



Ensuring the Youth guarantee is a European success story

*Declaration of PES Ministers for Social Affairs and Employment
Adopted in Luxembourg on 12 October 2016*

Four years ago, when youth unemployment was at its highest in the EU, we, members of the PES, have successfully campaigned for a European Youth Guarantee with the aim to ensure that **within four months upon finishing school or becoming unemployed, every young person under the age of 25 receives either: a job; an apprenticeship offer; a traineeship or a place in continued education**^[1].

Today, we can be proud of its success in several member states. **In three years, more than 9 million young people have already benefitted from it.**^[2]

Clearly, the Youth guarantee is a progressive structural reform that directly benefits young citizens. **We want to ensure that it becomes a permanent feature of EU employment policies and a central component of the European Social Model.** In the long run, **the Youth Guarantee must be accessible to every young European.**

With still more than one in five young European unemployed in Europe, a partial commitment over a few years is not sufficient. **The EU must answer the expectations of young people and offer them real perspectives for their future.** Therefore **we want a permanent and extended European Youth Guarantee with sufficient re-funding** for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) until 2020. We regret the European Commission has not followed the call for a **re-funding of 20 billion EUR** for the Youth Employment Initiative until 2020 by President Hollande and Prime Minister Renzi. The 2bn the European Commission proposed constitute an effective cut in funding of more than three-quarters in the Youth Guarantee as compared to 2014-2016 funding^[3]. This is even more strongly felt in countries with no corresponding ESF allocation to match the YEI.

The 20 billion Euro from 2017 would mean the improvement and expansion of the youth guarantee schemes. With this funding, we want (1) to ensure good quality and sustainable offers, (2) to widen the scope of beneficiaries, (3) to strengthen national implementation.

1. Quality offers

We want to **ensure the good quality and the sustainability of the offers** under Youth Guarantee schemes, including those for traineeships and apprenticeships^[4]. This is crucial to secure a safe transition from education to work. The Youth guarantee must be an effective springboard for young people to integrate quality jobs. To this end, the Youth Guarantee must foster high quality work standards and decent remuneration, in particular to ensure the principle of equal pay and equal treatment irrespective of the workers' age.

^[1]Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on Establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/c 120/0)

^[2] Jean-Claude Juncker, State of the European Union 2016, 14 September 2016, Strasbourg European Parliament.

^[3] from €6 billion over 2014-2016 to €2 billion for the next four years, Cf: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/lib/COM-2016-603/COM-2016-603_en.pdf

^[4] The Council recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships of 10 March 2014 constitute an interesting first step in this respect.

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It is essential to re-focus the implementation on the concept of a guarantee, entitling all beneficiaries to get a quality offer within the four months period, or even a shorter period, such as the 90 days period currently envisaged in Sweden. This could also be achieved by making the youth guarantee a part of mandatory education for young people until 18 or even 25, as currently envisaged in Austria.

2. A broader scope

In our view, the Youth Guarantee can only be a success if it efficiently reaches out to young people. Because many young people above 25 still face difficulties to enter the labour market, **we want to extend the youth guarantee until the age of 30.**

Reaching out also means making the schemes accessible and functional for all young people who need it. Particular attention should be paid to young people at greater risk of exclusion such as those living in or close to poverty thresholds, the long term unemployed, young refugees. A targeted approach, with specific measures, should be adopted to better address such specific beneficiaries. We need to use the youth guarantee as an additional tool to support young refugees' integration and education.

3. Strengthen National implementation

We want Public Employment Services with adequate means to support young people's transition from school to work. We want them to be trained to deal with young people and to provide personalized services and guidance, we want them to be ready to cooperate with the education system, social services and youth organisations, in order to reach out to those further away from the labour market.

To ensure all countries can access the YEI funding, in particular those that need it most, we want to further ease the pre-financing and the co-financing requirements for the YEI. Considering the Youth Guarantee is a structural reform, its national co-funding should be encouraged and exempted from deficit calculation, while its proper implementation should be monitored in the European Semester.

For us, PES, the **Youth Guarantee is a leverage for more social and economic innovation.** It has the potential to counter the skills mismatch and to provide individual, tailor made solutions to young people at a moment when they experience an important change in their life.

We want it to be a stepping stone for young people entering the labour market and a stepping stone for the EU towards a more social agenda.

It is time to confirm and strengthen the Youth Guarantee as a European success story and to show the young generation that Europe cares about their future.

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Alois Stöger, Minister Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria

Myriam El Khomri, Minister of Labour, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue, France

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