by the European Commission and supported by outreach to third countries and international organisations, the European [Inventory](#) on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning was updated in 2014 and again in 2016, encouraging more dialogue between the different stakeholders in developing and implementing validation in Europe.

Following the Council [conclusions](#) on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, wellbeing and social inclusion of young people (adopted in May 2013), the European Commission presented a study on the value of youth work in the EU which presented a comparative overview of the frameworks which support youth work at national level.⁷⁹ Subsequent work of the expert group resulted in a report underlining the importance of common indicators and quality development in youth work.⁸⁰ In June 2017, Council [conclusions](#) on the role of youth work in supporting young people's development of essential life skills that facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life included a short 'compendium of life skills and their attributes' which the Member States and the European Commission were invited to consider, support and develop.

In terms of funding, the European Structural and Investment Funds were already used to support multiple projects, and as the [Youth in Action](#) programme (operational from 2007 to 2013) has been replaced by Erasmus+, thousands of young people can still use the

⁷⁶ Adopted in the form of [Council conclusions](#) of 12 May 2009.

⁷⁷ COM(2012) 669.

⁷⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/creative-potential_en.pdf, p. 33.

⁷⁹ Available [here](#).

⁸⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/quality-youth-work_en.pdf

opportunity to study, train, teach, work or volunteer in another EU country.⁸¹ The functioning of [Eurodesk](#) is continuously supported with the aim of providing information to help young people and youth organisations find out about opportunities in Europe. Tools such as the [Europass](#)⁸² and [Youthpass](#) contribute to the mobility of the young people and their transition to the labour market by providing certificates documenting their competences and skills, including those gained through non-formal learning.

The Youth Report 2015 also underlined efforts undertaken by the European Youth Forum with regard to quality education (including non-formal aspects) and the institutional set-up related to the [European Qualifications Framework](#). Last, but not least, initiatives such as [Opening up Education](#), the [Scientix](#) platform and the [EU Contest for Young Scientists](#) could also eventually contribute to improving the indicator of achievers in science and mathematics.

3.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

The EU YS supports the coordination of Member States' policies in education in a very specific way, focusing on non-formal and informal learning, youth work, and facilitating mobility of young people throughout Europe. Through the use of various implementation instruments (including mutual learning, research, setting of concrete objectives and use of EU funds) a huge variety of initiatives and actions were undertaken at the European and national level, involving youth organisations, educational establishments and regional authorities. Comparison of the results of those measures between Member States would require detailed benchmarks, while the improvement of the average indicators cannot be attributed only to the implementation of the YS.⁸³

Acknowledging the value of youth work and its entrepreneurial character⁸⁴, indicates the link with the following policy field – on employment and entrepreneurship.⁸⁵

⁸¹ See http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/news/725000-europeans-went-abroad-erasmus-2016_en

⁸² Currently in revision [procedure](#).

⁸³ For example: the substantial progress in educational attainment, observed in the crisis-affected countries (Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Italy and Spain) could possibly be linked to the deterioration of the labour market reducing incentives to drop out of school and strengthening incentives to attain higher qualification (more resilient to unemployment) – See European Commission, [Employment and Social Developments in Europe - Annual Review 2017](#), p. 97.

⁸⁴ NB: youth work should not be limited to this factor; see Denise Chircop, [An overview of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015](#), EPRS Briefing, January 2016, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁵ The report '[Taking the future into their own hands](#)', published in July 2017, provides numerous case studies in that respect.

4. Employment and entrepreneurship

Five indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:

- Youth unemployment rate among the active population, with specific attention to long-term unemployment. Overall, the share of unemployed persons increased until 2013, and then fell. The precise percentages are different for two groups: for persons aged 15-24, the figure was 21.1 % in 2011, 23 % in 2013 and 18.1 % in 2016; for those aged 25-29, the numbers are lower: 12.2 %, 14.1 % and 10.8 % respectively. In the case of those without a job for the last 12 months, the situation is almost the same, regardless of age, and the average rate for the whole age spectrum (15-24) was 6.5 % in 2011, 8 % in 2013 and 5.4 % in 2016.
- Youth unemployment ratio: share of the total population (including – in comparison to the rate above – inactive persons) aged 15-24. This figure also increased between 2011 (9.2 %) and 2013 (9.9 %), and then dropped to 7.8 % in 2016. Due note should be made that many young people are still studying full-time and thus neither working nor looking for a job at that age.
- Self-employed youth. In nominal terms, the values decreased slightly for both age groups between 2011 and 2016, while big differences are reported between Member States: 1.7 % in Ireland and 11.8 % Italy for those aged 20-24, 3.7 % in Luxembourg and 17.3 % in Italy for those aged between 25 and 29.
- Young people who would like to set up their own business. Differences between Member States are also quite visible, from Germany and Greece (both 11 %) to Lithuania and Romania (32 % – 33 %). Overall, only 5 % have already established their own business, 17 % would like to, and 3 % made an unsuccessful attempt.
- Young employees with a temporary contract. The share of young persons (aged 20-29) who work on the basis of contracts with limited duration, remains rather stable – with a slight increase from 28.4 % to 29.4 % between 2011 and 2016.

4.1. Youth Strategy list

The specific aim of initiatives in this action field is to support young people both as employees or employers, and – alongside education and training – to facilitate their transition to the labour market. In addition to the continuation of the work towards the objectives of the European Youth Pact, the Council Resolution called for measures to improve the opportunities to reconcile working and family life.

The following initiatives were suggested:

1. Increase and improve investments in the provision of suitable skills for those jobs in demand on the labour market, with better matching in the short term and better anticipation in the longer term of the skills needed,
2. Take the specific situation of young people into account when devising 'flexicurity' strategies,
3. Promote cross-border professional and vocational opportunities for young people,
4. Develop short-term measures in their recovery plans to stimulate the integration of young people in the labour market as well as structural measures taking into account youth,

5. Develop career guidance and counselling services,
6. Lower barriers to the free movement of workers across the EU,
7. Promote quality internships and apprenticeships to facilitate the entry to, and progress within, the labour market,
8. Improve childcare and promote sharing of responsibilities between partners in order to facilitate reconciliation between professional and private life for both young women and young men,
9. Support young people's entrepreneurship inter alia via entrepreneurship education, support to 'start up' funds, mentoring programmes, and encourage recognition of junior enterprise,
10. Support development of European networks and structures to promote youth entrepreneurship,
11. Promote entrepreneurship in the field of sustainable development.

Data on point 2 from this list (on 'flexicurity' strategies) was not provided for each Member State contributing to the Youth Report 2015, although it did feature before in Youth Report 2012 (with the indication of introducing relevant measures before or after the adoption of the YS). Its implementation – separating flexibility and security, which can also be quite different or even conflicting concepts – was instead reported as a follow-up to the Council resolution on the structured dialogue (adopted in May 2011) mentioning various active labour market policies (existing in 25 Member States) and changes to social security systems (12 countries).

Point 7 – promoting quality internships and apprenticeships – was also not reported separately, but remains an important matter that was addressed at European level. The support for European networks and structures to promote youth entrepreneurship (point 10) is also mentioned below under 4.2.2.

The Youth Wiki covers the above-mentioned three points in its relevant section⁸⁶, but a number of national correspondents have not yet contributed to this new portal. On the other hand – no specific mention of promoting entrepreneurship in the field of sustainable development is made there, which might be a reflection of very limited information provided on this point (11 in the list above) through the Youth Reports.

4.2. State of play

4.2.1. National level

Short-term and structural measures to integrate young people into the labour market, developing career guidance, and supporting entrepreneurship (points 4, 5 and 9 respectively in the YS list and columns in the table below) were the initiatives taken by all Member States, while the remaining ones were reported by a majority between 21 and 25 countries.

⁸⁶ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/3-employment-entrepreneurship-overview>

It is interesting to note that many Member States did not report any specific activity in relation to cross-border arrangements,⁸⁷ which can be a reflection of the fact that this is considered to be covered by EU programmes, such as Erasmus (established in 1987 and now continued as Erasmus+). Similarly, not much data was provided on lowering barriers to the cross-border mobility of workers, and, when it was, it made reference to EU legislation and the EURES project.

An important element that streamlined certain activities at national level, was the Youth Guarantee (established in 2013); the Youth Report 2015 also provides a number of examples of how young people and/or youth organisations were involved in the preparation and implementation of national YG schemes, as well as the use of public-private partnerships.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ An example that additional efforts are worth taking is the cooperation agreement in the Greater Region - see Youth Report 2015, p. 40.

⁸⁸ Youth Report, pp. 52-55.

Table 2 – Employment and entrepreneurship

Member State	1	3	4	5	6	8	9	11
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	Policy	Website, EURES, Erasmus	YG	Agency	EURES	Regulation	Policy paper, action plan	No data
Belgium-German speaking Community	Programme	Erasmus+	YG	Agency	EU law	Projects	Funding, projects	No data
Belgium – French speaking Community	Programme	Youth Office, programmes	Policy, project	Public service	Actiris international	Project	Website, guidance, strategy	Strategy
Bulgaria	Project	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Czech Republic	Register	Policy, EURES	YG	Public service	Erasmus+	Policy	Projects, strategy	Programme
Denmark	Policy	No data	Policy reform	No data	No data	No data	Strategy	Project
Germany	Recommendations, programme	EURES, Erasmus+	YG	Programme, websites	EU law	Programme	Websites, funding, action plan	No data
Estonia	Programme	EURES	Programme	Information services	EURES	No measures	Development centres, funding, strategy	No data
Ireland	Action plans	No data	YG	No data	EURES	Programme	Project	Programme
Greece	Policy and project	Youth in Action	Regulation	Strategy	Programme	No data	Programme	Programme
Spain	Legislation, strategy	Erasmus+, EURES, programmes	Strategy	Counselling services	Erasmus+, programmes	Strategy	Strategy, legislation	Programme

Member State	1	3	4	5	6	8	9	11
France	Legislation	EURES, Erasmus+. programmes	YG	Regulation, public service	Erasmus+	Programmes	Programmes	No data
Croatia	NQF	EURES, Erasmus	YG	Public service	EURES	Parental leave	Incubators, agencies, strategy, curriculum	Project
Italy	Strategy	EU programmes	Regulation	No data	No data	Action plan	No data	No data
Cyprus	Public authority	EURES, EyE	Policy measures	Public services	EURES	Schemes, project	Programme	No data
Latvia	Agency	EURES, Erasmus+	YG	Agency	EURES	No data	Regulations, Erasmus+	Programme
Lithuania	Strategies	Erasmus+, project	Legislation	Website, action plan	Erasmus+	Regulation	Project, action plan	Project
Luxembourg	Analyses	Erasmus+	YG	Public services	EURES	Programme	Policy, project	No data
Hungary	Programmes	EURES, Erasmus+	YG	YG	EURES	Regulation	Association, action plan, strategy	No data
Malta	Project	EURES	YG	Public services	EURES	No specific measures	Programmes, Policy	Project
Netherlands	Advisory organisation	Erasmus+	Action plan	Public services	Erasmus +, programme, EYE	No data	Project, curriculum, Erasmus+	Programme
Austria	Programme	EURES, Erasmus+	YG	Public service	EURES, programme	Regulation	Project, strategy, curriculum	No data
Poland	Publication	EURES, Erasmus+	YG	Project	EURES	Projects	Websites, strategy	No data
Portugal	NQF	EURES, Erasmus+	YG	Public services	EURES	Financial support	Projects, website, strategy	No data

Member State	1	3	4	5	6	8	9	11
Romania	Regulation	EURES, EyE	Policy	Agency	EURES	Regulation	Programme, strategy, project	No data
Slovenia	Resolution	EURES	Policy	Regulation	EURES	Project, regulation	Programme, action plan	Regulation
Slovakia	Projects	Programmes	YG, programme	Public services	Programmes	Project	Programme, strategy	No data
Finland	Policies	Programmes	Project	Project	EU law	Financial support	Development offices, guidelines, curriculum	No data
Sweden	Programmes, website	EURES, EyE	YG, programme	Public services	Programme	No specific measures	Agency, website, strategy, curriculum	Strategy
UK	Projects	Programmes	YG, programme	Public service, strategy	Programmes	No specific measures	Websites, agencies, funding, policy paper in England, strategy in Northern Ireland and Wales, strategy and curriculum in Scotland	Strategy in Scotland

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki. YG = Youth Guarantee, EyE = Erasmus for young Entrepreneurs, EURES – European Employment Services network.

4.2.2. EU level

Facilitating the mobility of workers in the Single Market, and – more broadly – contributing to the macro-economic development of EU Member States has been on the European agenda since the signature of the Treaty establishing the European Community. In view of the negative effects of the financial crisis on the situation of young people⁸⁹, additional efforts were also made with regard to youth specifically, and this priority has been reflected in the Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, where youth employment and entrepreneurship is considered first among the eight policy fields. In May 2010, the Council adopted a [resolution](#) on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty, which was a reflection of the priorities established by the YS itself for the first 3-year period. In addition to the measures taken by Member States, the further incentives and concrete mechanisms to improve the employment of young people and strengthen their entrepreneurship were agreed at the European level.

