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**Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European
Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022-2024)

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INTRODUCTION

The **EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027** (the EUYS) is the framework for EU cooperation in the youth field and is based on a Council Resolution of 18 December 2018¹. The EUYS fosters youth and youth worker exchanges, and young people's participation in democratic life, in line with Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)², supports their social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary means to participate in society.

EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 overall objectives

- enable young people to be architects of their own lives, support their personal development and growth to autonomy, build their resilience and equip them with life skills to cope with a changing world;
- encourage and equip young people with the necessary resources to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change inspired by EU values and a European identity;
- improve policy decisions with regard to their impact on young people across all sectors (notably employment, education, health and social inclusion);
- contribute to the eradication of youth poverty and all forms of discrimination and promote the social inclusion of young people.

The EUYS **engages, connects and empowers young people**³, and **advances youth participation and youth mainstreaming across policy areas**. It encourages the development of youth policies, in synergy with other policies that target young people (e.g. health and well-being, the environment and climate, education and training, international cooperation and European values, employment and inclusion) to help achieve the **11 European Youth Goals**⁴ which were jointly developed with young people. The European Youth Goals are coherent with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁵ which, by emphasising that the needs of the current generation should be met without jeopardising those of future generations, has been a key driver for increased youth engagement in EU policy development.

The EUYS operates in **three-year work cycles**, at the end of which the **European Commission reports on the implementation and progress in a triennial EU Youth Report**. The EU Youth Report 2024, accompanied by two staff working documents, is the second report under the current EUYS and covers 2022 to 2024. The priorities are set by the Council together with the Commission in EUYS work plans, spanning two Council presidency trios. The

¹ [Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#)

² The article 165 of the TFEU mentions among others that "Union action shall aim at "encouraging mobility of students and teachers" and "encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe".

³ [EU Youth Strategy | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [European Youth Goals | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

overarching **thematic priority for 2022-2024** was ‘**Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe**’⁶.

The implementation of the EUYS relies on the **open method of coordination**⁷ and the commitment of all stakeholders to work towards the common objectives and priorities and to have an impact at different levels. The EUYS is supported by a range of **instruments**⁸, which are mainly funded by the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes (e.g. the EU Youth Dialogue, the European Youth Portal and the European Youth Work Agenda).

The European Year of Youth 2022 brought the EU closer to young people. It boosted youth participation and accelerated cross-sector cooperation in the youth field in line with the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. The **Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022**⁹, adopted in January 2024, sets out priority actions to give young people a greater say in the decisions that affect them and deepen the youth dimension across a range of EU policies of relevance to them.

The **Commission Report on the Interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027**¹⁰, adopted in April 2024, complemented the Communication on the European Year of Youth. It echoed priority actions on youth participation and youth mainstreaming, and set out how EU cooperation tools can be mobilised to support further progress at EU and national levels.

This staff working document presents the main developments and examples of activities in the implementation of the EUYS between 2022 and 2024, highlighting the **follow-up of the European Year of Youth legacy activities and of the results of the EUYS evaluation** (Section 1); and is then organised by the three core areas of **Engage** (Section 2), **Connect** (Section 3) and **Empower** (Section 4); followed by **youth-led initiatives and actions** (Section 5), **national policy priorities and EU cooperation needs** (Section 6), the international dimension in **beyond the EU** (Section 7) and **monitoring and data** (Section 8).

1 LEGACY OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH

In its Communication on the 2022 European Year of Youth, the Commission put forward 60 actions that give young people a stronger role in EU policymaking and deepen the youth dimension in a range of EU policies. The Council Conclusions on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022¹¹, adopted in May 2024, called on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to promote and support youth mainstreaming across policy areas, to strengthen the quality, visibility and outreach of the EU Youth Dialogue, to put in place the new EU Youth Stakeholders Group, and to pursue further efforts to communicate about opportunities via the European Youth Portal.

⁶ [Council Resolution on the revision of the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2022-2024](#)

⁷ The open method of coordination (OMC) in the European Union may be described as a form of ‘soft’ law. It is a form of intergovernmental policy-making that does not result in binding EU legislative measures and it does not require EU countries to introduce or amend their laws.

⁸ [EU Youth Strategy | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁹ [Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022 \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁰ [Commission Report on the Interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹¹ [Council Conclusions on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022](#)

As part of a wider commitment of the Commission to give young people greater freedom and responsibility within the EU's societies and democracies, and as announced by the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her *Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2024-2029*¹², the Commission will set up a **President's Youth Advisory Board** with young people from all Member States to advise the Commission President on issues that matter to young people and peers in their community and to act as sounding board for ideas developed by the Commission. Furthermore, all Commissioners will organise **Youth Policy Dialogues** every year to make sure that young people can use their voice to help shape Europe's future.¹³ 'In December 2024, a symbolic visit by European Commissioner Brunner to the Schengen Lyzeum in Germany marked the first Youth Policy Dialogue under the new Commission's mandate. The dialogue aimed to encourage open discussions with young people on pressing issues, including free movement, migration, and internal security. Commissioner Brunner discussed the EU's commitments to safe and secure borders, fair migration policies, and the importance of safeguarding migrants' rights¹⁴.

- **Youth check**

As part of the follow up of the European Year of Youth, the Commission committed to using the full potential of the Better Regulation framework to apply a youth check on the EU initiatives with significant youth-relevance, starting with the Commission's 2025 annual work programme¹⁵.

This addressed the invitation to the Commission in the 2023 **Council Conclusions on promoting youth mainstreaming** and the 2024 **Council Conclusions on inclusive societies**, to explore and further analyse the use of regulatory youth impact assessment mechanisms, to ensure that the Commission's existing Better Regulation tools are used to their fullest¹⁶.

The EU Youth Stakeholders Group will facilitate the 'youth check' process, in particular consultations of young people, youth organisations and other relevant stakeholders.

- **EU Youth Dialogue**

The EU Youth Dialogue (EUYD) is also used as a mainstreaming instrument. For instance, consultations at national level and at the EU Youth Conference will cover any policy topic chosen by young people, including, for example, mental health, public transport and digitalisation. As outlined in the Communication on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022, work is currently underway to improve communication on the EUYD. This includes a re-vamp of the European Youth Portal, a social media campaign and an explanatory video.

In addition, the Commission is also exploring ways to align the EUYD more closely with the Commission's annual work programme. Consultations with youth stakeholders on the path towards a European Degree¹⁷ (a joint degree based on common European criteria) took place online in February 2024 and at a workshop as part of the EU Youth Conference in March 2024.

¹² [Political Guidelines 2024-2029 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹³ [Political Guidelines 2024-2029 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁴ [Youth Policy Dialogues | European Youth Portal](#)

¹⁵ [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox](#)

¹⁶ [Council Conclusions on promoting youth mainstreaming in policy decision-making processes in the European Union; Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people](#)

¹⁷ [Commission presents a blueprint for a European degree | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

In addition, a consultation on the next generation on the EU youth programmes was held at the EU Youth Conference in Budapest in September.

The evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy recommended creating more synergies with other youth participation instruments (e.g. the EU Children’s Participation Platform) at EU and national level for visibility, and to make joint efforts to involve young people and youth representatives with the help of civil society organisations and networks. The European Youth Portal will contribute to raising awareness of and create links between the EU Youth Dialogue and other participation initiatives such as the EU Children’s Participation Platform.

- **Policy dialogues with Commissioners**

There were 26 policy dialogues with Commissioners during the European Year of Youth¹⁸.

As a follow to one of the main flagship initiatives of the European Year of Youth, **Vice President Margaritis Schinas** and **Commissioner Iliana Ivanova** hosted policy dialogues as part of the European Youth Week 2024. The topic of the Policy Dialogue with Vice President Schinas was ‘Our European way of life’ and the topic with Commissioner Ivanova was the ‘European Degree and Learning Mobility’. The dialogues covered a range of topics pertinent to the European elections, which were upcoming at that time. These topics included lowering the voting age, climate action, European values, education and mobility, and demonstrated the EU’s commitment to engaging with its young people.

In her Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2024-2029¹⁹, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that she would ask all Commissioners to organise their first annual Youth Policy Dialogues within the first 100 days of the mandate and that these dialogues would be repeated every year.

- **EU Youth Stakeholders Group**

During the European Year of Youth 2022, the Commission set up a stakeholders and national coordinators group, which included representatives from EU institutions, Member States and stakeholders in the field of youth. This network fostered cooperation between EU and national policymakers and youth representatives and helped bring the EU closer to young people.

To maintain and build on this achievement, the Commission committed to launch an EU Youth Stakeholders Group. The aim of this Group is to engage European youth organisations, national youth councils, youth researchers, representatives of Member States and other EU institutions in implementing the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022 and the 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy, and to facilitate exchanges and youth consultations on forthcoming EU policy initiatives.

The Group will:

- exchange knowledge and good practices in engaging, connecting, and empowering young people and in implementing the 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy and its instruments, including the EU Youth Dialogue;

¹⁸ See annex 3 for the full list

¹⁹ [Political Guidelines 2024-2029 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

- facilitate the ‘youth check’ process, in particular the consultations of young people, youth organisations and other relevant stakeholders;
- help improve understanding of the needs and concerns of young people and youth organisations, in their diversity and at multiple levels and
- serve as a sounding board and an incubator of ideas and actions leading towards joint initiatives to the benefit of young people.

On 9 July, 2024, the Commission published a call for European youth organisations interested in becoming members of the EU Youth Stakeholders Group. Member States were invited to nominate a national representative to the Group and to extend an invitation to their national youth council to nominate a representative. The European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee also nominated representatives.

The EU Youth Coordinator will chair the EU Youth Stakeholders Group.

- **Interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy**

The Commission carried out an interim evaluation of the EUYS²⁰, supported by an external study²¹ and including consultations of stakeholders, young people and the public. In essence, the evaluation found²² that the EUYS has been effective and remains relevant as a framework for cooperation on youth, youth participation and youth mainstreaming, and in relation to the many challenges facing young people. The main areas for improvement echo priority areas of the European Year of Youth’s legacy, in particular further accelerating youth mainstreaming and strengthening inclusive youth participation.

The evaluation proposed ways forward to enhance the EUYS’ impact by boosting some of its instruments, such as strengthening the EU Youth Dialogue, and implementing the youth check in EU policymaking. It also stressed the importance of involving young people and stakeholders in the preparation and design of the next EU Youth Strategy beyond 2027.

- **EU Youth Strategy work plan 2025-2027**

In November 2024, the Council approved a resolution on the EU Youth Strategy work plan, which presents the main priorities and actions to be implemented from 2025 to 2027²³. The Council invited the Commission to ensure cross-sectoral internal consultation in the early stage of designing of the next EU Youth Strategy in line with the Communication on the legacy of the European Year of Youth. Doing so will ensure youth mainstreaming across all policy areas.

²⁰ [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 – interim evaluation \(europa.eu\)](#)

²¹ [Support study for the interim evaluation of the EU youth strategy 2019-2027 - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

²² [Infographic_EUYouthStrategy_v5.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

²³ [Resolution of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2025-2027](#)

the intergenerational dimension in the youth field to foster dialogue and social cohesion²⁸ which included a summary report of the national consultations, were also published.

A review, carried out by the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership²⁹, found that the EUYD “is perceived as a very good opportunity to structure youth engagement activities and to ensure that young people are constantly consulted” but that there was scope for improvement in terms of increasing its impact on policy outcomes.

➤ *10th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (July 2023-December 2024)*³⁰

The 10th cycle under the Trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary, focused on European Youth Goal #3: inclusive societies. The consultation resulted in several concrete proposals, including ensuring young people’s financial literacy, access to youth-friendly healthcare and increased cooperation between formal, informal and nonformal education systems, which can be implemented at the national and EU level. These were included in the Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people adopted on 13 May 2024³¹. Measures were also taken to make the Conference more inclusive.



²⁸ [Council Conclusions on promoting the intergenerational dimension in the youth field to foster dialogue and social cohesion](#)

²⁹ <https://pipeu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261884/Review+of+the+9+cycles+of+the+EU+Youth+Dialogue+%282010-2022%29+executive+summary.pdf/b95d939d-ffd2-382c-68f7-5597557d4e20?t=1708012066530>

³⁰ [Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 10th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue](#)

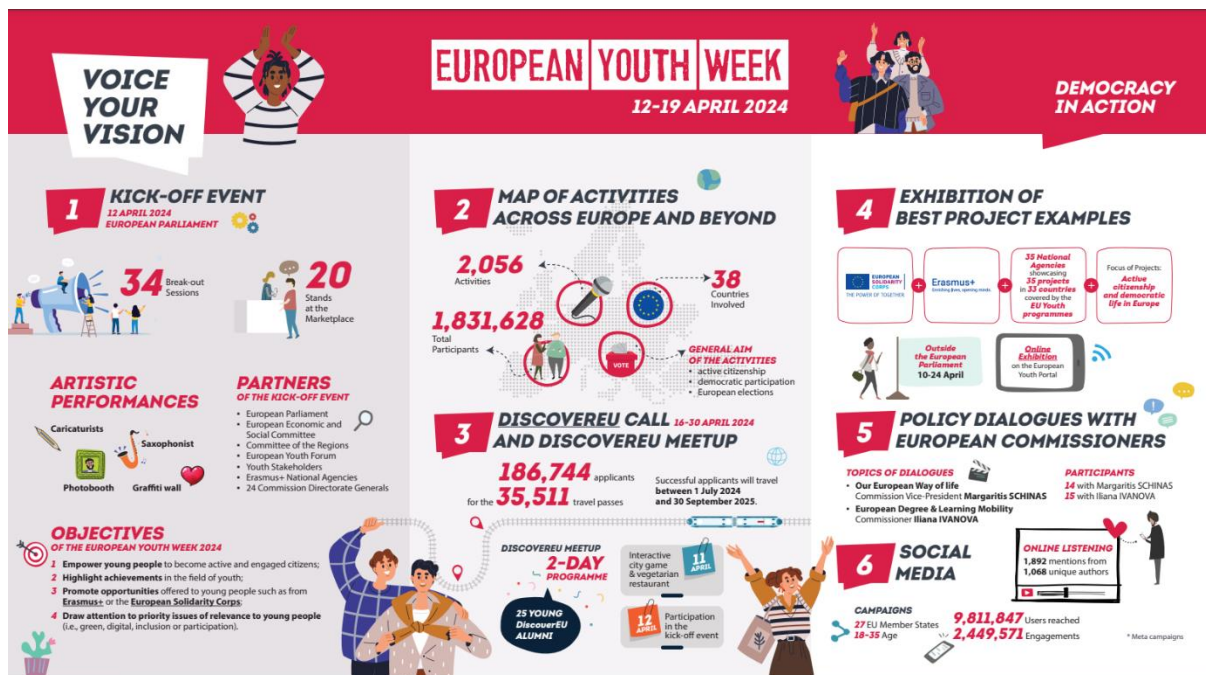
³¹ [Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on inclusive societies for young people](#)

- **European Youth Week 2024**

The European Youth Week 2024, held from 12 to 19 April, focused on democratic participation with the theme ‘Voice your vision’. It began with a kick-off event in the European Parliament on 12 April, organized by the European Commission. Simultaneously, the European Youth Forum hosted the “LevelUp! I care, I vote” event to inform and engage young people, in the European elections especially those unaffiliated or inexperienced with EU programs.

This event was a collaborative effort involving the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, 24 European Commission departments, the National Agencies of Erasmus+, and youth stakeholders. It featured various activities across Europe, an Active Citizenship Exhibition, and the DiscoverEU application round and a meet-up of 25 DiscoverEU travelers organised in Brussels, aiming to mainstream the youth perspective across EU policy fields.

Key objectives included empowering young people as active citizens, encouraging voting, highlighting achievements by young people, promoting opportunities from public policies and initiatives like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, and addressing topics such as green initiatives, digital transformation, inclusion, and participation. These goals aligned with the outcomes of the European Year of Youth 2022.



- **European Year of Youth 2022**

‘Voice your Vision’ was the slogan of the European Year of Youth 2022³². The Year aimed to give young people positive prospects after the COVID-19 pandemic and during the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The European Year of Youth put **young people high on the political agenda** and contributed to integrating the youth perspective across various policy fields.



Objectives of the European Year of Youth

Objective 1: highlighting how the green and digital transitions and other EU policies provide opportunities to young people after the COVID-19 pandemic

Objective 2: empowering and supporting young people, including those with fewer opportunities, to become active and engaged citizens and actors of change

Objective 3: promoting the various opportunities available to young people from public policies at all levels

Objective 4: bringing a youth perspective across all relevant EU policy fields

The European Year of Youth was essentially a bottom-up initiative and successfully triggered large-scale mobilisation and engagement. More than 2 700 stakeholders³³ across the EU and beyond organised activities. The Year created large-scale mobilisation and engagement, raising awareness of EU opportunities among millions of young people who took part in 13 000 activities across 67 countries. More than 30 Commission departments contributed, with over 130 policy initiatives for young people, many of which were developed in cooperation with them.

Social media campaigns running from February 2022 to May 2023 resulted in 210 million views and 10 million interactions and reached 91.4 million people.

All these efforts helped meet the Year’s four objectives as set out in Decision (EU) 2021/2316 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth (2022)³⁴.

New youth participation formats were launched, ranging from the Youth Voices Platform to the policy dialogues with European Commissioners³⁵ and the pool of European young journalists³⁶.

- **EU youth programmes**

Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps are instrumental in strengthening European identity and values and in contributing to a more democratic EU. Active participation in democratic life, European common values, and civic engagement are at the heart of both programmes. This is reflected in a horizontal priority, maintained throughout the 2021-2027 programming period, fostering a strong participatory dimension in all supported activities. The programmes aim to strengthen European identity and to encourage the participation of young people in democratic processes including European, national, regional and local elections, and in other EU initiatives and platforms revolving around participation and civic engagement.

³² [What was the European Year of Youth? | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

³³ Number of stakeholders who submitted activities on the EYY Activities map on the European Youth Portal.

³⁴ [Decision \(EU\) 2021/2316 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 December 2021 on a European Year of Youth \(2022\)](#)

³⁵ [Policy dialogues | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁶ [Meet the pool of European young journalists | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

Both programmes encourage participatory practices and the direct involvement of young people in all phases of supported projects (project design, implementation and follow-up).

These programmes play a crucial role as well in developing essential skills (such as social and intercultural competences, critical thinking, and media literacy), across lifelong learning, to help young people participate actively and responsibly in society. Detailed reporting on the activities of both programmes is available in the 2023 annual report of Erasmus+³⁷ and the 2021-2023 European Solidarity Corps report³⁸.

The 2024 **Council Conclusions on inclusive societies** recognize the EU's concerted efforts to promote cohesion, resilience and values through these programmes and initiatives³⁹.



Under the 2022 Erasmus+ call, a budget of 339.9 million was allocated to 1,201 cooperation projects supporting democratic participation and involving more than 4,000 organisations. The programme's commitment to this priority was strengthened in 2024, requiring beneficiaries to actively adopt, respect, advance and implement EU values in project activities.

Since 2021, Erasmus+ has supported a new action, youth participation activities, specifically aiming to empower young people, foster and facilitate their participation in European democratic life at local,

regional, national and European levels. Under this action, support is available for local and transnational initiatives run by informal groups of young people and/or organisations working with young people. 2 338 organisations have been awarded a total of EUR 61.1 million in grants since 2021 for the implementation of 1 643 projects aiming to involve over 320 000 participants (16% of them young people with fewer opportunities⁴⁰).

According to the 2022 Erasmus+ Annual Report⁴¹, 82% of Erasmus+ participants declare that they feel more European, 72% are more interested in European topics, and 52% are more aware of the European values after taking part in the programme's mobility activities.

³⁷ [Erasmus+ annual report 2023 - Publications Office of the EU](#)

³⁸ [European solidarity corps - Publications Office of the EU](#)

³⁹ [Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people](#)

⁴⁰ In the Erasmus+ Regulation, "people with fewer opportunities" means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme.

⁴¹ [Erasmus+ annual report 2022 - Publications Office of the EU](#)

The European Solidarity Corps builds on the achievements of more than 25 years of European programmes in the field of youth and solidarity. It brings together young people to build a more inclusive society, supporting vulnerable people and responding to societal and humanitarian challenges. It offers an inspiring and empowering experience for young people who want to help, learn and develop, and provides a single entry point for solidarity activities throughout the EU and beyond. The three strands of the European Solidarity Corps programme are: Volunteering, Solidarity projects and Humanitarian aid.

With volunteering and solidarity at its heart, the European Solidarity Corps offers an opportunity for young people to make a meaningful contribution to society, while gaining invaluable experience and developing new skills. Participants can get involved in solidarity activities, across the EU and beyond, in a range of areas such as citizenship and democratic participation. Since 2021, a total of 995 organisations have received 129.7 million in grants to run 1 646 projects (47% out of total) specifically aiming to promote “participation in democratic life” (involving more than 25 000 volunteers). Furthermore, over the same period, the European Solidarity Corps has awarded over EUR 2.8 million to 370 solidarity projects (10% of the total) specifically dealing with the topic of “democracy and participation”⁴².

The **SALTO Participation and Information**⁴³ resource centre was created in 2018 to enhance the impact of both Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps on democratic participation of young people. The centre provides guidance and support for applicants, beneficiaries, and National Agencies, ensures the involvement of young people, and organises trainings for experts and youth workers. The centre was actively engaged in initiatives to boost voter turnout among young people in the European Parliament elections.

The National Agencies that manage Erasmus+ youth actions and the European Solidarity Corps in EU Member States and non-EU countries associated to the programmes work together in Training and Cooperation Activities, with the aim to build organisational capacity and maximise the programmes’ on-the-ground impact. A key focus of several of these initiatives is to support and promote youth participation. For instance, “Democracy reloading, managed by the National Agency of the French Community of Belgium, aims to develop local democracies by engaging young people in municipal decision-making. “New Power in Youth”, managed by the Estonian National Agency, aims to foster young people’s civic engagement and participation in democratic life. ‘

- **Defence of Democracy and EU citizenship’ packages**

As part of the **Defence of Democracy package** adopted in December 2023, the **Commission Recommendation on inclusive and resilient elections** promotes high standards for European and national elections and referenda. It supports young citizens in exercising their electoral rights, both as voters and candidates, and promotes political engagement, with a special focus on young people, especially first-time voters. This may include actions such as fostering citizenship education, organising election simulations in schools, organising knowledge tests or art competitions on elections, running youth-friendly communication campaigns, publishing

⁴² European Solidarity Corps 01/2021 - 08/2024

⁴³ <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/participation/>

election guides to familiarise children and teenagers with the registration and voting process, encouraging students to become election observers and launching peer-to-peer programmes.

Another element of the Defense of Democracy Package is the Commission Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policymaking processes⁴⁴.

As part of the ‘**Citizenship Package**’⁴⁵, also adopted in December 2023, the Commission presented a **Guide to EU citizenship**, intended to equip in particular (but not only) young and new EU citizens with the most essential information on their citizenship rights, illustrating the opportunities these rights offer for democratic engagement. It was accompanied by a broad communication campaign celebrating the 30th anniversary of EU citizenship, with certain deliverables focused on young people, under #EURightsOn.

The **EU Democracy in Action toolkit**⁴⁶, published in May 2023, introduces pupils to the European Citizens’ Initiative and encourages them to take an active role in European issues.

- **European elections 2024**

The European elections took place from 6 to 9 June 2024. It gave young citizens the opportunity to express their choice of preferred representation in the EU’s directly elected assembly, the European Parliament. While the minimum age required to vote was 18 in most EU countries, the minimum voting age was 16 in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta, and 17 in Greece.

The overall turnout of 50.74 % was slightly higher than in the 2019 elections (50.66%)⁴⁷. According to the European Parliament’s 2024 post-electoral Eurobarometer survey, 36% of those aged 15-24 (if eligible) and 46% of those aged 25-39 voted in the 2024 elections to the European Parliament. Age therefore remains a determining factor in voter turnout, with older people still more likely to vote than young people: 51% of those aged 40-54, and 58% of citizens aged 55 and over voted. The level of education also influences voter turnout: 59% of respondents who finished their formal education at the age of 20 or older voted in the elections, while the turnout was 49% for those who finished at the age of 16-19, and 44% for those who finished at the age of 15 or younger. **The participation rate of young voters has decreased** by 6 percentage points since 2019, partially offsetting the 14 percentage points increase that took place between 2014 and 2019⁴⁸. According to the European Youth Forum’s analysis⁴⁹ of the new European Parliament, the average age of Members of the European Parliament remains 50 (as in 2019), and people aged under 35 only hold 10% of the seats, as a result of younger candidates consistently placed in electoral list positions with lower chances of being elected.

On 18 July 2024, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was elected for a second mandate by the European Parliament and presented her Political Guidelines for the

⁴⁴ [Commission Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes](#)

⁴⁵ [Citizenship Package - European Commission](#).

⁴⁶ [ECI at school \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁷ [Turnout | 2024 European election results | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁸ [EU Post-electoral survey 2024 - October 2024 - - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁹ [European Elections 2024: Young People never had a chance | European Youth Forum](#)

2024-2029 European Commission⁵⁰. She committed to strengthening the role of young people in policymaking and also stressed the need for intergenerational fairness.

As announced in the Defence of Democracy package, the Commission is preparing a **comprehensive report on the conduct of the 2024 European Parliament elections** that will include an assessment of young people's participation in those elections as voters, candidates and elected people.

- **Eurobarometer 2024 'Youth and Democracy'**

A Eurobarometer survey, carried out in April 2024⁵¹, showed that **young people are active and engaged**: 64% said that they had participated in the activities of one or more organisations in the previous 12 months. In addition, 48% reported that they had taken action to change society by signing a petition, participating in a rally, or sending a letter to a politician. In particular, young people were active in topics relating to human rights (34%), climate change and the environment (33%), health and well-being (29%) and equal rights regardless of gender, race or sexuality (29%).

Young people said that **the education system has prepared them well**. For example, 73% said their education has equipped them with the necessary digital skills to identify disinformation. 72% said their education has taught them to take care of the environment.

Finally, the survey showed that **young people continue to have a European outlook**. More than 43% had participated in an activity in another EU country. Typical examples of this include studying or training (16%), volunteering (12%) and working (12%). 49% said that they were aware of the funding opportunities offered by Erasmus+. In addition, 67% of young people believed that the EU has an impact, at least to some extent, on their daily life.

- **Youth survey on the views of young people on aspects of the EU Youth Strategy**

From 27 May to 19 August 2024, the European Commission published a survey on EU Survey and on the European Youth Portal to hear **the views of young people aged 15-29 on some aspects of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027**⁵². The answers complemented results of other consultations that help provide a better picture of young people's views and indicated how to give them a stronger voice in EU policymaking. A total of 2246 young people responded to the survey. 73% of them are not part of a youth organisation⁵³, and only 19% of the respondents have heard about the EU Youth Dialogue.

Overall, about half of the respondents indicated that they have only a **limited influence** over national and EU policies and laws that affect them⁵⁴. A larger share expressed similar views

⁵⁰ [Political Guidelines 2024-2029 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵¹ [Youth and democracy - May 2024 - - Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁵² The full questionnaire is available in the annex 5 of the present Staff Working Document

⁵³ The following definition was provided in the survey: "Youth organisations are generally understood to be led by young people, non-profit, and voluntary associations. They work for example on promoting young people's democratic rights, encouraging their social and political participation in community life, and offering opportunities for personal and social development through leisure activities, voluntary engagement and non-formal and informal learning. It can be for instance a youth council, a student association, a youth political organisation, etc."

⁵⁴ 48% of the young people responding stated that they had no or little say over national policies and laws. 53% said the same about EU policies and laws.

on the rights of the child, the 2022 Council Conclusions on the rights of the child, the 2023 Council Conclusions on inclusive societies and the 2023 Council Conclusions on children, youth and children's rights.



Since its launch in October 2022, the EU Children's Participation Platform⁵⁸ has been creating more opportunities for people aged under 18 to express their opinion on matters that concern them and to contribute to the decision-making process. More than 80 organisations working directly with children in 24 EU Member States are now members of the platform. Children co-design and co-decide on activities and topics that the platform works on.

The 2023-2024 work plan sets out the three topic areas:

- Feeling safe⁵⁹.
- Democracy and voting⁶⁰.
- Website co-creation.

*Create, Plan, Participate*⁶¹: During the meeting that took place on 27 and 28 June 2024, children discussed how the Platform has worked over the past two years, what to keep, what to change. They meet with Iris Abraham from the Cabinet of Vice-President Suica and representatives of different Commission Directorate Generals. The work plan (2025-2026)⁶² (also co-created with children) will focus on:

- Equal opportunities and social inclusion
- Mental health and well-being
- Online safety
- Climate action

Children's engagement and participation was one of the priorities of the CERV 2024 call for proposals on the rights of the child and children's participation. The eight selected projects with a total budget of EUR 5 million will promote an inclusive and systemic participation of children

⁵⁸ [EU Children's Participation Platform | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁵⁹ [Feeling Safe | EU Child Participation](#)

⁶⁰ [Democracy and Voting | EU Child Participation](#)

⁶¹ [Create, plan, participate: first working meeting](#)

⁶² [2025-26 Work Plan | EU Children's Participation Platform](#)

at local, national and EU levels to ensure that children's voices are heard and listened to, especially on matters that affect them.

On 23 April 2024, the Commission adopted a **Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child**⁶³, to support EU Member States in ensuring that children are safe and protected from violence. Over 1,000 children's views were collected through the Platform and are reflected in the recommendations.

- **Democracy survey for children**

Almost 2 000 children between the ages of 6 and 17 shared their thoughts about democracy in an online survey⁶⁴, interviews and focus groups organised by the EU Children's Participation Platform. The children surveyed expressed their interest in having more opportunities to discuss decisions that directly affect them with the adults taking those decisions, including in schools, local communities and municipalities. They also said that they need more civic education at school in theory and in practice.



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- **EU in my school**

'EU in my school' connects young audiences ranging from kindergarten children to first-time voters with EU-funded places and initiatives in their region through playful and memorable on-site experiences⁶⁵. A flexible cooperation model allows for different activities, such as visits to EU-funded projects, creative competitions and EU-themed school events. The Commission supports these activities through conceptual, logistical and financial support to connect young people to the EU's achievements in their homes. In 2022 and 2023, over 22 000 school pupils aged 3-19 participated directly in EU in my school experiences and activities as part of 18 regional campaigns in regions in 14 Member States.

- **Follow-up of the Conference on the Future of Europe**

The Conference on the Future of Europe⁶⁶ ended in May 2022 with proposals to the EU institutions on climate change and the environment, health, a stronger economy, social justice

⁶³ [Protecting children from violence \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/2024/04/11/Pages/protecting-children-from-violence.aspx)

⁶⁴ [Democracy and Voting | EU Child Participation](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/2024/04/11/Pages/democracy-and-voting.aspx)

⁶⁵ [Inforegio - #EUinmyregion \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/2024/04/11/Pages/inforegio.aspx)

⁶⁶ [Conference on the Future of Europe - European Commission \(europa.eu\).](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/2022/05/11/Pages/conference-on-the-future-of-europe.aspx)

and jobs, EU in the world, values and rights, rule of law, security, digital transformation, European democracy, migration, education, culture, youth and sport. The Commission outlined actions on proposals falling within its powers in its communication ‘Putting Vision into Concrete Action’⁶⁷. The Commission has acted on close to 95% of the measures proposed by the Conference that are within its remit, including the continuous and strengthened participation of young people in EU policymaking through European Citizens Panels.

The Conference proposed that the EU and its Member States focus on the specific needs of young people across all relevant policies, including the EU’s regional policy. The aim is to give young people the best possible conditions for study and work and starting an independent life, while involving them in democratic life and decision-making processes, including at European level. The Conference highlighted the crucial role of youth organisations in this regard. The Conference also proposed to ensure that **young people’s internship** and jobs adhere to **quality standards**, including on **remuneration**, and called for banning through a legal instrument **unpaid internships** on the labour market and outside formal education. The Commission followed up on this by proposing a Traineeship package in March 2024, consisting of a proposal for a Directive and a proposal for a Council Recommendation.

A key legacy of the Conference on the Future of Europe is the embedding of deliberative democracy in EU policymaking. **New generation Citizens’ Panels** (where a third of participants are young people aged 16-25) took place between 2022 and 2024, making recommendations ahead of Commission initiatives on food waste, virtual worlds, learning mobility, energy efficiency and tackling hatred in society. In her Political Guidelines, President Ursula von der Leyen announced that Citizens’ Panels will continue to be organised in the years to come. With the 2023 **Commission Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes**⁶⁸, Member States are called to encourage the participation of children and young people in democratic life in the EU. This should support their long-term engagement in European democracies as active citizens and vectors of positive transformative change and in political and democratic life at local, regional and national level, including in rural and remote areas.

Inspired by the introduction of European Citizens’ Panels, Belgium (as part of its presidency of the Council of the EU in 2024) pioneered a **Belgian national citizens’ panel**⁶⁹ on artificial intelligence (AI) between February and April 2024 with the aim to inspire further AI policies in the future.

Youth ambassadors

Between 2022 and 2024, the Commission launched youth ambassadors’ networks in several policy areas.

⁶⁷ [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Conference on the Future of Europe Putting Vision into Action.](#)

⁶⁸ [Commission Recommendation on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes](#)

⁶⁹ [Launch of citizens' panel on artificial intelligence \(europa.eu\).](#)

The Commission supports a community of around 300 **young European Climate Pact Ambassadors** as of 2024 to promote climate action among young people on the ground and support their local activities. Between 2022 and 2024, the European Climate Pact continued to work with young people taking part in climate action⁷⁰.

The EU Bioeconomy Youth Ambassadors were selected in 2022 to promote the bioeconomy in society, particularly among young people. They are 15 young students and professionals working in and around bioeconomy topics, representing 11 nationalities and living in 12 Member States. Since their appointment, they have supported the Commission in raising awareness of the bioeconomy, for instance, through the launch of a podcast, Bioeconomy Matters, and the publication of the Bioeconomy Youth Vision at the Bioeconomy Changemaker Festival in March 2024.

Since 2023, the Commission has supported a group of 30 Young Energy Ambassadors to promote sustainable energy and the clean energy transition⁷¹.

The Horizon Europe Young Observers initiative was one of the flagships of the European Year of Youth 2022. It aimed to offer the possibility to master students to participate as observers in Horizon Europe proposal evaluations. Through this, the aim was to get them interested in science and inspire them to consider science-related careers and active participation in EU processes. From autumn 2022 to summer 2023, more than 100 Young Observers were part of this initiative.

The second group of Black Sea Young Ambassadors (15 young ambassadors from Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine) was launched in 2023, in addition to the second group of the All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassadors and the BlueMed Young Communication Ambassadors already in place⁷².

As part of the **Better Internet for Kids** strategy (BIK+)⁷³, the Safer Internet Centres in Europe organise activities based on youth participation and select **BIK Youth Ambassadors** to ensure young people's voices are included in their work. National youth panellists help set programme priorities, provide feedback on actions and policy, organise youth-led activities and contribute to the debate in international conferences such as the Safer Internet Forum⁷⁴.

Youth4Cooperation Cross-Border Ambassadors is an initiative organised in the framework of the Border Focal Point Network. It is an EU-wide professional network bringing together experts on cross-border issues and committed to nurturing a generation of informed, engaged and passionate young Europeans. As part of the initiative, 10 ambassadors are selected based on their interest and activism in border topics. For four months, they share ideas on selected topics related to cross-border cooperation and produce online content for debate with the professional network.

⁷⁰ See Section 4.6. Environment, climate and energy

⁷¹ [Young Energy Ambassadors guidelines - European Commission](#) The activities of the Young Energy Ambassadors are described in the section on climate, environment and energy.

⁷² More information on their activities: <https://bridgeblacksea.org/index.php/black-sea-young-ambassadors-2nd-cohort-2023-2025/> - [All AtlaNtic Cooperation for Ocean Research and Innovation - AANCHOR - All AtlaNtic Cooperation for Ocean Research and innovation](#) and [The Young Communication Ambassadors](#) |.

⁷³ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/strategy-better-internet-kids>

⁷⁴ See also Section 5

Key youth stakeholders have also set up their own groups of young ambassadors, such as the ERYICA Youth Ambassadors Commission. Annex 2 provides an overview of youth ambassador networks.

- **2022 Eurograduate survey⁷⁵ results on social outcomes of higher education**

As higher education also prepares young people to become active citizens, the 2022 Eurograduate survey asked higher education graduates in 10 countries about their political interests and how they participate in the public debate. While over 90% of the graduates consider it is important to live in a democratically governed country, only 37% of the respondents reported to be politically interested, and only 10% felt confident enough to participate in politics.

Most graduates believed that people have only a little influence or very little influence on politics. However, most graduates engage in one to two types of political activities per year; most often this is done by signing petitions, boycotting certain products or using social media. The survey also showed that female graduates have lower levels of political interest, even though their support for democracy is stronger.

- **Pool of Young Journalists in Europe**

The European Commission and Eurodesk involve young people in writing articles for the European Youth Portal⁷⁶. After the successful 2022 edition, as part of the European Year of Youth 2022, two new pools of young journalists were set up for 2023 and 2024, to give young people a voice as storytellers. To date, around 30 young journalists selected from across Europe via an open call have written articles and created videos, podcasts and photo-journalism on themes of their choice and interest to young people.

The pool was also given the opportunity to cover important European events and received regular training in journalism.

- **Future scenarios and young visions for European democracy 2040**

Under **Horizon Europe**, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, a call for proposals⁷⁷ published in 2024 will fund two projects on ‘future scenarios and young visions for European democracy 2040’. The selected projects will run for three years. Submitted proposals to this call were asked to combine solid scientific forecasting methods with qualitative and speculative foresight practices, as well as large-scale activities (online and in-person) to build and co-develop alternative future scenarios that can empower young people living in the EU to proactively shape their collective future. In addition, proposals should help to understand the visions of the next generation and how to provide them with the tools to make those visions a reality.

