



YOUTH

Youth is a national policy area. Harmonisation of Member States' legislation is therefore excluded. At European level, youth policy is decided under the ordinary legislative procedure. The youth strand of the Erasmus+ programme encourages exchanges of young people within the EU and with third countries. Over the past few years, the European Union has strengthened its policies towards young people, as illustrated by the European Solidarity Corps initiative.

LEGAL BASIS

Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) are the basis for EU action in the youth field. Action falling within the scope of Articles 165 and 166 is subject to the ordinary legislative procedure. As regards youth policy, any harmonisation of Member States' legislation is expressly excluded. The Council may adopt recommendations based on Commission proposals.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has the same legal value as the treaties (Article 6 TEU), includes an article on children's rights (Article 24) and an article forbidding child labour and providing for protection of young people in the workplace (Article 32).

OBJECTIVES

Article 165 TFEU provides for Union action in order to encourage the development of youth exchanges and exchanges between socio-educational instructors, i.e. youth workers, and — with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty — to encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. Article 166 enables the EU to implement a vocational training policy to support and supplement the action of the Member States. It tasks the Union with facilitating access to vocational training and encouraging mobility of instructors and trainees, particularly young people.

In addition to these articles, children and young people benefit from EU policies in other fields, such as education, training and health, or in relation to the rights and protection of children and young people.



ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Strategic Framework

1. EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018

In November 2009, the Council adopted a resolution on ‘a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field’ for the 2010-2018 period (OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1–11). Its two overarching objectives are to create more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of young people. Initiatives are to be taken in eight fields of action: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and wellbeing, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, and creativity and culture.

Work proceeds in work cycles of three years. For the current cycle, from 2016 to 2018, the Council has identified six key goals: (1) increased social inclusion of all young people; (2) stronger participation of all young people in democratic and civil life in Europe; (3) easier transition of young people from youth to adulthood, in particular as regards integration into the labour market; (4) support for young people’s health and well-being, including mental health; (5) contributions to addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital era for youth policy, youth work and young people; and (6) contributions to responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing number of young migrants and refugees in the EU.

2. Europe 2020 strategy

Launched in 2010, the [Europe 2020 strategy](#) focuses on young people and centres on a variety of objectives, including reducing early school leaving, increasing the proportion of young graduates, and developing a comprehensive package of policy initiatives for education and employment. This includes ‘[Your first EURES job](#)’, a job mobility scheme to facilitate job placement all over Europe.

In its communication from May 2018 entitled ‘Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy’ (COM(2018) 0269), the Commission proposed that particular attention be devoted to the following areas of activity:

- Fostering young people’s participation in civic and democratic life;
- Connecting young people across the European Union and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding;
- Supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

B. Relevant EU spending programmes

1. Erasmus+

Erasmus+ contains a specific chapter on youth, for which approximately EUR 2.1 billion has been set aside. Its specific objectives are to: (1) improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, and promote participation in democratic life in Europe and the labour market, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion



and solidarity; (2) foster quality improvements in youth work; (3) complement policy reforms at local, regional and national level and support the development of knowledge and evidence-based youth policy; and (4) enhance the international dimension of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organisations as support structures for young people.

Erasmus+ directly supports the [European Voluntary Service](#) (EVS). The EVS is designed to help young people spend time abroad while participating in volunteering projects. This non-formal learning scheme is certified Europe-wide via the [Youthpass](#) recognition tool.

A spin-off from the Erasmus+ programme, [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#) gives aspiring entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced counterparts running small businesses in other participating countries.

2. Erasmus 2021-2027

In its proposal for the new Erasmus programme for 2021-2027 ([COM\(2018\) 0367](#)), the Commission recommends doubling the budget to EUR 30 billion from the 2014-2020 programming period, with EUR 3.1 billion earmarked for youth. One of the aims of the proposal is to promote a European identity with the travel experience [DiscoverEU](#), which will give young people opportunities to discover Europe's cultural heritage and diversity. Beneficiaries of the programme will include school pupils and higher education students, but also trainees and youth workers.

C. Other EU initiatives

1. The Youth Guarantee

In April 2013, the Council adopted a recommendation on establishing a [Youth Guarantee](#) (OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1–6). This is a landmark commitment to ensure that young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, further education or training within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Although Member States still need to implement and finance this policy, EU co-financing is already available for regions with youth unemployment above 25%, through a dedicated budget line, the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund^[1].

