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From: The Employment Committee
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject: EMCO Review of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee - Key Messages
- Endorsement

With a view to their endorsement at the Council meeting on 6 December 2021, delegations will find below the key messages from the **Employment Committee** on its Review of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

The country-specific conclusions of the EMCO Review of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee can be found in document **14111/21** ADD 1.

The data collection for monitoring of Youth Guarantee schemes in 2020 as transmitted by EMCO can be found in document **14111/21** ADD 2.



EMCO review of the implementation of the Council Recommendation “A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee”

Key messages on the Youth Guarantee

In 2016, 2018 and 2019 the EPSCO Council endorsed a set of key messages, which EMCO had provided on the basis of its monitoring of the 2013 Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee. These underlined the importance prevention, early intervention, strong partnerships within Member States and the crucial role of the Public Employment Services (PES). Past key messages have also highlighted a shift in the approach in several Member States, putting more focus on upskilling and support for young people facing multiple disadvantages, including through more individualised and integrated services. Outreach to young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) has been considered a key challenge in many Member States, although to a lesser extent for those that had developed strong incentives for young people to register for the Youth Guarantee. Moreover, the lack of an overarching strategy for implementing the Youth Guarantee was also highlighted in many Member States.

When EPSCO ministers agreed in 2020 on the Council Recommendation on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee, the **Employment Committee (EMCO)** was tasked with monitoring its implementation.

In October 2021, and in the context of its multilateral surveillance, EMCO carried out its first review of the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes under the 2020 reinforced Youth Guarantee Recommendation. The current key messages draw on the results of that review (whose country-specific conclusions are included in annex). Also annexed to this document are the results per Member State of the 2021 data collection exercise, preceded by a summary of the main results at EU level.

In response to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on young people, Member States maintained a strong political commitment towards the implementation of the Reinforced Youth Guarantee (YG). Steps forward were thus made in all European countries and new implementation Plans, adopted or to be adopted, in many Member States point towards a more systematic and coherent approach in tackling youth unemployment and inactivity. At the same time, challenges remain in all areas of the YG implementation, with the pandemic in many cases acting as an additional impeding factor.

Progress has been registered in mapping, notably by making better use of administrative data and of analyses carried out by research bodies. However, challenges remain in some Member States in relation to data protection issues, which prevent public authorities from exchanging young people's personal information with each other. Additionally, in some Member States there is scope for improvement in terms of the mapping of vulnerable young people in rural and remote areas.

There is a shared understanding of the importance of a preventive approach in reducing early school leaving and inactivity. To that effect, mechanisms to communicate at-risk-of-leaving students to relevant employment services are in place in some Member States, while others rely on softer approaches such as career guidance and counselling in schools. It should be stressed that in some Member States there is room for improvement as regards the cooperation between YG providers and education and training institutions with a view to a more effective preventive approach.

The scars left by the crisis on young people, especially the most vulnerable, point to the importance of reaching out to inactive and vulnerable NEETs. A wide array of practices has been established to increase the awareness of young people about the Youth Guarantee. This includes, in some Member States, the use of more innovative communication and outreach tools (social media, mobile teams, street workers, youth mediators). However, the share of NEETs (15-29) registered in the YG is still insufficient in many Member States and, in many cases, particularly low for inactive young NEETs (when compared to the whole target group). Particular attention should be devoted to inactive women as well as to NEETs living in remote or rural areas and those facing multiple socio-economic barriers. Barriers to entering the labour market, especially education underachievement and migrant background, should be better taken into account when designing or redesigning youth guarantee policies. In response to health and safety considerations, many Member States reported efforts to move services online in order to enhance access. However, it should be noted that while digital tools have a great potential in activating young people, due consideration should be given to those lacking adequate skills or the means to access online services.

As far as models of integrated service delivery are concerned, a variety of approaches was observed. While some Member States have established or are planning to introduce a one-stop-shop approach, others rely on joint case management, multi-disciplinary professional teams and/or single points of contact. There are still other Member States where integrated services are clearly underdeveloped. It would be advisable to create specific PES services or job centres for young people and to make use of individualised action plans in order to better address their needs. Overall, decentralised service delivery models show several advantages compared to more centralised approaches. Nonetheless, they require careful monitoring and evaluation in order to avoid regional disparities in the provision of support measures.

Assessing and providing digital skills is still underdeveloped in many Member States and should be reinforced. It is, however, worth noting that many Member States have already presented plans towards this goal, including by making use of available European funds, such as the ESF+ and the RRF.

The quality of offers has improved in most countries, and good outcomes are registered in terms of their capacity to offer stable employment for young people. However, in some Member States the recycling rate in the Youth Guarantee remains a concern and indicates that efforts would be needed in terms of better tailoring education and employment offers to both young people and labour market needs in order to avoid having young people re-entering the schemes multiple times. Furthermore, in some cases it would be advisable to reduce the over-reliance on traineeship offers in favour of employment and apprenticeships offers. In general, while offering young people job and training opportunities in the public sector was used in some Member States as a way to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on youth unemployment, the role of the private sector remains central in lowering the levels of youth unemployment. Finally, post-placement and follow-up services could be improved in many Member States.

Monitoring and evaluating YG schemes is crucial for guiding future policy decisions. Looking ahead, a robust allocation of available ESF+ funds for youth employment support measures over the 2021-2027 programming period and its effective use (in combination with opportunities from other funding instruments such as the RRF) can support Member States in tackling youth unemployment and inactivity.