⁷⁵ EUROGRADUAT 2022 Comparative Synthesis Report (publication forthcoming 2024/2025) - <https://www.eurograduate.eu/>

⁷⁶ [Young Journalists in Europe | European Youth Portal](#)

⁷⁷ Details of the call can be found here: <https://europa.eu/!drcgjf>.

The 2023 **Council Conclusions on promoting youth mainstreaming in policy decision-making processes in the EU**⁸³ stressed that a comprehensive approach to tackling the challenges facing young people requires their involvement and participation in policymaking processes. They invited the Commission and Member States to incorporate the youth perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies affecting young people's lives. This invitation was reiterated in the 2024 **Council Conclusions on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022** and in the 2024 **Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people**⁸⁴.

As presented in Section 1, the **youth check** was introduced in 2024 in the Commission, based on the existing Better Regulation tools. It will be applied to youth-relevant initiatives in the Commission's annual work programme as from 2025. The youth perspective is already reflected in many Commission policies and actions, as shown in the wide range of policy areas mentioned in this staff working document.

The EU Youth Dialogue (see Section 1) together with more recent tools, such as the policy dialogues with European Commissioners, also contributed to improving youth mainstreaming. Mutual learning activities were used to facilitate and support Member States that wished to develop a national youth check or a similar mechanism.

Nominated in 2021, the **EU Youth Coordinator** strengthens cross-sectoral cooperation, as well as knowledge development and exchanges on youth issues within the Commission. Since then, the evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy has shown that the EU Youth Coordinator is a frontrunner for youth mainstreaming at EU level.

The Commission Coordinator for the rights of the child mainstreams rights of the child across all Commission services and policies. The rights of the child apply to all children and young people under the age of 18.

During the European Year of Youth, a **Commission Youth Network** was launched, and coordinated by the EU Youth Coordinator. It enabled continuous exchanges between the DGs on youth-related initiatives and was a key enabler of the European Year of Youth's strong cross-sectoral dimension. As legacy action in the Communication on the Year of Youth, Commission departments nominated youth correspondents as primary contact points on youth issues in different policy areas and members of the Commission Youth Network. The launch of this renewed and reinforced Commission Youth Network of dedicated youth correspondents took place in June 2024.

The **Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health** (adopted in June 2023) marked a major step in ensuring a new cross-sectoral approach to mental health⁸⁵. The 2023 **Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people** encouraged the Commission to maintain its proactive approach and continue to promote actions aiming to improve young people's mental health, including the various

⁸³ [Council Conclusions on promoting youth mainstreaming in policy decision-making processes in the European Union](#)

⁸⁴ [Council Conclusions on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022](#); [Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people](#).

⁸⁵ In particular, in the chapter 'Boosting the mental health of children and young people'. See Section 4.3 on health and well-being.

flagship initiatives and other actions set out in the Commission Communication mentioned above⁸⁶. In addition, the Council invited the Commission to encourage carrying out evidence-based research on the impact of mental health issues on young people and to support the dissemination of these studies.

In the **digital realm**, the work on the evaluation of the **BIK+ strategy** started in 2024. Children and young people were consulted to assess the impact of the strategy on their online lives.

Young people will also be consulted on the preparation of the **Protection of minors guidelines** under the Digital Services Act. This will help online platforms provide a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors online.

Young people are actively involved in shaping the future of **European Territorial Cooperation** through consultation events.

Youth representatives are invited to twice-yearly exchanges under the **Just Transition Platform**. The platform runs a working group focused on equal opportunities which includes a dedicated Youth Task Force focused on challenges faced by young people in regions affected by the green transition. To better recognise and address these challenges, the views of those young people facing them is key to discussions.

In **EU external action**, youth organisations have been systematically included in the civil society consultations organised by EU Delegations and through the creation of **Youth Sounding Boards**. At global and local level, young people have contributed to shaping policies and programmes in different areas of EU external action, such as green and digital education, political participation and vocational education and training (VET). Young people from Europe and beyond have also been involved in bilateral summits, such as the EU-AU (African Union), EU-LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean), EU-OCTs (-Overseas Countries and Territories), EU-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and Arctic Dialogues, providing their views and recommendations to policymakers.

The Commission's internal Task Force on Equality is continuously updating mainstreaming equality issues. The toolbox contains a dedicated chapter on mainstreaming equality in activities, policies, legal instruments and funding programmes in the field of youth.

Defence and Security of the EU is a raising concern for young people. Cybercrime, terrorism and the risk of conflict are among the most significant concerns. Young people are increasingly aware of and concerned about defence and security challenges, advocating for stronger EU collaboration, policies and measures to address these challenges.

- **Policy dialogues with European Commissioners**

The policy dialogues are a major feature and legacy of the European Year of Youth. In the 2024 **Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022**⁸⁷, the Commission committed to pursue this successful flagship initiative. Between February 2022 and February 2023, policy dialogues with European Commissioners involved more than 300 young participants in exchanging ideas and views in 26 dialogues in Brussels. All Commissioners organised policy

⁸⁶ [Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union.](#)

⁸⁷ [Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022.](#)

dialogues on a chosen theme, identifying and inviting young participants and organising information sessions and preparatory briefings. The dialogues were a unique opportunity for young people to get closer to policy initiatives and policymakers and make their voices heard. They learned about how the EU works, networked with peers and developed their knowledge of various policy areas. Overall, the main takeaways across different policy dialogues were young people's concerns about employment, sustainability and the cost of living. 95% of the participants rated the dialogues as excellent or very good. The take aways of the policy dialogues are available on the European Youth Portal⁸⁸.

In its 2024 survey on some aspects of the EU Youth Strategy⁸⁹, the Commission asked young people which topics would in their view be the most relevant for future policy dialogues between young people and European Commissioners. The most selected topics were education and training, including learning mobility (43%), inflation / the cost of living (40%), the environment, sustainability and climate change (38%), physical and mental health and well-being (33%), unemployment/employment opportunities/apprenticeships (28%), peace and security (22%), and poverty and economic and social inequalities (20%). Inflation and the cost of living are the most frequently cited concerns among the two groups of oldest respondents (20-24 and 25-29) and those living in capital cities. At the same time, the environment is the top priority for members of youth organisations who took part in the survey.

- **Youth mainstreaming approaches in EU Member States**

In July 2024, the Youth Wiki Network⁹⁰ published a comparative report on 'Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks'⁹¹. It analysed youth mainstreaming practices in 33 European countries, with a focus on youth regulatory impact assessment instruments in four EU Member States: Belgium (the Flemish Community), Germany, France and Austria. It also highlighted good practices in mainstreaming the reflection of young people's concerns in public policymaking. In nine EU Member States (Finland, Cyprus, Ireland, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Sweden and Slovenia), youth issues are considered when developing policies in different areas (and not just youth policy).

Under the 2025 **Flagship Technical Support project on Addressing Demographic Change Through Reforms**⁹², the Commission is offering support to EU Member States to mainstream youth perspectives across all policy areas, including by using impact assessment tools (i.e. national youth checks) to determine the impact of legislative changes on young people, in line with the European Youth Strategy 2019-2027.

⁸⁸ [Policy dialogues | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁸⁹ See subsection on the Youth Survey in Section 2.1. 'Youth participation'.

⁹⁰ [Youth Wiki Network](#).

⁹¹ [Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks](#).

⁹² [TSI 2025 Flagship - Tackling the demographic change through supporting skills-labour market and social inclusion reforms - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

2.3 Youth employment and skills

- **European Year of Skills 2023**

The European Year of Skills took place between May 2023 and May 2024. It aimed to address **skills gaps** in the EU and boost the **EU skills strategy**, by focusing on changing mindsets on upskilling and reskilling (including via micro-credentials). As a result, this would further deliver on the EU Youth Strategy's objective to equip young people with the life skills necessary to cope with a changing world⁹³.

The Year also raised awareness of the challenges around youth unemployment and issues that young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) are facing, and highlighted related initiatives, funding and networks, thus building on the momentum generated by the European Year of Youth.

One of the **flagship events** of the European Year of Skills was entirely dedicated to a young audience: the 'Meet the Champions of Excellence' event gathered over 400 young people from all over Europe, highlighted the value of VET, and encouraged young people to choose VET as an effective learning and career path. Young EU champions from international skills competitions like WorldSkills, EuroSkills, and Abilympics, in more than 20 disciplines ranging from mechanical engineering to healthcare and social care, showcased and shared their experiences and achievements with the participants.

As a tangible result of this engagement, various stakeholders were involved in the 'youth and skills' angle of the Year through initiatives, projects and events. A total of 100 events in 28 countries targeted youth specifically. These included:

- 'Youth participation and democracy' in Portugal
- 'Union for the Mediterranean Community of Practices on Youth Employment' in Spain
- 'Empowering the Young Professionals of Tomorrow' in Cyprus
- 'Digital Marketing for Social Media – Digital Young Ambassadors for SMEs'
- 'Skills for the Future: Empowering Young People and Educators' in Belgium
- 'Interreg and Youth' in France
- 'Ideas, tools and experiences for re-motivating NEET youth' in Italy
- 'Youth Speak Forum' in Austria
- 'Skills of the future' in Slovakia
- 'Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs: European opportunities for Moldovan Entrepreneurs' in Moldova.

In addition to the above, over 530 events in 37 countries targeted vocational education and training (for example, 'Skills Competition Young Farmer' in Estonia, 'Youth activism and skills' in Poland, and 'Towards resilient youth labour markets: Tackling skill shortages and youth precarity through Observatory-based Research' in Norway).

On the official website of the European Year of Skills, a dedicated section was created for content targeting youth⁹⁴. In November 2023, the Commission launched a call for proposals for transnational projects dedicated to developing young people's skills and helping them find

⁹³ The results of the European Year of Skills are available here: [Results of the European Year of Skills - European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁹⁴ https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/about/what-eu-doing-you_en.

employment. For a total of over EUR 9 million of European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) funding, 20 projects develop or scale up innovative methods and practices that have proven to be successful in other contexts, countries and regions. Projects focus on helping vulnerable young people, in particular NEETs, to develop skills that can help them find work.

As part of the European Year of Skills, the third edition of the New European Bauhaus Prizes included a dedicated strand on education and learning – ‘**New European Bauhaus Education Champions**’. This strand was devoted to initiatives focusing on promoting the values of the New European Bauhaus in education and learning settings. Students were encouraged to apply with their own initiatives, and many selected finalist projects under the strand focused on education and upskilling young people and students.

- **Youth employment**

The **Youth Guarantee** continues to ensure that all young people, at national, regional and local levels, receive a quality offer of employment, continued education, traineeship, or apprenticeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Since 2020, the reinforced Youth Guarantee has extended its support to cover young people below the age of 30. The EU supports mutual learning activities and monitors the progress of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee every year and through Employment Committee (EMCO) reviews every two years. Since the adoption of the Youth Guarantee in 2013, over 50 million young people have started an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship.

At national level, Member States also continued to implement the reinforced Youth Guarantee. The latest EMCO review in November 2023 concluded, for example, that there is progress in identifying the target population, in reaching out to inactive and vulnerable young NEETs, and in the quality of the offers. There is also a shared understanding of the importance of a preventive approach in reducing early school leaving and inactivity. But Member States will need to do more, for example, to improve the registration of inactive young NEETs and put more emphasis on vulnerable people in rural and remote areas. Developing integrated services and making sure that young people are better equipped for the modern labour market, e.g. in terms of improved digital skills, are also essential aspects to be improved. The main financial support to Member States’ efforts to implement the Youth Guarantee and address youth unemployment and inactivity is through the ESF+ and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF).

The Communication ‘Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking potential in the outermost regions’⁹⁵ acknowledges the educational and labour market challenges in the outermost regions⁹⁶. It encourages the Member States and regions concerned to set up apprenticeship, job retention and hiring schemes for young people in the outermost regions as part of the Youth Guarantee using EU funds.

⁹⁵ [Inforegio - Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking the potential of the EU’s outermost regions \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁹⁶ The outermost regions suffer from high youth unemployment and brain drain and have particularly high levels of NEETs and early school leavers.

In March 2024, the Commission presented an **action plan to address labour and skills shortages** in the EU⁹⁷. Among other actions, under the social innovation strand of the ESF+, the Commission will finance new initiatives on zero long-term unemployment as well as on activating and upskilling young NEETs⁹⁸.

- **Quality framework for traineeships**

According to a 2023 Eurobarometer survey⁹⁹, 78% of young Europeans had taken part in at least one traineeship and 68% said they found a job afterwards. It is estimated¹⁰⁰ that there are around 3.1 million trainees in the EU (1.6 million of them paid) and demand for traineeships is expected to grow at least 16% by 2030.

In March 2024, the Commission adopted two new **proposals to improve the working of traineeships in the EU conditions** (including pay), quality, and inclusiveness(i) a proposal for a Directive¹⁰¹ on improving and enforcing working conditions of trainees who are workers and combating regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships; and (ii) a proposal for a Council Recommendation on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships for all trainees¹⁰². These proposals aim to improve the quality of traineeships as regards working conditions and their learning component and to make them more inclusive for those belonging to vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities.

The policy initiative follows up on the European Year of Youth. It contributes to the European Year of Skills, the European Parliament's 2023 Resolution on Quality traineeships in the Union, the call stemming from the Conference on the Future of Europe on quality traineeships, and, more broadly, to the Commission's youth employment initiatives.

- **ALMA**

The ALMA initiative¹⁰³ (Aim, Learn, Master, and Achieve) is a social inclusion initiative that **supports mobility across the EU for vulnerable young NEETs** aged 18-29, helping them integrate into society and the labour market in their Member State. In the framework of the European Year of Youth 2022, the Commission launched a one-off EU-level call (budget of EUR 11.6 million) to help Member States integrate ALMA into their ESF+ programmes by piloting or scaling up ALMA type of activities. Under this call, more than 800 young NEETs are participating in 29 ALMA projects across the EU. For example, the Spanish project 'Creating job opportunities for young people' of the Asociación Arrabal-AID sent three groups

⁹⁷ [Commission Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan; Labour Shortages Action Plan factsheet.](#)

⁹⁸ See text box on the social innovation strand of the ESF+ in Section 8.1 Insights into EU spending on youth.

⁹⁹ [Flash Eurobarometer 523: Integration of young people into the labour market with particular focus on traineeships](#)

¹⁰⁰ Estimations based on the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS 2019 data).

¹⁰¹ [Commission Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving and enforcing working conditions of trainees and combating regular](#)

¹⁰² [Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships](#)

¹⁰³ [ALMA: an active inclusion initiative for young people - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\).](#)

of young NEETs to Lithuania, Germany and Italy. Thanks to the continuous support and tailor-made counselling provided at all ALMA phases (preparation, mobility abroad and follow-up), all participants experienced positive changes, gained confidence, acquired new skills and are gradually finding employment or joining training and education programmes in their Member State of origin.

ALMA is generally implemented under shared management, and 15 Member States have shown interest in implementing the initiative as part of national or regional ESF+ programmes. To date¹⁰⁴, ALMA calls have been launched at national or regional level in seven Member States (Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Spain, Poland, Sweden and Slovenia).

- **Youth entrepreneurship**

The Commission supports young people on their path to entrepreneurship. Together with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Commission set up **the Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy (YEPA)**¹⁰⁵ in 2023. The objective of the YEPA is to create a policy-learning network that strengthen youth EU entrepreneurship policies. The network's participants are policymakers, young entrepreneurs, representatives of national and international youth entrepreneurship networks, experts and social entrepreneurship networks from the 27 Member States.

This group meets regularly to share information on the barriers that young people face in entrepreneurship, for instance, the lack of access to finance. Topics such as entrepreneurial skills, networking, innovation and AI or the specific characteristics of social entrepreneurship are also discussed. Specific attention is given to female entrepreneurship.

The Academy's ambition is to push Member States to offer better support packages to aspiring young entrepreneurs. The project will run until the end of 2025. Among other things, this group delivers on the Commission's commitment in the 2024 **Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022**¹⁰⁶ to work with groups whose untapped entrepreneurial potential remains high.

- **ESF+ support for employment and skills**

The **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)** continues to invest in youth employment and young people's socio-economic integration. In the 2021-2027 programming period, all EU Member States have been required to allocate an appropriate amount of their ESF+ resources to targeted actions and structural reforms to support youth employment. Importantly, Member States that had a NEET rate (aged 15-29) above the EU average¹⁰⁷ had to allocate at least 12.5% of their ESF+ resources to such actions¹⁰⁸.

Altogether around EUR 17 billion, including an EU contribution of EUR 11 billion, will be invested in measures supporting youth employment and young people's socio-economic integration. These includes targeted actions and structural reforms to support youth employment, the transition from school to work, vocational education and training,

¹⁰⁴ Situation in June 2024.

¹⁰⁵ <https://yepa-hub.org/> (launched in March 2023).

¹⁰⁶ [Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022](#).

¹⁰⁷ For the period 2017 to 2019, on the basis of Eurostat data.

¹⁰⁸ These Member States are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

apprenticeships, pathways to reintegrate into education or training and second chance education as well as outreach measures.

- **2022 Eurograduate survey¹⁰⁹ results on labour market outcomes and skills uses**

Over 100 000 recent graduates in 17 countries were surveyed at the end of 2022 (graduating in summer 2021) on their labour market experiences and the skills they use (or need) in their current jobs. Around 90% of graduates have found a job one year after finishing their higher education.

Bachelor graduates reach the highest employment rate in the field of health, whereas master graduates in information and communication technologies (ICT) and engineering enjoy the highest employment rates and wages, and were also most satisfied with their jobs. Overall, recent graduates report good levels of satisfaction (>70%) with most job aspects, except for salary and career opportunities (around 50%).

Most higher education graduates see their education as a good basis for their job (this is slightly more the case for master graduates than for bachelor graduates). About two thirds of working graduates have a job that matches their highest education degree. They also perceive a good skills match overall, with more than 75% of graduates assessing their skills level as matching or exceeding job requirements.

There is also a significant minority who are not working in field related to their degree or area of interest. While many replies suggest that graduates possess some skills that could be better used, around one third experienced a lack of skills in mastering their own field and communicating their ideas clearly to others.

The dominant teaching mode is still ‘lecture style’, but this has now dropped below 50% in almost all countries and is more often combined with problem-based learning. However, innovative teaching methods are still at a low level. The survey results show that different teaching and learning approaches are needed to develop a broader set of skills.

8% of recent graduates have started their own business, which may be attributed to innovative learning styles and extracurricular experiences. Self-employment is most common in arts and humanities. Graduates who had a learning mobility experience abroad increased their chance of finding a matching job by 7%.

- **More initiatives for youth employment and skills**

The **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** has allocated almost **EUR 6.1 billion¹¹⁰** to youth employment support and job creation. This includes hiring and job transition incentives and support for self-employment. For example, Cyprus will improve the effectiveness of its Department of Labour and Public Employment Services to reinforce support for young people. This will include developing an early warning tracking system for NEETs, giving them

¹⁰⁹ EUROGRADUAT 2022 Comparative Synthesis Report (publication forthcoming 2024/2025) -

<https://www.eurograduate.eu/>

¹¹⁰ Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data is based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and corresponds to the measures allocated to the ‘youth employment support and youth job creation’ policy area as a primary or secondary policy area. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

coaching and career guidance for labour market orientation and integration, and preparing an incentive scheme for employers to hire NEETs.

Furthermore, investments and reforms on skills and adult education amount to about **EUR 41 billion**¹¹¹. These focus on a wide range of issues, including the twin transition, and target both companies and individuals, which benefits young people as well. The recovery and resilience plans also pay specific attention to parts of the population that might need more targeted and additional support. For example, Portugal will modernise its vocational education and training institutions by installing and upgrading specialised technology centres in public secondary schools and vocational schools, as well as in private educational establishments offering vocational education. In addition, training centres of the public employment service will be expanded and upgraded, with the goal to make training more relevant to the labour market.

On 16 June 2022, the Council adopted a **Council Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts**¹¹². Individual Learning Accounts ensure that all adults regardless of their employment status can access financial support for training whenever they need it. This support is integrated in a user-friendly way with a registry of available training offers, certification and guidance, and includes paid training-leave. They incentivise the uptake of training in a joined-up way by giving young people the means to pay for it and by ensuring that it will be financially worthwhile. The initiative's scope is universal and therefore includes young adults who would benefit from individual learning accounts by developing the skillset they need to enter and make successful transitions in the labour market.

Member States have now moved to the design and implementation phases. Around half of the Member States are working on steps towards setting up Individual Learning Accounts schemes, in most cases supported by the ESF+ and RRF. Countries can also seek technical assistance from the Technical Support Instrument (TSI). The Commission also provides support to the Member States in the form of a mutual learning programme.

As one of the initiatives of the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities, the Commission together with its stakeholders launched the **Disability Employment package**¹¹³ in 2022, which draws attention to the situation of young people with disabilities. The package is a set of guidance and practices aiming to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities. It covers all stages from recruitment through retention and return to work of persons with disabilities¹¹⁴. This guidance provides advice and practices to employers, employment services, adult learning institutions, public authorities and persons with

¹¹¹ Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data is based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and corresponds to the measures allocated to the 'adult learning', 'human capital in digitalisation' and 'green skills and jobs' policy areas as primary or secondary policy areas. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

¹¹² [Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts](#)

¹¹³ [Disability Employment Package to improve labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

¹¹⁴ Respective guidance documents have been prepared with the European Network for Public Employment Services, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, the European Union information agency for occupational safety and health, Member States and civil society, in the Disability Platform.

disabilities. It also aims to tackle stereotypes about persons with disabilities and the cost of providing workplace adaptations.

The Commission continues supporting Member States and regions in the implementation of the 2021-2027 **cohesion policy programmes**. This includes European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) support in the areas of employment, education and training, social inclusion, healthcare and long-term care and sustainable tourism and culture. Young people have been identified as target groups that can benefit based on the identified needs in the targeted territories.

The **Talent Booster Mechanism**¹¹⁵ was launched in January 2023 to support EU regions affected by demographic challenges, including the departure of young people. The mechanism provides support in the form of training, retaining and attracting the people, skills and competences needed to address the impact of the demographic transition. Enabling young people to realise their potential in a high-quality learning environment and facilitating their transition to working life are part of the Commission's **toolbox of measures**¹¹⁶ to help Member States manage demographic change and achieve a more balanced brain circulation across Europe.

The **Youth4Reviving (stagnating) EU territories** toolkit¹¹⁷ is a project inspired by the conversations during a youth policy dialogue with Elisa Ferreira, the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms. It identifies initiatives and policies that could attract young people who have left their regions of origin back home and encourage those who have not yet left to stay. The toolkit is the result of a project that started in January 2023. The project included desk research, a multilingual and EU-wide questionnaire and visits to regions affected by youth emigration/out-migration. Education is prominently highlighted as a way to make regions more attractive for young people, particularly through strengthened cooperation between higher education institutions and local stakeholders to foster a more relevant education offer responding to local skills needs. In this regard, the blueprint for a European degree¹¹⁸ is instrumental to foster opportunities for attracting and retaining talent and creating the skills needed at regional level.

To alleviate social impacts of the transition towards a climate-neutral economy, the **Just Transition Fund (JTF)** invests EUR 3.4 billion in the development of skills, assistance on the labour market, improving the quality of education (namely vocational and tertiary), from which young people also benefit. Young people are key players in implementing **the Just Transition Fund (JTF)**. One of the largest areas of JTF investment is in skills, job searches and education. To support people affected by the green transition in coal and carbon-intensive regions, the JTF has devoted a significant part of its resources to employment programmes, particularly for young people. The **Just Transition Platform (JTP)** helps young people in regions who are most vulnerable to the effects of the transition to climate neutrality. Since 2024, the platform has runs a **JTP Working Group on Equal Opportunities** to provide a forum for vulnerable groups to share good practices, exchange knowledge and discuss concerns and achievements. The group consists of the **JTP Youth Task Force**, which focuses on the challenges faced by

¹¹⁵ [Harnessing Talent in Europe: a new boost for EU Regions \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/stories/2023/01/harnessing-talent-in-europe-a-new-boost-for-eu-regions).

¹¹⁶ [Demographic change in Europe - a toolbox for action.](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/stories/2023/01/demographic-change-in-europe-a-toolbox-for-action)

¹¹⁷ [Toolkit Youth4Reviving stagnating EU territories.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/stories/2023/01/toolkit-youth4reviving-stagnating-eu-territories-pdf).

¹¹⁸ [A blueprint for a European degree - Publications Office of the EU.](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/stories/2023/01/a-blueprint-for-a-european-degree)

young people and finding solutions for them. In addition, the JTP has managed since 2023 **technical assistance on the ground**, with dedicated workstreams on youth mobilisation, reskilling and upskilling for young people. Support through the JTP also promotes the development of green skills for young people to improve entrepreneurship and the development of the SMEs and start-ups. Youth representatives are also regularly involved in exchanges at bi-annual conferences organised by the JTP for all stakeholders.

The 2023-2027 **common agricultural policy 2023-2027 (CAP)** provides funding to EU countries under specific objectives whose aims include attracting young people to farming, facilitating business development and promoting employment, growth and local development in rural areas. EU countries' 2023-2027 strategic plans combine funding for income support, rural development and market measures. Specific support to young farmers (up to 40 years old) features prominently in the strategic plans in the form of income support, investment support and start-up grants and will amount to around **EUR 8.5 billion**. Overall, it is expected that 377 000 new young farmers will benefit. In addition, young people can also benefit from the strategic plans' measures supporting knowledge exchange, innovation, dissemination of information and cooperation projects¹¹⁹.

In its **Translating Europe Forum**, a yearly conference on translation, the Commission pays special attention to young people by providing them with the opportunity to meet professionals in the language industry, learn from their experience and share their ideas and expectations. Over 800 graduates and newcomers to the language industry took part in the Translating Europe Forum in 2023, taking advantage of networking with professional linguists, improving their skills and discovering new professional opportunities.

119 Projects funded and co-funded by the CAP and implemented by and/or for young people in rural areas can be found in the EU CAP Network database: [Good Practice | EU CAP Network \(europa.eu\)](#).

3 CONNECT



Connect young people through diverse forms of mobility for new connections, relations and exchange of experience, boosting inter-cultural understanding and engagement in solidarity and volunteering

3.1 Youth mobility and volunteering

Learning mobility is key to youth engagement, connectivity and empowerment and to the implementation of the European Education Area. The 2022 **Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers**¹²⁰ was a deliverable of the European Year of Youth and continued to facilitate youth volunteering in the European Solidarity Corps programme and national schemes. It was followed in May 2024 by a **Council Recommendation ‘Europe on the Move’ – learning mobility opportunities for everyone**¹²¹. The Recommendation sets two quantitative targets to be achieved by 2030 for the mobility of higher education students (23%) and learners in VET (12%), and an aspiration for learners with fewer opportunities (20%). It also includes policy frameworks for teacher’ and apprentice’ mobility. In addition, the proposal for Directive establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities¹²², adopted by the Commission on 6 September 2023, aims to facilitate the free movement of persons with disabilities by providing for the mutual recognition of their disability status.

These initiatives aim to tackle obstacles to learning and youth mobility and cross-border volunteering and encourage the Commission and Member States to take action in areas such as inclusiveness, quality and the recognition of these mobility and volunteering experiences.

In its 2024 survey on some aspects of the EU Youth Strategy¹²³, the Commission asked young respondents what they would prioritise if they had the chance to spend time studying, training or learning in another country. Young respondents said they would prioritise developing skills (knowledge and soft skills, such as adapting to new environments, self-reliance, teamwork, social skills) (58%), learning and practising other languages (40%), increasing their future job opportunities (36%), and connecting with other young Europeans (33%).

The Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes focus on inclusion and diversity. For example, 32% of Erasmus+ youth mobility participants and 51% of European Solidarity Corps volunteers are young people with fewer opportunities.¹²⁴

- **Erasmus+**

Erasmus+ is the EU programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport, supporting individuals and organisations. Erasmus+ has continued to grow, and the **milestone of 15**

¹²⁰ [Council Recommendation of 5 April 2022 on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union](#)

¹²¹ [Council Recommendation of 13 May 2024 ‘Europe on the Move’ – learning mobilities for everyone](#)

¹²² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=27084&langId=en>

¹²³ See subsection on the Youth Survey in Section 2.1. ‘Youth participation’.

¹²⁴ Between January 2021 and August 2024

million participants since its launch in 1987 was reached in 2024. Supporting the mobility of students, trainees, apprentices and young people is the backbone of Erasmus+. Through its learning mobility actions, the programme equips young people with a broad range of skills and competences, fosters social and cultural understanding and a European sense of belonging. Erasmus+ is an essential tool to support the implementation of the European Education Area and the underlying policy frameworks.

Following two challenging years due to the COVID-19 crisis, since 2022, mobility projects have returned to pre-COVID levels. In 2022, more than 900 000 learners took part in a mobility activity supported by Erasmus+.

Erasmus+ allocated funding to higher education institutions, enabling approximately 325 000 students to participate in mobility activities in the 2022/2023 academic year. These projects have yielded positive outcomes for participants, including higher competence levels, improved employability, increased social cohesion and a stronger interest in the EU. In particular, 90% of students reported having more confidence in their abilities, 94% declared having become better at adapting to and handling new situations, and 90% stated better collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds.

Erasmus+ mobility for school pupils saw a significant increase, highlighting the eagerness of young Europeans to engage in learning mobility experiences from an early age. Under the 2022 calls, the programme supported some 12 000 pupils to take part in an individual mobility abroad and more than 120 000 to get involved in a group mobility.

In the field of **vocational education and training**, the programme supported the participation of 224 000 learners, apprentices and staff in mobility activities in the 2022 academic year, of which 12% were learners with fewer opportunities.

Since 2021, Erasmus+ mobility actions in the field of youth have given 885 000 young people the opportunity to meet each other and learn outside the formal educational systems, enabling them to acquire or further develop skills, competences and European values. In addition, a total of 13 056 organisations inside and outside the EU have been granted a total amount of more than EUR 512.9 million.

Erasmus+ is committed to ensuring equal access to learning opportunities for all. Since 2021, the programme has significantly expanded its inclusion and diversity dimension, introducing several support measures and financial incentives, as well as a strategy that fosters the development of inclusive projects¹²⁵. In its **Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people**¹²⁶ (2024), the Council invited the Commission to continue supporting the development of inclusion and inclusive projects that actively involve young people with fewer opportunities and strengthen their mobility.

¹²⁵ In 2021, the Commission published an [Implementing Decision on the framework of inclusion measures of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes 2021-2027](#), which aims to increase the inclusiveness and diversity of Erasmus+.

¹²⁶ [Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people](#)

➤ DiscoverEU and DiscoverEU Inclusion Action

DiscoverEU offers young people who are 18 years old the opportunity to travel across Europe by rail (or other transport modes where needed) to discover Europe’s cultural heritage and diversity, connect with other young people and with communities and acquire new skills. It promotes young people’s sense of belonging to the EU; and inspires young people to embrace sustainable travel and environmental awareness.

Since 2022, the **DiscoverEU Inclusion Action** supports projects enabling young people with fewer opportunities to participate in DiscoverEU. It targets those who would not apply on their own initiative due e.g. to disability, health problems, barriers linked to education and training, cultural differences, social or economic barriers, barriers linked to discrimination, or geographical barriers. The DiscoverEU Inclusion Action offers extra support while travelling¹²⁷, such as the possibility to be accompanied, to receive extra budget for subsistence, organising mobility activities, mentoring and support for travel preparations. In total, 820 projects were submitted and 357 contracted since 2022. The first projects started on 1 March 2023, and more than 2 400 mobilities have been completed until October 2024.

- **European Solidarity Corps**

- Volunteering strand

The European Solidarity Corps is an EU programme which gives young people the opportunity to build a more inclusive society, support vulnerable people and respond to societal challenges. It also offers volunteers an enriching experience and the opportunity to improve skills for personal, educational, social, civic and professional development. The programme also increases the capacity of participating organisations to operate at EU and international levels. As one of the most visible displays of solidarity, volunteering supports young people engaging and connecting with local communities and sharing experiences.



The scope of volunteering projects is broad, covering areas such as environmental protection and climate change mitigation, social inclusion and community development. Between 2021 and 2024, 4 269 projects were contracted that will involve more than 56 000 volunteers, out of whom 51% are volunteers with fewer opportunities¹²⁸. This demonstrates that the programme is well suited for the specific needs of young people facing various disadvantages and obstacles. Building on the legacy of the European Year of Youth, the Commission also increased

¹²⁷ Exceptionally, plane travel is covered for participants from outermost regions.

¹²⁸ European Solidarity Corps 1/2021 - 8/2024.

volunteering opportunities for young people by topping up the 2024 European Solidarity Corps call with EUR 13.71 million from Horizon Europe¹²⁹.

➤ Solidarity projects

Solidarity projects are in-country solidarity activities initiated, developed and implemented directly by a group of at least five young people for 2 to 12 months. They offer young people a major opportunity to initiate projects on topics that matter most to them. This way they can express solidarity and engage by taking the initiative and committing themselves to bring positive change to their local community. Some of the projects can also tackle regional or even national issues. Solidarity projects can also have clear European added value, for example, by addressing EU priorities at local level.

At the same time, through active participation and implementation of the solidarity project, young people experience non-formal learning that can boost their personal, educational and social development. Running their own project can empower them and make their voices heard on matters that they consider important.

Since 2021, about 3 400 solidarity projects have been contracted, amounting to EUR 26.5 million¹³⁰. These projects have created opportunities for over 18 000 participants to show solidarity and bring a positive change by addressing local issues.

➤ Humanitarian Aid strand

Participants aged 18-35 from EU Member States and countries associated to the European Solidarity Corps programme are able to participate, individually or in teams, in humanitarian projects. These projects: (i) facilitate the transition from the humanitarian response to long-term sustainable and inclusive development; (ii) help to strengthen the capacity and resilience of vulnerable or disaster-affected communities; (iii) strengthen disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction; (iv) link relief, rehabilitation and development; (v) support the water, sanitation and health sector and the agri-food sector; and (vi) support the integration of young people with fewer opportunities in local communities.

Volunteers and organisations are able to rely on complementary support, e.g. involving more experienced coaches and experts. The aim is that, through these actions, young people can contribute to making vulnerable or disaster-affected local communities more resilient while acquiring essential skills. Not only can these skills contribute to young people's personal and socio-educational development and increase their self-empowerment and self-esteem, they can also boost their job prospects.

Following the 2021, 2022 and 2023 calls, specific Quality Labels¹³¹ for this action were awarded to 90 organisations with support roles in 20 countries and to 80 organisations with host roles in 41 countries.

¹²⁹ [Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022.](#)

¹³⁰ European Solidarity Corps 1/2021 - 8/2024.

¹³¹ The Quality Label is a procedure that ensures that applicant organisations have the capacity to engage in humanitarian aid activities and certifies that they comply with the European Solidarity Corps programme's quality standards.

The humanitarian aid strand has already attracted many young people. Between October 2022 and June 2024, more than 138 000 young people expressed interest in this strand on the European Youth Portal.

The humanitarian aid strand had, by June 2024, funded the deployment of 350 volunteers on the ground on four continents.

Young people with fewer opportunities are encouraged to participate. Organisations can apply for funding to receive a contribution for young people with fewer opportunities.

- **Interreg Volunteer Youth**

The Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) initiative offers young people aged 18-30 the possibility to serve as 'Interreg reporters' in promoting the concrete results of Interreg projects or as 'Interreg project partners' through getting involved in a project. IVY guarantees a better visibility for Interreg projects and programmes, with young, innovative volunteers supporting communication activities and it contributes to increased knowledge among youth about Interreg and Cohesion policy.

The initiative has reached 900 participants in 2024, considering all the volunteers deployed since its launch in 2017. In addition, the geographical scope of the initiative was significantly extended in December 2023, allowing for all Interreg programmes and projects, as well as Macro-Regional Strategies authorities, to host volunteers. Volunteers can now be deployed in all countries cooperating with the EU in the framework of Interreg and Macro-Regional Strategies, including in partner countries of outermost regions.

3.2 Youth and the digital world

The digital world has become an integral part of youth culture, shaping how young people communicate, learn and engage with society. It affects several areas covered in other sections of this document, such as social inclusion (Section 4.2) and education and training (Section 4.4¹³²). With unprecedented access to information and technology, today's young people are at the forefront of digital innovation and social change. This dynamic interaction not only offers immense opportunities for education and personal development but also presents challenges, such as digital literacy and online safety.

The results of the 2024 Commission survey on some aspects of the EU Youth Strategy¹³³ seem to suggest that disinformation is a reality for young people: only 5% of the respondents said they rarely or never come across news or information that they believe misrepresent reality or is even false¹³⁴. Over 70% of respondents check the accuracy of news or information they

¹³² Section 4.4 on education and training focuses on the follow-up of the Digital Education action plan, which sets out a long-term vision for high-quality, inclusive digital education.

¹³³ See subsection on the Youth Survey in Section 2.1. 'Youth participation'.

¹³⁴ "Youth survey on the views of young people on aspects of the EU Youth Strategy" subsection in Section 2.1 Youth participation provides an overview of the 2024 Commission youth survey. The question asked to respondents was "How do you usually react when you come across news or information that you believe misrepresent reality or is even false?".

believe to be misleading or false by consulting other sources (this practice is more common among young residents of capital cities (80%) and those aged 25-29 (79%)).

Upholding children and young people's **fundamental rights in the digital environment** is a Commission priority. Children and young people should always feel safe, secure and protected online from content or contacts that could bother, upset or scare them, or make them feel angry, sad, worried or bullied online.

The 2023 **Council Conclusions on digital empowerment to protect and enforce fundamental rights in the digital age**¹³⁵ invite Member States to adopt the necessary measures to provide specific protection and digital skills tailored to the needs of children and young people. Such measures include: (i) creating high-quality digital content in education programmes; (ii) facilitating access to equipment; (iii) providing children and young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to participate safely in the digital environment, (iv) helping to identify, among others cyberbullying, grooming and other forms of online harassment and crimes; (v) disseminate information on the support available to children and youth that are victims of crime online; and (vi) to tackle aggressive commercial practices.

