

Implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012

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The Committee on Culture and Education unanimously adopted the initiative report by Georgios PAPANIKOLAOU (EPP, EL) on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012.

Members recall that the **overall youth unemployment rate in the EU stood at 23.5 %** in February 2013 and that the economic loss resulting from the disengagement of young people from the labour market in 2011 was estimated at EUR 153 billion, corresponding to 1.2 % of EU GDP.

In this context, Members consider that the **budget allocated for the fight against youth unemployment in the future MFF**, namely **EUR 6 billion**, is insufficient and should be significantly increased in the negotiations. They call on the Council to further enhance the focus on young people by considering youth people as a mainstreamed priority in all EU programmes under the future MFF.

They also consider it regrettable the ambitious announcements made by the European Council, as well as the ambivalence shown by the Council, which is advocating additional resources for young people but is delaying negotiations on payments in connection with the amending budget for 2013, thereby threatening Erasmus scholarship payments.

EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012: Members observe the impact of the EU Youth Strategy in the first cycle (2010-2012) and call for the recommendations prepared by young people to be better taken into account in the future.

They recognise the need for a **cross-sectoral and balanced approach to the eight fields of action in the EU Youth Strategy** and call for the prioritisation of a youth policy which is informed and shaped by the voice and aims of young people themselves.

Challenges for the next cycle: as regards education, training, innovation and funding, Members stress the need to invest more in the right skills suited to youth employment; they recommend the creation of more flexible programmes, integrating entrepreneurship and transversal skills and the early learning of foreign languages.

In particular, they call for:

- the total transferability of acquired social benefits so as not to jeopardise welfare protection for young workers who have opted for mobility;
- methods to increase innovation in national curricula at school level;
- the strengthening of vocational training and apprenticeships in the Member States;
- greater involvement of local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of policies;
- involvement of cities and regions in anticipating the needs of young people;
- the strengthening of lifelong learning and the acquisition of transversal skills, such as ICT skills, leadership skills and language skills, but also informal and non-formal learning for the development of values, aptitudes and skills for young people;
- the encouragement of women to embark on careers that have generally been considered as typically 'masculine', especially in the IT sector;
- the combating of inequalities at school level, truancy and the reduction of dropout rates;

- the strengthening of the provision of advice and guidance services at an early stage in order to improve young people's ability to make sufficiently informed decisions about their future careers;
- the strengthening of the creative sector.

Youth employment and entrepreneurship: Members call on the Member States to take full advantage of the EU Structural Funds for 2007-2013, especially the ESF and on the Commission to keep Parliament regularly informed on the progress made by the Member States. The Funds should be invested in a programme to **stimulate investment in training and jobs with a view to combating the unacceptably high rate of youth unemployment**, including the encouragement of business development for young people through entrepreneurship.

They welcome the new EU initiative for a **Youth Guarantee scheme**, to be extended also to young people under 30, which should provide them with the skills needed in the labour market ensuring them high-quality, meaningful and relevant opportunities. However, Members underline that the Youth Guarantee Scheme **cannot replace the structural efforts and reforms needed to make the education systems and labour markets in some Member States** fit for the challenges of the future.

Members also call for:

- provision to be made for incentives and technical support for young people to create their own businesses, under the slogan: **'If you can't find a job, just create one'**;
- incentives for supporting quality employment for young people, such as relief on taxes and social contributions;
- the strengthening of social enterprises which can play an important role in promoting high-quality jobs and fighting poverty and social exclusion, by investing in education and training for young people;
- the provision of a safety net for failed start-ups.

New technologies and social media: in this regard, Members call on the Commission to launch a survey to monitor the impact of new technologies and social media on young people's lives. The Commission is invited to take advantage of the dynamism of social media in education, training and youth participation in order to increase employability and enhance entrepreneurship, innovation and culture.

They also emphasise the need to protect young people from all forms of abuse, including online attacks and abuse relating to their personal data and health.

Moreover, Members also stress the need for greater visibility of the Commission's initiatives in favour of young people (such as the European Youth Portal) and await the announced Commission communication "Opening Up Education" aimed at improving the efficiency, accessibility and equity of education, training and learning systems by strengthening the integration of ICT and new technologies in education and training.

Youth participation and European citizenship: Members call on the Commission to continue and increase its support for the **European youth card**, in order to facilitate young people's access to culture throughout the EU. They also call for the strengthening of measures encouraging youth participation in sport. They underline the importance of conveying solid youth-oriented messages on the part of the EU, supported by actual policies in view of the 2014 European elections and call on the Commission to develop more initiatives to strengthen EU integration. Additional measures are recommended to: (i) develop more outreach programmes for marginalised groups; (ii) encourage the involvement of young people in organisations and volunteering; and (iii) develop actions strengthening youth autonomy and the participation of all young people in society.

General principles: lastly, Members stress the importance of eliminating all kinds of discrimination among young people, including discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age and sexual orientation.