



## Committee of the Regions

EDUC-IV-038

**83rd plenary session  
9-10 February 2010**

**OPINION  
of the  
Committee of the Regions  
on  
A RENEWED EUROPEAN STRATEGY "INVESTING IN YOUTH"**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS:

- welcomes the present Communication from the European Commission on a renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities and; the approach proposed in this Communication to invest in youth and to empower young people;
- endorses the need for an active positive, cross-cutting youth policy, that addresses the potential of all youth by providing favourable conditions to develop their talents and skills to live, work, and actively participate in society, and not solely concentrate on youngsters who require special attention in view of their problems;
- calls for the opinion and contributions of local and regional authorities to be taken into account in the development of youth policies, owing to the relevant competences that these authorities possess in most Member States;
- believes, with the principle of subsidiarity in mind, that the European Commission should focus on inspiring, stimulating and supporting new and existing initiatives on youth policy in close collaboration with LRA;
- underlines that using the OMC must not lead to a subtraction of competences from lower tiers of administration in favour of States; draws attention to the previously published white paper by the CoR on multi-level governance.

Rapporteur

Anton Rombouts (NL/EPP), Mayor of 's-Hertogenbosch

Reference documents

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on "An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering - A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities"

COM(2009) 200 final

## I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

#### *General remarks*

1. Believes that young Europeans are the future of society. All young people should have the possibility to fully develop their talents and potential. Talent is not only developed in schools (education) but also in the family unit, in associations (sports, music and other cultural facilities), youth organisations, in non-formal young people's groups and in the local quarters (where the libraries, music schools, sports clubs and other facilities are found). Local and regional authorities (LRA) are closest to the young people's lives, and are therefore crucial in providing a framework for this development;
2. states that it pays off to invest in youth and empower youth. Municipalities and regions that provide good formal and non-formal education, sports, cultural and leisure facilities to youth will be more economically prosperous and safer places in the future, with a strong social dimension that is characterised by tolerance and mutual respect;
3. firmly believes that youth strategies should take a youth-centred approach, in which the individual, its talent and its needs to develop its full potential are the starting point;
4. recognises that: young people are all too often one of the most vulnerable groups in society, especially in the current economic and financial crisis and that; in our ageing society youth should be regarded as a precious and critical resource to society, which can and must be mobilised to achieve social and economic goals<sup>1</sup>;
5. endorses the need for an active positive, cross-cutting youth policy, that addresses the potential of all youth by providing favourable conditions to develop their talents and skills to live, work, and actively participate in society, and not solely concentrate on youngsters who require special attention in view of their problems;
6. draws particular attention to the importance of proactive and preventive measures<sup>2</sup> and; notes the importance of providing young people with better living conditions<sup>3</sup> and creating a society that is child-friendly and youth-friendly<sup>4</sup>;

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1 CdR 334/2006.

2 CdR 337/2008.

3 CdR 334/2006.

4 CdR 255/2007.

7. welcomes: the present Communication from the European Commission on a renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities and; the approach proposed in this Communication to invest in youth and to empower young people;
8. recognises that youth policy is inherently broad in scope, and therefore endorses the cross-cutting EU approach of mainstreaming youth affairs into a wide range of policies (in a cross-sector approach), while also developing more specific policies on youth work;
9. recommends that the European Commission takes into account the experience and insights available within the local and regional level, and that future actions build upon existing initiatives, such as the European Youth Capital initiative, and frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
10. recalls that in many Member States, it is the LRA who are primarily competent and responsible for the development, execution and implementation of youth policy. This was demonstrated by the results from the Consultation<sup>5</sup> organised by the CoR Subsidiarity Monitoring Network in the framework of this opinion; recommends the Commission, in view of the important role of Local and Regional Authorities in the development and implementation of youth policy, to take into account special characteristics of region's such as geographical;
11. calls for the opinion and contributions of local and regional authorities to be taken into account in the development of youth policies, owing to the relevant competences that these authorities possess in most Member States;
12. draws attention to the key role of the LRA in the delivery of the proposed EU Strategy, and would have welcomed more explicit reference to the roles and competences of the LRA throughout the Communication; encourages LRA to contribute to the proposed EU Strategy in close cooperation with all stakeholders at all levels, involving young people and their representative organisations in particular;