The Commission has taken major steps to ensure that the EU regulatory framework is fit for purpose for the current digital landscape and to protect minors online. The **Digital Services Act**¹³⁶ (DSA) which is fully applicable since February 2024, imposes obligations on providers of digital services in relation to the protection of children and young people. Online platforms accessible to children are required to put in place measures that ensure a high level of privacy, safety, and security for minors. Services designated as Very Large Online Platforms or Very Large Online Search Engines¹³⁷ are required to assess and mitigate actual or expected risks that their service may pose to the protection of minors, the rights of the child, and the user's mental and physical well-being. In 2024, the Commission opened formal proceedings on TikTok's, Instagram's and Facebook's compliance with the Digital Services Act, including on the protection of minors. The Commission also closed a case against TikTok, after the platform committed to permanently withdraw its Task and reward programme in the EU, which the Commission suspected had addictive effects. In 2025, the Commission will adopt guidelines for the protection of minors online to assist service providers in assuring a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors that is required by the DSA.

The emergence of **AI** is transforming industries worldwide by automating complex tasks and improving decision-making processes. As AI technology rapidly evolves, its potential to address global challenges and revolutionise daily life grows, highlighting the need for its responsible development to address ethical concerns and mitigate risks.

The **Artificial Intelligence Act**¹³⁸, adopted in 2024, aims to protect health, safety and fundamental rights and ensure any AI that is developed and used in the EU is trustworthy. It underlines the possible adverse impact of AI systems on the fundamental rights protected by

¹³⁵ [Council conclusions on digital empowerment to protect and enforce fundamental rights in the digital age](#)

¹³⁶ [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC \(Digital Services Act\)](#)

¹³⁷ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/list-designated-vlops-and-vloses>

¹³⁸ [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence](#)

the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and considers the specific rights of the child. For example, it prohibits the use of AI that exploits children’s vulnerabilities to manipulate their behaviour in a way that can cause harm. Another example relates to the that providers have to put in place for high-risk AI systems. This risk management system must consider whether, given its intended purpose, the high-risk AI system is likely to have an adverse impact on people under the age of 18.

Additionally, AI and algorithmic management in the **workplace** have the potential to benefit young people, for example, with increased efficiency, flexibility and personalised job opportunities. However, safeguards are important to ensure these systems are implemented fairly and respect workers’ rights. The **Platform Work Directive**¹³⁹, adopted in October 2024, provides key benefits by clarifying the employment status of platform workers, ensuring access to rights, such as the minimum wage or paid annual leave. It also mandates transparency in algorithmic management, giving young people insights into decisions that affect them, and introduces the right to challenge automated decisions, promoting fairness and autonomy in their work. The JRC report on ‘Artificial intelligence and the rights of the child’ focused on how researchers, policymakers and industry should involve children and their caregivers when designing new AI policies and initiatives.

- **Digital safety and links with mental health**

The **2023 Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union** invited the Commission to pay particular attention to the promotion of safer and healthier digital spaces for young people and to foster the eradication of online hate speech, particularly targeting young people in the most vulnerable situations¹⁴⁰. Since then, the Commission has vowed to step up efforts to tackle social media addiction and cyberbullying among young people by launching an EU-wide inquiry into social media’s effects on young people’s mental health, tackling unethical addictive techniques used by online platforms (such as infinite scroll, default auto-play and gamification) and developing an action plan against cyberbullying¹⁴¹.

As presented in the Commission Communication on a **comprehensive approach to mental health**¹⁴², the flagship initiative ‘**Healthy Screens, Healthy Youth** ensures protecting young people in the digital sphere, online and on social media.

The **Better Internet for Kids (BIK+)** strategy, adopted in May 2022, is a key initiative and part of the EU’s efforts to promote a safer and more beneficial digital environment for children and young people. Developed and launched with the participation of young people, this strategy aims to provide age-appropriate digital services where every child in the EU is protected, empowered, and respected online. Pillar 2 of the BIK+ strategy and the European Declaration

¹³⁹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/PE-89-2024-INIT/en/pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ [Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union](#).

¹⁴¹ [Political Guidelines 2024-2029 | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

¹⁴² [A comprehensive approach to mental health - European Commission](#)

on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade aim to empower children with digital skills and raise their awareness of online risks¹⁴³.

In this context, a pilot phase of the **MediaSmartOnline**¹⁴⁴ campaign was launched in March 2024; this campaign highlights existing media literacy initiatives being piloted in 3 EU countries and was extended to others in the second half of 2024.

As part of a range of new initiatives under the BIK strategy, the **AdWiseOnline**¹⁴⁵ campaign, launched on Safer Internet Day 2024, raises children's and young people's awareness of **manipulative digital marketing practices**, especially via influencers and in-game marketing, and illustrates their rights as young consumers online. In addition, the **BIK age assurance toolkit**¹⁴⁶ was published in 2024 to explain in a family-friendly language key messages and concepts about age assurance.

Promoting a responsible digital transition includes looking after the **well-being of young people in the digital world** and links up with initiatives that support young people's mental and physical health, for example, through the HealthyLifestyle4All initiative. In November 2022, the Council adopted **Council Conclusions on supporting well-being in digital education**¹⁴⁷. As a follow-up to these Conclusions, a model of emerging practices and dedicated items on digital well-being in the SELFIE¹⁴⁸ tool are being developed (SELFIE is tool that helps schools assess where they stand with learning in the digital age). In addition, the Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training¹⁴⁹ and the Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training¹⁵⁰ underscore the importance of ensuring that digital well-being is reflected in the teaching and learning process as well as in the design of supportive digital teaching and learning approaches and environments. This is to help ensure that students' engagement with digital technology is done so in a mindful way with a view to safeguard their mental health and boost their resilience both offline and online.

In the 'Living, working and COVID-19' survey series by Eurofound¹⁵¹, 49% of 18-29-year-old respondents reported working from home daily or several times per week, with an additional 16% working from home several times a month. While the possibility to work anytime, anywhere, enabled by digital technologies, may bring many opportunities in terms of autonomy, flexibility and productivity, it may also lead to an increased workload and an 'always-on' culture. This can create risks to the mental and physical health and safety and work-life balance of workers, including young people.

¹⁴³ [A European strategy for a better internet for kids \(BIK+\) | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

¹⁴⁴ <https://better-internet-for-kids.europa.eu/en/media-smart-online>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/adwiseonline> <https://better-internet-for-kids.europa.eu/en/adwiseonline>

¹⁴⁶ [Guide to age assurance | Family-friendly explainers](#)

¹⁴⁷ [Council conclusions on supporting well-being in digital education.](#)

¹⁴⁸ [SELFIE - European Education Area \(europa.eu\).](#)

¹⁴⁹ [Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training](#)

¹⁵⁰ [Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training](#)

¹⁵¹ [https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2022/fifth-round-living-working-and-covid-19-e-survey-living-new-era-uncertainty.](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2022/fifth-round-living-working-and-covid-19-e-survey-living-new-era-uncertainty)

The 2021 **European Parliament legislative resolution on the right to disconnect**¹⁵², included a call on the Commission to present a legislative proposal on the right to disconnect and an EU legislative framework for telework. As part of its follow-up to the resolution, the Commission commissioned a large-scale exploratory study to gather evidence and to better understand the challenges, opportunities and trends in relation to the flexibility of working time and work location, with a focus on telework and the right to disconnect¹⁵³.

As follow-up, the Commission is preparing a potential EU initiative on the right to disconnect and telework. As part of this and in line with its obligations under Article 154 of the Treaty, the Commission is conducting a formal two-stage consultation of the social partners.

- **The European Student Card Initiative (ESCI)**

The **ESCI**, a key flagship of the European strategy for universities, continues to support the digitalisation and interoperability of higher education institutions to facilitate data exchanges, simplify and streamline student mobility administration, and improve the experience of mobile students.

Since 2021, the ESCI has continued to gather pace, reaching 250 000 Erasmus+ app downloads and 2.86 million active European Student Cards issued across 18 countries by August 2024. A growing number of students can now get their student status securely and easily verified across Europe to access student services during their mobility. The digitalisation of mobility processes continued to grow during the same period. The number of higher education institutions connected to the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) network reached 3 060 (an increase of 265 institutions since 2023). Digital exchanges between higher education institutions also reached new highs: over 87 000 digital interinstitutional agreements completed in the last 12 months (bringing the total to 185 000 since 2021) and 126 320 digital learning agreements completed for the 2023/2024 academic year, an increase of nearly 52 000 compared to the 2022/2023 academic year.

The ESCI continues to support the secure digital exchange of students' data and academic records for mobility purposes, increasing the integration between the different digital ESCI components and the further development of digital European Student Cards that enable access to a wider range of online student services. Throughout 2025, improvements to the EWP network will enable digital signatures of multilateral agreements. There will also be testing of digitalised workflows for nominations and transcripts of records. The migration to a simplified digital infrastructure with more centralised components will also lay the ground for supporting the once-only data principle across ESCI components.

¹⁵² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0021_EN.html.

¹⁵³ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/study-social-economic-and-legal-context-and-trends-telework-and-right-disconnect-context_en

- **Support instruments**

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) has allocated more than **EUR 28.3 billion**¹⁵⁴ to increasing human capital in digitalisation, which also includes young people. The recovery and resilience plans (RRPs) include a wide range of digital transformation measures. These include comprehensive digital skills strategies, actions to overcome the shortage of ICT specialists and to equip the broader population and workforce with digital skills, support for the development of cyber skills, the digitalisation of educational institutions and content, and targeted support for vulnerable groups. For example, in Latvia, the RRF is being used to purchase IT equipment for general education institutions, with targeted support for students from socially vulnerable groups. The RRF is also supporting 42 municipalities with the establishment and implementation of programmes aimed at improving young worker’s digital skills. The RRF also supports other digitalisation investments, such as the digitalisation of public services and transport services, which benefits young people as well.

The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** has invested **EUR 13.4 billion** in ‘reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities’ and **EUR 2.4 billion** in ‘enhancing digital connectivity’, in particular, by providing broadband access. For example, an ERDF programme has supported a youth centre in a rural area to equip digital workplaces for children and young people with hardware and software in order to offer meaningful extracurricular activities, e.g. in the musical-creative field.

Digital transition, which is a key element of the EU's political agenda, is among the horizontal priorities of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. In 2024, a new digital strategy¹⁵⁵ was published for the programmes to further encourage and support projects working in these areas. SALTO Digital will support the implementation of the strategies through guidelines, various materials and workshops.

3.3 Communicating about the EU Youth Strategy

The **European Youth Portal**¹⁵⁶ is the main source of online information on EU youth policy and the EU Youth Strategy. A dedicated section presents the strategy as well as key policy activities and documents. It is regularly updated to inform the public about the latest developments and contains a wide range of resources. The European Year of Youth website was a window to all the activities organised by the Commission during the Year and brought together examples of activities in different areas that target young people. This legacy of the Year continues with a transformation of the EU Youth Strategy section of the portal to give more visibility to youth policy mainstreaming, policy dialogues, youth work and ease of access to the different resources on which EU policymaking is based.

¹⁵⁴ Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data is based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and corresponds to the measures allocated to the ‘human capital in digitalisation’ policy area as a primary or secondary policy area. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

¹⁵⁵ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-digital-strategy>

¹⁵⁶ https://youth.europa.eu/home_en

In 2023 and 2024, the **EU Youth Coordinator** carried out more than 160 communication and outreach activities¹⁵⁷ (speaking engagements, discussions with stakeholders, roundtables, interviews and videos) and moderated six youth policy dialogues with Commissioners. The EU Youth Coordinator chaired the European Year of Youth national coordinator and stakeholder group and coordinated the Commission Youth Network. She also led the preparation of the youth check process.

ERYICA, EYCA and Eurodesk continue to promote EU opportunities for young people and the European Youth Strategy through their **networks**. They use multipliers to reach out to young people with fewer opportunities and those from remote and rural areas everywhere in Europe.

Eurodesk is a network of 38 national coordinators and over 3 000 multipliers in 36 countries. Each year, it keeps over 2 million young people informed through online and face-to-face activities. Its objective is to raise awareness among young people of mobility opportunities and to encourage them to become active citizens. It does this via information, support and communication activities, with a priority on reaching out to those with fewer opportunities and who are not yet aware of such opportunities.

Eurodesk targets two main groups: (i) young people aged 13 to 30 from all parts of society, in particular those with fewer opportunities; (ii) and youth workers and professionals in direct contact with young people and multipliers that work with young people (including youth organisations, youth information workers and youth policymakers). Eurodesk contributed, for example, to promoting the survey aiming to collect young people's feedback for the EU Youth Report on the progress of the EU Youth Strategy.

The multilingual **EU Learning Corner** website¹⁵⁸ is a one-stop shop for youth materials and relays and promotes teaching materials on the EU developed by the EU institutions. The 'News and competition' section of the website, as well as the monthly newsletter that is sent to 130 000 schools throughout the EU, provide the latest information on EU initiatives to engage, connect and empower children and young people. Several online and printed publications are made available and distributed to specific target audiences to raise awareness of the opportunities on offer (for example, Keeping our promise to YOU!).

¹⁵⁷ https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/euyouthcoordinator_en.

¹⁵⁸ https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/index_en.

4 EMPOWER



Empower young people to take charge of their own lives, especially through youth work

4.1 Quality youth work

- **European Youth Work Agenda**

Youth work¹⁵⁹ is vital for: (i) the engagement and inclusion of all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities (including young NEETs); (ii) the promotion of democratic awareness and active European citizenship; and (iii) the green and digital transitions. According to a civil society survey carried out as part of the EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) interim evaluation, 67% of respondents considered that the EUYS brought young people together through youth work activities and helped improve the quality and recognition of youth work.

The European Youth Work Agenda (EYWA)¹⁶⁰ complements the EUYS, strengthening the policy base for **quality youth work**. The **EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership**¹⁶¹ supports the implementation of the EYWA with knowledge and evidence, notably through a steering group¹⁶² This steering group is also organising the fourth European Youth Work Convention to be hosted by Malta on 28-30 May 2025.

The **Visible Value: Growing youth work in Europe-symposium**¹⁶³ provided a space for peer learning, networking and discussing youth work development and the EYWA. It highlighted recent research, good practices, initiatives and achievements, celebrating the **25 years of cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe in the field of youth**.

The **Council Resolution on youth work in an empowering Europe** was adopted in May 2024¹⁶⁴. It emphasises the role of youth work in empowering young people, supporting their transition to autonomy and fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity in addressing key societal challenges. It calls on Member States, the Commission and relevant stakeholders to support the development and practice of youth work at EU, national, and local levels, including through comprehensive youth work policies, bottom-up approaches and training of youth workers.

The **European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy** in Brussels, under the 2024 Belgian Presidency (February 2024), highlighted significant progress in youth work over the previous 20 years. Key points included the visibility and participatory attitude fostered in

¹⁵⁹ Youth work covers activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental or political nature by, with and for young people. They are delivered by youth workers and based on non-formal and informal learning processes and voluntary participation (European Youth Work Agenda, points 1-7).

¹⁶⁰ [Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda 2020/C 415/01.](#)

¹⁶¹ [About the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership - Youth Partnership \(coe.int\).](#)

¹⁶² [Steering Group on the European Youth Work Agenda - Youth Partnership \(coe.int\).](#)

¹⁶³ [Visible Value: Growing youth work in Europe - Youth Partnership \(coe.int\).](#)

¹⁶⁴ [Council Resolution on youth policy in an empowering Europe, 13 May 2024.](#)

local youth work, the benefits of adapting good practices, and the importance of creating supportive spaces. The Commission can further support local youth work policy, emphasising municipalities' roles and enhancing youth engagement in democratic processes aligned with the EU Youth Strategy.

- **EU programmes and youth work**

Several EU programmes' actions and instruments support youth workers' development and the quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. The **European Training Strategy for youth work** (ETS), revised and launched at the beginning of 2022, offers a strategic framework for the development of youth workers' education and training in Europe.

EU youth programmes also support youth work. The **Erasmus+ youth action** and the **European Solidarity Corps** provide youth workers with significant opportunities for professional development and cooperation with their peers across Europe and beyond. In funded projects, youth workers exchange good practices, test tools and formats, build communities of practice and contribute to the development of the youth work community. More than 110 000 youth workers had the opportunity to take part in Erasmus+ youth worker mobility projects awarded between 2021 and 2024¹⁶⁵.

Erasmus+ also funds hundreds of training and cooperation activities (TCA) that are organised every year by the National Agencies network, with the support of the SALTO resource centres¹⁶⁶. These activities aim for a high-quality implementation of the programmes via skills development, cooperation and outreach.

As part of the TCAs, National Agencies also organise strategic long-term activities. Several of these relate to youth work, for instance with a focus on digital youth work, youth work in municipalities and youth workers' education and training. The European Solidarity Corps funds networking activities (which is equivalent to TCAs).

Youthpass¹⁶⁷, the EU instrument for identifying, documenting and validating learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in the field of youth, targets both young people and youth workers (covering a specific set of competences for youth workers). Between 2022 and 2024, almost 62 000 Youthpass certificates were issued to youth workers following their participation in Erasmus+ youth or European Solidarity Corps projects.

Detailed reporting on Erasmus + and the European Solidarity Corps activities is available in the 2023 Erasmus+ annual report¹⁶⁸ and the 2021-2023 European Solidarity Corps report¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶⁵ Erasmus+ mobility projects for youth workers 1/2021- 8/2024.

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.salto-youth.net/>.

¹⁶⁷ [Welcome to Youthpass – Youthpass.](#)

¹⁶⁸ [Erasmus+ annual report 2023 - Publications Office of the EU.](#)

¹⁶⁹ [European solidarity corps - Publications Office of the EU.](#)

4.2 Social inclusion

Social inclusion is vital for fostering a cohesive, equitable, and harmonious society. It ensures that all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities, have equal access to opportunities, resources, and rights. By promoting diversity and reducing discrimination and marginalisation, social inclusion strengthens community well-being and solidarity. It empowers marginalised groups, enabling them to contribute their talents and perspectives, which enriches the collective social and cultural fabric. Moreover, social inclusion helps mitigate social tensions and conflicts, creating a more just and compassionate society where everyone can thrive.

The intersectional nature of inclusion challenges (e.g. youth unemployment, poverty, social isolation) can exacerbate the experiences of groups already vulnerable groups at risk of discrimination and social exclusion, such as young people with disabilities, from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds such as Roma, belonging to the LGBTIQ community, belonging to religious minorities or those living in rural areas.

The 2024 **Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people**¹⁷⁰ set out targeted measures to promote equity, inclusion and support for young people in Europe, particularly those with fewer opportunities. In its conclusions, the Council acknowledges the challenges that young people face and the importance of facilitating their active participation and inclusion in their communities and in democratic life. It also highlights the need to improve mental well-being and living conditions for all young people. This can be done via inclusive measures that facilitate the meaningful participation of all young people in decision-making and spaces that concern them, especially through youth work.

The **Council Conclusions on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights**¹⁷¹ call on Member States and the Commission to facilitate a seamless transition from childhood to adulthood, especially for children and young people in a vulnerable societal position, and to improve cooperation, coordination, information and exchange at European level regarding the relevant policy fields. The Conclusions invite Member States to consider developing or elaborating upon existing national strategies or coordinated policies for children's rights and youth, ensuring policy coherence between children, children's rights, and youth affairs to coordinate age-related needs.

The 2023 **Council Conclusions on the social dimension of a sustainable Europe for youth**¹⁷² stress that the social inclusion of young people is necessary to promote the understanding of the interconnected global challenges and to support young people in developing the knowledge, skills and competences for a more sustainable society. The Conclusions invited the Commission and Member States to consider the results of the 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue¹⁷³ and to include a rights-based youth perspective in the design and implementation of social inclusion and sustainable development policies.

¹⁷⁰ [Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people](#) 13 May 2024

¹⁷¹ [Council Conclusions on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights](#), 13 May 2024

¹⁷² [Council Conclusions on the social dimension of a sustainable Europe for youth](#)

¹⁷³ see Section 2.1

The 2023 **Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion**¹⁷⁴ includes recommendations to address the needs of young adults.

The **Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities** (2021-2030) aims to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, including young persons with disabilities who are more disadvantaged than their peers without disabilities. To this end, the Commission committed to supporting inclusive education, vocational education and skills training, and employment. The Strategy's flagship initiatives are implemented through the Disability Platform that brings together various EU and national stakeholders and experts who oversee its implementation. Young persons with disabilities actively participate in the European Day of Persons with Disabilities, which attracts over 400 delegates from across the EU.

In the context of the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities, the Commission has published guidelines on inclusive and accessible recruitment and employment of persons with disabilities. The guidelines are complemented by examples collected from across Europe and they aim to promote employing persons with disabilities¹⁷⁵.

On 17 and 18 April 2024, in cooperation with the **European Crime Prevention Network**, the Commission organised a Crime Prevention Conference. The main topic was preventing the recruitment of young people in organised crime. Participants shared experiences and lessons learned in order to combat this complex phenomenon.

The EU Anti-racism action plan 2020-2025¹⁷⁶ acknowledges the role that young people can play in combatting racism and discrimination, and an important step in this direction is to listen to those affected by racism and discrimination and involve them in consultations and decision-making processes.

Collecting and using accurate and comparable equality data across Europe is also fundamental to combat social exclusion and discrimination experienced by young people belonging to specific vulnerable groups. Equality data would reflect current inequalities in several key areas of life and inform policymaking, allowing to assess the scale and nature of discrimination and social exclusion of specific groups of young people.

- **Protecting children**

The **EU Strategy on the rights of the child**¹⁷⁷ is a comprehensive EU policy framework adopted by the Commission in 2021 to ensure the protection of rights of all children, and secure access to basic services for vulnerable children. Three years after the adoption, the Commission has delivered on commitments to turn this Strategy into action. This brings progress to empower children, promote and protect their rights, offline and online, in the EU and globally, as a key achievement of the 2019-2024 Commission mandate and across all areas identified in

¹⁷⁴ [Council Recommendation of 30 January 2023 on adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion.](#)

¹⁷⁵ [Disability Employment Package to improve labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁷⁶ EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025 - European Commission.

¹⁷⁷ [Communication from the Commission – EU strategy on the rights of the child](#)

the strategy. Based on the progress, the Commission will continue maximising its impact on the daily lives of children and responding to new challenges.

The **2022 Council Conclusions on the EU Strategy on the rights**¹⁷⁸ confirmed a common commitment to fulfil the rights of all children without any discrimination, increase efforts to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, strengthen justice systems and increase opportunities for children to be responsible and resilient members of the digital society.

As announced in the Strategy, the Commission adopted in April 2024 a **Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child**¹⁷⁹. With this Recommendation, the EU aims to bring together all its actions to protect children from violence. The Recommendation encourages coordination among authorities at different levels, professionals across sectors, international and civil society organisations and other stakeholders. It calls upon all child protection actors to work together to protect children from any form of violence (physical, mental, including in the digital world) in a coherent and systemic way. It also underlines that families, communities and children themselves have a key role to play. Integrated child protection systems should ensure a continuum of comprehensive and coordinated support in cases of violence, which starts with prevention and early identification of the very first signs of violence. Reporting should lead to swift cross-sectoral support, including for mental health. Training and coordination of professionals are key. The Recommendation echoes the views of more than 1 000 children collected through the EU Children's Participation Platform¹⁸⁰.

The Commission continues to support EU Member States in the implementation of the Council Recommendation establishing a **European Child Guarantee**¹⁸¹, which guides Member States in preventing and combating social exclusion. By 2030, it aims to ensure that children at risk of poverty or social exclusion have effective and free access to early childhood education and care, education (including school-based activities), a healthy meal each school day, and healthcare. Effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing are also to be guaranteed. By the end of 2023, all Member States had submitted to the Commission their national action plans for carrying out the European Child Guarantee, and, by 9 October 2024, 17 of them had also finalised progress reports. Across the EU, a wide range of stakeholders – including children themselves – are involved in designing, implementing and monitoring measures responding to the European Child Guarantee.

As part of the 2022 Technical Support Instrument cycle¹⁸², a specific call on the implementation of the European Child Guarantee was launched to support authorities in carrying out actions and policies that prevent and combat child poverty and social exclusion. In Slovakia, the project supports authorities with a revised model for the social inclusion of children with disabilities

¹⁷⁸ [Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights](#)

¹⁷⁹ [Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#), see: [Protecting children from violence \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁸⁰ [Feeling Safe | EU Child Participation \(europa.eu\)](#).

¹⁸¹ [Council Recommendation \(EU\) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee](#)

¹⁸² [Technical Support Instrument 2022 call - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

in substitute care through an integrated package of quality services. In Portugal, the project supports improving child well-being and tackling child poverty and the social exclusion of children and young people by focusing on successfully implementing and monitoring the European Child Guarantee.

The **EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse**¹⁸³, adopted in July 2020, puts forward a series of legislative and non-legislative initiatives to ensure the protection of children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation and provide appropriate support and assistance if they fall victims of these crimes. On this basis the Commission adopted the **proposal for a regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse**¹⁸⁴ that sets out measures for companies to combat abuse on their services. The EU Strategy also includes the proposal for a **Regulation**¹⁸⁵ to combat child sexual abuse that lays down temporary and strictly limited rules for companies to carry out the voluntary detection of child sexual abuse. The co-legislators also revised the 2011 **Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography**¹⁸⁶. It sets out a common framework for criminal investigations into – and the prosecution of – child sexual abuse and exploitation crimes. In addition, to help EU Member States put in place effective prevention measures against child sexual abuse in the EU the Commission is setting up a **network for the prevention of child sexual abuse**.

Child trafficking is a rapidly evolving and multi-faceted form of trafficking in human beings. It is a severe form of human exploitation, violence against children, child abuse and the violation of children's rights. Children in the EU are trafficked for all types of exploitation, mainly sexual exploitation and forced criminality but also forced begging, forced marriage and labour exploitation.

According to 2022 data published by Eurostat, the number of registered victims of trafficking in human beings in the EU was 10 093¹⁸⁷. 15% of these victims were children. Since 2013 the proportion of child victims of trafficking in human beings has never been as low as it was in 2022. In 2022, children made up 22% of the trafficking victims of sexual exploitation, 7% of the trafficking victims of labour exploitation and 15% of the trafficking victims of exploitation for other purposes. 75% of the child victims of trafficking in human beings are girls, mostly exploited for sexual purposes. 74% are EU citizens, and 67% of them are exploited in their

¹⁸³ [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#), COM/2020/607 final, 24 July 2020.

¹⁸⁴ [Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse](#), COM/2022/209 final, 11 May 2022.

¹⁸⁵ [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a temporary derogation from certain provisions of Directive 2002/58/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of technologies by number-independent interpersonal communications service providers for the processing of personal and other data for the purpose of combatting child sexual abuse online](#), COM/2020/568 final, 10 September 2020.

¹⁸⁶ [Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA](#) (Child Sexual Abuse Directive), OJ L 335, 17 December 2011, 1–14.

¹⁸⁷ Source: crim_thb_vexp

own country. Finally, the 2022 data shows that prosecutions and convictions remain low and 6% of the suspects and convicts are children¹⁸⁸.

The **amended Anti-Trafficking Directive**, adopted on 27 May 2024, is based on a victim centred and child sensitive approach and contains reinforced provisions, which also address child trafficking and serve to further protect children. The modified Directive includes the exploitation of surrogacy, of forced marriage and of illegal adoption among the forms of exploitation as well as it places a greater emphasis on the online dimension, by including trafficking committed through the use of information and communication technologies to be considered as an aggravating circumstance in cases of sexual exploitation. Moreover, knowingly using services provided by victims of trafficking becomes a criminal offence. In addition, the modified Directive pays specific attention to children in residential or closed-type institutions and encourages Member States to ensure that national child protection systems develop specific plans to prevent human trafficking. The Directive also provides for confidential, child-friendly and accessible reporting procedures for child victims and requires specialised services, child-friendly accommodation and individual support to be provided until adulthood. The EU Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025 also contains actions specifically aimed at combating child trafficking, including prevention, awareness raising, detection and identification, investigation, prosecution as well as the protection of and assistance to victims, taking into account victims' perspective and needs.

Protection of minors online

The Commission is fully committed to supporting the protection of minors online. Under the **Digital Services Act (DSA)**, all providers of online platforms that are accessible to minors will need to take appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety, and security of minors on their service. Services designated by the Commission as Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs) that reach more than 45 million users in the EU, are also required to assess systemic risks that their services pose to children's rights as well as risks to young people's mental and physical wellbeing. These services have to mitigate identified risks, for example, by using age assurance tools, parental controls or tools for children to signal abuse or get support. As the supervisor of designated services, the Commission is empowered to conduct investigations into whether designated VLOPs and VLOSEs comply with their obligations under the DSA. In 2025, the Commission will adopt guidelines that will assist online platforms to ensure the high level of privacy, safety and security that is mandated by the DSA. The work under DSA is supported and complemented by the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) strategy.

¹⁸⁸ Calculations provided by Eurostat based on Trafficking in Human Beings administrative data collection

- **Young people in rural and remote areas**

The Commission aims to support and leave no one behind, including **young people in rural and remote areas**. In line with the EU Youth Strategy 2021-2027 and European Youth Goal #6 on ‘Moving rural youth forward’, the Commission is committed to the Long-Term vision for the EU’s rural areas and its action plan for stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas, of which rural young people are part of¹⁸⁹. Implementation of the **Long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas**¹⁹⁰, which proposed a Rural Pact and a Rural Action Plan, is advancing. Under the Rural Pact, almost 2 700 members from organisations and authorities at EU, national, regional and local levels are collaborating to forge stronger cooperation across different policy areas for stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas, including in activities focused on young rural people. The Rural Pact has produced good practices for attracting young people to rural areas. To enhance rural youth participation in policy making, it has also organised a good practice webinar on the topic¹⁹¹ and set up a community group on rural youth¹⁹².

Under the stronger pillar, the Long-Term vision for EU’s rural areas also includes a “**Support education, training, youth, sport and volunteering in rural areas**” action to increase opportunities for young people in rural areas. Action has also been taken under the “Prosperous” pillar of the rural vision by “encouraging Member States to increase education, training and employment opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas under the Youth Guarantee and the European Education Area¹⁹³.”

The Commission report on **implementation of the vision**¹⁹⁴, presented in March 2024, highlights, for example, LEADER local development strategies as a tool to respond to rural needs in areas such as employment, social inclusion and services. The report also mentions that reaching out to young people in rural and remote areas as well as offering services to them has been acknowledged as an important issue to tackle. Even though there have been positive developments in some Member States, creating jobs and providing social services for young people in these areas remains a challenge in most Member States.

As part of the **European Year of Youth 2022**, about 1 200 activities helped support rural youth. In addition, two **policy dialogues**, with Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski and with Cohesion and Reforms Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, involved young people from rural areas. The **EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership** also aims to monitor the implementation of youth strategies in Europe, with the preparation of a report for 2025 on ‘Opportunities for young people living in rural and remote areas in the EU in terms of non-formal learning, active citizenship and participation’¹⁹⁵.

¹⁸⁹ [Communication A long-term Vision for EU’s rural areas – towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040](#)

¹⁹⁰ [EU long-term vision for rural areas](#)

¹⁹¹ [Good Practice Webinar: ‘Rural youth participation in policymaking’ | Rural Pact Community Platform \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁹² [The Rural Pact Community Platform](#)

¹⁹³ [Report The long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas: key achievements and ways forward](#)

¹⁹⁴ [The long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas: key achievements and ways forward - European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁹⁵ As a follow-up to a first a first report on ‘[Young people in rural areas: diverse, ignored and unfulfilled](#)’ (2021).

In its Conclusions on providing glocal opportunities for young people living in rural and remote areas¹⁹⁶, the Council called for greater support for young people living in rural and remote areas – in particular by improving access to ‘glocal’ opportunities in education and employment – as a way to combat demographic challenges in Europe. The Council also called on the Commission to improve access to relevant EU initiatives and funds, and increase the visibility of rural youth in the EU’s youth programmes, including the post-2027 EU Youth Strategy.

The **Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 (CAP)** provides funding support to EU countries under specific objectives aiming to, among other things, attract young farmers, facilitate business development and promote employment, growth and local development in rural areas. The Strategic Plans of the EU countries for the period 2023-2027 combine funding for income support, rural development and market measures. Specific support to young farmers (up to 40 years old) features prominently in the Strategic Plans¹⁹⁷. In the CAP Strategic Plans, the participation of young people and women in LEADER governing boards has been encouraged. A **Youth LEADER forum** co-organised by the EU CAP Network and the Finnish National Network in June 2024, focused on ways to further increase the power, participation and commitment of young people in LEADER policy making and implementation.¹⁹⁸

The EU youth programmes Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps in their “Inclusion and Diversity Strategy”¹⁹⁹ supports young people living in remote or rural areas, on small islands, or in peripheral or outermost regions, urban suburbs, less serviced areas (with limited public barriers to their active participation in EU youth policy and programmes).

In addition, young people living in remote or rural areas experience transport poverty (i.e. the lack of adequate transport services necessary to access essential services, school and work, or the inability to pay for these transport services). However, they will benefit from measures financed under the Social Climate Fund (SCF)²⁰⁰, which is the first EU funding instrument created with the specific purpose of addressing energy and transport poverty and will be operational from 2026 to 2032. It will support vulnerable groups of society, including vulnerable transport users, who are most affected by the green transition.

Young people in the outermost regions²⁰¹

The unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 in the EU dropped from 25.7 % in 2013 to 14.4 % in 2022. Similarly, the rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) for those aged 15 to 29 fell from 16.1 % to 11.7 %. However, the youth unemployment rate remains particularly high in the outermost regions, reaching levels as high as 55.4 % in Mayotte in 2020, and 43.9 % in the Canary Islands, 41.9 % in La Réunion, 38.7 % in Martinique and 37.8 % in Guadeloupe in 2022. In 2022, young people aged 18 to 24 were far more likely to leave education early in these regions. For example, 28% of young

¹⁹⁶ [Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on providing glocal opportunities for young people living in rural and remote areas](#)

¹⁹⁷ See Section on employment and skills

¹⁹⁸ [Young LEADER Forum | EU CAP Network](#)

¹⁹⁹ [Implementation guidelines - Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy - Erasmus+](#)

²⁰⁰ https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets/social-climate-fund_en

²⁰¹ The EU has nine outermost regions (https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/themes/outermost-regions_en)

people in French Guiana left education prematurely, compared to 6.1% in Île-de-France. In the Azores, the early school-leaving rate was 27%, compared to 4.7% in Lisbon. Further disparities exist in tertiary education. In Île-de-France, 55% of the population held tertiary degrees in 2022, while in French Guiana, La Réunion, and Guadeloupe, the figures were 22%, 24%, and 24.2%, respectively.

These inequalities contribute to limited opportunities for young people in the outermost regions. Poor access to essential services, such as education, training, and healthcare, drives the number of young people migrating from regions such as Guadeloupe and the Azores, exacerbating demographic and economic challenges²⁰².

- **Support instruments**

The **ALMA** initiative (Aim, Learn, Master, and Achieve) supports mobility across the EU for vulnerable young NEETs aged 18-29²⁰³. Both **Erasmus+** and the **European Solidary Corps** provide accessible and **flexible formats** of activities to increase the participation of young people with fewer opportunities. Under the European Solidarity Corps, for example, a special format of volunteering in groups can be proposed for young people who do not yet feel ready to volunteer on their own. Short-term volunteering in teams can serve as a bridge for long-term activities. Over 51% of the total number of volunteers supported by the European Solidarity Corps since 2021 have been young people with fewer opportunities. Looking at the priorities tackled in the projects where these young people are involved, 3 112 of them have inclusion and diversity at their core. A total amount of EUR 243.5 million in grants was contracted for these projects, involving 46 000 participants²⁰⁴. There are also solidarity projects that provide in-country activities, meaning that participants who for different reasons are reluctant to go far away from home can still participate and develop their skills.

In addition, in all education and training sectors, participants have had access to a more varied mobility offer since the start of the current Erasmus+ programme in 2021. In the school education and VET sectors, in addition to short-term and long-term individual mobility activities, educational providers can also send learners abroad in groups for peer-to-peer experiences in schools. This is often an ideal way for young learners to have a first experience abroad and to gain the confidence to go for a learning mobility alone.

In **higher education**, with the introduction of blended mobility, participants now have the opportunity to opt for physical mobilities with a shorter time period if the mobility is accompanied by a virtual component. This allows those who feel they are unable to go on a long-term mobility to participate in a shorter physical mobility. These shorter mobilities can also act as a stepping stone to longer mobility experiences later in their studies. In addition, students, learners and pupils falling into one of the nationally defined categories of people with fewer opportunities get a bigger Erasmus+ grant.

²⁰² Source: Eurostat, 2022 and Chapter 2 on Social Cohesion of the Ninth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, 2024.

²⁰³ More about ALMA initiative in section 2.3 Youth employment and skills.

²⁰⁴ European Solidarity Corps 1/2021-8/2024.

In the field of youth, there is also **additional financial support**, in the form of top-ups and real cost support, and a range of support measures to encourage the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, including participants from the outermost regions, and better cater to their specific needs. The **Erasmus+ youth worker mobilities** provide opportunities to promote inclusive practices in participating organisations. Support is also available to give youth workers with fewer opportunities the same possibilities as others to exchange with their peers. Another action under Erasmus+ is the **DiscoverEU inclusion action**: organisations and informal groups of young people can receive support to carry out projects allowing young people with fewer opportunities to participate in DiscoverEU on an equal footing with their peers.

The Council Recommendation on a European approach to **micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability** was adopted on 16 June 2022. The Recommendation seeks to support the development, implementation and recognition of micro-credentials across institutions, businesses, sectors and borders. Micro-credentials offer a flexible, targeted way to help people, including young people, develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development. Some Erasmus+ projects focus on the development of micro-credentials that would **help integrate young people in the society**. One example is the project called ‘Promoting high quality’, digital transformation (VR gamification) and green transition in inclusive YW practices for youth with hearing impairment (or deafness) for better employability prospects” implemented from 2024 to 2026 in 5 countries. The project aims to providing green employability skills and empowers young people and youth workers with hearing impairment by offering capacity-building training that ends with them receiving micro-credentials.

