



2017/2259(INI)

31.01.2018

DRAFT REPORT

on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy
(2017/2259(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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EXPLANATORY STATEMENT - SUMMARY OF FACTS AND FINDINGS

The future framework for an EU action in the field of youth will be decided in a crucial moment for Europe, with the ongoing Brexit negotiations, discussions on the next MFF and the future generation of key programmes meaning Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens and the Youth Employment Initiative as well as the new one, European Solidarity Corps.

Meanwhile, the austerity measures taken in the context of the economic crisis had a negative impact on European citizens. Young Europeans are the first victims of the lack of investment in education and culture, the unemployment, cuts in social services. As a consequence, most of them are afraid of the future and feel sacrificed for economic interests. The numbers speak for themselves. Today, almost one out of three young persons between 18 and 24 years old is at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the European Union¹. In 2016 the youth unemployment rates (age group 15-24) of the EU were 18.7% as compared to 15.6% in 2008. In the Euro area the youth unemployment rate is still above 20%. Furthermore the NEET² rate in the EU is 15.6% as compared to 14.2% in 2008.³ In addition to them, a lot of employed young people are facing huge challenges such as precarious working conditions in terms of wages, stress, and contract length. For young Europeans, it is sometimes very difficult to feel part of the society. Indeed whether you are employed or not, the lack of confidence in young people leads for example to refusal to credits. As a consequence, frustration is increasing and young people feel excluded. The social exclusion has serious negative impacts on living conditions, civic participation, emotional life and health of young people.

In parallel, the recovery is ongoing and the European economy is now on a quite robust growth path with decreasing unemployment. Nevertheless inequality is still high in the European Union and the risk of poverty affects in particular young Europeans.

In this context, youth has become a priority for the European Union and therefore initiatives in order to tackle youth unemployment, to increase youth participation, to foster inclusion and to promote volunteering have been launched. Results are positive but the objectives are far from being achieved and therefore EU Youth Strategy should be improved and strengthened.

Evaluation results of the current EU Action in the field of youth (2010-2018)

The current EU action in the field of youth (2010-2018), the so-called EU Youth Strategy, is the continuation of the previous⁴ one, aims at creating more, and equal opportunities for all young people, especially in education and in the labour market, in order to meet some of the challenges listed above. The Strategy also has as an objective to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people and therefore focuses on mechanisms for youth participation in policy-making.

¹ According to the latest data published by Eurostat, an estimate of 29,8% of young people in the 18-24 age group were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU in 2011. Data can be accessed at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_social_policy_equality/youth/indicators

² The NEET rate is the share of people aged 15-24 who are neither employed nor in education or training.

³ AKW, ECLM, IMK, OFCE, “independent Annual Growth Survey 2018 - Repair the roof when the sun is shining”, November 2017

⁴ COM(2009)0200, p. 3.

However, these objectives remain very broad and ambitious. Therefore, assessing whether they have been met is difficult, as opportunities and participation for and of young people in Europe depend on many factors related to the socio-economic situation in respective countries, and is also a moving target in view of changing circumstances.

The current EU Youth Strategy features a very large number of suggested initiatives over the various fields of action (not all of them being specific policy areas), which in combination with rather complicated mechanism of establishing political priorities under the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), does not ensure a clear identification of objectives while the overall ones remain rather as general mottos.

It is worth noticing the lack of clearly established benchmarking under the youth policy of the European Union. Therefore, the exchange of best practices is still limited to providing peers with examples of actions taken, within the limitations of individual countries' specific circumstances.

Therefore, the approach establishing distinctive fields of action should be strongly supplemented by a cross-cutting, holistic approach, since the matters related to youth policy making are strongly interlinked (education, employment, innovation, volunteering.) , as the specific policy papers and activity of expert groups working on Youth Strategy matters constantly prove. Such was also an outcome of the European Conference on the future EU Youth Strategy in May 2017, suggesting that the future strategy '*has ambitious goals in a reduced number of areas...*'.¹

It can also be concluded that the tools allowing to measure the policy impacts are generally lacking, as the instruments used so far provide a compilation of data that are not easy to compare and in case of each of the Member States do not pertain to illustrate the real impact of policies chosen. Indeed, the evaluation study carried by the European Commission on the current EYS intended to measure the impact of the EYS on youth policies.² However, the lack of quantitative indicators for the measurement of the Strategy's direct effect on the situation of young people and the nature and scope of the OMC was expected to lead to a 'broad range of effects'.³

In practice, the reporting mechanism in the form of Youth Reports every three years, brings a collection of examples provided by Member States with regard to the implementation of specific suggestions listed in the Youth Strategy, on the basis of which only very general conclusions can be made. Therefore, it can be concluded that a more elaborate system of recording of evolution in national approaches to youth aspects would be needed.

