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Youth in Crisis

Forgotten Generation?

A lost generation, a forgotten generation. MEPs sent mixed messages today to young people across Europe suffering from the effects of the crisis. We have ended up allocating too little money for too many years while imposing policies that only make matters worse. Saying “Try harder; here is a little money to help you try harder” is not good enough. We must instead support young people, engage them in policy development and change policies to ensure that there are decent jobs, rights and opportunities. A generation in crisis came before MEPs in two reports today, one on Youth Unemployment and another on the implementation of the Youth Strategy (2010-2012). Seeing the report on youth unemployment as a step backward and ignoring the fact that there are simply not enough jobs, the Greens put forward their alternative. This was unfortunately rejected by MEPs, leaving the Youth Guarantee and other policies to stumble form the effects of chronic under-funding. On the Youth Strategy, MEPs made clear the disastrous consequences of austerity measures in the fields of education, with Member States imposing cuts that hinder the development of long term routes out of the crisis. The strategy was divided into 3 working cycles. The first cycle prioritised cooperation between Member States, with youth employability, entrepreneurship and the promotion of youth participation as the main topics. The new cycle (2013-2015) continues to focus on youth employment and is especially concerned with young people crossing the poverty line, an increasing reality for many. Green MEP Rui Tavares commented on the overall strategy, saying: *"There is no more telling statistic on what is happening in Europe when it comes to youth than having more than half of young people unemployed in the peripheral countries while youth unemployment is below 10% in Germany. This demonstrates that we are living with an asymmetric, supranational, crisis. However, we are still trying to respond to it on national terms. The correct way to respond to this is a community response rather than just an intergovernmental response. Unfortunately, for such a big problem, we have ended up allocating too little money for too many years. Worse still: we are forcing upon Member States policies that are pernicious in this context. We are forcing upon "troika" countries cuts in education and social programs directed at the youth, when expenditure in education or supporting start up companies should not be treated the same as any other expenditure. The Commission, the ECB, and the rest of the troika must take account of this rather than asking for more and more cuts."* Looking to the future, the challenges for the next cycle of the strategy consist mainly in making sure that all stakeholders participate in the general effort; youth associations and civil society must be included in decision making processes and also in working on the most difficult phase of the education-to-work transition. Policies must be consistent and visionary to give the necessary push in fostering all types of transversal, social and creative skills. They must also integrate non formal and informal education into a general approach of "quality education scheme" and "quality apprenticeships". We must not forget the role that youth has to play in a democratic and participative society, confronting extremism and radicalism and shaping their own future. In a nutshell

the focus on young people must be a mainstreamed priority in all EU programmes under the future multi-year budget (MFF). The Greens have been to the fore in advocating a binding youth guarantee to address the problem of youth unemployment. With crisis-hit EU member states those most affected by rocketing youth unemployment, EU support is essential. This is a fight that the Greens will keep up in the European Parliament and during the European elections next year.

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Member

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