Erasmus+ and the European Solidary Corps strive to make the **programme documentation easy to understand** for young people. This includes, where possible, the use of different languages and formats. The programmes also ensure the user-friendliness and accessibility of digital learning environments, such as the European Youth Portal. Both programmes also offer **‘Reinforced Mentorship’** - an intensified mentoring process that can be used to support participants with fewer opportunities.

Given that language skills are regularly mentioned as a barrier to participate in the programmes, **language learning opportunities** supporting mobility activities are provided through the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Online Language Support (OLS) and through other financial linguistic incentives. Participants who wish to improve their language proficiency have the opportunity to follow online language courses before and during their time abroad. The OLS platform offers a wide array of interactive and personalized learning activities in 29 languages, helping participants overcome language barriers during their mobility. OLS enhances users’ language proficiency without limiting the number of languages or courses followed, ensuring they can fully benefit from their international experiences.

Since its launch in July 2022, approximately 227 000 users have registered in OLS learning communities, with about 335 000 course enrolments. Additionally, around 544 000 placement tests were taken by users to test their language level, and 230 000 users participated in discussion forums run by 29 OLS community managers. In 2023 and 2024, new Vocational Education and Training courses were introduced in 10 fields of expertise focusing on the essential skills and competencies required for vocational roles, with job-specific vocabulary and communication

skills. Furthermore, cultural elements are emphasised to help learners understand nuances, etiquette and expectations, which are crucial for successful cross-border vocational experiences.

In certain cases where the main language is not covered by OLS, linguistic support is provided through other means by the sending or receiving organisation. On their return, participants can take a final assessment, which allows them to measure the progress made during their stay abroad.

The **SALTO Youth Inclusion & Diversity resource centre**²⁰⁵ provides inclusion and diversity training, guidance and resources to support international youth work and young people with fewer opportunities. The report on inclusion in the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes (January 2024)²⁰⁶ and the contribution of the inclusion and diversity strategy in improving inclusion in the youth field²⁰⁷ have been published.

The **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** has allocated more than **EUR 37.5 billion**²⁰⁸ to support social protection, housing and integration of vulnerable groups, which includes young people. The reforms and investments include improving and expanding social services and social housing, modernising social benefit systems, fighting energy poverty and improving access to food and water sanitation for those households most in need. For example, in Sweden, the RRF will provide investment aid for student housing by increasing the supply of new rental dwellings.

Many reforms and investments in the Member States' recovery and resilience plans (RRPs) are in areas such as education and training, health, long-term care, housing and employment. The plans include specific actions that support inclusion and the well-being of socio-economically disadvantaged people and specific vulnerable groups.

The **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)** provides funding for measures to address social inequalities and poverty. In the 2021-2027 programming period, Member States have had to earmark at least 25% of their ESF+ resources to promote social inclusion. Social inclusion measures funded under the ESF+ address a wide variety of issues and demographics, including support for the homeless, people with migrant backgrounds, people from disadvantaged groups and the Roma. While the ESF+ provides funding for social inclusion measures for people of all ages, certain measures target children and young people specifically. For example, all Member States, except Denmark and the Netherlands, have allocated a total of EUR 8.9 billion (EUR 6.1 billion in EU funding) of their ESF+ resources to address child poverty.

Satisfying **basic material needs** has been better integrated and implemented more efficiently than in the 2014-2020 programming period. Member States have had to allocate at least 3% of their ESF+ resources under shared management to support the most deprived persons. This funding falls under the specific objective to address material deprivation through food and/or

²⁰⁵ [SALTO-YOUTH - SALTO, Inclusion & Diversity.](#)

²⁰⁶ [Making EU programmes more inclusive research report \(salto-youth.net\).](#)

²⁰⁷ [Implementation guidelines - Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.](#)

²⁰⁸ Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data is based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and corresponds to the measures allocated to the 'social protection' and 'social housing and other social infrastructure' policy measures as primary or secondary policy areas. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

basic material assistance and accompanying measures supporting their social inclusion, and, in duly justified cases, the specific objective to promote the social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Four transnational projects were selected following a call for proposals under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Thematic Facility, to support the inclusion of **migrant children**. The projects, which have been awarded more than EUR 5 million, focus on more effective language learning, involving local stakeholders, including schools, NGOs, local and regional authorities and migrant-led organisations.

Inclusive education for migrant children was also the focus of the European Integration Network²⁰⁹, the expert group on integration composed of Member States' experts. The Network met from 29 to 31 May 2024 and discussed challenges and good practices on this topic.

Around **EUR 2.9 billion** has been allocated to integrating marginalised communities under the **European Regional Development Fund** in the 2021-2027 cohesion policy programmes. The funding, which complements support under the European Social Fund Plus, goes to comprehensive measures on social inclusion and access to mainstream services in education, employment, housing, healthcare and social care for different target groups of the population, including young people. For example, it includes building and renovating individual non-segregated social housing and associated services, developing infrastructure and equipment for non-residential inclusive and quality community- and family-based services (such as social and health facilities, community and youth centres, and counselling services). This aims to ensure independent living conditions and actions to tackle spatial and educational segregation.

Under the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme**, the Daphne strand provides funding to prevent and **combat** gender-based **violence** and violence against children, young people and other groups at risk with an estimated EUR 200 million available over the programming period. In particular, since 2022, the calls for proposals have included a priority on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems, in line with the Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child. In 2023, over EUR 14 million was granted to seven intermediaries to regrant funding to and support the capacity of grassroot organisations working to strengthen integrated child protection systems. This will be done by improving prevention, protection, child rights-based and child-friendly support services for (potential) child victims, witnesses of violence and those in need of protection. These services will also involve multidisciplinary cooperation.

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²⁰⁹ [European Integration Network | European Website on Integration \(europa.eu\)](#).

integrated child protection system by improving prevention, protection, child rights-based and child-friendly support services for (potential) children victims/witnesses of violence and those in need of protection, including multi-disciplinary cooperation.

4.3 Health and well-being

One of the key policy areas of the **2022 European Year of Youth** was to boost young people's personal, social, and professional development, including attention for mental health. A number of health-related initiatives were launched under the European Year of Youth such as the **Pathways to School Success**, the Expert Group for supporting Well-being at school, and the **Youth First Technical Support Instrument flagship**.

The **Flash Eurobarometer survey on mental health**²¹⁰, launched on 9 October 2023, showed that 59% of young people (16–24 year-olds) had an emotional or psychosocial problem (such as feeling depressed or feeling anxious) in the last 12 months. In addition, the Health at a Glance report 2022²¹¹ showed that 1 in 2 young Europeans reported unmet needs, and that depression among young people more than doubled.

The **European Youth Goal #5** is to achieve better mental well-being and end the stigmatisation of mental health issues, thus promoting the social inclusion of all young people. This goal places a particular focus on prevention measures, the development of an inclusive intersectional approach and the fight against stigmatising mental health issues.

Over EUR 42 billion²¹² from the **Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF)** is allocated to increasing the resilience, sustainability, adequacy, availability, accessibility and quality of health care systems, which all benefits young people as well. Health infrastructure is being developed, modernised and digitalised, the equipment for treatment and diagnosis is being purchased, and primary care and prevention are being supported. Many investments and reforms also support changes to the management of public health funds, healthcare governance and the development of human resources in the healthcare sector. For example, in Poland, the RRF supports increasing the capacity of medical teaching facilities to attract more students, to modernise the medical teaching programme and improve the clinical base for teaching in central clinical hospitals.

Young people can benefit from investments in health and long-term care under the **European Regional Development Fund**. Member States and regions have allocated EUR 7.4 billion under ERDF in 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy programmes to the delivery of family and community-based care services. Measures are also in place to improve accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of health systems, including health infrastructure and equipment and digitalisation of healthcare. This support aims to improve health outcomes, strengthen

²¹⁰ https://health.ec.europa.eu/publications/mental-health-0_en

²¹¹ <https://doi.org/10.1787/507433b0-en>

²¹² Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data are based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and correspond to the measures allocated to the policy area 'healthcare' as primary or secondary policy area. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

primary care and foster disease prevention and person-centred care, which will in turn improve equal access to mainstream health and long-term care services.

- **Mental health**

Following the announcement of ‘**a new initiative on mental health**’ by President von der Leyen in her **2022 State of the Union address**, the **Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health**²¹³ was adopted on 7 June 2023. The Commission consulted young people on this topic and took into account their opinions submitted through a **voice recording platform** and the **youth policy dialogue** with Commissioner Kyriakides, which was held during the European Year of Youth. This Communication marks a major step to ensure a new cross-sectoral approach to mental health.

The Communication was followed in November 2023 by **Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people** in the European Union²¹⁴. The Council Conclusions call on Member States to take action, especially in areas of national competence, such as mental health services. They highlight the importance of coordinated multi-sectoral efforts, involving young people’s views, to reduce and destigmatise mental health issues, and take into account the prevalence of these issues in policymaking. They also underscore the key role of youth work in protecting the mental health of young people by enabling them to participate in activities. These activities are largely based on the relationships and trust between young people and youth workers and help develop their capacity to seek help when they are facing emotional and psychological difficulties. The Conclusions invite Member States to encourage improving equal and affordable access for young people, especially those in vulnerable situations, to mental healthcare services that offer prevention, treatment and care, while increasingly working across disciplines and moving towards person-centred and community-based solutions. They invite the Commission to pay particular attention to promoting safer and healthier digital spaces for young people and to work on eradicating online hate speech, particularly targeting groups of young people in the most vulnerable situations²¹⁵.

All **20 flagship initiatives** of the Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health, **are being implemented or have been completed**²¹⁶. These actions are led by national authorities and stakeholders, with the coordination and horizontal support of the Commission. They include projects supported by EU financial instruments, such as the EU4Health programme²¹⁷, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, and the Digital Europe Programme²¹⁸. The implementation of the comprehensive approach to mental health focuses on concrete actions benefitting citizens and health systems at the country level. These initiatives are spearheaded by national authorities and stakeholders, in collaboration with international partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Organisation for Economic

²¹³ [A comprehensive approach to mental health - European Commission](#)

²¹⁴ [Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union.](#)

²¹⁵ See also subsection ‘Digital safety and links with mental health’ in Section 3.2. Youth and the digital world.

²¹⁶ [A comprehensive approach to mental health - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

²¹⁷ See for instance the [Icehearts](#) and [Let’s talk about children](#) projects for exchanges of best practices, each worth EUR 4 million

²¹⁸ Overviews of these programmes are available in section 8.1 Insights into EU spending on youth

Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, and UNICEF.

Four flagship initiatives have been identified as having a particular impact on **boosting the mental health of children and young people**:

- Work has started on a ‘child and youth mental health network’ to exchange information, mutual support and perform outreach via the Youth Ambassadors;
- The Commission is supporting UNICEF in developing a ‘prevention toolkit’ addressing the links between mental and physical health and key health factors;
- In January 2024, the Commission launched the ‘Child & Youth Well-being and Mental Health First’ multi-country project under the Technical Support Instrument. This project is providing tailored technical expertise to four EU Member States to design and implement substantive reforms;
- The ‘Healthy Screens, Healthy Youth’ initiative aims to better protect young people in the digital sphere, online, and on social media.

An updated **tracking framework**²¹⁹ published on 10 October 2024 on the occasion of World Mental Health Day provides information on the implementation of the flagships stemming from the Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health.

A number of mental health-related initiatives were launched under the European Year of Youth such as the 2022 Council Recommendation on **Pathways to School Success**²²⁰ and the **Expert Group** on supportive learning environments for groups at risk of underachievement and for supporting well-being at school. The Expert Group developed concrete guidelines²²¹ for policymakers and educators aimed at addressing well-being and mental health at school. Published in May 2024, the guidelines contain 11 recommendations coupled with tips and inspiring practices to help policymakers and educators to implement a whole-system and whole-school approach to well-being and mental health. They advocate for comprehensive strategies to promote well-being, support for educators, and collaboration with various stakeholders to create healthier educational environments.

The ‘**Healthier Together**’ - **EU non-communicable diseases** initiative provides the framework for the Commission’s support to Member States to address the key public health challenges, including mental health. Financial support via the EU4Health programme has been made available to support the implementation of actions under the Healthier Together initiative. For example, through the joint action ‘Mental Health Together’²²², national authorities are working together to promote mental health in community settings, such as schools. Stakeholder-led projects, such as EASE-Y, promote mental health and well-being among

²¹⁹ https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6317c605-5f5d-4d4f-9c8a-d5c93e869814_en?filename=ncd_tracking-framework-mh_en.pdf

²²⁰ [Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving](#). It highlighted the emotional wellbeing of children and young people as a key factor for improving their chances of succeeding in education and life in general.

²²¹ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/news/supporting-wellbeing-at-school-new-guidelines-for-policymakers-and-educators>

²²² [The Joint Action - Mental Health And Wellbeing](#)

vulnerable adolescents and MELODIC provides mental health support for young adults with cancer.

The **EU-CoE Youth Partnership** is conducting a **study on the mental health and well-being of young people** as part of the Work plan 2024-2026. This involves analysing available support systems at different levels, providing guidance for policy and practice and further exploring the different triggers that aggravate young people's mental health and well-being (socio-economic, climate, conflict, digitalisation, working conditions, etc.). The research is part of the Commission's efforts to improve mental well-being and **reduce the stigma of mental health issues**.

The **Youth Wiki Network** published a report on **'The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people. Policy responses in European countries'** (2022)²²³. The report analysed how European countries addressed the challenges the pandemic created for the mental and emotional well-being of young people. The report concluded that **European countries were generally proactive in drawing up measures to support young people during the pandemic**. The findings also pointed to some areas where **further action could be taken, such as youth work and sport**. Based on the evidence provided and on the analysis conducted, the report can serve as inspiration for further action.

To facilitate communication among young people, the National Youth Agency of **Malta** developed the **'Stories from young people during coronavirus'** project to give young people a voice during the pandemic. The project involved creating a platform where young people could recount their experiences of living through the COVID-19 pandemic. Their stories highlighted the difficulties encountered and the resilience shown to overcome them. The platform provided information on resources available and, in doing so, served as inspiration for others to cope with similar challenges.

The types of measures implemented in countries focused on the use of online and social media to reach out to young audiences. In **Austria**, the **'Fit & Strong 2021: #better together'** awareness campaign was conducted through posts and podcasts published on Facebook and Instagram. Well-known influencers were involved in raising awareness of how to recognise symptoms of mental and emotional distress among young people and awareness of available support services.

Online **workshops** addressing these issues were also organised. For example, **Cyprus** invited experts and young people to debate the state of young people's mental health during the pandemic. Facebook Live **discussions** were also held to promote awareness of the challenges faced and to support resilience. Websites were also a common initiative across countries. Germany created an information portal – 'Corona und du' – on the mental health of children and adolescents. The website offered children and young people advice and assistance to

²²³ [The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people – Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/11111111-1111-1111-1111-111111111111).

support them during the pandemic and strengthen their psychological and emotional well-being.

The Joint Research Centre ran several **activities on threats affecting young people's well-being**, including studies on loneliness, on [how schools can mitigate young people's feelings of loneliness](#)²²⁴, on socio-economic disadvantages and learning outcomes in Europe [after the pandemic](#)²²⁵, and what happened in households during the pandemic.

Under the **BIK+ strategy**, the Commission continues to co-fund the Safer Internet Centres network²²⁶ and their helplines providing assistance to children and young people on online risks (such as cyberbullying) affecting their mental well-being and hotlines to report child sexual abuse material online²²⁷.

Under the **Technical Support Instrument**, the Commission is supporting the implementation of flagship initiatives of the Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health. Put forward in 2024, the Flagship Project on **Mental health: Fostering well-being and mental health**²²⁸ demonstrated a high demand from authorities to design and implement reforms specifically targeted to the young generation. It supports the promotion of well-being at school, including the promotion of socio-emotional skills, the healthy use of technology, as well as addressing the mental health risks of online gambling and gaming. Already under the 2023 flagship **Youth First**²²⁹ **flagship project**, nudging EU Member States to design and implement reforms dedicated to the young generations, several authorities from four EU Member States successfully requested support to address the emotional well-being and physical and mental health of young people. As a result of this joint effort, in January 2024, the Technical Support Instrument multi-country **project supporting mental health and care for the well-being of vulnerable children and young people**²³⁰ was launched in the four participating EU Member States, namely Cyprus, Italy, Slovenia and the region of Andalusia (Spain). In all participating countries, the project develops tools and builds capacity across sectors to actively address the promotion of healthy lifestyles and well-being and the prevention of mental health problems of young people. Youth associations are included in the project governance and are consulted in all key phases of the project.

Well-being and mental health is an important priority of **Erasmus+**. For instance, through its Training and Cooperation Activities, Erasmus+ supports a long-term strategic activity on 'Mental health in youth work'. It aims to raise awareness, develop mental health literacy and equip youth workers with the skills to support young people in a changing world. Health and well-being are also supported and promoted through projects receiving Erasmus+ funding. In the current programme's 2021-2023 calls, there were 10 projects that focused on health and

²²⁴ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128731>.

²²⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/13381883-ec31-11ee-8e14-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

²²⁶ <https://better-internet-for-kids.europa.eu/en/about/insafe-inhope>

²²⁷ See also the links between digital and mental health in the section 3.2

²²⁸ [TSI 2024 Flagship - Mental health: Fostering well-being and mental health \(europa.eu\)](#).

²²⁹ [YOUTH FIRST – supporting children and youth wellbeing, education, training, social protection and labour prospects - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

²³⁰ [Supporting mental health and care for the wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

well-being that were funded under Key Action 2: Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of good practices.

From 2021 to 2023, the **European Solidarity Corps** placed a strong emphasis on supporting activities in the field of health (including mental health and well-being). Each year, this field was one of the specific annual priorities for the programme's **centralised action 'Volunteering Teams in High Priority Areas'**. Beyond the scope of this action, the priority also inspired a range of projects across the other action formats (volunteering projects and solidarity projects implemented at decentralised level). In 2023, the health priority focused more on vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups, including gender-specific needs and issues relating to mental health.

Detailed reporting on the activities of both programmes is available in the 2023 Erasmus+ annual report²³¹ and the 2021-2023 European Solidarity Corps report²³².

Under the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)** programme, the 2024 call for proposals on the rights of the child and children's participation included a priority on children's mental health. 12 projects were selected with a total budget of over EUR 5.6 million to tackle children's mental health, prioritising prevention, protection and support in a multidisciplinary and participatory approach involving children.

Several **Horizon Europe** projects²³³ focus on the relationship between young people's health – including mental health – and the environment. This research contributes to the understanding of how environmental factors shape health outcomes, disease prevention, and the overall well-being in young people.

- **Health and sport**

Sport and physical activity are crucial for young people's health and well-being. Regular exercise and sport is crucial for staying physically and mentally fit. Sport helps tackle weight and obesity and plays an important part in preventing and reducing the impact of many other health-related conditions. There are also serious social and economic costs related to physical inactivity. While the obligation of legislating **health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA)** lies with Member States, the Commission is able to support, coordinate and complement national actions.

The Commission and the World Health Organization (WHO) have highlighted the benefits of organised and non-organised sports²³⁴, which play a vital role in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle among Europe's young people. To encourage the development of effective policies in Member States, most activities in the field of sport now focus on implementing the **Council Recommendation on promoting health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) across**

²³¹ [Erasmus+ annual report 2023 - Publications Office of the EU](#).

²³² [European solidarity corps - Publications Office of the EU](#).

²³³ See for instance EQUAL-LIFE, ATHLETE, YOUTH-GEMS, SMILE, VARCITIES and MELCAYA.

²³⁴ <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/policies/sport-and-society/physical-activity-and-health>.

sectors²³⁵. Commission activities therefore push for strengthening cooperation between stakeholders – EU Member States, the WHO, and civil society. In late 2023, the Commission and the WHO Regional Office for Europe signed a joint contribution agreement, strengthening collaboration begun in 2015. The agreement supports EU Member States in developing, implementing and evaluating policies to increase levels of health-enhancing physical activity.

In addition, as a follow-up to the Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle ²³⁶ (which reached 180 000 Europeans and collected 103 pledges across Europe), the Commission set up **HealthyLifestyle4All**²³⁷, a two-year campaign running from 2021 to 2023 that aimed to link sport and active lifestyles with health, food and other policies. It showcased the Commission’s commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles for everyone across generations and social groups, noting that everyone can benefit from activities that improve health and well-being.

Each participating organisation and institution committed voluntarily to carry out an initiative, activity or campaign to promote healthy lifestyles for all, across generations and social groups. Such a pledge may have consisted of an original initiative or an addition to an existing activity to be launched during the campaign. The ultimate aim of a pledge was to make a specific contribution to HealthyLifestyle4All.

The Mapping on healthy lifestyles study, published in December 2023²³⁸, takes stock of two years of activity of the HealthyLifestyle4All campaign.

The **EU4Health** programme also promotes healthy lifestyles. For example, the **Health4EUKids** joint action implements best practices on promoting healthy lifestyles among children and their families. Another example is the Schools4Health project, which aims to make every school a health-promoting school that prioritises the health of the school community.

- **Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan**

As part of the **Prevention Package** under the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, the Commission published in January 2024 a **Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers**²³⁹. This proposal includes measures to boost the uptake of vaccination against human papillomaviruses among preadolescent and adolescent children.

On 17 September 2024, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation on smoke and aerosol-free environments²⁴⁰, which replaces Council Recommendation of 2009

²³⁵ The [Council Recommendation of 26 November 2013 on promoting health-enhancing physical activity across sectors](#) established the collection of information and data on HEPA levels and policies and are based on the EU Physical Activity Guidelines.

²³⁶ [Tartu Call for a Healthy Lifestyle \(europa.eu\)](#).

²³⁷ [HealthyLifestyle4All initiative \(2021-2023\) - Sport \(europa.eu\)](#).

²³⁸ [Mapping on healthy lifestyles - Publications Office of the EU](#).

²³⁹ [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine-preventable cancers - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

²⁴⁰ [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on smoke and aerosol-free environments - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

aiming to protect people from exposure to second-hand smoke and aerosols and contributing to achieving a tobacco-free generation.

In September 2023, as part of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the Commission launched an **evaluation study of the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity**²⁴¹. The objectives of the evaluation study are to examine the progress of the Action Plan and to provide an overview of the efforts carried out by EU Member States to address its key areas, as well as ongoing and planned actions on childhood obesity. In addition, it aims to identify obstacles and remaining challenges and to collect best practices in policy approaches contributing to the promotion of healthy diets from a young age. The findings of the study will contribute to informing the Member States and the Commission on the possibility for future action at national level and feed into a potential revision or follow-up of the EU action plan.

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan looks specifically at helping children with cancer. It focuses on access to diagnosis and treatment through the new EU Network of Comprehensive Cancer Centres. It also includes an inter-speciality cancer training programme to help deliver the highest standards of care. This complements what has already been done by the European Reference Network for paediatric cancer (PaedCAN), which aims to increase survival rates and quality of life through cooperation, research and training.

One of the goals for patients and survivors is ensuring a high quality of life. For instance, a Cancer Survivor Smart Card is being developed to help improve the health and well-being of cancer survivors throughout Europe. In addition, a Youth Cancer Survivors Network is now up and running to spark dialogue between young cancer survivors.

In 2023, the EU Cancer Mission launched a new **dialogue with young cancer survivors**²⁴² from all over Europe through a series of thematic workshops and a conference to better understand the challenges they face during and after cancer treatment. This enables young cancer patients and survivors to co-create initiatives that will help address their specific needs, focusing on physical and mental well-being and other aspects, such as follow-up care and continuity in education. The dialogue has led to many concrete outcomes, including a research topic in the Horizon Europe Cancer Mission 2024 work programme on the late effects of cancer treatment and quality of life and a study on the provision of adolescent and young adult care in Europe under the 2024 EU4Health work programme. The engagement also helps increase the awareness of the needs of young cancer survivors among stakeholders and Member States. This was, for example, the main goal of the workshop on 'Improving quality of life of young cancer survivors' at the Research and Innovation Days 2024 held on 21 March 2024²⁴³. Similarly, young cancer survivors are actively supporting the Cancer Mission Bus Roadshow²⁴⁴ piloted in 2024 in Lithuania, Poland and Romania. The roadshow aims to raise awareness of cancer,

²⁴¹ The EU action plan was adopted by the 28 EU Member States with Iceland, Norway and Switzerland in 2014 with support from the European Commission. Its overarching goal was to contribute to halting the rise in overweight and obesity in children and young people (0-18 years) by 2020. [EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity 2014-2020 - European Commission](#).

²⁴² [Dialogue with Young Cancer Survivors - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

²⁴³ [European Research and Innovation Days | Research and Innovation \(europa.eu\)](#).

²⁴⁴ [EU Cancer Mission Roadshow | Research and Innovation \(europa.eu\)](#).

focusing on prevention and screening, as well as the crucial role of research to progress in the fight against cancer.

- **Illicit drug use**

The Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health²⁴⁵ can play an important supportive role in helping Member States address the mental health needs of young people affected by drug use. The Communication emphasises early intervention, support for psychological well-being and integration of mental health services into drug prevention and harm reduction programmes. Its flagship project, EU-PROMENS²⁴⁶, helps build the capacity of health and other professionals in delivering multidisciplinary training and exchange, including those affected by drug use.

The EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025²⁴⁷ prioritises measures relevant to children and young people. The European Drug Report 2024: Trends and Developments²⁴⁸ presents the European Union Drugs Agency's latest analysis of the drug situation in Europe. Surveys conducted by most EU Member States suggest that in the 15-34 age group, 1.5 million people used amphetamines in 2023 (i.e. 1.5% of this age group), 2.2 million used MDMA (2.2%) and 2.5 million used cocaine (2.5%).

Nitrous oxide, also known as laughing gas, was reported in acute drug-toxicity presentations to emergency services of 6 out of 23 sentinel hospitals in 2022. Most cases involved young males (under 25) who went to emergency services during weekdays. A small number of cases involved alcohol, and cannabis was the drug most commonly reported in cases of polydrug use toxicity.

LSD was reported by 15 centres in 12 of the 17 participating EU Member States and Norway in 2022. The drug was reported in an estimated 0.7% of presentations (median) across the 23 centres. Three quarters of the presentations were in males, and 40% were younger than 25 years. One in three LSD-related presentations required admission to intensive care.

4.4 Education and training

Education and training formed a central topic during the European Year of Youth. They are crucial for personal and societal development and to equip individuals with essential knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities needed to navigate and succeed in an increasingly complex world.

²⁴⁵ [A comprehensive approach to mental health - European Commission.](#)

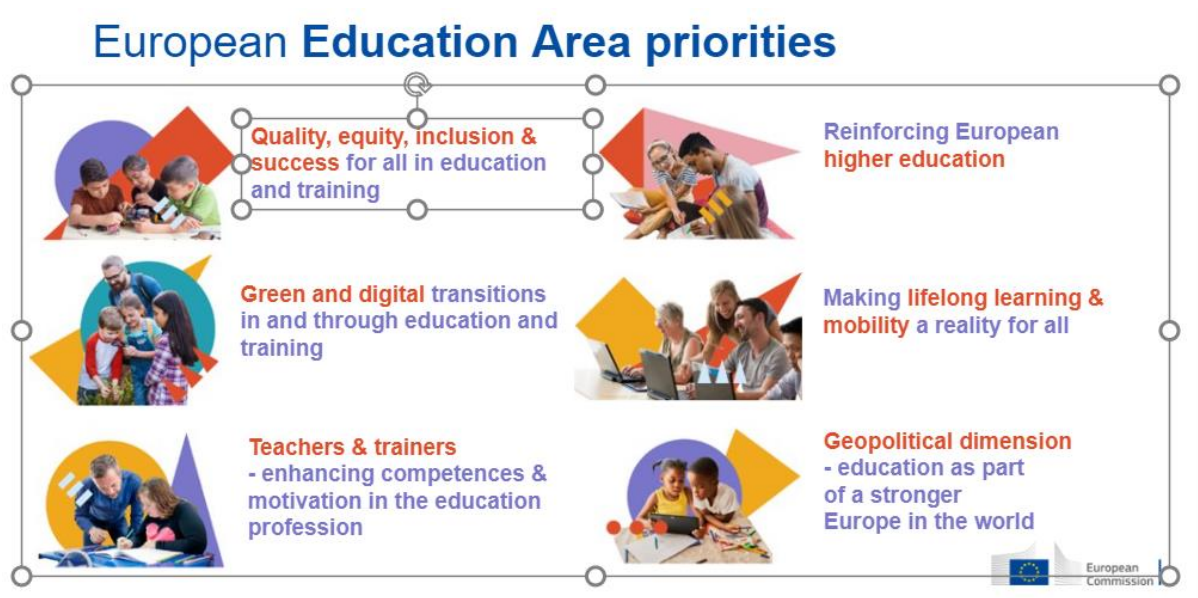
²⁴⁶ [EU-PROMENS Project Page - EU-PROMENS.](#)

²⁴⁷ [EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025](#)

²⁴⁸ [Understanding Europe's drug situation in 2024 – key developments \(European Drug Report 2024\) | www.euda.europa.eu.](#)

The importance of **learning mobility** is emphasised in: i) the 2024 Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022²⁴⁹; ii) the 2022 Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers²⁵⁰; iii) the 2024 Council Recommendation ‘Europe on the Move’²⁵¹; and iv) the recommendations of the 2022 Conference on the Future of Europe²⁵². These outline several actions aimed at sustaining the legacy of the Year and continuing to advance in this area.

The EU aims to enable all Europeans to receive the best education and training possible, regardless of their background or circumstances. To advance this, it has committed to creating a **European Education Area (EEA)**²⁵³, a common space for quality and inclusive education and lifelong learning across borders for all. To achieve this vision, the European cooperation takes place within the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) set out in the February 2021 Council Resolution²⁵⁴. To help the education and training systems adapt to the digital age, the Commission has adopted the **Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) 2021-2027**²⁵⁵. The Action Plan is a key enabler to achieving the European Education Area, setting out a long-term approach and vision for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe²⁵⁶.



In 2023, the Commission carried out a mid-term review process of the EEA²⁵⁷, and several important themes emerged for continued cooperation: the importance of boosting equity and inclusion, of tackling teacher shortages, and of enhancing European citizenship education, of which the last places particular importance on youth for Europe’s future. Enhancing youth

²⁴⁹ [Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022.](#)

²⁵⁰ [Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union.](#)

²⁵¹ [Council Recommendation ‘Europe on the Move’ – learning mobility opportunities for everyone.](#)

²⁵² [Conference on the Future of Europe - European Commission \(europa.eu\).](#)

²⁵³ [European Education Area.](#)

²⁵⁴ [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\) 2021/C 66/01.](#)

²⁵⁵ [Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\) - European Education Area \(europa.eu\).](#)

²⁵⁶ See subsection on digital education and skills.

²⁵⁷ [European Education Area midterm review process report](#)

participation through non-formal and informal learning, youth work and volunteering contributes to civic engagement and active citizenship, and complements European citizenship education in formal education and training settings. In the 2023 Council Conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship²⁵⁸, Member States affirm the role of education in shaping active, engaged and creative citizens.

As part of the European Education Area, the 2022 **Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success**²⁵⁹ offers policy guidance to Member States for systemic approaches to reducing underperformance in basic skills, and early leaving from education and training and promoting upper secondary education completion.

In March 2023, the Commission adopted the **European Higher education package**²⁶⁰, in order to pave the way towards a **European degree**, in line with the European strategy for universities²⁶¹, to give students more opportunities to study at various universities in different EU countries and to graduate with a single widely recognised diploma. The aim is to have a degree that would be automatically recognised everywhere in the EU, awarded jointly and on a voluntary basis by a group of universities across Europe, based on a common set of criteria agreed at EU level.

Central to realising the ambition of the pathway for a European degree and making the European Education Area a reality, the **European Universities initiative** brings together a new generation of Europeans who are able to study and work in different European countries, in different languages, across sectors and academic disciplines. As of 2024²⁶², 65 alliances encompass more than 570 higher education institutions of all types, providing students in all parts of Europe, including in rural areas and outermost regions, with access to a richer education offer, in cooperation with research departments and businesses. Pooling their expertise, knowledge and resources, including expensive equipment, the alliances allow students to develop a broader, future-oriented set of skills and competences including in strategic sectors, while fostering a sense of European belonging.

There are different ways of learning and the European Commission finds each of them relevant. Formal education is highly structured, occurring in traditional institutions like schools and universities, and leads to recognised certifications and degrees. In contrast, non-formal education is flexible and takes place in diverse settings such as community centres and workplaces, focusing on practical skills and personal development without necessarily leading to formal certifications.

To promote learning about the EU from an early age and reach out to new groups, the scope of **Jean Monnet actions** under Erasmus+ was widened to include schools and vocational education and training (VET) institutions. Launched in 2022, the newest Jean Monnet action,

²⁵⁸ [Council conclusions on the contribution of education and training to strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship \(C/2023/1339\)](#)

²⁵⁹ [Council Recommendation of 28 November 2022 on Pathways to School Success and replacing the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving.](#)

²⁶⁰ [Commission presents a blueprint for a European degree | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

²⁶¹ [Communication from the Commission on a European Strategy for Universities](#)

²⁶² [New funding for additional European Universities alliances will boost cooperation in higher education | European Education Area.](#)

Learning EU Initiatives²⁶³, enables teachers in schools and VET institutions in the Erasmus+ programme countries to develop activities bringing facts and knowledge on the EU to a broad spectrum of learners, also reaching out to their community (parents and families, local actors and authorities). To help teachers’ engage their students on EU matters, Jean Monnet Teacher Training funds activities proposed by higher education institutions and institutes offering teacher training to deliver specific training to teachers. These institutions can apply for a grant up to EUR 300 000 for a period of 3 years. Lastly, the Jean Monnet Schools Networks enable good practices to be exchanged between schools and higher education institutions. Networks with a minimum six schools and VET institutions from at least three different Erasmus+ programme countries can apply for a grant of up to EUR 300 000 over a three-year period.

The Long-Term vision for EU’s rural areas²⁶⁴ includes a “**Support education, training, youth, sport and volunteering in rural areas**” action to increase opportunities for young people in rural areas. Actions have also been taken under the prosperous pillar of the rural vision by “encouraging Member States to increase education, training and employment opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas under the Youth guarantee and the European Education area²⁶⁵;

Youth4Regions²⁶⁶ helps journalism students and young journalists learn about the EU and its actions in their region. In 2023, 42 participants from the EU, as well as neighbouring and accession countries came to Brussels for a week to follow training sessions about journalism and the EU, receive mentorship and work together with experienced journalists, and visit media organisations. The programme includes the Megalizzi – Niedzielski prize, which rewards aspiring journalists that show a strong attachment to the EU and its values.

In the alumni survey of January 2022, 78% of the respondents deemed the programme to have benefited their career thanks to networking and professional advice, while half think that their skills improved. The vast majority of the respondents also found that the programme helped their personal development, be it in terms of understanding of the EU (93%), intercultural understanding (71%) or creating friendships (62%). 17% mentioned that the programme enabled them to start their professional careers. The latest selection of applicants took place on 15 August 2024. Successful young journalists came together in Brussels for training, monitoring and exchanges in October 2024.

In line with the **Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe**²⁶⁷, and as part of the European Year of Skills, the **European Competence Framework for Researchers (ResearchComp)** was officially launched with a dedicated website in July 2024, after being developed in close consultation with stakeholders. It is part of an overall package of measures that the Commission developed to strengthen research careers in Europe. ResearchComp identifies and describes, including with learning outcomes, the transversal competences that researchers are advised to

²⁶³ [Jean Monnet Learning EU initiatives for schools and VET providers.](#)

²⁶⁴ [EU long-term vision for rural areas \(see sub-section on Youth in rural and remote areas in section 4.2 Social Inclusion\)](#)

²⁶⁵ [Report The long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas: key achievements and ways forward](#)

²⁶⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communication/partnership-with-media/youth4regions_en

²⁶⁷ [Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe.](#)

develop for successful careers spanning across sectors. It continues to be promoted among stakeholders, generating a high level of interest and use, and there was a call in Horizon Europe's 2024 WIDERA work programme to support its implementation.

It is further promoted in **EU TalentOn**, a science competition for early career researchers representing all disciplines of science, aged between 21 and 35, who are working, studying or completing their PhD in Europe. This programme is addressed to everyone willing to develop innovative solutions in order to achieve one of the EU's five objectives: i) adaptation to climate change, ii) cancer prevention and cancer patient care, iii) ocean and water restoration, iv) smart cities, and v) transition towards healthy soils. Initiated, funded, and co-created by the European Commission, **EU TalentOn** was launched as a part of the 2022 European Year of Youth. The following edition took place in Katowice in September 2024. The first edition of EU TalentOn brought to Leiden 104 researchers between 21 and 35 years old to work in teams on a challenge related to one of the five EU Missions, and it featured a programme co-created with academia, entrepreneurs and industry. The next edition took place in Katowice, European City of Science 2024, in September 2024.

The **EU Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS)** is a science competition for 14 to 20 year olds, organised annually by the Commission. It brings together winners of national science competitions to compete on an international stage where they present their projects to an esteemed jury. The contest is about young people, scientific excellence and innovative ideas and aims to encourage contestants to study STE(A)M subjects and to pursue careers in science, research and innovation. EUCYS laureates are the brightest of Europe's future scientists and it is important to provide a safe, encouraging, engaging and stimulating environment for them to interact with high level scientists and their peers. Over 3,500 contestants have taken part since the first contest took place 35 years ago. It is estimated that over 500,000 students embark on scientific projects every year in the hope of reaching national and international science fairs for school going students. The 2022 edition of the European Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) took place under as part of the European Year of Youth, bringing together almost 140 young scientists from 14 to 20 years of age to showcase their scientific projects and to exchange knowledge and experiences with their peers, encouraging them (especially young girls) to pursue a career in science. The contest took place in 2023 in Brussels and in 2024 in Katowice. The next edition will be in Riga in 2025.

