



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

# EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE



30.04.2009

## CONTENTS

### 1. ...from the Commission

- EU Youth Policy
- EU Youth Report
- The Bologna Process

### 2. ... from the Parliament

- Special Olympics in the EU



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

## *... from the Commission*

### **A new era of EU youth policies**

**COM (2009) 200 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities.**

The Commission has adopted a new EU strategy for youth policy for the coming decade. The new strategy acknowledges two facts:

- (1) **young people are one of the most vulnerable groups in society**, especially in the current economic and financial crisis, and
- (2) **in our ageing society, young people are a precious resource**. The new strategy is cross-sectoral, with both short and long-term actions, which involve key policy areas that affect Europe's young people, particularly youth education, employment, creativity and entrepreneurship, social inclusion, health and sport, civic participation, and volunteering. The new strategy also emphasises the importance of youth work and defines reinforced measures for a better implementation of youth policies at the EU level.

According to surveys, education, employment, social inclusion and health are issues which most of all preoccupy today's young people. Europe's youth must also be empowered to benefit from opportunities such as civic and political participation, volunteering, creativity and entrepreneurship, sport and global engagement. To confront such challenges, and open up opportunities for all young people, the Commission is proposing a renewed EU youth strategy that sets out a wide-ranging response.

The strategy "Youth – Investing and Empowering", which is a follow-up to the renewed social agenda announced by the European Commission in 2008, has the following goals:

- to create more opportunities for youth in education and employment,
- to improve access and full participation of all young people in society, and

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**Page 2 of 9**  
**30/04/2009**



**Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee**

- to foster solidarity between youth and society.

It emphasises the important role of youth work in dealing with unemployment, school failure and social exclusion, as well as improving skills and providing leisure time.

The Commission proposes to employ a cross-sectoral approach to address all youth related issues, with the new strategy outlining different actions to be pursued by the Commission and the Member States. As such, it constitutes a part of the EU's coordinated response to the current crisis.

The strategy proposes a better, more flexible and simplified method of coordinating youth policy among the Member States, with reinforced links with the Lisbon Strategy for more growth and jobs.

Commenting on the new EU strategy for youth, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Jan Figel' said: *"Youth is our present and our future – and we must make a concerted effort to open up as many avenues as possible for our young citizens, especially in the light of the current economic and financial crisis. The key is to empower our youth to deal with the many challenges they encounter in today's globalized world. Our new strategy is a timely response to these challenges, which opens the door to a new era in the development of youth policies at EU level."*

The Commission's adoption of the new strategy on youth follows an extensive consultation exercise undertaken in 2008, involving national authorities, the European Youth Forum, youth organizations and other stakeholders. Young people themselves were consulted on-line and will now be invited to react to the Commission's proposals in a new phase of the permanent dialogue between the EU and its youth.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

## The First EU Youth Report

*Together with the adoption of the Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering", outlining a new youth cooperation framework in the European Union, the Commission is also publishing a Youth Report. The Youth Report is a compilation of data, statistics and brief analyses on the situation of young people in Europe. It provides an overview of the situation in the EU Member States in a range of different areas and outlines as well the differences between countries.*

The Youth Report is the first such report to be published by the Commission. It was requested by the Council of the European Union and is expected to be published every three years.

The objective of this first Youth Report is twofold.

- 1) First, to support the new youth cooperation framework by collecting much of the available statistics and data on the situation of young people.
- 2) Second, it responds to the obligation for evidence-based policy making, i.e. to base all efforts to address young people's challenges and improve their situation on clear evidence.

The report also gives some indications as to where there is a lack of research and data on youth and outlines possible avenues for future improvement.

### KEY FIGURES ON YOUTH

The primary sources are data and statistics from Eurostat, plus additional figures and a number of surveys and data from various other sources.

Some key data and statistics on young people in Europe in various life-arenas are outlined below, all taken from the report:

#### Demography

There are 96 million young people aged 15-29 in the European Union, constituting almost 20 % of the total population. It is projected that the share of young people in 2050 will be reduced to 15.3 %.



## Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

### **Education**

There are now some 3 million more students in higher education than in 2000, and 1 million more graduates per year. The number of students increased by 25 % between 1998 and 2006.

There are 23 % more young women than young men in higher education.

One fifth of children do not have basic standards of literacy and numeracy.

6 million young people, 1 out of 7 young persons aged 18-24 years old, complete only compulsory education or less.

At the European level, the percentage of early school leavers (leaving school after lower secondary education) has continuously decreased over the 2000-2007 period, but still amounts to 14.8 %.

More than 50 % of young Europeans between 25 and 29 have completed upper secondary education, and 29 % higher education.

Less than one third of young people aged 25-34, who have a disadvantaged socio-economic background, complete higher education.

### **Employment**

More than one third of young people aged 15-24 are NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

The unemployment rate (15.3% in 2007, 15.4% in 2008) of young people aged 15-24 is nearly twice the percentage observed among the whole working population.

26 % of unemployed 15-24 year-olds and 35 % of unemployed 25-29 year-olds have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

### **Social inclusion**

19 million children (age 0-17) are at risk of poverty in the EU.

20 % of young people aged 18-24 are at risk of poverty.

