Assessment of the EU youth strategy 2013-2015

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PURPOSE: to present the draft 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).

BACKGROUND: the economic crisis has hit young people particularly hard. It has widened the gap between those with more and those with fewer opportunities.

This is why the Commission and the Member States continued working together in the period 2013-2015, to improve young people's employability, their integration in the labour market, their social inclusion and participation.

In the face of a growing socio-economic divide, it is necessary to **identify sustainable solutions to fight youth unemployment, strengthen social inclusion and prevent violent radicalisation**. This requires more systematic cooperation across a range of policies at EU and Member State level, such as employment, education, training, non-discrimination, social policy, citizenship (including citizenship of the Union) and youth, but also culture, sport and health.

This report evaluates progress towards the goals and priorities of the cooperation framework in the period 2013-2015, based on an assessment of young people's situation and policy measures taken at EU and Member State level.

CONTENT: youth employment and employability remained top priorities throughout 2013-2015. To improve educational outcomes, Member States took action under the European Semester to bring down early school leaving and **promote higher-education attainment** to reach the Europe 2020 headline targets.

The EU and Member States undertook to **reduce youth unemployment** by easing transitions from education to work. In 2013, the Youth Guarantee was introduced as a structural framework to offer young people a job, an apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed. The ESF and the YEI set aside at least €12.7 billion for youth activation and employment.

Further to the EU Security Agenda and the Paris Declaration, Member States undertook to **step up efforts to foster the inclusion and participation in society of all young people**. In response to concerns about the growing social exclusion of young people, nearly all Member States took measures to enhance the inclusion of NEETs (young person who is "Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Most undertook to improve young people's access to quality services and 80 % supported **youth work and youth centres**. However, youth work has suffered from budget cuts across Europe, while the growing share of youth at risk of poverty and exclusion increases the demand for intervention.

As regards **governance** and the implementation of the youth cooperation framework in 2013-2015, the framework encouraged cross-sectorial cooperation. Nearly all Member States now have **institutionalised mechanisms** to ensure a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy, such as inter-departmental structures and regular inter-ministerial meetings. The Structured Dialogue has yet to fulfil its full potential: It still fails to reach a wider group of young people with fewer resources and a weaker political voice.

Proposals for the way forward 2016-2018: the report noted that in 2016-2018, the cooperation framework for youth should aim to **empower more and more diverse young people**, especially those at risk of exclusion.

It should help them find **quality jobs and participate in social life**. EU funding under the Erasmus+ programme, European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) will complement policy cooperation on youth work, volunteering and participation in democratic life.

The future work cycle of the cooperation framework should prioritise:

1. **increased social inclusion** of all young people, especially those at risk such as NEETs and young people with a migrant background;
2. stronger participation of all young people, in particular those at risk of marginalisation;
3. **easier integration into the labour market for all young people**, with a special focus on the long-term unemployed and those in transition from education to work.

The Commission and Member States will take action in these areas, including through the framework's instruments and cooperation with other policies as appropriate, to promote:

- **social inclusion and outreach practices** to reach young people of diverse backgrounds, especially those suffering from disadvantages;
- the capacity of youth work, youth organisations and networks and the recognition of quality youth work;
- **evolving skills demands**, including citizenship, media and digital literacy, critical judgment and intercultural understanding;
- **volunteering**, including through EU programmes such as the EVS and the new EU aid volunteers initiative.