

## 2025 State of the Union address - 4 reflections

In her [State of the Union address](#) on 10 September, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, reflected on the EU's achievements over the last year and shared its priorities for the year ahead.

Von der Leyen called for "a free and independent Europe" in times of geopolitical and political instability.

Building on President von der Leyen's call for a stronger Union rooted in unity and solidarity we believe that **youth and social work play a vital role in making this vision a reality.**

Here are our four big takeaways for the youth and social work sector:

### 1. Anti-poverty efforts must tackle intergenerational poverty

We welcome the President's emphasis on a strong anti-poverty plan. But to succeed, the Anti-Poverty Strategy must **address systemic, intergenerational disadvantage** through long-term, cross-sectoral investment in housing, education, healthcare, and social work.

### 2. Affordable housing is a pressing social justice issue for youth

The first European Affordable Housing Plan responds to a crisis that disproportionately affects young people. Too many cannot afford a place to live, driving insecurity and exclusion. **Housing must be connected with broader social inclusion measures.**

### 3. Protecting children and young people online requires ambition

The Commission's commitment to tackling online harms is encouraging. Strong EU measures are urgently needed to protect young people from harmful algorithms, online bullying, and addictive design features. But **protection must go hand in hand with empowering young**

**people's voices and equipping parents, educators, and youth workers** with the tools to create safe and inclusive digital spaces.

#### 4. Quality jobs and skills must include the social field

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The announcement of a **Quality Jobs Act** and new skills initiatives is a step forward. Yet, the social, care and youth work sectors are too often overlooked. To ensure fairness, the EU must also **invest in decent work and skills development in the social sector**, which is crucial for reducing poverty and supporting young people furthest from opportunity.

September 2025

#### About the YES Forum

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Established in 2002, the YES Forum is a European network of national youth and social work organisations. We strive for a Europe where every young person, regardless of their background, has the skills and support they need to reach their full potential. We aim to influence relevant EU legislative, political, and funding processes while supporting our member organisations to use policies and funding to benefit disadvantaged young people in EU member states. Our work is rooted in a commitment to ensuring that youth and social policies are prioritised within the European Pillar of Social Rights, contributing to a fairer and more inclusive Europe.