

Council conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training

(2014/C 30/03)

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL:

ACKNOWLEDGE THAT:

1. Young women and men are an important resource of Europe. They represent potential for today and the future; however, they face many challenges such as unemployment and related social problems ⁽¹⁾. In order to emerge from the current crisis and to prevent similar problems in the future, all Member States have to take immediate actions aimed at promoting youth employment, education and training, participation and social inclusion of young people.
2. Young people not in an employment, education or training situation (hereinafter — young people in a NEET situation) ⁽²⁾ can face negative social conditions, such as isolation, lack of autonomy, involvement in risky behaviour, and unstable mental and physical health, which expose them to higher risks of unemployment and social exclusion later in life. Social exclusion of young people, in particular young people in a NEET situation, can have negative consequences for the economy and significant costs for Europe. In 2011, the economic loss due to the disengagement of young people from the labour market was 153 billion euro. This is a conservative estimate and corresponds to 1,2 % of EU GDP ⁽³⁾.
3. Young people in a NEET situation are more or less vulnerable, with different characteristics and needs. Therefore, an individually tailored approach is needed in order to effectively and successfully (re)integrate them into the labour market, the education or training system, and social life.
4. This approach has been recognised by the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, adopted on 22 April 2013 ⁽⁴⁾. This Recommendation sets out that all young people under the age of 25 should receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education ⁽⁵⁾.
5. The EU skills panorama and the CEDEFOP skills forecasts can support policy initiatives aimed at reducing youth unemployment by facilitating the identification of emerging skills shortages, as well as trends in skills and perspectives for the labour market.
6. Risk factors that increase the danger of falling into a NEET situation are often a combination of personal, economic, educational and social circumstances.
7. Youth work, voluntary activities, active citizenship, and non-formal and informal learning can play an important and complementary role by bringing added value for all young people, especially those in a NEET situation, in the transition to the labour market: building bridges between education and employment systems, complementing the formal education system, providing self-confidence, social capital and self-development, and increasing soft and technical skills that enhance employability.
8. The Joint Conclusions of the EU Youth Conference organised by the Lithuanian Presidency from 9 to 12 September, 2013, emphasise the need to adapt education to the needs of young people and the demands of the labour market, to facilitate the transition from education to employment and to improve conditions for young people's integration into the labour market ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ In 2012, 7,5 million young people aged 15-24 and an additional 6,5 million young people aged 25-29 were not in employment, education or training in Europe. This corresponds to a significant increase in the rate of young people classified as NEET: in 2008, the figure stood at 11 % of 15-24 year olds and 17 % of 25-29 year olds; by 2012 this had increased to 13 % and 20 % respectively (Eurostat).

⁽²⁾ The Employment Committee at its meeting on 19 May 2010 agreed that the definition 'youth neither in employment nor in any education and training' includes unemployed persons (according to ILO definition) not in any education and training and inactive persons (ILO definition) not in any education and training. See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6602&langId=en>

⁽³⁾ NEETs. Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe, page 2. Eurofound (2012). See http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/54/en/1/EF1254_EN.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ Following the June 2013 Commission Communication 'Call to Action on Youth Unemployment' and the related European Council conclusions, Member States with regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25 % should submit a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) by December 2013, and in 2014 for the other Member States.

⁽⁶⁾ Joint conclusions of the EU Youth Conference (Vilnius, 9-12 September 2013).

CONSIDER THAT:

