



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions Promoting youth employment to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives

*3099th EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH and CONSUMER AFFAIRS
Council meeting*

Luxembourg, 17 June 2011

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

1. the headline employment target of the Europe 2020 Strategy aiming to raise the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 to 75% by 2020, inter alia through the greater participation of young people;
2. the Integrated Guidelines¹, especially Integrated Guideline 7 on "Increasing labour-market participation of women and men, reducing structural unemployment and promoting job quality" and Integrated Guideline 8 on "Developing a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs and promoting lifelong learning", which highlight the importance of the labour market integration of young people;
3. the Joint Employment Report 2010-11², which also emphasises that the headline employment target should be achieved by, among other things, increasing the labour market participation of young people, inter alia by means of tailor-made pathways to ease the transition from education to work;

¹ OJ L 308, 24.11.2010, p. 46.

² Doc. 7396/11.

P R E S S

4. the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives "An agenda for new skills and jobs: a European contribution towards full employment"³ and "Youth on the move"⁴ aimed at enhancing the performance of education and training systems and seeking to equip young people properly for labour market needs;
5. the Council Conclusions of 19 November 2010 on the "Youth on the move -initiative — an integrated approach in response to the challenges young people face", and of 7 July 2010 on "New skills for new jobs: the way forward"⁵;
6. the Council Resolution of 27 November 2009⁶ on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field 2010-2018, which states that one of the overall objectives for EU cooperation on youth should be to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market;
7. the Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the structured dialogue with young people on youth employment, adopted on 19 May 2011;⁷
8. the outcome of the informal EPSCO meeting of Labour Ministers on 17 and 18 January 2011;
9. the discussions during the Hungarian Presidency conference on youth employment held in Budapest on 4 and 5 April 2011 and, in particular, the contribution of the Employment Committee to the conference;

CONSIDERING

10. the fact that young generations have an essential role in influencing the future of the European Union and its social, economic, cultural and environmental development;
11. the overall negative effects of the financial and economic crisis on the whole population of the European Union, which affect youth even more seriously, especially young people who have not completed or succeeded in their compulsory or upper secondary education, young people who face long-term unemployment and social exclusion, as well as youth in regions with an unfavourable economic situation or which lag behind;
12. the unacceptably high youth unemployment rate, currently over 20%⁸ in the European Union, and the evidence from past recessions of the consequential long-term adverse impacts that early unemployment can have on young people, as well as the significant proportion of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) and thus are at high risk of social exclusion;
13. that labour market segmentation in some Member States may have unfavourable effects on young people, who are more often in temporary or part-time employment, which can be, but is not always, a stepping stone towards permanent employment;

³ Doc. 17066/1/10 REV 1.

⁴ Doc. 13726/10.

⁵ Docs. 15276/10 and 10841/10.

⁶ Doc. 15131/09 + COR 1.

⁷ Doc. 9048/11.

⁸ 20.8% Source: Eurostat 2010 (15-24 years old).

14. that the demographic decline in the EU will lead to a shortage of labour supply and for that reason young people need to be kept as close as possible to the labour market so as to ensure that they are ready to work when the demand for labour resumes;

ACKNOWLEDGES THAT

15. in some Member States, significant numbers of young people face challenges in transitions from education to work, from unemployment to work and from temporary or part-time to permanent or full-time employment;
16. skills mismatches between labour demand and supply often hinder the chances of young people to find adequate employment, especially when this is due to a lack of appropriate competences;
17. in addition, lack of work experience constitutes a serious obstacle to young people's ability to enter the labour market;
18. given a lack of appropriate employment opportunities, in some Member States a significant number of young people have no other choice but to take up precarious employment offers, such as unpaid or low-paid internships, or are exposed to underemployment or undeclared work;
19. certain groups of young people are particularly exposed to the risk of labour market exclusion; they include the low-skilled, persons with disabilities, early school-leavers, NEETs, and youth from marginalised and disadvantaged communities such as Roma, as well as young legal migrants;
20. the gender equality perspective has to be taken into consideration, as traditional gender role expectations might have an impact on the labour-market participation of young people, in particular women;
21. social protection systems need to be designed in such a way that they provide adequate protection and at the same time give incentives in order to promote young people's transitions and to avoid the risk of long-term exclusion and poverty;

STRESSES THAT

22. increasing the labour market participation of young women and men is crucial for achieving the headline employment target of the Europe 2020 Strategy and for supporting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;
23. increasing their labour-market participation also makes an important contribution to ensuring the long-term sustainability of social benefit and pension systems and the stability of public finances as a whole;
24. frequent and/or long spells of unemployment, inactivity and/or benefit dependency at an early stage of a working life have significant lasting negative effects on future career development, income and social inclusion and therefore need to be prevented and tackled as a top priority;
25. adaptations aimed at a better matching of education and training systems to labour market needs should be prioritised in order to achieve sustainable employment results in the long term;

