Resolution on empowering European youth: post-pandemic employment and social recovery

2021/2952(RSP) - 17/02/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 580 votes to 57, with 55 abstentions, a resolution on empowering European youth: post-pandemic employment and social recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the employment and social situation of young people in Europe. Job losses were higher in the 15-24 age group than the 25-29 age group, in particular among women. Young people were particularly affected by the fact that working hours decreased more than employment as a whole.

Prioritising mental health

The resolution stressed that 2022 should provide an additional impetus for the proper and full implementation of the **European youth strategy** through ambitious actions to address challenges faced by young people and through the concrete implementation of other existing tools such as the reinforced Youth Guarantee to combat the unemployment and social effects resulting from COVID-19.

The fight against youth unemployment should be made a priority. Therefore, Parliament called for a reinforced Youth Guarantee instrument that has the objective of reducing long-term and youth unemployment by at least 50 % by 2030.

The inclusion of mental health is also commended as one of the priorities in the youth goals and should be prioritised in the upcoming EU care strategy.

Parliament called on the Member States to make mental health an integral part of the EU's socioeconomic recovery from the pandemic and an occupational health priority, in particular in educational and workplace environments.

Investing in the young generation

The resolution called on the Commission and Council to make full and optimal use of the funding available under the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 without prejudice to the programmes already established under the ESF+, following structural problems related to youth unemployment and poverty. The Commission should continue monitoring investment and spending on youth priorities within **NextGenerationEU, the RRF and the ESF+** and to keep Parliament closely involved.

Labour market integration of young people

Member States should facilitate access for young people to **paid, quality and inclusive traineeships and apprenticeships**. Parliament called for the reinforcement of monitoring schemes, ensuring that young people receive adequate and quality first working experiences, opportunities for upskilling and new qualifications or credentials. It called for a **common legal framework to ensure fair remuneration for traineeships and apprenticeships** in order to avoid exploitative practices.

Labour mobility and skills for the future

Stressing that digital skills are essential for young people and all industries in the 21st century, the Commission and the Member States are invited to consider developing permanent, certified and free access for young people to online and offline courses for digital skills and literacy in all EU languages in partnership with public entities and private companies.

The resolution also stressed the importance of green skills development and quality employment opportunities in a climate-neutral, energy efficient and circular economy, especially in the regions most impacted by the green transition, such as those which are heavily dependent on the agricultural sector and those involved in combating climate change, the production of energy from renewable sources, reducing carbon emissions, increasing energy efficiency, waste and water management, improving air quality and restoring and preserving biodiversity.

The Commission is called on to propose in 2022 new tools and initiatives aimed at developing youth entrepreneurship and youth social investment in the action plan for social economy.

Fighting youth exclusion

Parliament called on the Commission to develop a recommendation to ensure that **traineeships, apprenticeships and job placements count as work experience** and consequently grant access to social benefits. There should be a decrease in the minimum period of contributions needed to access social benefits. The resolution suggested looking into the feasibility of merging the existing European Youth Portal, Europass and Eures platforms into a **single digital space** with the aim of providing information and opportunities to every young European concerning training, jobs, internships, vocational education and training offers, financial aid, mobility programmes, advice on setting up a business, mentoring programmes, volunteering schemes, rights associated with European citizenship, access to culture, etc.

Parliament reiterated the importance of access to **decent and affordable housing** and tailored social services for young people, in particular those belonging to vulnerable groups, including young people with disabilities and young people from large families.