Following early projects established under the [Europe 2020 strategy](#), such as Youth on the Move and An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, the European Commission launched the Youth Opportunities Initiative in December 2011 in order to trigger more action to counter the high youth unemployment rates and the growing number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). This initiative emphasised the primary responsibility of Member States in tackling unemployment and supported the use of the European Social Fund (ESF) for skills development and the transition from education to labour market. Special action teams were created to assist eight Member States with the highest youth unemployment rates. A preparatory action on youth guarantee schemes eventually led to the Council recommendation on [Youth Guarantee](#) (YG) adopted in 2013, obliging Member States to ensure that a good-quality offer of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship is made to all young people within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. In addition to specific support measures that the European Commission provides to the Member States in their implementation of this recommendation, a separate financing instrument – the [Youth Employment Initiative](#) (YEI) – was established to support the implementation of YG in countries with the most difficult situation.

In addition to EU funds that were spent via ESF and other programmes to support apprenticeships, student placements in enterprises, young volunteers and entrepreneurs, a [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#) was established in July 2013, providing a platform for sharing experiences and learning from best practices. Moreover, in order to improve the quality of traineeships and work placements, research and consultation resulted in a Commission's proposal for Council [recommendation](#) on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (QFT), the latter adopted in March 2014. The QFT contains guidelines on learning content, fair working conditions, transparency of compensation and social security coverage, as well as future hiring chances. Importantly to note, the

⁸⁹ Confirmed by the [IMF report on Inequality and Poverty across Generations in the European Union](#), published in January 2018.

Council recommendation on QFT did not cover remuneration, which led some stakeholders (such as the European Youth Forum) to propose additional action (including minimum pay).

The EU paid separate attention to improving the entrepreneurial skills of young Europeans. The Commission communication on Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan⁹⁰ – Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe invited Member States to offer all students a practical entrepreneurial experience, including through non-formal learning and volunteering, before they leave secondary education.⁹¹ In May 2014, Council [conclusions](#) on promoting entrepreneurship brought together a list of recommendations for Member States in terms of appropriate education and training, and requested the European Commission to ensure necessary coordination of all relevant areas involved in the follow-up.⁹² At the same time, the Council also adopted separate [conclusions](#) on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people. In terms of available funding, [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#) 2014-2020 should be mentioned (although it is not limited to a certain age group and concerns 'young' companies rather than their founders), while other programmes supported research on youth mobility and social entrepreneurship.

Finally, the European Employment Services network (EURES) continues to facilitate the mobility of young workers throughout the EU, especially with the [Job Mobility Portal](#) and other services. Details on achievements of EURES are presented within the Single Market Scoreboard⁹³ and the results of evaluation of an integrated scheme entitled '[Your first EURES Job](#)' should be available soon. The European Parliament underlined – in its 2016 resolution on the assessment of the YS – the importance of addressing geographical mismatches between job supply and demand both within and between Member States, in order to improve youth employment opportunities and achieve greater social cohesion.⁹⁴

4.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Following the indication of the Youth Report 2012, employment and entrepreneurship constituted a priority in the following period of the YS (2013-2015). Important measures were taken at the European level, especially in the form of the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee and the EU support for its implementation in the form of the Youth Employment Initiative. Both have led to significant reforms in some Member States and concrete projects financed by the EU.

Some of the findings (such as inactivity of many Member States with regard to cross-border measures) suggest that actions managed by the European Commission (including

⁹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/action-plan_en

⁹¹ COM(2012) 795 final.

⁹² Embedding entrepreneurship as a key competence in education and training was also analysed by the Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education - see [Final Report](#), November 2014.

⁹³ See [Eures](#) section of the performance by governance tool, internal market scoreboard, European Commission website.

⁹⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0426, point 7.

student exchange programmes) are considered by the national authorities to fulfil the requirements of the YS. This is similar to the risks identified by the Court of Auditors with regard to the Youth Employment Initiatives, namely that some Member States withdraw their resources from policy areas which are supported from the EU budget.

The variety of labour market reforms undertaken in some Member States in view of the financial and employment crisis (covering long-term and temporary employment incentives, as well as tax benefits or cash benefits) constitute an interesting and possibly inspiring pool of ideas and practices. Nevertheless, only in areas where binding EU law was adopted (such as Directive 2014/54 on measures facilitating the exercise of rights conferred on workers in the context of freedom of movement for workers), there is a legal obligation that leads to harmonised measures taken at national level – such as the designation of bodies providing assistance to mobile workers.

In accordance with the established priorities, there were also a number of activities taken at European and national level to support entrepreneurship by young people, ranging from the educational programmes to financial support for start-ups. Taking the variety of strategies and programmes into account (although only a few examples exist on sustainable development), additional efforts should be made to allow the relevant institutions and stakeholders to compare the results of these measures and learn from each other.

The labour market situation of young people improved recently⁹⁵ but the younger workers are living and working in a more precarious labour market than older generations.⁹⁶ Further development of smart ideas, such as the 13 points presented by CEPS⁹⁷ in January 2018, should be considered by the policy-makers at all levels.

⁹⁵ European Commission, Employment and Social Developments in Europe - Annual Review 2017, p. 11.

⁹⁶ European Commission, Employment and Social Developments in Europe - Annual Review 2017, p. 104.

⁹⁷ See https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/RR2018_01_BlameItOnMyYouth.pdf

5. Health and wellbeing

Four indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:

- Regular smokers. The share of daily cigarette smokers in the population aged 15-24 was at 15.5 % in 2014 (no other data is available), which is only a few points lower than the share in the overall population (15+) – 19.2 %. The highest percentage of young regular smokers was recorded in the Czech Republic (33.2 %) and France (27.9 %).
- Obesity. In 2014, 4.8 % young people aged 18-24 had a Body Mass Index of 30 or above.
- Alcohol use. In almost all countries with available data, more than 50 % of young people (the same applying to older groups) reported having drunk alcohol in the past month.
- Suicide as the cause of death, per 100 000 inhabitants aged 15-24. The rate remains relatively stable across the EU, below the level of 5 throughout the last 10 years. There are differences in terms of gender (three times more young men than women committed suicide in 2012), and the rates are higher in some northern countries than in the south (although there was also a notable 50 % increase in Greece between 2007 and 2012).

5.1. Youth Strategy list

The indicated aim of this field of action is to support young people's health and wellbeing, with a focus on the promotion of mental and sexual health, sport, physical activity and healthy lifestyles. The prevention and treatment of injury, eating disorders, addictions and substance abuse is also mentioned in the YS.

The following initiatives were suggested:

1. Follow-up to the 2008 Council Resolution on the health and wellbeing of young people and encourage youth fitness and physical activity by applying the EU Physical Activity Guidelines (also adopted in 2008),
2. Take account of health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in activities to promote the health and wellbeing of young people,
3. Encourage healthy lifestyles for young people via physical education, education on nutrition, physical activity and collaboration between schools, youth workers, health professionals and sporting organisations,
4. Emphasise the role of sport as an activity supporting teamwork, intercultural learning, fair play and responsibility,
5. Increase knowledge and awareness of youth workers and youth leaders of health issues,
6. Mobilise stakeholders at local level in order to detect and help young people at risk and to signpost them to other services, where needed,
7. Encourage peer-to-peer health education,
8. Promote the protection of children and young people, in particular regarding the

competences concerning new media and their protection against certain dangers arising from the use of new media, while also recognising the benefits and opportunities new media can offer young people, e.g. through the follow-up of the Council conclusions of 21 May 2008 and 27 November 2009 on media literacy in the digital environment,

9. Facilitate access to existing health facilities by making them more youth friendly.

The Youth Wiki data base largely matches the Strategy, with a separate consideration for Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools (point 7.4.3).⁹⁸ NB: the data in column 5 in the table below comprise information provided by national correspondents under point 7.4.6 in the Youth Wiki, where measures raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and wellbeing of young people are not limited to youth workers and leaders (otherwise most of the cells would have been filled with 'No data').

5.2. State of play

5.2.1. National level

Encouraging youth fitness and physical activity, as well as promoting healthy lifestyles for young people (points 1 and 3 from the list above), were indicated by most (27) Member States in the evaluation exercise leading to the Youth Report 2015. A huge variety of measures reported under point 2 address sport, food, suicide prevention, sexual health and other issues. Some countries made a reference to the single policy document or programme as indication for covering multiple points, but – surprisingly – not much data was provided on emphasising the role of sport (4). Promoting safe use of new media (8) took the form of numerous, but different, projects in many Member States. The vagueness of 'youth-friendly' health facilities might have led to little response to the last point (9).

⁹⁸ See <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/7-health-and-well-being-overview>

Table 3 – Health and wellbeing

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	Yes ⁹⁹	Regulation	Policy, action plan	Policy paper	Expertise centres, campaigns	Programme, legislation	No measures	Project, campaign	Policy
Belgium-German speaking Community	Yes	Public facility	No data	Programme	Programme	Policy	No data	Project	Project
Belgium – French speaking Community	Programme ¹⁰⁰	National Plan	Programme	Project	Web portals, campaigns	No data	Project	Legislation, project	None
Bulgaria	No data	Strategy	Strategy	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Czech Rep.	Strategy	Strategy	Legislation, projects	Strategy	Projects, NGO's	Legislation	Programmes	Strategy	No specific measures
Denmark	Projects	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Germany	No data	Strategy	Action plan, campaign	Programme	Web portals, campaigns	Legislation	Project	Legislation	No data
Estonia	Policy	National health plan	Programme	Policy	Youth centres, campaigns	Legislation, programme	Youth organisation	Strategy	Youth clinics
Ireland	Policy	Strategy	No data	No data	Programme	Agency	No data	No data	No data
Greece	No data	Project	Programme	Programme	Project	Policy	No data	Project	No data
Spain	Yes	Strategy	Website	No data	Campaigns	Strategy	Programme	Legislation, projects	Programme

⁹⁹ Yes - Measures and initiatives are taken to encourage youth fitness and physical activity by applying the EU Physical Activity Guidelines.

¹⁰⁰ Insertions other than Yes/No are based on Youth Report 2015.

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
France	Policy	Action plan	Consultation, programmes	No data	Counselling services, campaigns	Policy	Project, website	Programmes	No specific measures
Croatia	Strategy	Strategy	Legislation	Project	Project	No data	Project	Project	Policy
Italy	Project	Programme	Policy	Project	Project	Project	Project	Guidelines	Policy
Cyprus	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	Project	No data
Latvia	Strategy	Guidelines	Legislation	Strategy	Campaigns, programmes	No data	Guidelines and NGOs	Policy guidelines	Policy
Lithuania	Regulation	Strategy	Action plan	Programme	Projects	Programmes	No data	Programme	Project
Luxembourg	Action Plan	National action plans	Project	Project	Campaigns	Strategy	Programme	Strategy	No specific measures
Hungary	No data	Regulation, curriculum	Legislation	No data	Programme	Strategy, legislation	Education	Strategy	Strategy
Malta	Programme	Public services	Project	Project	No specific campaigns	Guidelines	No measures	Programme	Project
Netherlands	Yes	Policy, programme	Programme	Project	Campaigns, website	Legislation, policy	Project	Website	Project, website
Austria	Policy	Strategy	Action plan	No data	Campaigns, public bodies	Strategy	Project	Strategy	Strategy
Poland	No data	Programme	Programme	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Portugal	Yes	Programmes	Guidelines, programmes	No data	Programme, helpline	Programme	Programme, Project	Programme	Programme
Romania	EU reference	Strategy	Plan	No data	Programmes	Programmes	No measures	Strategy	No specific measures
Slovenia	Yes	Resolution	Projects	Programme	Programme	Programme	Programme	Strategy	Programme
Slovakia	Programme	Programme, action plan	Programme, project	No data	Strategy, campaigns	Legislation	NGOs, projects	Programme	No specific measures

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Finland	Strategy	Legislation	Action plan, programme	Programme	Strategy	Legislation	Education	Online publication	Health services, campaigns
Sweden	Project	Strategy	Guidelines	Project	Campaign	Strategy	Education	Strategy	Youth Centres, website
UK	Strategy in Wales	Strategy in England, Scotland and Wales, guidelines in Northern Ireland	Programme in England, strategy in Northern Ireland, guidelines in Scotland, programme in Wales	Regulation	Strategy in England, campaigns in Northern Ireland, websites and campaigns in Scotland, campaigns and projects in Wales	Strategy	Charities, guidelines	Strategy	Projects in England and Northern Ireland, National initiative in Scotland

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki.

5.2.2. EU level

Promoting health and wellbeing has been the subject of various activities of the European Union, and the young people are often considered as specific target groups within the relevant programmes. Attention to youth health-related matters was also reflected in the Council [resolution](#) on the health and wellbeing of young people, adopted in November 2008 (that is before the current YS).¹⁰¹

As a result of a dedicated conference 'Be healthy, be yourself' in 2009, specific actions were carried out under the [Youth Health Initiative](#) around four priorities (empowerment and participation, inequalities and vulnerability, communicating health, and mainstreaming these principles across European health policy). Its separate website was later incorporated into the general one on Public Health¹⁰², and the Youth Report 2015 only refers to this initiative when presenting the activities of the European Youth Forum (criticising the worsening of access to health care in view of austerity in some EU countries).