2. European Solidarity Corps

The [European Solidarity Corps](#) (ESC) is an initiative that was launched by the Commission in December 2016. It gives young people between the ages of 18 and 30 the possibility to volunteer for or work on projects in their own country or abroad. A total of 72 000 young people have registered so far, and 7 000 of these are directly involved in solidarity activities. In August 2018, the Commission called on stakeholders to come forward with some ideas for new projects under the scheme. A total of EUR 44 million was set aside from the EU budget for selected projects, which will be open to all young people across Europe and beyond. On 11 June 2018, the Commission published its [proposal for the European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020](#), allocating EUR 1.26 billion to enable approximately 350 000 young people to take part in solidarity activities ([COM\(2018\) 0440](#)).

[1]For further information see Fact Sheet [2.3.2](#) on the European Social Fund, section B.2.



3. Child protection policies

As laid down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child is any human being below the age of 18. The Treaty of Lisbon introduced an objective for the EU to promote children's rights, while the Charter of Fundamental Rights guarantees the protection of children's rights by EU institutions, as well as by Member States.

On 15 February 2011, the Commission adopted a communication entitled 'An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child' ([COM\(2011\) 0060](#)). Its purpose is to reaffirm the strong commitment of all EU institutions and of all Member States to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies, and to turn this into concrete results. The rights of the child and the prevention of violence against children, young people, women and other groups at risk are also protected and promoted under the [Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme \(2014-2020\)](#).

In 2016, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a directive on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings (OJ L 132, 21.5.2016, p. 1.), in order to ensure that children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings are able to understand and follow those proceedings and to exercise their right to a fair trial, and to prevent children from reoffending and foster their social integration.

4. Youth and media

Online technologies bring unique opportunities to children and young people by providing access to knowledge and allowing them to benefit from digital learning and to participate in public debate. However, children can also be especially vulnerable to modern technology. For this reason, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (OJ L 95, 15.4.2010, p. 1) prohibits the inclusion in linear TV services of any content which might be seriously harmful to minors. Content that is likely to be harmful to minors must either be broadcast at a time when they will not be watching, or blocked using technological means so that they cannot access it. For non-linear on-demand audiovisual media services, the respective content may only be made available in such a way that minors would not ordinarily come into contact with it.

5. European Youth Portal

The [European Youth Portal](#) is a web page addressed to young people all over Europe in order to help orient them among the many opportunities the EU offers in different areas of interest, such as volunteering, working, learning, culture and creativity, and many others.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has always supported close cooperation between Member States in the youth field. It has accompanied and taken an active role in the formulation of youth policy, for example in its resolutions on 'An EU Strategy for Youth — Investing and Empowering' (OJ CE 161, 31.5.2011, p. 21), on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012 (OJ C 93, 9.3.2016, p. 61), on the assessment of the EU Youth



Strategy 2013-2015 (OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 212) and on a Youth Guarantee (OJ C 440, 30.12.2015, p. 67).

Numerous other resolutions on youth employment (for example OJ C 224, 21.6.2016, p. 19), entrepreneurship (OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 76) and policies for fighting youth unemployment (OJ C 11, 12.1.2018, p. 44) have been adopted in recent years.

Parliament also safeguards the best interests of children on the basis of petitions addressed to it (OJ C 66, 21.2.2018, p. 2), and has adopted a resolution on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty (OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 19). Parliament has also focused on children's rights beyond the EU's borders, promoting resolutions on the situation of children all over the world, such as on education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises (OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 151) or on child malnutrition in developing countries (OJ C 289, 9.8.2016, p. 71). In 2015, it adopted a resolution on fighting child sexual abuse on the internet (OJ C 316, 30.8.2016, p. 109)^[2]. During its plenary session in October 2018, it adopted the Commission's legislative proposal for a revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (P8_TA(2018)0364). Under the new provisions, broadcasters will be required to reduce children's exposure to publicity on unhealthy food or beverages; content inciting violence, hatred and terrorism will be proscribed; and gratuitous violence and pornography will be subject to highly stringent rules.

In the negotiations on the Erasmus+ programme in 2012-2013, Parliament strongly advocated a separate youth chapter and a designated budget for its key actions. It also stressed that possibilities for the participation of disadvantaged young people should be enhanced. In its resolution of 17 September 2017 (OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 131), it proposed that the successor programme should focus on lifelong learning and mobility and recommended that the priorities of the Erasmus programme, the EU Youth Strategy and other EU-funded programmes be brought into line. In June 2018, the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the proposal concerning the European Solidarity Corps, which both institutions must now formally adopt.

To encourage young people to pursue European projects of their own, in 2008 Parliament, together with the Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, launched the [European Charlemagne Youth Prize](#), awarded every year to projects promoting European and international understanding.

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09/2018

[2]For further information see Fact Sheet [3.6.2](#) on Audiovisual and media policy.

