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From:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
To:	Council
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Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative

1. The Presidency has prepared a set of draft Council Conclusions on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative.
2. The Permanent Representatives Committee agreed to forward the draft Conclusions to the EPSCO Council for adoption.

**Council Conclusions on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and
the Youth Employment Initiative**

WHEREAS

1. Young people's labour market performance has improved overall in the EU in recent years, however more than 4.1 million young people (aged 15-24 years) are still unemployed today. Younger generations were severely hit by the economic and financial crisis, and they continue to feel its employment and social effects today.
2. Although the youth unemployment rate has decreased - from a peak of 23.9% in February 2013 to 18.2% in September 2016 -, it remains high in the EU and in a number of its regions. There is a gap of more than 30 percentage points between the Member States with the lowest rates of youth unemployment and those with the highest rates. Notwithstanding significant divergences persisting across countries and regions, youth unemployment remains a priority concern for the EU as a whole.
3. Particularly since the onset of the crisis, the EU has geared significant efforts towards improving the situation of this group, mainly via the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation and the Youth Employment Initiative.
4. Three years into the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative, it is appropriate to review the situation and necessary to renew the EU's shared commitment to ameliorating the employment situation of its young people.

5. WELCOMES the European Commission's Communication on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the operation of the Youth Employment Initiative¹, as a response to the call by the European Council in June 2013.²
6. TAKES NOTE of the Commission's proposal on the continuation of the Youth Employment Initiative, as proposed in the Communication of 14 September 2016.³
7. [TAKES NOTE of the Commission's Youth Initiative of 7 December 2016 and the launch of a European Solidarity Corps.]
8. RECALLS the Roadmap agreed upon at the Bratislava Summit of 27 Member States of 16 September 2016, and the European Council Conclusions of 20 and 21 October 2016⁴, calling on EU support for Member States in fighting youth unemployment and on enhancing EU programmes dedicated to youth.
9. UNDERLINES that a complete employment recovery requires an adequate economic policy mix that favours job-rich growth and the integration of the unemployed, including the young unemployed, into the labour market, with investment playing an important role in supporting the recovery.
10. ACKNOWLEDGES Member States' commitment to implementing national Youth Guarantee schemes and the Youth Employment Initiative, and first positive results achieved by measures and reforms implemented to date.

¹ 12749/16 + ADD1, 2, 3.

² EUCO 104/2/13.

³ 12183/16.

⁴ EUCO 31/16.

11. RECOGNISES the work done by Member States to mobilise additional financial resources, to strengthen and modernise their labour market institutions, and to support partnerships between the employment, education and youth sectors, as well as to engage with social partners, in line with national practices, and other stakeholders, in order to better deliver the Youth Guarantee.
12. HIGHLIGHTS that Member States have supported reforms in the education and training sector, including to traineeship and apprenticeship systems, to provide young people with the skills required to ease their transition from education into the labour market.
13. UNDERLINES that the continuation of Youth Guarantee schemes relies on maintaining the commitment of governments to take actions to tackle youth unemployment.
14. STRESSES that the financial support provided through the European Social Fund, and in most Member States through the Youth Employment Initiative, has been instrumental in setting up Youth Guarantee schemes.
15. RECALLS that, in accordance with the regulatory framework, the first Youth Employment Initiative national evaluations were submitted by Member States at the end of 2015. A second national evaluation is required from Member States by the end of 2018. These evaluations help the Council to actively assess the effectiveness of the instrument.
16. UNDERLINES the importance to strengthen outreach to those young people neither in employment, education or training (NEETs) who are not registered with the public employment services. The heterogeneity of the NEET population must be taken into account when designing policies to re-engage NEETs in the labour market and in education, for example by integrating, where appropriate, social and employment service delivery.

17. **HIGHLIGHTS** the need to engage better with disadvantaged young people and to promote different pathways into the labour market. The provision of holistic and evidence-based support to young people who are facing multiple barriers to entering the labour market (poverty, social exclusion, lack of qualifications, health problems, disability, migrant background, and discrimination) requires particular attention.
18. **RECOGNISES** the need to ensure good quality offers and services that lead to a sustainable attachment to the labour market.
19. **UNDERLINES** the importance of necessary personalised guidance and counselling services for the youth, especially in transition phases between unemployment, education and work.

CALLS UPON MEMBER STATES TO:

20. Continue to step up the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative and ensure that those young people who are most disadvantaged benefit from it.
21. Pursue efforts to reach out to young people who are not registered with the public employment services, including by taking a diversified approach to the different needs of the NEET population, and to engage better with those encountering multiple barriers to entering and remaining in the labour market, including through upskilling.
22. Ensure that all offers provided in the framework of the Youth Guarantee contribute to the sustainable labour market attachment of young people, and, where relevant, the validation of their skills.
23. Pursue efforts to achieve better alignment of national data with the common Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee, taking into account the current possibilities and limitations of national data.

CALLS UPON THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION TO:

24. Jointly explore options for improving the implementation and reinforcing EU funds towards unemployed and inactive young people, with a focus on disadvantaged people and areas.
25. Work within the framework of the European Network of Public Employment Services to further build PES capacity to deliver the Youth Guarantee and to assess its progress.
26. Explore the options to further develop the apprenticeship offers under the Youth Guarantee, with a view to achieve high levels of mobility of apprentices.

CALLS UPON THE COMMISSION TO:

27. Continue to support Member States in fighting youth unemployment.
28. Continue to support mutual learning and the diffusion of best practices, especially innovative evidence-based practices to support non-registered NEETs and young people facing multiple barriers to entering and remaining in the labour market or returning to education.
29. Create synergies with other youth initiatives:
 - a) supporting mutual learning and the exchange of best practices among Member States on adapting national legislative frameworks to comply with the Quality Framework for Traineeships;
 - b) pursuing work for supporting apprenticeship reforms and mobility of apprentices, building on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, in particular encouraging business partnerships with vocational education and training providers;
 - c) seeking to strengthen partnerships with education and training providers and the youth sector in the context of the Education and Training 2020 Strategy and the EU Youth Strategy.

CALLS UPON THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE TO:

30. Further improve the monitoring of the national implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes through the multilateral surveillance within the framework of the European Semester, and through the common Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee.
 31. Explore the possibility of discussing standards for quality criteria under this Indicator Framework.
 32. Pursue efforts to ensure the transparency, better comparability and consensual interpretation of the data collected under this Indicator Framework.
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