

YOUTH

Youth is a national policy area, so EU-level harmonisation is not possible. The EU therefore plays a supporting role, especially when it comes to mobility and opportunities across the EU. For instance, Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme about mobility for individuals encourages exchanges of young people within the EU and with third countries. Over the past few years, the European Union has strengthened its policies towards young people, as illustrated by the European Solidarity Corps programme and the DiscoverEU project.

LEGAL BASIS

Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) are the basis for EU action in the youth field.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union includes an article on children's rights (Article 24) and an article forbidding child labour and providing for protection of young people in the workplace (Article 32).

OBJECTIVES

Article 165 of the TFEU provides for Union action in order to encourage the development of youth exchanges and exchanges between youth workers, and to encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. Article 166 enables the EU to implement a vocational training policy to support and supplement the action of the Member States. It tasks the Union with facilitating access to vocational training and encouraging mobility of instructors and trainees, particularly young people.

In addition to these provisions, children and young people benefit from EU policies in other fields, such as education, training and health, or in relation to the rights and protection of children and young people.

ACHIEVEMENTS

A. Strategic Framework

[EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027: engaging, connecting and empowering young people](#)

The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 is based on the [Council Resolution of 26 November 2018](#). The text proposes that particular attention be devoted to the following points:

- Fostering the participation of young people in civic and democratic life;
- Connecting young people across the European Union and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding;
- Supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and the recognition of youth work.

In June 2021, as part of this strategy, the Commission appointed Biliana Sirakova as the first 'European Union Youth Coordinator'. Her role is to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation within the Commission.

B. EU funding for programmes on youth

1. Erasmus+

[Erasmus+](#) is the EU programme for supporting education, training, youth and sport. For the 2021-2027 period, 10.3% of the Erasmus+ budget – more than EUR 2.5 billion – is earmarked for actions in the field of youth.

[DiscoverEU](#) became an integral part of the Erasmus+ youth strand in 2021. This initiative gives 18-year-olds the opportunity to travel across Europe for up to one month. This enables them to discover Europe's diversity and cultural heritage, and connect with people from all over Europe.

2. European Solidarity Corps

Launched in October 2018, the [European Solidarity Corps](#) is an initiative which aims to give young people aged 18-35 the opportunity to take part in solidarity activities abroad or in their own country through volunteering, a traineeship or a job in a range of areas such as healthcare and environmental protection.

C. Other EU initiatives

1. The reinforced Youth Guarantee

Created in 2013, the [Youth Guarantee](#) is a scheme to ensure that young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. In view of its success, the scheme was enhanced in 2020 on the basis of the Council Recommendation entitled '[A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee](#)'.

2. Child protection policies

The Treaty of Lisbon introduced an objective for the EU to promote children's rights, while the Charter of Fundamental Rights guarantees the protection of children's rights by EU institutions, as well as by Member States.

On 15 February 2011, the Commission adopted a communication entitled '[An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child](#)'. Its purpose is to reaffirm the strong commitment of all EU institutions and of all Member States to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies, and the willingness to translate this commitment into concrete results.

In 2016, Parliament and the Council adopted a [Directive on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings](#). That directive should ensure that children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings are able to understand and follow those proceedings and to exercise their right to a fair trial. It should also prevent children from reoffending and foster their social integration.

The rights of the child and the prevention of violence against children, young people, women and other groups at risk are also protected and promoted under the Rights and Values programme (2021-2027).

On 24 March 2021, the Commission adopted a communication entitled '[EU strategy on the rights of the child](#)'. This strategy's overarching ambition is to build the best possible life for children in the EU and across the globe.

3. Youth and media

Online technologies offer a great opportunity for children and young people to benefit from digital learning and to participate in public debate. However, children can also be especially vulnerable to modern technology. The Audiovisual Media Services Directive ensures that minors are protected from content that may impair them, whether offered by traditional broadcasters or through on-demand services (see fact sheet [3.6.2](#) on audiovisual and media policy).

