Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioner Piotr Serafin, Responsible for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration

Future EU priorities - what should the European Union get involved in? The youth perspective

18 February 2025

European Commission Representation in Poland, Warsaw

Introduction

The Youth Policy Dialogue of Commissioner Serafin took place in the context of the beginning of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, on the same day as the informal General Council in Warsaw, that Commissioner also took part in.

The topic *'Future EU priorities - what should the European Union get involved in? The youth perspective'* was aimed to be large enough to cover various interests of the youth, at the same time to look for synergies with the ongoing discussions on the shape of the next EU budget. Giving the voice on this topic to the youth, without going too much into technical details of the next MFF proposal – that could be too abstract for this audience.

The event brought together 25 young Europeans, most of them being Polish but some also from Ukraine and Armenia. They were students from Warsaw universities and few of them were young graduates.

Topics of Discussion

The meeting was opened by Director of the EC Representation in Poland Katarzyna Smyk, who reminded the idea behind the Youth Policy Dialogues, the context of the newly established Commission and ongoing Poland's presidency in the EU Council. She invited the participants not to narrow down the discussion to only budgetary issues that are the chief responsibility of Commissioner Serafin, but also to also to think what kind of policies should be financed by the EU and more broadly what kind of Union we want to develop.

Then the Commissioner started by making a link to his own student's times in Warsaw, reminded tipping points on Poland's way to be prosperous and secure in the EU and the NATO and then stressed how serious the historical context we live in with "tectonic geopolitical shifts" notably in trans-Atlantic relations.

Then the floor was given to the youth and the main topics they raised were the following:

1. **European financing for the European defence projects** – is it possible at all, could it be based on the NGEU model, is there a risk of those mechanisms based on common debts being overused in the future? The Commissioner pointed at the recent announcement of the Commission's President that military spending would be exempt from the allowed deficit levels. How the decisions on potential EU

spending for defence and security would be agreed on the Member States level and will they require their unanimous decision.

2. **Deregulation** – the idea is gaining ground, but what areas could be covered? The Commissioner referred to the first omnibus proposal and the areas it covers and assured other proposals in this vein will follow. He also gave an example of reporting extensive obligations for entrepreneurs who would like to benefit from EU funds through national promotional banks – but were complaining that these obligations are so heavy that they discourage them as potential beneficiaries. The Commissioner expressed the intention of the Commission to look for simplification in the next MFF.
3. **EU enlargement and its budget dimension** – will the next MFF include budget for the potential EU new members, notably Ukraine? Commissioner Serafin elaborated on how important the role in stabilisation and modernisation of the candidate countries plays in the enlargement process. Yet, he underlined that the Commission's MFF proposal, which is to be revealed in the second half of this year, should not predetermine the enlargement policy. Once an enlargement happens during any MFF the EU has means to adjust its budget, as it was the case in the past.
4. **Migration** – how the EU wants to tackle the problem of massive inflow of migrants? The Commissioner noted that there is a certain shift in the EU in thinking about this issue. Currently, assuring effective returns of people who have not obtained the right to stay legally in the EU emerges as a priority.
5. **Common Agriculture Policy** – the Commissioner debunked a fake news of the day, produced by one of marginal local internet portals, that as of 2028 the EU would withdraw from financing the agriculture policy. He clearly stated it was not true.
6. **Assessment of the Polish Presidency in the EU Council** – Commissioner Serafin made it clear it is not his role to assess the presidency, but he considered making the security its leitmotif a right choice.
7. **Youth involvement in the EU Dialogue** – one of the participants complained about the youth policy in Poland not having enough official recognition by national laws and institutions. That hampers participation of Polish youth also in EU funded programmes. The Commissioner noted that although the problem looks as a national competence, there is nothing wrong in bringing it to the Commission and he will explore the possibilities on how to bring it to the attention of Polish authorities.
8. **EU Careers** – shortly before the end of the meetings one of the young participants touched upon the topic of traineeships and employment in the EU institutions, which sparked interest of the others. The Commissioner noticed there is relatively low number of EU officials from Poland, which is not desirable. He encouraged the participants to take practical steps starting by applying to the Blue Book traineeship programme.

Conclusions

The meeting was an opportunity to address various pressing themes within the EU, from budgetary allocations to strategic priorities and youth engagement. The emphasis on unity, strategic investments, and tackling administrative burdens were key takeaways. The Polish presidency's focus on security reflects current global priorities, requiring coordinated efforts across member states.