

Tuesday 18 May 2010

## An EU Strategy for Youth

P7\_TA(2010)0166

### European Parliament resolution of 18 May 2010 on ‘An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering’ (2009/2159(INI))

(2011/C 161 E/04)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 165 and 166 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 18 December 2000, and in particular Article 14 thereof,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989, and in particular Articles 23 and 28 thereof,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 13 December 2006, and in particular Articles 7 and 24 thereof,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 29 April 2009 on ‘An EU Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering. A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities’ <sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document accompanying the Communication from the Commission ‘An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering’ – EU Youth Report <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to the Council resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’) <sup>(4)</sup>,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2009 on the evaluation of the current framework for European cooperation in the youth field and on the future perspectives for the renewed framework <sup>(5)</sup>,
- having regard to the Council recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union <sup>(6)</sup>,
- having regard to the Council decision on the European Year of Voluntary Activities promoting Active Citizenship (2011) <sup>(7)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(2009)0200.

<sup>(2)</sup> SEC(2009)0549.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ C 311, 19.12.2009, p. 1.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

<sup>(5)</sup> 9169/09.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 8.

<sup>(7)</sup> 15658/09.

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- having regard to the European Youth Pact adopted by the Brussels European Council of 22 and 23 March 2005 <sup>(1)</sup>,
  - having regard to the Commission communication of 2 July 2008 on a 'Renewed Social Agenda', which targets youth and children as a main priority <sup>(2)</sup>,
  - having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Communication from the Commission <sup>(3)</sup>,
  - having regard to its Written Declaration on devoting more attention to youth empowerment in EU policies <sup>(4)</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 21 February 2008 on the demographic future of Europe <sup>(5)</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0113/2010),
- A. whereas investing in actions for young people is crucial for the future of European societies, especially at times when the proportion of young people in the total population is constantly decreasing,
- B. whereas all young people are an added value to society and have to be recognised as such,
- C. whereas current generations, when shaping policies of today, have a strong responsibility towards young people and future generations; whereas policy-makers and researchers need to take young people's views into account to give them a say,
- D. whereas the European Union possesses important tools relating to youth policies, yet these tools need to be fully exploited, communicated and integrated by Member States,
- E. whereas employment means more than just paid work: it is an agent of socialisation and can be an important source of support, structure and identity formation,
- F. whereas an insecure job situation may lead young people to refrain from or to postpone starting a family, thus having an impact on demographic developments,
- G. whereas today's European youth is exposed to growing unemployment rates and is badly affected by the economic crisis, whereas in particular young people with poor qualifications are more likely to be unemployed, and whereas it is important, therefore, to ensure that young people receive the best possible training which guarantees them prompt access to and a long-term stake in the labour market,
- H. whereas equal access for all young people to high-quality education and training at all levels should be supported and opportunities for lifelong learning should be further promoted,
- I. whereas young people's transition between education and training and the labour market should be facilitated,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 292, 24.11.2005, p. 5.

<sup>(2)</sup> 11517/08.

<sup>(3)</sup> SOC/349.

<sup>(4)</sup> DCE/2008/2193.

<sup>(5)</sup> Texts adopted, P6\_TA(2008)0066.

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- J. whereas absolute priority should be given as a matter of urgency to the problems of early school-leaving and illiteracy, in particular among adolescents and the youth prison population,
- K. whereas issues relating to health, housing and the environment are of great importance for young people and can have a serious impact on their lives and future; whereas a favourable environment should be promoted in terms of education, employment, social inclusion and health,
- L. whereas young people, while having to be able to rely upon a healthy family environment, require support in satisfying their need for autonomy and independence,
- M. whereas environmental aspects are not explicitly included in the Commission communication and in the Council Resolution, although they are crucial for young people and have a serious impact on the health, quality of life and well-being of future generations; whereas, therefore, in an EU strategy for youth environmental issues should be clearly mentioned in the fields of action,
- N. whereas active participation in society is not only an important means of empowering young people but also contributes to their personal development, to their better integration into society, to the acquisition of skills and to the development of a sense of responsibility,
- O. whereas youth work is important for the EU's youth strategy, as a worthwhile leisure activity for and to be undertaken by young people, but also in order to acquire skills and achieve personal development,
- P. whereas learning and experiencing what it means to have a stake in society fosters an understanding of and active participation in democracy and its processes,
- Q. whereas the existence of the European programmes which benefit youth should be better communicated to young people so as to enhance their participation,
- R. whereas an effective youth policy can contribute to the development of a European mentality,