Setting concrete targets at the European and national level is difficult to imagine in an area where Member States maintain competence, and the EU action is limited to coordination and support."The [Strategy's] main EU added value for Member States was that it provided them with policy inspiration, knowledge and expertise, leverage and legitimacy, opportunities and

¹ [Conference Report](#), p. 7.

² SWD(2017)0281, p. 10.

³ Idem

resources.”¹

Finally, according to the European Commission, the external evaluation “shows that Member States are interested in pursuing cooperation on youth issues at the EU level. Unfortunately, the main obstacles are linked to the limited resources available at national level.

Need for a better coordinated and more focused EU Youth Strategy

With this implementation report, we are seeking to provide elements for a strong, long term and well-coordinated strategy in the interest of young Europeans.

First of all, the EU Youth Strategy is designed for young people who should be the first interlocutors. There is an urgent need to give a voice to them either through the successful structured dialogue or through all other formats ensuring strong participatory policy making, such as creating a forum for discussion between young people and decision makers. Young people should have the opportunity to easily access decision making at EU level in order to share their views and make a relevant input into decision making. In parallel, social partners, civil society organizations and educational sector should be widely consulted. Furthermore European Union should work in strong cooperation with national, regional and local levels in order to design in an appropriate way measures to be implemented and promoted among European citizens.

Secondly, all young people should be inserted in the labour market and have a quality jobs, we should strengthen our efforts to give young people equal opportunities for securing sustainable inclusion in the labour market and long term jobs. They should have the opportunity to manage their career developments according to their qualifications and professional interests. Young Europeans need to have a more positive outlook on their future professional careers and retirement prospects. Most of them consider that they will not be able to benefit from quality retirement in the future because of the progressive degradation of social welfare systems. As a consequence, a new social pact between generations has to be promoted in order to secure their future.

Thirdly, young people have the right to live in a healthy environment and have access to education and culture, which is a fundamental right. From secondary to university, all young people should have the possibility to study and to enjoy mobile experiences despite socioeconomic difficulties. A strong focus should be put on marginalized groups such as people with special needs, ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees. Furthermore all young people should have easily access to culture which is crucial during times when intolerance, radicalization and extremism are increasing around Europe. Intercultural dialogue should be promoted in order to honor the European adage to be united in diversity. In parallel, young people can't enjoy their lives if their environment is not healthy. According to United Nations, the air pollution affects the development of growing brains of children. Furthermore, around 66 % of the world 'population will live in urban areas. So it is vital to work and propose an alternative to young people. Sport activities should be promoted in order ensure the physical well-being of young people. Mental well-being is also affected by stress caused by work and daily life putting always more pressure on young people who are expected to be

¹ SWD(2017)0280, p. 2.

productive, high qualified and flexible. Indeed the labour market is extremely competitive and pressure is put on young people to do long traineeships before finding a proper first job. In addition to the stress, cyberbullying affects young people from an early age. As a consequence, the EU Youth Strategy should be designed on a cross sectorial approach and be part of the sustainable development strategy.

Finally, European programmes should be strengthened, improved, promoted and well financed with a long-term and coordinated vision in order to deliver strong results. An ambitious budget should accompany all initiatives whose results are visible in the long term.

It is important to remind and underline that as of course the core competences on youth policies reside within Member states, it is most essential that the relevant national authorities step up the pace of cooperation under the Strategy as one of the strongest critics to the current cooperation is the extreme unevenness of the results achieved and the lack of systematic reporting and availability of reliable data on the implementation of the Strategy.

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2017/2259(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 9, 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Articles 14, 15, 21, 24 and 32 thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing ‘Erasmus+’: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No 1298/2008/EC¹,
- having regard to the Council resolution on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018²,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee³,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 7-8 February 2013 to create a Youth Employment Initiative⁴,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)⁵,
- having regard to the Commission Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy⁶,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’)⁷,
- having regard to its resolution on of 14 September 2017 on the future of the Erasmus+ programme⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 2 February 2017 on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing ‘Erasmus+’: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Decisions No 1719/2006/EC, No 1720/2006/EC and No

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 50.

² OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p. 1.

³ OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1.

⁴ EUCO 37/13.

⁵ OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/youth/youth-strategy-2016_en.pdf

⁷ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁸ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0359.

