



**European Youth Forum
Position on
Youth Employment in Times of Crisis**

Introduction

The financial and economic crisis will especially hit the most vulnerable, which includes young people. The crisis threatens to exacerbate the difficulties young people face in finding stable employment, achieving autonomy and being able to fully being included in society.

At the same time, the current young generation has the highest potential to contribute to a lasting recovery from the current crisis. It is the best educated generation ever, familiar with new technologies, more mobile and open to new opportunities. The EU should not run the risk of a "lost generation" engendered by the current crisis. Losing this potential will have long-term negative effects, whereas effective investment in youth will be crucial for a successful recovery in the mid - and long term. This strategy was outlined in the 2007 BEPA (Bureau of European Policy Advisors) report 'Investing in Youth' which states that 'timely and effective investment in youth is the key to making that future prosperous, both economically and socially.'¹

The European Youth Forum puts forward a clear list of priorities and policy actions upon which the YFJ calls EU Member States to act in order to minimise the effects of the crisis when it comes to young people's entrance into the labour market as well as decent working conditions for young people.

Youth Employment in Times of Crisis

Unemployment and precarious working conditions seriously affect the life of each and every individual, and young people are especially vulnerable in this regard. Young people today face difficulties in entering the labour market and are often faced with precarious working conditions and atypical working contracts, facing difficulties in having a stable job. This situation prevents them from becoming autonomous, from settling down and perhaps starting a family, and does not allow them to be fully integrated in society. The financial and economic crisis threatens to exacerbate the difficulties young people face in finding stable employment.

At the same time, the current crisis is potentially detrimental to the development of the young generation's potential. The EU needs to acknowledge it and invest in youth in order to contribute to a lasting recovery from the current crisis.

¹ Investing in Youth, and empowerment strategy; 25/04/2007; Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA)

Therefore, the European Youth Forum:

- calls upon the Ministers of Employment of the EU to take into careful consideration the concerns of young people when developing employment policies in view of meeting the Lisbon Strategy commitments. There is a strong need to develop measures targeted at those who face the biggest difficulties when trying to enter the labour market and to keep a decent and stable job — or when trying to start up their own business;
- urges the EU Ministers of Employment to take into account the need for the development of skills that can foster the transition of young people from education to the labour market. It is also important to promote policies that foster entrepreneurship, by providing entrepreneurial education;
- requests to promote and fully recognise the competences that young people can acquire through non-formal education and volunteering activities as well as through vocational training. It is also of key importance to recognise the value of and to promote professional guidance, that is: orientation tools and better interaction between educational providers, social partners and the professional sector;
- underlines that internships must not replace paid work. Internships can be a valuable step in the transition from education to professional life and quality internships, which must be above all a learning experience for the intern, must be made available for young people. However, the YFJ is strongly against the practise of interns being recruited in order to reduce costs of employers without having access to labour law protection and financial compensation, working on issues which have very limited added value to their professional and personal development;
- calls upon a strong employment support initiative, re-focusing European Social Fund expenditure, in view of fostering the transition of young people from education to decent employment;
- proposes that, in view of fostering the mobility of young workers, Member States make further progress towards the mutual recognition of qualifications and skills, towards the compatibility of national social security systems, especially of pension systems and further invest in language learning as language barriers also need to be overcome. The European Youth Forum is also convinced that a mobile work force can only be achieved if mobility becomes more a common practise in other areas. Therefore, mobility opportunities for pupils and students, young people in vocational training, volunteers, entrepreneurs or trainees should be multiplied through a considerable expansion of the scope of mobility programmes.

The need to invest in youth should be reflected in the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy, as well as the short-term measures and initiatives to deal with the current financial and economic crisis, especially in the context of the implementation of the European Economic Recovery Plan.

To that effect, the European Youth Forum would urge the EU Member States to agree on a renewed and updated European Youth Pact within the post-Lisbon framework.

Conclusion

It is evident from the above that the European Youth Forum is deeply concerned with the current crisis and how this situation affects young people's possibilities of finding a quality job and remaining in the labour market with decent working conditions. Therefore, the YFJ calls upon EU Member States to agree on coordinated enhanced measures and policies, which include a strong investment in youth, and young people's education, training and entry into employment.

Our message is clear: in times of crisis invest in youth!