

Proposals to the Informal EPSCO Council Horsens, Denmark, April 23-25, 2012

For the sustainable inclusion of youth in education, society and employment and the effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee

1. Establish an inclusive education system that provides for the specific requirements of today's diverse youth and guarantees equal access to quality education and training without distinction of cultural and social origin.

How?

- a. **Adopt the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships.** Presented by the European Youth Forum this charter is a set of basic quality principles to ensure that internships and apprenticeships become a valuable and quality experience across Europe and beyond. Concrete proposals include existence of a written and legally binding contract outlining the length, remuneration of the internship, a description of learning objectives and tasks to be attached to the contract and decent remuneration for work carried out additional to the requirements outlined in the internship or apprenticeship contract, including compensation for overtime.¹
- b. **Recognise officially and validate "hard" and "soft" skills and competences gained through non-formal and informal education** i.e. in social relationships, in youth work and volunteering - that are important for the employability of young people, for our society and for a knowledge-based, innovative economy.
- c. **Adopt the Article 19 anti-discrimination Directive blocked for the last four years in the council.** Tackling discrimination within the labour market cannot be achieved without tackling it outside the labour market, particularly in access to resources and services including education and training. This should include ensuring equal and universal access to and availability of quality education for all children and concerns public education and training measures, lifelong learning, qualification and skills upgrading and retraining. Any education and training opportunities scheme should be accompanied by a scholarship to cover minimum expenses and/or reimbursement of incurred costs, including also extra costs incurred by youth with disabilities.
- d. **Reform education systems to promote social mobility and reduce early school leaving.** Teacher training and support should equip teachers with the necessary skills to respect and respond to the diversity of children and young people's backgrounds, learning styles, interests and capabilities.
- e. **Improve the transition from schools and training systems to the labour market** - in close coordination between educational establishments,

¹ Qualityinternships.eu - This document has been elaborated by a broad number of experts and stakeholders and it is available online with the aim of gathering further support and commitment.

governments, educational and social service providers and social partners - by setting up:

- job counselling centres providing personalised support, already on campuses and within schools;
- synergies between practical activities, workplace learning and classroom work;
- job placements.

Why?

- **One out of six young people does not finish secondary education, and early school and university leavers are highly susceptible to social exclusion and marginalisation**, according to the European Youth Forum. Additionally, students whose parents have a low level of education or a low socio-economic status are more likely to leave school early.
- **Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are a higher risk of dropping out of school.** According to the Commission, more than 30% of children living in poverty have parents who did not complete a secondary education (against 16% for all children), and only 16% of children living in poverty have a parent who has completed higher education². In addition, a high proportion of students with disabilities do not reach third level education.
- **Internship outside formal education is frequently replacing quality employment for young people.** The lack of clear quality guidelines undermines the main purpose of internships and apprenticeships as educational opportunities that give practical skills to young people and help avoid the skills mismatch. This trend prevents young people in Europe and in other regions of the world from earning a decent wage, and from having access to social security and health insurance.
- **Exclusion of Roma children from formal schooling, often as a result of direct or indirect discrimination, is reported in several EU member states.** In Poland more than 50% of Roma children do not attend school.³ In countries such as Hungary, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, Roma children are excluded from mainstream education and are over-represented in alternative systems.⁴ In central and eastern Europe the enrolment rate in primary school for Roma girls is 64% compared to 96% in non-Roma communities with a similar socio-economic situation⁵.
- **In many European countries, young undocumented migrants are denied access to internships and vocational training in contradiction with the Fundamental Rights Charter**, even when it is an integral part of their compulsory education and prevents them from completing their studies. Denying undocumented youth access to some forms of education is discriminatory and limits their skill development and opportunities on the labour market in Europe or elsewhere. Undocumented pupils are also often denied formal certification of their studies, which further restricts their opportunities to continued education and work, and can lead to early school leaving.

² Thematic study on policy measures concerning child poverty, European Commission, 2008.

³ ECRI, 2010.

⁴ Council of Europe 2012; Czech School Inspection Thematic Report 2012.

⁵ UNICEF 2010: 196.

2. Ensure that all young people - especially those who are neither in employment, nor education and training - have appropriate means to be socially included.

How?

