

## **EU Youth Report calls for employment and social inclusion to be top priority**

The EU Youth Report published last week calls for youth employment, social inclusion, health and the well-being of young people to be top priorities in Europe's youth policy. The report, which is produced every three years by the Commission, underlines that the EU and Member States must do more to support young people, who have borne the brunt of the economic crisis.

Youth unemployment in the EU among 15-24-year-olds has increased by 50% since the onset of the crisis, from an average of 15% in February 2008 to 22.5% in July this year. Latest figures released by Eurostat show that highest rates are in Greece (53.8%) and Spain (52.9%). Across the EU, more than 30% of young unemployed have been jobless for more than a year.

"I am deeply concerned by the effects of the crisis on young people. Far too many of them are at risk of social exclusion and poverty. Young people are our future and I am committed to strengthening our policies and programmes in education, training and youth in order to increase their job prospects and opportunities in life," said Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.

There are, however, signs of hope on the horizon: the report finds that nearly all Member States are implementing the EU Youth Strategy, which aims to create more and better opportunities for young people and to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. Since the previous report in 2009, Member States have strengthened education, employment and entrepreneurship initiatives aimed at young people. Levels of youth participation in associations and social movements have remained high.

Erasmus for All, the proposed new education, training and youth programme for 2014-2020, will be at the heart of the new EU Youth Strategy. The new programme envisages a significant increase in funding which would enable up to 5 million people to receive EU grants to study, train or volunteer abroad - nearly twice as many compared with today under the 2007-2013 programmes.

### **Next steps**

The EU Youth Report will be submitted to the Council and is scheduled to be adopted as a Joint Council–Commission Report in November.

### **Background**

The EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) was adopted by the Council on 27 November 2009. Its objectives are (1) to create more and better opportunities for young people and (2) to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. The nine-year strategy is divided into three cycles. Towards the end of each cycle, an EU Youth Report is drawn up assessing results and proposing new priorities for the next three-year cycle. If adopted by the Council, the new priorities will apply from 2013-2015.

The 2012 Report includes a summary of how the EU Youth Strategy has been implemented at national and EU level since 2010 and a comprehensive analysis of the situation faced by young people. It draws on input from Member States, government agencies and ministries as well as consultations with young people. Candidate countries and EFTA countries also participated in the reporting exercise on a voluntary basis.

The EU Youth Strategy is complementary to the Youth on the Move flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs. The EU Youth Strategy addresses young people's needs and opportunities in eight fields of action:

Education & training

Employment & entrepreneurship

Social inclusion

Health & well-being

Volunteering

Participation

Culture & creativity

Youth & the world

What the EU is doing to combat youth unemployment

Measures to tackle youth unemployment and related issues are at the heart of the country specific recommendations, adopted by the Council in June.

The Commission's Employment Package (April 2012) underlines the need for Member States to focus on job creation and growth, not solely on austerity measures. To facilitate more labour mobility, the Commission intends to develop its EURES job portal which matches job-seekers with vacancies across borders.

Before the end of this year, the Commission will present a proposal for a Council recommendation on 'youth guarantees'. The aim is to ensure that all young people are in employment, education or training within four months of leaving school. In addition, the Commission will launch a consultation with employers and unions on a quality framework for traineeships.

The Commission is also encouraging Member States to make better use of the European Social Fund to support job creation and Commission action teams are assisting eight Member States (Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain) where youth unemployment rates are highest. They have helped these countries to reallocate EU structural funds totalling some €7.3 billion that stands to benefit over 460, 000 young people

The Commission is also endeavouring to lift obstacles that EU citizens face, notably their right to free movement within the EU, including for volunteering, study or work.

The priorities and recommendations in the EU Youth Strategy are supported by the Youth in Action programme which funds learning opportunities abroad for young people, youth workers and youth organisations. In line with the strategy, it promotes citizenship and solidarity among young people and enables them to gain skills through youth work, volunteering and civic participation. It benefitted around 185 000 participants in 2011, compared to 111 000 individuals when it was established in 2007.

Efforts to boost the employability, learning mobility and participation of young people are supported through the current Lifelong Learning programme, including Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci. In 2012-2013, the Commission will provide funding support for 280 000 job placements through these programmes for vocational and higher education students as part of its 'We Mean Business' campaign.

(Source: European Commission)

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