

Report Policy Dialogue with European Commissioner Iliana Ivanova 'European degree & learning mobility' – 19 April 2024

Introduction

The Policy Dialogue - organised within the frame of the European Youth Week 2024 - brought together 15 young people from 13 different countries in Europe and European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Iliana IVANOVA, to discuss the European degree and learning mobility. Pia AHRENKILDE HANSEN, Director-General DG EAC introduced the dialogue, while Biliana SIRAKOVA, EU Youth Coordinator was the moderator.

Summary of the event

Pia AHRENKILDE HANSEN welcomed the participants and set the stage for the Policy Dialogue. She recalled that 26 Policy Dialogues had been organised during the Year of Youth 2022 and highlighted their legacy as flagship projects of the Year.

Commissioner Iliana IVANOVA began by stressing the importance of including diverse youth perspectives into the work of the European Commission in order to tackle effectively the emerging complex challenges (in particular digital and green transition, competitiveness, strategic autonomy, and security). Commissioner IVANOVA urged the participants to share their views and feedback on the topics of the debate and more generally on youth participation in democratic life.

On learning mobility:

Participants discussed the accessibility, awareness, and challenges associated with European learning mobility initiatives. It was highlighted that non-formal education opportunities, such as the youth chapter in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, are primarily known among the 'usual' beneficiaries of the programmes and remain less accessible to others. To address this issue, suggestions were made to include comprehensive information on more non-formal education opportunities on the European Youth Portal. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of enhancing synergies between non-formal and formal education sectors to increase awareness and accessibility.

Participants emphasised the need for tailored support services and guidance, particularly for those from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, concerns were raised regarding the inadequacy of current funding levels for education and training.

Another important matter that participants stressed was the need for universities to provide adequate housing for exchange students and to streamline bureaucratic processes. Peer support systems and improved social inclusion initiatives were suggested.

The Commissioner acknowledged that the issues raised, particularly regarding the visibility and accessibility of programmes, are not unique to Erasmus+. She pledged to enhance the

European Youth Portal to make it more user-friendly and responsive to the needs of beneficiaries and users.

On the European degree:

The participants stressed the importance of ensuring that the European degree is accessible to all students.

Participants also advocated for the early introduction of transnational higher education concepts at the secondary education stage, in order to promote European values in high schools.

The need for swift action from Member States was also stressed, to pave the way for the European degree, addressing regulatory obstacles.

Furthermore, participants discussed the significance of the doctoral component of the European degree underscoring the notion that educational programmes should prioritise knowledge acquisition over labour market demands. Challenges related to differences in legal and practical terms were identified, with disparities arising from national-based degree titles and doctoral networks.

Participants emphasised the need to invest in innovation, both in terms of educational processes and social innovation. Language proficiency was also identified as a vital component.

The Commissioner emphasised the importance of realistic expectations and honesty from the outset to build and maintain trust. She highlighted the need to clearly define the European degree and manage expectations accordingly, to ensure its successful implementation. The Commissioner agreed that European degrees should be inclusive and underlined that the proposal for a blueprint is only the first step.

Finally, on the European elections:

Participants discussed strategies to encourage youth participation in European elections, drawing on personal experiences and practical recommendations. They emphasised the transformative impact of such experiences on themselves and their peers, highlighting the evolving attitudes among the younger generation towards civic engagement.

Key points for mobilising youth to vote and stay engaged between and beyond elections, were raised:

- Emphasising the relevance of political agendas to youth issues to encourage voter turnout;
- Addressing disparities in voting age across Member States to combat discrimination; and
- Establishing continuous engagement efforts post-election to sustain youth involvement.

Additionally, participants stressed the importance of ongoing participation and the need for practical measures such as facilitating voting from abroad and creating spaces for young people to voice their concerns.

Commissioner Ivanova expressed her gratitude for the insightful remarks and underscored the importance of taking them seriously and incorporating them into future initiatives. To this end the outcomes of every policy dialogue will be shared with the Commission Youth Network and respective policy departments to inform the policymaking process. She also stressed the importance of proactive involvement in upholding and promoting the founding values of the European Union, highlighting voting as a powerful tool in this endeavour.