



European Economic
and Social Committee
Civil Society Organisations' Group

Young people and the labour market in the context of the 2022 European Year of Youth and the 2023 European Year of Skills

Debate with Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner responsible for Jobs and Social Rights

Speech by Civil Society Organisations' Group President Séamus Boland

EESC plenary session, 15 December 2022

Dear Commissioner, dear colleagues,

As you can see, I am not among the Committee's youngest Members, but I still wanted to speak at this debate for **two reasons**. **Firstly**, because the topic of youth is **very close to my heart**, having worked in youth affairs at the beginning of my career. **Secondly**, because with the crucial help of our Members representing the youth sector, the **Civil Society Organisations' Group** took the **lead** on the topic. The **EESC Opinion** on a **European Youth Test** was a Group III initiative. And of course, we were strong supporters of the creation of the **coordination group for the European Year of Youth**, which has drafted the **resolution** that we have before us today. And I would like to say publicly that I **fully support** this **resolution**, which is both **ambitious** and **practical**.

Personally, I believe that we are at a turning point in relation to youth as political actors:

- **1966** is a date known to most, as the year in which young people **demanded to be recognised as actors in their own right**;
- I find the mood of this decade to be quite **similar**;
- We may not be living through the **violence** of sixty years ago, but I do see **parallels**;
- There is the same **anger** and **determination** by young people to be **heard**;
- To have a **role in shaping** and **implementing the decisions** that will **affect their future**;
- They are **leading**, at times **shaming** us oldies into action;
- The most obvious recent example being their **engagement on Climate Change**.

Indeed, a **quotation** from the author **George Bernard Shaw** comes to mind (and I quote): "*Youth, which is forgiven everything, forgives itself nothing. Age, which forgives itself everything, is forgiven nothing*".

Dear Commissioner, I would like to draw your attention to **two elements** which are highlighted in the **resolution** and **Information Report** on young people in the labour market:

- **Firstly**, the **necessity for youth mainstreaming**;
- Which will require the development of a **common approach** towards structured and meaningful youth engagement **by all EU Institutions**;

- In this context, the **EESC's has a pivotal role to play in bridging the gap** between policy-makers, youth organisations and young people;
- **Secondly**, I would like to stress the links between the **equal treatment of young people in the labour market** and the **importance of civic and democratic participation by young people**;
- Ultimately, the **labour market** is a place of **inter-generational solidarity**, where individuals feel that they **contribute to society** at large;
- **Young people must have a voice in the labour market** as ultimately, **politics and policies are rooted in our societies**;
- Both the **Commission** and the **EESC have an important role in this process**.

Thank you for your attention.