

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



Directorate General Internal Policies of the Union

## Policy Department Structural and Cohesion Policies

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

### THE EUROPEAN UNION AND YOUTH POLICY

#### NOTE

**Abstract:**

More than one-third of European citizens participate in sporting activities and many of the Union's policies have an impact on the world of sport (free movement of people, competition policy, media and health policies etc). However it was only after 1997 - with the insertion of a declaration on sport in the Amsterdam Treaty - that the EU began to deal with sport from a non-economic point of view. This information note deals with these questions in detail.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND LEGAL BASIS

It is the Member States which are responsible for the area of Youth. The **Treaty of Rome** only mentioned youth policy in **Article 50** on the exchange of young workers. Young people, however, also benefited from the Community's activities through the European Social Fund and initiatives based on **Article 128** on vocational training. **Article 235** of the Treaty of Rome was also used as a legal basis, inter alia, for the first action programme for the promotion of youth exchanges – 'Youth for Europe' - on 16 June 1988.

It was, however, **the Maastricht Treaty** that provided the EU with a legal basis for developing new programmes in the area of education and vocational training (**Articles 149 and 150**), which form the basis of the Community's endeavours to promote investment in people and enhance their qualifications.

The 2001 **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** recognises rights of primary concern for youth concerning education, lifelong learning and work conditions. **Article 14** formally recognises that everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training. **Article 32** provides that "Young people admitted to work must have working conditions appropriate to their age and be protected against economic exploitation and any work likely to harm their safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social development or to interfere with their education".

At their meeting on 18 June 2004 Heads of State of Government gave their agreement to the new **Constitutional Treaty**. **Article III-182** refers explicitly to 'the participation of young people in the democratic life of Europe'.

## 2. THE FIRST INITIATIVES

In the 1960s and 1970s the Community led the way in the area of youth by funding pilot programmes.

### 2.1 The Youth for Europe Programme

With its decision of 16 June 1988, the Council adopted the first phase of the Youth for Europe programme, which ran from 1 July 1988 to 31 December 1991. The second phase was adopted in 1991 and ran from 1 January 1992 to 31 December 1994 with an estimated budget of ECU 25 million<sup>1</sup>. The third phase was adopted on 14 March 1995 and ran from 1 January 1995 to 31 December 1999 with a budget of ECU 126 million<sup>2</sup>.

The main objective of the programme was to contribute, in particular through intensified cooperation between the Member States, to young people's education by developing exchange activities within the Community and exchanges with non-member countries with which the Community had concluded cooperation agreements. The programme sought to help young people in their education outside the formal school system. The programme supported initiatives and innovative projects in the interest of the Community or of a transnational nature set up by young people for young people, which allowed them to play an active and acknowledged role in society and to develop their individual abilities, creativity, sense of solidarity and independence and to discover different social and cultural environments.

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<sup>1</sup> Council Decision 91/395/EEC of 29 July 1991, OJ L 217/91, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Decision N° 818/95/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 14 March 1995, OJ L 87/95

## 2.2. European Voluntary Service for Young People (EVS)

**The European Parliament** played a pioneering role in setting up this programme. In 1995 the European Parliament called for a scheme to enable young people to gain experience as volunteers in other Member States or third countries. After a Pilot Action in 1996-97 the EVS was started in 1998 with a budget of ECU 47.5 million<sup>1</sup>. It offered young people an accredited informal educational experience in another Member State or in a third country in a non-profit making, unpaid activity of importance to the Community and of a limited duration of a maximum of 12 months.

## 3 THE YOUTH PROGRAMME (2000-2006)

Building on the success of the former programmes, the European Commission in May 1998 presented a proposal for a Community Action Programme on Youth. This programme, which incorporated all youth-related activities such as the 'Youth for Europe' and 'European Voluntary Service for Young People' programmes, aimed to rationalise Community action in the youth sector.

The '**Youth Programme**', was formally adopted on 13 April 2000 for the period of 2000-2006 with a total budget of EUR 520 million. The objective is to help young people to acquire knowledge, skills and competences which may be the foundations of their future development, and to exercise responsible citizenship so as to become an active part of society. It focus on young people between the ages of 15 and 25 for whom it is difficult to participate in other Community or national programmes for cultural, social, economic, physical, mental or geographical reasons. There are five categories of actions:

Action 1 - *Youth for Europe* (Youth Exchanges and Youth Encounters): mobility activities for groups of young people (from 15 to 25) based on transnational partnerships;

Action 2 - *European Voluntary Service*: participation by a volunteer between 18 to 25 years of age, in a Member State other than the one in which he/she is living, or in a non-member country, in a non-profit-making and unpaid activity which is of value to the community and lasts for a limited period (12 months at the most);

Action 3 - *Initiative for Youth*: support for innovative and creative projects being promoted by young people;

Action 4 - *Joint Actions*: community aid may be provided for actions undertaken jointly with other Community schemes in the field of knowledge policy;

Action 5 - *Various support measures*: support and integration initiatives undertaken under the other four actions, as to improve or increase their benefits<sup>2</sup>.