**General remarks**

1. Welcomes the Commission Communication 'An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering';
2. Welcomes the Council Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018);
3. Points out that the definition of the concept of 'youth' varies among Member States; notes that this concept is influenced by different social circumstances and that this fact allows scope for a different approach by each Member State;
4. Takes the view that Community programmes and funds should reflect Europe's ambitions for young people;
5. Calls on the Member States to fully implement the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty in the area of youth policy, such as the encouragement of the participation of young people in democratic life, special attention to young sportsmen and sportswomen and the legal enforcement of the Charter of Fundamental Rights;

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***Key remarks about the effectiveness of the youth strategy***

6. Acknowledges that the reinforced Open Method of Coordination (OMC) with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity is an appropriate tool for cooperation on youth policy issues, despite its weaknesses, its restricted use, its legitimacy deficits, its lack of effective cooperation between 'experts' and elected politicians, a lack of proper integration with national priorities and the risk of 'responsibility confusion' between the various levels; considers that, in order to obtain long-term results, the Open Method of Coordination should be reinforced;
7. Underlines that the Open Method of Coordination needs to be carried by a strong political will on the part of all those involved if it is to deliver maximum results; considers implementation shortcomings to be a fundamental obstacle to achieving the set goals;
8. Recognises the importance of cooperation among institutions at local, regional, national and European level in order to achieve the objectives of this strategy and calls on the Commission, the Member States and youth representatives to play an active part in implementing a youth strategy;
9. Urges closer cooperation on youth issues between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council and stresses the need for more integrated cooperation with and among national parliaments within the scope of the OMC process;
10. Welcomes the clear definition of the dual approach, the introduction of working methods and especially the clear list of implementation instruments set out by the Council; requests the involvement of the European Parliament in the definition of the priorities of the work cycles; calls for European cooperation in the youth field to be evidence-based, pertinent and concrete;
11. Stresses the need to develop clear and user-friendly indicators both at European and national level which make it possible to improve, broaden and update our true knowledge of the condition of young people and to measure and compare progress on the implementation of commonly set objectives; underlines the importance of constant monitoring and evaluation;
12. Points out the importance of an evaluation of the state of implementation of the EU Strategy for Youth; stresses that Member States' progress reports in the youth field should be made publicly available in order to increase public awareness; stresses the need to monitor the way the lives of young people in Europe are developing and changing so that the actual progress made can be assessed;
13. Considers that peer-learning should be more developed as a means of facilitating the exchange of good practice and contributing to the consistency of the actions taken at national level;
14. Considers that in order to have a complete EU strategy for youth, the formulation of youth policies and of EU programmes and actions should go hand in hand in an accurate and transparent way; considers, in particular, that the results deriving from the implementation of EU programmes should give feedback to the formulation of youth policies and the EU strategy for youth in general, and vice versa;
15. Stresses, further, the need for an in-depth analysis of the existing programmes already implemented in order to make effective quality management possible and, on that basis, devise any improvements which may be needed to the programmes in the future;
16. Points out the need to mobilise and to adapt the EU programmes and social funds for youth, to facilitate access to them and to simplify the procedures for access; stresses how important it is to devise a practical, non-bureaucratic approach in this area with a view to implementing an integrated strategy to improve young people's lives; highlights the importance of young people being involved in implementing youth programmes so that their needs can be better taken into account;

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17. Stresses the important role of the Comenius, Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci programmes in the development of European education and training policies; reiterates its political priority of considering those programmes as a cornerstone in the development of the EU youth strategy, especially for the next generation of multiannual programmes;
18. Considers that even more effort should be made to promote the mobility of young people within Europe and that, in mobility programmes, there must be sufficient scope for and attention devoted to exchanges of young people outside formal education;
19. Calls on the Commission, within the new mobility programmes, to devote special attention to the mobility of youth workers, and to this end calls for the special visa regime which currently exists for students to be extended to youth workers;
20. Draws attention to the need to involve the mass media in popularising programmes for young people;
21. Acknowledges that improving young people's lives is a cross-cutting task which must be taken into account in every policy area; encourages the European Institutions and the Member States to promote the creation of a youth sector in all departments and ministries that will help to strengthen the drafting of appropriate youth policies; also calls on the Commission to appoint 'youth officers' in its directorates-general and to give them further training; considers that the aim should be to assess Commission documents in the light of youth policy objectives; therefore, strongly welcomes the cross-sectoral approach as a necessary factor to achieve a maximum level of effectiveness; considers that the mainstreaming of youth issues in all fields of policy is a key factor for the success of the youth strategy;
22. Stresses the need for the institutionalisation of intergenerational justice at European level and the adoption of this principle by Member States for the just regulation of relations between the generations;

