

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



EU-CoE youth partnership policy sheet

Social Inclusion

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Executive Summary:

Social inclusion is a youth policy priority of the EU and CoE strategies for sustainable and inclusive growth and the promotion of human rights. Both institutions build their policies on the understanding of the complex and multi-dimensional character of young people's social integration and the grave risks that the economic crisis is still posing. Breaking down the barriers is made possible through development of evidence-based policy using the capacities of youth research, policy, practice, and young people's own agency.

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1. Definition and state of affairs

From a youth perspective **social inclusion** is the process of individual's self-realisation within a society, acceptance and recognition of one's potential by social institutions, integration (through study, employment, volunteer work or other forms of participation) in the web of social relations in a community. In present-day European societies the concept is relevant to all young people as youth is the life stage when young people make the transition from family dependence to autonomy within the larger society under rapidly evolving circumstances. It has a particular meaning to those young people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and live in precarious conditions. For them social inclusion involves breaking various barriers before acquiring their social rights as full members of society.

Understanding and promoting social inclusion faces various challenges:

- The process has many stages forming a continuum from total isolation to active inclusion. Social exclusion is a state of isolation, rupture in the social bonds between the individual and society. The other pole is the empowerment of the individual by society for active participation in social life. Young people may enter the process at different points and move toward both poles – either marginalisation or achievement of autonomy and well-being.
- Social inclusion is multi-dimensional and affects various life domains: economic, political, cultural, social. The integrating processes do not act independently of one another. The successful passage of young people through the educational system provides them with crucial resources such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes for their social inclusion in other life domains. Poverty allows social disadvantages to concentrate in the affected group who might slip towards social exclusion.
- A complex array of factors such as gender, health, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation acts to enable or constrain social integration. Similarly youth social exclusion has both current and long-term consequences which make it a priority topic for youth policy in Europe. The socio-economic crisis from 2008 threatens to turn present day youth in some European societies into a lost generation if adequate actions are not taken to address the causes of social exclusion and empower youth agency for full citizenship.

2. Background information

Taking into consideration the complex challenges in conceptualizing and measuring social inclusion, the process has been subjected to rigorous research work funded by European and national bodies. Eurostat through its regular studies such as [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) and the [Survey on Income and Living Conditions](#), as well as its Flash Youth Barometers has gathered and analysed data and produced a set of about 40 indicators on young people's living conditions, forms of participation in public life, and barriers to social inclusion.

The [Dashboard of EU Youth Indicators](#) provides ample evidence about various forms of barriers preventing the successful social inclusion of young Europeans. The collapse of opportunities for labour market integration with the breaking of the crisis in 2008 is perhaps the most common youth problem on the road to independence as the unemployment rate in the union affects almost a quarter of all young people aged 18-24 in 2012. Cross-country variations are very large from less than one in ten young people unemployed in Germany to more than every second young person in Greece. Another group having difficulties in the process of social inclusion are the early school leavers who comprise 12.7% of young Europeans (EU 28 countries, 2012), fluctuating from less than 5% in Slovenia and Croatia to almost 25% in Spain. Similar is the share of young people living in a situation of severe material deprivation and varies from less than 1.5% of young people in Sweden, Norway, and Luxemburg to 45% of those in Bulgaria affected by this form of poverty. Prone to social exclusion is the status 'not in employment, education, or training' which currently encompasses about 14 million Europeans aged 15-29. Its scale spreads from 5.5% in the Netherlands to 23% in Italy. Territorial inequalities exist inside countries as well, creating highly deprived areas in which the above disadvantages concentrate and prevent young people from achieving their rights as for example the South-East region in Bulgaria and the North-East region in Romania where more than half of the population live at risk of poverty or social exclusion, according to Eurostat indicators.

Evidence from academically robust and practice oriented investigations enriches the statistical information on social inclusion. Through them we get deeper insights about the situation of specific youth groups such as the homeless, migrants, ethnic minority youth, especially the Roma, and those from a public care background who are more vulnerable to social exclusion in the European context. Research based analysis reveals the special transitional needs of these young people and the internal variations among them. It also brings to light subtle distinctions in the multiple factors that can make policy interventions more effective. For example, it is not only the low social capital of the disadvantaged young people that creates barriers to their social integration but more so the lack of bridging social capital in the community, the missing links between these groups and the majority population. Research also demonstrates the strong potential of integrated youth policy by showing that the weak or non-existent links between welfare assistance and educational and employment policies not only create discordance in policy interventions but also underplay the resilience and capabilities of young people's own agency.