- a. **Ensure access to social security schemes**, such as adequate minimum income schemes, already approved by the European Parliament, as a fundamental step that prevents young people from being at risk of poverty, without eligibility criteria linked to previous working periods. To this end, fully implement key provisions included in the Revised European Social Charter and relating to the right to social security and decent working conditions, include fair remuneration.
- b. **Ensure access to affordable, high-quality services for young people** to support them in bridging social and labour market transition phases and to avoid social exclusion. For example, provide personalised job counselling and other types of counselling, according to needs.
- c. **Build enough units of affordable rental housing across all territories and increase the supply especially in booming regions and university towns where there is an outstanding concentration of young people.** Empty houses, vacant office spaces and empty dwellings can be converted into housing accommodation for young people.
- d. **Support mediation services between young people and their families.** Early intervention allows avoiding young people leaving home and thus being outside any education or training system. Preventing youth homelessness by strengthening the relationships between young people and their families helps tackling the problem of young people being socially excluded.

Why?

- **In 2010, young adults not in employment nor in any education or training reached 7.5 million people**, putting them at risk of exclusion from the labour market as they gain neither work experience nor skills useful to obtain employment⁶.
- **The level of in-work poverty among young people in the EU is 9%**⁷. These people work for low salaries, with little social protection and in precarious working contracts. This situation does not allow these people to lift themselves out of poverty.
- **High skills are no guarantee for obtaining a quality job.** The number of Portuguese graduates, who are unemployed or underemployed, for example, rises every year⁸.
- **Social protection is a prerequisite** for allowing people to alternate in a more flexible way between periods of employment and unemployment, training and re-skilling.
- **According to the ILO, first-time job seekers are usually not covered by unemployment benefits.** Young unemployed women and men who have

⁶ Eurofound (2011), [Young people and NEETs in Europe: first findings](#).

⁷ Eurofound (2010), [Working Poor in Europe](#).

⁸ Instituto Nacional de Estatísticas, Portugal.

some work experience are less likely to be eligible for statutory unemployment benefits as compared to older workers. Young women are less likely to access unemployment benefits than young men because of the gendered employment patterns of young people.⁹

- **Young people are increasingly squeezed out of the housing market;** affordable housing in both the private and social rented sector is in short supply and buying a home is out of reach of many. Finding accessible housing for persons with disabilities is an increased challenge as costs of adaptations are high, and other tenants rarely accept to share the costs to adapt common areas. Delayed adulthood as a social phenomenon produced by housing conditions, is considered a problem that employment and social policies should take seriously; in terms of the potential negative effects it can have on family life, labour market mobility and on the economy.

⁹ report for the ILC, 2012.

3. Ensure that 75% of young people available on the labour market are employed, in line with the employment target and guidelines of the Europe 2020 strategy.

How?

- a. **A tailored Youth Guarantee for all**, as foreseen by the Europe 2020 Youth on the Move Flagship Initiative together with a quality framework that goes beyond providing a first job or traineeship. Personalised career counselling – taking into account the needs of specific groups and guidance should be available to help finding a tailored solution to unemployment. Creating a youth guarantee without a strong anti-discrimination and inclusion focus bears certain risks. Too often we have seen that special programmes designed for inclusion to the labour market have not established real integration in society because they took a form of special workplaces or separate trainings programmes. Such approaches still exclude young people from actually participating in society and consequently form a pseudo-labour market that does not prepare them for the regular labour market.
- b. **Elaborate the Youth Guarantee and a further European Youth Employment Strategy in cooperation with all different stakeholders** - including young people and their representative organisations, civil society organisations and social partners - and provide adequate financial support for its implementation to accompany the youth employment target and to ensure that no young person is out of the labour market, nor education or training, for longer than four months.
- c. **Actively look for good practices that can be transposed into youth employment policy**, such as the "Youth social guarantee" in Finland. It applies to young unemployed people under the age of 25. It mandates that within three months from the start of unemployment, a young person is offered a job, an educational opportunity, or some other measure to improve their employability. Actions are based on a personalised employment plan. The system facilitates early intervention, emphasises regional equality, and is concrete and goal-oriented. The evaluation of the programme showed that it had accelerated the pace in which personalised plans were drawn, and that it had decreased unemployment.
- d. **Implement an 'Individual Placement and Support Approach' for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups into the labour market**, such as the 'place and train' method that has been developed specifically for young people that experienced severe mental health problems. It combines health care services, educational and social services that aim to place young people with psychosocial disabilities on the regular labour market. The young person is therefore placed directly within a regular work environment or vocational setting with individualised and intensive support to accessing competitive, paid employment followed by time-unlimited in-work support. The results show the young people can get and retain paid employment, which implies there are no strains on the disability benefit funds. This good practise has been used and evaluated in the United Kingdom, and already has gone through excessive evaluations in Australia, Canada, China and the United States. It could be applied mutatis mutandis to other groups of young people.¹⁰

¹⁰ Rinaldi et al. (2004), Bacon and Grove (2010), Rinaldi et al. (2010).