The Youth Report 2015 also describes a number of EU policy documents concerning nutrition and physical activity, addressing childhood obesity,¹⁰³ alcohol, smoking, sexual health, AIDS¹⁰⁴ and drugs. Some measures are specifically focused on youth, such as the 2014-2016 action plan on youth drinking and on heavy episodic (binge) drinking¹⁰⁵ – part of the broader EU alcohol strategy. A 2007 [strategy](#) on nutrition is continuously implemented also through the functioning of an EU platform for action on diet, physical activity and health.¹⁰⁶

Promotion of healthy lifestyles among the young people was supported earlier under the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013) and continues to be covered by Erasmus+ (2014-2020). Other currently running projects either managed or financed by the European Commission, include support from the EU Health programme and 7th Framework Programme. As the YS also specifically mentioned sport, it is also worth noting the funding opportunities under Erasmus+. ¹⁰⁷

An example of specific European legislation that can also contribute to the wellbeing of young people is the Audiovisual Media Services Directive¹⁰⁸, which aims to reduce the marketing pressure to consume unhealthy products.

¹⁰¹ OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 1-3.

¹⁰² https://ec.europa.eu/health/home_en

¹⁰³ See the [EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity](#).

¹⁰⁴ See

https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/sti_prevention/docs/ec_hiv_actionplan_2014_en.pdf

¹⁰⁵ See

https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/alcohol/docs/2014_2016_actionplan_youthdrinking_en.pdf

¹⁰⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/platform/

¹⁰⁷ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/events/infoday-sport-30012018_en

¹⁰⁸ Directive 2010/13/EU.

The European strategy for a better internet for children, adopted by the European Commission in 2012, is additionally mentioned as one of the examples of EU action in favour of young people in the digital world,¹⁰⁹ in direct relation to point 8 of the YS.

With regard to the indicators that should be used to assess the situation of young people in Europe, the EU Physical Activity Guidelines themselves already contained a provision on regular monitoring based on pre-defined indicators to allow for evaluation and review.¹¹⁰ In addition, the Joint Action in 2012 led to the establishment of European Core Health Indicators,¹¹¹ which can be useful in promoting healthy lifestyles from an early age.

5.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

The Youth Report 2015 correctly indicated the direct link of this field of action (on health and wellbeing) with the two previous ones – education and employment: 'A healthy youth performs better at school and work. Investing in and maintaining the health of young people lowers the pressure on national healthcare systems and budgets, and makes a positive contribution to the labour market and the European economy as a whole.'¹¹²

Member States are providing very different examples of initiatives taken under specific points listed in the YS, and the difficulty in making any comparisons is increased by the fact that the content of the Council Resolution is partly phrased in general terms and with overlapping elements (such as physical activity). At the EU level, action is mostly taken with regard to very specific elements, especially with the use of action plans and funding instruments, although certain legislative acts can also have an influence on the wellbeing of young people. As such, the youth-related matters are already integrated into the general health policy, fulfilling the Youth Strategy's aim of mainstreaming youth policy. The necessary protection of children in the digital sphere could also be better placed within the relevant policy area, rather than as a self-standing point among health-related matters.

¹⁰⁹ COM(2012) 196 final.

¹¹⁰ [Recommended Policy Actions in Support of Health-Enhancing Physical Activity](#), 2008, p. 35.

¹¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/health/indicators/echi/list_en

¹¹² Youth Report 2015, p. 102.

6. Participation

Five indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:

- Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in political or community/ environmentally-oriented NGOs during the previous year. These participation rates remain rather low (at 3 to 7 %), especially in comparison to sports clubs (29 %) or leisure (16 %).¹¹³
- Participation of young people (aged 18-30) in local, regional, national or European parliamentary elections in the last three years. While 16 % declare not having been old enough, 63 % did vote – with the general rate decreasing as the geographical scope grows. There are differences between Member States – with 82 % in Sweden and 45 % in the UK.¹¹⁴
- Young people (aged 18-30) who are elected to the European Parliament. In 2014, at least one young MEP was elected from 9 countries, with more than one Member in two cases (Bulgaria – 3, Denmark – 2).¹¹⁵
- Young people (aged 16-24) who use the internet for interaction with public authorities (such as obtaining information from their web sites, downloading official forms and/or completing and sending them) in the last year. The average fluctuates around 50 %, with big differences between Member States (91 % in Finland and 11 % in Romania).¹¹⁶
- Young people using internet for accessing or posting opinions on websites (e.g. blogs, social networks, etc.) for discussing civic and political issues in the last three months. This indicator was measured at the level of 18 % in 2013, which is a slight increase from 14 % in 2011.

6.1. Youth Strategy list

The Council Resolution set out EU support in this field of action as aiming to maximise young people's participation in representative democracy and civil society at all levels and in society at large.

The following initiatives were suggested:

1. Develop mechanisms for dialogue with youth and youth participation on national youth policies,
2. Encourage use of already existing, or development of, guidelines on youth participation, information and consultation in order to ensure the quality of these activities,
3. Support youth organisations politically and financially, as well as local and national youth councils, and promote recognition of their important role in democracy,
4. Promote the participation of more and a greater diversity of young people in representative democracy, in youth organisations and other civil-society organisations,

¹¹³ [Flash Eurobarometer 408](#), p. 6.

¹¹⁴ [Flash Eurobarometer 408](#), p. 15.

¹¹⁵ The remaining seven are Belgium, Germany, Italy, Romania, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK.

¹¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/dashboard/participation/internet-activities/index_en.htm

5. Make effective use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen participation of young people,
6. Support various forms of 'learning to participate' from an early age through formal education and non-formal learning,
7. Further develop opportunities for debate between public institutions and young people.

Additionally, the European Commission was tasked with the revision of the European Youth Portal and promoting greater outreach to young people.

The Youth Wiki data-base covers the participatory measures in a different order, with the content covering all of the YS points and more.¹¹⁷

6.2. State of play

6.2.1. National level

In most Member States, mechanism supporting youth organisations and involving them in consultation of policy-making existed before the adoption of the YS. The formulation of the YS points unfortunately led to an overlap in some answers – indicating policy actions or legislative acts broadly covering the youth representation.

¹¹⁷ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/5-participation-overview>

Table 4 – Participation

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	YC, YP, policy plan	Legislation	Funding	Project	Projects	Curriculum	Citizen's Cabinet for Youth
Belgium-German speaking Community	YC, YP, Youth Advisory Board, Decree	Strategy	Funding	Legislation, Youth information centre, YC, strategy	Youth information centre	Legislation, youth work	Project
Belgium – French speaking Community	YC, YP	None	Funding	Legislation, Youth information centre, YC	Project, websites	Legislation	YC
Bulgaria	Strategy	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Czech Republic	National Parliament of Children and Youth, Structured dialogue	Strategy	Funding	Projects, programmes, NGO's	Strategy	Legislation	Structured dialogue
Denmark	Working group	No data	Funding	No data	No data	Project	Project
Germany	YP, Legislation	Strategy	Funding	Projects, Web portals, legislation	Websites, E-participation	Legislation, programme	Project, programme
Estonia	YC, Youth field Development Plan	Development Plan	Funding	Project, Youth centre, YC	E-participation	Curriculum, legislation	Project
Ireland	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Greece	Platform	No data	No data	No data	Platform	Platform	Project
Spain	YC, Structured dialogue	Strategy	Funding	YC, Legislation	E-participation, campaigns	Curriculum	YC
France	YC	Strategy	Funding	Projects, Youth information network & centres	Projects	Programme, actions	Youth rendezvous
Croatia	YC, Youth Advisory Board, programme	Strategy	Funding	Programme, NGO, campaign	Eurodesk	Programmes	Structured dialogue
Italy	No data	Guidelines	Convention	Project	No data	Network	No data
Cyprus	Youth Board, YC	Strategy	Projects	Website, Eurodesk	Project	Curriculum	Youth conference
Latvia	YC, Structured dialogue projects	Legislation, plans	Legislation, funding	Programme, Eurodesk, projects	Eurodesk	Legislation, youth organisations	Project
Lithuania	Legislation, Structured dialogue	Programme	Funding	Policy, Eurodesk, website	Programme	Curriculum	Strategy
Luxembourg	YC, National structured dialogue	Legislation	Funding	Policy, Youth centre, campaign	E-participation	Curriculum, student unions	YC
Hungary	YC, YP, National Youth Expert Forum	Legislation	Funding	Programme, curriculum	E-participation	Curriculum, programme	Youth Forum
Malta	YC, YP, Consultation Platform	Policy	Funding, Project	Programme, publications, Youth one stop shop	Online platforms	Youth Hub, programmes	Debates in schools

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Netherlands	YC, consultations	Strategy	Funding	Programme, projects	Project	Curriculum, policy, guidelines	National youth debate, projects
Austria	YC, YP, projects	Strategy	Legislation, funding	Youth org., online platforms	Online platforms	Curriculum, projects	EU projects
Poland	YC, consultations	Programme	Funding	Youth org., campaign	Websites	Curriculum, projects	Not applicable
Portugal	YC, YP, projects, campaigns	Programmes	Legislation, funding	National electoral Commission	Social media, programmes	Strategy	National Youth Plan
Romania	YC, legislation	Strategy	Legislation, funding	Strategy, campaigns	No spec. policies	Legislation	Structured dialogue
Slovenia	YC, legislation	Programme	Legislation, funding	Programme, projects	Eurodesk	Curriculum, programme	Projects
Slovakia	YC, Youth consultations	Strategy	Legislation, funding	Youth centers, projects	Eurodesk	Legislation, programme	No specific initiatives
Finland	YC, legislation	Policy	Legislation, funding	Action plan, website	Centre of youth information	Curriculum, projects	Projects
Sweden	YC, referral system	Policy	Legislation, funding	Projects, website	No specific policies	Curriculum	No specific initiatives
UK	YC, YP, Statutory guidance in England	Programme in England, strategy in Scotland and Wales	Policy, funding, legislation	Funding in England and Wales, policy in Northern Ireland, programme in Scotland	Action plans	Curriculum, campaigns, legislation	Projects in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, consultations in Scotland

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki. YC = Youth Council, YP = Youth Parliament.

Additional activities were presented in the Youth Report 2015 in relation to topics not covered in the YS list or more broadly related to participation of young people in policy-making. Specific attention was given to the eastern dimension, and projects involving young people with a migrant background.¹¹⁸ A number of initiatives taken by Member States following the Council resolution of 11 December 2012 on the overview of the Structured Dialogue are examples how further promotion of youth participation can be done. A majority of countries reported enhancing the recognition of youth work (21)¹¹⁹, establishing youth facilities guided by youth workers (19), promoting youth participation through social media and e-participation (18), raising awareness of European values (18) and supporting participation and intercultural dialogue of young people from EU and non-EU countries, including refugees (17).¹²⁰

6.2.2. EU level

As it was already pointed out in the Introduction, encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe was listed among the Union's aims. It was already set as a top priority in the Council Resolution 2009 (for the last 6-month period – first half of 2011), as then – for the following 18-month cycle (from mid-2011 until the end of 2012). The Council [resolution](#) on new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life (May 2011) stressed the importance of promoting youth participation in decision-making structures, increasing information about democratic rights and values.

A study published in February 2013 underlined the young people's willingness to participate in political and social life, and provided a number of ideas to make this participation more attractive and efficient.¹²¹ Specific projects focusing on youth were supported through EU programmes, such as [Europe for Citizens](#).

In accordance with the clear provision of the YS, the European Commission further developed the [European Youth Portal](#), which was re-launched in May 2013. The use of modern social media for raising awareness of the importance of civic participation at various levels is also growing. The European Parliament's 2016 resolution stressed 'the potential of new technologies for connecting with young people and calls on the EU and the Member States to take advantage of those technologies to strengthen dialogue with young people and their capacity to participate in society'.¹²²

In addition to the [European Youth Week](#) (an annual event since 2008), during which numerous events take place across the EU, the [European Youth Event](#) (EYE) is hosted by the European Parliament every second year, with participants later having the chance to present their most concrete ideas to parliamentary committees.

¹¹⁸ Youth Report 2015, pp. 84-85.

¹¹⁹ See also Chapter 3.

¹²⁰ Youth Report 2015, pp. 86-88.

¹²¹ [Youth Participation in Democratic Life](#), final report.

¹²² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0426, point 10.

A separate [European Youth Capital](#) initiative is organised annually since 2009 and contributes to the increase of awareness about young people's potential.¹²³

Research projects financed by the EU – as already mentioned in Chapter 1 on the instruments of the EU YS – contribute to the gathering of evidence. The Youth Report 2015 also makes numerous references to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, which can be linked to 'learning to participate' from early age.¹²⁴

In December 2015, the extensive Council [resolution](#) on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe invited the Member States to work on strategies (or other mechanisms) enhancing the political participation of all young people (especially those with fewer opportunities with numerous priorities. The latter included elements on formal education and non-formal learning, local and regional participation opportunities, alternative forms and e-participation, dialogue with political decision-makers, as well as youth work and youth organisations. Additional requests for research and publicity were addressed to the European Commission.

The current presentation of this policy action, made by the European Commission, correctly focuses on the dialogue with young people, support for youth organisations, engagement of under-represented groups and early 'learning to participate'.¹²⁵ The way, in which these elements are being pursued at the EU level – Structured dialogue, support through Erasmus+ and the newly established European Solidarity Corps, shows that policy objectives and implementation instruments are often inseparable.

6.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Contrary to the previous three fields of action – related to specific policy areas in which youth aspects could be better taken in account, the one on participation is more about encouraging young people to actively take part in societal life. Active citizenship of young people was already one of the three pillars of youth cooperation framework in the previous period (2002-2009) and continues to be a major aim or concern under the current EU YS.