#### ***Fields of action***

23. Strongly stresses that the global economic crisis is having a major impact on young people and that it should therefore profoundly influence priorities within the fields of action; considers that this should be done by identifying a range of measures to back up the social exit strategy and that special attention should be paid to the review of social safety nets and social security systems;

#### ***General principles applying to every field of action***

24. Underlines the importance of eliminating all kinds of discrimination among young people, such as discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age and sexual orientation;
25. Stresses the importance of considering young people as a priority group in the EU's social vision;
26. Strongly underlines the need to give young people with disabilities effective, tailor-made support as well as real and equal opportunities in physical, sensory and cognitive access to education, employment, culture, leisure, sports, social activities and involvement in the conduct of public and civil affairs;
27. Calls for measures to ensure respect for diversity and the successful integration of youngsters and children;
28. Calls on the Member States to identify cross-sectoral connections between youth policies and education, training, employment, culture and other policies;
29. Underlines the need for strong links between policies on youth and children;

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***Education and training***

30. Encourages the Member States to intensify the interaction between the sides of the knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation) as a key element for growth and job creation; strongly recommends promoting common criteria for stronger mutual recognition of non-formal education and vocational training, for example by speeding up the adoption of the EQF system for the recognition of qualifications, transparency and the validation of skills;

31. Calls on Member States to undertake more initiatives to invest in the right skills for jobs in demand and encourages them to link educational curricula to labour market demands, to provide legislation for short-term vocational training (where still needed) and to use, whenever possible, the validation of skills and the recognition of qualifications;

32. Draws attention to the problem of school drop-out and the need to take measures to ensure that as high a percentage of young people as possible complete their period of compulsory education;

33. Strongly encourages Member States, in the context of increased funding, to promote learning and training mobility for all young people, which is a key factor for gaining learning and working experience; stresses the importance of youth mobility also in regions bordering on the EU by guaranteeing broad participation in the European programmes which benefit youth;

34. Urges Member States to do their utmost to meet the strategic objectives and to reach the benchmarks fixed under the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), particularly as regards low achievers in basic skills, and early school leavers;

35. Calls on the Member States to create sufficient channels to enable people who have left the education system to rejoin it and ensure that appropriate bridges are available for people who have followed vocational training courses to go on to higher levels of education and urges them to take measures and to offer targeted programmes for young people who have fallen behind or have left school earlier due to difficult circumstances or poor choices;

36. Stresses the importance of providing young people with access to guidance and counselling on the transition from education to work;

37. Calls on Member States to ensure that children and young people, irrespective of the legal status of their families, have a right to State education, helping them to achieve, with due respect for their own culture and language, the necessary command of the language of the host Member State and a knowledge of its culture as a tool for integration;

38. Calls on Member States to ensure equal access to education for young people irrespective of social origin and financial conditions, and to guarantee equal access to education for disadvantaged young people from low-income families;

39. Calls on the Member States to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to make inclusive education - covering both formal and informal education - a reality;

40. Underlines the importance of a new, effective and continuous training system for teachers in order to help young students to cope better with the challenges of our quickly changing society;

41. Stresses the importance of promoting media literacy;

42. Points out that education plays a fundamental role in the positive development of personal attitudes;

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**Employment and entrepreneurship**

43. Is extremely concerned about the increasing numbers of young people who are unemployed, under-employed or have no job security, especially in the current economic crisis; strongly supports the invitation addressed to the European Council to ensure a youth perspective in the post-2010 Lisbon and Europe 2020 Strategies and to support the continuation of initiatives in line with the overall objectives of the European Youth Pact; strongly supports the proposal to develop appropriate measures targeted at young people in the recovery plans drawn up in the economic and financial crisis plans;
44. Underlines the essential need to attain the objectives of Europe's Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs and considers that the renewed EU 2020 agenda should enable the EU to make a full recovery from the crisis by moving more speedily towards an innovative and job-creating economy; in this context, urges that the renewed agenda be more focused on young people;
45. Calls on the Member States to take action against job insecurity and poor working conditions that young people experience in the labour market and to actively support the reconciliation of the worlds of employment and personal and family life;
46. Urges the Member States to take the inter-generational dimension into account in their policies to foster employment;
47. Calls on Member States to facilitate the access of young people to all kinds of employment in good working conditions so as to avoid a mismatch between skills and jobs that represents a waste of talent; in this respect, recommends an improvement in the quality of internships provided as well as the rights of interns by ensuring that the majority of intern programmes endow young people with qualifications and lead to paid positions;
48. Also calls on Member States to offer more employment opportunities, to implement social protection policies for disadvantaged young people, to ensure equal opportunities for young people in the periphery and in urban centres and to give special support to young mothers;
49. Recalls the risk of a brain drain and the negative consequences for young people's countries of origin; calls upon Member States to explore and develop youth retention strategies in countries and regions prone to outward migration, which takes diverse forms, such as brain drains, skills gap fillers and cheap, flexible, unskilled and often seasonal labour;
50. Calls on the Member States to eliminate the cases where a disparity in income levels between young men and young women on the grounds of sex is noted;
51. Calls on the Member States to ensure decent employment rights and social security in an era of globalisation by striking a balance between flexibility and security;
52. Calls on the Member States to guarantee the total transferability of acquired social benefits so as not to jeopardise welfare protection for young workers who have opted for mobility;
53. Stresses the importance of periods of practical training in companies and institutions during the period of study, which may make it easier subsequently to find a job;
54. Suggests promoting an entrepreneurial culture among young people by improving communication on entrepreneurship, by supporting the development of European structures and networks to that end and by encouraging young people to become self-employed and to use microcredit and microfinance tools; stresses the importance of life-long learning;
55. Supports the need for synergy between the worlds of education and industry and for advanced forms of integration between universities and businesses;