*Mainstreaming and cooperation*

13. endorses the EU approach of mainstreaming youth into a wide range of policies, so as to consistently take the concerns of young people into account in different policy areas;
14. supports the flexible approach of a youth policy directed at three long-term overarching and interconnected goals, which are linked to fields of action that will be reviewed regularly; believes it is essential for the goals and related actions to be monitored effectively and consistently at all the levels that are responsible for one or more of the goals, and urges local

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<sup>5</sup> Report on the Consultation of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network and EDUC commission members on the Communication on an EU strategy for youth, CdR 325/2009.

and regional authorities to prepare to deal with selected key topics over a longer period of time in order to improve the scope for greater effectiveness;

15. supports: the fields of action identified in the Communication and; the actions proposed for Member States and European Commission within their respective spheres of competence;
16. believes that it is crucial that young people's needs and aspirations are taken into account in every EU reform, and recommends that youth be integrated as a target group within larger EU strategies, campaigns and activities, such as: the successor strategy to the Lisbon strategy; the EU Social Agenda; the thematic strategies and activities, which it hopes the EU ( the EU institutions and future EU presidencies) will in the future plan and implement in close cooperation with local and regional authorities and the Committee of the Regions;
17. recalls, in this regard, that young people represent a key factor for achieving the objectives of the new Lisbon strategy, and considers it essential that they be provided with better education, training, mobility, entry into employment, social inclusion and services for young families;
18. calls for a medium-term European youth strategy which would take a longer-term view with the emphasis on quality, while focusing on a small number of priorities. The effort and resources invested should be combined in order to boost their chances of being effective;
19. welcomes the designation of 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering; calls upon the European Commission to explicitly include children and youth as a focus group in its agenda and; strongly encourages LRA to actively participate;

*Implementation and exchange of experience*

20. supports that an effective youth policy mandates cross-sectoral policy approaches at the EU national, regional and local levels to deliver results in areas such as child and family policy, education, gender equality, employment, housing and healthcare;
21. is pleased that the Communication acknowledges that LRA are crucial for implementing cross-sectoral youth strategies, but recalls that in many Member States LRA are primarily competent and responsible for the development, execution and implementation of youth policy;
22. believes, with the principle of subsidiarity in mind, that the European Commission should focus on inspiring, stimulating and supporting new and existing initiatives on youth policy in close collaboration with LRA;
23. agrees with the importance of a structured dialogue with youth, on various levels of government and including all stakeholders;

24. encourages active LRA participation in peer to peer learning for better policy making, as well as in conceiving, implementing and disseminating best-practice examples of policy for youth and together with youth. The CLIP (European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policies for Migrants) and ERY (European Regions for Youth) networks are a good examples of such an approach<sup>6</sup>;
25. believes that the choice of a renewed Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as a tool for the implementation of the strategy may be appropriate; it must be ensured here that the European level does not exceed its powers and that no additional bureaucratic mechanisms are created as a burden to the administrations of the Member States;
26. stresses that LRA are the government level closest to children, youth, their caretakers, infrastructure for youth education, health and care, and to civil society and; subsequently emphasises the requirement for the direct inclusion and involvement of local and regional authorities as key actors in all stages of the proposed OMC to deliver the EU strategy;
27. strengthening the means by which young people can participate in these institutions would help to achieve a more flexible, dynamic relationship and increase young people's ability to influence public decisions, thus ensuring that they are effectively included in the economic, social and political life of the regions;
28. underlines that using the OMC must not lead to a subtraction of competences from lower tiers of administration in favour of States; stresses that this must not lead to harmonisation or encroach on the powers of the Member States by the development of indicators or further reporting obligations; draws attention to the previously published white paper by the CoR on multi-level governance<sup>7</sup>;
29. recalls the request to the European Commission raised by the CoR that the application of the OMC make sufficient use of the role of LRA, thereby respecting their remit and taking into account the initiatives that are already undertaken<sup>8</sup>;
30. calls on the Member States: to support the OMC through local or regional action plans and, conversely; to help ensure that local and regional plans are taken into account in national plans and are the subject of multilevel written arrangements;
31. agrees upon the need for evidence-based policymaking, and endorses the proposal to make better use of existing tools to gather information;

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/clipabout.htm>

<sup>7</sup> CdR 89/2009.

