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NOTE

from: Presidency
to : Delegations

Subject: Implementation issues of Youth Employment Initiative and Youth Guarantee
(Lunch debate at the EPSCO Council - 10 March 2014)

Delegations will find attached a background note prepared by the Presidency in view of the lunch discussion at the EPSCO Council on 10 March 2014.

LUNCH DEBATE
EPSCO Council, 10 March 2014

Implementation issues of Youth Employment Initiative and Youth Guarantee

Promoting employment and particularly youth employment is the main priority of the Greek Presidency. To do so, priority is given to speeding up the implementation of the “Youth Employment Initiative” as well as to monitoring the implementation of the “Youth Guarantee”. Progress in this field will be reviewed by the EPSCO Council in June.

The ‘Youth Employment Initiative’ was adopted by the European Council in February 2013 with a view to increasing available EU financial support to the EU regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25% in 2012 and to individuals not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The funding of the Youth Employment Initiative will comprise EUR 3 billion from a specific EU budget line dedicated to youth unemployment and another EUR 3 billion at least, from the European Social Fund.

Member States should put a focus on the quality of the actions, and thus ensure adequate financial support per young person targeted. Based on a decision of the European Council in June 2013, the budget of the “Youth Employment Initiative” will not be committed under the standard 7-year period of the Multiannual Financial Framework, but frontloaded in the years 2014 and 2015 to ensure a swift mobilisation of actions. In addition to that, youth unemployment should be also funded from the margins left available below the MFF ceilings for the years 2014-2017, the so called "global margin for commitments".

The “Youth Employment Initiative” will support young people aged below 25 years (or when Member States consider it necessary, persons aged below 30 years), through provision of a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship and other related measures such as second chance education, in line with the “Youth Guarantee” Recommendation. Member States eligible for the “Youth Employment Initiative” have already submitted their Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans and held meetings with the Commission. All other Member States are expected to submit their plans in the coming weeks. A conference, organised by the Commission on 8 April, will take stock of the implementation of the "Youth Guarantee".

In order to facilitate work experience - a key asset for a smooth transition from school or unemployment to working life - the Council is about to agree on the ‘Quality Framework for Traineeships’ Recommendation. This Recommendation aims at ensuring fair working conditions and high quality learning content to support young people's transition to the labour market. Quick implementation of the Quality Framework is essential to achieve real results for young people.

The European Union has also developed a number of other tools to support the Youth Guarantee, such as the ‘European Alliance for Apprenticeships’ and the “Your first EURES Job” initiative.

Given the dramatic deterioration in many Member States of both quantitative and qualitative indicators of youth unemployment (that stood at 23.3% in November 2013) and with a view to maximising the effectiveness and the impact of available funding, the Presidency considers it useful to discuss some central issues that would help prioritising the policies to be pursued.

Ministers are invited to express their views on the following issues:

1. What progress have Member States made in implementing the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans; what are the main challenges and what are the intentions to speed up the implementation?
2. What is the role of apprenticeships in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans? Could it be possible to establish a relationship between the Youth Guarantee schemes and the various active schemes for youth, so as to maximise synergies?
3. How do the eligible Member States intensify their efforts to finalise the programming of the “Youth Employment Initiative” to start using EU pre-financing and payments? What needs to be done to optimise the use of the available financial resources?