Leiden European City of Science 2022 was a year-long initiative co-funded by the European Commission, designed to engage the public with science through a 365-day festival featuring daily activities such as lectures, workshops, exhibitions, excursions, and events. This stream of activities was dedicated to young people, shedd light on the importance of youth for a better, greener, more inclusive and digital future, and launched several initiative to engage the European youth in science. A key focus was youth involvement, in line with the European Year of Youth. Notable youth-centred events included the Bright Young Minds programme, providing opportunities for young people to participate in scientific discussions and collaborative problem-solving events. The second edition of the festival, although in a less extensive form, took place in Katowice in 2024. While the Commission's support for the

European City of Science concludes after 2024, it has introduced a new initiative called ‘Science Comes to Town,’ which will be piloted in 2026 and aims to achieve similar objectives.

Under **Horizon Europe**, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, three dedicated calls for fundings were published to support and strengthen the development and implementation of a **STE(A)M**²⁶⁸ **education approach** across Europe.

With the dedicated funds for widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area (WIDERA)²⁶⁹, a first call for funding intitled “Developing a STE(A)M roadmap for Science Education in Horizon Europe” funded three projects with an EU contribution of €5 129 446,25, which started in September 2022. The **EU funded project Road-STEAMer**²⁷⁰ is creating a STEAM roadmap for science education in Horizon Europe, providing guidance to the EU’s key funding programme for research and innovation on how to foster greater interest in STEM through the integration of artistic and creative thinking. The **EU funded project SENSE**²⁷¹ is working on shaping a flexible roadmap for future-making STEAM education across Europe to radically re-configure the education of young citizens, by connecting schools with life and society with work. The last **EU funded project** from this cluster, **SEER**²⁷², is currently developing a set of roadmaps that will pave the way for the policy and institutional changes necessary for the large-scale implementation and mainstreaming of STE(A)M education in Europe.

Through another WIDERA call for funding, “Support to the implementation of an EU Manifesto for STE(A)M education and research and innovation career paths to tackle gender inequalities in the ERA”, the **EU funded project ST(R)E(A)M IT**²⁷³ started on January 1st 2024 with a total EU contribution of EUR 1.8 million. Its main objective is to initiate change about the persisting gender inequalities in STEM education, research, and innovation to contribute to the implementation of the ‘The European Manifesto for gender-inclusive STE(A)M education and careers’. By encouraging sustainable collaboration between STEM-oriented businesses, secondary and higher education institutions, research organisations, informal science education establishments, NGOs, and civil society organisations, ST(R)E(A)M IT intends to provide several tools to close the existing gender gap in STEM education and career.

Under the Cluster 2 ‘Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society’²⁷⁴, a call on ‘Cultural and creative approaches for gender-responsive STEAM education’ funded the **EU project STEAMbrace**²⁷⁵. The project started its activity on 1 January 2024 with an EU contribution of EUR 2.9 million. By merging STEM with arts, the project hopes to create a strong European

²⁶⁸ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The STEAM approach refers to the inclusion of arts, social sciences and the humanities in STEM education, as a transdisciplinary, inclusive and future-oriented approach to learning, to make STEM studies and careers more appealing to a diverse group of learners.

²⁶⁹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/jobs-research/researchcomp-european-competence-framework-researchers_en

²⁷⁰ [Road-STEAMer Developing a STEAM Roadmap for Science Education in Horizon Europe](#)

²⁷¹ SENSE. SENSE. The New European Roadmap to STEAM Education

²⁷² [The SEER The STE\(A\)M Education European Roadmap](#)

²⁷³ [ST\(R\)E\(A\)M IT/STREAMING GIRLS AND WOMEN INTO STEAM EDUCATION, INNOVATION AND RESEARCH | STREAM IT](#)

²⁷⁴ Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive society - European Commission (europa.eu).

²⁷⁵ [European coordination network and activities to embrace a sustainable and inclusive STEAM educational system: the blend of artistic and creative approaches in STEM education, research & innovation.](#)

alliance, employing creativity and evidence-based approaches to create a sustainable and inclusive STEAM education methodology. It will in particular raise awareness about the value of STE(A)M education, R&I for competitiveness, gender equality and career perspectives by implementing the first EU STE(A)M week for future women innovators. It will also include validation with 11 to 18-year-old students to better understand gaps and limitations in STEM education across demographics.

The Commission addresses the **underrepresentation of women and girls in STEM** education and training, including through the STEAM approach and the **Women in Digital initiative**²⁷⁶, in line with the Digital Education Action Plan, the European Strategy for Universities, and the Digital Decade Policy Programme target. More concretely, as part of the action plan, over 47 000 girls aged 14-19 in 23 countries boosted their digital and entrepreneurial competences by completing the **Girls Go Circular**²⁷⁷ training programme since the launch of its pilot in 2020. Also, over 13 ESTEAM Fests for girls and women have been organised, which are 1-day workshops taking place across Europe.

The Commission is supporting 12 EU Member States in designing and implementing skills reforms under the **Technical Support Instrument 2024** flagship on Skills²⁷⁸. The projects selected help develop young people's skills for them to thrive economically and personally via quality early childhood education and care, the development of competence-based curriculum, skills forecasting system, and micro-credentials across all stages of education, and integration of migrants and refugee children through the education system.

For example, the Commission will help Portugal further strengthen its capacity to assess the skills needs and effectively target skills mismatches in higher education. It will do so by developing a forecasting system that can be used by higher education institutions to better adjust their offer to the labour market needs and address challenges emerging from rapid technological developments, the digital revolution and green transition as well as demographic and geopolitical changes.

Under the TSI 2025 **Flagship Technical Support project on Addressing Demographic Change Through Reforms**²⁷⁹, the European Commission is offering support to EU Member States to help the young generation by means of education reforms. Possible support areas include: improving the inclusiveness, quality and accessibility of education and training systems at all levels, including non-formal and informal learning, also through the engagement of families in children learning; facilitating the acquisition and consolidation of basic skills and key competences ; promoting whole-school approaches to combatting underachievement and early leaving from education and training and promoting school success for all learners, through partnerships with local services, NGOs, social, health professionals, and the community at large, including parents.

²⁷⁶ [Women in Digital \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu).

²⁷⁷ [Girls Go Circular | Digital and Entrepreneurial Skills for the Circular Economy \(eit-girlsgocircular.eu\)](https://eit-girlsgocircular.eu).

²⁷⁸ [TSI 2024 Flagship – Flagship on Skills: Fostering skills development systems better adapted to the labour market \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu).

²⁷⁹ [TSI 2025 Flagship - Tackling the demographic change through supporting skills-labour market and social inclusion reforms - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu).

As a follow-up to the Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on **vocational education and training** (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience²⁸⁰, Member States have designed their **national implementation plans** to respond to the agreed priorities. Many of the measures focus on young people in initial VET such as development of work-based learning / apprenticeship schemes, or on building up Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs).

Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) are partnerships comprising local and regional public and private actors and stakeholders that work together to provide **high quality vocational education, training, and skills for young people and adults**. The **Erasmus+ programme provides** EUR 400 million to fund at least 100 CoVE projects in the period 2021-2027. In the period 2021-2023, 41 projects have been running, and additional 16 new projects were selected under the 2024 call. Many CoVEs focus on horizontal topics relevant for youth.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) aims to strengthen the supply, quality and overall image of apprenticeships across Europe, while also promoting mobility of apprentices. Since its launch in 2013, 41 countries²⁸¹ have made national commitments under the Alliance, and in 2022 and 2023, also Armenia, Georgia and Moldova joined the EAfA. In 2024, EAfA received more than 470 pledges made by various apprenticeship stakeholders. Altogether, companies, employers and intermediaries have pledged to provide over 3 million apprenticeships opportunities since 2013.

The **European Apprentices Network (EAN)** is a platform which since 2017 has regrouped apprentices, youth organisations and other bodies related to apprenticeships. Its aim is to ensure that young apprentices are involved in policymaking related to VET and apprenticeships. In 2024 the EAN carried out a survey to address the mental well-being of apprentices²⁸², to identify the challenges they face, potential solutions and effective practices.

As for promoting the importance of **financial literacy**, especially that of the framework for children and young people published by the Commission and the OECD/INFE in September 2023, the Commission and the Belgian Financial Services and Markets Authority organised a high level Conference on financial literacy, resilience and inclusion under the Belgian Presidency on 20 February 2024. The conference addressed the different dimensions of financial literacy and looked at how to build on existing work in this area to identify opportunities, challenges and best practices. The conference as well as the financial competence frameworks contribute to the aim of empowering the youth and creating a more inclusive society.

Following the call in April 2024 by the European Council for “strengthening financial literacy of citizens and promoting awareness-raising initiatives”, on 14 May 2024 the Council adopted detailed **Conclusions on financial literacy**²⁸³. In these Conclusions, the Council encourages Member States to consider integrating financial education in school curricula and foster financial education for adults through events, seminars, workshops and awareness raising campaigns. It also invites the Commission to continue promoting the uptake of the financial

²⁸⁰ [2020/C 417/01](#)

²⁸¹ These include the 27 EU Member States, 8 candidate countries, all 4 European Free Trade Association countries, as well as Israel and Armenia.

²⁸² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&caId=1147&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10799>

²⁸³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/05/14/capital-markets-union-council-approves-conclusions-on-financial-literacy/>

competence frameworks and to facilitate the exchange of best practices by Member States and its stakeholders.

The defence and aerospace ecosystems **are essential for EU and its citizens' security** and play a significant role in today's society. However, recent surveys show that the workforce is ageing and is very male dominated. To attract and retain the talent and increase diversity, the Commission has a number of actions, which are promoted in an accessible and inclusive way (e.g. testimonial videos with female role models). For space, these include CASSINI Hackathons, organised every semester at 10 different locations across Europe, with past editions on Space for International Development & Humanitarian Aid or Space for Defence & Security. Projects like ASTRAIOS, focusing on creating an overview of current space curricula to identify space-related education and training to improve future career pathways, or UNIVERSEH, the European space University for earth and humanity, an alliance of 7 EU Universities, aimed at setting-up an inter-university campus with enhanced teaching and learning opportunities and interactive experiences within space sector. In July 2024, the Commission launched a matchmaking platform, the Space Career Launchpad, aimed to give university students and young graduates hands-on experience through internships and entry-level jobs with particular focus on startups and SMEs.

The defence industry has had difficulties attracting young people. Although this has changed to a large extent over the last years, it is still seen as a problem in some Member States. The Commission has conducted a survey on the perceptions and experiences of the European defence industry as an employer, in order to understand the underlying factors. The results will be presented in 2025.

- **Support instruments**

The **European Social Fund+** (ESF+) supports the entire education and training cycle from early childhood education to life-long learning, higher education and VET to make sure that people get the right knowledge and skills at all stages of life.

In the 2021-2027 programming period, the ESF+ will have invested around EUR 17.3 billion, including an EU amount of around EUR 11 billion, in the employment and socio-economic integration of young people. Measures supporting youth employment focus on a wide range of issues, all converging towards how to accompany young people into the labour market.

Furthermore, around EUR 64.7 billion, including an EU amount of EUR 42 billion, is allocated to education, training and skills investments, including measures targeting young people specifically.

In addition, EUR 8.4 billion²⁸⁴ has been allocated under the **European Regional Development Funds (ERDF)** to support efforts by Member States and regions towards ensuring equal access to inclusive and quality education and training, addressing territorial and social disparities in accessing these services, with a particular focus on deprived areas and vulnerable groups. This

²⁸⁴ Cohesion Open Data Platform Data Story: Cohesion Policy Support for education, training and skills <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Cohesion-policy-support-to-education-training-and-/jxir-9xbs#erdf-support-much-more-than-education-and-training-infrastructure-and-equipment>

support is provided in close cooperation with the ESF+ and consists primarily of building, renovating or expanding infrastructure at all education and training levels, providing equipment and the conditions for digital education, and education desegregation measures, from which young people will benefit.

Nearly **EUR 53 billion**²⁸⁵ from the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** is allocated to education at all levels. This includes, amongst others, reforms and investments in early childhood education and care (ECEC), making schools more inclusive, improving the quality of the curricula, fighting early school leaving, expanding the number of places available at all levels of education, internationalising higher education, expanding STE(A)M education, upgrading the schools/universities infrastructure, and digitalising teaching and learning. For example, in Croatia, the RRF aims to increase the relevance of secondary education, by improving the labour market relevance of vocational programmes and supporting enrolment in schools which are relevant for jobs that are most needed. The digital transformation of higher education will also be supported.

Up until now, more than **11.7 million persons**²⁸⁶, including young people, have benefited from different types of education and training support and more than **500 000 people**²⁸⁷ have already benefited from increased classroom capacity or modernised childcare and education facilities.

- **Digital education and skills**

Digital skills are essential for everyone, including young people, so they can participate in society, in education and training, as well as in the labour market. The Commission has put in place actions to help develop the full spectrum of digital skills, ranging from basic to advanced. This comes along with actions towards supporting the development of a **high-performing digital education ecosystem**, which is a requirement for learners to acquire the digital skills they need to thrive in today's world, creating also more and better opportunities for everyone as regards learning and teaching in the digital age. Support for upskilling, including digital upskilling, is a core objective of **EU funding**. The **European Social Fund Plus** is the EU's main training investment instrument. As of July 2024, **EUR 2 billion** has been allocated **exclusively to help develop digital skills** for the 2021-2027 period, beyond other more general measures that may also involve developing digital skills through, for example, modernising education and training systems or delivering active labour market policies.

In addition, under the **Recovery and Resilience Facility**, over EUR 28 billion²⁸⁸ will be spent digital skills and education in the current financing period. For example, in Spain, the RRF is supporting digital skills for both employed and unemployed people, in particular for young people.

²⁸⁵ Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data is based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and correspond to the measures allocated to the policy areas 'general, vocational and higher education' and 'early childhood education and care' as primary or secondary policy area. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

²⁸⁶ See footnote on RRF Common Indicators in Section 8.2 Insights into EU spending on youth

²⁸⁷ See footnote on RRF Common Indicators in Section 8.2 Insights into EU spending on youth

²⁸⁸ Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data are based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and correspond to the measures allocated to the policy area 'human capital in digitalisation' as primary or secondary policy area. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

The **Digital Skills & Jobs Platform**²⁸⁹ brings together different stakeholders (students, teachers, and adults, both employed and unemployed) and also gathers and connects the national coalitions. It is a central hub for information around digital skills in Europe. On this platform, users can find useful resources, articles, training and funding opportunities, and opinions from inspirational leaders.

Under the **Better Internet for Kids** strategy (BIK+), the co-funded Safer Internet Centres network provide training, awareness raising activities and resources in all EU languages to help provide digital skills and media literacy among young people.

The Commission is also continuing to build the **Cybersecurity Skills Academy**²⁹⁰. This initiative, part of the 2023 European Year of Skills, contributes to increasing the Commission's effort to support cybersecurity skills. with the objective of training additional cybersecurity experts. Building on work conducted under the Cybersecurity Skills Academy, the Commission has announced in December 2024 an upcoming Industry-Academia Network which aim will be to strengthen the connections between industry and academia in the field of cybersecurity skills for professionals. Other initiatives conducted by the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) such as the **European Cybersecurity Challenge**²⁹¹ and the **Cybersecurity Higher Education Database (CyberHEAD)**²⁹² aim respectively at enhancing cybersecurity talent across Europe and connecting high potentials with industry leading organisations, and at allowing young talents to make informed decisions on the variety of possibilities offered by higher education in cybersecurity²⁹³. In October 2024, ENISA also launched the **CyberEducation platform**²⁹⁴, which acts as a central hub for cybersecurity educational resources tailored for primary and secondary schools in each Member State. The platform will help advancing cybersecurity literacy and resilience in Europe's schools.

Exploiting **synergies** between initiatives such as the Cybersecurity Skills Academy and funding instruments such as Digital Europe Programme²⁹⁵, the **European Universities** play a key role to enhance digital skills development including for young people. They notably are strong possible contributors to the industry-academia network to bridge cybersecurity skills gap, and several alliances develop digital specialised masters (for instance, the Arqus Master Programme in International Cybersecurity and Cyberintelligence).

The **Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) 2021-2027**²⁹⁶ sets out a long-term approach and vision for high quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe through two strategic priorities, namely fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem and enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation.

²⁸⁹ [Home | Digital Skills and Jobs Platform \(europa.eu\)](#).

²⁹⁰ [Communication on the Cybersecurity Skills Academy | Shaping Europe's digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

²⁹¹ <https://ecsc.eu/>

²⁹² CYBERHEAD - Cybersecurity Higher Education Database — ENISA

²⁹³ [How students can use CyberHEAD to choose academic programmes aligning with their interests and aspirations: https://videos.enisa.europa.eu/w/4Qx8c9HD7QjRAZujMnR5AV](#)

²⁹⁴ [ENISA CyberEducation Platform — ENISA](#)

²⁹⁵ [The Digital Europe Programme | Shaping Europe's digital future](#) This programme is also mentioned further in the present section.

²⁹⁶ [Digital Education Action Plan \(2021-2027\) | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

Responding to the strategic priorities of the DEAP, in November 2023, the Council adopted **two Recommendations to support Member States in addressing the digital divide in education and training** (i.e. Council Recommendation on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training) **and supporting the development of people’s digital skills** (i.e. Council Recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training)²⁹⁷.

The Council Recommendations are the result of the **Structured Dialogue with Member States on digital education and skills**²⁹⁸ that took place between October 2021 and March 2023. The Dialogue gathered different sectors and institutions of government, as well as various stakeholders, such as social partners, civil society and the private sector, who shared their experience and best practices. The Dialogue increased the political commitment of the EU Member States to achieving EU objectives on digital education and skills and raised awareness of the key factors for the successful digital transformation of education and training systems and improvement of digital skills. To support Member States and stakeholders in the implementation of the Council Recommendations the European Commission has launched new actions, including the launch of two Expert Groups: An Expert Group supporting the Commission in drafting **guidelines for teachers and educators on high quality informatics** and another supporting the Commission in **drafting guidelines and quality requirements for accessible, well-designed and high-quality digital education content**. The guidelines are expected to be published in 2025.

As part of the DEAP, the Commission published another two sets of guidelines in October 2022: i) **ethical guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data in education**²⁹⁹, which aim to support educators in understanding the potential benefits and risks of AI and data use in education; and ii) **guidelines to help teachers and educators promote digital literacy and address disinformation** through education and training³⁰⁰. Both sets of guidelines are translated into all EU official languages and are of valuable help for teachers in supporting young people.

Work continues on other actions and initiatives under the Digital Education Action Plan. One of the programme’s flagship initiatives is the **Digital Education Hackathon (DigiEduHack)**³⁰¹. Through the Hackathon, the Commission promotes the development and application of digital skills among participants, the great majority of which are young people (pupils, students from secondary or tertiary education, young entrepreneurs). Since its launch in 2019, DigiEduHack has become one of the EU’s flagship grassroot initiatives in digital

²⁹⁷ [Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training \(europa.eu\)](#); [Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training \(europa.eu\)](#)

²⁹⁸ [Digital Education Action Plan – Action 1 | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

²⁹⁹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d81a0d54-5348-11ed-92ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

³⁰⁰ [Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#).

³⁰¹ [Homepage - DigiEduHack 2024](#).

education, encouraging user-driven innovation and providing insights into trends for education and training in the digital age.

To support the DEAP's priorities, the **European Digital Education Hub**³⁰² strengthens cooperation and exchange in digital education at the EU level. Its mission is to overcome the current fragmentation of digital education policy, research and implementation practices at European level. The Hub brings together people working at all levels and in all sectors of education and training. It aims to support peer learning and collaboration and enable best practices to be shared. The Hub gathers a wide range of professionals interested in digital education, including school educators, teacher trainers, policy makers, and researchers.

Since July 2023, a Working Group of around 140 higher education stakeholders and experts within the European Digital Education Hub has been collaboratively designing a **higher education interoperability framework**. This framework aims to achieve interoperability for the learning and teaching systems of European higher education institutions, promoting virtual mobility, virtual exchange and the development of joint degrees, programmes, and course catalogues.

Another action under the DEAP was to update in 2022 the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) to take account of emerging technologies such as AI, datafication and phenomena, such as teleworking, disinformation and the new skill requirements they bring. Work is continuing on a more comprehensive update to take account of new skills requirements, including work on digital skills gaps and needs as well as learning outcomes.

As **2024 marks the midpoint of the DEAP**, the Commission has begun a **comprehensive review** to evaluate the impact of the actions taken, and to adapt its strategy and future actions in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. The aim is to ensure that the DEAP remains responsive and effective in advancing digital education at the EU level. The review of DEAP will help ensure its efficacy in fostering a safe, informed and technologically adept learning environment for all, including young people.

The review process began with a launch event in April 2024, where stakeholders shared perspectives and feedback on DEAP actions in the first years of its implementation. Among the participants there were an alumni from the Girls Go Circular programme³⁰³ and four global winners of the 2023 DigiEduHack edition, who had the opportunity to pitch their solutions to the audience. The review process entails a series of stakeholder consultations throughout 2024. As part of the consultation with social partners that took place in July 2024, young people's representatives contributed with their perspectives. The Commission has also organised online consultation meetings with VET and civil society stakeholders to get their views on the DEAP's achievements and ambitions for the future.

Learning by doing emphasises practical experience over passive learning, encouraging active involvement in tasks to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations. This hands-on approach fosters deep understanding, problem-solving skills, and confidence through

³⁰² [European Digital Education Hub - European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](https://european-education-area.europa.eu/).

³⁰³ [Girls Go Circular | Digital and Entrepreneurial Skills for the Circular Economy \(eit-girlsgocircular.eu\)](https://eit-girlsgocircular.eu/).

experimentation and learning from mistakes. It cultivates a dynamic learning process that is both enriching and empowering across various fields of study. For that, the Commission provides young people with different EU-funded opportunities to get involved and develop digital skills.

Both **Erasmus+** and the **European Solidarity Corps** have digital transformation as one of their overarching priorities, in line with the DEAP’s strategic priorities, and with the two Council Recommendations adopted in November 2023 on: a) the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training³⁰⁴; and b) improving the way digital skills and competences are provided in education and training³⁰⁵.

To support the digital transformation in a human-centric manner and address societal challenges such as AI, social media or disinformation more effectively, Europe needs education and training systems that are fit for the digital age.

The **Erasmus+ programme** seeks to prepare individuals and organisations for the digital transition and to provide them with the skills and competences needed in a digitally advanced society and work environment. It promotes actions to step up the development of digital competences throughout society and focuses both on basic and advanced digital skills, as well as on digital literacy. The programme provides funding for cooperation projects that support the digital transformation planning of education and training institutions, including primary and secondary schools, vocational education and training (VET), higher education and adult learning institutions.

Erasmus+ 2022 call	
Budget	743.9 million of the 2022 budget for cooperation projects supporting digital transition (59% of the total)
Number of cooperation projects	1,653 or 41% of the total number
Number of organisations	6,200
Traineeships in advanced digital skills in Higher Education	12,300
Traineeships in cross all fields of education, training and youth	17,000

The **Erasmus+ teacher academies** have been set up to further help in creating and applying digital pedagogies and to help boost teachers’ expertise in using digital tools, including accessible and assistive technologies. The **SELFIE for Teachers**³⁰⁶ is an online self-reflection tool that helps teachers identify strengths and gaps in their digital competences and plan further training. The **European Universities initiative** plays a key role in helping young people develop the digital skills and competences required to accelerate innovation and meet sustainability goals. The initiative supports young people in their personal and professional life, and helps maintain a digitally literate, democratic and open European society.

³⁰⁴ [Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training \(europa.eu\).](#)

³⁰⁵ [Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on improving the provision of digital skills and competences in education and training \(europa.eu\).](#)

³⁰⁶ [SELFIE for TEACHERS | European Education Area \(europa.eu\).](#)

The **European Solidarity Corps** can play a role by helping Europeans, regardless of their gender, age and background, live and thrive in the digital age through projects and activities that aim to boost digital skills, foster digital literacy and/or develop an understanding of the risks and opportunities of digital technology. Since 2021, 927 (22% out of total) volunteering projects had digital transition as a priority, involving over 14 000 volunteers³⁰⁷.

The programmes also promote the use of virtual and digital components such as information, communication and technology tools in all projects and activities.

In 2022, the **SALTO Digital**³⁰⁸ resource centre was set up to advance the implementation of the digital priority in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps through the provision of resources to National Agencies, potential applicants and beneficiaries, capacity building activities and monitoring actions.

In addition, the **Digital Europe Programme**³⁰⁹ provides funding for higher education programmes in key digital areas, like artificial intelligence, data analytics, cloud computing, quantum technologies, high performing computing, semiconductors, virtual worlds or robotics to increase the number of Information and communication technology (ICT) graduates in Europe able to design, deploy and use [the different advanced](#) digital technologies.

To help reduce disparities and address the uneven deployment of high-speed internet access in schools, the **Connecting Europe Facility Digital programme**³¹⁰ supports gigabit and 5G connectivity for smart communities, where socio-economic drivers such as schools are located. This action promotes best practices in 5G connectivity in local communities and schools, alongside other education and training institutions.

The **EU Code Week**³¹¹ spreads computational thinking, coding and related digital skills to schools' teachers and students. The Code Week strives to widen the offer and lower the barrier for teachers to integrate programming and technology in their everyday teaching practices. It provides equal access to digital skills to all children, regardless of their economic background or gender.

4.5 Culture

Culture plays an essential role in reaching out to young people. According to the Eurobarometer survey³¹², 23% of young Europeans identify culture as a key factor in community-building. **Creative Europe** – the European Commission's flagship programme to support the culture and creative sectors – co-finances actions and projects to promote European cultural content to a large audience including younger people. It facilitates the cross-border circulation and mobility of artists and professionals – including young talents – in Europe and beyond.

³⁰⁷ European Solidarity Corps 01/2021 – 08/2024.

³⁰⁸ [Useful Resources on Digital Transformation](#)

³⁰⁹ [The Digital Europe Programme | Shaping Europe's digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

³¹⁰ [Connecting Europe Facility - CEF Digital | Shaping Europe's digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

³¹¹ [EU Code Week](#)

³¹² [Eurobarometer survey: Youth and Democracy in the European Year of Youth.](#)

Culture Moves Europe³¹³, for example, awards mobility grants to artists and cultural professionals so they can work abroad. It has a special focus on emerging artists. In 2023-2024 almost 6 000 individual artists received mobility grants and 1 037 artists participating in the residencies were supported by the scheme.

Creative Europe also supports young creatives through its **Platforms for the Promotion of Emerging Artists**³¹⁴. For instance, **Versopolis**³¹⁵ is a European poetry platform that builds upon novel opportunities for emerging European poets. It envisages cooperation and growth continuing, given that Creative Europe selected it from two open calls within the Support for European Platforms initiative. From 2022-25 the Versopolis was granted EUR 1 936 815 from the Creative Europe programme.

Furthermore, the **Pan-European Cultural Entities**³¹⁶ scheme helps transnational orchestras train and boost the careers of young musicians. For example, the **European Union Youth Orchestra (EUYO)**³¹⁷ continues to provide an exceptional bridge between music colleges and the professional music world for generations of Europe's finest musicians. The project aims to professionalise the capacity of the orchestra and its young musicians so it can act as Cultural Ambassador for EU values, while pursuing the highest levels of artistic excellence. Each year, at least 150 members from all Member States are selected through a rigorous recruitment process. In 2021-2023 the EUYO was granted EUR 1 800 000 from the Creative Europe programme.

In addition, Creative Europe supports young talents through the horizontal scheme **Networks of Cultural and Creative Organisations**³¹⁸. In particular, the **Euro-Mediterranean Network for the professional development of young artists (BJCEM)**³¹⁹ ranges from cultural institutions to independent organisations, with partnerships throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa. In 2022-2024, the BJCEM was granted EUR 326 136 from the Creative Europe programme.

As the largest funding scheme of Creative Europe's Culture strand, the **European Cooperation Projects**³²⁰ support cultural projects addressing young audiences and talents. **New Perspectives for Action (NPA)**³²¹, for example, is a four-year transnational co-creation and circulation project by 13 interdisciplinary art organisations across Europe. It builds upon the results of the successful Re-Imagine Europe project (2017-2021). For 2023-2027, the NPA was granted EUR 2 000 000 from the Creative Europe programme. The countries participating are: Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands (coordinator), North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal and Slovakia.

EU cultural prizes, co-funded by Creative Europe, recognise the excellence of emerging European talents. In 2023, the **EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der**

³¹³ [Culture Moves Europe – Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](#).

³¹⁴ [European Platforms for the promotion of emerging artists](#).

³¹⁵ [Versopolis](#).

³¹⁶ [Pan-European Cultural Entities - Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](#).

³¹⁷ [European Union Youth Orchestra](#).

³¹⁸ [European networks - Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](#).

³¹⁹ [Euro-Mediterranean Network for the professional development of young artists](#).

³²⁰ [European cooperation projects - Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](#).

³²¹ [New Perspectives for Action](#).

Rohe Award (EUmies Awards Young Talent)³²², supported under Creative Europe, was granted to three qualifying university master's degrees that include a design proposal. By bringing together the most talented graduated architects and some of the best architecture firms and institutions in Europe, the Young Talent Winners have the chance to develop strategies, synergies or complementarities with the firms and institutions of their choice. The Young Talent award aims to support the talent of recently graduated architects, urban planners and landscape architects, who will be responsible for transforming our environment in the future.

Likewise, the **Music Moves Europe award**³²³ and the **European Union Prize for Literature**³²⁴ recognise emerging European literary and music talents – many of those writers and musicians are under 30 – and promote them to a diversified audience including young people. Furthermore, the **European Heritage Awards**³²⁵ highlight and acknowledge achievements in protecting and promoting heritage, which often involve young people, be it as heritage professionals or volunteers. For example, in the Citizens' Rehabilitation of the Tsiskarauli Tower project in Akhveli (Georgia) – one of 26 award-winners in 2024 – 54 young volunteers from different European countries worked closely with the rural area's local community to restore a historic landmark over the course of three years. This has enabled these volunteers to experience cross-border collaboration and acquire new skills and heritage practices. In addition, each of the Awards' selection committees includes a young member, ensuring young people are represented in the selection of the award-winning projects.

In March 2024 the second edition of the **Day of European Authors**³²⁶ took place in all 40 Creative Europe countries gathering almost 2 000 reading events. It aimed to reconnect the younger generation with books and reading as well as to encourage them discovering the cultural and linguistic diversity of European literature. The second edition had a stronger focus on the collaboration between schools and book sectors.

In addition to that, all **European Capitals of Culture (ECoC)**³²⁷ have ambitious youth programmes. Title-holding cities engage the public, especially young people, in developing (part of) the cultural programme or gaining professional experience through volunteering, and they design projects or schemes to increase youth interest in the arts and culture. This was also the case with the three ECoC cities in 2023. To give a few examples, as part of its outreach activities, Elefsina 2023 (Greece) involved teenagers and youths in a series of educational programmes for the student community in the Municipality and the wider region. The programme of Timisoara 2023 (Romania) had a number of flagship events that had been especially dedicated to young audiences. Finally, the Volunteer Programme of Veszprém 2023 (Hungary), which included a focus on youth participants, received the Quality Label of the European Solidarity Corps. Furthermore, together with Timisoara 2023, Kaunas (ECoC 2022), and Tartu (ECoC 2024), Veszprém 2023 was a partner in the Erasmus + funded Youth creatives going digital project. The aim of the project was to enable participating organisations to

³²² [EUmies Awards Young Talent - Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/europa/en/eumies-awards-young-talent-culture-and-creativity).

³²³ [MME Awards](https://www.musicmoves.eu/).

³²⁴ [Home Page | EU Prize for Literature \(euprizeliterature.eu\)](https://www.euprizeliterature.eu/).

³²⁵ <https://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/>.

³²⁶ [Day of European Authors - Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/europa/en/day-of-european-authors-culture-and-creativity)

³²⁷ [European Capitals of Culture - Culture and Creativity \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/europa/en/european-capitals-of-culture-culture-and-creativity)

increase their capacity to support young people to take full advantage of the opportunities created by digital and entrepreneurship.

Creative Europe also co-funds the **European Heritage Days (EHDs)**³²⁸, one of the most widely celebrated participatory cultural events in Europe. Co-organised by the EU and the Council of Europe, the EHDs provide access to thousands of rarely opened sites and unique events in 48 countries to over 20 million people every year. Since 2019 the EHDs have run a special initiative, the **Young European Heritage Makers**³²⁹, a youth competition targeting children in primary and secondary schools across Europe. Through this competition among classrooms, the action aims to reconnect youngsters with their local heritage while giving them a voice in promoting it. The winning classroom will be offered a trip to Strasbourg to visit the Council of Europe's premises.

In 2021-2027, **support for culture and cultural heritage** under the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** provided support to programmes totalling EUR 5 billion and EUR 0.4 billion under Interreg programmes. The support includes investment in cultural infrastructure, conservation of cultural heritage, digital and green measures in cultural sites, support for long-term cultural activities that foster social inclusion and innovation, and culture as part of regeneration of public spaces. Young people have been identified as a target group in ERDF support for culture and cultural heritage in many cohesion policy programmes. They are expected to benefit from better access to culture and potential creation of job and social inclusion opportunities driven by such support for culture. For example, the 2021-2027 ERDF ESF+ programme for Sicily (IT) seeks to generate employment opportunities for young people through its ERDF investments in revitalising cultural heritage and cultural spaces dedicated to culture and creative production, with an innovative and digital approach being used. As part of the efforts to support disadvantaged areas in the city by harnessing the potential of culture, the 2021-2027 ERDF programme for Berlin will invest in developing and modernising art schools for young people, youth leisure centres and neighbourhood centres among other cultural sites.

The **Digital Europe Programme** is supporting the **digital transformation of museums, galleries, libraries and archives** across the EU. It aims to enable younger generations to access to EU's rich and diverse cultural heritage. The Digital Europe Programme is funding worth EUR 7.5 million per year to the **common European data space for cultural heritage**. The data space, based on the Europeana.eu platform, is accelerating the digitisation of monuments, sites, objects, artifacts and intangible heritage, to protect and preserve those at risk, and boost their reuse in domains such as education, tourism and creative sectors. It also aims to provide more immersive and personalised cultural experiences with advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and extended reality; virtual worlds applications offer huge opportunities to attract young audiences.

- **Multilingualism**

The European Commission coordinates the **European Master's in Translation project (EMT)**³³⁰. By promoting high-quality training criteria in translation education, this network actively supports multilingualism and dialogue while ensuring the upskilling of young

³²⁸ [European Heritage Days | European Heritage Days.](#)

³²⁹ [Young European Heritage Makers | European Heritage Days.](#)

³³⁰ [European Master's in Translation \(EMT\) - European Commission.](#)

professionals in the changing landscape of AI-based technologies and digital developments. It brings together more than 2 000 master students, along with hundreds of academics, researchers, professors and young professionals. Recent milestones include the updating of the EMT Competence Framework³³¹ and the new five-year mandate³³² (2024-2029) with 81 programmes.

The Commission Representations in the Member States organise numerous **events and activities across the EU to promote language learning, translation and multilingualism**. To this end, they visit schools and universities to give presentations, and invite pupils, students and teachers to activities such as mini-language classes, fairs, contests and workshops. Every year, they organise celebrations on the **European day of languages**³³³ involving in particular school teachers and students. In 2023, 71 EDL events were organised in 25 countries with almost 200 000 participants and reaching almost 1.5 million people online.

The **Juvenes Translatores translation contest**³³⁴, organised by the Commission every year in November, gathers over 3 000 teenagers from about 700 schools across all EU countries to translate texts linked to EU priorities. Having 552 language combinations possible among the EU's 24 official languages on offer, participants become aware of the rich European cultural heritage and benefits it offers. The ever growing interest from schools confirms the success of the contest in reaching out to young people and in promoting language learning in secondary education, as a means of connection, becoming aware of the EU cultural diversity and having an advantage in the job market.

4.6 Environment, climate and energy

Around EUR 346 billion³³⁵ of the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** is allocated to reforms and investments supporting the green transition, which benefit young people as well. These include: i) supporting the deployment of renewables and energy efficiency renovations of public and private buildings; ii) developing green skills; iii) reforming the regulatory framework; and iv) stepping up green urban mobility and the production of zero or low-emission vehicles. For example, in Denmark, the RRF supports the development of skills and knowledge related to green technologies and sustainability in vocational education and training schools, as well as in adult vocational training.

The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** allocates **EUR 93.4 billion** towards achieving the green transition. With young people having the highest stake in a successful delivery of the green transition, the investments in, e.g. the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and wastewater treatment are directly related to ensuring a

³³¹ [emt_competence_fw_k_2022_en.pdf](#).

³³² [EMT members 2024-29 - European Commission](#).

³³³ [EDL - European Commission](#).

³³⁴ [Juvenes Translatores - European Commission](#).

³³⁵ Figure as of 16 October 2024. Data are based on the pillar tagging methodology for the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard and correspond to the measures allocated to the policy pillar 'green transition' as primary or secondary policy pillar. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

sustainable future. For example, in Portugal, the ERDF helps implement energy improvement measures in basic and secondary schools in Madeira.

In addition, young people will benefit from measures financed under the **Social Climate Fund**, which will be in operation in 2026-2032. It will support vulnerable groups of society, particularly vulnerable households, vulnerable transport users and vulnerable micro-enterprises, who are most affected by the green transition. Support will be provided to Member States through non-repayable financial grants based on national social climate plans submitted to the Commission.

- **Youth participation for the environment, climate and energy**

In line with the **2022 Council Conclusions on young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment**³³⁶, the Commission has committed to create further opportunities to be involved in and help shape the green transition, including by promoting youth volunteer activities addressing environmental issues, by facilitating young people's access to training that equips them with the necessary skills for the green jobs of tomorrow, and by supporting young entrepreneurs seeking to develop solutions to environmental issues.

The **Commission Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems** includes recommendations to Member States to protect children from the impact of climate change and environmental hazards on their rights. This includes involving children in decision-making related to climate change, as well as a child-protective and child-sensitive approach in their climate change adaptation³³⁷ and mitigation plans.