The activity of Member States in this policy field was found to be particularly high, with 27 of them developing mechanisms of dialogue with young people, 25 providing public support for youth organisations and two-thirds reporting other measures.¹²⁶ At the same time, the European Commission considered that policy-makers at all levels could still do more to involve under-represented groups.¹²⁷

The establishment of a permanent structure, which allows youth representatives to influence policy-making at national, regional or local level, might be more effective than

¹²³ <http://www.europeanyouthcapital.org/>

¹²⁴ Youth Report 2015, p. 76.

¹²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy/civil-society_en

¹²⁶ SWD(2017) 281 final, p. 14.

¹²⁷ Idem

separate projects or even legislative provisions encouraging such consultation. Unfortunately, not many Member States confirmed the existence of guidelines ensuring the quality of this participation. Moreover, especially in comparison to the activity at EU level, relatively little national examples were provided so far about the effective use of ICT to increase youth participation in mainstream policy-making.

Various aspects of young people's participation in civil society are based on fundamental values and cover different policy areas such as education, employment and social inclusion. Major policy documents (such as Council resolutions) have complemented the YS but the importance of youth participation is often referred to only in general terms. The overlap of specific initiatives with voluntary activities (covered in the next chapter) and the structured dialogue (Chapter 11) concerns both the EU and national (or lower) level of youth policy.

7. Voluntary activities

Four indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:

- The engagement of young people (aged 15-30) in organised voluntary activities in the last 12 months. On average, 31 % young Europeans are involved in volunteering (with some Member States higher values and others – below 20 %), and this figure increased by 6 % since 2014 (while in Malta it decreased by 4 %).¹²⁸ The rate of volunteers aged 15-19 is slightly higher than that of their older peers.
- Share of young people making a voluntary contribution to their local community during the last 12 months. Between 2011 and 2015, the reported rate increased on average from 51 % to 66 %.
- Share of young people who have resided abroad for the purpose of volunteering. This indicator also noted an increase (from 2.4 % in 2011 to 6 % in 2015 and 8 % in 2017), but still remains at a low level.
- Formal recognition for taking part in voluntary activities. The percentage of young people involved in organised voluntary activities and having received formal recognition for their participation (for example through a certificate or diploma) increased since 2011 by only 3 % (from 25 % to 28 %), with significant changes in some Member States since December 2014 (increase of 25 % in Croatia and decrease of 13 % in Luxembourg).

7.1. Youth Strategy list

The aims set out by the Council Resolution were to support and better recognise young people's voluntary activities, remove existing obstacles and to promote cross-border mobility. It is important to note that the value of volunteering was indicated as an important form of non-formal learning, which links it to education and training.

The following initiatives were suggested:

1. Promote the recognition of skills acquired through voluntary activities through instruments such as Europass, Youthpass and Member State funded instruments,
2. Implement the [2008] Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers in Europe,
3. Raise awareness about the value of voluntary activities, including through peer-to-peer processes,
4. Promote protection of young volunteers and quality in voluntary activities,
5. Engage young people and youth organisations in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the future European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship (2011),
6. Promote intergenerational solidarity through voluntary activities.

With regard to point 2, it should be noted that the [2008 Recommendation](#) contained two major recommendations addressed to the Member States: the first – to promote the mobility of young volunteers across Europe by enhancing the conditions for cooperation

¹²⁸ [Flash Eurobarometer 455](#), Report, European youth, p. 20 and the following.

between the organisers of voluntary activities in different countries; and the second – to facilitate the development of a number of actions (with a significant disclaimer of due regard for national frameworks and legislation in the field of voluntary activities, overall national priorities, existing local opportunities and public expenditure regimes). The 12 actions were as follows:

- improve the level of knowledge of voluntary activities within their national territories and transfer this information to the European Commission for further dissemination;
- make information on opportunities for voluntary activities abroad easily accessible to young people and to those active in youth work and in youth organisations;
- make information available to all the relevant actors on the rights and opportunities that arise from existing provisions at European and national level on cross-border voluntary activities;
- promote the exchange of information on the opportunities for voluntary activities in other Member States and the simplification of the procedures to be followed with the aim of making it easier for young volunteers of a Member State to take part in voluntary activities in other Member States;
- adopt, where appropriate, a flexible approach to developing opportunities for cross-border voluntary activities in Europe (with a couple of specific examples¹²⁹);
- increase awareness of the importance of intercultural competences and language learning among young people in order to reduce barriers to their cross-border mobility;
- encourage organisers of voluntary activities to develop self-assessment tools, taking into account the EVS experience, in order to ensure the quality of the cross-border voluntary activities they are taking part in;
- encourage organisers in both sending and receiving Member States to cooperate in providing assurances about the protection of young volunteers and service recipients. This should include sufficient information about the voluntary activity, its organisers and the volunteer, so as to enable both parties to make an informed decision about the activity's suitability and meet any legal requirements;
- examine further relevant social protection provisions through the appropriate existing EU fora with a view to making full use of the possibilities under EU and national legislation;
- promote the appropriate recognition of learning outcomes of voluntary activities, in line with Community provisions and within the respective national systems or frameworks for qualifications, where existing;

¹²⁹ supporting the development of the hosting capacity for cross-border volunteers; supporting the creation of contact points for young European volunteers, in connection, if feasible, with National Agencies of the Youth in Action Programme; promoting the use of existing European mechanisms that can help youth mobility, such as, mobility cards; promoting the cross-border mobility of those active in youth work and in youth organisations; and supporting the development of information and training, for those active in youth work, youth organisations, local authorities and civic services, on the cross-border voluntary activities of young people.

- promote the use of instruments at EU level that can facilitate cross-border voluntary activities by ensuring the transparency of qualifications, such as Europass, Youthpass and the European Qualifications Framework;
- give particular attention to young people with fewer opportunities in order to enhance their access to voluntary activities and especially to cross-border voluntary activities.

Most of the detailed suggestions listed in the 2008 Recommendation¹³⁰ aimed to support the growth of cross-border volunteering. The YS adopted in 2009 added important points on the general need to increase public awareness of the value of volunteering as such, as well as to assure the necessary social and quality standards. Two final elements constituted an invitation to active involvement in the 2011 European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship and – apart from an incentive to arrange the relevant measures at the national level – the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.¹³¹

The new Youth-Wiki covers this policy field with information re-organised into a more coherent structure.¹³² The references to the national strategies (if such exist), regulations and programmes (including public funding and forms of quality assurance), is complemented by one point on cross-border mobility programmes (with an obvious link to EU measures), awareness raising and skills-recognition. Importantly, the whole part on voluntary activities is placed in second place, right after general information on youth policy governance, and in advance of employment.

7.2. State of play

7.2.1. National level

According to the descriptive material in the Youth Wiki, most Member States do not have separate strategies on volunteering, but a majority has adopted specific laws to ensure its legal framework. In some countries (such as Finland), the approach is that voluntary activities need to be supported but not heavily regulated. Promoting the recognition of skills acquired through voluntary activities was the most often reported action taken by Member States so far (29), closely followed by raising awareness (28). Intergenerational solidarity was supposedly taken up in 20 countries, but only two concrete examples are available. The Youth Report 2015 also signalled an increased effort in supporting the protection of young volunteers but many countries provided exactly the same references to policy acts or instruments in response to separate issues.

¹³⁰ Council recommendation of 20 November 2008 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union; OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8–10.

¹³¹ See Jan Tymowski, [European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations \(2012\) – European Implementation Assessment](#), European Parliament, March 2015.

¹³² See <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/2-voluntary-activities-overview>

Table 5 – Voluntary activities

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	Policy	+	Campaign, website	Legislation	No data	No data
Belgium-German speaking Community	Decree	+	Website, youth information centres	Erasmus+ quality assurance	Programme	Project
Belgium – French speaking Community	Youthpass	+	Platform	Regulation	Platform	Platform
Bulgaria	Legislation		No data	No data	Campaign	No data
Czech Republic	Legislation		Strategy	Recommendations, methodical material	Coordination	Action plan
Denmark	Recognition		Project	Certification	Steering group	Policy
Germany	NQF	+	Project, campaigns	Regulations	No data	Project
Estonia	Volunteer pass		Youth Agency	EU programmes	EU programmes	Projects
Ireland	Strategy	+	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy
Greece	Platform		Platform	Platform	Platform	Platform
Spain	Certificate	+	Website, projects	Ethical code, legislation	No data	Project
France	Legislation	+	Website, platform	Legislation	No data	Legislation
Croatia	Legislation	+	State award	Rulebook	Legislation	Legislation
Italy	No data	+	Projects	Projects	No data	No data
Cyprus	No arrangements		Youth board	None	Seminar	Project
Latvia	Youthpass, Europass		Policy	Guidelines, Plan	Legislation	No data
Lithuania	Legislation		Campaigns	Regulations	Programme	Programme
Luxembourg	Legislation	+	Youth service, websites	Legislation	No data	No data
Hungary	Legislation		Programmes	No information	No data	No data
Malta	No framework		Campaign	Formal monitoring	No data	Project
Netherlands	Youthpass		Campaigns	Declaration	Project	Project
Austria	Volunteer pass	+	Online platform	Reports	Project	Projects
Poland	Legislation	+	Website, projects	Legislation	No data	No data

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6
Portugal	None		Programmes, campaigns	Programme	No data	Project
Romania	Legislation		Campaign	Legislation	No data	No data
Slovenia	Legislation	+	NGO, programme	Legislation	National Council	Projects
Slovakia	No framework	+	Platform	None	Programme	Project
Finland	Legislation, projects	+	Websites, curriculum	Legislation	No data	No data
Sweden	No framework		Government agencies	None	No data	No data
UK	Europass, Youthpass, awards	+	Social media and national database in England, social media in Northern Ireland, project in Scotland, national database in Wales	Programme	No data	Funding in England

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki. Indications of actions under point 2 reflect the fact whether any examples were provided by Youth Report 2015.

7.2.2. EU level

A number of acts adopted at the European level with regard to volunteers even before the 2008 Recommendation was supposed to contribute to the freedom of movement of people. In legislative terms, facilitating cross-border mobility of unremunerated training or voluntary service was among the objectives of the [Council Directive 2004/114/EC](#) but only dealt with the issue of special residence permits.¹³³ Support for voluntary activities has already been a subject of the open method of coordination, and the Youth in Action Programme reinforced the positive experience of the European Voluntary Service (EVS – part of the EU youth programme since 1996).

The 2008 Recommendation clearly aimed at the intensification of Member States' cooperation with regard to cross-border volunteering 'without prejudice to the diversity of their national situations'.¹³⁴ From the four options presented by the European Commission in its impact assessment,¹³⁵ improving the inter-operability of existing national schemes was chosen, rather than harmonising them at the European level or simply expanding the EVS. The [European Voluntary Service](#), which now operates under Erasmus+, offers young people (aged 17-30) the possibility to volunteer in another

¹³³ OJ L 375, 23.12.2004, p. 12–18.

¹³⁴ See point 7 under 'Recognises that...' of the Council Resolution on the EU Youth Strategy.

¹³⁵ COM(2008) 2174.

Member State as well as outside the EU. The [database of accredited organisations](#) – upgraded in December 2014 – contains more than 6000 organisations and by the time of its 20th Anniversary, 100 000 volunteers have been supported through this programme.¹³⁶

Although Member States provided little information on the European Year of Volunteering (2011)¹³⁷ for the Youth Reports (the value in raising awareness was acknowledged in YR 2012), its sustainability effect comprises such initiatives as the [European Volunteer Centre](#) – a network of over 60 organisations promoting and supporting volunteers and volunteering in Europe at all levels.

Taking into account the OMC character of the EU YS, the exchange of information and experience on youth volunteering was organised through an expert group set up by the European Commission as early as 2009. Additionally, an online [youth volunteering platform](#) was created as part of the [European youth portal](#) – containing a user-friendly search engine, basic information and individual stories.

The new initiative to allow young people to volunteer (or work) in projects for the benefit of communities and people around Europe – the [European Solidarity Corps](#) – was launched in December 2016 and is currently under a legislative procedure.¹³⁸

7.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Volunteering has been present in the EU Member States' practices before the matter was taken up by the European Union, and young people have always been part of it – although such activity is not limited by age. The limited scope of the European intervention, especially in comparison to other YS policy fields, focused on improving the chances of cross-border volunteering – through the extensive list of suggestions contained in the 2008 Council Recommendation, as well as specific funding, coordination and publicity projects. The decision to integrate this recommendation into the YS framework has resulted in a repetition of calls for action, while the reporting mechanism leading to Youth Reports did not provide detailed information on Member States' activity in all the points listed.

The development of the Youth Wiki illustrates the direction in which the European coordination of volunteering could now proceed. In order to make volunteering even more accessible and appealing, it might be necessary to further improve the recognition of the skills gained in voluntary projects, assure the protection of young volunteers and the quality of these projects, and continue raising awareness about existing opportunities. Better sharing of best practices between Member States, which have different legal arrangements and traditions, could ultimately lead to some form of limited harmonisation.