In October 2001 the Commission presented an **evaluation report** on the Programme<sup>3</sup>.

On 28 February 2002, the **European Parliament** adopted a resolution regarding the implementation of the Youth Programme<sup>4</sup>. The Parliament was pleased by the large number of projects founded, although it asked the Commission to provide more precise and coherent figures in future reports. The Parliament also stressed that disadvantaged youth had not been sufficiently involved in the projects and that obstacles in this sense should be examined more thoroughly. The Commission was asked to ensure gender equality in participants' rate in the Programme and to

<sup>1</sup> Decision No 1686/98/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 July 1998 establishing the Community action programme European Voluntary Service for Young People.

<sup>2</sup> A User's guide providing detailed information on various features and actions of the Programme can be downloaded at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/index_en.html).

<sup>3</sup> SEC(2001)1621.

<sup>4</sup> A5-0019/2002 – OJ C 293 E/02, p. 109

support projects aiming at the integration of young immigrants.

In the same resolution the Parliament also called on the Commission together with the National Agencies and the European Parliament to hold a youth action week to raise public awareness of the Youth Programme. Accordingly the **First European Youth Week** took place from 29 September to 5 October 2003. Since its start the Youth programme has enabled 400 000 young people to participate in 40 000 projects. About 150 young people representing the best of these project were invited to Brussels to meet Members of the European Parliament and the Commission to debate the future of youth policy. At the same time activities and events were organised throughout Europe.

#### 4. THE YOUTH PROGRAMME AND THIRD COUNTRIES

The EU has developed close cooperation with Mediterranean countries, South East Europe (SEE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Latin America within the Youth Programme. Youth from these countries have to be associated with partners, who are nationals of EU Member States.

##### 4.1. The Euro-Med Youth Programme

EU-Mediterranean youth intercultural dialogue and exchanges started in 1992 within the scope of the "Youth for Europe" and "European Voluntary Service" programmes. A more structured relationship was developed later within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, often referred to as **Barcelona Process**, between the EU and 12 Mediterranean Partners: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia (Maghreb), Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, Syria (Mashrek), Turkey, Cyprus and Malta. The Partnership has its main political basis and justification in the **Barcelona Declaration**, signed by the 27 Partners in November 1995. The Declaration defines three main areas of concern in the EU-Mediterranean Partnership: 1) political and security partnership, 2) economic and financial partnership and 3) partnership in social, cultural and human affairs<sup>1</sup>. In 1996, the first MEDA Programme was established by a Council Regulation 1488/96<sup>2</sup> (amended and renewed by Regulation 2698/2000<sup>3</sup>) with the objective of funding projects in the area of common concern defined in the Barcelona Declaration. The third chapter of the Barcelona Declaration deals with partnership in social, cultural and human affairs and explicitly addressed is "the importance of encouraging contacts and exchanges between young people". Accordingly, Council Regulation 1488/96 lists "cultural cooperation and youth exchanges" among the objectives of the initiatives taken under the MEDA Programme. In order to implement this objective, in September 1998, the European Commission and the Euro-Mediterranean (MED) Committee<sup>4</sup> adopted the first Euro-Med Youth Programme (1999-2001)<sup>5</sup>. The second Euro-Med Youth Programme (2002-2004) was adopted by the European Commission on 22 November 2001<sup>6</sup> on the basis of the evaluation report of the first phase. The Programme's budget for the second phase is 14 million EUR (10 million from MEDA and 4 million from the Youth Programme). Youth from both the EU and Mediterranean partners participate in the different projects. The major goals of the Euro-Med Programme include the integration of young people into social and professional life, the democratisation of the civil society of the Mediterranean partners, respect and dialogue between cultures, the promotion of

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<sup>1</sup> See the Declaration and other relevant documents at the web site [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/euromed/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/index.htm)

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 189/96, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 311/00, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> The MED Committee, referred to in Article 11 of Regulation 1488/96, assists the Commission in the implementation of MEDA and is "composed of the representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission".

