

Supporting Young People as a Pillar of Europe's Demographic Renewal

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RECOGNIZING THAT:

1. The European Union, through the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, recognises young people as key drivers of social, economic and democratic development and promotes their active involvement in decision-making processes¹;
2. Europe remains one of the most successful political and economic projects, yet is confronted with negative long-term demographic trends, including ageing populations and persistently low birth rates, with fertility levels across the Union remaining below the replacement rate, all of which require continued and coordinated efforts³;

3. The median age in the European Union continues to rise, while the old-age dependency ratio is projected to increase significantly by 2050, placing growing pressure on labour markets, social protection systems and intergenerational solidarity;
4. Young Europeans today have more opportunities than previous generations, particularly in education and mobility, yet increasingly face a prolonged transition to adulthood, characterised by delayed financial independence and postponed family formation^{2,6};
5. Access to stable, secure and quality employment plays a decisive role in shaping young people's life choices, including decisions on starting a family and remaining in or returning to their local communities⁶, while the prevalence of precarious forms of employment limits young people's financial stability and long-term planning capacity;
6. Access to affordable and quality housing is increasingly becoming one of the main challenges for young people across Europe, with many unable to leave the parental home before the age of 30, thereby directly affecting demographic trends^{3,4};
7. Regional disparities within the Union continue to shape opportunities for young people, particularly in rural, remote and less-developed areas, contributing to youth outmigration and causing territorial imbalances, which underscores the importance of cohesion policy⁵;
8. Freedom of movement remains one of the core achievements of the European Union, while balanced mobility and the creation of conditions for return migration are essential for sustainable demographic development²;
9. Access to quality education, training and lifelong learning opportunities remains uneven across the Union, affecting equal opportunities and long-term resilience;
10. Mental health challenges among young people have increased in recent years, impacting their well-being, social participation and economic prospects;
11. Digitalisation and technological transformation create new opportunities, but also risk widening inequalities without adequate access to digital skills and infrastructure;

12. The European Union and its Member States have made progress in supporting families and improving work-life balance, while further sustained efforts and investments remain necessary;
13. Public investment in youth-oriented policies, including education, employment and housing, is needed to fully address demographic challenges;
14. Demographic renewal requires not only economic measures, but also a stable, predictable and supportive social environment in which young people can plan their future with confidence³;
15. A comprehensive and forward-looking approach to demographic renewal necessitates the systematic integration of the youth perspective across all relevant European policies and strategies;

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:

1. EPP Leaders adopted, in Zagreb in January 2026, the Resolution entitled “Demographic Renewal: A Strategic Imperative for Europe”, affirming that demographic renewal constitutes a strategic priority for the European Union, on an equal footing with competitiveness, security, energy, and technological sovereignty, and underscoring the critical importance of sustained investment in younger generations⁷.
2. Demographic change is increasingly recognised across the European Union as a structural challenge, with direct implications for labour markets, public services and the long-term sustainability of local communities³.
3. Across the European Union, as well as at national level, a range of measures has already been introduced with the aim of supporting young people and families, although their effectiveness still varies depending on specific national and regional circumstances.
4. Investment in education, skills and innovation remains a key factor for both the opportunities available to young people and the long-term competitiveness of the European economy⁶.
5. The green and digital transitions create new opportunities for younger generations, but also highlight existing gaps in access to education, skills and the labour market.

6. Europe's long-term resilience will largely depend on whether young people see realistic prospects within the Union and choose to build their lives and careers in their local communities, whether in urban, rural or remote areas³.

YEPP CALLS ON:

1. The European Commission and governments across Europe to further improve the transition of young people from education to the labour market, by strengthening traineeship systems and first-job opportunities, developing dual education models and ensuring a closer link between education systems and labour market needs, taking into account recent initiatives such as the European Commission's reopening of large-scale entry-level recruitment, which attracted around 60,000 applicants for approximately 750 positions, demonstrating both the high demand among young people and the need for more frequent and accessible entry pathways into the labour market.
2. The European institutions to systematically mainstream the youth perspective, in particular in the preparation of a comprehensive European Demographic Strategy and in the finalisation of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034, ensuring that it effectively promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion across the Union.
3. The European Union to strengthen and further expand the Erasmus+ Programme within the next Multiannual Financial Framework, recognising it as a key instrument for the empowerment and participation of students and young people, while ensuring broader and more inclusive access to mobility and learning opportunities across the European continent.
4. The European Union and its Member States to ensure that the European Youth Strategy beyond 2027 incorporates clear demographic objectives, acknowledging youth participation as an essential prerequisite for youth empowerment and for advancing Europe's demographic renewal.
5. The EPP to support the strengthening of Europe's demographic analytical, forecasting, and strategic foresight capacities, with the full integration of the youth perspective, in order to ensure evidence-based policymaking and to facilitate the exchange of best practices across the Union.

6. The European Union to support the development of accessible career guidance and employment systems for young people, including the digitalisation of public employment services and better use of data in guiding young people towards in-demand professions.
7. The Member States to focus, in line with the European Affordable Housing Plan, on housing policies that prioritize the needs of young people and enable them to achieve independence at an earlier stage, including through the mobilization of vacant housing, supporting access to affordable financing and mortgage schemes that enable them to purchase or renovate their homes, the development of sustainable long-term rental models, and the strengthening of affordable housing as a viable and accessible option.
8. The European Union and governments across Europe to strengthen support for young families through a more integrated approach that connects housing, employment and family policies, with particular attention to childcare and flexible forms of work.
9. The European Union to introduce a European Child Investment Benchmark, aimed at encouraging sustained prioritisation of early childhood, education and family support within national budgets and recovery plans, while ensuring that financial sustainability frameworks, including ESG criteria, also take into account their impact on demographic renewal and incentivise the private sector to integrate family-friendly policies into corporate decision-making.
10. The EPP should give greater attention to youth mental health, including more accessible counselling services, preventive programmes in education and stronger responses to different forms of addiction, especially those linked to the digital environment.
11. The European Union to further support young people in rural and less developed areas, through investment in infrastructure, access to services and the development of local economies, making the “right to stay” a realistic choice.
12. The European Commission to more consistently assess the demographic impact of policies affecting young people, particularly in areas such as housing, mobility and regional development.

13. The European Union and governments across Europe to further promote youth entrepreneurship by simplifying access to finance and supporting self-employment, building on measures that have already shown results.
14. EU institutions to ensure that young people are not only formally included in policymaking, but that their perspectives have a real impact on decisions shaping Europe's future.

CONCLUSION

At a time of growing geopolitical uncertainty and shifting global dynamics, demographic renewal in Europe is not only about trends and numbers, but also about whether young people feel confident about their future.

A Europe that offers stability, opportunity and perspective to its young people is a Europe that remains strong and capable of shaping its own future.

The Youth of the European People's Party therefore calls for continued efforts to ensure that young people can build their future here in Europe.

Resources:

1. European Commission. (2018). EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027.
https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en
2. European Commission. (2022). EU Youth Report.
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3. European Commission. (2023). Demography Report.
https://commission.europa.eu/publications/demography-report_en
4. Eurostat. (2024). Fertility statistics.
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>
5. European Commission. (2020). A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas.
<https://commission.europa.eu>
6. OECD. (2023). Youth and Labour Market Transitions in Europe.
<https://www.oecd.org>

7. European People's Party. (2026). Demographic Renewal: A Strategic Imperative for Europe.
<https://www.epp.eu/papers/demographic-renewal-a-strategic-imperative-for-europe>