



## **POSITION PAPER**

# **LOVE YOUTH FUTURE: A NEW EUROPEAN DEAL FOR AND WITH YOUTH**

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The European Union matters for young people. The EU is also at a crucial juncture with the current financial and monetary crises. Young people understand that a credible way out from the crisis requires more European leadership, not less. The European Union has the potential to bring many answers to our needs, dreams and expectations. Therefore, it is important to bring young people to the core of the EU agenda if we want to be able to meet the challenges we will be confronted with in the coming years.

Taking into account the demographic change occurring in Europe, but also in the rest of the world (footnote deleted) and the challenges this poses, we are convinced that the EU should concentrate on the place of young people in society. The current intergenerational dynamics are outsourcing one generation's problems to the next one, as shown by the financial and economic crisis and unsolved ecological problems. At the same time, young people are facing consequences of the crisis and austerity already today, being more and more exposed to unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

In the current budget of the Union however, we, European youth, do not see our priorities reflected. Mistargeting and the lack of investment in youth is not only costly now<sup>1</sup> but it risks becoming a structural burden impacting our prospects for development in the next 30 years. Spiralling levels of youth unemployment and the associated increasing levels of poverty and social exclusion are not only the results of the economic crisis, but also of the lack of real financial investment in young people and their social support structures.

Instead of empty words we need concrete actions now that stop young people carrying the cost of the current system in decades to come. Young people have a right to be young now, and not only to be seen as future workers, pensioners, and consumers - this right needs to be re-affirmed. Young people should enjoy their full rights matching their duties as citizens already today. European Union and Member States need to urgently take action to improve the situation of young people in Europe. To change the current dynamics and offer a fair deal across generations, we need **a New Deal for and with Youth!**

This New Deal implies a new mindset toward youth policies, building on a rights based approach and encompassing key measures in line with the following principles:

- A European Union with competences matching current challenges;
- More Citizens' participation in decision-making;
- Sustainable policies;
- Investing in Employment;
- Creation of a European social model that protects the rights of and services for the citizens;
- Accessible quality education.

Only if implemented together will these measures improve the situation of young people and restore social mobility in European society.

### **Stronger Union, more action**

The European Union needs to take a leap forward. It is time to overcome the small step integration process and start transferring competences to the EU that cannot be handled anymore by the Member States alone, notably in terms of economic, fiscal, environmental, social and employment policy. **We therefore call for a strengthened and more federal European Union with increased competences.**

- **New resources for new investment:** the European Union should be given the ability to raise its own resources through direct taxation on environmental impact and through a European financial transaction tax. New incomes should be directed to support the New

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1

Deal for and with Youth.

- A **European Status for European Associations** should be created, giving institutional recognition to the engagement and to the activism of millions of citizens, freely and voluntarily joining together in associations across Europe.
- **Participatory democracy**: in line with the provisions of article 11 TEU<sup>2</sup>, EU institutions should recognize the European Youth Forum as a privileged partner and maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue on measures affecting youth in all policy areas.
- **Beyond voluntary cooperation**: the current Open Method of Coordination is not sufficient to answer the challenges young people face in Europe. Therefore the European Union should widen its competences in youth beyond article 165 TFEU<sup>3</sup> and create a framework for a real youth policy in Europe. This framework would be co-managed by young people and youth organisations, ensure the involvement of the European Parliament and consist of binding cross-sectorial commitments.
- **Mobility**: young people need to experience Europe first hand to support a more integrated Europe. Mobility programmes must thus be strengthened and made accessible to all young people.

### **Right to participation, more democratic Union!**

The European Union has acquired new competences with the Lisbon Treaty. Among these, the provision is included in Article 165 TFEU to “encourage [...] the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe”, is not the least important. **That strong and crucial mission should be fully seized for the realisation of a European Union for all, with all.**

- **Stronger democracy**: we call for the creation of transnational elections lists for European Parliamentary elections, and for the direct election of the European Commission President.
- **Vote@16**: we call upon the Member States of the European Union to lower the voting age of European Parliament elections to 16 years of age and to encourage Member States to lower and equalise voting age to 16 in all their elections.
- The **Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers** should be fully endorsed, implemented and promoted by EU institutions.
- **Direct democracy**: we support instruments of direct citizens' participation. The European Citizens Initiative is the first step for a more democratic Europe.
- **Better youth representation!** We urge the European and national parties to have more young people as candidates to electable positions. The EU needs to include European youth representatives selected by the European Youth Forum in its delegation and involve them as full members when represented in a global context. The European Economic and Social Committee should include youth representatives nominated by National Youth Councils in each national representation.

### **End austerity, invest in sustainability**

At a time of austerity, pressure on the European Social Model is growing, while the environmental and economic impact of older and previous generations are more and more visible. It is clear that the on-going austerity-only policies are not the solution to the crisis. It is time for the EU to re-launch its future on the basis of innovation, cohesion and youth and to explore alternative sustainable economic models. **We ask the EU to intensively invest in new growth sectors and**

<sup>2</sup> TEU stands for the Treaty of the European Union. As is stated in article 11 :

« 1. The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.

2. The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

3. The European Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that the Union's actions are coherent and transparent. »

<sup>3</sup> TFEU stands for the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

**to ensure that on-going and future budget-reforms will be fair for all generations.**

- **A budget for growth:** we call for a budget that is more focused on supporting environmentally sustainable economic growth and social cohesion; that puts humans and their needs at the centre of decisions and that pays special attention to youth and their organisations. Setting new priorities is needed to reflect the EU's aim of re-launching its future on the basis of innovation, cohesion and youth. This needs to be done in order to ensure the equality of all European citizens, and to uphold the idea of European solidarity.
- **A leading role in development:** the European Union should take a leading role in the negotiations on the development agenda beyond 2015, and include an agenda regarding youth in it.
- **Reducing the debt:** Member State should strive for a positive mid and long run balanced budgets, without undermining the welfare state, to avoid that current generations live at the cost of future ones. The Eurozone should be strengthened and Euro-bonds created to avoid that the prohibitive cost of debt prevents the EU and Member States from acting.

