

2012-11 PAPER RIGHTS/REAL RIGHTS: *Improving the Exercise of Social Rights by Youth*

Rapid societal changes have led our country to focus on the issue of the position of young people in our social welfare system. In the period after the Second World War, youth, understood as the period between the end of mandatory schooling and entry into the workforce, was short-lived. Today, career paths are becoming less and less certain for young people. The number of years spent in education has increased, and entry into the labour market occurs later and is often more difficult, particularly for young people without qualifications. In this new era, young people may find themselves in a wide variety of situations, which are not sufficiently taken into account in our social welfare system, as the length of this period and the changes that take place vary between individuals. As a result, it has become more difficult for young people to achieve independence.

Timely measures have been introduced to deal with these changes: raising the age limit for family benefits and linking them to household income, widening the categories of people who have access to housing allowances etc. To meet the need for qualifications, which have become essential for access to the labour market, higher education and professional training courses have grown dramatically. Finally, numerous ad hoc arrangements for training and work placements to respond to youth unemployment have been put in place.

According to the OECD figures for 2010, 13.1% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are not in education, training or employment (NEET)

However, in spite of these efforts, results have been patchy to say the least. Reports are published one after the other, with recurrent findings, which tend to worsen in the crisis. Today, young people are exposed to the precarious nature of the labour market to a greater extent than older generations and are more vulnerable to unemployment. Social inequalities between young people have a tendency to deepen depending on their social background and the area where they live, and their relative

standard of living tends to decline in comparison with that of previous generations.

In 2012, 24% of women and 21% of men between the ages of 18 and 24 are living below the poverty line - or one in five young people

While the impact of these social changes has often been discussed, access to social welfare for young people is one of the aspects of the problem that has received little attention. The Economic, Social and Environmental Council has therefore decided to address this issue. Instead of limiting our discussion to the concept of social welfare itself, which cover health, family, old age etc., this assembly has chosen to address the larger issue of "social rights", which include access to decent housing, courses leading to qualification and stable employment.

One in six young people have no additional health cover

The Committee decided to reflect on the best ways of ensuring that young people can exercise their rights during this period, which is often marred by ruptures. Various changes in entitlements and age based criteria effectively preclude them from fully accessing the general law. To that end, the Council has chosen to address this issue from the point of view of a non exercise of rights, which is to say the fact that a person fails to access social entitlements or services to which they should be entitled. While this is a new perspective, which is difficult to analyse due to the lack of data in the area, it is important in terms of identifying concrete measures to optimise young people's access to their social rights, in terms of information, support, simplification of the law etc.

In the context of France's high birth rate and with 18.4% of the population (12 million people) between the ages of 15 to 29, according to Insee, this will become a major issue in the years to come.



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His role at the ESEC :

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For the Economic, Social and Environmental Council,
the improvement of access for young people to social rights must be among the major objectives of a
 much more ambitious public policy for integrating young people into society,
 through the provision of training and support for access to employment.
Equality of access of all to social rights must contribute to achieving these objectives.
Young people must be a political priority.
They must not be perceived as a burden,
but rather as an investment in our society, both for now and for the future.

SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN ACCESSING THEIR SOCIAL RIGHTS

- **by developing** education on these rights through educational institutions, associations, and young people in civic service;
- **by structuring** public information and support services through general information points and a national online training and information service to develop social mediation and «extra mural» action;
- **by strengthening** local projects by promoting their role beyond the area of integration into the labour market, in the provision of information and advice, by developing centres for advice on legal and social welfare matters, and supporting CROUS (Centres régionaux des œuvres universitaires et scolaires – Regional Student Welfare Centres) in its role as the main point of contact for students;
- **by integrating** the theme of the non-exercise of rights into professional training.

RENEWING NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF YOUTH POLICIES

- **by appointing** a High-Commissioner for Youth, working with the Prime Minister, with responsibility for articulating public policy for youth;
- **by including** access to social rights as an item on the agenda of the Association of French Regions to designate regions as the frontrunners in providing support for young people in their careers.

INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN ESTABLISHING, IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING YOUTH POLICY

- **by setting up** a Advisory Council for Youth Policy. This Council could serve as a place for the key players in youth policy to study and work together, and would be given the responsibility of proposing changes to public policy;
- **by designating** representatives for student organisations and youth movements in regional Economic, Social and Environmental Councils.

SAFEGUARDING THE PATH TO THE LABOUR MARKET

- **by improving** the rate of health cover and reallocating tax credits for youth development funds in order to evaluate and promote responses to the non-exercise of young people's rights;
- **by giving** the CMU fund (universal health insurance) the responsibility of analysing the barriers to individual requests for CMU and supplementary CMU for young people aged 18 to 25. In light of their conclusions, simplifications to the regulatory regime could be proposed and the chèque santé (assistance with complementary health cover) could be universalised. Allocated on the basis of the means of the claimant, this cheque provides partial cover of the cost of complementary health insurance;
- **by using** the Student Social Security File (DPE) when applying for supplementary CMU/ACS (Aide à l'acquisition d'une complémentaire santé – Assistance with taking out additional health care);
- **by safeguarding** housing rights through the development of a common mandatory system of solidarity deposits; strengthening accommodation structures and developing information tools and support;
- **by ensuring** that short term employment counts towards pension entitlements for young people.

REDEPLOYING SOCIAL WELFARE PAYMENTS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

- **by starting** from scratch on the provisions to abandon the effective ones and abandon the others;
- **by boosting** funding for the Labour Market Integration Contract (CIVIS) in order to ensure that all beneficiaries receive the payment prescribed by law. The ESEC also recommends restoring the amount of the payment to previous levels;
- **by relaxing** the conditions of access to the RSA (revenue de solidarité active – income support) for young people under 25 who have worked;
- **by establishing** a right to qualification and education for all, including a grant. The new Youth Policy Council would have responsibility for studying the details, particularly in terms of means testing based on family income and proposing methods of funding.