**5.8.2022**

**EU Youth Strategy – Equipping Young People with Skills for the Future**

**Association for Consumer Rights Budget 2023 Proposal**

**The EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027)**

**The Association for Consumer Right believes that equipping young people with skills for the future is a key element to developing the potential of young people in Malta.**

**Based on the EU Youth Strategy, the following are a number of proposals and recommendations for Government, the Education System, Youth Organisations in Malta and other relevant authorities:**

* The EU Youth Strategy is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, based on the [Council Resolution of 26 November 2018](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL). EU youth cooperation shall make the most of youth policy's potential.
* It fosters youth participation in democratic life; it also supports social and civic engagement and aims to ensure that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society.
* Youth employment and issues affecting young people remain high on the EU’s policy agenda and there is strong concern that young people will be among the main victims of the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

**Looking ahead**

* Having already paid the highest toll of the previous recession, to avoid history repeating itself the European Commission has proposed a reinforced Youth Guarantee as a concrete policy instrument to tackle the employment and social consequences of COVID-19.
* This aims to ensure that all young people under 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.
* This initiative will build on previous actions carried out at European level. The Commission’s 2016 Communication ‘Investing in Europe's Youth’ aimed to support young people in the form of a Youth Package, which is applicable for Malta as an EU Member State
* The package supports better opportunities to access employment, via the Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative launched in 2013, better opportunities through education and training, as well as better opportunities for solidarity, learning mobility and participation.

As part of this effort, the latest EU Youth Strategy (2019–2027), adopted on 26 November 2018, sets out the framework for cooperation with Member States on their youth policies.

# Ares of action

The EU Youth Strategy focuses on three core areas of action, around the three words: [Engage](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/engage_en), [Connect](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/connect_en), [Empower](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/empower_en), while working on joined-up implementation across sectors. During a 2017-2018 dialogue process which involved young people from all over Europe, [11 European Youth Goals](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/european-youth-goals_en) were developed. These goals identify cross-sectoral areas that affect young people’s lives and point out challenges. The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising this vision of young people.

## 1. Engage

With “Engage” the EU Youth Strategy aims towards a meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people.

**ACR Urges Government to take concrete action on the following :**

* Encourage and promote inclusive democratic participation of all young people in society and democratic processes;
* Actively engage young people, youth organisations and other organisers of youth work in policies affecting the lives of young people on all levels;
* Support youth representations at local, regional and national level, recognising young people’s right to participate and self-organise;
* Support and convey the EU Youth Dialogue in order to include diverse voices of young people in decision-making processes on all levels;
* Foster the development of citizenship competencies, through citizenship education and learning strategies;
* Support and develop opportunities for ‘learning to participate’, raising interest in participatory actions and helping young people to prepare for participation;
* Explore and promote the use of innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation e.g. digital democracy tools.

## 2. Connect

Young people in in Malta and in Europe are getting more and more connected. Connections, relations and exchange of experience are a pivotal asset for solidarity and the future development of the European Union. This connection is best fostered through different forms of mobility.

**ACR urges Government and relevant authorities to take action to**:

* Enable access for all young people and youth workers to cross-border mobility opportunities, including volunteering, by eliminating obstacles and implementing support measures with special attention to young people with fewer opportunities;
* Encourage young people’s engagement in solidarity, promoting support schemes and seek complementarity and synergies between EU funding instruments and national, regional and local schemes;
* Actively engage young people and youth organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of relevant EU funding programmes;
* Share best practices and further work on effective systems for validation and recognition of skills and competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning, including solidarity and volunteering activities, continuing the implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

## 3. Empower

Empowerment of young people means encouraging them to take charge of their own lives. Today, young people in Malta as is the case across Europe are facing diverse challenges and youth work in all its forms can serve as a catalyst for empowerment.

**Proposals for Government**

* Further develop and implement a European Youth Work Agenda for quality, innovation and recognition of youth work;
* Support quality youth work development on all levels, including policy development in the field, training for youth workers, the establishment of legal frameworks and sufficient allocation of resources;
* Support youth work activities, including grassroots, and recognise youth organisations as providers of competences development and social inclusion through youth work and non-formal education activities;
* Create and further develop easily accessible youth contact points that deliver a wide range of services and/or provide youth information.

Youth Goals

The aim of the 6th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue - Youth in Europe: What’s next? which took place in 2017/2018 – was to collect voices of young people and contribute together to creating the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027. As a result, eleven European Youth Goals were developed. These goals reflect the views of European youth and represent the vision of those active in the EU Youth Dialogue:

1. Connecting EU with Youth
2. Equality of All Genders
3. Inclusive Societies
4. Information & Constructive Dialogue
5. Mental Health & Wellbeing
6. Moving Rural Youth Forward
7. Quality Employment for All
8. Quality Learning
9. Space and Participation for All
10. Sustainable Green Europe
11. Youth Organisations & European Programmes

The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising this vision of young people by mobilising EU level policy instruments as well as actions at national, regional and local level by all stakeholders.

# The EU Youth Dialogue

The EU Youth Dialogue is the dialogue with young people and youth organisations involving policy and decision makers, as well as experts, researchers and other relevant civil society actors, as appropriate. It serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection and consultation on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation in the field of youth.

It builds on the achievements of past dialogue processes, with the aim of including more decision-makers and young people, especially those with fewer opportunities in decision-making processes and in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy.

The EU Youth Dialogue is organised into 18-month work cycles. Each cycle focuses on a different thematic priority (set by the Council of Youth Ministers). The current thematic priority is “A Sustainable and Green Europe”, which is directly connected to Youth Goals number 3: Inclusive Societies and number 10 Sustainable Green Europe.

The current cycle runs from 2022 to mid-2023 over the course of the French, Czech and Swedish EU Presidencies

**The success of EU Youth Dialogue depends on the direct involvement of young people and youth organisations**. During each 18-month work cycle, every EU country, including Malta are to conduct a national consultation of young people and youth organisations.

The participatory process is to be organised by national working groups through representatives of youth ministries, national youth councils, youth organisations, youth workers, researchers and young people from all backgrounds.

In January 2020, the Commission presented its Communication 'A strong social Europe for just transitions'. This prepared the way for an Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, which reiterates the EU’s commitment to the Youth Guarantee.

As it emerged that young people were among the most vulnerable to the severe social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictive measures, on 1 July 2020 the Commission launched a Youth Employment Support package structured around four strands to provide a ‘bridge to jobs’ for the next generation.

**The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan,** proposed by the European Commission in March 2021 and followed by a declaration at the Porto Social Summit in May 2021, introduced The Commission put forward a proposal for a Council Recommendation on ‘A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee’, to replace the 2013 Recommendation.

**Malta needs to ensure that this initiative is linked in with the needs of companies to provide the skills needed**, particularly for the green and digital transitions. It extends the age range covered by the Youth Guarantee from age 15–24 to 15–29.

The package also **includes a proposal on vocational education and training, a renewed impetus for apprenticeships and additional measures to support youth employment.**

**Malta needs to commit to the new, ambitious targets for young people, such as reducing the rate of young people aged 15–29 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) from 12.6% (2019) to 9% by 2030.**

*Source: EU Commission Youth Strategy*

Grace Attard – General Secretary

Association for Consumer Rights