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ACP YPN Communication on The New EU Youth Strategy:



9 Recommendations for an Inclusive Youth Strategy

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Investing in ACP Youth & youth of ACP heritage in the EU's new Youth Strategy is crucial to build a sustainable future. ACP YPN fully supports the commitments outlined in the new EU Youth Strategy to empower all young people, including youth of ACP heritage living in the EU. Based on our extensive experience providing a platform for young people to play an active role in policy-making - in line with Article 26 of the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement - we have drawn up this Communication to present **9 key recommendations to EU-ACP policy-makers under the three main headings of the new EU Youth Strategy: Engage, Connect, Empower.**

I. Engage

- 1. Further investment in and cooperate with organisations directly involved with youth of ACP heritage.** Organisations already dealing with issues that concern ACP Youth and youth of ACP heritage can best provide support and advice in order to foster an inclusive and impactful decision-making processes. We recommend that in order to foster inclusive decision-making, **an annual intergenerational dialogue between young experts and decision makers should be held.**¹
- 2. Encourage an intercultural approach to integration of migrants through further cultural exchanges across the youth population, inclusive education and cultural sensitivity trainings.** It is necessary to emphasise the importance for inclusion to be a two-way process, which is based on the *exchange of knowledge* (as opposed to transfer of knowledge). Training should **promote, and support intercultural dialogue to foster mutual understanding and combat stigmatisation of migrants, minority and marginalised groups.** It should also be an integral part of “*a truly inclusive Erasmus+ programme*” through striving to reframe the narrative surrounding migrants and counter the damaging negative stereotypes regarding specific groups.^{2,3}
- 3. Provide an online portal for youth of various cultural backgrounds to be able to access opportunities to participate in decision-making.** ACP YPN initiated the Youth Forum of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assemblies. However, with the beginning of the post-Cotonou negotiations the future of the EU-ACP relations and the JPA in

¹ Joint paper by the ACP YPN and CBM International - recommendations for mainstreaming all youth - especially youth with disabilities - within the framework of EU-ACP relations; 20.03.2018.

² Priorities for the European Citizens Programme 2.3.

³ On the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values.

particular are unknown. ACP and EU youth need to be able to continue to access such spaces where they can be exposed to and involved in policy-making, and they should have a one-stop shop available to them to find these opportunities. Therefore, we encourage the promotion of the **representation of youth of ACP Heritage in political and public spaces**. Improved representation would encourage under-represented groups to participate in politics, and public life but also, tackle the negative and biased stereotypical image associated with those groups.

II. Connect

4. **Promote programmes for circular migration, youth mobility programmes between the EU and ACP countries by enhancing partnerships between academic institutions.** Barriers to mobility should be reduced to encourage intercultural, ideas and skills exchanges. We therefore recommend increasing international exchanges between all young people in ACP and EU, including youth with disabilities, e.g. **Erasmus+ and through scholarships**. In addition, to facilitate and promote mobility and integration, young people should not be professionally disadvantaged when presenting diplomas, degrees or expertise earned overseas. It is therefore crucial to **recognise the equivalence of diplomas, degrees, expertise and experience acquired in and outside ACP and EU countries**.
5. **Invest in ‘digital inclusion’ through access to technology, digital education, and improved connectivity in schools, universities and public spaces.** Youth from disadvantaged backgrounds and socially excluded youth have a higher risk of being digitally excluded which include having less access to technology and less developed skills, both on a global and a local level. **To avoid further structural exclusion and in tackling the SDG 4 and 10, governments need to ensure that youth are connected and invest in the development of digital skills** for youth ensuring digital inclusion. Digitalisation provides both benefits and challenges for our future. Due to its evolving nature, **the impact of the Internet and social media shapes political social and economic life**. It is therefore essential to anticipate changes in how digital spaces are used and equip youth to use it responsibly. Investing in access to technology, such as Open Access resources and providing quality training in higher education is a priority in providing a *holistic education*, which prepares youth for the future⁴.
6. **Investment in ‘inclusive research’ in cyber security, data protection and further knowledge exchange on the issue.** Technological development is moving faster than

⁴ Based on the expertise of Dana Shurmans and ACP YPN contribution on the Joint Consultation Paper issued by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. ACP YPN, Rue de Trone 130, Brussels, 1050, Belgium. Non-profit NGO: No. 0676938254
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policies that can protect users. For decisions makers to stay up to speed, further *research and international collaboration* is necessary. Understanding the issues young people might face as a specific target group is vital. We propose further **digital training opportunities to foster effective online education on usage and how to stay ‘safe’ online**. We suggest incorporating the recommendations from the **European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children**. The new generations will be the most exposed to Internet as digital natives. It is important to recognise that *the Internet can also be used to reinforce stereotypical norms, spread hate, racism or xenophobia, practice cyberbullying or to share fake news if there is not sufficient education and training*.

III. Empower

7. **Promote equal opportunity amongst young people and especially within the most disadvantaged groups.** SDG 10 of the Agenda 2030 addresses the role of governments in reducing inequality within and among countries. It aims to build capacities to identify and tackle poverty and exclusion. This includes **political inclusion** through the participation of minority and traditional underrepresented groups, **social and economic inclusion** through the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices⁵. In particular, we continue to **recommend the establishment ACP scholarships at the College of Europe** and further **enhanced representation through the selection criteria of youth from EU member states**.
8. **Provide and broaden alternatives to traditional education for accessing the labour market and job creation, through traineeships, apprenticeship, vocational training and incentives for youth-led start-ups.** SDG 8 of the Agenda 2030 addresses the promotion of development-oriented policies that support labour productivity, honourable job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation and the creation and growth of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. We therefore call for support to the **promotion youth entrepreneurship** through, for example, “*reducing barriers to entry for cross-border start-ups*” and “*simplifying registrations procedures for entrepreneurs from different regions (EU or ACP)*.”⁶
9. **Establish diverse, simplified and inclusive funding modalities to support organisations working on ACP youth affairs.** This promotes a pluralistic approach including ACP Youth and Diaspora Civil Society organisations and local Civil Society organisations.

⁵ <https://www.uclg.org/>

⁶ ACP YPN contribution on the Joint Consultation Paper issued by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

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