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## Draft policy paper on youth employment for the first meeting of the National Youth Councils of Italy, Germany, France and Spain

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### Introduction

Forum Nazionale dei Giovani (FNG), Consejo de la Juventud de *España* (CJE), Comité pour les relations Nationales et internationales des Associations de Jeunesse et d'Education Populaire (CNAJEP), Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Internationale Jugendarbeit (DNK) met at the same time of Italian, Spanish, French and German Ministers of Economy and Labour's meeting with the aim of identifying shared strategies to struggle the problem of youth unemployment which, coinciding with the current socio-economic landscape, has now reached such a magnitude to have sever impacts on the lives of young people and on the European society as a whole. The four National Youth Councils are members of the European Youth Forum, which represents national youth councils and international youth organizations from Europe. The Youth Forum advocates for the rights and interests of young people and has a rights based approach towards youth policy. The attached position paper on youth employment represents the opinion of the Forums 99 member organizations.

Decent work and protection against unemployment are Human Rights<sup>1</sup>. New policies to promote employment, in the opinion of the four national councils, should be based on the principle of equal access to rights by young, which can contribute to the discussion and open dialogue between governments and Youth Organizations to find together sound and tailored solutions to this problem. The strategy must include short and long-term as well as structural elements in order to be effective. For instance, Public service of personal guidance and counseling should be enforced along with lifelong learning schemes, to help young people to achieve their life project.

In line with the joint action that our governments intend to start towards the EU during the European Council of June 2013, we want to start a parallel between our National Councils to extend this strategy of joint action even at the level of youth representative in order to be able to bring the voice and the diverse needs of young people at national and European level. The National Youth Councils are committed to function in advisory capacity to the governmental cooperation.

There are, in fact, common variables which characterize the situation of young Europeans in this context of crisis and rising of unemployment. Almost one out of four young people in Europe younger than 25 years is unemployed. Even though the situation is different in our four countries with youth unemployment rates between 8 and 56 %, young people are more likely to be unemployed than adults. We are facing the risk that the most educated generation of young people in history will turn into a lost one.

For this reason, the Youth Organizations decided to overcome the specific differences of the original contexts and focus on the common needs inviting our institutional representatives to do the same in order to continue the establishment of a great European house.

### Create Youth Opportunities

Creating jobs for young people must be at the center of our policies. Community policies must continue in the footsteps of the Youth Employment and Youth Employment Package Initiative focused on fighting youth unemployment and consequent social exclusion.

The above measures are likely, however, to be ineffective if it were not activated - at Community level - a special plan to promote employment, especially among young people, able to reverse the

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<sup>1</sup> The EU Human Rights Charter, 2010/C83/02, Lisbon



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trend produced by the 2008 crisis, which has reduced the number and quality of job opportunities in the countries of the Union.

There is a need to financial incentives to encourage employers to create stable and quality job opportunities for young people.

Young people need to be protected against discriminatory employment practices.

It is important to ensure that the educational system receives the financial means that are needed in order to provide young people with the skills needed and improve the access to education for students with limited economic capacity. It should be evaluated whether revising the parameters of the Stability Pact is a way forward, excluding the counts of public expenditure investments in the creation of more employment opportunities for the young generation, identifying appropriate control systems in the use of resources. The investments identified should have a purpose clearly linked to a counterpart in terms of opportunities for employment and development: infrastructure, sustainable conversion of enterprises, technological innovation, research and development, training for employment or re-employment with feedback on the effects in the long run.

We believe that, among European priorities should be used also a special fund to encourage self-employment and entrepreneurship, with the use of the tools of microfinance and micro-credit, linked to projects designed and implemented on the basis of territorial plans development.

Provide better advice and guidance to young people who wish to undertake a project, ensuring the coherence and coordination of these services. Within the training should be include knowledge of labour law

Reduce barriers and streamline administrative expected to start an entrepreneurial project by a young person. Procedures linked to entrepreneurship should be simplified.

## **Education and work**

In order to build a Europe that really points to sustainable development based on knowledge, the policies for the training over the course of life and active labor market policies should be increasingly converging towards the goal of widespread employment and quality.

In this context it is particularly relevant the relationship between the paths of formal training and the world of work and the steps between training and work throughout their lives.

For this it is necessary to act on orientation services since the secondary education in the transition to advanced training in professional training and in continuing training.

The crisis has called into question the objectives of increasing access to education and training throughout life. Youth unemployment and NEET rates are on the rise with the consequent exclusion from the educational processes and employment schemes for many young people, while also increases early exit from the formal education and training.

We need to take action on three lines:

- Restricting early exit from the training and behaviors that hinder the achievement of the basic educational qualifications
- To encourage the acquisition of more advanced skills
- Improve the correlation between skills training and job opportunities

To improve education must necessarily establish new forms of integration between the world of education and the labor market. The constant technological developments and their more widespread application in various economic sectors, reinforce the need for constant to focus on training and education. The process of Lifelong Learning must be institutionalized to encourage the development of programs schoolwork.



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It is therefore necessary to increase the overall quality of the school system, revisit strategically training opportunities promoting and connecting these systems to business networks and local institutions, such as employment centers, in order to enhance flexible learning pathways and locally contextualized.

Non-formal and formal education are complementary. Skills and competences acquired through non-formal education need to be recognized by the formal education system as well as by employers.

