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<Commission>{EMPL}Committee on Employment and Social Affairs</Commission>

<RefProc>2017/2259(INI)</RefProc>

<Date>{28/03/2018}28.3.2018</Date>

<TitreType>OPINION</TitreType>

<CommissionResp>of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs</CommissionResp>

<CommissionInt>for the Committee on Culture and Education</CommissionInt>

<Titre>on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy</Titre>

<DocRef>(2017/2259(INI))</DocRef>

Rapporteur: <Depute>João Pimenta Lopes</Depute>

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

A. whereas youth unemployment has been gradually decreasing in recent years, although, according to Eurostat, it stood at 16.1 % in January 2018, even exceeding 34 % in some Member States; whereas if we compare the figures from 2008 (15.6 %) we can see that the rate has increased; whereas these figures prevent a one-size-fits-all solution if we are to realise young people’s full potential; whereas there are worryingly high rates of youth unemployment in the outermost regions, with some of those regions registering rates of over 50 %, as in the case of Mayotte;

B. whereas the percentage of young people living in situations of poverty and social exclusion has increased; whereas in 2016 there were more than 6 million young people aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in the EU;

C. whereas the European institutions do not themselves create jobs in the regions, which is why the stated aim of the Youth Initiative must be to promote the regions and SMEs across the board in order to guarantee young people work in the long term;

D. whereas the ultimate objective of the EU Youth Strategy is to increase the number of opportunities and ensure equality of opportunity for all young Europeans;

E. whereas the EU economy is growing again and the disparities have started to shrink;

F. whereas narrowing disparities are evident at regional level across the EU; whereas many regions still have employment rates below their pre-crisis levels;

G. whereas in 2016 the percentage of NEETs stood at 15.6 %;

H. whereas combating poverty and social exclusion is primarily a Member State competence, with the EU playing an important support and coordination role;

I. whereas although the EU Youth Strategy is an ongoing strategy that is continually being refined, its objectives are still very broad and ambitious; whereas there is a lack of duly established parameters of reference;

J. whereas education helps in minimising the effect of socio-economic inequalities, providing skills and competences that are necessary for reducing the intergenerational transmission of disadvantages;

K. whereas the overall lack of investment in young people and young people’s rights will prevent young people from claiming, exercising and defending their rights, and will contribute to the aggravation of phenomena such as declining populations, early school leaving, lack of professional and vocational qualifications, late entry into the labour market, lack of financial independence, potential malfunctioning of social security systems, widespread job insecurity and social exclusion;

L. whereas in recent years the EU has launched a number of initiatives such as the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the Youth Guarantee in the framework of its Youth Strategy, with the objectives of creating more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market and promoting young people´s inclusion, empowerment and active participation in society;

M. whereas the problems that young people face in employment, education and training, as well as in social and political engagement, are not uniform, with some groups being affected disproportionately more than others; whereas more effort is needed to support those who are furthest from the labour market or entirely detached from it;

N. whereas safeguarding local schools and educational establishments in all European regions is vital if the aim is to improve education for young people and if the EU is to offer the regions its full support in meeting this challenge;

O. whereas a highly skilled labour force and an attractive business environment make it possible to benefit from higher growth;

P. whereas career orientation and access to information on employment opportunities and educational paths are essential for future educational development and transition to the labour market;

Q. whereas there is an urgent need to give young Europeans a voice, both through successful structured dialogue and also in other ways;

R. whereas in establishing the objectives of this strategy and implementing and evaluating it, the EU must work in close partnership with national, regional and local authorities;

1. Stresses that an inclusive youth policy should defend and promote social programmes facilitating political and cultural participation; further believes that decent and regulated work, grounded in collective labour agreements, with non-precarious labour relations, adequate salaries and wages, and high-quality, universal public services are important for young people’s societal wellbeing; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote fair working conditions and adequate social protection, including with regard to new forms of employment;

2. Calls on the Member States to actively promote the principles of inclusivity in youth work, with particular emphasis on the work integration of young people with disabilities, making their participation a goal for the success of youth programmes; acknowledges the fact that current technological developments offer learners with disabilities new possibilities to acquire knowledge and skills in both formal and non-formal ways;

3. Urges the continuity of key programmes such as Erasmus +, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs and the YEI; argues that these programmes should be adapted to the differing situations of young people in the EU so that everyone has the same opportunities; draws attention to the specific situations of young people in the outermost regions, which often stop them from making use of these programmes; recognises the importance of Erasmus+ for improving education and youth employability, providing young people with skills and competences for life and exploring further cross-border career opportunities; calls for increased funding for this programme in the framework of the next MFF;

