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Joint statement European Youth Forum – National Youth Councils

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Despite its announced intention to address the issue of youth unemployment, on 27-28 June the European Council failed to provide a plan aimed at creating growth and new job opportunities for young people. Even if useful, the measures endorsed at the summit fall short of the expectations and the reality of youth employment in Europe. The current lack of investment in the younger generations is costly, and both the European institutions and the member States should reverse the trend and invest in its youth today, to ensure long-term growth in the future. The allocated budget of 6 billion Euros plus the possibility of using the margins left available below the MFF ceilings is not enough. The International Labour Organization has calculated that 21 billion Euros per year are needed to stem the loss of 150 billion Euros due to youth unemployment. Therefore, the financial support allocated at European level is not up to the challenge, and it is crucial now that it is backed up by additional complementary financial commitments.

Coordinated Policy Responses to Youth Employment

Effective coordination and significant European, national and regional investment is required in order to tackle the roots of youth unemployment, rather than seeking to address it through short-term, isolated measures. National policy responses to youth unemployment, based on European and international recommendations, still need to be developed, in active coordination with youth organisations. Member States and the EU need to look for a full set of complementary measures to address youth unemployment, and stimulate job creation.

Use of the European Investment Bank Funds to support young entrepreneurs

The proposal of using EIB funds could be instrumental in this regard providing a complementary tool for SMEs and entrepreneurs to create jobs and thus widen the opportunities for young people. The EIB could be used as well for young people themselves to create their jobs and those of their peers. It is up to Member States to ensure that the tool is known and used for many initiatives to flourish.

Vocational Education and Training and transition to labour market

Regarding the promotion of active labour market measures and the work towards more effective vocational and education systems to facilitate the transition from school to work, the push from the European Council on the member states needs to translate into concrete actions. Best practices exchanges among the Member states should identify the key success factors and properly design new interventions in this direction, while political will makes sure they are properly implemented. Increased transferability of skills acquired by individuals in a Member State across the Union must not only focus higher education but all forms of learning to make mobility accessible to more young people.

Recent EC research already demonstrated that only high quality experiences lead to a smoother transition to the labour market and increased significantly youth employability. That is why we think that bilateral or multilateral agreements on apprenticeships or internships programs are welcome only if accompanied by a strong fully binding European quality framework for both Internships and Apprenticeships and this system is monitored.

An effective Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee received lots of attention before and during the summit, although it is not such a new tool. After the talks, now is the time to make it work. Financing for Youth guarantees may be in place for at least 2014-2015, but this is too little and too short. It is essential that member states now use this opportunity and take steps to be ready to deploy a guarantee mechanism as soon as funding is available. It is also up to them to raise the ambition of the initiative and complement the narrow funding available. It is also necessary to make the requirements for funding more flexible, as suggested by some Governments recently. However, the programme cannot be limited to providing educational programmes such as internships and apprenticeships but needs to provide youth-friendly job opportunities in the regular labour market.

Monitoring and Implementation

Creating jobs for young people must be at the center of our policies. EU policies must continue in the footsteps of the Youth Employment Initiative package focused on fighting youth unemployment and consequent social exclusion. The above measures are likely, however, to be ineffective if they are not monitored and implemented at the most appropriate level and with the support and the participation of young people and their organisations. The example of, the current threat against the Spanish Youth Council is going in the opposite direction to this. We therefore call on a commitment to support local, regional and national independent democratic Youth Councils and youth organisations in general as crucial stakeholders in fighting unemployment alongside governments and the social partners.