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56. Encourages the Member States to support private initiatives for young people, including through national programmes that supplement the European programmes;

57. Draws attention to the need to draw up policies to reconcile working life and private life and encourage young people to start a family; also points out the need to ensure that young people have sufficient income so that they can take decisions independently, including the decision to start a family;

***Health, well-being and environment***

58. Underlines that the impact of climate and environmental changes and environmental degradation have a negative impact on young people's lives and calls for sustainable actions in this field;

59. Calls on the Member States to include in their curricula appropriate forms of education on the prevention of health- and environment-related risks;

60. Deeply regrets the fact that the cooperation framework makes no reference to consumer policies; takes the view that some health problems may be related to the production and marketing of unhealthy food;

61. Underlines the need to take into account the specific vulnerability of young people and children when formulating consumer and environmental policies; stresses the need to ensure a high level of protection of young consumers through actions such as information and education campaigns;

62. Underlines the importance of further combating the use of drugs and alcohol and tobacco-related harm and other forms of addiction, including gambling, especially by means of prevention and rehabilitation; calls on the Member States to make the most of the EU Drugs Action Plan and of the EU Strategy to support Member States in combating alcohol-related harm and other forms of addiction;

63. Also recalls that children and young people are exposed to a multitude of scenes of a violent nature in the media; suggests that the issue be further investigated and that all the necessary measures be taken with a view to eliminating the impact on their mental health;

64. Recommends guiding young people in their use of new technologies by means of media education policies and policies to raise awareness of the dangers inherent in their uncontrolled use;

65. Stresses the role of informing young people about sex education issues in protecting their health;

66. Draws attention to the continuing high level of under-age pregnancies and calls on the Commission and the Member States to make young people aware of and educate them about this problem;

67. Calls on the Member States to ensure that immigrant children and young people, irrespective of the legal status of their families, have access to basic health care;

68. Emphasises the role of sport as a whole set of activities promoting healthy lifestyles for young people and supporting teamwork, fair play and responsibility, and the role of information for young people in combating violence at sports grounds; calls for special programmes for young people with disabilities;

69. Calls on the Member States, in their efforts to encourage young people to participate in sports, to take gender-specific issues into account and to provide support for less popular sports as well;

70. Stresses the importance of promoting youth education campaigns to combat doping and support clean sport;

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**Participation**

71. Stresses the importance of an ongoing structured dialogue and consultation with young people; strongly encourages promoting the participation of young people and youth organisations at all levels (local, national and international) in the formulation of general policies and, in particular, of youth policy and not only that, through ongoing structured dialogue;

72. Underlines the importance of considering the method of youth consultation, so as to ensure that a broad range of views of young people are taken into account; is in favour of the development of structures where all the actors can work together, equally influence policies and decisions and provide the means needed to create these structures;

73. Encourages Member States to include youth organisations in the policy-making process, including at local level;

74. Stresses the importance of representative youth representatives in the structured dialogue and recommends that the Commission consult representatives of national youth councils concerning the priority topics for young people;

75. Agrees to the frequently addressed need for recognition of and support for youth organisations and the major contribution they make to non-formal education; calls on the Commission and the Council to encourage the Member States to set up and provide support for local youth parliaments and councils and to launch corresponding programmes;

76. Stresses the need to involve more, and more diverse, young people, with a view to enhancing representativeness; is in favour of encouraging participation from an early age; in this respect, encourages reflection on reinforcing links between schools, youth organisations and other civil-society organisations and strongly recommends fostering stronger recognition of non-formal education;

