Assessment of the EU youth strategy 2013-2015

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The Committee on Culture and Education adopted an own-initiative report by Andrea BOCSKOR (EPP, HU) on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015, in response to the 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).

General recommendations: Members recommended the EU, national, regional and local authorities to make sure that the **different programmes** at EU level dealing with youth policies are well communicated, implemented, coordinated, in order to respond to new needs with a view to the social and educational challenges to come. It views the **open method of coordination** as an appropriate but still insufficient as a means for framing youth policies that needs to be complemented by other measures.

Given the EU's alarmingly high youth unemployment, the high and widely varying percentages of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and the challenges of youth poverty and social exclusion, Members stressed that the **next cycle (2016-2018)** should contribute to the two objectives of the EU Youth Strategy:

- by identifying and tackling the causes of youth unemployment, such as **early school leaving** (the Europe 2020 headline target whereby the proportion of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10 %);
- by fostering **entrepreneurship** among young people;
- by **investing in education, internships, apprenticeships and vocational training** in the skills that reflect labour market opportunities, needs and developments;
- by facilitating the **transition to the labour market** in terms of measures ensuring better coordination of education programmes, employment policy and labour market demands.

The report noted that it is essential that the next cycle of the EU Youth Strategy should include **young refugees and asylum seekers**.

Effective implementation of the EU Youth Strategy should be closely linked to achieving the Europe 2020 headline targets, particularly those of having **75 % of the population aged 20 to 64** in employment and lifting as many young people as possible out of poverty and social exclusion. The report stressed the importance of changes made to the **European Job Mobility Portal** (EURES), in order to improve youth employment opportunities and achieve greater social cohesion.

The EU and the Member States are called upon to take advantage of those technologies to **strengthen the dialogue with young people** and their capacity to participate in society. In this regard, the report stressed the importance of involving young people and youth organisations in shaping the priorities and drafting a new EU Youth Cooperation Framework after 2018.

Employment and education: Members called on the Member States to make the best use of available EU and national policies and financial frameworks in order to promote appropriate investment in young people and the creation of quality and secure jobs. They insisted on the need to:

- fully implement the Erasmus+ programme, especially its apprenticeships facet;
- improve opportunities for vocational education and training (VET) students to do **work placements in neighbouring countries** in order to foster a better understanding of other Member States' labour and training practices;

- **boost information and communication technologies (ICT) training** in order to equip all young people with the relevant e-skills useful for the labour market, for example by reallocating funding within the Youth Employment Initiative;
- pursue youth and education programmes that **empower young women and girls** and facilitate their entry into traditionally male-dominated sectors where they are under-represented, such as entrepreneurship, ICT, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM);
- ensure that young people have the opportunity to attain at least **basic digital skills** and acquire knowledge and understanding about the media, in order to work, to learn and to participate actively in modern society;
- continue the **Youth Employment Initiative** (YEI) and ensure better coordination at all levels between education and training curricula and the needs of the changing labour markets;
- implement measures to facilitate young people's **transition from education to work**, including by ensuring quality internships and apprenticeships;
- take measures to **incentivise entrepreneurship** by creating a more entrepreneur- and start-up-friendly environment for the launch of business start-ups, which could include schemes and measures for easy provision of credit by banks, simplified regulation and tax relief schemes and measures enabling young people to go ahead with their own business ideas.

Financial resources: Members underlined the importance of strategic investment, including from the **European Structural and Investment Funds**, in particular the European Social Fund, for regional development, competitiveness and the creation of high-quality traineeships, apprenticeships and sustainable jobs.

Members called for **targeted and simplified measures** to enhance Member State capacity to make use of available funding through the European Structural Funds, the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Cohesion Fund, the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), the Youth Employment Initiative, Youth on the Move, Your First Eures Job, Horizon 2020 and programmes and actions in the area of citizenship.

Member States are urged to fully **implement and monitor the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee**. This guarantee should also focus on education and training for unskilled or low-skilled unemployed young people, so as also to cover young graduates and those who have completed vocational training. The age limit under the Youth Guarantee should go from 25 to 29.

Lastly, Members called on all Member States to introduce a **minimum guaranteed income**, in order to offer young people who have finished school and university the resources they need to live decently until they find work.