¹³⁶ http://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/evs_factsheet_and_impacts_apr_2016.pdf

¹³⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/european-year-of-volunteering/index_en.htm

¹³⁸

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2017/0102\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2017/0102(COD)&l=en)

The increase in cross-border volunteering, as shown in the indicators mentioned at the beginning, might probably be attributed to the EU action, and it will be interesting to see how much this trend is further maintained by the European Solidarity Corps.

8. Social inclusion

Six indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:

- Poverty risk. Share of young people (aged 18-24) who are at risk of poverty and/or severe material deprivation and/or who are living in a household with very low work intensity (where adults worked less than 20 % of their total work potential during the past year) – and thus potentially socially excluded. This indicator was increasing until 2013, with the average reaching 31.9 %, and has dropped to 30.6 % in 2016.
- The share of young people (aged 16-24) living with parents with a disposable income equivalent to 60 % of the national median or below. This indicator continued to increase, with 18.1 % in 2011, 19.3 % in 2013 and 20.1 % in 2015.
- Severe material deprivation rate. The percentage of youth that cannot afford at least four of the given nine 'items' (rent, mortgage or utility bills; keeping their home warm; facing unexpected expenses; eating meat or proteins regularly; going on holiday; TV set; refrigerator; car; telephone) increased between 2010 (9.7 %) and 2012 (11.7 %). Data is only available for some countries in 2013: for example 3.7 % in Finland and 42.1 % in Bulgaria.
- Living in households with very low work intensity. For the age group 15-29, this has increased slightly from 10 % in 2011 to 10.6 % in 2013.
- Self-reported unmet needs for medical care. In 2013, the proportion of young people (aged 16 to 24) renouncing a medical examination due to prohibitive cost, travel distance, or as a result of waiting lists, was 1.5 % (half of the rate for the total population).¹³⁹
- Young people (aged 15-24) not in employment, education or training (NEETs). Following the steady increase to 13.2 % in 2012, the rate has been falling and the EU average in 2016 was 11.6 %.

8.1. Youth Strategy list

The specific aims of initiatives in this action field is to prevent young people's social exclusion and poverty and the transmission of such problems between generations, as well as strengthening mutual solidarity between society and young people.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, the Council Resolution called for the promotion of equal opportunities for all and combatting all forms of discrimination.

The following initiatives were suggested:

1. Realise the full potential of youth work and youth centres as means of inclusion,
2. Adopt a cross-sectoral approach when working to improve community cohesion and solidarity and reduce the social exclusion of young people, addressing the interlinkages between e.g. young people's education and employment and their social inclusion,
3. Support the development of intercultural awareness and competences for all young people and combat prejudice,

¹³⁹ The presentation of this indicator in the [Youth Monitor](#) is misleading in terms of colours used (red for the best results).

¹⁴⁰ A formulation 'between young people and the rest of society' could be more precise.

4. Support information and education activities for young people about their rights,
5. Address the issues of homelessness, housing and financial exclusion,
6. Promote access to quality services — e.g. transport, e-inclusion, health, social services,
7. Promote specific support for young families,
8. Engage young people and youth organisations in the planning, delivery and evaluation of European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010).

The overlap with the points addressed under education, employment, health, participation and voluntary activities can be instantly noticed, and was probably intended. When compared to the structure of the relevant chapter of the Youth Wiki,¹⁴¹ a notable addition is the specific reference to a national strategy for the social inclusion (point 4.3) – which was integrated below in column 0. Another novelty is point 4.4 on inclusive programmes for young people, including details on their financing and quality assurance – the brief data on this matter appears below in column 9.¹⁴² Points 5 and 6 appear together in the Youth Wiki under a joint title of 'Access to quality services'.

8.2. State of play

8.2.1. National level

The Youth Report 2015 summarised Member States' actions as the confirmation of the 'importance attached to the integration of socially excluded young people'.¹⁴³ Cross-sectoral cooperation (mostly between the relevant government ministries) was reported separately, and the basic info (Yes/No) is shown below under column 2.

Unsurprisingly, all Member States engage in some form of policy in favour of social inclusion, with or without the need of additional incentive from the EU in the framework of the YS. In addition to national arrangements concerning education and employment in general, additional initiatives on quality youth work and public funding were provided by numerous Member States.¹⁴⁴ The point concerning access to quality services resulted in action in many countries after the adoption of the Council Resolution, but some national reports were only limited to such measures as discounts for young people on transport services. With regard to point 5 from the list above, some Member States developed mechanisms specifically addressing young people, while the 2012 Youth Report already indicated that youth homelessness and housing matters were previously considered under general social policies in those countries. Supporting the development of intercultural awareness materialised in the form of inventive programmes and campaigns, while support for young families is mostly provided through financial instruments.

¹⁴¹ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/4-social-inclusion-overview>

¹⁴² Column 8 was skipped due to the very limited reference of the relevant point from the Council Resolution.

¹⁴³ Youth Report 2015, p. 65.

¹⁴⁴ Youth Report 2015, p. 71.

Table 6 – Social inclusion

Member State	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	Policy Plan, action plans	Programme	Yes	Projects	Projects	Curriculum, website, projects	Legislation	Policy	Programmes, projects
Belgium-German speaking Community	Regional development project	Strategy	Yes	Strategy	Strategy, Youth Decree	Legislation, strategy	Centre for health care	No data	Youth Strategy Plan, projects
Belgium – French speaking Community	Various strategies	Programme	Yes	Programme, campaign	Programme, campaign, projects	Information centres	Legislation, financial support	Financial support	Legislation, projects
Bulgaria	-	No data	No	No data	No data	No data	Legislation	Funding	-
Czech Republic	Youth Strategy, other strategies	Funding	Yes	No data	Campaign	Strategy, campaign	Network	Funding	Programme, Project
Denmark	-	Strategy	Yes	Strategy	Strategy	Projects	No data	No data	-
Germany	National Action Plan	Programme	Yes	Projects	Projects	Campaign, projects, programme	Policy	Financial services (grants and tax breaks)	Programmes
Estonia	Development plan	Legislation, plan, project	Yes	Strategy	Strategy	Legislation, policy	Policy	Funding	Programme
Ireland	-	Policy	Yes	No data	No data	Policy	Policy	Policy	-
Greece	-	No data	Yes	Programme	Programme	Project	No data	Project	-
Spain	Youth strategy, Action plan	Programme	Yes	Programmes	Programmes	Compass manual, strategic plan	Projects	Action plan	Erasmus +

Member State	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
France	Multiyear plan	Programme	Yes	Actions	Actions, events	Campaigns, guide	Policy	Financial services	Youth Guarantee, programmes
Croatia	Strategy, National Youth Programme	Programme	Yes	Programme	Programme	Strategy, projects	Strategy	Financial services	Projects, programmes
Italy	-	Programme	Yes	No data	No data	Policy	No data	Projects	-
Cyprus	Strategy	Programme	Yes	Policy	Policy, project	Programme, campaigns, strategy	Project, E-counselling	Benefits, funding	Programme, policy
Latvia	Strategy	Programme	Yes	Policy	Policy, foundation	Discussions, seminars, preventive actions	Guidelines	None	EU Programme
Lithuania	Action Plan	Programme	Yes	Campaign	Campaign	Legislation, programme	Financial support	Legislation, funding	EU Programme
Luxembourg	National Reform Programme	Project	Yes	Campaign	Campaign, projects	Committee, projects	Project, legislation	Funding	Youth Guarantee
Hungary	National Youth Strategy, National Social Inclusion Strategy	Project	Yes	Scholarships	Scholarships, projects	None	Programme, discounts	Programme	Scholarship Programme
Malta	National Strategic Policy	Programme	Yes	Project	Project	Commissioner for Children	Financial benefits, project	Social assistance	Programme, project
Netherlands	National strategy, projects, education	Programme	Yes	Campaign	Campaign, projects	Ombudsman, Action programme	Financial support	Project	Programmes
Austria	National Action Plan	Network	Yes	Strategy	Strategy, project	Action Plan, Information centre	Discounts	Funding	Projects
Poland	National Programme	Project	Yes	Ombudsman	Ombudsman, project	Ombudsman	Funding	Funding	National Programme

Member State	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
Portugal	Strategy	Programme	Yes	Projects	Projects, campaign	Projects, guidelines, campaign, strategy	Programme, discounts	Programme	Youth Guarantee
Romania	National Strategy	Programme	Yes	Campaign	Campaign	Campaign	Legislation, campaigns	Programme	Strategic programmes
Slovenia	National Programme	Project	Yes	Campaign, projects	Campaign, projects	Ombudsman, projects	Legislation, strategy	Financial support and benefits	National Programme for Youth
Slovakia	Youth Strategy	Project	Yes	Programme	Programme, campaign	Programme	Programme	Financial support	Projects
Finland	Policy, programme	Programme, project	Yes	Programme	Programme, action plan	Ombudsman, action plan	Programme	Financial support and benefits	Action Plans
Sweden	Strategy	Funding	Yes	Funding, project	Funding, project	Action Plans, strategy	Legislation	No data	National Coordinator
UK	Various strategies in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales	Programme in England, strategy in Scotland, project in Northern Ireland, programmes in Wales	Yes	School curriculum in England, strategies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales	School curriculum in England, strategies in Scotland Northern Ireland, and Wales	Legislation and strategy in England, strategy in Scotland, Commissioner for Children in Northern Ireland, Children's Commissioner in Wales	Benefits in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales	No data	Programmes in England and Wales, strategy in Northern Ireland and Scotland

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki.

8.2.2. EU level

Social inclusion is an area where numerous special measures were taken at the EU level and mainstreaming of youth policies was practiced quite extensively, with the interests of young people considered within larger actions and programmes. Social (and vocational) integration was one of the three pillars of the youth cooperation framework in the previous period of coordination (2002-2009). Shortly after the adoption of the present YS, 2010 was dedicated to the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and it led to the creation of a [European Platform against Poverty](#), which facilitated further exchange of information and policy-making.

Also in the following years, addressing poverty and social exclusion remained a general aim for the EU, in accordance with the Europe 2020 Strategy. Specific policy documents, such as the [Social Investment Package](#) (adopted by the European Commission in February 2013), contained separate provisions on children and young people, while the representatives of the Member States (maintaining principal competences in social affairs) were dealing with those matters on multiple occasions (esp. within the framework of the Social Protection Committee). The European Parliament decided to recall in its 2016 resolution the importance of addressing poverty among young people from socio-economically deprived backgrounds, those with unemployed parents and those who have not managed to break out of their family's socio-economic cycle.¹⁴⁵

The Council [resolution](#) on the active inclusion of young people, adopted in May 2010, provided further incentives for national action especially in the policies of education and employment, especially with regard to young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). The Council recognised the crucial role of young people for the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth necessary for Europe's future prosperity. As reported by the European Commission, almost all Member States took action in this field, although the reported measures addressed all young people in need.¹⁴⁶ Another major policy document looking into this matter were the Council [conclusions](#) on enhancing the social inclusion of young people who are not in employment, education or training in November 2013, which called for innovative ways, peer learning and outreach activities to be used for working with young people in a NEET situation.

Specific attention was also given to young people disadvantaged because of their background. In November 2012, the Council [conclusions](#) on the participation and social inclusion of young people with emphasis on those with a migrant background stressed inter alia that successful integration of migrants is essential for the prosperity, mutual understanding and communication of the individuals concerned, local societies and the EU at large. A number of Member States introduced specific measures – such as language courses, educational support, or other services – for certain minorities. Additionally, the European contribution to preventing discrimination led to general measures against racism and xenophobia, as well as a 2015 overview report focused on youth.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, it is also important to note the [conclusions](#) of the Council from June 2016 on

¹⁴⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0426, point 20.

¹⁴⁶ Youth Report 2015, p. 72.

¹⁴⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/overview_youth_discrimination_en.pdf

the role of the youth sector in an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to preventing and combating violent radicalisation of young people. In relation to this, a separate point was created in the Youth Wiki under the Chapter on social inclusion to present Member States' key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation which lead to violent extremism.

With regard to the first point from the YS list (and in addition to what has already been mentioned in Chapter 3), Council [conclusions](#) on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, wellbeing and social inclusion of young people, adopted in May 2013, underlined the important role that youth work plays in preventing social exclusion and enhancing social inclusion. Subsequent Council conclusions on [reinforcing youth work](#) to ensure cohesive societies and on enhancing cross-sectorial [policy cooperation](#) to effectively address socio-economic challenges facing young people (both adopted in May 2015) acknowledged the work of the expert group on youth work quality systems in the EU Member States, and called for strengthening the visibility of the value of youth work and the other tools of youth policy and their complementary role in effectively addressing the challenges of young people. More recently, the Council [conclusions](#) on the role of youth work in supporting young people's development of essential life skills that facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life (adopted in June 2017) recalled the particular importance of those skills for young people at risk and those with fewer opportunities and for their employment needs, social inclusion and democratic participation.

