

European Youth Policy: how does it work?

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WHY?

The youth policy became a concept in the second half of the 20th century when the Western European countries realised they needed **to develop a special long-term strategy** that would respond to the **needs of young citizens**. Such a strategy should not only solve the problems of young people as a social group, but also consider them as an **important resource** that can contribute to the development of the whole society.

WHAT?

Youth policy in Europe has been recognised as an important aspect of public policy not only by national governments, but also – or even more specifically – by international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, as well as by the **European Union**. Since 1993, the Treaty establishing the European Community has had a **legal basis for youth**. In the Treaty of Lisbon the legal basis for the youth policy is provided for in article 165, which foresees that the EU action should be aimed at [...] “*encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors, and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe*”.

Following the Treaty, main institutions of the EU, with European Commission in particular, declare that „Europe's future depends on its youth”. It means that **young people are supposed to be a priority of the EU's vision, what has even greater importance in the current time of economic crisis**: the EU is seeking to favourable conditions for youth to develop their skills, fulfill their potential and achieve the autonomy.

FOR WHOM?

- In January 2011, around 95.2 million young people aged between 15 and 29 lived in the EU-27. The acceding country Croatia and five candidate countries to the EU (Montenegro, Iceland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey) added approximately 22 million young people to this figure
- More than **35 % of young Europeans** today have a diploma of higher studies;
- **The unemployment rate of young people** (aged 15 to 24) rose from 15 % in 2008 to an unprecedented **22.6 % in June 2012**, and it has been consistently higher than the unemployment rate of the whole population.
(All data according to Eurostat / EU Youth Report 2012).



The project is realized with the support of the Youth programme of the European Union, 2013

EU Youth Strategy

With a great scope of various dimensions of European reality, development of concrete actions addressed to young people need to be well structured. It should be also realistic, operational and based on research results. In respond to such demand, for the current period of 2010 – 2018, European Commission has been drafted the **EU Youth Strategy**, adopted by the EU Council (representing EU Member States) on 27 November 2009.

- *Participation of young people in democratic life has not suffered as a result of the crisis. The results of a 2011 Eurobarometer survey supports the claim that young people are interested in politics: 78% of eligible young people below the age of 30 declared that they had voted in a political election at local, regional, national or EU level in the last three years.*

Two main objectives of the Strategy are:

- to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market;
- to encourage young people to be active citizens and participate in society.

The nine-year Strategy is divided into three cycles. By the end of each cycle, an EU Youth Report is drawn up assessing results and proposing new priorities for the next three-year cycle. The strategy finally covers 8 areas that affect young people the most: **education, employment, creativity and entrepreneurship, social inclusion, health and sport, civic participation and volunteering**; the last field of activity is called “**Youth and the World**” and refers to raising awareness and encouraging young Europeans to get involved in global policy-making at all levels (local, national and international) to address climate change and the UN Millennium Development Goals. It is also a good basis to develop global-wide youth cooperation and support international mobility of young people!

An important aspect of the strategy is also its **cross-sectoral nature**: achieving the given objectives would be possible only with cooperation of many different stakeholders – central, regional and local governments and other public institutions, as well as civil society organisations. Finally, the strategy put young people themselves in the central position by giving to them concrete tools to realize their projects, to attend non-formal education activities and to consult certain solutions with policy-makers.

- *Want to know more? Watch the video on the EU Youth Strategy at:*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_zCQNhivTQ

“Youth in Action”: programme for young people for 2007 - 2013

“Youth in Action” is the European Union programme that has helped young people, since 2007 boost their skills and develop their personal capacities through non-formal learning and wider mobility. It is open **to all young people** (aged 13 – 30), regardless of their educational, social and cultural backgrounds. It encourages intercultural dialogue and the inclusion of all young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities. It strengthens European values everywhere it operates – in the EU and in 140 countries beyond. It funds a wide variety of youth activities, including exchanges, initiatives, democracy projects, and a voluntary service. The Programme is also dedicated to youth workers and members of youth organisations, who intend to improve their qualifications, expand the scope of their activity, or launch international cooperation.

The Programme makes extensive use of non-formal learning through attractive methods (such as workshops, interviews or simulations), and based on personal experience outside schools. This promotes individual-based teaching, with the emphasis on talents and strengths. Professional facilitators ensure that the learning process is conducted mainly by young people themselves through participation and peer learning.

“Youth in Action” is the successor of the “Youth” Programme (2000-2006). For the period of next seven years (2014–2020) European Commission has proposed already a new programme for education, youth and sport titled “Erasmus for all” (its name being still subject to modification).

The Programme’s budget is EUR 885 million for seven years. Its geographic outreach covers EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, the EU neighbours (Eastern Europe and Caucasus, the Mediterranean region, South-Eastern Europe) and other partner countries in the world.

- *Every year “Youth in Action” Programme supports over 8 000 projects allowing more than 150 thousand young people to get involved. Have you already taken your chance?*

More information at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/how-to-participate_en.htm

- *Did you know that EU has much more different programmes dedicated also to young people, such as Lifelong Learning Programme (including Erasmus) or Europe for Citizens?*

Take a look at: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu>

Structured Dialogue with young people

Structured Dialogue provides a platform for young people and policy-makers to discuss and encourage EU youth policy both at the national and European level, as well as a tool to ensure that youth policy meets the needs and expectations of young people across Europe. It takes the form of national consultations in particular Member States and EU Youth Conferences at the European level.

On the European level, it brings together the European Commission, Member States, national youth councils and European Youth Forum. On the national level, special working groups (composed of youth representatives, people from government institutions and experts) carry out consultations with young people within the country. One structured dialogue cycle lasts 18 months and focuses on one chosen topic, such as youth employment or youth participation in democratic life. Additionally, each Member State holding EU Presidency aligns specific subjects of consultations with its national priorities.

What is important about this process is that every six months young people work on specific recommendations that are presented during the meetings of ministers responsible for youth affairs. This means that politicians in Europe have a real opportunity to hear the young people's voice!

Are you interested how the structured dialogue really works? Visit European Commission website dedicated to young

- http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/structured-dialogue_en.htm
- *people:* http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/structured-dialogue_en.htm