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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.

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. The inclusion of 'youth' as a concept in EU policy dates back to the Treaty of Maastricht, which entered into force in 1993. 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 and 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

On the basis of a Commission communication of April 2009, in November 2009 the Council adopted a resolution on the framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). 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.

Policy measures include both specific initiatives in the youth field (e.g. voluntary activities and mobility) and mainstreaming initiatives (meaning that youth issues are taken into account when policies in fields with an impact on young people's lives are drawn up).

Work proceeds in work cycles of three years, and priorities for the fields of action are chosen for each cycle. For the current (and last) 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; (6) contributions to responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing number of young migrants and refugees in the EU.

The Commission draws up an EU Youth Report at the end of each work cycle, which maps progress towards the goals. Member States cooperate by means of high-level expert groups and other networks. The structured dialogue with young people and youth organisations gives young people a say when youth policy is shaped. Finally, the funds provided by relevant EU programmes, such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe and the European Social Fund, need to be mobilised in order to achieve the goals of European cooperation in the youth field.

2. Europe 2020 strategy

Launched in 2010, the Europe 2020 strategy focuses on young people and tackles different objectives for young people, such as 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.

B. Relevant EU spending programmes

1. Erasmus+

Erasmus+ contains a specific chapter on youth, for which 10% of its annual budget of approximately EUR 2.1 billion is set aside. Its specific objectives are to: (1) improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, 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; (4) enhance the international dimension of youth activities and the role of youth workers and organisations as support structures for young people. Three key actions are set up to support these objectives: (1) Learning mobility of individuals; (2) Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; (3) Support for policy reform.

Erasmus+ directly supports the European Voluntary Service (EVS) under Key Action 1 of the Youth chapter. 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.

C. Other EU initiatives

1. The Youth Guarantee

In April 2013, the Council adopted a recommendation on establishing a [Youth Guarantee](#) 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. This good-quality offer should be for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education and should be adapted to each individual and situation. 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. For details, see Fact Sheet [5.10.2](#) on the European Social Fund, section B.2.

2. European Solidarity Corps

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is an initiative launched by the European Commission in December 2016. It gives young people between 18 and 30 years old the possibility to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad. The volunteering strand of the ESC offers young people the opportunity to carry out full-time voluntary service of between two and twelve months in another country. The occupational strand will provide young people with the opportunity of a job or traineeship in sectors which engaged in solidarity-related activities. It will be set up gradually through partnerships with public bodies, NGOs and commercial organisations active in these fields. It is expected that organisations will begin recruiting participants from late spring 2017 onwards, and that participants will start to join projects from June 2017 onwards.

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 \(2014-2020\)](#). The Commission has prepared an [overview of the EU acquis and policy documents on the rights of the child](#).

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^[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.

[1] OJ L 132, 21.5.2016, p. 1.

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, Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) to prohibit the inclusion in linear TV services of any content which might be seriously harmful to minors. For non-linear on-demand audiovisual media services, the respective content may only be made available in such a way that minors would not normally come into contact with it. Content that is likely to be harmful to minors must either be broadcast at a time when minors will not watch it or blocked using technological means so that they cannot access it. The Commission has adopted a new legislative proposal for the AVMSD on 25 May 2016, and negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council will in all likelihood be concluded during 2017. In 2015, Parliament adopted a resolution on fighting child sexual abuse on the internet ([P8_TA\(2015\)0070](#))^[2].

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’ ([P7_TA\(2010\)0166](#)), on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012 ([P7_TA\(2013\)0364](#)), on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015 ([P8_TA\(2016\)0426](#)) and on a Youth Guarantee ([P7_TA\(2013\)0016](#)). Numerous other resolutions on youth employment (for example [P8_TA\(2014\)0010](#)), entrepreneurship ([P8_TA\(2015\)0292](#)) and for fighting youth unemployment ([P8_TA\(2016\)0008](#)) have been adopted in recent years. Parliament also safeguards the best interests of children on the basis of petitions addressed to it ([B8-0487/2016](#)), and has adopted a resolution on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty ([P8_TA\(2015\)0401](#)). Parliament has also focused on children’s rights outside 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 ([T8-0418/2015](#)) or on child malnutrition in developing countries ([P8_TA\(2014\)0072](#)).

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. The Committee on Culture and Education has drawn up an implementation report on the programme in 2016 that is expected to be voted in plenary in 2017, taking note of the functioning of the Youth strand of the programme.

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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[2]For further information see Fact Sheet → [5.13.2 on Audiovisual and media policy](#).