9. Evaluation and assessment of existing research, systems and programmes at local, regional, national and European levels related to young people in a NEET situation are needed in order to identify out the obstacles to their access to services, especially for those who are inactive.
10. Youth policy, and especially youth work, can contribute to successful implementation of EU initiatives to combat youth unemployment and inactivity, such as the Youth Employment Package and, in particular, the Youth Guarantee. In order to achieve the best possible results, coherent and mutually reinforcing national measures and other political instruments are therefore needed.
11. A holistic approach and cross-sectoral cooperation should be ensured in order to enhance the social inclusion of young people in a NEET situation. Social investment in people's skills and capacities throughout their lifetime to improve their opportunities to integrate in the labour market and society is crucial⁽¹⁾. All policy instruments, measures and actions should be coordinated and implemented at local, regional, national and European levels and should include a wide range of stakeholders in the design and delivery of youth social inclusion measures.
12. Prevention should be a priority in order to avoid increasing the number of young people getting into a NEET situation and to break the inter-generational cycle of social exclusion. A proactive approach involving family, early child educators, schools, especially secondary and vocational education, training and non-formal learning providers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), especially youth organisations, youth workers, parents and other stakeholders is needed to ensure early intervention to avoid young people getting into a NEET situation.
13. Policy measures have to address the diversity of young people in a NEET situation in terms of the stage when they have to intervene, their range of aims, objectives and activities. Greater attention is needed to address gender differences in education, to social and employment policies as well as to young people with special needs.
14. Measures addressing young people in a NEET situation should be personalised and flexible and aim to achieve sustainable positive outcomes in the long term in the

labour market, as well as (re)integration into education or training and civic or social life. Innovative ways, peer learning and outreach activities should be used for working with young people in a NEET situation.

15. The effective use of European Structural and Investment Funds, in particular the European Social Fund and European initiatives and programmes, including the Youth Employment Initiative and Erasmus+, is vital to provide impetus for projects in the area of social inclusion of young people.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND WITH DUE REGARD FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY TO:

16. Establish, implement and further develop, where appropriate, national, regional and/or local strategies or programmes, such as Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans, for enhancing social inclusion of young people in a NEET situation. The strategies should be evidence based, built on cross-sectoral cooperation and include all relevant stakeholders. Drawing up of strategies should encompass discussion with the target group, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of effective policy instruments. Monitoring and evaluation of access to policy measures and outcomes should be gender sensitive.

In the area of prevention

17. Promote access to adequate, affordable, accessible and high quality services, such as early childhood education and care, housing, health and social services to prevent young people getting into or remaining in a NEET situation.
18. Promote and invest in youth work and ease the access for young people in a NEET situation to its services through strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation among relevant stakeholders.
19. Pursue a comprehensive approach to reduce early school leaving, encompassing prevention and intervention measures⁽²⁾.
20. Develop and implement new and individually tailored approaches, such as detached and/or outreach youth work, for better social inclusion of young people in a NEET situation. Make full use of the potential of

⁽¹⁾ Council Conclusions of 20 June 2013 'Towards social investment for growth and cohesion'.

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (OJ C 191, 1.7.2011, p. 1).

youth work to provide self-confidence and self-development to young people and to contribute to the reduction of early school leaving ⁽¹⁾.

21. Encourage and support high quality guidance including career information, information on rights at work, employment and education prospects, free movement possibilities and more comprehensive advice and support for all young people, especially for those at risk of getting into a NEET situation, and their families.
22. Strengthen the capacity of youth organisations, youth work and other forms of inclusion as a means of participation and use their potential to foster the social inclusion of young people in a NEET situation.
23. Encourage local initiatives and social cohesion plans to develop specific actions targeted to young people in a NEET situation in order to (re)integrate them in the local communities.
24. Use the European Youth Portal as an information platform to inform young people about social inclusion related issues.

In the area of education, training and non-formal learning

25. Widen access to second-chance education and support the acquisition and/or development of skills and competences that meet the needs of the labour market.
26. Promote and increase the availability of professional counselling and guidance adapted to the needs of socially excluded young people at all stages of their life.
27. Have in place, no later than 2018, in accordance with national circumstances and specificities, and as Member States deem appropriate, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable individuals to make use of that learning for their careers and further learning ⁽²⁾.
28. Increase access to and the quality of early childhood education and care. Additional support should be

⁽¹⁾ See Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving (OJ C 191, 1.7.2011, p. 1). One of the Europe 2020 headline targets agreed by the European Council is to reduce the share of early school leavers to less than 10 % and to ensure that at least 40 % of the younger generation have a tertiary qualification or equivalent.

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1).

provided to children from disadvantaged backgrounds ⁽³⁾.

