



## YOUTH

Youth is a national policy area. Harmonisation of Member States' legislation is excluded. The role of the EU is therefore a supporting one. As such, 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 and the DiscoverEU project.

### 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 of the Treaty on European Union (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 of the 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. 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 people aged 30-34 who have completed tertiary education 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.

#### 2. EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027: engaging, connecting and empowering young people

On 26 November 2018, the Council adopted a [resolution](#) on the new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. The text proposes that particular attention be devoted to the following areas of activity:

- Fostering the participation of young people 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 the recognition of youth work.

### B. Relevant EU spending programmes

#### 1. Erasmus+ 2014-2020

[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.

#### 2. Erasmus 2021-2027

In the proposal for the new Erasmus programme for 2021-2027 ([COM\(2018\) 0367](#)), it was recommended that the budget be doubled, with approximately 10% earmarked for youth activities. One of the aims of the proposal is to promote a European identity with the travel experience [DiscoverEU](#), which gives young people opportunities to discover Europe's cultural heritage and diversity. Beneficiaries of DiscoverEU include school pupils and higher education students, but also trainees and youth workers. So far, the Commission has awarded 50 000 travel passes through three application rounds which attracted applications from 275 000 young people.



## 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). 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<sup>[1]</sup>.

### 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](#)).

### 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.

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



#### 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. On 25 May 2016, the Commission published a new legislative proposal amending the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. Key elements of the text agreed include protecting minors from content that 'may impair' them, combating hate speech and protecting minors from harmful content.

#### 5. European Youth Portal

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

#### 6. European Youth Week

Every two years, the European Commission, together with Parliament, organises the [European Youth Week](#). Its purpose is both to celebrate youth activities across all of the countries taking part in the Erasmus Programme and to present the various EU mobility opportunities that are on offer to young people.

### ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has always supported close cooperation between Member States in the youth field. It has taken an active role in the formulation of youth policy, for example in its resolutions on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015 (OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 212), on a Youth Guarantee (OJ C 440, 30.12.2015, p. 67), on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training (OJ C 316, 22.9.2017, p. 76), on youth employment (OJ C 224, 21.6.2016, p. 19) and on skills policies for fighting youth unemployment (OJ C 11, 12.1.2018, p. 44).

On 12 March 2019, Parliament adopted a resolution on the Commission's proposal for a regulation establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme beyond 2020<sup>[2]</sup>. MEPs voted for the programme to be made more accessible to young people with fewer opportunities, such as persons with disabilities and those from isolated or marginalised communities, and to young people with learning or health difficulties. They also voted for a clear distinction to be made between volunteering activities and job placements, in order to ensure that no participating organisation uses young people as unpaid volunteers when potential quality jobs are available. The volunteering period will be

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[2]Texts adopted, P8\_T8(2019)0150.



limited to 12 months and traineeships will last from two to six months. Parliament also imposed a minimum job contract length of three months. Finally, it broadened the scope of the European Solidarity Corps for 2021-2027, adding the provision of humanitarian aid in non-EU countries as one of the Corps' activities.

In its resolution of 14 September 2017 (OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 131), Parliament proposed that the next Erasmus+ programme should focus on actions geared towards delivering better employment opportunities for young people. It recommended that the priorities of the Erasmus programme, the EU Youth Strategy and other EU-funded programmes be aligned. Similarly, it was Parliament which recommended that the budget for the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme be tripled to EUR 41 billion, and that 10.3% of it be allocated to youth activities<sup>[3]</sup>.

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)<sup>[4]</sup>. During its plenary session in October 2018, it adopted the Commission's legislative proposal for a revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (OJ C 11, 13.1.2020, p. 64). 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.

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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[3]Texts adopted, [P8\\_TA\(2019\)0324](#).

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