26. the European Social Fund has an important role to play in improving the employment prospects and skill levels of young people and implementing policies at the national, regional and local level to increase the labour market access and employability of young people;
27. the creation of more and better jobs and employment opportunities is crucial for achieving real improvement in the employment situation of young people;
28. in view of the future needs for a skilled and motivated work force, attention should be paid to issues such as the development of working life;

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES TO

29. consider, where appropriate and necessary, the implementation of reforms to improve the quality of education and training systems as well as recognising other than formal education in order to be able to reduce mismatches between skills and labour-market needs;
30. where appropriate, take the necessary measures in order to facilitate and speed up labour-market transitions of young people inter alia by further strengthening vocational education and training, including apprenticeships, as well as other work experience schemes and voluntary work;
31. enhance targeted, transparent active labour-market policies for youth, while paying special attention to the least qualified and other vulnerable young people, with an emphasis on tailor-made career guidance and counselling;
32. develop an individualised approach and enhance outreach strategies, including by using information and communication technologies (ICT) to meet the needs of young people inter alia through promoting the development of partnerships between employment services, training and education institutions, social support and career guidance services, social partners and youth organisations;
33. complement various supply-side measures by making efforts on the demand side of the labour market, i.e. by stimulating job creation. For example, the Member States could consider temporary and targeted reductions of non-wage labour costs, applying incentives such as employment subsidies or tax credits, promoting entrepreneurship and supporting young entrepreneurs and self-employment among young people;
34. tackle labour market segmentation where appropriate by developing adequate contractual arrangements, strengthening activation measures as well as promoting sustainable and high quality employment, securing decent working conditions and providing adequate income protection with clear incentives for young people, while respecting national needs and starting positions and the important role of the social partners;
35. intervene rapidly, by offering further education, (re)training or activation measures for young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training, including early school leavers, in order to get them back into education, training or the labour market within the shortest time possible and reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion;
36. exploit the full potential of EU funds, especially the European Social Fund, while implementing the most suitable policies for youth;

37. share experiences and available best practices among Employment Services and other relevant labour-market actors in order to enhance youth employment, by consulting and involving young people and their organisations as appropriate in the design, implementation and follow-up of these measures;
38. consider the labour market situation of young people when drafting the National Reform Programmes and where appropriate design adequate measures and targets within their national policies while supporting them with adequate resources as well as through monitoring and evaluation arrangements;
39. promote quality mobility for young people at both national and EU level;
40. strengthen cooperation with the social partners, employment services and other labour market stakeholders, and education and training bodies where appropriate in fields such as:
 - development of better systems of anticipation and forecasting of labour market skills needs and supply;
 - identification of relevant skills and competences in order to avoid mismatches between skills supply and labour market demands elaborating vocational education and training programmes meeting labour market demands;
 - provision of information, guidance and counselling at school level so as to prepare and help youngsters to make career choices and to navigate the complex world of the labour market;
 - better recognition of the skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning;
 - supporting employers in facilitating the acquisition of professional skills and experience by young people through apprenticeships, internships and other innovative and inclusive experience schemes;
 - where young people are neither in employment nor in education or training, promoting their return to education, training or the labour market, which could be achieved by developing an integrated approach similar to the 'youth guarantee' already developed in a number of Member States;
 - inclusion in the labour market of those young people who are most at risk of exclusion, through the provision of individual services, including mental health services in case of need;

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

41. continue promoting the EU-level exchange of best practices and experiences in order to enhance youth employment in line with the actions announced in the "Youth on the move" flagship initiative;
42. continue acting on its proposals included in the flagship initiative "Youth on the move", inter alia by:

- exploring new ways of promoting entrepreneurship through mobility programmes for young professionals and encouraging greater access to support for potential young entrepreneurs;
 - developing the initiative "Your first EURES job" aimed at supporting young people to access employment opportunities and take up jobs abroad, as well as encouraging employers to create job openings for young mobile workers;
 - supporting the Member States in their arrangements to maximise work-based learning, including apprenticeships, in order to contribute to increasing the number of apprentices in Europe by 2012;
 - to provide guidance on conditions for high quality traineeships by means of a quality framework for traineeships;
43. make further efforts to implement the flagship initiative "An agenda for new skills and jobs", inter alia through:
- the development of a new momentum for flexicurity to better manage economic transitions and to fight unemployment and raise activity rates;
 - the promotion of intra-EU labour mobility and a better matching of labour supply to demand – inter alia through the development of systems for the validation and recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning;
44. report to the Council on the implementation of relevant actions envisaged in the present Conclusions in 2014;

INVITES THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE TO

45. continue the work of aiming to identify the most effective and efficient policies for promoting youth employment, in particular in times of fiscal consolidation;
46. in the context of the European Employment Strategy, consider further action, based on the framework for youth employment proposed by the Commission in the flagship initiative "Youth on the move". This action should enhance the employment prospects of young people and contribute to efforts to the EU headline employment target of aiming to raise the employment rate to 75% by 2020;
47. pursue its cooperation and exchanges with the network of European Public Employment Services so that in future the designing of policies on youth employment can be based on successful evidence-based labour-market interventions and practices."