Building on the many opportunities created during the European Year of Youth for young people to be involved in and help shape the green transition, the Commission supports a community of around 300 **young European Climate Pact Ambassadors** as of 2024 in promoting climate action among young people on the ground and supporting their local activities. In 2023-2024, the European Climate Pact continued to work with young people taking part in climate action.

To give young people a prominent space in the Pact community, the Climate Pact prioritised the recruitment of more young ambassadors in its latest open call in September 2023, with the goal of one third of all new ambassadors being under the age of 35. That target was reached, as the Pact now includes around 300 young Pact Ambassadors out of about 850, many of whom coordinate initiatives on the ground with the Pact's support and/or have a big youth following on social media or in their communities. Some of the Pact's partner organisations also focus on young people (e.g. the European Youth Parliament and Save the Children).

In terms of activities, the Climate Pact has been involved in the European Youth Week 2024, in which eight Pact Ambassadors participated and talked about their activities related to climate action and the involvement of young people. The Pact has also involved young Pact Ambassadors at events, and launched a set of citizen engagement tools that have been used by

³³⁶ [Council Conclusions on fostering engagement among young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment](#)

³³⁷ Notably in light of the [Commission Notice Guidelines on Member States' adaptation strategies and plans 2023/C 264/01 \(OJ C 264, 27.07.2023\)](#)

young (and not so young) Pact Ambassadors around Europe to engage their community. Furthermore, the Pact helps amplify young Pact Ambassadors' voices, giving them a platform by inviting them to events and exchanges with EU representatives and policymakers, and promoting them on the Commission's website and social media channels. Young Climate Pact Ambassadors held an exchange with a Commission Director-General during the 2024 European Youth Week about how young people across Europe can take climate action at local level. The discussion was focused on concrete actions anyone could take and highlighted the easy-to-use Climate Pact citizen engagement tools as a way for young people to engage other people in their communities.

Also during the 2024 European Youth Week, young people spoke with Commission staff about the role **EU humanitarian aid** plays in providing support to those most affected by climate change and the resulting forced displacement. They also discussed how environmental degradation and resource scarcity, exacerbated by climate change, can contribute to social and political instability, ultimately leading to displacement and conflict in vulnerable regions.

Outside of the multiple Youth Dialogues organised in Brussels during the European Year of Youth, the European Commission has also organised public dialogues between Commissioners and young people (including from outside Europe) at international climate conferences, such as COP27, COP28, and COP29.

The Commission also helps **young people contribute to the achievement of the EU's disaster resilience goals** as an essential tool for strengthening resilience to future disasters. As part of the strengthening of European civil protection activities, the EU developed the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)³³⁸ and its Young Civil Protection Professionals (YCCP) group. Through the annual YCCP event, the EU supports young people in networking and collaborating with the emerging generation of the UCPM community.

A yearly two-day study visit is organised in Brussels for around 60 young participants interested or already involved in civil protection and disaster risk management. Participants include students, researchers, professional and volunteer firefighters, medical personnel and civil protection experts. The event gives participants the opportunity to learn about the general architecture of the UCPM and the realities of working in civil protection, especially targeting evidence-based decision-making in crisis situations.

In addition, a group of 27 young civil protection professionals participated in the 8th European Civil Protection Forum in 2024 and benefited from relevant exchanges during this event with 1 500 participants.

The Commission encourages **networks of green cities and regions** (such as the Green City Accord initiative) to engage young trainees and volunteers in local green projects. The Green City Accord secretariat has launched preparatory actions to this effect.

Under the Just Transition Fund, the **EU Teens4Green** promotes young people's participation in the just transition towards climate neutrality and a greener Europe. Some 70 projects were

³³⁸ The UCPM aims to strengthen cooperation between EU countries and participating states to improve prevention, preparedness and response to disasters.

implemented between April 2023 and March 2024 by young people aged 15-24 years old, living in 41 Just Transition regions. In April 2024, the closing conference took place in Brussels as part of the European Week of Youth. Young people representing the different projects debated about ways to strengthen youth involvement in policymaking and to improve young people's possibilities to shape and lead the green transition. Lessons learned from the projects have also resulted in a full list of recommendations (e.g. establishment of youth representation bodies, more institutionalised involvement of young people, financial and administrative support for youth-led projects, capacity building for young people) to ensure that cohesion policy, and specifically the Just Transition, continue to engage young people in future. The Commission is sharing lessons learned and policy recommendations from EUTEENS4Green with Member States and stakeholders and is reflecting on how to keep young people interested and engaged in local development and green topics.



Efforts have continued towards the EU commitment to planting 3 billion additional trees before 2030, the **#3BillionTrees pledge**³³⁹. All EU Member States are contributing by registering new trees. The EU campaign **#ForOurPlanet**³⁴⁰, launched in 2022 in the context of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15), encourages Commission Representations and EU Delegations, together with citizens and civil society organisations, to take part in concrete activities for nature and climate. In 2024, the focus of the campaign was on tree planting in various contexts, including urban greening, reforestation after forest fires and agroforestry. More than 40 events were organised worldwide to support the campaign, many involving young people.

³³⁹ [The #3BillionTrees Pledge - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-summaries/2022/02/10/Pages/3-billion-trees-pledge.aspx)

³⁴⁰ [#ForOurPlanet | EEAS \(europa.eu\)](https://eeas.europa.eu/eeas/campaigns/for-our-planet/)

Between May and October 2024, the Commission organised a **#WaterWiseEU** awareness-raising campaign with the slogan ‘See Water Differently’³⁴¹. The campaign aims to encourage Europeans to rethink the way they use, manage and value water. The Commission is working with many partner organisations to promote the campaign, some targeting young people, including the World Scout Organisation. As part of **EU Green Week Partner Events**³⁴² and as part of the **#WaterWiseEU** campaign, the Commission is supporting several youth-led events and activities targeting young people across the EU.

Every year, the **#EUBeachCleanup** campaign includes hundreds of clean-up events organised by EU Representations and Delegations aiming to raise awareness about marine litter. Many schools participate, including EU blue schools. The 2022 European Year of Youth helped develop a specific targeting towards young people; and the campaign was presented as part of the 2024 European Youth Week.

Since 2023, the Commission supports a community of **Young Energy Ambassadors**³⁴³ to promote sustainable energy and the clean energy transition. This group of 30 young professionals (aged 18 to 34 years old) is selected every year from different career stages (studies, employment, personal engagement, etc.) in the clean energy sector. The Young Energy Ambassadorship programme is a year-long commitment that aims to strengthen the connection between young people and the **European Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW)** – a yearly conference organised by the Commission – and the EU’s energy policies. This helps increase young people’s interest and involvement in sustainable energy.

The EUSEW is committed to involving the younger generation in discussions on clean energy. Since 2020, the European Youth Energy Day³⁴⁴ has been organised as part of the EUSEW Policy Conference, to give young participants the chance to get involved in debates on Europe’s sustainable energy transition. In 2024, the European Youth Energy Day hosted a dialogue between generations³⁴⁵, a closed-door session to co-create recommendations on the future of clean energy for the next Commissioner in charge of energy as well as a dialogue with Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič during the closing session³⁴⁶.

³⁴¹ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/water/water-wise-eu_en.

³⁴² https://green-week.event.europa.eu/partner-events_en.

³⁴³ https://sustainable-energy-week.ec.europa.eu/young-energy-ambassadors_en

³⁴⁴ [Young Energy Ambassadors - European Commission.](#)

³⁴⁵ [EUSEW Interactive.](#)

³⁴⁶ [EUSEW Interactive.](#)



- **Teaching and learning for the green transition and sustainable development**

The Commission supports Member States in their implementation of the **Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development**³⁴⁷. In line with the **2022 Council Conclusions on young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment**³⁴⁸, the Commission also aims to support young people in acquiring the necessary competences and facilitate their access to training that prepares them for the green jobs of tomorrow.

The **Education for Climate Coalition**, a flagship initiative of the European Education Area by 2025³⁴⁹ and an essential part of the European Green Deal³⁵⁰, is a participatory community that aims to support teaching and learning for the green transition and sustainable development. Since the launch of the community platform³⁵¹ on the first Education for Climate Day (25 November 2021), the platform over 7 500 users have logged in to exchange ideas on how to combat climate change. The Coalition also has a youth group³⁵² which in 2024 runs the Youth

³⁴⁷ [Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on learning for the green transition and sustainable development.](#)

³⁴⁸ [Council Conclusions on fostering engagement among young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment](#)

³⁴⁹ See [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, COM\(2020\) 625 final](#), February 2021 [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#); [2022 EEA progress report](#).

³⁵⁰ [The European Green Deal](#)

³⁵¹ [Education for Climate Coalition](#)

³⁵² [Education for Climate Youth Group](#)

Climate Lab³⁵³, a peer-learning café where young participants can engage with peers, explore an existing climate-related issue and propose practical solutions that can be implemented by interested stakeholders. 2024's topic is “**How to approach AI and Climate Change in Learning Communities**”, which the Youth Climate Lab explores with **experts** from the European Union Intellectual Property Office, the European Commission and its Joint Research Centre.

In December 2022, the **Higher Education Working Group under the EEA strategic framework** organised a peer-learning activity (PLA) on the higher education sector's contribution to the green transition and sustainable development. The outcomes of this PLA highlight the need of a clear policy framework, along with adequate core funding and incentives, investments in lifelong learning, as well as a whole-institution approach and more local and regional engagement. Knowledge sharing is also key, with both national and EU-level support acting as an enabler to scale up innovations, share information and instigate practices to mobilise the higher education community. The PLA conclusions also stress that students and young people are driving forces behind the green transition and sustainable development, pushing for institutional changes. The conclusions also cite their behavioural changes possibly generating a positive impact. In addition, further efforts are needed to include students in designing and implementing sustainability strategies, and suggestions have been made to better support and recognise students who volunteer in environment and climate-related activities.

The green transition is a key pillar of the **European strategy for universities**, aiming to ensure appropriate skills are provided to learners so they can thrive in and drive the green transition. The Eurograduate 2022 survey³⁵⁴ showed high levels of awareness among higher education graduates, with 73% of the graduates surveyed believing that climate change is mainly human driven. 54% of these graduates are very/extremely worried about climate change. Environmental sustainability is a (very) important part of the curriculum for 30% of the recent graduates (2020/21), a 7% increase on those graduating in 2016/17. On the whole, 73% of graduates also support the idea that individual action is effective, regardless of what other people do.

The **European Universities alliances** are leading when it comes to promoting climate and environmental literacy for learners with innovative and flexible approaches. They develop joint programmes and courses promoting transdisciplinary challenge-based approaches for intercultural teams, and engage staff and students from different backgrounds and disciplines in order to establish the links between education, research and innovation. Concrete examples are CHARM-EU Joint Master's Degree in Global Challenges for Sustainability, Unite! Alliance's work towards an international Energy PhD programme, INVEST joint Bachelor Specialisation (e.g. in Regional Food-System Transitions & Environmental Quality; Sustainable Communities in Energy Transition) or joint Master's programmes for instance in Sustainable Urban Development. Some alliances such as Una Europa and AURORA develop lifelong learning opportunities embedded in flexible learning modules such as micro-credentials in sustainability and climate change, providing opportunities for climate upskilling and reskilling.

³⁵³ Education for Climate Coalition Youth Climate Lab

³⁵⁴ EUROGRADUAT 2022 Comparative Synthesis Report (publication forthcoming 2024/2025) - <https://www.eurograduate.eu/>.

The EU continues to support the **European coalition for ocean literacy (EU4Ocean)**³⁵⁵ launched in 2020 to improve the EU citizens' awareness and education about our ocean, seas, and waters. The coalition currently has more than 1000 registered members across its three communities, two of which specifically target students and young people.

The **Youth4Ocean Forum**³⁵⁶ brings together young people committed to ocean conservation, focusing on enhancing their capacity and empowering them to influence decision-making and policy. Its Young Ocean Advocate programme also offers mentoring and support to forum members working on specific ocean projects in the EU. During 2022-2024, the Youth4Ocean Forum recruited over 100 new **Young Ocean Advocates** across Europe. Accredited projects range from science communication and awareness-raising to community engagement, research, and innovation.³⁵⁷ Young Ocean Advocates participated in capacity-building workshops and training sessions and played a central role at high-visibility events such as the European Maritime Day³⁵⁸, the European Ocean Days³⁵⁹, the European Youth Week³⁶⁰, the first Ocean Literacy World Conference³⁶¹, UNFCCC COPs, and UN Ocean Conferences.

The **Network of European Blue Schools**³⁶² supports EU teachers in integrating ocean-related issues into project-based learning. Common topics in blue school projects include sustainability, climate change, the environment, and the blue economy. This EU network, which grew from 46 schools in January 2022 to 630 in December 2024, has been recognised as a best-case example and has inspired the establishment of a global blue school network coordinated by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

The **JRC Youth Programme** supports the Commission's effort in disseminating its scientific knowledge while encouraging public engagement in the EU. The objectives of the programme are: to raise awareness of the benefits of the EU by sharing information on how EU science supports citizens; to provide an understanding of the role of science in policymaking and stimulate students to learn science; to foster critical thinking, promote European collaboration and enhance citizen engagement with science. Additionally, the programme tests and launches new ideas and methodologies for feedback mechanisms and content co-creation.

Empowering **Youth and Early Career Ocean Professionals (ECOPs)** through intergenerational learning and dialogue is essential for shaping new value systems and enhancing ocean knowledge. In this regard, activities in the Atlantic (under the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance - AAORIA) in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea aim to mainstream both young people and ECOPs into policy formulation and implementation. Building on the success of the intergenerational dialogue session organized at the Galway Statement 10-year anniversary event in Galway, Ireland (5-6 July 2023) which saw

³⁵⁵ [EU4Ocean Coalition | Drive change together \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁵⁶ [Youth4Ocean Forum | Become a changemaker for the ocean! \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁵⁷ More information about the YOAs and their projects is available on the [Maritime Forum website](#).

³⁵⁸ [Youth4Ocean Forum at the European Maritime Day - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁵⁹ [Ocean Literacy in Action at the European Ocean Days - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁶⁰ [Join Youth4Ocean Forum Activities at the European Youth Week Kick-Off Event - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁶¹ A group of YOAs was involved in the drafting of the [Venice Declaration for Ocean Literacy in Action](#).

³⁶² [Network of Blue Schools | Little waves make a big ocean! \(europa.eu\)](#)

active participation of more than 60 Atlantic ECOPs, yearly ECOP events are foreseen in conjunction with AAORIA annual Forums, such as the event Ottawa in October 2024.

Several **Horizon Europe projects**, including those from the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, organise dedicated summer schools for ECOPs and awareness-raising activities targeting young people³⁶³. Also they have created a network of Early Career Researchers (e.g. the Marine Sabres Project³⁶⁴).

- **Agriculture**

The Commission highlights the need to support generational renewal in agriculture, as young people are a source of new ideas and energy, with innovative initiatives, and are committed to using sustainable practices and transitioning towards a net-zero emission economy.

- **The New European Bauhaus**

The **New European Bauhaus**³⁶⁵ (NEB) initiative continues to inspire a grassroots movement across the EU, involving Member States, regions and municipalities in promoting climate resilience and environmental sustainability. It has established over 150 projects in research and innovation, cohesion, regional and urban development, skills development, and culture. The NEB community with almost 700 official partners has reached millions of Europeans and the NEB Prizes³⁶⁶ have encouraged many individuals and organisations to embed the NEB ideas and values in their projects.

As part of the NEB Prizes, every year a dedicated strand recognises and supports young people's creativity and talent. The 'New European Bauhaus Rising Stars' celebrates and awards the best ideas developed by people under 30 that involve implementing the values of sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics across Europe. Since 2021, over 1 700 applications from young people were received in this dedicated strand.

³⁶³ See the Plastic Pirates – Go Europe initiative: www.plastic-pirates.eu

³⁶⁴ www.marinesabres.eu

³⁶⁵ [A New European Bauhaus – bringing culture to climate action \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu).

³⁶⁶ [New European Bauhaus Prizes 2024 | New European Bauhaus Prizes 2024 \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu).



- **Green horizontal priority in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps**

Green transition, which is a key element of the EU's political agenda, is among the horizontal priorities of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. In 2024, a new green strategy³⁶⁷ was published for the programmes to further encourage and support projects working in these areas. SALTO Green will support the implementation of the strategies through guidelines³⁶⁸, various materials and workshops.

To contribute towards achieving the **European Green Deal**, both the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes integrate green practices into all projects and activities and promote environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour among participants and participating organisations. Organisations and participants should therefore employ an environmental-friendly approach when designing and implementing their activities. Activities

³⁶⁷ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-green-strategy>

contributing to other existing EU initiatives in the area of environmental sustainability (e.g. the New European Bauhaus) are highly encouraged.

In 2021, the Commission introduced financial incentives for green travel in 2021 for the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes and increased these amounts in 2024 to accelerate the use of low-emission modes of transport by participants in these programmes. Moreover, incorporating green practices into all facets of project implementation is part of the award criteria.

Practically, close to 1 600 volunteering projects that have green practices as a main priority have been implemented since 2022 by almost 1 000 different organisations, with a total contracted amount of approximately EUR 125 million in grants. Out of the 2 709 Solidarity projects, 26% (709) dealt with green skills and promoted environmental protection³⁶⁹.

Under the Erasmus+ 2022 call, a budget of EUR 592.1 million was allocated to 1 285 cooperation projects supporting environment and climate change, involving 5 205 beneficiary organisations.

The **SALTO Green**³⁷⁰, set up in 2022, provides training, guidance and resources such as webinars, best practices, compendium of projects focusing on green transition and sustainable development to support National Agencies, stakeholders and potential applicants under the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes.

5 YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS

The survey that the Commission launched in 2024 to consult young people on some aspects of the EU Youth Strategy³⁷¹ (hereafter “youth survey”) asked young people to provide **examples of youth-led initiatives and actions that their organisations have been involved in**. The most frequently mentioned initiatives were (i) councils, forums, debates and consultations, followed by (ii) campaigns, events and festivals, (iii) volunteering programmes, (iv) seminars and training, (v) demonstrations and protests, and (vi) mentorship programmes or job fairs.

Some members of youth organisations mentioned their work to support ideas for **improving the electoral process** to encourage young people to participate in it (e.g. right to vote at 16). Some organisations conducted training programmes and resources to **educate young people about politics** and the EU. Others have launched campaigns and petitions on issues like climate change, social justice and fair elections. An example was provided by a member of the Young Fair Trade Advocates (YFTA), a youth organisation which connects young people with fair trade ideals, educating them about EU institutions to raise their awareness and bring about positive changes in areas such as climate justice, labour rights and sustainable trade practices. The YFTA have developed 45 comprehensive policy recommendations addressing climate justice, fair trade and labour rights, aiming to influence decision-making in the European

³⁶⁹ European Solidarity Corps 01/2021 – 08/2024.

³⁷⁰ <https://agence.erasmusplus.fr/en/salto-green-sustainable-development/>.

³⁷¹ See subsection on the Youth Survey in Section 2.1. ‘Youth participation’.

Parliament. These recommendations were designed to promote sustainable and equitable trade practices and to improve the labour rights of workers in global value chains.

In the framework of the Commission's **Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY)**, Citizens Engagement Activities (CEAs) provide volunteers with a small budget to organise activities **to inform and engage local populations on the benefits of cohesion policy in their region**. For example, in April 2024, an IVY volunteer reached out to more than 50 people of all age groups in a CEA as part of Green Arctic Interreg Awareness Day, held at the Luleå tekniska universitet in Sweden. The event included information on cohesion policy, interactive exercises for pupils, and a showcase of Interreg projects in the Northern Periphery and Arctic region. Incurring costs of less than EUR 800, the volunteer managed to gather a diverse group of local public and project representatives for an interactive and fruitful exchange.

Young people from Member States and EU accession countries are involved in the context of Interreg through the **Youth4Cooperation Group**. This group is composed of students, interns and young workers interested in Interreg and cohesion policy. Its main aim is to make sure that their ideas are heard by the Commission and taken forward to, for example, the managing authorities of Interreg programmes. The youth group was particularly active in 2022, during the European Year of Youth. Young people were invited as participants and speakers to the Youth for Cooperation Summit, which formed part of the Interreg Annual Event 2022. In 2024, the group was working on youth-led ideas as part of the European Year of Skills. One group is working on creating a workshop on Interreg and macro-regional strategies to be shared by young people in their local areas (with schools, universities and municipalities). This initiative will continue to involve young people in designing the future of the European territorial cooperation – a 'Youth for future cooperation' event will be held in Brussels, inviting young people to produce recommendations.

Youth councils formed under the Alpine, Danube, and Adriatic-Ionian strategies represent young people's voices and interests of the country they live in and of the entire macro-region. Young people take part in concrete initiatives and are often engaged in communication and co-working with the strategies on managing social media channels. The youth councils are led by the governance structures of the strategies, which organise their involvement and yearly youth camps.

The Commission **supports young people in the outermost regions** through the EUR 1 million grant scheme Youth4Outermostregions³⁷². This scheme funds small-scale projects led by **young people or youth organisations in the outermost regions** enabling them to become active in their local communities, with an overarching emphasis on promoting equality and inclusion. Approximately 70 actions will run from September 2024 until June 2025.

Children and young people from across Europe are involved in planning and leading the agenda of the **Safer Internet Forum**³⁷³, an annual international conference on online safety. The Forum also brings together international stakeholders to discuss the latest trends, risks and solutions related to child online safety and the impact of technology on individuals and society.

³⁷² [Call relaunched – Youth for Outermost Regions: €1 million to support youth in the outermost regions \(europa.eu\)](#).

³⁷³ [Safer Internet Forum | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

A young respondent to the survey on some aspects of the EU Youth Strategy³⁷⁴ mentioned an example of a digital inclusion project in Spain led by a group of young people to provide a digital skills training programme for older people, facilitating their access to technology.

Several youth survey respondents provided examples of their activities **to promote equality and inclusion for people with disabilities**. For example, a project in Cyprus gives opportunities to young people with disabilities and other psychological problems by enabling them participate in theatre and the singing performances. A youth-led project in Spain provides training and organises cultural activities for a community of families with children who have disabilities of any kind.

On **education and training**, some youth survey respondents reported on their work to encourage participation in exchange programmes to promote mobility and intercultural learning. Some of them organised workshops and courses on teaching history and the EU's political structure, and provided training activities for vulnerable groups to increase their social integration.

Several youth survey respondents mentioned youth-led activities in the **cultural** field, such as i) programmes promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding, ii) cultural events e.g. festivals and concerts, and iii) workshops celebrating cultural diversity. For example, a youth organisation based in Madrid organises workshops in which 20 international students from around 15 different European countries spend a week in Madrid sharing their experiences and their cultural and technological knowledge.

The **EUTeens4Green project**³⁷⁵ promotes young people's participation in the just transition towards climate neutrality and a greener Europe. This is in line with the **2022 Council Conclusions on young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment**³⁷⁶, which invited the Commission to support young entrepreneurs seeking to develop projects that focus on practical solutions to environmental issues. Under the EUTeens4Green, young people aged 15-24 years old implemented 70 projects. During the European Week of Youth, young representatives of the different projects debated about ways to strengthen youth involvement in policymaking and to improve young people's possibilities to shape and lead the green transition. The lessons learned and policy recommendations from these debates were shared by the Commission with Member States and stakeholders.

Beyond the EU, the Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF)³⁷⁷ focuses on youth-led solutions to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals³⁷⁸ and the **Women and Youth in Democratic Engagement Initiative** supports youth-led initiatives to boost the capacities of youth organisations and young leaders³⁷⁹.

³⁷⁴ See subsection on the Youth Survey in Section 2.1. 'Youth participation'.

³⁷⁵ See the section on Environment, climate and energy.

³⁷⁶ [Council Conclusions on fostering engagement among young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment.](#)

³⁷⁷ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-empowerment-fund_en.

³⁷⁸ See Section 7 on the youth action plan.

³⁷⁹ <https://epd.eu/what-we-do/programmes/women-and-youth-in-democracy-wyde-civic-engagement-supporting-women-and-youth-participation-in-democratic-processes/>; https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/summit-democracy-eu-launches-milestone-programmes-empower-youth-key-actors-democracy-2023-03-31_en.

The **Charlemagne Youth prize**³⁸⁰, run by the European Parliament and the Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, is awarded to youth-run projects that promote European and international understanding, strengthen democracy and active participation.

- **Youth participation activities and Solidarity projects**

Beyond the horizontal priority on ‘Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement’ pursued by the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps across all their actions, each of these programmes has a specific action format encouraging young people to participate through grants for **youth-led** initiatives: **Youth participation activities** (Erasmus+) and **Solidarity projects** (European Solidarity Corps).

- *Youth Participation Activities (Erasmus+)*

These form a new format (introduced in 2021) specifically focusing on youth participation, boosted financially and designated as **one of the flagship initiatives** of the European Year of Youth in 2022. Youth participation activities support **youth-led** initiatives run by informal groups of young people or youth organisations (with young people actively involved in all stages of the project, including its design) to boost civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation. The **scale of projects can range from local to transnational** (always with a demonstrated European added value). They can last between 3 and 24 months and participation is open to young people between 13 and 30 years of age. Individual projects may receive grants up to a maximum of EUR 60 000. Informal groups of young people applying without the support of an established organisation may benefit from **coaching** in one or more fields of their choice and specific additional support is available for young people with fewer opportunities.

- *Solidarity projects (European Solidarity Corps)*

A **grassroots format designed specifically for young people wishing to come up with their own projects**, Solidarity projects are activities that are initiated, developed and carried out by young people themselves (in groups of at least five people between 18 and 30 years of age) for a period from 2 to 12 months. This format gives groups of young people the chance to take responsibility and commit themselves to addressing key challenges within their communities. Coaching is available to help young people acquire/improve various competences linked to the topic of their project or to learn about project management. Specific support for young people with fewer opportunities is also available.

³⁸⁰ [Charlemagne Youth Prize](#) | [Youth Hub](#) | [European Parliament](#) | [Youth Hub](#) | [European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

6 COOPERATION NEEDS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The Future National Activities Planners³⁸¹ allow Member States to voluntarily share their youth policy priorities and cooperation needs in line with the EU Youth Strategy. To inform the 2024 EU Youth Report and help identifying priorities for mutual learning activities under the EUYS, the Commission carried out a survey to collect-updates from Member States³⁸². The results are summarised below.

- **National policy priorities**

Respondents indicated that the **main challenges for young people** in their country are **mental health and well-being** (74% of respondents), youth participation in democratic life (48%) and inflation/cost of living (33%).

As regards the question about what comprise the current **main national youth policy priorities**, a majority (78%) selected **youth participation**, followed by youth work (56%) and social inclusion (52%). The **European Youth Goals** considered as most relevant in this context were Youth Goal 3: Inclusive societies (74%), Youth Goal 5: Mental Health and Well-being (63%) and Youth Goal 9: Space and Participation for all (59%).

- **Topics for EU cooperation**

Under **Engage**, respondents were mainly interested in EU cooperation in the areas of **youth participation** (78%), youth mainstreaming (67%) and the EU Youth Dialogue (59%). For the **EU Youth Dialogue**, most of the interest was in cooperating on communication and outreach, and increasing impact and follow-up. The preferred tools for cooperation on these topics were peer learning (focused on policy development, exchange of good practices, methods and tools) and evidence building/research.

Under **Connect**, respondents were mainly interested in EU cooperation on **digitalisation** and its impact on young people and **learning mobility** (59% for each topic) as well as synergies between EU and national programmes and schemes (48%). The preferred tools for cooperation on these topics were peer learning (focused on policy development, exchange of good practices, methods and tools), and evidence building/research.

Under **Empower**, respondents were mainly interested in EU cooperation on recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning (48%), youth worker education and training and synergies with the work of the Council of Europe on youth work (44% for each). The preferred tools for cooperation on these topics were peer learning (focused on policy development, exchange of good practices, methods and tools) and evidence building/research.

Specifically on **youth mainstreaming and cross-sector cooperation**, the preferred tools for cooperation were training and cooperation or networking activities under the EU youth

³⁸¹ [Future National Activities Planners | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁸² 25 Member States took part to the survey. The separate replies from the 3 communities of Belgium are considered in the analysis of the results. Three replies were submitted on behalf of Slovakia (National Youth Council, Erasmus+ agency, and the Ministry). For consistency, the reply of the Ministry is considered in the analysis. The full questionnaire is available in the annex 4 of the present Staff Working Document.

programmes (quality and support measures under Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps) and expert group, platform or roundtables at EU level.

Many respondents also showed interest in EU cooperation on **transversal topics**, in particular in the areas of monitoring and data and communication and outreach to young people.

Respondents also indicated that certain some areas were particularly important for cooperation on EU, including:

- social inclusion and participation;
- youth unemployment and young people not in employment, education or training;
- recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning, and mental health and well-being;
- youth mainstreaming and cross-sector cooperation (on themes such as social inclusion, digitalisation, climate change);
- multi-level cooperation from local to EU and international;
- research and data.

Public authorities at national and regional level can apply under the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) to design and implement youth policy reforms. An integral part of TSI projects is the review of good practices and exchanges with other public administrations, with recommendations on the possibility to replicate them in the national, regional and/or local context. Public authorities can also jointly apply for technical support, as part of a multi-country/multi-regions project.

7 BEYOND THE EU: the Youth Action Plan in EU external action

As the key deliverable of the global dimension of the European Year of Youth, the EU adopted its first-ever **Youth Action Plan in EU external action**³⁸³ (YAP) in October 2022. With this major political development, the YAP is the overarching framework for all global, regional and national (partner countries) EU initiatives worldwide. Developed in consultations with youth organisations and young people, the YAP aims at promoting a strategic partnership with young people in EU external action and to engage, empower and connect youth from the EU and partner countries from all regions through specific initiatives.

The YAP includes commitments to advance meaningful youth engagement in the EU institutional processes – including in EU Delegations –, as well as in bi-regional and multilateral processes, paying particular attention to ensuring diversity and inclusion in those processes.

With the three pillars mirroring the EU Youth Strategy, the Youth Action Plan in EU external action encompasses multiple initiatives, programmes and projects at national, regional and global level across various geographic and thematic areas.

At global level, the **EU Youth Sounding Board (YSB) for International Partnerships** is a group of young people who advise the European Commission on youth participation and empowerment in EU external action. Its second cohort (2022-2024) works on several initiatives, from providing advice on how to connect across national youth advisory structures of EU Delegations to contributing to the policy on green and digital education.

Prepared together with a group of 40 global and regional youth organisations, the **Youth Dialogue Platform** has been set up as a space for regular dialogue with youth organisations on EU external action. Through a call for expression of interest³⁸⁴, a group of 250 youth-led and youth-focused organisations has been established in 2024 and will follow the YAP implementation.

At country level, an increasing number of EU Delegations have set up local youth advisory structures³⁸⁵, such as YSBs. As of October 2024, there were 33 YSBs across the world and through the YAP the EU commits to creating such structures in most EU Delegations by 2027.

In addition, EU Delegations systematically include youth organisations in the regular consultations and engagement with civil society organisations and more than 80% of the EU Delegations have nominated youth focal points.

Through the Youth Action Plan, the EU commits to follow the areas of work outlined by the UNSC Resolution 2250 on **Youth, Peace and Security** (YPS): participation, protection,

³⁸³ [Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council Youth Action Plan \(YAP\) in EU external action 2022 – 2027 Promoting meaningful youth participation and empowerment in EU external action for sustainable development, equality and peace, JOIN\(2022\) 53 final.](#)

³⁸⁴ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/call-expression-interest-youth-dialogue-platform-eu-external-action_en

³⁸⁵ [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-participation_en#youth-advisory-structures-in-eu-delegations.](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-participation_en#youth-advisory-structures-in-eu-delegations)

prevention, partnerships and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. This is increasingly important in conflict situations around the world, not least in Africa and the Middle East, and in the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU includes YPS as an integral and predominant topic in its national and regional dialogues with non-EU countries.

Under the YAP's first pillar of action – **partnership to engage** – the European External Action Service, in collaboration with the network of EU Delegations, launched the #OurVoiceOurFuture global social media campaign, which ran in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The campaign aimed to bridge the gap between EU institutions and young demographics, empower young people by amplifying positive stories, and push for young people to take part in policy and decision-making processes. As a result, the campaign created a network of young people with significant dissemination potential. In 2023 alone, the #OurVoiceOurFuture hashtag reached an estimated 97.8 million people across more than 100 countries and was used in posts in over 100 languages.

At regional level, youth engagement tracks have been organised in relation to high-level political meetings (EU-African Union/AU, EU-Association of Southeast Asian Nations/ASEAN, EU-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States/CELAC, EU-Overseas Countries and Territories/OCTs) allowing young people to engage and transmit their views and recommendations on bi-regional relations to political leaders.

Youth engagement has also been prominent in several other processes and events such as the EU-NGO Human Rights Forum³⁸⁶ in December 2023, the Global Gateway High-level event on Education in April 2024, and the Global Gateway High-Level Youth Event: “Engage, Empower, Connect” in October 2024.

Celebrating the second anniversary of the YAP adoption, the **Global Gateway High-Level Youth Event**³⁸⁷ (9-10 October 2024) aimed to consolidate the foundations of the youth agenda in EU external action by connecting youth networks and showcasing the political potential of partnering with young people. The forum marked an important milestone for the EU and its partners underlining the importance of young people as a catalytic investment for the future. The forum multiplied the impact of youth action by strengthening the connection with and between all the young people engaged in EU external action. The **Youth Recommendations on International Partnerships**³⁸⁸ provided forward-looking views from young people and are designed to inform and inspire the European Commission's political leadership to keep young people among the political priorities for its new mandate.

The programmes **AU-EU Youth Lab**³⁸⁹ and the **Youth Europe Sahel- Engagement de la Jeunesse au Sahel (YES-ENJEU)**³⁹⁰ have been officially launched and will further promote

³⁸⁶ <https://eungoforum2023.eu/>

³⁸⁷ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/global-gateway-high-level-youth-event_en

³⁸⁸ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/775aa0fb-7788-438c-b6cf-45adc920da20_en?filename=global-gateway-high-level-youth-event-2024-youth-recommendations_en.pdf

³⁸⁹ <https://aueuyouth.com/>

³⁹⁰ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/burkina-faso/lancement-du-projet-yes-enjeu-au-sahel_fr;
<https://www.acra.it/cosa-facciamo/aree-di-intervento/senegal/enjeu>

the engagement and empowerment of young people in Africa and support youth-led initiatives there.

At **multilateral level**, a partnership with the **UN Youth Office** (EUR 1 million) was announced in May 2024³⁹¹ and the **EU@UN Youth delegates** programme now comprises its second cohort: these initiatives strengthen young people's participation in the EU's multilateral agenda and policy making, through for example, advocacy, capacity building and mentoring opportunities.

In addition, a financial framework partnership agreement and action grant (EUR 3 million over 4 years) was signed with the global youth-led organisation **United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY)**. These aim to support the UNOY's work in relation to young people, peace and security and the implementation of the UN 2250 Resolution through advocacy, capacity building, support for youth-led initiatives and the strengthening of internal networks.

YAP flagships

The flagship initiatives showcasing the three pillars of action of the YAP have all been launched.

ENGAGE - Women and Youth in Democracy Initiative

The **Women and Youth in Democratic Engagement (WYDE)** initiative supports the engagement of young people in decision-making, political processes and civic movements at global and partner country level. Among the different activities of the programme, more than 50 sub-grants were already awarded in 30 countries, providing the opportunities to young people to take concrete actions at local level. The Youth Democracy Cohort also represents a major success of the programme gathering more than 250 youth organization networks. WYDE also includes a youth advisory board that showcases the commitment to ensure young people are integrated in the programme's implementation.

EMPOWER – Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF)

The **Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF)** in partnership with the Big 6 Youth Organisations³⁹² was officially launched at the YAP first anniversary event in Nairobi in October 2023³⁹³. Through low-barrier funding accessible for young people at the grassroots level, the YEF focuses on youth-led solutions for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The programme includes youth engagement mechanisms, such as the Youth Panel – a group of young people selected through an open call, who will recommend how and where the funding is awarded. The first call for proposals for youth-led initiatives received more than 10.000 submissions.

CONNECT – Africa-Europe Youth Academy

The **Africa-Europe Youth Academy** aims to enhance the capacities and opportunities of young people to act as multipliers for sustainable development and as bridge-builders

³⁹¹ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/eu-un-cooperation-eu-announces-support-un-youth-office-2024-05-13_en.

³⁹² Formed in 1996, the Big Six Youth Organisations are an alliance of leading international youth-serving organisations. The Big Six comprises the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (World YMCA), the World Alliance of Young Women's Christian Associations (World YWCA), the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (The Award).

³⁹³ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/eu-launches-youth-empowerment-fund-new-partnership-worlds-largest-youth-organisations-support-young-2023-10-04_en

between Africa and Europe. Its first component, launched in April 2024³⁹⁴, consists of a youth leadership programme undertaken in a Team Europe approach (France, Italy).

The EU is funding, to the tune of EUR 10.5 million, the project ‘**STRIVE Juvenile: Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups**’. The project combines global efforts with country-specific activities focusing on Indonesia, Iraq and Nigeria. The overall objective is to prevent and counter violent extremism affecting children, in full respect of human rights, gender equality and international law. With this project, the EU intends to disrupt terrorist groups’ recruitment of children and promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with these groups. STRIVE Juvenile supports the partner countries in a dual capacity by: (1) strengthening government strategies, policies and mechanisms related to child association with terrorist groups; and (2) increasing the resilience of children and their environment against violent extremist and terrorist agendas. In Indonesia, the project partnered with Peacegeneration, a youth-led civil society organisation, to strengthen resilience against terrorist propaganda. The initiative involved collaboration with 17 schools, where 46 counsellors were trained. The project’s activities reached over 15 000 children, providing them with the skills and knowledge to resist extremist influences.

The EU has **extended several initiatives beyond its borders**. For instance, Erasmus+ finances online exchanges in higher education and youth with countries in the Southern Mediterranean, the Western Balkans, the Eastern Neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Commission finances **Erasmus+ youth and sport capacity-building activities** in the Western Balkans, the Southern Neighbourhood, and, since 2024, the Eastern Neighbourhood.