3. Policies on European level

Creating an inclusive community was a primary goal in the process of European integration from its start and the latest economic crisis placed new weight on this objective. Social inclusion became a key priority in the [Europe 2020 Strategy](#) of the European Union, setting a common target to lift 20 million people out of risk of poverty by 2020. This ambitious goal is backed by the flagship initiative '[European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion](#)' and the Social Open Method of Coordination. The EU financially supports such actions through its Social Investment Package, the new umbrella Programme for Employment and Social Innovation and the EU funds, in particular the European Social Fund.

While all of these policies have a strong bearing on youth, dealing specifically with the situation of young people are the flagship initiative 'Youth on the Move' and the Youth Employment Package. Both measures have significant social inclusion objectives: to make education more accessible and better suited to young people's needs, to stimulate youth educational mobility (under the Erasmus Plus Programme) and to encourage Member States to take measures easing the transition from school to work. Among specific actions designed for young people's employment integration are the 'Your first EURES job' in support of labour market mobility within the EU, and measures for promoting youth entrepreneurship under the European Progress Microfinance Facility. The Youth Employment Package includes such innovative actions as the Youth Guarantee, Quality Framework for Traineeships, and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

The [EU Youth Strategy \(2010-2018\)](#) was developed with the principle objectives to create more and equal opportunities for youth in education and the labour market and to promote social inclusion and solidarity of all young people. The Strategy defines eight main fields of action, social inclusion being one of them and is set as the focus of the second three-year work cycle of the Strategy (2013-2015). Within this field national governments are encouraged to design and implement country-specific measures, such as:

- expanding the opportunities of youth work and youth centres as vehicles of social inclusion;
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- developing intercultural competence and combating discrimination;
- addressing homelessness, housing and financial exclusion;
- widening access to quality social, health and transport services;
- assisting young families.

While most national policies have encompassed measures against social exclusion before the launch of the Strategy, most were inspired to design new actions responding to changing circumstances such as helping young people manage financial indebtedness in some South and West countries or learning to appreciate cultural diversity and solidarity with migrants in some North and East countries.

The Council of Europe is another long-standing actor in the field of youth social inclusion on a wider European level. Social inclusion is one of the four priorities in the 'Agenda 2020' – the programme directing the current stage of its youth policy since 2008. The social inclusion strand puts special emphasis on:

- supporting the integration of excluded young people;
- promoting the recognition of non-formal education/learning, strengthening young people's opportunities to reconcile private and working life;
- ensuring young people's equal access to decent living conditions as well as to cultural, sporting and creative activities;
- encouraging intergenerational dialogue and solidarity.

Specific mechanisms for the implementation of the youth Agenda of CoE are international reviews of national youth policies, co-management of youth policy between governments and youth organisations; work with multipliers for the development of quality youth work and its recognition; as well as its unique institutions such as the European Youth Centres and the European Youth Foundation.

In conclusion, the vision for an inclusive growth out of the economic crisis in Europe has at its core a stronger youth policy with a holistic approach to the dynamic area of newly formed and persisting social vulnerabilities among youth vis-a-vis the demand for equal opportunities. The cooperation between the EU and CoE in the face of the Youth Partnership institutionalised in 1998 (2005) allows for effective management of evidence based youth policy relying upon the mutually enriching capacities of youth researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and young people themselves.