4. European Youth Portal

The [European Youth Portal](#) is a website to help young people all over Europe navigate the many opportunities the EU offers in different areas of interest, such as volunteering, working, learning, culture and creativity, and many others.

5. European Youth Week

Every two years, the Commission, together with Parliament, organises the [European Youth Week](#), whose purpose is both to celebrate youth activities across all of the countries taking part in the Erasmus programme and to present the various mobility opportunities that are on offer to young people in the EU.

6. [European Year of Youth 2022](#)

On 22 December 2021, Parliament and the Council adopted [Decision \(EU\) 2021/2316 on a European Year of Youth \(2022\)](#). The overall objective was to boost the efforts of the EU, the Member States, and regional and local authorities, together with civil society actors, to empower, honour, support and engage with young people, including those with fewer opportunities. The Year took place in the context of the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to having a long-term positive impact for young people. The EU committed to ensuring the long-term legacy of the contributions and aims of the European Year of Youth 2022. To fulfil this aim, the Commission announced the 'youth check' in January 2024. This initiative will ensure that the impact of policies on young people is systematically taken into account.

7. European Youth Capital

The '[European Youth Capital](#)' is an initiative created in 2009 by the European Youth Forum. Every year, a European city is chosen to be the European Youth Capital and given the opportunity to highlight innovative initiatives launched by and for young people.

8. Youth4Regions competition

The [Youth4Regions](#) competition is aimed at young journalists interested in the EU's regional policy. The winners of the competition can receive training on European issues and mentoring from senior journalists, as well as having the opportunity to take part in press trips to the Member States organised by the Commission.

9. [Youth Action Plan](#)

On 4 October 2022, the Commission and the High Representative communicated the Youth Action Plan (2022–2027), which aims to engage young people worldwide in EU external action. On 28 November 2022, the Council adopted its [conclusions](#) to support the involvement of young people worldwide in policy-making by boosting their participation and engagement in international forums and allocating the necessary resources, with a focus on the protection of activists, empowerment, health and mobility.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 18 May 2021, Parliament and the Council adopted the [European Solidarity Corps \(ESC\) programme](#) for the period 2021–2027. Parliament supported the dedicated budget of more than one billion euros, which would allow some 350 000 young people to participate over the whole period. Parliament insisted that the programme be made more accessible and inclusive to young people, including those with limited opportunities. On 21 November 2023, Parliament adopted its [mid-term assessment of the ESC programme](#). The resolution called for the doubling of the funding for the next ESC cycle (after 2028) in order to meet the demand for participation in the programme. MEPs emphasised the need to raise more awareness about the programme, as its visibility remained limited.

On 5 October 2023, Parliament adopted a [resolution on the new European strategy for a better internet for kids \(BIK+\)](#). This strategy ensures that children and young people are protected, respected, and empowered online in the new digital decade. Parliament highlighted the importance of digital education for online safety and called for a European strategy against bullying and cyber-bullying in schools.

On 10 February 2021, Parliament adopted its [resolution on the impact of COVID-19 on youth and sport](#). In addition, on 13 September 2022, Parliament adopted its [resolution on the impact that COVID-19 closures of youth activities](#), among other things, had on children and young people in the EU. The resolution drew attention to the worsened mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and called for a holistic EU approach to dealing with mental health problems. It also pointed out the need for investments in improving mental health awareness and access to (psychological) help services.

To stimulate active citizenship and involve young people in its action, in 2014 Parliament created the [European Youth Event](#) (EYE), which takes place every two years in Strasbourg. In the same spirit, the [Youth Hub](#) website was developed alongside Youth Ideas, where young people are invited to submit their ideas about the EU, some of which will be forwarded to MEPs and policy-makers.

To encourage young people to pursue European projects of their own, Parliament and the Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen launched the [European Charlemagne Youth Prize](#) in 2008, which is awarded every year to projects which promote European and international understanding. Parliament also runs the [Ambassador School](#) and [Euroscola](#) education programmes to help improve knowledge about EU democracy and values among young people.

For more information on this topic please see the [website of the Committee on Culture and Education](#).

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