4. Recognises that in recent years the number of young people leaving school early has fallen and that figure is approaching the target laid down in the Europe 2020 strategy; calls on the Member States, despite this, to come up with policies geared towards young people from more disadvantaged families, such as those belonging to ethnic minorities, and especially the Roma community, who have lower education levels and are at risk of poverty and social exclusion, since better education helps break the vicious circle of poverty;

5. Stresses that more can be invested in both domestic and cross-border mobility in order to reduce the youth unemployment rate; calls for the supply of work and skills to be better aligned with demand by facilitating mobility between regions (including cross-border regions);

6. Notes the findings of the interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy, highlighting that it has been successful in triggering concrete changes at the national and organisational levels, has encouraged cross-sectoral cooperation, mutual learning and structured dialogue with young people, and has given an impulse to national youth agendas, strengthening or reorienting youth policy priorities in a number of Member States;

7. Deplores the high numbers of NEETs, and stresses that employment, education and training for young people should be one of the EU’s highest political priorities;

8. Insists on the important role of volunteering activities in developing skills; stresses the need for better validation of the skills gained through volunteering;

9. Urges the Commission to keep the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme; encourages the Member States and the Commission to invest in promoting this programme together, along with chambers of commerce, companies and young people, while not neglecting their main areas of activity;

10. Calls for improved promotion and awareness of existing volunteering opportunities;

11. Believes that the open method of coordination could be continued beyond the current period for cooperation on youth policy in order to set a joint agenda, exchange best practices and improve knowledge-based policymaking; believes, however, that the current strategy’s fields of action and initiatives should be simplified and streamlined and its mechanisms for monitoring and reporting outcomes should be improved so as to make it more targeted and ambitious;

12. Welcomes the positive results of the Youth Guarantee, while highlighting that there are still a worrying number of NEETs in the EU; urges the Commission, therefore, to strengthen the Youth Guarantee and to continue to implement it, and to replicate its results in those Member States where it has yet to be implemented;

13. Shares the view that youth policies cannot succeed in stagnant economies and are correlated with strong economies with conditions conducive to work;[[1]](#footnote-1)

14. Reiterates the importance of the Youth Strategy’s cross-sectoral approach as a means of mainstreaming a youth dimension and creating synergies in other relevant policy fields such as employment, education and training; believes that the integration of the Youth Strategy with other related initiatives at EU level could be improved;

15. Urges the Commission to create an online platform for young people where they can anonymously report violations by the persons responsible for promoting the programmes, as well as suggest changes and ask questions; reiterates the need to guarantee that promoting authorities and employers are also involved, creating a space within the platform where they can ask questions and share good practices;

16. Urges the Commission to improve the quality of vocational training and increase awareness of it among the Member States as an essential alternative to higher education;

17. Highlights the value of structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations (including national youth councils) as a means of establishing structures and processes for their active participation in the planning, implementation and assessment of the youth policies and programmes, the creation of a joint agenda, the exchange of best practices and the improvement of knowledge-based policymaking; encourages the inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g. NEETs, people from marginalised communities, migrants and refugees, young people with disabilities and early school leavers); stresses that consideration should be given to the creation of an EU hotline against the violation of the rights of young people, so that young people can report any negative experience of participation in YEI and Youth Guarantee measures to the Commission directly; underlines the importance of the conference on the future EU Youth Strategy held in 2017; calls on the Commission to replicate this event with frequency in order to share good practices in the implementation of youth programmes and to promote communication between young people’s associations, employers, and national and local governments;

18. Highlights the importance of the Commission’s evaluation of the implementation of the Youth Strategy in the Member States with a view to enabling increased checks and monitoring on the ground; urges the Commission to establish objectives for the EU Youth Strategy that can be qualitatively and quantitatively assessed, taking into account the specificities of each Member State or region; calls on the Commission to increase funding for programmes and actions preparing young people for the world of work;

19. Urges the Commission to strengthen control and monitoring measures in order to ensure that European youth programmes do not have the opposite effects to those intended and do not create precarious jobs; urges the Commission, furthermore, to pursue economic and employment policies with the aim of creating more and better jobs for young people; argues, therefore, that a proper EU Youth Strategy should be based not only on getting young people into work but also on supporting the creation of dignified and quality jobs;

