

Position Paper

# European Youth Forum's proposals for the Council Recommendation on Minimum Income

The European Youth Forum welcomes the commitment of the Commission to propose a Council Recommendation on minimum income for adoption in 2022, to further implement Principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

For the European Youth Forum, minimum income - and in a broader way, access to social protection - is a **key issue for young people across Europe**. Young people are among the most at risk of poverty in our societies and the Covid-19 pandemic has only worsened the situation to the point of a possible “pandemic scar”.

The long-term effects of the disruption of young people’s education and transition to work could reduce their possibilities to exercise their rights, like accessing adequate and enabling minimum income schemes<sup>1</sup>.

## Minimum income schemes and young people

The provision of social protection is a **cornerstone of the European social model**. Social protection provides vital support for people who lack adequate sources of income and financial security. However, **age-based discrimination prevents young people from being fully supported by these systems**. Young people are often not eligible for unemployment benefits because of their lack of previous employment. Hence, they should be eligible for minimum income schemes.

However, in practice they are excluded from these schemes in countries where there are minimum age requirements, or they receive reduced support simply because of their age. As an example, in the Netherlands, young people can receive support from the State but the amount varies a lot depending on their age: in 2020, people over 21 years-old (without children) would receive 1052 euros, compared to 260 euros for young people under 21 years-old. In France, minimum income (RSA) is available to anyone over 25 years old - it is only accessible for people under 24 years old if they are parents or can attest they worked for at least 2 years (internships not included).

Often young people also receive less support if they are living at home with their parents, making them more dependent on their families and restricting their possibility to transition to an independent life (e.g living on their own, starting a family...). Such age-based discrimination prevents many young people from accessing minimum income schemes and, therefore, decent living conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Youth unemployment soared during the pandemic, from 14.9% to 17.1% in early 2021 in the EU. Youth unemployment rates have mainly gone back to pre-crisis levels in OECD crisis which are still higher than the rest of the population. *European Youth Forum “Beyond Lockdown: the pandemic scar on young people” (June 2021)* - OECD *“Delivering for youth: how governments can put young people at the center of the recovery” (March 2022)*.

## Our demands for the upcoming Council Recommendation

With this Recommendation the European Youth Forum, representing more than 100 youth organisations and being the voice of young people in Europe, calls on the Commission and the Council to work together to ensure an ambitious Council Recommendation that respects young people's fundamental rights, notably:

- the right to **adequate and enabling social protection**, and
- the right to **live free from discrimination**, including ageism.

As a way to ensure a more youth friendly, impactful and meaningful policy framework, we ask the Commission and Council to take into account our following recommendations:

- Have a rights-based approach and tackle ageism and age-based discrimination by **removing age barriers** and ensuring **equal access** to minimum incomes schemes to everyone without discrimination;
- **Improve the outreach** to all young people who could benefit from those schemes, especially those coming from marginalised backgrounds, by ensuring their specific needs and realities are taken into account in the policy-making and that relevant information on the schemes and benefits is shared;
- **Ensure the adequacy** of minimum income schemes by setting minimum income to at least the level of the **national at-risk-of-poverty threshold**, like in Ireland and the Netherlands for example (see [here](#));
- **Ensure the best possible use** of minimum income schemes by people by:
  - Tackling the high non-take-up by granting minimum income benefits proactively, ideally automatically;
  - Not implementing sanctions that would lead to cuts in the minimum income support;

- Guaranteeing a rapid system: minimum income schemes should react quickly to any change of the beneficiary's situation that could impact them;
- Allowing the possibility to combine the MI with other benefits, such as disability benefits for example.
- **Guarantee concrete follow-up** of the MI schemes' implementation by the Member States by setting up strong monitoring mechanisms;
- **Demand further action be taken**, ideally a **Directive** on Adequate Minimum income, to set common standards across the European Union and as part of the recovery from the pandemic;
- **Include young people and youth organisations**, as well as broader civil society, in all decision-making processes related to minimum income schemes, including regarding their implementation at national level;



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