

Research for CULT Committee – EU education, youth and sport policy – overview and future perspectives



This study aims to identify, analyse and provide a comprehensive overview of the situation to date in the areas of EU education and training (E&T), youth and sport policy, as well as delivering forward-looking insights for the European Parliament (EP) Committee on Culture and Education (CULT Committee). It also provides procedural and thematic recommendations. The former address the CULT Committee's ways of working; the latter outline ways to address the challenges identified in the three policy fields.

In EU E&T policy, the study focuses on formal education, including school and higher education (HE). Other levels of E&T are addressed briefly. In EU youth policy, the focus is on engagement, connection and youth empowerment. In EU sport policy, professional sport and sport for leisure are covered.

The overview of the present state and recent developments mainly covers 2019-2024, coinciding with the previous CULT Committee term. Forward-looking insights mainly relate to 2024-2029, covering the term of the current CULT Committee, assembled following the 2024 EP elections.

The present document is the executive summary of the study on “EU education, youth and sport policy – overview and future perspectives”. The full study, which is available in English can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/3AVQcCp>

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PE 752.454 - September 2024

Background to EU education, youth and sport policy

Under the EU treaties, Member States (MS) are primarily responsible for E&T, youth and sport policy. The EU can support their cooperation on challenges affecting all or most of them. According to Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), EU action in **education policy** should focus on developing the European dimension in education, encouraging mobility, promoting cooperation between educational establishments and exchanges of information, and supporting the development of distance education. Regarding **youth policy**, Articles 165-166 TFEU outline the EU's role in youth exchanges and youth participation in democratic life in Europe. On the basis of Article 165 TFEU, the EU's actions in **sport policy** should be aimed at developing the European dimension in sport by promoting fairness and openness, the integrity of sportspeople, and fostering cooperation with third countries and international organisations.

The key actors within each policy field largely overlap. At MS level, these are national governments; ministries working on E&T, youth and sport policy issues; regional or local authorities; and other stakeholder and civil society organisations. At EU level, key actors in the three policy fields include the EP, the Council of the EU, the European Commission (EC) and various advisory bodies. International organisations (e.g. the Council of Europe) influence EU E&T, youth and sport policy through their research, data and cooperation activities.

The EP has a role in priority setting, legislation, budget adoption and scrutiny of the EC's policy implementation. Within the EP, the CULT Committee has E&T, youth and sport policy in its remit. Its key legislative responsibilities include leading the EP's position during interinstitutional negotiations on the regulations establishing the **Erasmus+**¹ and **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)**² programmes. The CULT Committee also provides opinions on other legislative acts, or sets out its positions on issues relevant to the three policy fields in own-initiative reports and via oral questions with motions for resolutions. The CULT Committee also commissions studies and organises hearings and workshops, exchanges of views and structured dialogues on specific issues in the three policy areas. The procedural and thematic recommendations below propose ways to strengthen the roles of the EP and CULT Committee in relation to E&T, youth and sport policy.

Procedural recommendations

With regard to the CULT Committee's ways of working, it is **recommended to focus on:**

- Strengthening formats for regular dialogue with relevant stakeholders and civil society organisations.
- Engaging more actively in interinstitutional cooperation formats, especially on youth and sport policies.
- Continuing to advocate for increased funding for E&T, youth and sports policies.

EU education policy – overview and recommendations

The Council resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in E&T³ sets the basis for such cooperation for 2021-2030. Until 2030, achieving and further developing the European Education Area (EEA) is the overarching political objective. The EEA aims to support and coordinate the actions of MS to create more resilient and inclusive E&T systems. It spans all levels of education,

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021](#) establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport.

² [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/888 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021](#) establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme.

³ [Council Resolution of 26 February 2021](#) on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030).

adopting a holistic approach and focusing on learners and other school actors such as teachers and school leaders. It covers the following six dimensions: 1) quality; 2) inclusion and gender equality; 3) green and digital transitions; 4) teachers and trainers; 5) HE; and 6) the geopolitical dimension.

Many initiatives are taking place within these dimensions at EU level, and EEA implementation is on track. Nevertheless, additional efforts are needed to address the remaining challenges. It is **recommended to focus on:**

- Launching a strategic dialogue with E&T stakeholders and civil society on the lack of competent teachers, trainers and other education staff, and developing a comprehensive plan to tackle the issue.
- Developing practical guidelines for implementing the Artificial Intelligence Act into E&T systems, collecting more data and launching discussions with E&T stakeholders and civil society on the impact of the educational technology (EdTech) sector in E&T.
- Further supporting schools, teachers and trainers in developing sustainability and citizenship education and introducing innovative forms of learning assessment.

In addition, continued efforts are needed to improve the quality of E&T and the inclusion of vulnerable groups, to address threats to academic freedom in HE, and to ensure the well-being of learners, teachers, school leaders and other education staff.

EU youth policy – overview and recommendations

The EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) 2019-2027⁴ provides the basis for European cooperation in youth policy. It supports a common EU response to the challenges faced by European youth, and complements the actions of the MS. EUYS 2019-2027 focuses on engaging young people in civic, social, economic, cultural and political participation, connecting them through mobility programmes and empowering them to respond to emerging challenges such as social exclusion, discrimination and threats from fake news and propaganda.

Many initiatives to meet these objectives are taking place at EU level, and the implementation of EUYS 2019-2027 is on track. Nevertheless, additional efforts are needed to address the remaining challenges. It is **recommended to focus on:**

- Strengthening the engagement of young people, including the most vulnerable youth, in democratic participation, including more active use of online platforms.
- Increasing young people's access to mental health services to meet the existing demand.
- Introducing a European Volunteering Status, establishing dialogue formats to discuss the impact of digitalisation and climate change on volunteering.
- Further action to ensure affordable housing for young people.

Furthermore, efforts regarding youth mainstreaming, recognition, visibility and the professionalisation of youth work as well as the quality of traineeships and apprenticeships need to be continued. Further support is also needed to expand youth engagement in the EU's external action initiatives.

⁴ [Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 18 December 2018](#) on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01).

EU sport policy – overview and recommendations

EU sport policy is guided by the three-year EU Work Plans for Sport. These coordinate cooperation with and between the MS to strengthen integrity- and values-based sport in the EU and create more impactful sport policies. The current EU Work Plan for Sport 2024-2027⁵ sets out three priorities: 1) protect integrity and values in sport; 2) socio-economic and environmental dimensions in sport; and 3) promote participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity.

Many initiatives are taking place at EU level concerning these priorities. Nevertheless, additional actions are needed to address the remaining challenges. It is **recommended to focus on**:

- Revision of the 2008 EU physical activity guidelines.
- Collecting data on the reasons for decreasing volunteering rates, and promoting volunteering in sport.
- Revising and strengthening the EP's sport diplomacy strategy.

Continued efforts are needed to further develop the European sport model, strengthen the link between sport and social inclusion, and address athletes' rights issues.

Further information

This executive summary is available in the following languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The study, which is available in English, and the summaries can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/3AVQcCp>

More information on Policy Department research for CULT: <https://research4committees.blog/cult/>

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⁵ [Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council of 14 May 2024](#) on the European Union Work Plan for Sport (1 July 2024 – 31 December 2027) 9771/24.