The [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#), published in December 2014, outlined the support and possibilities available in the Erasmus+ programme for the youth field when it comes to including young people with fewer opportunities. The strategy also set the aims to be reached and defined the groups to be targeted. Moreover, a number of research projects concerning the social inclusion of young people are on-going under FP7 and Horizon 2020. An example provided by the European Commission is the research project listing ICT-enabled innovations, a large part of which are focused on youth.¹⁴⁸

Also the Council [conclusions](#) on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of all young people, from May 2014, highlight the direct relation between formally separate policy fields. Among other points, this document underlined the importance of social enterprises' contribution to smart and sustainable growth by taking environmental impacts into account as well as putting an emphasis on people and social cohesion. The Council [resolution](#) on the overview of the structured dialogue process including social inclusion of young people (also from May 2014) indicated priority areas to promote the social inclusion of young people in Europe: equal rights and opportunities (with exemplary initiatives concerning mostly education), cooperation between stakeholders (where numerous countries indicated such activity, and the need to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation. Special information and education activities increasing young people's awareness about consumer rights, undertaken by the European Commission, are also part of general policy related to an important EU policy area within the single market.

¹⁴⁸ Youth Report 2015, p. 62.

The activity of the European Youth Forum should also be mentioned in this field, with examples provided by both Youth Reports (2012 and 2015), such as their contribution to the position paper of the Social Platform (another pan-European network organisation) on minimum income.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, the call for the establishment of such income was the only paragraph of the European Parliament Employment and Social Affairs Committee report on the assessment of the YS 2013-2015 that did not pass into the final resolution of the European Parliament.

The most recent development related to social inclusion of youth at the EU level is the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which also encompassed a number of elements of direct concern for young people. Its Chapter III (on social protection and inclusion) also contains provisions on the protection of children from poverty and the right of those from disadvantaged backgrounds to measures enhancing equal opportunities.¹⁵⁰

8.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

It is important to underline – as the Youth Report did in 2012 – that combating poverty and social exclusion is primarily a Member State competence, and the European Union as a whole can only play a supporting and coordinating role by identifying best practices and promoting mutual learning, setting up EU-wide guidelines and making funding available.

In comparison with other policy fields, the social inclusion was dealt with by the European Union through a large number of policy acts (especially Council conclusions) which looked at the matter from different, albeit often overlapping, angles. Separate listing of initiatives aimed at social inclusion might have contributed to the visibility of the matter, but – as shown by concrete measures at various levels – the real effects are mostly ensured in this area by specific action in education, support for employment, and participatory mechanisms (including those on non-discrimination). Additional incentives in the area of 'quality services' and support for young families remain an important complement where sharing of best practices could improve Member States' effectiveness.

The Youth Report 2015 was right to underline the negative consequences of the economic crisis on young people, which led to social inclusion becoming the top priority in the EU Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018. Regardless of the future arrangement for this policy field, the relevant indicators should be revised in order to better reflect the scope of common interests.

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.socialplatform.org/documents/social-platform-position-paper-on-an-eu-directive-on-adequate-minimum-income/>

¹⁵⁰ [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), point 11 b.

9. Youth and the world

Two indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:¹⁵¹

- Participation of young people (aged 15-30) in non-governmental organisations active in the domains of climate change and other environmental issues, development aid or human rights in the preceding 12 months. The average participation rates are low (3 % for climate change in 2015, after a higher 7 % in 2013; 5 % for human rights – also lower in 2015 than 8 % in 2013), although in some Member States they are significantly higher (reaching 7 % and 16 % in Sweden).
- Involvement in activities or projects during the past year that have involved young people from other continents. The 3 % in 2015 (down from 4 % in 2011) is not very high. Similar to the subjects mentioned above, young people from eastern and southern European countries participate less in such activities than those from western and northern Europe.

9.1. Youth Strategy list

The Council Resolution brought together two aims in this field of action: support for young people's active participation in global policy-making (listing climate change, the UN Millennium Development Goals and human rights as examples) and their cooperation with regions outside Europe.

The following initiatives were suggested:

1. Raise the awareness of young people about global issues such as sustainable development and human rights,
2. Provide opportunities for young people to exchange views with policy-makers on global issues (e.g. via participation in international meetings, virtual platforms/forums, etc.),
3. Foster mutual understanding among young people from all over the world through dialogue and by means of supporting actions such as training courses, exchanges, and meetings,
4. Encourage young people to participate in 'green volunteering' and 'green' patterns of consumption and production (e.g. recycling, energy conservation, hybrid vehicles, etc.),
5. Promote entrepreneurship, employment, education and volunteering opportunities with regions outside of Europe,
6. Promote cooperation with, and exchanges between, those active in youth work on different continents,
7. Encourage young people to participate in development cooperation activities either in their country of residence or abroad.

The list established in the YS in 2009 had no clear internal logic and the scope of specific points (such as those on cooperation and exchanges) could have easily overlapped with others. The Youth Wiki arranged these matters better, allowing national correspondents

¹⁵¹ [SWD\(2015\) 169 final](#), pp. 125-131.

to describe separately the structure of youth participation in global issues, actions taken to increase awareness and environmental behaviour, as well as initiatives on international cooperation (also reported upon under point 1.8 in the part on 'Youth Policy Governance').¹⁵² Points on fostering mutual understanding (3) and promoting various opportunities (5) were not explicitly taken over in Youth Wiki, so the relevant columns in the table below are limited to the data from the Youth Reports.

9.2. State of play

9.2.1. National level

According to the Youth Report 2015, raising awareness of young people about global issues was the most popular response of the Member States (27), with various examples of activities. The area of initiatives mentioned least often in the last reporting exercise was inter-continental cooperation in youth work. Information provided by Member States about entrepreneurship, employment, education and volunteering opportunities with regions outside of Europe, is mostly either very general (especially when referring to existing EU programmes) or limited to single projects (such as from one city in one of the biggest countries).

¹⁵² <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/9-youth-and-world-overview>

Table 7 – Youth and the world

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	Curriculum, projects	Events, projects	Support for youth organisations	Projects	Support for NGOs	Funding programme	Projects
Belgium-German speaking Community	Campaigns, NGO	Youth Council	No data	Programme	EU Programmes	None	ASA-Program
Belgium – French speaking Community	Programme, funding	Youth Council	Project	Project	Project	Project	Youth organisations
Bulgaria	No data	No data	No data	Policy	No data	No data	No data
Czech Republic	Curriculum, projects	Programmes	Programmes	Programme, campaign	Bilateral agreements	Erasmus+	Youth organisations, NGOs
Denmark	Project	National Commission for UNESCO	Project	Strategy	Project	Project	Project
Germany	Action Plan, programme	Conferences, project	Programme	Programmes	Project	Programmes	Programmes, projects
Estonia	Curriculum, campaigns	Youth Council	Strategy	Course, programme	Projects	Programme	GLEN network
Ireland	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Project	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy
Greece	Project	Programme	Policy	Projects	Policy	Policy	Policy
Spain	Decree, project	Programme	Policy	Programmes	Programme	Programmes	Programme

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
France	Curriculum, projects	Annual events	No data	Campaigns, programmes	Platform	Programmes	Project
Croatia	EU Programme	EU Programme	EU Programme	EU Programme	EU Programme	EU Programme	EU Programme
Italy	Policy	Policy	Policy	Policy	EU Programmes	Policy	Policy
Cyprus	Projects	No data	No data	Policy	Erasmus +	No data	Programme
Latvia	Campaign, projects	EU Youth Forum	No data	Homo Ecos Association	EU Programmes	Youth seminar	Consular representations
Lithuania	Framework	Youth Council	Programme	Programme, strategy	Programme	Project	Legislation, Action Plan
Luxembourg	Charter, Youth centre	Meetings, UN Delegate Programme	Erasmus +	Projects	Programme	Programmes	UN, EU Programmes
Hungary	Concept on Global Responsibility Education	None	No data	Programme	No data	Youth Office	No programmes
Malta	Curriculum, campaign	International Youth Day, Youth Forum	Platform	NGOs	Platform	Seminars, Symposiums	Programme
Netherlands	Legislation, programmes	Youth Council, Structured dialogue	Project	Project	Funding	Foundation	Erasmus+
Austria	Programme, campaign	UN Youth Delegates	Project	Programmes	EU Programmes	Projects	Projects, programmes
Poland	Policy	No data	No data	No data	Programmes	No data	Programme
Portugal	Strategy, project	Project, Youth Parliament	Project	Programme, project	No data	No data	No data

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Romania	GEW event	No data	Project	No data	No data	No information available	Project
Slovenia	Projects	Programme, UN Youth Delegate	EU Programmes	Programme, project	No data	Programme	Campaigns, projects
Slovakia	Strategy	No official mechanism	No data	Strategy	No data	Programme	No programmes
Finland	Global Education	Youth Councils, UN Youth Delegate	No data	NGOs	Programme	Programmes	Programmes
Sweden	Curriculum, programmes	Consultations, UN Youth Delegate	Policy	Foundation	EU Programmes	Erasmus+	Programme
UK	Programmes	Youth Parliament, Youth Councils, projects, platforms	Strategy in Scotland	Programmes	Strategy in Scotland	Erasmus+	Programmes

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki; GEW = [Global Education Week](#).

9.2.2. EU level

The support for youth cooperation reaching outside the European Union is mostly placed within the EU relations with neighbouring countries and the wider world. The organisation of Eastern Partnership Youth Forums in 2013 and 2015, various projects of youth cooperation between the EU and China, as well as meetings with young people from Africa, are provided as concrete examples in the Youth Report 2012¹⁵³ and 2015.¹⁵⁴

Good practice in mainstreaming youth policy was the visible inclusion of young people into the 2015 European Year for Development,¹⁵⁵ supported by additional research and funding focusing on these matters in countries covered by EU development aid.

The [EU Aid Volunteers Initiative](#), launched in 2015, aimed for over 300 trained volunteers (aged 18 or more) by the end of 2017 and 200 volunteers deployed to 28 non-EU countries in that time frame,¹⁵⁶ to help communities affected by, or at risk of disaster.

Additionally, numerous examples of the international dimension of European Youth Forum's (YFJ) activities, including action in the fields of sustainable development and its participation in conferences and networks, highlight the existing potential of global youth dialogue and cooperation.¹⁵⁷

9.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

In a world of global concerns, the importance of European youth should also not be limited to the territory of the EU. As it was presented in the Youth Report 2012, the addition of this field of action in the EU YS was welcomed by young people and allowed the stakeholders, such as YFJ to look for synergies between European youth organisations and their counterparts elsewhere.¹⁵⁸

In view of the multi-level governance which takes place in all of the policy areas that the EU is competent for, it would be a surprise if young people were excluded from contributing to the global aspect of important debates and decisions. The incentives to take part in policy-making that reaches outside the European Union could form an inherent element within the whole structure of participatory mechanisms.

Acknowledging the need for increased environmental awareness amongst young people, encouragement for green behaviour does not need to be limited to the global context of the YS. As for the education- and employment-related activities of young people and their organisations, a cross-border dimension could be integrated into the substance of respective fields of regulation and funding.

¹⁵³ Youth Report 2012, p. 115.

¹⁵⁴ Youth Report 2015, p. 120.

¹⁵⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/news-and-events/reporting-european-year-development-2015_en

¹⁵⁶ See also <http://www.euvolunteerportal.org/en/>

¹⁵⁷ Youth Report 2015, p. 126.

¹⁵⁸ Youth Report 2012, p. 120.

10. Creativity and culture

Four indicators describe the situation of young people in the EU in this field:

- Share of young people (15-30) who declare that they have participated in amateur artistic activities (playing a musical instrument, singing, acting, dancing, writing poetry, photography, film-making) at least once in the last 12 months. The average rate in the EU was down from 33 % in 2011 to 30 % in 2015, with some variety among Member States (the highest rate reported in Austria – 46 %, and Estonia – 44 %).
- Share of young people reporting that they have participated in cultural activities (visiting historical monuments, museums or galleries, going to the cinema or a concert, a theatre, a dance performance or an opera) in the last 12 months. With the EU average dropping from 93 % in 2011 to 89 % in 2015, the highest rate (96 %) was reported in Denmark.
- Participation in sports clubs, leisure time or youth clubs/associations and/or cultural organisations during the previous year. Activity in sport clubs is spread between countries with single-digit figures (Bulgaria and Romania), and those above 40 % (UK and France), with the average result of around 30 %. Luxembourg and Belgium had the highest percentage of young people (29 % and 27 %) actively spending leisure time or participating in youth clubs/associations, while as many as nine countries in eastern and south-east Europe reported below 10 % (the total average being 16 % in 2015). Participation in cultural organisations was more even, with an average of 10 % lower than in previous years, and three countries at 19 % (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Czech Republic).
- Learning at least two foreign languages. This indicator remains stable just above 50 %, but the average is built on 13 Member States with a rate that is above 80 % (including Luxembourg at 100 %, Finland – 99.6 % and Slovakia 99 %) and four below 20 % (Greece 3.5 %, UK 4.4 %, Portugal 5.3 %, and Ireland 7.6 %).

10.1. Youth Strategy list

In this field of action, the YS formulated one aim with two indications for instruments leading to five different results. According to the Council Resolution, the support for young people's creativity and capacity for innovation should be based on better quality access to and participation in culture and cultural expressions from an early age. The expected results were: personal development, enhanced learning capabilities, intercultural skills, understanding and respect for cultural diversity and the development of new and flexible skills for future job opportunities.