<sup>5</sup> See the Programme's web site at [www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth/youthprogram.html](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth/youthprogram.html).

<sup>6</sup> Decision No 2001/2347.

active citizenship of youth (especially women) and the exchange of information, experience and expertise between youth organisations.

#### 4.2. South East Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States and Latin America

In 1992 the Youth Programme was extended to the Commonwealth of Independent States<sup>1</sup>, and in 1995 to South East Europe<sup>2</sup>. These areas are together with the Mediterranean Countries listed "Priority 1" regions. In 2002, under "Priority 2" regions, the Commission also listed Latin America countries<sup>3</sup>.

### 5. THE WHITE PAPER ON YOUTH

In the EU Member States there are about **75 million** young people between the ages of 15 and 25. As mentioned above, a number of specific youth related activities have been initiated at Community level, and both the European Parliament and other European institutions have adopted several resolutions dealing with the Youth sector. For instance in a resolution on measures **to protect minors** in the **European Union**, adopted on 12 December 1996, **the European Parliament** called on the Member States to promote the political participation of young people and, in particular, to support the establishment of representative youth parliaments at local, regional and national levels<sup>4</sup>. In a resolution of 8 February 1999 on **youth participation**<sup>5</sup> the **Council** recognised the importance of young people having a say in all aspects of society, particularly in political, social, economic and cultural affairs. The Commission was asked to promote the involvement of young people in EU youth activities and programmes and to take the opinion of young people into consideration in the development of these activities and programmes.

The Council adopted another resolution on 14 December 2000 concerning the **social inclusion of young people**<sup>6</sup>. The Council called on the Commission to consider as a priority, the improvement of young people's situations, to promote their access to Community and national mobility programmes, the work on objectives to ensure the participation of young people in economic and social life and to develop exchanges of information and good practice in combating their exclusion.

However, according to the Commission, these resolutions and declarations have often gone no further than to express good intentions. The European Institutions and the Member States lack an overview of the policies and hence of the various types of action which can be taken to support young people and cooperation in the field of youth has to respond to the following new challenges: demographic and social change, the widening gap between young people and public affairs at national, European and international levels and the attendant risk of a "citizenship deficit".

In November 2001, the European Commission, therefore, presented a **White Paper on Youth**<sup>7</sup>. The White Paper was the result of extensive consultation with tens of thousands of young Europeans, as well as youth organisations, Member States, experts and European institutions. **The European Parliament** took part in this consultation process by organising a Public Hearing, on 24 April 2001,

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<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> The following countries are part of the Programme: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Federal republic of Yugoslavia.

<sup>3</sup> Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 20/97, p.170

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 42/99, p. 1

<sup>6</sup> OJ C 374/00, p. 5

<sup>7</sup> COM(2001)681.

with the participation of young people, experts and MEP's. Young people's education, employment, social situation as well as their values, expectations and participation in society were all debated.

The White Paper focused on the following four objectives : 1) new ways of enabling **young people to participate in public life**, 2) giving young people **better information on European issues**, 3) **encouraging voluntary service** and 4) greater **understanding and knowledge** of young people. All major EU institutions welcomed the Commission's conclusions in the White Paper. The **European Parliament** formally endorsed them on 14 May 2002<sup>1</sup>, and called for the involvement of young people and youth organisations in policy matters both at national and international level. On 14 February 2002, the **Council** stated<sup>2</sup> that the application of the open method of coordination to the youth field, and the consideration of youth issues within other sectorial policies are both "appropriate and feasible" approaches to youth matters, fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity. On 27 June 2002 a Council resolution fixed the terms and the framework for the implementation of the White Paper conclusions<sup>3</sup>.

The Commission has launched three Communications for the **follow-up** to the White Paper and the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 :

- 1) COM (2004)336 Common objectives for a greater **understanding and knowledge** of youth
- 2) COM (2004)337 Common objectives for **voluntary activities** among young people and
- 3) COM (2003)184 Common objectives for the **participation and information** of young people.

**The Parliament** in its resolution of 26 February 2004 on COM (2003)184 considered that the Commission's proposed open method of coordination is an appropriate way to achieve better cooperation at European level in the specific area of youth policy, and called for an interinstitutional agreement to be concluded along these lines. The Parliament also recommended an independent follow-up programme for the "Youth" action programme, with sufficient financial resources to meet the growing demands in the youth policy area.