20. Stresses that the YEI is the most visible EU programme supporting labour market inclusion for young people in Europe, and insists on its continuation and the widening of its scope, also by clarifying the objectives and transparency of the results, in the next programming period; welcomes the increase in funding for the YEI, but recognises that its resources are still insufficient to guarantee that all NEETs will find an apprenticeship, a traineeship, or a place on a further education scheme; in this context, calls on the Member States to ensure that the available ESF funds do not replace national public spending; calls, accordingly, for the YEI envelope for the next MFF to be increased while also ensuring the quick and simplified deployment of funds and stable financing;

21. Emphasises that the labour market is constantly changing; argues that the transition into the labour market is facilitated by an education and training system that educates individuals comprehensively, supporting students in finding their own learning methods, ensuring that they acquire cross-cutting skills and competences including basic and non-cognitive skills, as well as key competences that are future-oriented, in order to foster integration into the world of work and versatility in professional life, not through early specialisation but also by enabling the attainment of a wide variety of skills; calls for a specific focus on promoting language skills and cross-border professional and vocational opportunities and mobility among young people; calls for greater coordination between public employment services, social partners and education providers, and for better recognition and validation of degrees and skills, including informal learning; draws attention, in particular, to the combined vocational education and training model, which is not sufficiently well-known, but can make a significant contribution to training professionals in deficit occupations by ensuring a smooth transition from school and training to professional life;

22. Recalls that employment and entrepreneurship constitute one of the eight priorities identified in the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018); stresses that youth work and non-formal learning, particularly as developed in youth organisations, play a vital role in developing young people’s potential, including entrepreneurial skills, allowing them to develop a broad set of competences which can increase their opportunities on the labour market;

23. Stresses that, despite high unemployment rates, labour mobility within the EU remains limited; draws attention, therefore, to the importance of worker mobility for a competitive labour market; calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage cross-border professional and vocational opportunities to this end;

24. Reiterates the importance of adults over the age of 55 in training young people in the workplace; argues, together with the Commission, in favour of the creation of programmes that allow the gradual departure of these people from the labour market up to retirement age, more specifically transitioning first to part-time work, during which they also train young people and help them to gradually integrate into the workplace;

25. Points out the important role of enterprises in matters related to skill acquisition and the creation of jobs for young people; notes that education and training in areas related to the promotion of entrepreneurship may contribute to the achievement of long-term development, the promotion of European competitiveness and the fight against unemployment;

26. Stresses the need to combat early school leaving by identifying the shortcomings of the school system and society, supporting students in finding their own learning methods, implementing relevant and engaging curricula and realising a strong and well-developed guidance system with high-quality counselling and orientation services for all students; underlines that a holistic and inclusive educational approach is essential to make all students feel welcome and included, and feel ownership of their education;

27. Calls on the Commission to ensure, as part of the future Youth Strategy and the post-2020 MFF, an increase in the funding, powers and scope of programmes promoting education, training, job creation and social inclusion for young people, including young people with disabilities, while also ensuring that these funds are not used to help create unpaid internships or precarious work or to replace permanent jobs with temporary ones or internships; underlines the need to offer proper learning and training content and decent working conditions for traineeships and apprenticeships in order to ensure their crucial role in the transition from education to professional life; considers that in order to ensure the delivery of quality placements, besides specific guidance and supervision, the existence of an apprenticeship or a traineeship contract will delineate roles and responsibilities of all parties specifying length, learning objectives and tasks corresponding to clearly identified skills to be developed, employment status, adequate compensation/remuneration including for overtime, social protection and security schemes under the applicable national law, applicable collective agreements, or both;

28. Urges the Member States to monitor the effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee, for example by putting in place tailor-made lifelong guidance systems that can help people, at any stage of their lives, make educational, training and occupational decisions and manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings; recalls that the involvement of youth organisations in the evaluation, implementation and communication of the Youth Guarantee is crucial for its success, and encourages registration of the unemployed;

29. Encourages the strong involvement of NGOs, local and regional authorities in helping young people and especially vulnerable groups (e.g. NEETs, migrants and refugees, young people with disabilities, school dropouts) find gainful employment, education or training, and assisting them with engaging in political decision-making and civic society;

30. Believes that in view of the complexity of youth policies and their impact, research collaboration must be stimulated in order to develop empirically justified responses and intervention and preventative solutions that will further young people’s wellbeing and resilience;

31. Notes the findings and risks suggesting that actions managed by the Commission (including student exchange programmes) are considered by the national authorities to fulfil the requirements of the Youth Strategy, and that some Member States are withdrawing their resources from policy areas which are supported from the EU budget;[[2]](#footnote-2)