The following initiatives were suggested:

1. Support the development of creativity among young people by following up the Council conclusions on promoting a creative generation: developing the creativity and innovative capacity of children and young people through cultural expression and wider access to culture,
2. Widen quality access to culture and creative tools, particularly those involving new technologies, and develop opportunities for youth people to experience culture and

- express and develop their creativity within or outside school,
3. Make new technologies readily available to empower young people's creativity and capacity for innovation, and attract interest in culture, the arts and science,
 4. Provide access to environments where young people can develop their creativity and interests and spend a meaningful leisure time,
 5. Facilitate long-term synergies between policies and programmes in the fields of culture, education, health, social inclusion, media, employment and youth with the view to promoting young people's creativity and capacity for innovation,
 6. Promote specialised training in culture, new media and intercultural competences for youth workers,
 7. Promote partnerships between culture and creative sectors and youth organisations and youth workers,
 8. Facilitate and support development of young people's talent and entrepreneurial skills with a view to enhancing their employability and future job opportunities,
 9. Promote young people's knowledge about culture and cultural heritage in the different EU Member States, including through the use of new technologies.

The Youth Wiki structure¹⁵⁹ largely covers all the points from the Council Resolution, with promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people (not just the youth workers, who might be of different age) already referred to under participation. It is also important to note that intercultural awareness and key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation are also reported under the policy field of social inclusion. The separate element on acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training is another example of an overlap with other policy fields.

10.2. State of play

10.2.1. National level

Supporting the development of creativity and culture amongst young people was highlighted by all Member States contributing to the Youth Report 2015 in this field, and all other initiatives were reported by multiple countries (in each case – above 20). In most cases, the same policy documents were referred to for specific initiatives, and only a handful of very concrete examples indicated a focused approach to the issues listed in the Council Resolution. Point 7 (promoting partnerships between culture and creative sectors and youth organisations and workers) was covered as part of the national responses to subsequent Council conclusions from November 2010, with a few random examples. Much more specific data was provided via the Youth Wiki, which was launched in December 2017.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/8-creativity-and-culture-overview>

¹⁶⁰ NB: eight Member States (Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus and Poland) have yet to provide any data.

Table 8 – Creativity and culture

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Belgium-Flemish speaking Community	Funding Strategy	Apps, online databases, policies, projects, programmes	Youth organisations	Youth houses	Policy	Programme	Yes	Action Plan	Decree
Belgium-German speaking Community	Funding, Strategy Programme	Programme, projects	No data	No data	No data	Projects, workshops	No data	Event	Clubs, museums
Belgium – French speaking Community	Funding, political declaration	Projects, discounts	Projects	Decree	Decree	Projects	Yes	Programme	EU Project
Bulgaria	Programmes	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	-	No data	No data
Czech Republic	Institutions, general youth strategy	Programmes, special activities	None	Project	Meetings	EU Project	Yes (project)	Curriculum	Education
Denmark	Project	Project	Project	Project	Project	Project	-	Project	Project
Germany	Project, Youth strategy	Project, programmes	Projects	Policy	Strategies	Trainings	Yes (political strategies and funding initiatives)	Strategy, programmes	Cultural education
Estonia	Strategy, general principles	Policy	Programme	Project	Mechanism	Trainings	No regular policy	Initiative Creative Estonia	Programme
Ireland	Youth Council	Programmes	Project	Strategy	No data	Project	-	No data	No data
Greece	Projects	Projects	Projects	Project	Project	No data	-	Strategy	Project

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Spain	No data, Culture plan	Digital Agenda, funding	Project	Programme	EU legislation	Scholarships , trainings	Yes (programme, projects)	Programme	Programme
France	Policy	Websites, apps, policy	Project	Youth and culture centres	Charter	Trainings, certificates	Yes (programmes)	Website, projects	Programme
Croatia	Programme	Programme	Programme	Programme	Programme	No data	-	Youth in Action	Youth in Action
Italy	Policy	Project	Policy	Policy	Policy	Policy	-	Policy	Policy
Cyprus	Programmes	Programmes	No data	Programmes	No data	Project	-	No data	Programmes
Latvia	Guidelines, policy	Policy guidelines, free cultural activities	Online program	No data	NGOs	Programmes	Yes (programme)	Project	Contest
Lithuania	Project, progress strategy	Guidebook, legislation	Development centre	Art incubators	Progress strategy	Project	Yes (projects)	Strategy	Programme
Luxembourg	Programme	Online, digital media, discounts	Programme	Project	Policy	Specialised training	Yes	BEE Creative Initiative	Cultural Centres
Hungary	Projects, legislation	Strategy, programme	Programme	Programmes	Youth Expert Forum	Programmes	Roundtables	Action Plan	Cultural Institutions
Malta	Funding, Strategy 2020	Funding, programmes, projects	Website	Cultural centres	Memorandum , programme	Training courses	Yes (projects)	Platform	Discounts
Netherlands	Legislation	Programme, projects, funding	Programmes, Projects	Curriculum, cultural facilities	Website	Manual	No information	Funding	Project
Austria	Programmes	Web portals, apps, programme, projects	Projects	Cultural facilities, festivals	Working groups	Platform	Yes	Strategy	Projects

Member State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Poland	Programmes	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	-	No data	No data
Portugal	Programme, strategic plans and documents	Online platforms, discounts	Projects	Cultural activities in museums	Programmes	Programme	Yes (project)	Guidelines	Programme
Romania	Strategy	Project, programme, festivals	No data	No data	Programme	Programme, projects	Yes (programmes, projects)	Programmes	Projects
Slovenia	Programme	Programme	Strategic Guidelines	Implementati on plan	Programme	Programme	Yes	Curriculum	Projects
Slovakia	Project, legislation	Projects, discounts, programme	Project	Contests, funding	Action plan	Programmes	No	Strategy	Cultural event
Finland	Programme	Policy, programmes, strategy	Programme	Young culture	Policy	Policy, programmes	Yes (policy, programme)	Strategy	Strategy
Sweden	Project, No strategy	Project funds, free entrance to museums	Strategy	Funding	Programme	Programme	Not applicable	Programme	Cultural event
UK	Strategies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, legislation and white paper in England.	Online platform, programmes and projects	Programmes	Programmes	Programmes	Programmes and projects	Yes in England, Yes (programme) in Northern Ireland, Yes (programmes and projects) in Scotland, Yes (programmes) in Wales	Programmes , projects	Programmes

Source: EPRS compilation on the basis of Youth Reports 2012 and 2015, as well as data available in Youth Wiki.

10.2.2. EU level

Similarly to the youth policy in general, the European Union has limited competences in the area of culture, provided in Article 167 of the TFEU. Following previous developments and cooperation in this field, the [Work Plan for culture \(2015 – 2018\)](#) is currently setting the priorities, working methods and actions at the EU and national levels. In terms of funding, the [Creative Europe](#) and [Erasmus+](#) programmes provide specific possibilities to support individual projects, especially those of young people.

Starting from the Council [conclusions](#) on promoting a creative generation – also adopted in November 2009 and referred to in the very first point in the YS – the introduction of the youth angle in the European mechanism for coordinating cultural policies was based on the assumption that supporting Member States in developing the creativity and innovative capacity of younger generations will bring significant benefits to all.

In accordance with the implementation mechanisms of the YS, stressing the importance of evidence-based policy making, as well as mutual learning, a detailed study was prepared in 2009 and concluded that access of young people to culture as actors or users is an essential condition for their full participation in society.¹⁶¹ In November 2010, the Council [conclusions](#) on access of young people to culture called on reducing obstacles, stimulating strategic partnerships, deepening knowledge on access, and promoting relevant experiences.

The Youth Report 2015 referred to the expert group which was set up to share best practices in promoting the creativity and innovative capacity of young people by identifying competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning relevant to employability. The group's final report¹⁶² underlined the importance of non-formal learning activities, which reinforced the policy directions identified under the other fields of action (especially education and employment).

Additional working groups were also created under the previous Work Plan for culture (2011-2014), and delivered a report covering better access to culture for young people¹⁶³, another one on creative partnerships between cultural institutions and other sectors¹⁶⁴, and the handbook on cultural awareness and expression¹⁶⁵. In the meantime, the Council [conclusions](#) on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people – adopted in May 2012 – also underlined the need for partnerships between various actors.

In addition to the Creative Europe programme mentioned above, which is currently the main EU framework for support to the culture and audiovisual sectors – supporting many projects also for young artists and various educational activities, the Youth Report 2015 additionally mentioned a number of European awards that serve to promote young

¹⁶¹ [Access of young people to culture. Final report - Study.](#)

¹⁶² http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/creative-potential_en.pdf

¹⁶³ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/policy/strategic-framework/documents/omc-report-access-to-culture_en.pdf

¹⁶⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/library/reports/creative-partnerships_en.pdf

¹⁶⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/culture/news/2016/0422-handbook-cultural-awareness-expression_en

talents in specific areas.¹⁶⁶ Another important initiative, originally proposed by the European Parliament, is the [New Narrative for Europe](#) – a campaign largely focused on participation of young people in discussing policy issues, such as employment, education, and environmental protection.¹⁶⁷ Culture as a tool for engagement is among the twelve ideas described therein.¹⁶⁸ Finally, the activities organised in the framework of the [2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) should also engage young persons across the EU.

10.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

There is obviously a huge variety of measures taken by Member States in the area of culture, and many are addressed to young people in order to allow them to learn and build upon the heritage created by former generations. Reducing specific obstacles requires concrete measures, whether organisational or financial.

Apart from facilitating the exchange of best practices in order to inspire further development of these actions, the European Union is contributing (through its own policy making and funding) to the cross-border and intercultural projects and dialogue, which has always been the source of innovation in culture.

Access of young people to culture is as important as their participation in political life. The variety of actions taken by EU Member States (by legislative and institutional means, as well as funding, programmes, action plans, and specific projects) reflect the rich cultural heritage present in each country, as well as creativity in reaching out to the young generations – facilitating their active involvement in further development of that heritage.

When the effects of investments in culture are assessed in educational and entrepreneurial terms, an overlap with other action fields is apparent. This could lead to a revision and potentially – a simplification – of the YS, so that young people's creativity is not singled out separately but supported throughout all aspects of their lives.

¹⁶⁶ Youth Report 2015, pp. 128-129.

¹⁶⁷ See also https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/new-narrative_en

¹⁶⁸ Support the development of creative, experiential, immersive learning experiences and cultural and arts events through which young people can engage with policy issues that affect them and develop solutions. - See https://europa.eu/youth/sites/default/files/12_ideas_for_the_future_of_europe.pdf

11. Structured dialogue

Developing structured dialogue with young people and their organisations did not start with the EU YS, and the arrangements set by the Council Resolution in 2009 did not remain untouched. This chapter briefly presents the evolution of the mechanism, taking note of the experiences gathered so far.

It is important to note that the Council [resolution](#) adopted in November 2005 on addressing the concerns of young people in Europe (implementing the European Pact for Youth and promoting active citizenship), called on the Member States to ensure consultation of youth at national, regional and local level on policy actions affecting them. In addition, the European Commission was asked to develop dialogue with young people at the European level, using innovative information technology and by organising regular conferences with researchers and policy-makers.

In effect, the assessment made when the current EU YS was proposed was already able to describe the discussions of chosen themes between governments, EU institutions and young people, which aimed at obtaining results that would be useful in policy-making.¹⁶⁹

11.1. Youth Strategy arrangements

The provisions of the Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field, adopted in 2009, formalised the mechanism which has largely already been established. In addition to the principles described in the main text (see also Chapter 1.3.6.) the structured dialogue was described in more detail in Annex III. Three elements of the practical implementation were designed:

1. An overall theme should be chosen for each 18-month period, corresponding to the priorities set by the Council, with a possibility of a priority theme for each 6 months;
2. Consultations should take place at all levels within Member States, with the addition of EU Youth Conferences to be organised by countries holding the Presidency of the Council;
3. A European Steering Committee (ESC) should coordinate the dialogue, comprising representatives of the relevant bodies from the EU Presidency trio (especially Ministries for Youth Affairs and National Youth Councils), the European Commission, and the European Youth Forum (the latter chairing the ESC). In addition, Member States were to support the establishment of National Working Groups (preferably with a leading role for national youth councils) to ensure participation, and – together with the European Commission and other actors – follow-up with best practices.

¹⁶⁹ SEC(2009) 545, p. 6.

11.2. Implementation and review

In accordance with the Council Resolution on Youth Strategy, the process of organised youth consultation was continued, the relevant conferences were organised, and the information about them was disseminated through the available means of communication. At the end of each cycle, separate Council conclusions assessed the structured dialogue of the 18-months' period, took note of the recommendations made by young people on the priority theme, and chose the priorities for European cooperation in the following period.

The Council [resolution](#) of 19 May 2011 provided early comments on multiple elements of the structured dialogue, stressing the need for appropriate political follow-up, feedback, financial support, and efficient methods (including sharing good practices among NWGs, clear and precise language of the consultation questions, and 'meaningful process for young people').¹⁷⁰

According to the Youth Report 2012, all Member States demonstrated their commitment to structured dialogue by actively supporting the setting up of national working groups (NWG) during the first cycle of the process. A significant majority of Member States' governments declared they provide financial and other means of support for the activities of NWGs. They also supported extending the concept of dialogue at national level. Interestingly, among the recommendations provided in the national reports, there was a call by one Member State to explain the term 'Structured Dialogue', as supposedly young people did not understand what it means.

The Council [resolution](#) assessing the second cycle acknowledged further developments of the process, and took note of a number of proposals made during the structured dialogue. Among them, necessary involvement of young people in all stages of the dialogue was underlined (from setting the priorities to monitoring the follow-up and evaluating the implementation of outcomes), and the link between the outcomes and policy-making at national and European level was stressed (including clearer and better communication throughout the process).