<sup>8</sup> CdR 253/2005.

32. endorses the proposal to set up a Working Group to discuss possible "descriptors" (light indicators) for evaluating the impact of policy actions in priority areas; recognises that LRA are vital for implementation on the ground and; strongly encourages their active involvement in this "descriptors" working group;
33. underlines that reporting should be simplified and should concentrate on key descriptors for priority areas and; stresses that reporting should not result in additional administrative burden;
34. asks the European Commission: to ensure the accessibility of all relevant EU funds to stakeholders on the local and regional level and; to promote the visibility and attractiveness of these programmes by reducing the administrative burden related to EU funds such as the Youth in Action Programme;
35. calls upon the Member States to allocate adequate funds to LRA and stakeholders for the implementation of common objectives for voluntary activities by young people and; encourages Member States to make use of EU funds and programmes offering support and guidance to national, local and regional voluntary organisations (such as the European Social Fund and the Youth in Action Programme) to enhance the quality of international voluntary projects<sup>9</sup>; the tender and contract award procedures for support funding should be made more transparent and the workload involved in submitting applications, reporting and documentation should be reduced;
36. agrees on the need for cooperation with other EU institutions and international organisations, so that activities can build upon each others' strengths and mutually benefit from each other.

Brussels, 10 February 2010

The President  
of the  
Committee of the Regions

Mercedes Bresso

The Secretary-General  
of the  
Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

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<sup>9</sup> CdR 252/2008.

## II. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Opinion on <i>An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering, A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities</i>
<b>Reference(s)</b>	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - <i>An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering, A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities</i> (COM(2009) 200 final)
<b>Legal basis</b>	Article 149 TEC; Articles 165 and 166 TEU, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty.
<b>Procedural basis</b>	
<b>Date of Council referral/Date of Commission letter</b>	27 April 2009
<b>Date of Bureau/President's decision</b>	
<b>Commission responsible</b>	Commission for Culture, Education and Research (EDUC)
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Anton Rombouts (NL/EPP) Mayor of 's-Hertogenbosch
<b>Analysis</b>	
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	11 December 2009
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	11 December 2009
<b>Result of the vote in commission</b>	Adopted by majority
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	10 February 2010
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	White Paper on <i>Multilevel Governance</i> (CdR 89/2009) <sup>10</sup>  <i>Opinion on the follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth. Proposed common objectives for voluntary activities among young people in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field and on the Communication on the follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth. Proposed common objectives for a greater understanding and knowledge of youth in response to the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 regarding the framework of European cooperation in the youth field</i> (CdR 192/2004 fin) <sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> OJ C 211, 4.9.2009, p. 1–27.

<sup>11</sup> OJ C 43, 18.2.2005, p. 42–46.

	<p>Opinion on <i>Addressing the concerns of young people in Europe – implementing the European Youth Pact and promoting active citizenship</i> (CdR 253/2005 fin)<sup>12</sup></p> <p>Opinion on the <i>Follow-up to the White Paper on a New Impetus for European Youth: Implementing the common objectives for participation by and information for young people in view of promoting their active European citizenship</i> (CdR 334/2006 fin)<sup>13</sup></p> <p>Opinion on <i>Promoting the active citizenship of young people through education</i> (CdR 173/2007 fin)<sup>14</sup></p> <p>Opinion on <i>Mobility of young volunteers across Europe</i> (CdR 252/2008 fin)<sup>15</sup></p> <p>Opinion on the <i>Renewed Social Agenda: Opportunities, Access and Solidarity in 21st Century Europe</i> (CdR 337/2008 fin)<sup>16</sup></p> <p>Opinion on <i>Full involvement of young people in society</i> (CdR255/2007)<sup>17</sup></p>
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12 OJ C 192, 16.8.2006, p. 15–20  
13 OJ C 156, 7.7.2007, p. 8–13  
14 OJ C 105, 25.4.2008, p. 21–24  
15 OJ C 76, 31.3.2009, p. 23–29  
16 OJ C 200, 25.8.2009, p. 37–40  
17 OJ C 172, 5.7.2008, p. 65–69