1298/2008/EC¹,

- having regard to the Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, adopted at the informal meeting of EU education ministers in Paris on 17 March 2015,
- having regard to the 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), adopted by the Council on 23 November 2015²,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning³,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 August 2015 entitled ‘Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) – New priorities for European cooperation in education and training’ (COM(2015)0408),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘EU 2020: a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to its resolution of 27 October 2016 on the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015⁴,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 April 2016 on Learning EU at school⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2015 on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training⁶,
- having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values⁸,
- having regard to the Shadow Report on Youth Policy published by the European Youth Forum,
- having regard to the resolution on the EU Youth Strategy by the European Youth

¹ Texts adopted P8_TA(2017)0018.

² OJ C 417, 15.12.2015, p.17.

³ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0426.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0106.

⁶ OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 76.

⁷ [OJ C 120, 5.4.2016, p. 22.](#)

⁸ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0005.

Forum¹,

- having regard to the position paper entitled ‘Engage. Inform. Empower’ of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA),
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8 0000/2018),
- A. whereas the negative impact of the recession on young people’s prospects for developing their full potential continue to be felt across the European Union;
- B. whereas many Member States, particularly those in Southern Europe, remain some way from achieving their pre-crisis levels on a number of youth indicators, such as employment, welfare and social protection;
- C. whereas disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minorities, people with special needs, women, LGBTIQ, migrants and refugees – who are facing barriers to enter the labour market, and access culture, social services and education – are those most affected by the socio-economic crisis;
- D. whereas education, and intercultural dialogue in particular, have a key role to play in preventing the radicalisation of young people;
- E. whereas young people should be actively involved in the planning, development, implementation, monitoring and assessment of all youth policies;
- F. whereas the 2010-18 EU Youth Strategy (EYS) emphasises the need for a structured dialogue between young people;
- G. whereas young people should be helped and empowered to address the serious problems they are currently facing and to tackle the challenges they will face in the future through more relevant, effective and better coordinated youth policies and the targeted use of economic, employment and social policies at local, regional, national and EU levels;
- H. whereas there is a need to mainstream EU action in the field of youth through the inclusion of a youth dimension in current and future plans;
- I. whereas a gender perspective must be included in decision-making on youth policies which takes into account the specific challenges and circumstances faced by young women and girls in particular;
- J. whereas sustained efforts are needed to increase the participation of young people in society, particularly for migrants, refugees, those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and those at risk of social exclusion;

¹ <http://www.youthforum.org/policypaper/resolution-eu-youth-strategy/>

- K. whereas Article 9 of the TFEU establishes that the Union, in defining and implementing its policies and activities, shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health;
- L. whereas the EYS established a good base for fruitful and meaningful cooperation in the field of youth;
- M. whereas the objectives of the last three-year cycle of the EYS (2010-2018) seem to have been partially achieved; whereas, however, the comparison of the respective situations of the different Member States is very difficult to evaluate owing to a lack of benchmarks and indicators, and to overlapping implementation instruments;

Youth challenges and the current EU youth-related policymaking process

- 1. Notes with regret that long-term austerity measures, notably cuts in funding for education, culture, and youth policies, have had a negative impact on young people and their living conditions; warns that young people, especially the most disadvantaged, such as young women, ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ, those with special needs, migrants and refugees, are greatly affected by rising inequality, the risk of exclusion, insecurity and discrimination;
- 2. Welcomes the achievements of European cooperation in the field of youth, which has demonstrated its ability to tackle the problems faced by most Europeans and to support national policymakers, providing them with expertise, recommendations and legitimacy, and successfully mobilising more EU funding;
- 3. Acknowledges the positive achievements of the EYS through the development of cross-sector work and the implementation of structured dialogue in order to ensure the participation of young people;
- 4. Welcomes the policy initiatives aimed at supporting the EU's youth, in particular Investing in Europe's Youth, the European Solidarity Corps and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI); believes, however, that these instruments should be better connected to the EYS and follow a bottom-up approach; calls on the Commission, therefore, to systematically link all policy proposals pertaining to young people to the overarching strategy and to involve all the relevant stakeholders, such as social partners and civil society;
- 5. Urges the Member States to use the European Pillar of Social Rights as a basis for drafting legislation for young people;

Giving a voice to young people in the EYS

- 6. Recommends that the future EYS should be centred around young people and participatory, reflecting the needs, well-being, ambitions and diversity of all young people in Europe;
- 7. Believes that the EU should express solidarity with young people and continue to empower them to participate in society, primarily by mainstreaming volunteering and

developing new tools;

8. Strongly urges the Commission and the Member States to encourage young people, including the most disadvantaged, to pursue a participatory approach to life, by using online and offline democracy tools and by involving the relevant stakeholders, such as social partners, civil society and youth organisations, in the development, implementation and assessment of youth policies;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage regional and local authorities to ensure that young people are able to fully participate and be involved in decision-making;