In reality, the first three cycles of the structured dialogue resulted in joint recommendations adopted at EU Youth Conferences on priority topics as agreed earlier by the Council,¹⁷¹ but no mechanism for evaluating their effectiveness was established. European funding was provided via the [Erasmus+](#) programme to the National Working Groups,¹⁷² while the consultation at national level struggled with reaching a broader range of young people.

Following a review of the structured dialogue organised by the European Commission in 2013, the Council [resolution](#) of 20 May 2014 introduced a new framework which was

¹⁷⁰ OJ C 164, 2.6.1011, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ The documents in chronological order are available at the website of the European Youth Forum: <http://www.youthforum.org/claims/the-structured-dialogue/structured-dialogue-past-outcomes/>

¹⁷² The Youth Report 2015 later declared the support from this programme to national projects within the structured dialogue as 'ample evidence of how EU youth programmes support the policies and tools of the EU Youth Strategy' – Youth Report 2015, p. 139.

intended to ensure a thorough reflection of a single priority during the whole 18-month period. From then on, the cycle was supposed to contain three phases: developing of a common understanding and bottom-up approach, consultations leading to possible solutions, and formulation of concrete actions for further consideration.¹⁷³ In order to improve the quality of the outcomes, the resolution called for the review of the way the EU Youth Conferences were organised, and asked for consideration of a feedback mechanism on the feasibility of the recommendations thereby adopted.

After another effort made by the European Commission to reflect on this consultation process, the Council established a few principles in Annex III to its [resolution](#) adopted in November 2015 (on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe). The 18-month architecture was maintained in order to allow for 'better time management' of consultations, detailed ideas were proposed to reach different target groups, persons experienced and knowledgeable in youth policies were suggested 'to enrich the quality of outcomes', and informing participants on the extent to which the Council and the European Commission took their final views into account was requested from the Member States holding the Presidency.

The problematic implementation of the structured dialogue, which can be easily deducted from the formulations mentioned above, was illustrated by detailed references to national reports provided in the Youth Report 2015.¹⁷⁴ In addition to various critical remarks about the EU Youth Conferences, various issues were raised with regard to the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the structured dialogue, as well as the implementation of its outcomes. The growing number of participants reported by Member States (several millions) is balanced with a statement that 'the reliability and reality of such a figure remains questionable'.

Annex II to the above-mentioned Council resolution on encouraging political participation of young people in democratic life in Europe, adopted in December 2015, established a priority theme for the period from January 2016 to June 2017 under a rather elaborate title 'Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe – Ready for Life, Ready for Society'. The fifth cycle of structured dialogue was then managed within a detailed timetable¹⁷⁵ and resulted (apart from the standard set of recommendations established through subsequent phases of consultations and conferences) also in a useful toolbox for engaging young people in the process of policy making.¹⁷⁶

In June 2017, another Council [resolution](#) on the structured dialogue was adopted, addressing its future development post 2018. In addition to taking note of the topics identified through the structured dialogue of the previous cycle,¹⁷⁷ it also invited the

¹⁷³ See 'How is it done' at https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/dialogue_en

¹⁷⁴ YR 2015, pp. 140-142.

¹⁷⁵ Link to EYF website...

¹⁷⁶ http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2017/01/toolbox_online_low_2.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Which were the following: access to quality and critical information, building resilience and self-confidence, beyond fear and intolerance, towards and education system that realises young people's potential, fostering young people's engagement in society, rebuilding the trust of young

Member States and the Commission to undertake a review of the mechanism and look for innovative and effective ways of promoting meaningful and constructive dialogue in the future. Finally, it established the theme for the following 18-month work cycle (between July 2017 and December 2018): 'Youth in Europe – What's next?'. The Council [conclusions](#) adopted at the same time stressed that the renewed structured dialogue should facilitate innovative, meaningful and targeted constructive dialogue not only with young people from youth organisations but also those from diverse backgrounds, with fewer opportunities and non-organised youth.

11.3. Findings, conclusions and recommendations

According to the European Commission's evaluation report, the structured dialogue is considered to be the most sustainable instrument within the YS, as it has led to the establishment of permanent structures and processes of youth participation in the Member States.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, it is acknowledged that it 'has yet to fulfil its full potential [as] it still fails to reach a wider group of young people with fewer resources and a weaker political voice.'¹⁷⁹

In addition to the continued review and problems identified through YS reporting mechanisms, the problematic assessment of the structured dialogue was clearly identified by the focus group organised by the European Commission in March 2017 and conducted as part of the preparations for a stakeholder conference on the future of the EU YS. With regard to the influence that this consultation process should have on policy making at national and EU level, the value of the structured dialogue was claimed to be more in developing the skills of its participants.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the absence of the dialogues' definition and aims resulted in the reported disagreement about its objectives.

Although the recommendations made at the EU Youth Conferences have become more visible by direct references provided in Council resolutions, a comprehensive analysis of their impact has not been attempted so far. A few examples of direct correlation between specific requests of young people and policy instruments established at EU level (such as Youth Guarantee, information mechanisms in the form of EURES and European Youth Portal, and other support measures) are provided in Annex 4 to the YS evaluation report.¹⁸¹

The separate description of structured dialogue in the Youth Reports 2012 and 2015 has been supported by the stakeholders, but the disadvantage of such presentation is that the form and content of young peoples' contribution to youth policy coordination is not sufficiently reflected in earlier parts – when the process of establishing priorities and development of policy-making in respective fields is described.

people in the European project, mobility programmes for all, and the impact of youth work and youth organisation for all.

¹⁷⁸ SWD(2017) 281 final, p. 28.

¹⁷⁹ COM(2017) 429 final, p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/youth/sites/youth/files/eyw-structured-dialogue_en.pdf, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ ICF Final Report - Annexes, p. 5.

The Parliament's 2016 resolution drew attention to the fact that 57 % of youth organisations in the EU consider that youth expertise is not taken into account in the formulation of relevant policies – which is a figure taken from the Shadow Report on Youth Policy prepared by the European Youth Forum.¹⁸² In effect, Parliament called for 'strengthening the Structured Dialogue as a quality participatory tool for young people in the next cooperation framework for youth'.¹⁸³ In its most recent proposal, the EYF underlined that the structured dialogue should be kept in the future YS but the young people's participation in policy-making should not be limited to it.¹⁸⁴ The proposed permanent national structures, based on the example taken from the Council of Europe, might be easier to monitor and report on, but it is their functioning in practice that would really matter. A claim reported in the Youth Report 2015 that the 'main indicator of success should be the quality of discussion with young people and the outcomes reached'¹⁸⁵ remains ambitious and elusive at the same time.

¹⁸² <http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/10/Shadow-Report-on-Youth-Policy.pdf>, p. 5.

¹⁸³ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0426, point 4.

¹⁸⁴ [EYF proposal for the governance of the EU Youth Strategy](#), 14 December 2017, p. 4.

¹⁸⁵ YR2015, p. 138.

12. Overall conclusions

The assessment of the current framework of EU youth policy largely resembles that reported by the European Commission for the previous period, where the open method of coordination was considered to be an appropriate tool for cooperation, its priorities (participation, information, volunteering and better knowledge of young people) remaining relevant, and the structural dialogue in need of better organisation and greater outreach.¹⁸⁶ Education, employment, anti-discrimination and health, were underlined once more - within the European Youth Pact and mainstreaming efforts made.

The three elements of the OMC – setting a joint agenda, exchanging best practices and improving the evidence-base for policy-making¹⁸⁷ – became quite elaborate on the basis of the EU YS, as agreed by the Council in 2009. However their efficient implementation is still difficult to measure. The large number of suggested initiatives over the various fields of action (not all of them being related to specific policy areas), as well as the complicated mechanism for the establishment of political priorities for subsequent time periods, does not ensure a clear identification of objectives while the overall aims remain too general and overambitious (especially in the use of 'all' with regards to young people in the EU). The indicators of the situation of young people, based on a mix of Eurostat figures and Eurobarometer surveys, are often difficult to match with the rationale or intended effects of a certain action or measure.

The creation of distinctive fields of action should be revised, since education (especially non-formal education, including volunteering), employment and innovation continue to be interlinked, as the specific policy papers and activity of expert groups working on YS matters constantly demonstrate. This was also an outcome of the European Conference on the future EU YS in May 2017, suggesting that future strategy should have 'ambitious goals in a reduced number of areas'.¹⁸⁸ This could also remedy the situation in which the Member States consider the OMC to be an *à la carte* instrument, rather than a fixed set of objectives.¹⁸⁹

There are still no tools to measure the real policy impacts of the YS, as the instruments used so far provide a compilation of data that is not easy to compare. More specifically, there has been no benchmarking within the EU youth policy, and the exchange of best practices is still limited to providing peers with examples of actions taken – which can of course be illustrative and inspiring within the limitations of individual countries' specific circumstances. Setting specific targets at the European and national level might be difficult to imagine in an area where Member States maintain their principal competence and EU action is limited to coordination and support, but an interesting proposal on quality standards was already made by the European Youth Forum.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ COM(2009) 200 final, p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ See https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/member-state-cooperation_en.

¹⁸⁸ [Conference Report](#), p. 7.

¹⁸⁹ SWD(2017) 281 final, p. 18.

¹⁹⁰ http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2017/03/Toolkit_Quality_Standards.pdf

The external study, which formed the basis of the Commission's recent evaluation, 'sought to capture examples of systemic effects of the EU YS and gather data on the perceived relevance of the strategy and on the opinions about the processes and implementation instruments'.¹⁹¹ A qualitative-only approach to 'system-level result' of the YS was justified by the fact that there are no quantitative indicators for the measurement of the strategy's direct effect on the situation of the young people, and because the nature and scope of this OMC was expected to lead to a 'broad range of effects'.¹⁹² In practice, the reporting mechanism in the form of Youth Reports every three years provides a collection of examples from Member States with regard to the implementation of specific suggestions listed in the YS, on the basis of which only very general conclusions can be made. The new online tool, named Youth Wiki, already contains significantly more information on most countries' practices and developments, although it relies on regular updates from national correspondents designated by the governments of each participating country, and does provide a possibility for comparative analysis. A more elaborate, even if still qualitative, system of recording the evolution in national approaches to youth aspects in such policy areas, would be needed.

In addition to setting up or enhancing existing institutional structures for supporting direct consultation on policy-making with young people or through their representative organisations, the European Union and Member States further developed and used a number of specific funds and programmes to finance specific projects in all policy fields set by the 2009 Council Resolution. Activity in the areas of education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, participation, health and wellbeing, volunteering, social inclusion, and global awareness, as well as culture and creativity, often highlights their overlapping character, as reflected in the numerous policy acts (especially Council conclusions and resolutions) which cross-reference, repeat and elaborate on each other. Instruments such as Erasmus+, YEI and the Youth Guarantee are already taking place and assessment of their effectiveness and efficiency will also influence future youth policy at EU level, while others have only been added or proposed recently (especially the European Solidarity Corps) and raise concerns with regard to consistency and clarity as to what is on offer for European youth. In accordance with the priorities agreed under the YS, extensive research was undertaken with regard to the situation of young people and the effects on general society and the economy, contributing to evidence-based policy making, but some difficulties persist in communicating clearly with the relevant stakeholders. Finally, the functioning of the structured dialogue, although regularly revised since its establishment, continues to be assessed critically, for example with regard to the problems in reaching or engaging young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, for whom the youth policies could provide with important benefits).

In conclusion, the Strategy's 'main EU added value for national authorities and stakeholders was that it provided them with policy inspiration, knowledge and expertise, leverage and legitimacy, opportunities and resources'.¹⁹³ In the view of the European Commission, the external evaluation showed that Member States want to continue the

¹⁹¹ SWD(2017) 281 final, p. 10.

¹⁹² *Idem*

¹⁹³ SWD(2017) 280 final, p. 2.

cooperation on youth policy at European level, and that the main obstacles are linked to the limited resources available in respective countries.¹⁹⁴ Now that the structures for the consultation of young people have been established and tested in all Member States, they should be used (with the additional support of EU programmes and bodies, but not fully replacing national and local ones) to provide a genuine mainstreaming of youth policy

¹⁹⁴ European Commission response to EP 2016 resolution, p. 2.

This study provides an analysis of the EU Youth Strategy, established through the Council Resolution adopted in November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field for the period 2010-2018.

The EU Youth Strategy is, first and foremost, an instrument created to facilitate the coordination of Member States' youth policies, with the additional possibility of supporting actions taken at the European level and managed by the European Commission and other bodies and organisations.

Using the data available in various documents and sources on the implementation of the Youth Strategy, this study follows the structure of the Council Resolution, covering all fields of actions listed, as well as the types of measures introduced at the national level by Member States (strategy/policy/regulation/guidelines/programme/other) in order to assess the relation between its parts and their take-up to date by the main actors in EU youth policy. It presents a compilation of findings allowing the reader to understand how much has been done so far, and shows substantial evolution in the activity of the European Union and individual Member States, particularly in learning from best practices and undertaking joint projects.

This is a publication of the Ex-Post Evaluation Unit
EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service
European Parliament

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PE: 615.645
ISBN: 978-92-846-2647-2
DOI: 10.2861/221832
CAT: QA-01-18-126-EN-N