- e. **Invest in the creation of and access to sustainable and quality jobs for young people** in line with Guideline 7 of the Integrated Guidelines¹¹ and apply it to all EU legislative proposals. Ensure that job quality comprises living wages, working conditions, job security, employment protection, social protection and health insurance, and reconciliation between private and professional life, among others for women as well as for men.
- f. **Ensure sustainable funding for employment in the social and health care sector**, provide adequate information on employment opportunities and improve salaries and working conditions in the sector to create and promote jobs in this sector.
- g. **Encourage youth entrepreneurship policies and create stable, enabling, and supportive environments through which youth can enter the field of entrepreneurship** to allow young people to consider entrepreneurship as a real option on how to be active on the labour market. This requires access to personalised counselling services accompanying young people and helping them to be self-employed in a sustainable way and paying special attention to the young entrepreneurs' income, social protection, health insurance, and the ability to reconcile work and family life.
- h. **Look into the role of discrimination** (stereotypes, prejudices) at recruitment stage but also in all forms of vocational & education training (e.g. that could explain lower participation rates of young people with ethnic/migrant background in apprenticeship schemes in AT and DE) as a strong determinant for high youth unemployment in some specific territories (e.g. suburbs, overseas departments, ...) – including multiple barriers such as origin, family names and place of residence.
- i. **Undertake an in-depth investigation of the regional/local disparities of youth unemployment rates**, i.e. looking behind the national average rates that are hiding appalling situations.

Why?

- **Youth unemployment has currently reached an average of 22.4% in EU countries, meaning that 5.5 million of young persons do not have a job.**¹² It rose to almost 50% in Spain and Greece and exceeds 30% in Slovakia, Italy, and Portugal.
- **Precarious contracts are on the increase while decent work and quality employment are a precondition for fair, sustainable and inclusive growth.** According to the Commission, in several EU countries a large share of hiring takes place via temporary contracts, mainly involving young workers. Temporary jobs account for 40% young workers' contracts in the EU, against 13% for the overall working-age population¹³.
- **Although women in the EU are better educated than men, they are less employed.** 36.8% of women aged 25-29 are high-skilled, whereas for men this figure is 27.1%. However, their employment rate is 2.8 percentage points

¹¹ "The quality of jobs and employment conditions should be addressed. Member states should fight in-work poverty. Adequate social security should also be ensured for those on fixed-term contracts and the self-employed". Member states should also "increase labour market participation, combat segmentation and gender inequality".

¹² Eurostat (2012): [Euro area unemployment rate at 10.7%](#).

¹³ EC, Employment in Europe 2010 Report.

lower than that of men. In addition, in 2009, 29.2% of young women were involuntarily in part-time employment, compared to 25.4% of young men. Furthermore, the gender gap in the youth employment rate is marked across the EU: for the EU27, a youth employment rate in the first quarter of 2010 was 35.1% for young men and 31.7% for young women.¹⁴ This is also particularly relevant for women facing multiple discriminations.

- **There is overwhelming evidence that persons with disabilities who are in transition from school to employment are prevented or hindered from accessing employment and/or sustaining themselves in the workplace.** They face barriers which hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with other citizens.¹⁵
- **Self-employment and entrepreneurship can be helpful in improving the youth employment situation; however currently serious obstacles prevail to make it a real option of earning income.** These obstacles include too complicated administrative procedures, lack of tailored guidance and support structures, lack of support in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills, insufficient start-up support and help in maintaining and expanding the enterprise, and social protection and health insurance systems adapted to news ways of earning income that are therefore less favourable and supportive. This form of employment also leads more often to low income, precariousness, indebtedness and insufficient social protection. Self-employed persons in the EU25 have a three times higher risk of being working poor than employees: 18% compared with only 6%.¹⁶
- **Volunteers can not be used a cheap alternative to replace workforce.** Volunteering does not discharge policymakers and social partners of their duties of ensuring decent jobs for the active population.
- **While job opportunities in the general labour market decrease, there is a growing staff and skills shortage in the social and health care sector,** this due to the growing need for health and social services across Europe. Nevertheless youth do not easily find their way towards the social sector because of a lack of information, low salaries and unsatisfying working conditions.

¹⁴ European Commission, Recent developments in the EU-27 labour market for young people aged 15-29, September 2010.

¹⁵ As specified in the new EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

¹⁶ Eurofound, European Working Conditions Observatory, Doris Hanzl-Weiß/Hermine Vidovic: Working poor in Europe, April 2010, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/studies/tn0910026s/tn0910026s.htm>.