32. Urges the Commission and the Member States to supervise establishments that repeatedly offer consecutive internships without following them up with jobs, in order to ensure that jobs are not replaced with so-called internships;

33. Argues that in order to increase the effectiveness of actions in the fields of education, youth and sport, joint objectives and instruments must be developed to measure the impact of policy, based on international studies;

34. Calls for the promotion and better facilitation of cross-border professional and vocational opportunities and mobility among young people, and for providing them with skills and competences for life, including language skills, while also broadening their opportunities and chances to participate in both the labour market and society;

35. Argues for the harmonisation, without prejudice to the principle of subsidiarity, of the concept of young person, setting an age limit applicable across the EU; encourages all the Member States to contribute to this harmonisation, eliminating obstacles to the gauging of progress and establishing measures to be put in place;

36. Urges the Member States to uphold transparency in submitting their accounts and using funds earmarked for boosting sustainable employment opportunities for young people; reiterates the importance, consequently, of the Member States submitting detailed information on the situation of their young people when requested;

37. Recalls that the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights declares that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable all to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market; stresses, consequently, the importance of prioritising and ensuring social investment in education and training in the new programming period of the MFF for 2020-2026;

38. Highlights the lack of systematic updates and reliable data on the implementation of the Youth Strategy; urges the Member States and the Commission, therefore, to promote closer cooperation between national and regional statistics services when it comes to submitting relevant and up-to-date statistics on youth, which are important for assessing the level of success of the strategy being implemented; considers that the triannual reports submitted must be accompanied by these statistics;

39. Urges the Member States to indicate the hoped-for impact of the measures to be adopted in their action plans; emphasises, therefore, the importance of the Member States providing guarantees that the measures put in place have effectively boosted employment; reiterates the need to gauge the sustainability of the policies to be implemented.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| **Date adopted** | 27.3.2018 |  |  |  |
| **Result of final vote** | +:–:0: | 4052 |
| **Members present for the final vote** | Guillaume Balas, Tiziana Beghin, Brando Benifei, Mara Bizzotto, Enrique Calvet Chambon, David Casa, Michael Detjen, Lampros Fountoulis, Elena Gentile, Arne Gericke, Marian Harkin, Czesław Hoc, Agnes Jongerius, Ádám Kósa, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Patrick Le Hyaric, Jeroen Lenaers, Thomas Mann, Dominique Martin, Miroslavs Mitrofanovs, Emilian Pavel, João Pimenta Lopes, Georgi Pirinski, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Robert Rochefort, Claude Rolin, Siôn Simon, Romana Tomc, Ulrike Trebesius, Marita Ulvskog |
| **Substitutes present for the final vote** | Georges Bach, Amjad Bashir, Heinz K. Becker, Karima Delli, Tania González Peñas, Krzysztof Hetman, Ivari Padar, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Jasenko Selimovic, Csaba Sógor, Neoklis Sylikiotis |
| **Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote** | Jude Kirton-Darling, Ana Miranda, James Nicholson, Massimo Paolucci |

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| **40** | **+** |
| ALDE | Enrique Calvet Chambon, Marian Harkin, Robert Rochefort, Jasenko Selimovic |
| EFDD | Tiziana Beghin |
| GUE/NGL | Tania González Peñas, Patrick Le Hyaric, João Pimenta Lopes, Neoklis Sylikiotis |
| NI | Lampros Fountoulis |
| PPE | Georges Bach, Heinz K. Becker, David Casa, Krzysztof Hetman, Ádám Kósa, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Jeroen Lenaers, Thomas Mann, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Csaba Sógor, Romana Tomc |
| S&D | Guillaume Balas, Brando Benifei, Michael Detjen, Elena Gentile, Agnes Jongerius, Jude Kirton-Darling, Ivari Padar, Massimo Paolucci, Emilian Pavel, Georgi Pirinski, Siôn Simon, Marita Ulvskog |
| VERTS/ALE | Karima Delli, Ana Miranda, Miroslavs Mitrofanovs |

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| **5** | **-** |
| ECR | Amjad Bashir, Arne Gericke, Czesław Hoc, James Nicholson, Ulrike Trebesius |

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| --- | --- |
| **2** | **0** |
| ENF | Mara Bizzotto, Dominique Martin |

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

1. https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/RR2018\_01\_BlameItOnMyYouth.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/615645/EPRS\_STU(2018)615645\_EN.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)