Related key documents

[Council of the European Union \(2013\) Council conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people](#)

European Commission (2013) EaSI. New EU umbrella programme for employment and social policy.
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7682&type=2&furtherPubs=yes>

[Council of Europe: Recommendation CM/Rec\(2013\)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on ensuring full inclusion of children and young persons with disabilities into society](#)

Communication from the Commission COM(2010) 2020 final EUROPE 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
<http://www.oeci.eu/Attachments%5CEurope2020.pdf>

[Council Resolution \(2010\) Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty](#)

European Commission (2010) European platform against poverty and social exclusion.
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=961>

[COM\(2009\) 200 final: An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering – A renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities](#)

[European Commission \(2009b\): EU Youth Report – 2009. Commission Staff Document accompanying the Communication "An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering." European Communities, Brussels.](#)

[Council of the European Union \(2009\): Council resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field \(2010-2018\). Brussels, 27.11.2009.](#)

[Final Declaration of the eighth Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for youth, 10/11 October 2008 in Kiev](#)

[Council of Europe \(2008b\): Recommendation \(2008\) 242 on the integration and participation of young people at local and regional level. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Strasbourg, 30.05.2008.](#)

[Council of the European Union \(2008\): Council resolution on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities. Brussels, 08.05.2008.](#)

[Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008](#)

[COM\(2005\) 94 final: Green Paper "Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations"](#)

[Recommendation on fighting severe poverty in towns: the role of local authorities Rec 154\(2004\)](#)

[Recommendation Towards full social inclusion of people with disabilities Rec 1592\(2003\)](#)

[European Commission \(2001\): A new impetus for European Youth. White Paper, Brussels, 21.11.2001.](#)

[CSEYHP Project: Combating Social Exclusion among Young Homeless Populations](#)

[Research and policy brief on ICT for inclusion of youth at risk: Using ICT to reengage and foster the socio-economic inclusion of youth at risk of social exclusion, marginalized young people and intermediaries working with them](#)

["Youth and Social Inclusion" 'Social inclusion of youth on the margins of society: more opportunities, better access, and higher solidarity'](#)

[T-Kit 8 – Social Inclusion](#)

[EACEA \(2013\) Youth Social Exclusion and Lessons from Youth Work. Evidence from literature and surveys.](#)

[World Bank \(2013\) Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity. Washington.
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16195/9781464800108.pdf?sequence=1>](#)

[Dagmar Kutsar and Helena Helve \(2012\) Policy review of the Youth Research Cluster on Social Inclusion](#)

[European Youth Forum \(2011\) Youth Employment in Europe. A Call for Change.
\[http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/11/YFJ_YouthEmployment_%5BISUU%5D.pdf\]\(http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/11/YFJ_YouthEmployment_%5BISUU%5D.pdf\)](#)

[Filipa Menezes \(2009\) Social Inclusion/Equal Opportunities, report for the Youth Partnership \(\[http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Better_understanding/Research/Social_Inclusion_Report.pdf\]\(http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Better_understanding/Research/Social_Inclusion_Report.pdf\)\)](#)

[Hugh Frazer and Eric Marlier \(2008\) Building a Stronger EU Social Inclusion Process. Analysis and recommendations of the EU Network of Independent national experts on social inclusion
\[www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net\]\(http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.net\)](#)

Social Protection Committee (2008) [Child Poverty and Well-Being in the EU. Current status and way forward](#)"

Helen Colley, Bryony Hoskins, Teodora Parveva, and Philipp Boetzelen (eds.) (2007) "[Social inclusion and young people: breaking down the barriers](#)";

Monica Călușer and Mariana Sălăgean (eds.) (2007) [Good governance in Multiethnic Communities : Conditions, Instruments, best practices, ways to achieve and measure good governance at the local level](#)

Main statistical data sources

Dashboard on EU youth indicators -

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_social_policy_equality/youth/indicators

European Union Labour Force Survey (LFS)

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/lfs>

European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/eu_silc

Research projects

INCLUD-ED: <http://www.ub.es/includ-ed/>(Strategies and good practice for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education)

EDUMIGROM: www.edumigrom.eu (Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe)

YIPPEE: <http://tcru.ioe.ac.uk/yippee/> (Young people from a public care background: pathways to education in Europe)

YOUNEX: <http://www.younex.unige.ch> (Youth, unemployment, and exclusion in Europe)

EUMARGINS: <http://www.iss.uio.no/forskning/eumargins/index.html> (On the Margins of the European Community - Young adult immigrants in seven European countries)

CSEYHP: www.movisie.nl/homelessyouth (Combating social exclusion among young homeless populations)