29. Implement the Erasmus + programme as a supportive instrument to acquire social and civic competences and skills, and strengthening the mobility and employability of young people.

In the area of transition from education to employment

30. Develop partnerships among public and private employment services, career guidance services, other specialised youth services (NGOs, youth centres and associations) that help to smooth the transition from unemployment, inactivity, education or training into work.
31. Promote high quality work-based learning, such as apprenticeships, internships and traineeships, as an effective measure to improve sustainable transitions from education and training to work, notably by fostering skills that are relevant to the labour market and improving skill matches, in the context of, inter alia, the Council declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships ⁽⁴⁾.
32. Implement measures to tackle youth unemployment, in particular to improve transitions, taking account of the Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee, inter alia by building up partnership based approaches (including those involving youth support services), early intervention and activation, supportive measures for labour market integration (including enhancing skills and labour market-related measures), use of European Union funds and assessment and continuous improvement of schemes.

In the area of employment

33. Enhance full and active participation in the labour market with the help of active inclusion measures, promote creativity and innovation of young people in pursuing self-employment, support entrepreneurship and first work experience.
34. Eliminate barriers, including age and other forms of discrimination, to (re)entering the labour market, address different forms of precarious work and, where relevant, analyse possibilities to reduce non-wage labour costs in order to boost recruitment prospects amongst young people ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽³⁾ Council Conclusions on early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow (OJ C 175, 15.6.2011, p. 8).

⁽⁴⁾ Council declaration of 15 October 2013 on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

⁽⁵⁾ See Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1), point 16.

35. Enable employment services, together with youth organisations and other partners supporting young people, to provide personalised guidance and individual action planning, including tailor-made individual support schemes, based on the principle of mutual obligation at an early stage.
36. Involve youth policy stakeholders and young people, as well as youth and other civil society organisations, in designing and implementing appropriate policies, including the Youth Guarantee, in particular paying specific attention to the potential of youth work to identify young people at risk of getting into a NEET situation and establish bridges between them and service providers. Empower youth stakeholders to promote and advertise the possibilities provided by the Youth Guarantee and other employment and training initiatives.
37. Contribute fully to the development of EURES into a true pan-European job placement and recruitment network focused on addressing labour market needs in individual Member States, including vacancies in both public and private employment services, as well as apprenticeships and traineeships ⁽¹⁾, where appropriate.
38. Support reconciliation between work, private and family life in order to prevent and avoid obstacles to integration into the labour market.
- INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:
39. Envisage sharing best practices through appropriate tools at its disposal, including a summary report of best practices in the Member States on initiatives aimed at (re)integration of young people in a NEET situation into employment and education systems; take account of other research studies and initiatives in this area and disseminate their results; exploit good practices resulting from projects funded by EU programmes and funds (i.e. Youth in Action, Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund) and existing cooperation networks in the field of youth policy, such as the European knowledge centre for youth policy (EKCYF).
40. Take into account input from the youth sector to the regular, systematic assessment of the future needs of the labour market and the skills and competences required.
41. Promote and ensure that future EU programmes for young people, such as Erasmus+, address young people with fewer opportunities, especially those in a NEET situation, among their priorities.
42. Promote dialogue between stakeholders concerned by youth issues, including youth work and business representatives, focussing on young people in a NEET situation, their individual guidance and social skills development.
43. Address in a high level seminar, based on cross-sectoral cooperation among business, academia, public authorities, youth and other stakeholders, challenges and possible solutions for young people in a NEET situation.
44. Continue to monitor the developments concerning the design, implementation and results of Youth Guarantee schemes through the multi-lateral surveillance of the Employment Committee within the framework of the European Semester, analyse the impact of the policies in place and report regularly on those developments.
45. Continue to support Member States' and other stakeholders' efforts to increase the supply of high quality work-based learning opportunities, notably within the framework of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, and to promote the exchange of best practices and experiences on apprenticeship schemes.

⁽¹⁾ Commission implementing decision of 26 November 2012 implementing Regulation (EU) No 492/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the clearance of vacancies and application for employment and the re-establishment of EURES (OJ L 328, 28.11.2012, p. 21).