



PES Presidency statement welcoming the PES European Youth Plan

Declaration adopted by the PES Presidency on 22 April 2016

Europe's youth is paying a high price in the current difficult economic and social context. More than one in five young Europeans under 25 is still out of employment. Furthermore, more than a third of the young unemployed in Europe are long-term unemployed (more than 12 months). The consequences of these developments are dire, as is also confirmed by many of the findings of the FEPS Millennial Dialogue project:

More and more young people are **not in education, employment or training** (NEET). Young people are **disconnected from active participation in politics and society**, while **the EU is losing popularity** among parts of the youth. Many young people are **attracted by populists or far right and extreme-right movements**.

It must moreover be born in mind that youth unemployment cannot be properly tackled without changing the wider macroeconomic and political climate; including European policies that encourage austerity, wage depreciation and deflation and systems of economic governance that are detached from the democratic process.

Citizens' trust vis-à-vis the EU is in decline. For many citizens, the EU is way too far from their concerns or even worse, is considered as the cause of their problems. We have to act, Europe has to unite, in order to **offer a future for Europe's youth**. That is why we **must send a major signal to young people to regain their confidence**.

As PES Presidency we support the launch of a major initiative, a **PES European Youth Plan** which should involve Youth organisations in its design and implementation and build on the following four pillars:

1. **Employment: A permanent and extended European Youth Guarantee**

We should build on the success of our Youth Guarantee and use it as a leverage for social and economic innovation. However, its initial funding of 6 billion EUR is not sufficient and might lead to a premature end. In the framework of the PES European Youth Plan we call for:

- The youth guarantee to **become a permanent feature of EU horizontal employment policies**. This implies ensuring **sustainability and sufficiency of funding beyond** the 2016 revision of the multiannual financial framework. We thus demand **20 billion Euro until 2020 for the Youth Employment Initiative** that backs the Youth Guarantee, as called for by French President Francois Hollande

and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi¹. Moreover, a comprehensive approach with more progressive reforms, including support to the education system, should complement the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

- We want to **ensure the optimal use of the Youth Employment Initiative**, for a **qualitative implementation of the Youth Guarantee**. This implies a proper **evaluation of all schemes** with concrete criteria and monitoring tools put in place, together with young people, addressing identified shortcomings and ensuring **an easy access and mobilisation of existing funding** sources.
- We want to ensure a **maximum outreach of the Youth Guarantee**, and call for the **extension of the scope of beneficiaries**, by raising the age limit **to 30** and ensure that a gender dimension is included in terms of reaching out to women and men equally but also in terms of helping women accessing the labour market to achieve the EU2020 target..
- We want to guarantee the **quality and sustainability of the offers provided**, by promoting standards in particular in terms of **social protection, remuneration, equal pay and equal treatment, stability, rights, type of contract, quality skills for quality jobs, the related level and type of qualification required and the availability of additional job-related training**. Particular attention should be paid to groups that are affected the most by precarious forms of employment, such as young women and migrants. The Youth Guarantee must therefore require clear and specific guidelines for work standards and remuneration. We want to make sure the Youth guarantee is an effective **springboard for young people to integrate new jobs in a changing labour market**, including in the care, digital and green sectors. We want a Youth Guarantee that not only provides for job placements, but enables job creation and involves young people in the process.

2. **Education: A broadened Erasmus+ for secondary and vocational education and training school students**

We want to promote equitable and increased access to all forms of education that reach out to all young people. We want to support education systems and youth structures as learning spaces that encourage the development of **21st century skills and competences for citizens and emancipation**, in particular digital skills, critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork. Education systems that promote democratic values, break gender stereotypes, enhance intercultural exchanges and intensify the cooperation with civil society are key factors in our quest for active citizenship. In the framework of the PES European Youth Plan we call for:

- Further support to youth structures at the European and national level.
- Increasing the volume of exchanges of European students between not only higher education institutions but also upper secondary schools, we demand to **extend the financing of Erasmus+** in order **for all secondary school pupils and students engaged in vocational education and training**, regardless of their background, study choice, and gender, to benefit from fruitful international exchange programs. The program must be accessible to every young person regardless of his/her socio-economic and cultural background. Participating in the program should not result in additional costs for socially disadvantaged young people.
- The recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education.

¹ Joint declaration by French President Francois Hollande and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of the 33rd French-Italian Summit, 8 March 2016. Online: <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/declaration-conjointe-du-33eme-sommet-franco-italien/>

3. **Culture: A European Youth Cheque to facilitate accessibility of culture**

Following Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's example who announced to spend 1 EUR on culture for every extra EUR spent on security measures, the accessibility of cultural programs for young people must be increased. **Culture has a transformative power** that can help **promote social cohesion, solidarity and youth engagement**, and it fosters **critical thinking, creativity** and the **understanding of the world's complexity**. Culture is a source of identity and cohesion for all societies. This is why culture policies must be integral part of our efforts to shield our youth from radicalisation, from turning to intolerant, populist and nationalistic ideas and to sharpen their active and critical citizenship. We want increased support of cross-border cooperation projects in culture, innovation and creativity. And we want to broaden young people's access to and role in culture, enhance the outreach of cultural organisations, and improve cultural infrastructure especially in peripheral and economically disadvantaged areas. In the framework of the PES European Youth Plan we will call for:

- Empowering young people as culture consumers and creators by introducing a '**European Youth Culture Cheque**', a voucher of a certain money value co-financed by European funds, to be spent on any cultural activity of the young card holders' choice and to support young European creators in their cultural projects.

4. **Child Guarantee: Ensuring children's rights to healthcare, education, childcare, housing and nutrition**

This pillar embraces the PES child guarantee campaign, building on the work that is being done by the S&D Group and the definition adopted by the European Parliament stating that every child in poverty must have access to

- **free healthcare,**
- **free education,**
- **free childcare,**
- **decent housing, and**
- **adequate nutrition,**

as part of the European integrated plan to combat child poverty including both the Child Guarantee and programs offering support and opportunities for parents to get out of social exclusion situations and to integrate women and men equally into the labour market

In the context of the MFF's revision we call for a new fund dedicated to the Child Guarantee that groups existing child poverty-related funds and new money to support the abovementioned measures. We strive to **achieve having funding for these proposals**, under a **common, easily understandable European umbrella**, coupled with better monitoring and evaluation of spending on child-related projects.

In all these measures **European funding** must have a **strong leverage effect** to reinforce the capacity of national and/or regional authorities to invest and prioritise youth policies. Co-financing requirements must not hamper the ability of the poorest Member States or regions to access these European funds.