### **Safer transition and green job creation**

Youth unemployment is one of the greatest problems created by the current economic crisis. A number of measures have to be taken to tackle the issue. A safer transition from education to the labour market is needed to generate decent employment for youth in the EU and to strengthen the social inclusion of young people - but this cannot alone solve the challenges of in-work precariousness and of job creation. The way out of the crisis lies in creating new growth, following a socially and environmentally more sustainable development model. Entrepreneurship and the green economy thus have a huge importance for youth autonomy, either as businesses established by young people or as a source of employment for young people. **We call on the EU to combat youth unemployment and support a green economy.**

- **For a European Youth Guarantee:** the implementation of a European wide Youth Guarantee should be one of the main priorities in order to fight youth unemployment. The European Youth Guarantee must also be funded at the European level. This scheme should orientate young people preferably towards green jobs.
- **For a more equal and inclusive labour market:** the EU should implement a wide-ranging scheme to ensure that the European labour market is equal and inclusive towards all young people. This should ensure the protection of the workers' rights and of the workers' right to organise.
- **Better support for Young entrepreneurs:** young entrepreneurs should benefit from a support equivalent to the unemployment benefit when starting their activities, while administrative tasks related to business creation should get easier, with easy access to loans and investments as well as free and high quality counselling and guiding services.
- **Towards a more sustainable economy:** the EU should push the Member States towards more sustainable models of economy and to fulfil the economic potential of green economy and to ensure the sustainability of the European way of life for future generations.
- **A European Status for interns:** an intern status should be created, based on the European Quality Charter for Internships and Apprenticeships. This would prevent exploitation and include the recognition of internships as a bridge from education to work and as a working condition, while ensuring its educational value.
- **Fair contracts:** a framework directive on contractual arrangements is needed to prevent the almost one hundred contractual arrangements existing in Europe to hide in-work precariousness. Systems of minimum wages need to be established, set respecting the national practices of collective bargaining.

## **Inclusivity and equality**

The European Union has set standards for the defence of human rights, and built on the values of democracy and the rule of law, allowing generations to overcome old antagonisms and live in peace. In parallel, it has developed a European Social Model covering the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of health, allowing its citizens to live in dignity. It is essential for new generations to benefit from this acquis and therefore it is crucial for the European Union to firmly stand by these values and to ensure that **social reforms will not only be at the cost of young people.**

- **Rights:** an Ombudsperson for young people should be nominated to defend their rights.
- **A security net for all:** welfare provisions should be extended to all young people in need, either unemployed or still in education.
- **End (age) discrimination:** The EU should (finally!) adopt the Anti-Discrimination Directive.
- **Freer movement:** There should be a strong youth strand in the EU's neighbourhood policy, focusing on visa liberalisation, while respecting the Schengen acquis.
- **Effective rights:** we call for a stronger scrutiny of Member States to fight against discrimination and xenophobia, better protect minorities and those seeking refuge in Europe, and ensure the respect of the rule of law.

## **Holistic education, better inclusion**

Despite of budgetary pressure, education should stop being considered a cost and become an investment again. Education is a value by itself. It is a life long learning experience that pursues the objectives of personal fulfillment, social inclusion and active citizenship<sup>4</sup>. Education does not only enable young people to build up their personal skills and competences, but also to learn about being part of society. Education, therefore, goes beyond schools and employers and should involve society as a whole and concentrate on the opportunities open to citizens for their self-development. To refocus on the pupil's autonomy and their interaction in society as a fulfilled citizen, **we call for a holistic approach to education, which recognizes the complementary natures of formal & non-formal education.**

- **Education for all:** the European Union and Member States should keep the promises they made within Europe 2020 on combating early-school leaving, and work further to eradicate functional illiteracy by 2020.
- **Equal and free access to education:** any kind of access barriers or fees linked to education and training should be abolished, and free and equal access to education for all must be guaranteed disregarding social standing.
- **Inclusive education:** a learner-centred approach should be promoted where the needs of all learners must be considered to prevent any kind of exclusion.
- **Education throughout life:** transition to work should be better prepared with more counselling and guidance services while lifelong learning should remain a strong dimension of the educational policy of the EU.
- **An overall democratisation of formal education:** we call for more participation of pupils and students in the decision-making within schools and universities.

## **European Union, act now!**

We strongly believe that not making youth a priority of future decisions will be costly at human, social and economic levels and for the society as a whole. A strong and united European Union can answer the challenges highlighted by the financial crisis. We are convinced that working collectively will be more effective to address the crisis whilst ensuring the full social and economic

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<sup>4</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION WHITE PAPER; A NEW IMPETUS FOR EUROPEAN YOUTH; com2001\_0681

participation of young people. Taking into consideration the overall economic and political impact of lower rates of active citizenship, early school leaving, poor access to social services, it is essential that the EU mainstreams youth in all the resources, either financial or political, that the Union has at its disposal, and to support the autonomy and the rights of young people.

Therefore we call on you, European Commission, European Council, European Parliament and Member States, to seize the opportunity to act and **put youth at the core of the European Union's agenda. To prepare Europe's future - invest in a New Deal for and with Youth!**