The **European Solidarity Corps** programme includes a strong international dimension, by involving young people and organisations from non-EU countries not associated to the programme. Due to its extended geographical scope, the Corps contributes to the EU efforts to promote solidarity and address societal challenges.

In the European Solidarity Corps 2023 Call, the EU launched a new action called the ‘European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps’ that allows young volunteers aged 18-35 from the EU Member States, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia and Türkiye to contribute to humanitarian aid projects around the world. Selected projects involve at least one organisation from a country not associated to the programme.

As of December 2023, the **Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY)** initiative³⁹⁵ has expanded its scope allowing for all Interreg programmes and projects as well as macro-regional strategies to host volunteers. Therefore, all public authorities and project beneficiaries in regions cooperating with the EU as part of the cohesion policy are eligible to host volunteers. This includes not only candidate countries and neighbourhood countries, but also partner countries from outermost

³⁹⁴ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/global-gateway-eu-launches-new-regional-initiatives-africa-boost-youth-mobility-and-skills-including-2024-04-11_en

³⁹⁵ See section on Youth mobility and volunteering.

regions³⁹⁶. In the digital realm, Safer Internet Day is celebrated every year on every continent, in around 190 countries and regions.

7.1 Neighbourhood

EU candidate countries and potential candidate

[Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine]

The enlargement process gained new momentum in 2023-2024. The **Commission Communication on EU enlargement policy - 2024 Enlargement Package**³⁹⁷, presented in October 2024, assesses the progress made by the 10 countries on the path towards accession and includes Commission's recommendations on reform priorities. The Package stresses that democracy, the rule of law and fundamental values are the cornerstones of the EU's enlargement policy. It is for the Council of the EU to decide on the next steps in the enlargement process.

The **Commission Communication on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews**³⁹⁸, presented in March 2024, explores the implications of a larger EU in four main areas – values, policies, budget and governance. It also mentions the importance of people-to-people programmes – such as Erasmus+, especially in relation to young people – fostering a common European spirit, and creating synergies, for example, with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office in the Western Balkans, or the networks of Young European Ambassadors, Goodwill Ambassadors and Jeel Connect in the enlargement and neighbourhood countries. Following the Communication, the Commission will carry out in-depth policy reviews in early 2025.

The European Education Area and the Erasmus+ programme support the ongoing reform processes in the candidate countries. Erasmus+ supports enlargement by building up and strengthening cross-border cooperation, capacity building, international partnerships and exchanges among students, trainees, teachers, youth workers, etc. in the EU, candidate countries and potential candidate countries. At this moment, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye are associated to the Erasmus+ programme. North Macedonia and Türkiye are associated to the European Solidarity Corps. programme. Therefore, these countries participate in these respective programmes with the same status as EU Member States.

Erasmus+ offers other opportunities to candidate countries that are not associated to the programme in the field of Youth. For example, actions on **learning mobility of individuals** in this field provide non-formal and informal learning opportunities for young people and youth workers. Erasmus+ also offers youth participation activities that support youth-led local and transnational initiatives to boost meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation.

³⁹⁶ [Programmes - Keep.eu.](#)

³⁹⁷ [2024 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy - European Commission](#)

³⁹⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/926b3cb2-f027-40b6-ac7b-2c198a164c94_en?filename=COM_2024_146_1_EN.pdf.

Young people from the Western Balkans (since 2023) and from Ukraine (since 2024) can now apply to NEB Rising Stars, the dedicated strand of the **New European Bauhaus Prizes**³⁹⁹ for young people.

- **Western Balkans**

The Commission supports Western Balkans governments in adopting and implementing the **Youth Guarantee** mirroring the EU model⁴⁰⁰, to address the difficulties faced by young people not in education, employment or training. North Macedonia has been fully implementing the scheme since 2019. Piloting started in 2023-2024 in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina is finalising its Youth Guarantee implementation plan for national adoption. Montenegro has adopted its implementation plan and is preparing for piloting. A regional technical assistance facility, composed of the European Commission, the European Training Foundation and the International Labour Organization, supports the Western Balkan economies in the implementation process.

The **Western Balkans Youth Lab** initiative is instrumental in strengthening formal and informal mechanisms for youth participation by mobilising young people and connecting them with policymakers. Youth policy labs provide a safe space for young people to participate on an equal footing with policymakers and to engage meaningfully in policymaking based on the principles of co-management and co-production. Six working groups worked throughout 2022 to identify ways to raise mental health awareness and support measures to address mental health issues among young people. The solutions identified and the final results and next steps for continued cooperation between young people and policymakers were presented at a conference in Belgrade in June 2023. The Youth Lab also promotes the involvement of young people from the Western Balkans in the green transition.

In the field of **education**, the Commission supports the involvement of Western Balkans in the 2021-2030 strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training. To inspire transformation of the higher education sector in the Western Balkan region, in 2023, the **European Universities initiative**⁴⁰¹ was opened to all Western Balkans' universities⁴⁰². According to the results of the 2024 Erasmus+ call for European Universities, 14 Western Balkans universities are taking part as full partners in the European Universities alliances. A campus of the College of Europe was established in Tirana in 2024). The Western Balkans Superschools programme is a programme for school exchanges in the Western Balkans with the objectives to support the peacebuilding and reconciliation process and intercultural learning and dialogue among schools, students and their communities.

³⁹⁹ [A New European Bauhaus – bringing culture to climate action \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁴⁰⁰ The Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. See more on the Youth Guarantee in Section 2.3 Employment and skills.

⁴⁰¹ [European Universities initiative | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁴⁰² In addition to those associated to the Erasmus+ programme that were already eligible before.

In the context of the European Year of Youth, the Commission ran a major **regional communication campaign titled ‘Made of us – an EU-Western Balkans road trip’**, as part of the WeBalkans regional communication programme for the Western Balkans. This campaign aimed to show how the EU invests in a number of important areas, particularly in the future of young people, as well as to highlight how close the Western Balkan partners already are to the EU. In April-May 2023, 12 young EU and Western Balkan vloggers were selected to travel across the region to share their experiences, promote EU projects and showcase the hidden beauties and unique cultural heritage of the Western Balkans⁴⁰³.

North Macedonia is now fully associated to the Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps programmes, while Serbia is associated to the Erasmus+ programme. Therefore, these countries participate in these respective programmes with the same status as EU Member States. Regarding Western Balkans countries not yet fully associated to Erasmus+, since 2021, close to 3 000 participants from those countries have received support that has enabled them to participate in such projects.

- **The Eastern Partnership**

The Eastern Partnership, a joint initiative of the EU, its Member States and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

In the key action on **cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices of Erasmus+**, partnerships for cooperation enable participating organisations to gain experience in international cooperation, strengthen their capacities and produce high-quality innovative deliverables. The Commission offered **Erasmus+ youth and sport capacity building actions** in the 2024 call for participation by young people and sport organisations from countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood⁴⁰⁴, in order for them to build their capacity⁴⁰⁵.

The **EU4Youth initiative**⁴⁰⁶ continues to support youth leadership and entrepreneurship through various actions, including capacity building, fellowships, support for policy dialogue, and providing grants to organisations active in these areas.

Under the phase III of the programme, more than 9 000 young participants took part in activities to develop competences. In 2022, 39 youth policy discussions were introduced, while more than 5 500 young people were reached. Very positive achievements are observed in terms of learning and participatory experiences, and success stories have been publicised on the impact on the specific policy areas considered by the youth policy labs, such as youth employment, greening of the economy and social entrepreneurship. The six policy labs that took place in 2022 i) monitored the way recommendations by 2021 youth policy labs were implemented, and ii) promoted the sustainability of Youth Policy Lab approach.

Under the Phase IV of the initiative, which started in July 2023 ‘**EU4Youth: Youth empowerment and engagement**’ and aims to increase the capacity of youth organisations and public institutions to jointly implement more participatory and structured policy dialogue in the EaP region and improving the quality and outreach of youth work for mobilising and

⁴⁰³ (More information on EU-funded projects and opportunities for young people in the Western Balkans are available here: [WeBalkans | Your Story, Our Future | EU projects in the Western Balkans](#)).

⁴⁰⁴ Except Belarus.

⁴⁰⁵ As a follow-up to the 2023 Commission Decision to open up Erasmus+ capacity building actions in youth and sport to countries of the Eastern Partnership.

⁴⁰⁶ [Youth - EU NEIGHBOURS east](#).

engaging more young people from remote/less advantaged and conflict-affected areas. Work is ongoing to ensure better visibility of the EU in the EaP countries, and to coordinate the existing EU4Youth projects and actions carried out in the EaP region at regional, national and local levels.

The **Erasmus+** programme mobilises its efforts to mitigate the consequences of the Russian war of aggression against **Ukraine**, including by supporting projects that promote educational activities and enabling people fleeing the war in Ukraine to integrate into their new learning environment. As part of its capacity-building higher education call, the programme includes an open competitive call with a total budget of EUR 5 million to help create an open education digital environment to offer quality higher education for students fleeing from Ukraine or who are internally displaced.

The Erasmus+ programme has offered flexible and multiple opportunities for both students and staff from Ukrainian higher education institutions since the outbreak of the Russian war aggression against Ukraine. Students studying at a Ukrainian higher education institution at any study level from short cycle, bachelor, master to doctoral level may receive a grant to study at their host higher education institutions in any EU Member State or non-EU country associated to the Erasmus+ programme. In addition, both students and recent graduates from Ukrainian higher education institutions can do a traineeship in one of these countries. Staff from Ukrainian higher education institutions may also receive an Erasmus+ grant for a short period.

Since 2021, over 6 900 participants from Ukraine in youth exchanges and in projects involving mobility of youth worker projects have been supported by Erasmus+⁴⁰⁷.

The **European Solidarity Corps** programme was also quickly mobilised to support Ukrainians fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion by allowing projects to refocus on assistance to displaced Ukrainians, funding close to 1 000 Ukrainians since the start of the invasion.

Instrumental in building Europe's connections to the world and promoting European values globally, EU Universities support the strengthening of higher education in partner countries with close to 35 Ukrainian higher education institutions engaging in the alliances' activities as associated partners.

A European Commission project supports the printing of 1.5 million textbooks in the Ukrainian language for fifth grade students under the new Ukrainian curriculum. They also include a Ukrainian-language insert on the Erasmus+ programme and the opportunities it offers.

The **EU4Health** programme supports **psychological first aid** to displaced people (including children) from Ukraine via a contribution agreement of EUR 31.2 million with the Red Cross.

In 2022 and 2023, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova joined the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships**, which aims to strengthen the supply, quality and overall, image of apprenticeships across Europe, while also promoting mobility of apprentices.

In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the overall objective of the project 'Strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation for youth entrepreneurship education in the South Caucasus' (January 2024-June 2025) is to strengthen the quality and recognition of youth entrepreneurship education in the South Caucasus region through multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral cooperation for youth employability, specifically youth entrepreneurship.

⁴⁰⁷ Erasmus+ Mobility projects for youth workers 01/2021 - 08/2024.

- **Southern Neighbourhood**

The Commission implemented various communication activities in the Southern Neighbourhood. One of these initiatives is the **EU Jeel Connect network**, which was set up to help raise awareness about the EU's contribution towards providing a better future for young people across the Southern Neighbourhood and support more robust and enhanced youth engagement. EU JEEL CONNECT exists in many countries and territories in the Southern Neighbourhood including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. In January 2024, a new phase was launched to identify EU Jeel Connectors.

The Commission has adopted a **Youth package for the Southern Neighbourhood**. As part of the package, the Mediterranean youth in action programme is being implemented by the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures in the 43 Member States that comprise the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The programme aims to encourage young people to take part in politics, bridge the gap between generations, and promote active citizenship in the Mediterranean region. The programme also aims to engage young individuals through various activities and empower them as agents of positive change and responsible leaders. The youth package also includes the Youth NEETs South project implemented by the International Labour Organization. This examines the approach uses to implement the EU Youth Guarantee and aims to extract some methodologies and practices to support the activation of young people in the region.

The Young Civil Society Leadership Programme (YCSLP), part of the Med Dialogue for Rights and Equality II, funded by the European Commission, led by DAI Global Belgium, and implemented by the Anna Lindh Foundation, focuses on improving the skills of civil society leaders who show potential in policymaking, policy dialogue and advocacy⁴⁰⁸. In 2022, the UfM adopted a Youth Strategy⁴⁰⁹ and an Agenda for 2030. The UfM youth focal points meet on a regular basis with a focus on one of the three thematic clusters identified by the UfM Youth Agenda (environment and climate action, social inclusion and participation, education and employment), with the dual objective of setting out the subtopics for the UfM Mediterranean Youth Lab 2024 and mobilising actors to carry out the Agenda's actions. The Mediterranean Youth Lab took place in 2024 around the thematic clusters of the UfM Youth Agenda. Moreover, the main focus of the 5th UfM Ministerial meeting on Employment and Labour, held in May 2022 in Morocco, was on 'Employment and employability of the most vulnerable, especially among youth and women'. The ambitious Marrakech Ministerial Declaration and an actions-related roadmap 2022-2025 were adopted at the meeting.

Since 2021, almost 4 300 young people and youth workers sent by organisations from the Southern Neighbourhood have benefited from Erasmus+ KA1⁴¹⁰ grants, and over 1 300 have benefited from the European Solidarity Corps.

⁴⁰⁸ <https://south.euneighbours.eu/opportunity/young-civil-society-leadership-programme-yicslp-second-cycle/>

⁴⁰⁹ [UfM Youth Strategy 2030: Euro-Mediterranean Youth towards a Common Goal \(ufmsecretariat.org\)](https://ufmsecretariat.org/).

⁴¹⁰ KA1: Learning mobility of individuals

7.2 Other parts of the world

- **Sub-Saharan Africa**

As part of the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, and with a contribution of EUR 970 million, the flagship initiative on **Youth Mobility for Africa** promotes learning mobility opportunities within Africa and between Africa and the EU. It supports cooperation in higher education and skills development, and promotes Africa as a study destination. Youth Mobility for Africa brings under one umbrella several existing and new EU-funded programmes, including Erasmus+, the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme, the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation, the support to the African Continental Qualifications Framework, the Young African Leaders Programme, and the Africa-Europe Youth Academy.

The **Africa-Europe Youth Academy** will channel financial support of EUR 50 million towards formal and informal learning opportunities and exchanges for young people willing to improve their leadership skills and create networks of change-makers in Africa. It will be partly implemented through the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Youth action, open to Sub-Saharan countries as off the 2025 call.

In 2024 two additional regional programmes were launched. The **AU-EU Youth Lab Programme** bringing the voices of young people in the Africa-EU Partnership processes and support youth-led cooperation initiatives between the two continents.

In Sahel, the **Youth Europe Sahel (YES-ENJEU)** project was officially launched on 16th May 2024 with events in all the six countries (Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso). It aims to support young people's participation, promote intercultural dialogue, as well as strengthen career guidance services to promote entrepreneurship and access to employment.

The EU supported several regional dialogues with African partners focused on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS). More specifically, the Africa–Europe Youth Conference in Italy (October 2022) featured a dedicated YPS panel with EU experts taking part. In May 2024, the EU also funded a conference on the Coups d'État in the Sahel (totalling around EUR 120,000), as part of the Local European Youth Event. The event highlighted the role of young activists in building a participatory civic space to prevent radicalization, with the participation of the EU Special Representative for the Sahel.

- **Latin America and the Caribbean**

In July 2023, the EU organised, as a side event of the EU-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Summit in Brussels, an **EU-Latin America and the Caribbean (EU-LAC) Forum**, involving young people, civil society organisations and local authorities. The overall objective of the EU-LAC Forum was to have an inclusive exchange with non-state actors and to discuss opportunities to build a sustainable and inclusive future for both regions. The outcome of the Forum was the preparation of three complementary sets of recommendations from young people, civil society organisations and local authorities. These contributions were presented to the leaders during the EU-CELAC Summit.

In 2024, the EU-Caribbean 'Meet the Leaders' Civil Society and Youth Forum took place, which aimed to provide a constructive dialogue and reach consensus on policy recommendations on climate, social issues, youth empowerment and economic growth.

- **North America**

As part of the European Commission's **EU-North America Education Outreach project** ('Creating the Next Generation of Transatlanticists'), the yearly **EU-US Young Leaders Seminar** took place in Brussels in March 2024 to discuss "The Security Implications of Climate Change". The seminar consists of a series of discussions involving 50 young professionals and students from the EU and the United States, who are alumni of education and people-to-people programmes (Erasmus+, Erasmus Mundus, MSCA, Fulbright-Schuman). To frame the discussions, guest speakers from the EU Institutions, think-tanks, academia, US authorities and international organisations delivered a series of panel sessions, giving the opportunity to the participants to interact with them. The young leaders also received coaching. This Seminar was a stepping stone ahead of the Informal EU-US dialogue on the climate and security nexus meeting held at officials level in June 2024. This is a good example of people-to-people connections leading to more formal engagement.

- **Asia and the Pacific**

In 2022, on the margin of the EU-ASEAN Summit, a Youth Day was organised to bring together young people from both regions to discuss challenges and provide recommendations.

The 2022 ASEAN Regional Forum approved a 'Framework on Inclusive Processes for the Women, Peace and Security and **Youth, Peace and Security Agendas** in Confidence Building Measures, Preventive Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution.'

In August 2024, youth and civil society organisation representatives from across the Pacific region participated in the EU-Pacific 'Meet the Leaders' Civil Society and Youth Forum hosted in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. The event sought to strengthen the EU-Pacific Partnership through a constructive dialogue based on recommendations from youth and civil society organisations.

The Forum concluded with a set of robust recommendations reflecting the voice of youth and civil society representatives in the region. These recommendations, which aimed to improve the EU-Pacific Partnership, emphasised the need for: i) young people to increase their involvement in decision-making processes, ii) a commitment to the rule of law and human rights, and iii) a steadfast commitment to environmental sustainability.

- **United Kingdom**

In October 2023, the Delegation of the EU to the United Kingdom set up a **European Affairs Society Network**. This meets three times per academic year, each time at a different UK university, to discuss European affairs: for example, the event held in May 2024 focused on the European elections. The European Affairs Societies are open to British, EU and international students interested in EU affairs.

- **Arctic**

The EU is supporting the **Youth Together for Arctic Futures** project. Launched in January 2024 by a group of Arctic and European partner organisations, the project aims to empower young people in the Arctic region and Europe in order to influence policy for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic future. The four-year project aims to provide young people in both regions with knowledge, skills and opportunities to work towards implementing good

climate and nature policies for the Arctic. Special attention will be given to including underrepresented groups in the Arctic, including women, indigenous peoples and social or other minorities. A key part of the project is the establishment of an EU-Arctic youth dialogue, which will become a part of the EU's flagship events on the Arctic, namely the EU Arctic Forum and the Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue. To ensure that the project reflects the needs and perspectives of young people, a youth board consisting of young people from Arctic and European regions will steer its direction.

8 Monitoring and data

8.1 Insights into EU spending on youth

The EU offers many funding opportunities to support young people under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF), with the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes being the main sources of funding that directly support the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy.

The EU long-term budget for 2021-2027 (MFF)⁴¹¹ of €1.074 trillion (in 2018 prices), combined with the temporary recovery instrument, NextGenerationEU (NGEU), of EUR 750 billion (in 2018 prices), helps repair the economic and social damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic and steers the transition towards a modern and more sustainable Europe⁴¹².

The NextGenerationEU⁴¹³ funds kick-started the recovery in a limited period of time. They are included in : Recovery and Resilience Facility (€672.5 **billion**); REACT-EU (EUR 47.5 **billion**); Rural development (EUR 7.5 **billion**); Just Transition Fund (EUR 10.0 **billion**); InvestEU (EUR 5.6 **billion**); RescEU (EUR 1.9 **billion**); Horizon Europe (EUR 5.0 **billion**).

The expenditure categories ('headings')⁴¹⁴ of the 2021-2027 long-term EU budget reflect the sectoral policy areas in which it intervenes (total **EUR billion** with NGEU), including: **1.** Single Market, Innovation and Digital (EUR 161 **billion**), **2.** Cohesion, Resilience and Values (EUR 1 203.2 **billion**), **3.** Natural Resources and Environment (EUR 419.9 **billion**), **4.** Migration and Border Management (EUR 25.7 **billion**), **5.** Security and Defence (EUR 14.9 **billion**), **6.** Neighbourhood and the World (EUR 110.6 **billion**), **and 7.** European Public Administration (EUR 82.5 **billion**).

- **Single Market, Innovation and Digital**

This heading aims to step up investment in areas such as research and innovation, digital transformation, strategic infrastructure, and the Single Market. Youth-related spending is found in particular in the Horizon Europe programme.

➤ *Horizon Europe - Framework Programme for Research and Innovation*

⁴¹¹ The allocations per spending category in current prices are available on [Headings - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴¹² See: [2021-2027 long-term EU budget & NextGenerationEU | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴¹³ See: [EU's next long-term budget & NextgenerationEU - Key facts and figures | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴¹⁴ See: [Headings: expenditure categories | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

Horizon Europe (2021-2027) is supporting research on youth. Thus, topics related to youth have been included in the Work Programmes of **Cluster 1 (Health)**, and **Cluster 2 (Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society)**. Research related to youth will focus on inclusive education and training, tackling inequalities, social fairness, social inclusion, migration, health, democracy, cultural heritage, etc.

Research topics related to youth include:

- The impact of inequalities on democracy
- Education for democracy
- Providing support in a changing world of work and social protection
- Determining key drivers of inequality trends
- Addressing poor learning outcomes in basic skills and early school leaving in Europe
- Integration of emerging new technologies into education and training
- Games and culture shaping our society
- Overcoming discrimination for an inclusive labour market
- Conditions for the successful development of skills matched to needs
- Non-communicable diseases risk reduction in adolescence and youth

The following are examples of calls for proposals under Horizon Europe:

- ✓ With the dedicated funds for widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area (**WIDERA**)⁴¹⁵, a call for funding titled ‘Developing a STE(A)M roadmap for science education in Horizon Europe’ funded three projects with an EU contribution of **EUR 5 129 446.25**, which started in September 2022.
- ✓ Through another WIDERA call for funding, ‘Support to the implementation of an EU Manifesto for STE(A)M education and research and innovation career paths to tackle gender inequalities in the ERA’, the **EU-funded project ST®E(A)M IT**⁴¹⁶ started on 1 January 2024 with a total EU contribution of **EUR 1.8 million**.
- ✓ Under the Cluster 2 ‘Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society’⁴¹⁷, a call on ‘**Cultural and creative approaches for gender-responsive STEAM education**’ funded the **EU project STEAMbrace**⁴¹⁸. This project began on 1 January 2024 with an EU contribution of EUR 2.9 million.

⁴¹⁵ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/jobs-research/researchcomp-european-competence-framework-researchers_en.

⁴¹⁶ [ST\(R\)E\(A\)M IT/STREAMING GIRLS AND WOMEN INTO STEAM EDUCATION, INNOVATION AND RESEARCH | STREAM IT.](#)

⁴¹⁷ [Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive society - European Commission \(europa.eu\).](#)

⁴¹⁸ [European coordination network and activities to embrace a sustainable and inclusive STEAM educational system: the blend of artistic and creative approaches in STEM education, research & innovation.](#)

➤ *InvestEU*

The **InvestEU programme** supports investment across the EU through a policy-driven and market-based approach. It consists of the InvestEU Fund, the InvestEU Advisory Hub and the InvestEU Portal. The InvestEU Fund's rationale in combination with InvestEU Advisory Hub and InvestEU Portal is based on the proven effectiveness of budgetary guarantees to crowd in private capital in EU priority areas that experience market failures and sub-optimal investment conditions.

The EU budgetary guarantee **supporting investment in young people and education** falls under the **Social Investment and Skills Window (SISW)** with the budget of **EUR 2.8 million**. Currently seven implementing partners deploy financial products (debt, equity) under the SISW, and three more implementing partners are negotiating new financial products under the SISW (as a result of the first cut-off date under the second call for expression of interest).

Relevant policy areas covered by operations relate mainly to skills, education, training, social infrastructure (which includes educational infrastructure and student housing), social economy, social innovation, integration of vulnerable people, inclusion and accessibility. As of the end of April 2024, approved financing by InvestEU implementing partners under the SISW represents around EUR 2.67 billion. This amount of financing is expected to mobilise more than EUR 8.8 billion in private and public investments. The amount of support is expected to increase during the remaining implementation period until the end of 2028.

Examples of operations backed by InvestEU guarantee

- Jacob's University: deferring of tuition fees by establishing an income sharing agreement to their students at substantially more favourable terms. This aims to give to a wider range of students access to education.
- Cyprus University of Technology: the construction of Tepak student residences and associated sports infrastructure as well as the construction and renovation of academic and research facilities and a photovoltaic park.
- Università degli Studi di Milano: construction of new campus, where the University intends to relocate the teaching and research activities of its STEM departments.
- Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil; funding to renovate and expand of its Saint-Philippe education campus in Meudon, which no longer meets regulatory standards and the needs of nearly 600 vulnerable young people currently in education and training.
- EduCapital II: the first specialised impact fund in Europe on skills and education, that seeks to have a positive social impact, in terms of reach, inclusion and learning outcomes. The Fund's strategy targets investments into software and hybrid (tech-enabled hardware) solutions that improve learning outcomes, and reach marginalised population segments from toddlers to adults.

➤ *Digital Europe Programme*

The Digital Europe Programme (DEP) ⁴¹⁹ provides funding for higher education programmes in key digital areas, like artificial intelligence, data analytics, cloud computing, quantum technologies, high performing computing, semiconductors, virtual worlds or robotics to increase the number of Information and communication technology (ICT) graduates in Europe able to design, deploy and use the different advanced digital technologies.

In particular, under DEP, there is funding provided for the network of the Safer Internet Centres in the Member States and the Better Internet for Kids Platform.

➤ *EU4Health*

The EU4Health programme, running from 2021 to 2027, is a major initiative with an overall initial financial budget of EUR 5.7 billion. The programme budget was reduced to **EUR 4.6 billion** following the revision of the 2021-2027 MFF. The programme aims to improving health across the EU. It aims to improve the health of children and young people by focusing on disease prevention and health promotion, and addressing health determinants.

The programme funds actions that involve:

- supporting children's and young people's mental health, e.g. best practices such as 'Ice hearts' and 'Let's talk about children' projects, each worth EUR 4 million, and psychological first aid to displaced people/children from Ukraine via a contribution agreement of EUR 31.2 million with the Red Cross;
- increasing vaccination rates: examples include i) the project 'Overcoming Obstacles to Vaccination (EUR 5.25 million) identifies and pilots exemplary practices in overcoming structural barriers to vaccination, including vaccination against human papillomaviruses for adolescent girls and boys; and ii) a EUR 3 million contribution agreement on immunisation with the WHO, which also focuses on children and young people;
- promoting healthy lifestyles: examples include i) the joint action Health4EUKids implements best practices on promoting healthy lifestyles for children and their families; and ii) the Schools4Health project which aims to turn all schools into health-promoting schools that prioritise the health of the school community;
- improving the quality of life of young cancer survivors.

In addition, EU4Health invests in digital health tools and services, ensuring that young people have access to modern, efficient healthcare. By strengthening health systems and boosting resilience, EU4Health aims to create a healthier future for the younger generation.

- **Cohesion, Resilience and Values**

The main programmes under this expenditure category aim to strengthen the cohesion among EU Member States, reduce disparities in EU regions both within and across Member States, and promote sustainable territorial development. Through **investment in young people, health and actions to protect EU's values**, the programmes seek to make Europe **more resilient**,

⁴¹⁹ [The Digital Europe Programme | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

cohesive and inclusive in its response to the various challenges that the continent faces and will be facing in the future.

The most relevant examples under this heading refer to: i) the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) that supports youth employment, upskilling and reskilling of workers, and poverty reduction; ii) the ERDF; and iii) the **Erasmus+ programme** that continues to create opportunities for the education, training and mobility of young people. **The Recovery and Resilience Facility and REACT-EU** (channelled as a top-up of the 2014-2020 ERDF and the ESF+ allocations), as part of the NextGenerationEU temporary recovery framework, are also included under this heading. Furthermore, there are other relevant programmes and funding schemes presented below that need to be taken in consideration.

➤ *The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)*⁴²⁰

The ESF+ is a key financial instrument for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, to support jobs and create a fair and socially inclusive society. The ESF+ has a total budget of over **EUR 140 billion**. It invests in people, creates and protects job opportunities, promotes social inclusion, fights poverty and develops the skills needed for the digital and green transition.

It also includes a more ambitious requirement for **investing in young people** and addressing child poverty, as proposed by the Commission. Member States that have a rate above the EU average of young people not in employment, education or training (the so-called NEETs aged between 15-29 years) should allocate at least 12.5% of their ESF+ resources to targeted actions and structural reforms to support youth employment, helping these young people find a qualification, or a good quality job in line with the Youth Guarantee. All other Member States must allocate an appropriate amount of their ESF+ resources towards achieving this aim. The Commission is urging Member States to use this and other existing funding opportunities to further increase investments in youth employment measures. Altogether around **EUR 17.3 billion**, including an EU contribution of EUR 11 billion, will have been invested in measures supporting youth employment and young people's socio-economic integration.

Examples of actions under the ESF+ Social Innovation strand

Under the **social innovation** strand of the ESF+, new initiatives have been launched on activating and upskilling young NEETs, on the ALMA social inclusion model and on the zero long-term unemployment scheme:

- ✓ In 2023, the Commission launched a **call for proposals**⁴²¹ for transnational projects dedicated to developing young people's **skills** and helping them to integrate the labour market. 20 projects will receive a total of over **EUR 9 million** of ESF+ funding to develop or scale up innovative methods and practices that have proven to be successful in other contexts, countries and regions.

⁴²⁰ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en>

⁴²¹ [Social Innovations for the Upskilling of Vulnerable Youth, Especially Young People not in Employment, Education, or Training \(NEETs\) \(closed\) » Europos socialinio fondo agentūra](#)

- ✓ In 2023, the Commission also launched a call for proposals for supporting the **integration of long-term unemployed**⁴²² (including vulnerable young people) into the labour market, with a total grant budget of EUR 23 million. The call focuses on combatting long-term unemployment from a geographical perspective by implementing and replicating established and promising innovations, bringing together key stakeholders at local levels. Grant agreements are to be signed in April 2025.
- ✓ In the framework of the European Year of Youth, the Commission launched a **one-off EU-level call** (budget of €11.6 million) to help EU Member States integrate **ALMA**⁴²³ in their ESF+ programmes, by piloting or scaling up ALMA type of activities.

Since 2013, the **Youth Guarantee**⁴²⁴ has ensured that all young people, at national, regional and local levels, receive a quality offer of employment, continued education, traineeship, or apprenticeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Since 2020, the reinforced Youth Guarantee has extended its support to young people aged under 30 and is funded through the NextGenerationEU and the long-term EU budget, in particular the European Social Fund+. The EU supports mutual learning activities and monitors the progress made annually in implementing the Youth Guarantee. Since the Youth Guarantee was adopted in 2013, over 50 million young people have taken up an offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship and a traineeship.

The Communication “Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking potential in the outermost regions”⁴²⁵ acknowledges the educational and labour market challenges in the outermost regions. It encourages concerned Member States and these regions to set up apprenticeship, job retention and hiring schemes for young people in the outermost regions within the Youth Guarantee using EU funds.

➤ *EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation*⁴²⁶

The EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) aims to promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guarantee adequate and decent social protection, combat social exclusion and poverty, and improve working conditions. In the financial period 2021–2027 the EaSI programme is included under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). The EaSI Programme has a comprehensive performance monitoring system with biannual performance monitoring reports.

⁴²² <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/update-on-the-call-innovative-approaches-tackling-long-term-unemployment/>

⁴²³ See section 2.3 on employment and skills

⁴²⁴ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>

⁴²⁵ [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region on Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking the potential of the EU’s outermost regions](#)

⁴²⁶ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081>

➤ *The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)*

The RRF is at the heart of the EUR 800 billion **NextGenerationEU** (NGEU) plan: It will last until the end of 2026. It has a two-fold objective: to (i) help Member States to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and (ii) make their economies and societies more sustainable, resilient and prepared for the green and digital transitions, in line with the EU's priorities.

The RRF is the EU's first major performance-based funding programme, disbursing a total of up to **EUR 650 billion** (in 2024 price) in grants and loans to Member States against the progress made towards an ambitious agenda of reforms and investments put forward in their national recovery and resilience plans (RRP), which is:

- in line with the EU's green, digital and socio-economic policy priorities, and
- tailored to address national challenges identified in the European Semester country-specific recommendations.

More than 25% of the RRP are dedicated to social objectives.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is supporting important reforms and investments relevant for young people across all Member States. In total, more than **EUR 66 billion** is dedicated to **reforms and investments supporting children and young people**⁴²⁷. Measures cover a wide range of policy areas, including employment support, education at all levels, such as vocational education and training, and housing. For instance, the RRF dedicates almost EUR 6.1 billion to supporting youth employment and job creation. More than **7.5 million** young people aged 15-29 have already benefited from the RRF, including monetary and in-kind support, such as education, training and employment support⁴²⁸.

➤ *Technical Support Instrument (TSI)*

The TSI⁴²⁹ is the EU programme that provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU Member States to design and implement reforms. The support is demand-driven and does not require co-financing from Member States.

The TSI operates on an annual basis. Each year, there is an open call for proposals from EU Member State administrations – launched at national, regional or local level. Also, each year, the Commission further proposes a list of flagship technical support projects, comprised of a

⁴²⁷ Figure as of 29 August 2024. Following the methodology used for reporting social expenditure as set out in [Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2105](#), the Commission flagged measures that include a focus on children and young people. The Commission applied this methodology not only to measures of a social nature, but to all other measures included in adopted RRP that have a focus on children and young people, in order to better capture these throughout the plans. This did not have to be the main focus of the concerned measures. Measures not flagged as such may also have an impact on children and young people. These figures are based on the *ex ante* estimated cost of the relevant RRF measures.

⁴²⁸ The Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard includes a set of common indicators related to the objectives of the RRF. The common indicators show how the implementation of the RRPS is progressing towards achieving common objectives and the overall performance of the RRF. Member States collect the common indicators data and report their numbers to the European Commission twice a year, by the end of February and the end of August. In total, the Commission, the Member States and the European Parliament have identified 14 common indicators across all six policy pillars in the [Delegated Regulation EU 2021/2106](#).

⁴²⁹ [Technical Support Instrument - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#).

list of (pre-identified) support measures to select from. The support measures are just orientational, and Member States may use them in various configurations, and may also wish to add new measures to the proposed packages. These flagship projects are meant to address pivotal EU and national policy priorities, and are developed in consultation with all relevant Commission departments.

Four TSI flagship support projects have in particular contributed to reforms in the field of youth: (i) the TSI 2022 Flagship on the Implementation of the European Child Guarantee; (ii) the TSI 2023 Youth First Flagship; (iii) the TSI Skills Flagship; and (iv) the TSI Mental health Flagship.

In the period covering the TSI calls for 2022 to 2024, **the Commission supported 34 youth-related projects through funding of more than EUR 25 million.** The projects aimed to address the needs of the younger population that spanned across multiple sectors and policy domains, including i) social protection; ii) education and training; and iii) health. Specific projects have aimed to: i) expand access to mental health and well-being services for young people (focusing on prevention and early intervention approaches); ii) improve the quality and labour market relevance of vocational education and training; and iii) develop strategies to improve the inclusiveness of education at all levels.

For example, through the TSI, the Commission helped the Irish authorities develop a new policy framework for children and young people, encompassing important government initiatives such as the National Action Plan to implement the European Child Guarantee⁴³⁰. In concrete terms, the project provided recommendations to improve the governance, monitoring and evaluation of child and youth policies, including by addressing existing data gaps and introducing new incentives for inter-agency and cross-departmental collaboration. Furthermore, the project provided guidance on how to strengthen stakeholder collaboration for delivering services for children and young people, including through a greater reliance on local coordination structures. The project is part of the European Child Guarantee flagship, which facilitates the implementation of concrete actions and policies to prevent and combat child poverty and social exclusion, with specific attention to children experiencing disadvantages

➤ *Erasmus+: the EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport*⁴³¹

The general objective of the 2021-2027 EU programme for education, training, youth and sport is to support, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people involved education, training, youth and sport, in the EU and beyond. This contributes to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship.

⁴³⁰ [Towards a new governance framework for children and youth policies in Ireland - European Commission \(europa.eu\).](#)

⁴³¹ See: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en#:~:text=Erasmus%2B%20is%20the%20EU's%20programme,youth%20and%20sport%20in%20Europe.&text=Erasmus%2B%20is%20open%20to%20individuals,Commission%2C%20along%20with%20other%20organisations.

The Programme has an overall indicative budget of more than EUR 26 billion of the total EU budget for the period 2021-2027⁴³² and an additional 2 billion from EU external cooperation funds⁴³³). The threshold of total budget allocation under Erasmus+ 2021-2027 for Youth is 10.3%.

➤ *European Solidarity Corps*⁴³⁴

The overall indicative budget of the European Solidarity Corps is EUR 1 009 billion of the total EU budget for the period 2021-2027 in current prices, and covers activities that include volunteering in the area of humanitarian aid. The European Solidarity Corps' activities support the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy for 2019-2027, which encourage young people to become active citizens, agents of solidarity and positive change for communities across Europe and beyond with the new humanitarian action, inspired by EU values and a European identity.

➤ *Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe package (REACT-EU)*⁴³⁵

With an allocation of EUR 47.5 billion (EUR 50.5 billion in current prices), REACT-EU contributes to a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy by adding fresh additional resources to existing cohesion policy programmes.

For the ERDF, the REACT-EU resources are used primarily to: i) support investments in products and services in the area of health or social infrastructure; ii) provide support in the form of working capital or investment support to SMEs' investments in sectors with a high potential for job creation; iii) support investments that contribute to the transition towards a digital and green economy; iv) support investments in infrastructure providing basic public services; and v) support economic support measures in the regions that are most dependent on those sectors most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

The European Social Fund (ESF) is benefitting from the top-up resources provided by REACT-EU. ESF measures are planned to help job seekers and preserve jobs, advance education and skills and promote the social inclusion of people in vulnerable situations. The top-up to ESF+ funding will be vital in terms of shoring up access to employment for those affected by the crisis - and is reflected by millions invested to ensure our labour market continues to expand in its recovery.