Equal opportunities for securing sustainable inclusion in the labour market

10. Is highly concerned at the persistent high rates of youth unemployment throughout the EU; recalls that quality job creation and employment should be guaranteed and remain key commitments towards young people; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote fair working conditions and remuneration; stresses the importance of defining social rights for new forms of employment and ensuring social dialogue;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage cross-border professional and vocational opportunities;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support regional and local authorities and to invest in new life opportunities for young people, in order to develop their creativity for the benefit of their communities;
13. Urges the Commission and the Member States to adopt a rights-based approach to youth and employment; calls on the Member States to ensure that young people have access to quality jobs that uphold their rights, including the right to a stable job that offers a living wage, social protection and secures a life of dignity and autonomy;
14. Welcomes the fact that YEI measures have provided support for more than 1.6 million young people¹; emphasises the need to improve the quality of offers under the Youth Guarantee;
15. Recalls that measures that foster the integration of NEETs into the labour market, including paid internships, traineeships or apprenticeships, must be financially supported by the YEI, but should not be used as a way to substitute employment;

Sustainable development: the future for young people

16. Strongly believes that quality education and training is a fundamental right; considers, therefore, that access to education should be guaranteed for all Europeans, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity or gender; underlines the important role played by education in providing young people with the knowledge and skills to become

¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2017-0406+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

committed citizens and take part in the European project;

17. Is deeply concerned at the particularly acute problem of child poverty, with which up to 25 million children in the EU (more than 26.4 % of all Europeans aged 0-17) from families that are suffering every day from a lack of sufficient income and basic services, are afflicted; calls on the Commission to develop a Child Guarantee as a long-term tool to offer equal opportunities for all children in the EU;
18. Encourages the Commission to support initiatives which aim to foster citizenship, respect, tolerance, values and intercultural learning; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote spaces for dialogue with young people on a range of themes, such as sex, gender, policy and the environment;
19. Strongly believes that literacy, as a key vehicle to secure autonomy and a promising future for young people, must be a priority at European, national and local levels; urges the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to step up their efforts in providing basic learning skills and competences for all;
20. Strongly believes that the social scoreboard, which was introduced within the framework of the European Social Pillar of Social Rights, should be used to monitor the EYS; calls on the Commission to adopt a specific set of indicators to monitor the EYS, such as education, skills and lifelong learning, gender equality in the labour market, healthcare, digital access, living conditions and poverty;
21. Stresses the key role of the family and teachers in supporting young people who experience bullying at school and cyberbullying; urges the Commission and the Member States to take action to address these kinds of behaviour, which affect the mental well-being of young people;
22. Underlines the harmful impact of stress on young people's well-being, both on the labour market and in their personal lives; calls on the Commission and the Member States to invest in mental health programmes and to encourage the relevant actors to help young people in this regard;
23. Highlights the importance of culture not only in combating violence, racism, radicalisation and intolerance, but also in developing a European identity; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote and invest in culture and to ensure equal access;

Stronger alignment and support from funding instruments for the EYS

24. Believes that the EYS should follow the MFF and comply with the Sustainable Development Goals and all relevant flagship initiatives, programmes and policy strategies, setting up systematic dialogue between the respective bodies, defining clear goals and targets and establishing a relevant coordination mechanism;
25. Strongly believes that the funds available to support various youth-related initiatives and policies such as the Erasmus+ programme, the YEI and the Europe for Citizens programme should be significantly increased in the next MFF;

26. Welcomes the European Solidarity Corps – a programme to foster solidarity among young Europeans; recalls Parliament’s position to properly finance the new initiative by means of fresh resources;
27. Firmly believes that the Europe for Citizens programme should continue to stimulate active citizenship, civic education and dialogue and engender a sense of European identity; notes the low success rate of the programme due to a lack of funding; calls for a substantial increase in its funding allocation;
28. Reiterates its support for strengthening the Creative Europe programme, which provides specific mobility schemes for young artists and professionals working in the cultural and creative sectors;
29. Highlights the importance of Erasmus+: an essential tool to create active and committed young citizens; strongly believes that Erasmus+ should target all young people and that the greater aspirations for the next Erasmus+ programming period must be matched by significant additional funding to unlock the programme’s full potential, namely an increased budget;
30. Stresses that the YEI budget is not sufficient to ensure that the programme reaches its targets; calls, therefore, for a significant increase in the YEI allocation under the next MFF and for the Member States to make provisions for youth employment schemes in their national budgets;

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31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.