In a Resolution of 25 November 2003<sup>4</sup> the **Council** emphasized the need to increase the participation by young people in the civic life of their community and to increase participation by young people in the system of representative democracy.

On 26 May 2004 the **European Youth Portal** (europa.eu.int/Youth) was launched by the European Commission. This Portal which was suggested by the White Paper on Youth aims to give as many young people as possible quick and easy access to relevant youth related information on Europe, to enhance young people's participation in public life and to contribute to their active citizenship.

## **6. ACTION PROGRAMME TO PROMOTE BODIES ACTIVE AT EUROPEAN LEVEL IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH**

Following the reform of the EU Financial Regulation in 2002 it was necessary to establish a legal bases with the aim of supporting non-governmental organisations active at European level in the field of youth, such as the **European Youth Forum**. The Parliament supported the proposal and the

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 180 E/03, p. 145

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 119/02, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 168/02, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 295/03; p.6



EP and Council Decision was adopted the 21 April 2004<sup>1</sup>. The programme runs from 2004 until 2006 with a total budget of EUR 13 million.

## 7. OTHER ISSUES

### 7.1 Mobility

**Education and training** is of primary importance for youth and the European Union is supporting young people through its Structural Funds in particular the European Social Fund, and via its different Action Programmes such as SOCRATES, LEONARDO DA VICINI and TEMPUS. These programmes encourage **mobility** of students, persons undergoing training and young volunteers. Although free movement of persons is one of the basic principle of the EC Treaty there still remain many obstacles for young people who wish to study or work in another Member State, for example non-recognition of diplomas, double taxation and problems with social security. A Recommendation of 10 July 2001 on mobility of the European Parliament and the Council recommended appropriate measures to solve these problems<sup>2</sup>.

To facilitate mobility the Commission in 2003 presented a proposal for a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences<sup>3</sup> (EUROPASS). This proposal was supported by the European Parliament on 22 April 2004 (first reading).

The European Commission has also on 5 March 2003 launched a portal **Ploteus** : (<http://europe.eu.int/ploteus/portal/home.jsp>) which provide information on learning opportunities throughout the European Space.

### 7.2 The European Youth Convention

On the 26 of February 2002, the **Convention on the Future of Europe**<sup>4</sup> started to work on renewing the EU treaties. In his introductory speech<sup>5</sup>, Mr Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Chairman explicitly encouraged youth participation and in particular proposed a 'Convention for the Young People of Europe'. Following this suggestion, 210 young people aged between 18 and 25 gathered in Brussels in the European Parliament from 9 to 12 July 2002 within the European Youth Convention<sup>6</sup>. They discussed several issues organised along the same lines as the Convention. The Youth Convention's objective was to provide the perspective of young people on the future EU Constitution. **On 12 July 2002, the European Youth Convention adopted a final text**<sup>7</sup> touching upon general issues such as democracy, equality, participation and globalisation, but also specific topics such as social rights, subsidiarity, environment, taxation, education, enlargement,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 138/04; p. 24

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 215/01

<sup>3</sup> COM (2003) 796

<sup>4</sup> Detailed information about the Convention and related documents can be found at the Convention's web site <http://european-convention.eu.int>.

<sup>5</sup> Introductory speech by President Valéry Giscard D'Estaing to the Convention on the Future of Europe, SN 1565/02, 26 February 2002.

<sup>6</sup> See the European Youth Convention web site at [www.youth-convention.net](http://www.youth-convention.net).

<sup>7</sup> Final Text adopted by the European Youth Convention, CONV 205/02, Brussels, 12 July 2002. It is available at the Youth Convention web site.

immigration, foreign policy and the reform of European institutions. According to the Youth Convention, the new EU should approach its citizens, in particular youth, by substantiating and promoting a European citizenship, which integrates national and local identities. The Union should also become a real and unified actor in international relations, by assuming a leading role in reinforcing human rights, democratisation, peace and security and by supporting development and cooperation throughout the world. On 20-21 May 2003 the Youth Convention Presidium organised **a follow-up meeting** in Brussels in which it assessed the draft Constitutional Treaty in the light of the proposals made on 12 July 2002.

### 7.3 The European Youth Forum

The European Youth Forum (EYF) is the international umbrella organisation of national youth councils and international NGOs. It represents youth association in International Institutions such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Within the EU, it plays an important role of promotion of youth policy in EU policies<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> EYF website at [www.youthforum-org.ae.psiweb.com/index.html](http://www.youthforum-org.ae.psiweb.com/index.html)