

Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Raffaele Fitto, Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms

Title of Youth Policy Dialogue “Youth Policy Dialogue with Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms Raffaele Fitto

Date: 7 March 2025

Location: Paradisi Institute of Secondary Education, Vignola (Mo), Italy

Introduction

Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms, Raffaele Fitto, held a Youth Policy Dialogue at the Paradisi Institute of Secondary Education in Vignola, Italy, on 7 March 2025, where EVP Fitto engaged in a vibrant exchange with the students of the school, discussing EU values, the future of young people and the impact of Cohesion Policy on everyday life.

The initiative was sparked by a handwritten letter the students sent to EVP Fitto last Christmas, in which they shared their hopes and vision for Europe. Deeply moved by their message, the Vice-President chose to visit their school to continue the conversation in person – recognising the importance of meeting young citizens where their ideas were born, understanding the context and environment from which their concerns emerged.

Joined by Vignola's Mayor Emilia Muratori and the President of the Emilia-Romagna Region, the Dialogue underscored the importance of listening to young people and promoting a structured, inclusive debate on the future of the EU.

Summary of the Youth Policy Dialogue (In person-meeting)

The Youth Policy Dialogue at Istituto "A. Paradisi" in Vignola unfolded within a rich and participatory programme that balanced institutional aspects with student engagement. The event allowed Executive Vice-President Raffaele Fitto to hold a structured yet dynamic exchange with students, embedded in a broader educational and civic celebration of Europe.

The morning opened with greetings from Claudia Polo, Head of the School, and Emilia Muratori, Mayor of Vignola; both underlined the importance of strengthening ties between education, local communities, and European institutions.

This was followed by a symbolic musical moment: a performance of the Ode to Joy, the official anthem of the European Union, and Il Canto degli Italiani, the national anthem of Italy, played as a piano duet by two students — highlighting unity in diversity.

The core of the event revolved around student presentations under the theme "L'Europa a scuola: progetti, esperienze e domande" (Europe at school: projects, experiences and questions).

The students, representing three classes, shared insights on their engagement with EU institutions and values. Additional presentations showcased peer-to-peer initiatives (PEER per l'Europa), simulation activities (Processo all'Europa), and testimonies from participants in Erasmus+ mobility projects. These

contributions illustrated the tangible ways in which EU policies shape educational and personal development pathways for young people.

During the Dialogue, Executive Vice-President Fitto commenced highlighted the value of listening to the younger generation, praising their preparation, curiosity, and sense of responsibility. The discussion adopted an interactive and informal format, with students taking the floor one by one to share questions and comments directly with the Executive Vice-President. The atmosphere was open and respectful, with strong engagement and well-prepared interventions from the students. The physical setting—a school hall arranged to promote visibility and closeness between participants—reinforced the sense of shared space and active citizenship.

The Dialogue was characterised by a vibrant group dynamic: students addressed not only institutional themes, such as the future of the EU and the role of Cohesion Policy, but also raised concerns related to education, sustainability, and social inclusion. Executive Vice-President Fitto answered the questions, acknowledging the relevance of their reflections and reaffirming the Commission's commitment to youth participation in policymaking. He encouraged the students to continue engaging with European institutions, underlining that their voices are not only welcome but necessary for shaping the Union's future.

The session concluded on a hopeful and emotional note, a musical interlude—"Una canzone per la pace", again performed by two students on the piano—served as a symbolic closure to the Dialogue, reinforcing the shared commitment to peace and unity.

The structure of the programme offered multiple touchpoints for expression, exchange, and visibility—making the Dialogue a meaningful, student-centred event aligned with the European Commission's objectives for youth engagement.

Topic(s) of discussion

The Youth Policy Dialogue in Vignola addressed several interrelated themes, all centred around the role of young people in shaping the European Union and the concrete impact of EU policies on their lives. The conversation unfolded organically through student interventions, thematic presentations, and an open Q&A with Executive Vice-President Raffaele Fitto.

1. European Values and Democratic Engagement

A core focus of the Dialogue was the importance of European values: students voiced their belief in a Europe without barriers and reflected on how these values are instilled through education and mobility experiences. Executive Vice-President Fitto echoed their concerns, stressing the need to reinforce these principles, particularly among younger generations. He acknowledged that structured and consistent dialogue with youth is essential for ensuring that the EU remains responsive, democratic, and future-oriented.

2. Everyday Impact of EU Policies and Programmes

Participants explored the relevance of the EU in their personal and educational paths, particularly through programmes such as Erasmus+. Students shared powerful testimonies on how international exchanges can broaden their horizons and strengthen their European identity. The Commissioner highlighted these opportunities as key instruments of cohesion, inclusion, and mutual understanding across the continent, affirming the Commission's continued support for mobility and youth participation programmes.

3. Cohesion Policy and Regional Development

The Dialogue also included a focused discussion on Cohesion Policy and how it contributes to local development, especially in less advantaged areas. Executive Vice-President Fitto presented the role of Cohesion Policy in reducing regional disparities and promoting equal opportunities, connecting it to the long-term objectives of economic, social, and territorial cohesion. He underlined that all regions benefit directly and indirectly from these investments, which are designed not only to build infrastructure but to empower communities.

4. Participatory Citizenship and Institutional Dialogue

A particularly interesting trait of the exchange was the story behind the Dialogue itself: it was initiated by a handwritten letter sent by students to the Commissioner during the 2024 holiday season. This personal gesture, which led to the organisation of the event, became a symbol of proactive citizenship and meaningful institutional engagement. Fitto praised the initiative, noting: "The students' letter made clear their sense of purpose and their desire to be heard."

Throughout the Dialogue, the Commissioner reaffirmed the European Commission's commitment to involving youth in policy design and implementation. He encouraged students to remain active participants in public life, to stay informed, and to seek opportunities to contribute to a better Europe. The exchange also resonated with the broader institutional priorities set out in President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines, particularly the ambition to create a Union that empowers and listens to its youth.

Annex

In this section you may include links to web streams, videoclips and news articles (if any related to the coverage of the event), etc.

- 1) Video interview with the local tv from Modena www.tvqui.it
- 2) Article on Gazzetta di Modena: the Italian PM Giorgia Meloni has sent a letter to the school: [Giorgia Meloni, lettera agli studenti del Paradisi di Vignola per la visita di Raffaele Fitto: il suo messaggio - Gazzetta di Modena](#)
- 3) Article on Il Resto del Carlino: [L'Europa 'in classe'. Fitto e lettera di Meloni: "La pace va coniugata con la libertà di tutti"](#)

- 4) Article on La Pressa: [Vignola, al Paradisi il vicepresidente Commissione europea Fitto - Politica - LaPressa.it](#)
- 5) Article: [Vignola al Paradisi il Vicepresidente Commissione Europea Fitto - Vignola](#)