18 % of young people aged 18-24 earn less than half the average income of the country they live in.

### **Active citizenship**

22 % of young people in the EU declare that they are members of an organisation.

49 % of young people declare that they are members of a sports club.



## Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

4 % of young people declare having participated in activities of political parties or trade unions.

Less than 40 % of young people aged between 16 and 29 have trust in (or are neutral towards) politicians and political parties.

### Lifestyles

24.5 % of young people (15-29) live in the same household as their partner.

37 % of all babies are born outside marriage.

### Health

Around 2 million young people have mental health problems.

17 % of young people aged 15-24 are overweight.

9 % of young people aged 15-24 are underweight.

24 % of young people aged 15-29 smoke daily.

### The internet generation

In 2007, 70 % of young people aged 16-24 used computers daily (compared to 50 % in 2004).

59 % of young people aged 16-24 use the Internet daily.

## The Bologna Process

Bologna Ministerial Conference

**30% of 25-34 year-olds in the EU27 are graduates from higher education**

Higher proportion of women than men among graduates

In connection with the Bologna Ministerial Conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium on 28-29 April, **Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities** issues a report "The Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe – Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility". The following is a selection of indicators on higher education, taken from this report.

In the **EU27**, the proportion of the population having completed higher education, i.e. tertiary level education of at least two years, has increased steadily through the generations. In 2007, 30% of those aged 25-34 had graduated from tertiary education, compared with 25% of those aged 35-44 and 19% of those aged 45-64.



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The proportion of tertiary education graduates was in 2007 higher in the youngest age group (25-34 years) than in the oldest (45-64 years) in all Member States, except **Germany**. The highest shares of tertiary education graduates in the youngest age group were found in **Cyprus** (47%), **Ireland** (44%), **France** (42%), **Belgium** (41%) and **Denmark** and **Sweden** (40% each), and the lowest in the **Czech Republic** (16%), **Romania** (17%), **Slovakia** (18%), **Italy** and **Austria** (both 19%).

The proportion of tertiary education graduates in the **EU27** has increased more for women than for men through the generations. In the oldest age group, a higher proportion of men than women had completed tertiary education (21% for men and 18% for women); in the middle age group proportions were nearly equal (24% for men and 25% for women); and in the youngest age group a higher proportion of women than men had completed tertiary education (26% for men and 34% for women).

### **A strong influence of the educational background of the parents**

The educational background of parents has a clear influence on the level of education of their children. In the **EU25** in 2005, 17% of those aged 25-64 whose parents had at most completed lower-secondary education had completed tertiary education. This proportion rose to 32% for those whose parents had completed upper-secondary education and reached 63% for those whose parents had themselves completed tertiary education.

In the youngest generation, the impact of the educational level of the parents remains significant even if the impact was reduced for those whose parents had low education. In the age group 25-34, 23% of those whose parents had low education had completed tertiary education, 30% of those whose parents had medium education and 61% of those whose parents had high education.

### **Highest share of foreign students in the United Kingdom, Austria, France and Belgium**

Mobility of students is one of the goals of the Bologna Process. In 2006, 7.5% of students enrolled in tertiary education in the **EU27** were foreign students, compared with 5.3% in 2000. The proportion of foreign students rose between 2000 and 2006 in all Member States except **Latvia**, **Romania** and **Slovakia**. The proportion of foreign students in 2006 was higher than 10% in the **United Kingdom** (18.3%), **Austria** (15.6%), **France** (14.6%), **Belgium** (14.3%), **Germany** and **Sweden** (both 12.8%), and less than 1% in **Poland** (0.5%), **Lithuania** (0.8%) and **Slovakia** (0.9%).



**Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee**

In 2006, 2.6% of students originating from one of the **EU27** Member States were enrolled in tertiary education in a European country other than their country of origin, compared with 2.1% in 2000. The highest rates in 2006 were observed in **Cyprus** (78.7%), **Malta** (10.6%), **Slovakia** (9.5%) and **Bulgaria** (8.9%). The lowest rates were registered in the **United Kingdom** (0.5%), **Spain** (1.2%), **Italy** and **Hungary** (both 1.3%) and **Poland** (1.4%).



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

## *... from the Parliament*

### **MEPs adopt a written declaration on support for Special Olympics in the European Union**

The European Parliament passed a written declaration in support of the organisation, which enables half a million people with intellectual disabilities to take part in sports training and major events across Europe. The declaration acknowledges the wide benefits of Special Olympics for athletes, families and the wider community and calls on the European Commission to support the 2011 World Special Olympics in Athens and the 2010 European Special Olympics in Warsaw.

436 MEPs have signed the declaration. In order for a written declaration more than half of the 785 MEPs must sign it. The declaration was declared adopted on 23 April in Strasbourg.

#### **About Special Olympics Europe Eurasia**

Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia (SOEE) works with half a million athletes in 58 countries across Europe and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, providing year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

SOEE undertakes a number of key additional roles, which include serving as an advocate for people with intellectual disabilities, taking responsibility for European level competitions and establishing European level partnerships.

SOEE is part of the Special Olympics family that works with 2.5 million people across the world supported by 1.5 million volunteers and 3 million family members.

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Page 9 of 9  
30/04/2009