



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Youth Initiative
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find attached the explanatory note of the European Commission on the above subject, with a view to the EPSCO Council on 8 December 2016 (AOB item).

Youth Initiative

Objective:

The aim of the AOB point is to inform EPSCO about the Youth Initiative, which will be presented by the Commission on 7 December 2016. This initiative contains elements that are relevant for EPSCO, among other things, the setting up of the European Solidarity Corps, the fight against youth unemployment (through the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative) and action to offer better support to apprentices and students in the field of vocational education and training.

Content:

The Youth Initiative consists of a package of three documents:

- A Communication launching the European Solidarity Corps;
- A Communication that makes the case for improving and modernising education;
- A chapeau Communication presenting the overall framework and which recalls existing EU action in support of young people and sets out new actions on improving opportunities for young people in three key areas: (1) access to employment, (2) education and training and (3) solidarity, mobility and participation.

Points of particular interest for EPSCO include:

- The fight against youth unemployment: The package puts the focus on improving the *implementation* of the Youth Guarantee and increasing funding for the Youth Employment Initiative.
- Better opportunities for apprentices: vocational education and training systems, and in particular apprenticeships, are a tried-and-tested way to equip young people with relevant skills and facilitate the transition from school to the labour market. To make full use of this potential requires that sufficient apprenticeship places are available and that they are of good quality. To achieve these two objectives, the Commission intends to prepare a quality framework for apprenticeships. In addition, the Commission intends to create under the Erasmus+ programme a new activity to support work placements abroad ("ErasmusPro").

- The European Solidarity Corps: by supporting others and better including the most vulnerable in our communities, young people will not only express their solidarity, but also acquire skills that will be valuable to them when looking for a job or considering further education and training. This is why the Corps will not only be about volunteering but also an occupational experience. This could take the form of a traineeship, apprenticeship or a job. It should not be a one-off experience for the young person but a stepping stone towards a longer-term job. Young people who have participated in the corps will receive a certificate that will enable them to document the skills and experiences that they gained. The European Commission will advance the European Solidarity Corps initiative based on an active engagement and close cooperation not least with Member States and national stakeholders.
 - Education and training systems: the youth initiative seeks to create renewed political momentum to improve and modernise education. The OECD PISA data released on 6 December confirms that a high share of young people have very low skills in basic skills such as reading or mathematics. Education systems need to become better in equipping young people with the skills they need for the labour market. In addition, too many young people have left education prematurely without a formal qualification, which makes them hard to employ (more than 40% of early school-leavers are unemployed).
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