77. Suggests the establishment of awards schemes for young people who actively participate in society, with the ultimate purpose of establishing a culture of both rights and obligations;

78. Stresses the need for particular efforts to encourage young people living in peripheral and rural areas and in poor neighbourhoods to actively participate in European activities; in this respect, regrets that the cooperation framework proposes no specific action in order to better communicate EU programmes to young people and notably to those who live in remote places and to those who are not organised in political, social or nongovernmental organisations; asks the Commission for a definite commitment in this regard;

79. Underlines the need to step up efforts to ensure an effective three-way exchange of views and information between the academic, business and political communities at local, regional, national and European levels;

**Creativity and culture**

80. Calls on the Member States to facilitate access to new technologies in order to boost young people's creativity and capacity for innovation and generate interest in culture, the arts and science;

81. Is surprised at the lack of any explicit reference to cultural issues in the Commission communication; adds that such issues cannot come down only to entrepreneurship and the use of new technologies;

82. Welcomes the fact that the Council resolution takes into account the role played by social and cultural activities, which complements that of the education system and of families; notes that such activities also contribute decisively to the fight against discrimination and inequality and facilitate young people's access to leisure pursuits, culture and sport;

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83. Stresses the importance of supporting and recognising youth culture when the Member States allocate funds, as this is essential for developing young people's creativity;
84. Welcomes the proposal included in the Council resolution to promote specialised training for youth workers in culture, new media and intercultural competences;
85. Suggests including a youth perspective in policies, programmes and actions in the culture and media fields;
86. Takes the view that cultural institutions (e.g. museums, libraries and theatres) should be encouraged to involve children and young people to a greater extent;
87. Calls on the Commission and Council to devise a European youth pass so that young people can gain access to cultural institutions throughout the EU at a very low charge;

#### ***Voluntary activities***

88. Welcomes the decision of the Council to designate 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering and the measures set out in the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the European Union;
89. Takes the view that youth volunteering should be supported, also by extending the European Voluntary Service programme, and by helping disadvantaged young people to commit themselves to volunteering;
90. Considers that, depending on the outcome of the evaluation of the Amicus Preparatory Action, further actions of this kind should be envisaged;
91. Takes the view that voluntary activities should not replace professional, paid employment opportunities but add value to society;
92. Calls for the introduction and mutual recognition of a 'European Volunteer Pass' as an adjunct to the existing 'European Youth Pass'; this pass would provide a record of the voluntary work performed by children and young people and could be submitted to potential employers as proof of a qualification;

#### ***Social inclusion***

93. Welcomes the fact that 2010 is designated the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, especially in the context of economic and financial crisis, which is having a particularly heavy impact on young people;
94. Holds the view that, against the background of ageing societies, intergenerational equity is a key challenge; calls on Member States to take the interests of young people and of future generations into account when formulating their policies, especially in times of economic and financial crisis;
95. Stresses also the need to develop more outreach programmes for marginalised groups, such as young immigrants and all those with special needs (the disabled, young people who need to be reintegrated into society after a period of imprisonment, homeless people, those in casual employment, etc.);
96. Recognises the need to raise awareness of disabled young people and calls on the European Institutions to take action to ensure that, in the future, young persons with disabilities are fully integrated;

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97. Reiterates its request to ensure gender equality from an early age and in all areas of life; therefore, particularly welcomes the fact that the Council Resolution aims at improving childcare and promoting the sharing of responsibilities between parents in order to facilitate reconciliation between professional and private life for both young women and young men;

98. Stresses the need to make children and young people aware that discrimination is unacceptable in any form and in any area and to take resolute action to combat all forms of extremism;

99. Recommends that priority be given in each Member State to ensuring that no young minors are denied access to social care;

100. Stresses the importance of an inclusive digital environment; encourages Member States to develop, as part of their formal and informal education systems, concepts which guarantee access to information, education and culture and improve young people's media skills;

#### ***Youth and the world***

101. Recommends direct development aid to measures for the benefit of young people and to combat drug use and trafficking in developing countries;

102. Is in favour of the fostering of general interest activities that create a sense of responsibility among young people, such as volunteering for climate change, for development or for humanitarian aid; in this respect, welcomes the opportunities that the creation of a European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps will give young people to participate in the humanitarian work of the EU and calls on the Member States to ensure that young people are fully aware of its existence;

103. Encourages the Commission to further explore the possibility of enhancing international cooperation activities in youth volunteering;

104. Calls on the Member States to develop exchanges and twinning schemes with third countries and communities in order to promote intercultural dialogue and encourage young people to embark on common projects;

105. Calls for the improvement and extensive implementation of the Erasmus Mundus programme;

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106. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

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