Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Resolution 1885 (2012)[1]
Final version

The young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Young people are a key asset for Europe. Conditions must be created for them to participate fully in decision making, democratic processes and the shaping of a more cohesive, prosperous and just society. Yet the financial and economic crises, together with underlying structural problems, threaten the effective exercise of rights by the young generation, whose autonomy, dignity and well-being are severely affected by growing economic and social inequalities. In some countries, the enormous public debt, financial speculation and the global economic crisis are forcing the young generation to make painful sacrifices.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly is deeply concerned by the fact that the young generation in Europe is disproportionally hit by unemployment, underemployment, poverty and exclusion. This is nothing less than a tragedy in the making. If no tangible improvements are made, Europe risks not only producing a "lost generation" of disillusioned young people, but also undermining its political stability and social cohesion, justice and peace, as well as its long-term competitiveness and development prospects in the global context.

3. Europe is ageing and needs the dynamism of young people to advance and prosper. Therefore policy makers have a duty to act rapidly and decisively to help deliver real opportunities for young people – or face the backlash of rising extremism and alienation in society. The Assembly is convinced that Europe needs to reactivate intergenerational solidarity mechanisms and better share political, social and economic power with the young generation. Adequately supporting young people today, even in times of austerity, is the best investment Europe can make for its future vitality and quality growth.

4. Regarding the major youth employment challenge, the Assembly reiterates the proposals contained in its Resolution 1828 (2011) on reversing the sharp decline in youth employment, and urges national parliaments to ensure due follow-up. It welcomes the job-creation strategy unveiled by the European Union in April 2012 and strongly supports proposals specifically relating to youth.

5. The Assembly refers to the valuable research work done by its partner institutions regarding strategies and tools for improving the integration of young people into labour markets and fostering progress in society. It is in particular convinced of the utility of putting into practice the proposals of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as outlined in the *OECD Employment Outlook* series, its review *Jobs for Youth* and the independent study "Challenges Facing European Labour Markets: Is a Skill Upgrade the Appropriate Instrument?", and recommends their implementation.

6. Moreover, the Assembly urges the Council of Europe member States:

6.1. regarding youth policies, to:

6.1.1. focus youth strategies and action plans on better integration of young people into society through active citizenship, social dialogue and sustainable employment opportunities;

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1. Assembly debate on 26 June 2012 (21st and 22nd Sittings) (see Doc. 12951, report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Volontè; and Doc. 12974, opinion of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Jakič). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 June 2012 (22nd Sitting). See Recommendation 2002 (2012).

6.1.2. ensure that young people have full access to all their human (including social) rights;

6.1.3. ensure adequate remuneration and working conditions for young workers;

6.1.4. ensure that youth policies are put high on the political agenda and receive adequate funding;

6.1.5. reallocate part of unspent budgetary balances and supplementary resources generated through adjustments in taxation to youth-oriented projects, programmes and organisations;

6.1.6. implement family-friendly policies in support of young parents and the proposals contained in the Recommendation 1912 (2010) on investing in family cohesion as a development factor in times of crisis, in the reply from the Committee of Ministers (Doc. 12450) and in Resolution 1864 (2012) on demographic trends in Europe: turning challenges into opportunities;

6.1.7. foster the implementation of proposals laid out in Resolution 1778 (2010) and Recommendation 1948 (2010) on promoting volunteering in Europe and in Resolution 1800 (2011) on combating poverty;

6.1.8. promote the emancipation of young people by developing housing policies specifically addressed to this age group;

6.2. regarding youth employability and skills, as well as the transition from studies to work and between jobs, to:

6.2.1. refocus their macroeconomic policies on sustainable job creation and investment in quality education, training and lifelong learning schemes;

6.2.2. adjust their educational systems towards equipping young people with a wider array of skills and linguistic abilities to better qualify for the evolving needs of labour markets and multiple vacant jobs across Europe;

6.2.3. improve youth access to high-quality education, which can be better achieved by greater competitiveness of schools in both the public and private sectors;

6.2.4. remove administrative and tax obstacles to youth mobility for studies, training and work, and stimulate this mobility;

6.2.5. give impetus to youth entrepreneurship through an enabling environment, advisory services, tax facilities, grants and microcredits especially designed for young people;

6.2.6. facilitate young people’s access to development programmes, patentability and employment in the green economy, health, innovation and information technology sectors;

6.2.7. use the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives (2012) to encourage the creation and development of youth co-operative enterprises;

6.2.8. improve the Europe-wide recognition of professional qualifications and non-formal education;

6.2.9. offer tax incentives for employers who propose apprenticeships to young people while retaining older workers, notably for the inter-generational transmission of skills in the workplace;

6.2.10. subsidise employers’ contributions to social insurance schemes or even grant a moratorium on them for a limited period of time so as to stimulate the recruitment of young people;

6.2.11. endorse and promote the implementation of the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships in the national context;

6.2.12. implement any programmes and databases for the exchange of information between national public employment services with a view to favouring the access of young people to all European job vacancies;

6.2.13. address the exclusion of young people from the educational system, as well as the risk of a digital divide due to the lack of equal opportunities for access to the Internet;

6.3. regarding social protection, to:

6.3.1. support the implementation of national “youth guarantee” schemes to ensure that no young person is out of employment, education or training for more than four months against their will;

6.3.2. ensure that young people with special needs, notably those with disabilities, can access training and employment adapted to their capacities, be adequately remunerated and become fully integrated in society;

6.3.3. propose targeted programmes and means of integration in order to help young people in precarious situations avoid the scourge of delinquency, prostitution, self-destruction or self-exclusion caused by addictions;

6.3.4. guarantee equal opportunities for young people to choose freely and have effective access to quality education through a systematic use of scholarships having regard to family resources;

6.3.5. enhance public social security coverage and encourage a greater use of private pension schemes for young workers in temporary, low-paid or otherwise precarious employment;

6.3.6. ensure that first-time jobseekers have access to social benefits;

6.3.7. promote the establishment of a basic statute for young trainees in all member States, defining a set of minimum guarantees for working traineeships based on a written contract, social security contributions and, at least, the national minimum wage for traineeships of more than three months;

6.4. regarding the promotion of active citizenship and social dialogue, to:

6.4.1. make better use of new means of communication, consultation and institutional representation (including youth councils, youth organisations and youth parliaments) to build more collaborative social models that give voice to young people and adequately take their input into account;

6.4.2. foster social dialogue to address youth problems by developing public-private partnerships between educational institutions, enterprises, local authorities, trade unions, employment agencies and social services;

6.4.3. consider setting up multifunctional youth support funds aimed at providing more scholarships for students, fostering the creation of start-up enterprises and access to patents by young entrepreneurs and promoting social inclusion projects for the young generation.

7. The Assembly resolves to make regular use of its “state of democracy and human rights” debates and other existing monitoring mechanisms provided in the Council of Europe legal instruments in order to assess progress made and the effectiveness of measures taken by member States in improving access to social rights, notably for the more vulnerable segments of the population such as young people in general, and women, the disabled or the most marginalised in particular. Moreover, the Assembly considers that it would be useful to hold a follow-up debate in 2014.