➤ *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), including its European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) strand, and the Cohesion Fund*

With a budget of close to EUR 253.3 billion for 2021-2027, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund continue to enable investments towards delivering a smarter, greener, more connected, more social Europe that is closer to its public. These funds allow the EU Member States and regions

⁴³² Source: [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education, training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation No 1288/2013](#)

⁴³³ Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe. Article 13(6) of Regulation EU 2021/947

⁴³⁴ See: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

⁴³⁵ See: [Commission welcomes the political agreement on REACT-EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

to respond to current challenges by boosting sustainable and inclusive development and resilience in European regions and communities.

The **ERDF** invests close to EUR 30 billion into projects that enable young people to benefit from opportunities related to the digital and demographic transition, access to quality local services including in the areas of employment, education and training, social inclusion, social housing, health and care, sustainable tourism, and culture. Furthermore, the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund invest EUR 93.4 billion into low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and sustainable urban mobility. Young people need access to a sustainable, affordable and reliable transport system. This includes developing sustainable and accessible transport options such as rail, public transport and cycling and walking. In the 2021-2027 period, the ERDF and Cohesion Fund are helping develop a seamless and door-to-door transport system with funding amounting to EUR 40.3 billion.

Under its **Interreg strand**, ERDF supports cooperation between regions, citizens and economic stakeholders over their respective land and maritime borders with a budget of EUR 8.05 billion. As one of the key instruments of the EU supporting cooperation across borders through project funding, Interreg aims at jointly tackling common challenges and finding shared solutions in fields such as health, environment, research, education, transport, sustainable energy and more. In the 2021-2027 period, internal cross-border Interreg programmes have to allocate resources to the Policy Objective 4 ‘a more social and inclusive Europe’ thus offering the possibility to implement youth-related projects. In addition, the Interreg transnational programmes linked geographically to the EU Macro Regional Strategies give the full support to the implementation of the Strategies where the youth involvement is a priority.

➤ *Social Climate Fund*

Young people experiencing energy or transport poverty (i.e. the lack of adequate transport services needed to access essential services, school and work, or the inability to pay for these transport services) will benefit from measures financed under the **Social Climate Fund**. The fund is the first EU funding instrument created for the specific purpose of addressing energy and transport poverty. It will be operational in the 2026-2032 period and will mobilise at least **EUR 86.7 billion** to support vulnerable groups of society, in particular vulnerable households, vulnerable transport users, and vulnerable micro-enterprises, who are most affected by the green transition. The support will be provided to Member States through non-repayable financial support (grants) based on national social climate plans submitted to the Commission.

➤ *Rights and Values programme*⁴³⁶

The EUR 1.55 billion ‘**Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values**’ (**CERV**) programme⁴³⁷ is the biggest-ever EU fund to be established for promoting and protecting fundamental rights inside the EU. Its main objective is to protect and promote people’s rights and values as enshrined in the Treaties, the Charter and in the applicable international human rights conventions. This is

⁴³⁶ See: [JUST - Item \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴³⁷ See: [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)

achieved by supporting civil society organisations and other stakeholders active at local, regional, national and transnational level. The CERV programme is based on **4 strands**:

1. **Equality, Rights and Gender Equality** - promote rights, non-discrimination, equality, including gender equality, and advance gender and non-discrimination **mainstreaming**;
2. **Citizens' engagement and participation** - promote the engagement and participation of citizens in the democratic life of the EU and exchanges between citizens of different Member States and to raise awareness of the common European history. For instance, a call for proposals on the rights of the child and children's participation was launched in 2024, with 23 projects being selected with a total budget of EUR 12 million. Some 12 projects will tackle children's mental health while the others will promote an inclusive and systemic participation of children at local, national and EU levels to ensure their voices are heard and listened to, especially in matters that affect them, as well as help children understand their democratic rights..
3. **Daphne** - fight violence, including gender-based violence. One of the objectives of the Daphne programme refers to young people, among other vulnerable groups, by aiming to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, young people, as well as violence against other groups at risk, such as LGBTIQ people and people with disabilities⁴³⁸. This strand provides an estimated EUR 200 million available over the financing period. In 2023, over EUR 14 million was granted to seven intermediaries to regrant funding to support the capacity of grassroot organisations in strengthening integrated child protection system by improving prevention, protection, child rights-based and child-friendly support services for (potential) children victims/witnesses of violence and those in need of protection, including multi-disciplinary cooperation.
4. **Union values** - protect and promote Union values.

➤ *Creative Europe*⁴³⁹

Creative Europe invests in actions that strengthen cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sectors. The Creative Europe programme for 2021-2027, with a budget of EUR 2.44 billion: i) safeguards, develops and promotes European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage to large audiences including younger people; and ii) increases the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, particularly the audiovisual sector. An example of an action that targets young people is the [Pan-European Cultural Entities](#)⁴⁴⁰ scheme, which helps transnational orchestras to train and boost the career of young musicians.

➤ *EU Careers Student Ambassadors programme*

⁴³⁸ Source: [call-fiche_cerv-2021-daphne_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴³⁹ See also section 4.5 on culture

⁴⁴⁰ Pan-European Cultural Entities.

The **EU Careers Student Ambassadors programme** aims to promote EU career opportunities across selected university campuses. The programme engages universities and student ambassadors through the European Personnel Selection Office. These ambassadors serve for one academic year, representing the EU at job fairs, delivering presentations, managing social media, and building networks within their universities. The programme's budget for the 2023–24 academic year, including conference and training costs, is EUR 104 000.

- **Natural Resources and Environment**

The EU budget continues to be a driver of sustainability: investing in sustainable agriculture and maritime sectors, alongside climate action, environmental protection, food security and rural development. A part of the programmes under this expenditure category supports Europe's farming, agricultural and fisheries sectors and seeks to make them more competitive. Other programmes are dedicated exclusively to achieving the EU's environmental and climate objectives. Although this heading does not make direct reference to young people, the following funding schemes could be relevant and are included as regards monitoring the EU spending on youth-related activities in the future.

- *Just Transition Fund (JTF)*

To address the social and economic consequences that results from efforts to fulfil the objective to reach climate neutrality in the EU by 2050, a Just Transition Fund helps the most vulnerable coal- and carbon-intensive regions address the economic and social costs of the climate transition. The Just Transition Fund received additional funding from NextGenerationEU and is equipped with EUR 19.7 billion. A toolkit for youth participation in the Just Transition Fund⁴⁴¹ has also been developed.

- *Support for young farmers*⁴⁴²

The **2023-2027 Common Agricultural Policy** provides for several forms of support specifically for young farmers. Young farmers receive complementary income support through the European agricultural guarantee fund, as well as grants, loans or guarantees through the European agricultural fund for rural development. The overall support will amount to approximately **EUR 8.5 billion**. Launched in 2019 by the Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB), a **EUR 1 billion loan facility to young farmers** has attracted interest from several intermediaries in different EU countries, The financing targets have been met in a relatively short time, despite the economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By early 2023, 98% of the financing was signed with intermediary banks.

- *The EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme*⁴⁴³

The scheme pursues the objectives of contributing to viable food production and promoting healthy eating habits among school children. With a **total budget of EUR 220.8 million per school year** it supports the distribution of fruit, vegetables, milk and certain milk products to

⁴⁴¹ [Youth for a just transition - Publications Office of the EU](#)

⁴⁴² See: [Young farmers - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁴³ See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme_en

school children, from nursery to secondary school, as well as accompanying educational measures.

➤ *Blue careers for a sustainable blue economy*⁴⁴⁴

The EU supports cooperation projects between business and education through the ‘Blue careers for a sustainable blue economy’ calls for proposals under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. Eight new projects kicked off in September 2023⁴⁴⁵, following the fourth edition of the call. With a **total budget of EUR 7.5 million**, the projects aim to help develop the next generation of blue skills and to provide opportunities for attractive and long-term maritime careers, especially for young people. Previous editions funded 18 projects with a total EU budget of EUR 11 million. Success stories include the NAUTILUS and BBMBC projects⁴⁴⁶.

- **Migration and Border Management**

Programmes under this heading tackle challenges linked to migration and the management of borders. Young people are directly impacted by migration policies. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund continues to target young migrants in different situations, asylum applicants, refugees, beneficiaries of integration policies, returnees and unaccompanied minors. For instance, four transnational projects, with a total budget of EUR 5 million, were selected following a call for proposals under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Thematic Facility to support the inclusion of migrant children.

- **Neighbourhood and the World**

Programmes under this heading invest in the EU’s external action in its neighbourhood, in developing countries and the rest of the world. The current MMF streamlined and simplified EU external action financing instruments for international and development cooperation, crisis response and peace-building actions. It did this by merging several external financing instruments - including the European Development Fund - into one single financing tool called the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). This instrument promotes multilateralism, strategic priorities and achieving key international commitments and objectives, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The NDICI has been allocated a total financial budget of EUR 79.462 million for the period 2021-2027, providing funding through three pillars: **Geographical, Thematic, and Rapid Response**.

➤ *The EU4Youth Programme*⁴⁴⁷

Young people are at the heart of EU cooperation with its Eastern partners through the EU4Youth programme funded by the EU. The EU helps develop young people's skills and employability, promotes education and training and supports their involvement in civic, cultural, academic and professional exchanges. Investing in young people is investing in the

⁴⁴⁴ [EMFAF Blue Careers Call 2023 \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

⁴⁴⁵ [Eight EMFAF projects kickstarted their work to develop the next generation of blue skills - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu).

⁴⁴⁶ [Training the water sports professionals of tomorrow - European Commission - BBMBC: From a blue career project to a Mundus master - European Commission](https://europa.eu).

⁴⁴⁷ See: [EU4Youth Days - EU4Youth Days](https://europa.eu)

future. Greater and better opportunities for young generations must be provided inside and outside the EU to support effective and responsible citizenship and prosperous, stable and democratic societies.

➤ *DEAR Programme*⁴⁴⁸

The **Development Education and Awareness Raising** (DEAR) programme supports projects that get Europeans involved, especially young people, in global social, economic and environmental development issues. Through European civil society organisations and local authorities, the aim is to raise awareness and support active engagement. The programme seeks to tackle global challenges, such as climate change and inequalities, and to promote global justice, human rights, sustainable development and democratic participation.

8.2 Key indicators and data

Data plays a crucial role in the EU Youth Strategy to ensure evidence-based monitoring and development. With its cross-sectoral nature and youth mainstreaming objective, the EUYS benefits from data, research, studies and surveys in many policy areas by many Commission departments, Member States and stakeholders. Key knowledge and data sources are described below:

- **Youth Wiki**⁴⁴⁹, which provides comparable qualitative information on youth related national policies.

The Youth Wiki information on national youth policies is regularly updated (by a network of national correspondents, nominated by national authorities of Erasmus+ programme countries). The information is based on official documents, such as laws, decrees, regulations and recommendations. Between 2022 and 2024, the Commission, with the help of the Youth Wiki Network, published two analytical reports, one on young people's mental health⁴⁵⁰ and one on youth mainstreaming approaches in Member States⁴⁵¹. Comparative maps to illustrate data in some areas were updated and created, including new maps on youth work⁴⁵².

- **Eurostat**, which provides survey and other data on the situation of young people.

In 2024, Eurostat launched an updated thematic section on children and young people⁴⁵³. It presents detailed, age-specific breakdowns across various topics, such as health and well-being, social inclusion, youth employment and digital skills. There is also an interactive tool⁴⁵⁴ presenting statistics on young Europeans in a fun and easy way.

⁴⁴⁸ See: <https://dearprogramme.eu/>

⁴⁴⁹ [Youth Wiki: Europe's Encyclopedia of National Youth Policies \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁵⁰ [The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁴⁵¹ [Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁴⁵² [Comparative Overviews \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁴⁵³ Eurostat [thematic section on children and youth](#)

⁴⁵⁴ Eurostat interactive tool [Young Europeans](#)

- **Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programme data.**

This includes programme dashboards and data from **National Agencies with the RAY research network**⁴⁵⁵, which provide data and analysis on the EU youth programmes. In 2024, the Commission launched a data storytelling initiative providing easy public access to Erasmus+ information and data⁴⁵⁶. The Commission publishes **reports on the implementation**⁴⁵⁷ of Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, which include **comprehensive data annexes** and examples of supported projects and initiatives.

- **Partner organisations**

Further sources include the **EU-Council of Europe Youth partnership**⁴⁵⁸ (which provides research and training materials on topics related to young people), **civil society organisations and networks**⁴⁵⁹ and **international organisations**⁴⁶⁰ (which provide data and research on topics related to young people).

- **Examples of data in the EUYS sphere**

In 2023 and 2024, the EU Children's Participation Platform conducted two consultations with children and young people below the age of 18 resulting in data on what they need to feel safe and on democracy and voting⁴⁶¹.

During the European Year of Youth 2022, the EUYS's evidence-base was strengthened with the publication of an **updated EU Youth Dashboard**⁴⁶², based on **proposals from the expert group on youth indicators**⁴⁶³. The dashboard is composed of a selection of statistical indicators on the situation of young people (grouped according to the EUYS core areas of Engage, Connect and Empower), complemented with contextual indicators. The EU Youth Dashboard takes the cross-sectoral nature of youth policy into consideration, which is important for youth mainstreaming. The expert group proposal also included a new dashboard of mainly qualitative **policy indicators** on the EUYS instruments. Efforts are ongoing on this new dashboard to explore further what data is available and accessible for the EUYS.

Furthermore, during the European Year of Youth, reports on international, EU, and national youth programmes worldwide⁴⁶⁴ contributed to an evidence-based approach for the **Youth Action Plan in EU external action**, and to other youth policies in the EU and around the world. Developed in consultation with youth organisations and the Youth Sounding Board for International Partnerships, the **monitoring framework of the Youth Action Plan in EU**

⁴⁵⁵ [Research-based analysis of European youth programmes | RAY \(researchyouth.net\)](#)

⁴⁵⁶ [Data visualisations on Erasmus+ - Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁵⁷ [Factsheets and statistics on Erasmus+ - Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁵⁸ [Youth research - Youth Partnership \(coe.int\)](#)

⁴⁵⁹ For example the European Youth Forum's: [Youth Progress Index | European Youth Forum](#)

⁴⁶⁰ For example the OECD's work on youth policies and investing in youth: [Youth employment and social policies - OECD](#)

⁴⁶¹ [Children's Voices in the European Union | Child Participation \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁶² [EU dashboard - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁶³ [Proposal for an updated dashboard of EU youth indicators - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁶⁴ Youth in External Action: Bridging policy and data: [JRC Publications Repository - Youth in external action \(europa.eu\)](#); Patchwork: mapping international data on youth: [JRC Publications Repository - Patchwork: Mapping international data on youth \(europa.eu\)](#)

external action⁴⁶⁵ will further contribute to the collecting data on youth. It will specifically look at institutional change that can strengthen youth engagement in EU policymaking and progress towards the Youth Action Plan’s objectives in thematic priorities.

- **Other EU institutions and bodies**

Other EU institutions and bodies also provide analysis and research on policy issues of relevance for the EUYS. The European Parliament’s research service provides Members of the European Parliament, and where appropriate parliamentary committees, with research in order to assist them in their work. The European Parliament also publishes surveys (for example, the European Parliament’s 2024 post-electoral Eurobarometer⁴⁶⁶) and studies (for example, the Parliament’s 2024 Study on Maximising the impact of EU initiatives on skills⁴⁶⁷). The European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions also produce studies and publications to support their work and to raise awareness of EU policy developments. One example is the European Economic and Social Committee’s 2024 study on youth participation in policy and decision-making processes⁴⁶⁸.

⁴⁶⁵ YAP monitoring framework: [0ee0521d-2633-412c-be28-40bfc858287f_en \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴⁶⁶ [EU Post-electoral survey 2024 – October 2024 – Eurobarometer survey \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁴⁶⁷ [Maximising the Impact of EU Initiatives on Skills \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁴⁶⁸ [Structured and Meaningful Youth Participation in Policy and Decision-Making Processes - Mapping Local, National, EU, and International Good Practices | EESC \(europa.eu\)](#).

9 ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of main EU policy documents adopted in the youth field 2022-2024, mutual learning activities and studies

Commission Communications on youth/of youth relevance 2022-2024:

- [Commission Recommendation on developing and strengthening integrated child protection systems in the best interests of the child, 23 April 2024](#)
- [Commission Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan, 20 March 2024](#)
- [Commission Communication on the European Year of Youth 2022, 10 January 2024](#)
- [Commission Defence of Democracy package, 12 December 2023](#)
- [Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health, 7 June 2023](#)
- [Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council Youth Action Plan \(YAP\) in EU external action 2022 – 2027 Promoting meaningful youth participation and empowerment in EU external action for sustainable development, equality and peace, 4 October 2022](#)
- [Commission Communication on A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids \(BIK+\), 11 May 2022](#)
- [Commission Communication on a European Strategy for Universities, 18 January 2022](#)
- [Commission Communication A long-term vision for EU's rural areas – towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040, 30 June 2021](#)
- [Commission Communication - EU Strategy on the rights of the child, 24 March 2021](#)

Council Conclusions, Recommendations and Resolutions on youth/of youth relevance 2022-2024

- [Resolution of the Council on the EU Youth Strategy Workplan 2025-2027](#), 25 November 2024
- [Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the outcomes of the 10th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue](#), 10 December 2024
- [Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on providing global opportunities for young people living in rural and remote areas](#), 10 December 2024
- [Council Conclusions on the legacy of the European Year of Youth 2022](#), 31 May 2024
- [Council Conclusions on inclusive societies for young people](#), 13 May 2024
- [Council Resolution on youth work policy in an empowering Europe](#), 13 May 2024
- [Council Conclusions on the European and international policy agendas on children, youth and children's rights](#), 13 May 2024
- [Council Conclusions on a comprehensive approach to the mental health of young people in the European Union](#), 30 November 2023
- [Council Conclusions on promoting youth mainstreaming in policy decision-making processes in the European Union](#), 20 November 2023
- [Council Conclusions on the social dimension of a sustainable Europe for youth](#), 26 May 2023
- [Council Resolution on the revision of the EU Youth Strategy Work Plan 2022-2024](#), 26 May 2023
- [Council Resolution on the outcomes of the 9th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue](#), 26 May 2023
- [Council Conclusions on promoting the intergenerational dimension in the youth field to foster dialogue and social cohesion](#), 29 December 2022
- [Council conclusions on the Youth Action Plan in EU external action](#), 28 November 2022

- [Council Conclusions on Pathways to School Success](#), 28 November 2022
- [Council conclusions on supporting well-being in digital education](#), 28 November 2022
- [Council Recommendation on learning for the green transition and sustainable development](#), 16 June 2022
- [Council Conclusions on the EU Strategy on the rights of the child](#), 09 June 2022
- [Council Conclusions on Fostering engagement among young people as actors of change in order to protect the environment](#), 12 April 2022
- [Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union](#), 5 April 2022
- [Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation](#), 5 April 2022

Commission proposals

- [Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a reinforced Quality Framework for Traineeships](#), 20 March 2024
- [Commission Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving and enforcing working conditions of trainees and combating regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships \('Traineeships Directive'\)](#), 20 March 2024

Main mutual learning and knowledge gathering activities 2022-2024 in the field of youth

Peer-learning activity supporting Member States to develop solidarity, volunteering, civic service and mobility schemes for young people at national, regional or local level, 28-29 April 2022

Information and networking event on the EU Youth Test/Check organised by the Belgian Presidency on the Council of the European Union, 26 April 2023

Mainstreaming youth policy event organised by the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 19 June 2023

Expert conference celebrating and evaluating the past ten cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue organised by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 10 December 2024

Main studies 2022-2024

Youth Wiki network, Comparative report on [Youth mainstreaming, youth impact assessment and youth checks](#), 2024

Youth Wiki Network report on '[The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people](#)', 2022

[Research report: Mapping age assurance typologies and requirements](#)⁴⁶⁹, 19 April 2024

Youth in External Action: Bridging policy and data:

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC130554>

Patchwork: mapping international data on youth:

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128858>

[Youth Perspectives in Latin America and the Caribbean; Evidence from Latinobarómetro survey](#)

The **RAY research network** provides data and analysis on the EU youth programmes⁴⁷⁰.

The **EU-Council of Europe Youth partnership**⁴⁷¹ provides research and training materials on youth policy related topics. For the purpose of the EU school scheme review, three evaluation support studies were conducted to backup evaluation process⁴⁷²:

European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, [Evaluation support study of the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme](#) – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, [Complementary evaluation support study on the EU School fruit, vegetables and milk scheme](#) – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, [Synthesis and analysis study of the public consultation and evaluation reports of Member States pertaining to the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme 2017-2022](#) – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

[Study on funding for EU rural areas](#), April 2024

⁴⁶⁹ [Research report: Mapping age assurance typologies and requirements](#)

⁴⁷⁰ [Research-based analysis of European youth programmes | RAY \(researchyouth.net\)](#)

⁴⁷¹ [Youth research - Youth Partnership \(coe.int\)](#)

⁴⁷² The Commission presented findings from the evaluation support study, public consultation and Eurobarometer 520 during the conference ‘An EU school scheme fit for the future’, which took place in Brussels on 24 November 2022.

Annex 2: Policy dialogues with Commissioners

Date	Commissioner	DG	Topic
3 February 2022	Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager	DG COMP	Taking competition policy into the future
7 April 2022	Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans	DG CLIMA	Sustainable Consumption and Production
17 May 2022	Commissioner Didier Reynders	DG JUST	Right to repair initiative
24 May 2022	Commissioner Helena Dalli	DG JUST	Strengthening the role of equality bodies
13 June 2022	Commissioner Nicolas Schmit	DG EMPL	Social protection for all: minimum income and beyond
21 June 2022	Vice-President Margaritis Schinas	DG COMM	Our European Way of Life – the model of society we stand for
20 September 2022	Commissioner Thierry Breton	DG GROW	Entrepreneurship
21 September 2022	Commissioner Johannes Hahn	DG BUDG	Financing future EU priorities
26 September 2022	Commissioner Kadri Simson	DG ENER	How to ensure that Europe’s future energy independence is sustainable
27 September 2022	Commissioner Elisa Ferreira	DG REGIO	Addressing brain drain: retaining and attracting talents in EU regions
28 September 2022	Maciej Popowski (Acting Director-General, Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations)	DG NEAR	Building bridges among communities
11 October 2022	Commissioner Mariya Gabriel	DG EAC	Research and innovation at school - the role of young people
25 October 2022	Commissioner Mairead McGuinness	DG FISMA	Future of finance, digital currency, sustainable finance, access to finance for vulnerable groups and finance literacy
9 November 2022	Commissioner Adina Vălean	DG MOVE	Jobs in Transport

15 November 2022	Commissioner Janez Lenarčič	DG ECHO	Climate change, and humanitarian action and International Humanitarian Law
29 November 2022	Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen	DG INTPA	Building partnerships as the way forward in geopolitically challenging times
30 November 2022	Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni	DG ECFIN	Measuring what matters: looking beyond GDP
5 December 2022	VP Dubravca Šuica	SG	Geography of Discontent
6 December 2022	Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič	DG CLIMA	Innovations for the Future of Europe – the voice of youth
8 December 2022	High Representative and VP Josep Borrell	EEAS	Engaging the Youth in Global Politics: towards a stronger Europe in a changing world
10 January 2023	EVP Valdis Dombrovskis	DG ECFIN	Supporting People Now & Repowering our Economy for the Future
23 January 2023	Commissioner Ylva Johansson	DG HOME	Protecting young people from organised crime
25 January 2023	Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius	DG ENV	Sustainable and circular textiles
31 January 2023	Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski	DG AGRI	Young people in agriculture and rural areas
7 February 2023	VP Věra Jourová	SG	Media freedom and pluralism in the EU
22 February 2023	Commissioner Stella Kyriakides	DG SANTE	Towards a comprehensive approach to Mental Health

Annex3: List of Ambassador networks and stakeholders groups

Name of the network	Responsible European Commission department
All-Atlantic Ocean Youth Ambassador Programme	RTD
BIK Youth Ambassadors	CNECT
Bioeconomy Youth Ambassadors	RTD
Black Sea Young Ambassadors	RTD
BlueMed Young Communication Ambassadors	RTD
EU Children's Participation Platform	JUST
EU Climate Pact Ambassadors	CLIMA
EU Youth Stakeholders Group	EAC
European Digital Education Hub	EAC
Horizon Europe Young Observers	RTD
Network of Young European Ambassadors on Holocaust Remembrance	JUST
Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) Youth Network	INTPA
Pool of Young Journalists in Europe	EAC
Young Energy Ambassadors	ENER/CINEA
Young European Ambassadors (YEA)	NEAR
Youth Advisory structures in EU Delegations	EEAS, INTPA
Youth Sounding Board	INTPA
Youth4Cooperation Cross-Border Ambassadors	REGIO
Youth4Ocean Forum	MARE

Annex 4: Questionnaire for the Future National Activities Planners⁴⁷³

Please choose the Member State you represent when replying to this questionnaire.

- Austria
- Belgium (Flemish Community)
- Belgium (French Community)
- Belgium (German-speaking Community)
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovenia
- Slovakia
- Spain
- Sweden

Please indicate the national ministry/department/service you represent when replying to this questionnaire.

Section 1 - Your youth policy priorities in line with the 2019-2027 EU Youth Strategy

1. Please indicate which of the below are generally considered as the main challenges for young people in your country [please select maximum 3]

- Education and training
- Environment and climate change
- Digitalisation
- Inflation/Cost of living
- Mental health and well-being
- Physical health and well-being
- Peace and security
- Poverty and economic and social inequalities

⁴⁷³ Published on [EUSurvey - Welcome](#) from 12 March 2024 to 17 July 2024. See the main findings in section 6. Cooperation needs at national level.

- Unemployment
- Youth participation in democratic life
- Democracy and the rule of law
- Other: [please specify, max 30 words]

2. Which European youth goals are particularly relevant considering your national youth policy priorities? [please select *maximum 3*]:

- Youth Goal 1: Connecting EU with Youth
- Youth Goal 2: Equality of All Genders
- Youth Goal 3: Inclusive Societies
- Youth Goal 4: Information and Constructive Dialogue
- Youth Goal 5: Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Youth Goal 6: Moving Rural Youth Forward
- Youth Goal 7: Quality Employment for All
- Youth Goal 8: Quality Learning
- Youth Goal 9: Space and Participation for All
- Youth Goal 10: Sustainable Green Europe
- Youth Goal 11: Youth Organisations and European Programme

3. [Optional] **Please provide a few examples of on-going or planned actions for the selected youth goals** [maximum 200 words]

4. Which are your current main national youth policy priorities? [please select maximum 3]

- Social inclusion
- Youth participation
- Youth work
- Non-formal and informal learning
- Learning mobility
- Volunteering
- Youth mainstreaming
- Other: [please specify, max 30 words]

5. *To what extent has the European Year of Youth 2022 or its legacy/follow-up influenced your current youth policy priorities?* [please select 1 option]

- To a great extent
- To some extent
- Not at all

6. [Optional] *Please provide a few examples of how the European Year of Youth influenced your youth policy priorities* [maximum 200 words]

Section 2 - Your needs within the European cooperation context

1. ENGAGE

On which topics would you like to cooperate in a European context under the core area ENGAGE? [Please select maximum 3]

- Youth participation in democratic and social life, including innovative and alternative forms of youth participation

- EU Youth Dialogue: [+please select sub-topic(s):]
 - communication, outreach, inclusion
 - mechanisms for channelling recommendations and follow-up
 - complementarity and synergies with other youth participation mechanisms
- Youth mainstreaming and involving stakeholders and young people in the development of policies
- Development and recognition of youth representation/representative youth structures
- Other: [please specify, maximum 30 words]

Please indicate which EU cooperation tool(s) would be most useful to support your work on these topics [please select maximum 3]

- Evidence building/research
- Expert group, platform or roundtables at EU level
- Peer learning focused on policy development and on exchange of good practices, methods and tools
- Training and cooperation or networking activities under the programmes
- Peer counselling
- Other: [please specify, maximum 30 words]

2. CONNECT

On which topics would you like to cooperate in a European context under the core area CONNECT? [Please select maximum 3]

- Cross-border learning mobility, including volunteering
- Complementarity and synergies between EU and national programmes and schemes
- Implementation of the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU
- Implementation of the Council Recommendation on 'Europe on the Move – learning mobility opportunities for everyone'
- Validation and recognition of competences gained through learning mobility, including volunteering
- Digitalisation and its impact on young people
- Other: [please specify, maximum 30 words]

Please indicate which EU cooperation tool(s) would be most useful to support your work on these topics [please select maximum 3]

- Evidence building/research
- Expert group, platform or roundtables at EU level
- Peer learning focused on policy development and on exchange of good practices, methods and tools
- Training and cooperation or networking activities under the programmes
- Peer counselling
- Other: [please specify, maximum 30 words]

3. EMPOWER

On which topics would you like to cooperate in a European context under the core area EMPOWER? [please select maximum 3]

-
- Implementation of the European Youth Work Agenda
- Complementarity and synergies with the work of the Council of Europe on youth work
- Youth worker education and training
- Grass root/local youth work development
- Recognition of youth work and non-formal and informal learning
- Youth information and support

- Other: [please specify, maximum 30 words]

Please indicate which EU cooperation tool(s) would be most useful to support your work on these topics [please select maximum 3]

- Evidence building/research
- Expert group, platform or roundtables at EU level
- Peer learning focused on policy development and on exchange of good practices, methods and tools
- Training and cooperation or networking activities under the programmes
- Peer counselling
- Other: [please specify, maximum 30 words]

4. YOUTH MAINSTREAMING AND CROSS-SECTOR COOPERATION

How would you like to use EU cooperation in the youth field to develop your work on youth mainstreaming and cross-sectoral cooperation?

- Peer learning [+ please select topics:]
 - implementation of youth checks and/or other mainstreaming tools
 - capacity building for youth mainstreaming, e.g. methods for policy makers to engage with young people and civil society organisations
 - setting up youth advisory structures
 - specific policy areas/topics, such as youth mental health and well-being, and other: [please specify maximum 3 policy areas/topics:]
- Expert group, platform or roundtables at EU level
- Training and cooperation or networking activities under the programmes
- Other: [please specify, maximum 30 words]

5. TRANSVERSAL TOPICS FOR COOPERATION

Would you also be interested to cooperate in a European context on the below topics:

- Communication and outreach to stakeholders, such as policy makers, civil society organisations, youth councils, platforms) on the EU Youth Strategy and its instruments and opportunities
- Communication and outreach to young people, especially focusing on those harder to reach, on the EU Youth Strategy and its instruments and opportunities
- Monitoring and data on the EU Youth Strategy's progress, youth policy developments and on the situation of young people

6. FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR COOPERATION

[Optional] Free text box for sharing your potential ideas and views on the outlook for European cooperation in the youth field and priorities to focus on in the cooperation in the future [maximum 300 words]

Annex 5: Questionnaire for the Youth survey on the views of young people on aspects of EU Youth Strategy⁴⁷⁴

1. How old are you?

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25-29

2. In which country do you live?

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- EU Member State
 - Austria
 - Belgium
 - Bulgaria
 - Croatia
 - Cyprus
 - Czechia
 - Denmark
 - Estonia
 - Finland
 - France
 - Germany
 - Greece
 - Hungary
 - Ireland
 - Italy
 - Latvia
 - Lithuania
 - Luxembourg
 - Malta
 - Netherlands
 - Poland
 - Portugal
 - Romania
 - Slovak Republic
 - Slovenia
 - Spain
 - Sweden
- Other country associated to the Erasmus+ Programme:
 - Iceland
 - Liechtenstein
 - North Macedonia
 - Norway

⁴⁷⁴ Published on the [European Youth Portal](#) from 27 May 2024 to 19 August 2024. See the main findings in section 2.1. Youth participation in society, sub-section “Youth survey on the views of young people on aspects of EU Youth Strategy”

- Serbia
- Türkiye
- Other [Please specify – 100 characters maximum]

3. Would you say you live in...

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- A rural area or a village
- Small or medium-sized town
- Large town/city
- Capital city

4. **Are you currently part of a youth organisation?** (*Youth organisations are generally understood to be led by young people, non-profit, and voluntary associations. They work for example on promoting young people's democratic rights, encouraging their social and political participation in community life, and offering opportunities for personal and social development through leisure activities, voluntary engagement and non-formal and informal learning. It can be for instance a youth council, a student association, a youth political organisation, etc.*)

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- Yes [please specify which organisation(s) - 500 characters maximum]
- No

5. To what extent do you feel you can have a say over policies and laws affecting young people...?

- In your country (ex. local, regional, national levels)
[Scoring 1-5, visualised through 5 stars; 1 not at all – 5 to a large extent]
- At EU level
[Scoring 1-5, visualised through 5 stars; 1 not at all – 5 to a large extent]

6. According to you, to what extent are youth organisations included in policy making...

- In your country (ex. local, regional, national levels)
[Scoring 1-5, visualised through 5 stars; 1 not at all – 5 to a large extent]
- At EU level
[Scoring 1-5, visualised through 5 stars; 1 not at all – 5 to a large extent]

7. The EU organises policy dialogues between young people and European Commissioners to provide opportunities to exchange on key topics and initiatives. For the future policy dialogues, which topics do you think would be the most relevant?

[You may select up to three]

- Education and training, including learning mobility
- Environment, sustainability and climate change
- Digitalisation and artificial intelligence
- Inflation/Cost of living
- Physical and mental health and well-being
- Peace and security
- Migration

- International cooperation and European values
- Poverty and economic and social inequalities
- Unemployment/Employment opportunities/Apprenticeships
- Youth participation in democratic life
- Democracy and the rule of law
- Other: [please specify, 250 characters maximum]

8. The EU Youth Dialogue is a dialogue mechanism between young people and decision makers taking place within the EU Youth Strategy and is organised in 18-month cycles. Have you ever heard about the EU Youth Dialogue?

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- Yes, I heard about it and I participated [Please specify which ones, and mention whether this was at national or EU level - maximum 500 characters]
- Yes, I heard about it but I have never participated
- No
- I don't remember

➤ *Question 9 to appear only if the reply to 8 was "Yes I heard about it and participated"*

9. Where did you first hear about the EU Youth Dialogue?

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- School
- National youth council
- European Youth Portal
- Social Media
- Friends
- Other: [please specify, 250 characters maximum]

10. The 11 European Youth Goals* which are an integral part of the EU Youth Strategy were developed by young people through the EU Youth Dialogue. To what extent do you feel the 11 Youth Goals address the concerns of young people?

*(*The 11 European Youth Goals are: Connecting EU with Youth, Equality of All Genders, Inclusive Societies, Information & Constructive Dialogue, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Moving Rural Youth Forward, Quality Employment for All, Quality Learning, Space and Participation for All, Sustainable Green Europe, Youth Organisations & European Programmes)*

[Scoring 1-5, visualised through 5 stars; 1 not at all – 5 to a large extent]

11. If you were to propose a 12th Youth Goal, what would it be?

[Optional]

[Open text, 250 characters maximum]

12. If you had the chance to spend time studying, training or learning in another country, what would you prioritise?

[You may select up to two]

- Connect with other young Europeans

- Develop skills (knowledge and soft skills, such as adaptation to new environment, self-reliance, teamwork, social skills, etc.)
- Learn about Europe and its diversity and/or cultural heritage
- Learn and practice other languages
- Increase your future job opportunities
- Other [please mention, 250 characters maximum]

13. A recent evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy recommends that the youth perspective should be strengthened when addressing challenges such as digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI). Which statement best describes your attitude towards AI?

[You may select up to two]

- AI is already part of our daily lives and we will have even more opportunities to use it in the future
- AI is a useful tool but needs to be human-centred and well safe-guarded
- AI will put machines above humans and is dangerous
- AI will take over our jobs and therefore increase unemployment
- I have never used AI and have no opinion
- I do not know

14. How do you usually react when you come across news or information that you believe misrepresent reality or is even false?

[Several options allowed]

- I check the accuracy of the news in another source (fact-checking website, social or traditional media, scientific, etc)
- I check the accuracy of the news with my family
- I check the accuracy of the news with teachers, educators, youth workers, etc.
- I check the accuracy of the news with other young people (friends, peers, etc.)
- I share on my own social media to check if others have seen it
- I alert other people about the false information
- I comment to flag that it is fake
- I ignore the news or information and do not think about it any longer
- I rarely or never come across news or information that I believe misrepresent reality or is even false
- I do not know

15. Youth work covers a wide variety of social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political activities by, with and for young people. Youth work is done outside of the formal education environment and supports young people's personal development, social integration and active citizenship. Examples include leisure-time activities, activities of youth centres, and political activism. In your view, youth work is useful to...

[You may select up to two]

- Improve informal skills (such as teamwork, leadership, intercultural interactions, critical thinking...)
- Facilitate young people's inclusion in society
- Facilitate young people's participation in decision-making
- Learn about universal values such as human rights, gender equality, democracy, peace, pluralism.
- Engage with others in recreational/cultural/social activities

- I don't know youth work
- Other (please specify)

16. If you could take an action in support of a cause that you care about, in what area would it be?

[You may select up to three]

- Education and training, including learning mobility
- Environment, sustainability and climate change
- Digitalisation and artificial intelligence
- Inflation/Cost of living
- Physical and mental health and well-being
- Peace and security
- Migration
- International cooperation and European values
- Poverty and economic and social inequalities
- Unemployment/Employment opportunities/Apprenticeships
- Youth participation in democratic life
- Democracy and the rule of law
- Other: [please specify, 250 characters maximum]

➤ *Question 17 to appear only if the reply to 4 was Yes.*

17. Please give two or three short examples of youth-led initiatives/actions in which you or your organisation have been involved. (Possible examples are campaigns, petitions, projects, debates, etc.)

[Optional – open text – 2500 characters maximum]