### **Internships and Apprenticeships**

The first approach of young people with the world of work is represented by work experience or internship. They represent a crucial time for the formation of each worker, although in some cases they are processed in real forms of precarious employment (quality of training they receive is often not lived up to expectations lack of pay, lack of recognition of rights and protections minimum, without considering the cases in which these contracts mask genuine employment relationships, have meant that many young people do not see them as an opportunity but a trap to be avoided).

We are convinced of the great importance of internships and apprenticeships may have in personal and professional development of each young person, but with the condition that they comply with the mandatory requirements. Taking up the process of the "European Charter for quality training and apprenticeship" of the European Youth Forum we want to highlight some essential points:

#### **Internships within the training:**

For young people undertaking internships or apprenticeships as part of formal education, this is often their first working experience and their perception of it can be a defining moment in their careers. It is therefore important that there is a legally binding contract between the educational institution, intern or apprentice and hosting organization outlining the main principles of the internship or apprenticeship, including how many credit points this will contribute to the diploma of the young person, as well as a description of learning objectives and tasks that should be fulfilled. In addition, guidance throughout the internship or apprenticeship period by a supervisor trained specifically for the role is fundamental to its quality and should also be foreseen in the contract.

#### **Apprenticeships after the training:**

There is a need to ensure a decent remuneration that from our point of view is not less than 60% of the average wage in the country in which the training takes place. This remuneration should in accordance to the tasks that are performed by the intern or apprentice, as well as the hours worked. Internship remuneration should be regulated either in law or by collective agreements in accordance with national practice. It is also important for regulations to be brought in limiting the number of internships allowed per employer, depending on the size of the organization.

The way of a European charter of quality internships and the European Alliance for apprenticeship should be pursued. These are essential tools for the transition between education and work for which should be guaranteed the quality of training and should be prevented the substitution of internship for paid work. The instrument must be regulated so that the Internship is a distinguished form from employment and respect the minimum wage standard. The internship should be increasingly one of the most important forms of European mobility through which to get credits, linguistic awards and professional skills. Internships should be part of the educational system and should never replace regular jobs.



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## YOUTH GUARANTEE

The investment on youth employment is essential to the exit from the economic crisis, for inclusion and social cohesion, for the diffusion of equal access to the rights of citizenship.

With this attitude and preparation, the European Commission approved on 5 December 2012 a recommendation on the Youth Guarantee, included in the package of measures to combat youth unemployment (Youth employment initiatives). These recommendations were part of the political agreement by the EPSCO council of the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2013

In the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy and “Youth on the move”, the European Commission asked to Member States to commit their countries to guarantee to all citizens under 25 a qualitatively valid offer of employment, continued studies or access to a training course within four months of unemployment or interruption / achievement of their studies. The Commission has laid the foundation in six key points for ensuring the social inclusion of young people and facilitate entry into the labour market. While the Youth Guarantee is an important step, it is crucial to provide the necessary financial means. The budget of hardly 6 billion Euros within a multiannual financial framework coming in part from the credits of the European Social Fund is absolutely insufficient taking into account the magnitude of the problem that we encounter. The International Labour Organization has calculated that 21 billion Euros – or 0.5% of the Eurozone budget – are needed; the cost of youth unemployment has exceeded 150 billion Euros. It is necessary also to make the requirements for funding more flexible, as suggested by our Governments recently. However the programme cannot be limited to providing educational programmes such as internships and apprenticeships but needs to provide youth friends job opportunities in the regular labour market.

The introduction of the Youth Guarantee in all European countries must be a priority, and our countries should be promoters of this process.

As indicated in the Recommendation of the Council of Europe, in order to introduce the Youth Guarantee action is required on the forms of transition between job training, encouraging the use of apprenticeship training and apprenticeship, which must be considered as part of the training course and not hide first employment experience that could never be replaced by a paid job.

Another assumption is the need of creating a bridge between demand and supply of labor, which must be based more on attitude and skills of the people and the demands of the business world.

It should be resolved the mismatch between formal training received and the working position held, focusing on employment policies based on the direction and balance of skills, which must also take into consideration the paths of non-formal education.

In this sense we should uniformed the investment on employment services and you need to go to the homogenization of the services provided.

The Youth Guarantee must be accompanied, as claimed by EYF from the recognition of youth guarantee, a policy where Governments, regional authorities and public employment services to young person committed to offering a quality-job training or re-training within a certain period of being made unemployed or leaving formal education, for a number of years. What is fundamental about the youth guarantee is That It Involves a rights-based approach to youth employment and Recognizes That young people can expect certain services and provisions from the state and their community.

The age limit should be raised to 30 years, as recommended by the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee. It is necessary that the youth guarantee schemes offer coverage also to young people who have completed their training and are in transition from education to labour market.



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When developing, managing, promoting and monitoring this initiative, social partners and youth organizations as well as youth councils that represent them should be taken into account – following the example of the countries that have already successfully implemented the Youth Guarantee and the recommendations of institutions such as the European Commission, European Parliament and EESC.

Our Governments should make sure that the Youth Guarantee is implemented as agreed initially, meaning they should ensure that the period until a young person gets a job offer, training or internship does not exceed 4 months.

European countries must also have uniform systems of recognition of work experience and training within the member countries by encouraging internal mobility and laying the foundations for a European Youth Guarantee.