

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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DRAFT OPINION

Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture

European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)

Rapporteur: **Csaba Borboly** (RO/EPP)
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This document will be discussed at the meeting of **the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture** to be held **from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on 19 November 2015**. To allow time for translation, any amendments must be submitted through the online tool for tabling amendments (available on the Members' Portal: <http://cor.europa.eu/members>) **no later than 3 p.m. (Brussels time) on 6 September**. A user guide is available on <http://toad.cor.europa.eu/CORHelp.aspx>.

Reference document

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Draft 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)

COM(2015)429 final

Draft opinion of the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture –European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. welcomes the fact that the Commission has recognised the importance of improving the development of policies based on facts and solid evidence within the field of youth affairs, and of coordinating the European Union and Member States' resources and efforts as effectively as possible in order to achieve youth policy objectives;
2. is particularly appreciative of the Commission's approach, which deems it necessary to react as rapidly as possible – in the area of youth affairs during the period 2010-2018 – through appropriate changes to policy in response to new challenges such as the integration of young refugees or the rise in extremism among young people;
3. insists that in the future, ensuring equal opportunities, promoting social integration and improving the competitiveness of young people on the labour market should remain the key objectives of youth policy;
4. expresses its concern however that the Commission fails to mention the role of local and regional authorities (LRAs) in relation to youth policy, despite it being very obvious that in the majority of Member States – where youth policy is a national policy – LRAs are, to varying degrees, the competent authorities in this area;
5. suggests harmonising definitions used in different policy fields. For example the Common Agricultural Policy includes farmers aged 40 in the "young farmers" category, while elsewhere the upper age limit is considered to be 25 or 30 years and in the case of scientific activities, the age limit normally applied is 35. It is clear then that there is still significant work to do in this area to ensure that policies have the appropriate effect and that the impact of instruments can be measured;
6. calls on the Commission to assess, on the basis of currently available data, if it is possible to conduct analyses on youth policy at sub-national level, at least to NUTS 2 level. If these assessments are already available the Committee calls on the Commission to take the necessary steps to carry out sufficiently in-depth territorial analyses. If however, data collection is currently unsatisfactory, ways of improving the collection and processing of local and regional level policy indicators should be examined;
7. after consulting stakeholders, considers that while the Erasmus+ programme and the Youth Guarantee are essential tools for achieving strategic objectives, the problems are far more complex and EU action in the area of youth affairs already goes beyond these two effective tools. Consequently highlights the need to make other information on the results of youth policy accessible in an appropriate format;

8. is concerned by the decline in direct political activity among young people, and more generally, by the sceptical attitude or even rejection by young people of opportunities to get involved;
9. recommends that the Commission assess good practices in Member States and regions with regard to the lowering of the voting age and more precisely, the direct or indirect influence that this has on political engagement among young people and their willingness to get involved. The Commission should then share the results of this assessment with Member States and the regions;
10. considers the role of youth organisations to be especially important, particularly those that operate in formal settings, as they contribute considerably to developing young peoples' participatory skills and to improving the quality of the decision-making process. Therefore considers it necessary to examine the possibility of guaranteeing that these organisations receive adequate support to enable them to exploit the potential of regional and European synergies;
11. considers the migratory flows in different European regions to be highly detrimental to young people and that it would be useful to explore the possibility of establishing appropriate partnerships between regions of origin and host regions in order to better manage difficulties relating to integration. However, the Committee also insists on the need to adopt the measures necessary to help facilitate the return to regions of origin as part of these inter-regional partnerships, as well as through various EU initiatives;
12. suggests developing a basic package that each Member State could guarantee for young people and that would focus on access to high speed internet, learning a second foreign language to the equivalent of at least B2 level within the public education system, career guidance and continuous mentoring, appropriate involvement in volunteering, promoting the right to a first job, and flexible and accessible forms of funding in order to carry out studies that offer career prospects;
13. deems it appropriate – in relation to the implementation of different European policies and particularly the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Regional Development Fund – to include youth policy among the horizontal objectives, starting with the current programming period, and in doing so take account of the specific characteristics of each region and not only the differences between Member States;
14. stresses the need to determine how to face challenges in the area of youth policy, such as the issue of equal opportunities for young people who live in small communities, located in peripheral and rural areas that are facing demographic challenges, or furthermore, how to promote professional training initiatives tailored to regional specificities and specific skills and the exchange of good practices in this policy area;
15. considers it necessary that youth policy continue to focus particularly on issues such as discrimination against or the exclusion of young people from ethnic minorities, as well as developing measures that should be taken in this respect;

16. calls on the Commission and Member States to check that young people are properly informed on employment law, employment protection legislation and legislation on volunteering, and that they receive – when applicable – the necessary protection, particularly when they are carrying out paid work or volunteer activities in a Member State other than where they are habitually resident;
17. highlights that caution should be exercised with regard to the protection of young volunteers or young people active on the labour market, and calls on regions to examine the opportunities in this area for cooperation on mutual learning and the exchange of best practices;
18. believes that it would be advisable to examine the impact that new, emerging social and community values – such as environmental awareness, community engagement, support to those in need, appreciation of traditional ways of life that are closer to nature – have on young people and their view of things, as well as how to strengthen the influence that these values have on the younger generation's approach to the world;
19. believes that the isolated measures adopted by different Member States in the area of youth policy are not always sufficient and that coordination of such measures is often patchy. The Committee thus supports the conclusion that greater commitment and further measures are necessary at European level to improve coordination, guarantee sufficient harmonisation and exploit the possibility for synergies – particularly given the fact that young people are more open to mobility and migration – and insists that the revised policy should clearly state the key role of LRAs;
20. emphasises the importance of extending structured dialogue and lends its support to the new measures put forward by the Commission in this area, in relation to enhancing opportunities to participate both for young people in general and for the organisations that represent them;
21. considers it important to support interaction between young people from different social backgrounds (cultural, ethnic origin, income etc.), as well as to examine initiatives in this area and on this basis, to exchange good practices between regions;
22. recommends that European LRAs establish local and regional strategies that expressly address problems and opportunities that are specific to young people, taking into account EU and Member States' youth policies. The Committee proposes that they should endeavour, when drawing up such plans, to enhance mutual learning opportunities while seeking to ensure that the target group –young people – are involved as widely as possible in designing these plans and strategies, as well as in monitoring their implementation.

Brussels,

II. PROCEDURE

Title	Opinion on the <i>Implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018)</i>
Reference	Own-initiative opinion
Legal basis	Articles 165 and 166 of the TFEU
Procedural basis	Article 41 (b)(i)
Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter	N/A
Date of Bureau/President's decision	24 September 2015
Commission responsible	SEDEC
Rapporteur	Csaba Borboly (RO/EPP)
Analysis	12 October 2015
Discussed in commission	Scheduled for 19 November 2015
Date adopted by commission	Scheduled for 19 November 2015
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	
Date of adoption in plenary session	Opinion due to be adopted at the plenary session on 10 and 11 February 2016
Previous Committee opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Quality Framework for Traineeships</i>COR-2014-00111-AC • <i>Youth Employment Package</i>, CDR789-2013-AC • <i>Rethinking education</i>, CDR2392-2012-AC • <i>Erasmus for All</i>, CDR400-2011-AC • <i>Youth on the Move</i>CDR292-2010-AC
Consultation of Subsidiarity Monitoring Network	N/A