

# Position Paper

## UEAPME<sup>1</sup> position on the EC Communication Moving Youth into Employment

### Introduction

In December 2012 the European Commission published a Communication on Moving Youth into Employment, as part of the “Youth Employment Package” with a range of measures aimed at tackling the high levels of youth unemployment in the EU, averaging at around 23%, but closer to 50% in some Member States.

### General Comments

- The unacceptable high level of youth unemployment is one the most pressing challenges of Europe and notably the specific situation of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). This greatly risks diminishing the future employment potential of European workforce, whilst causing substantial economic and societal costs estimated at 1.2% of GDP<sup>2</sup>.
- Youth unemployment is not a new phenomenon. It was twice as high before the crisis even if it rose more rapidly during the crisis showing structural problems concerning employment legislation and relevance of education and training systems to adequately respond to labour market needs.
- UEAPME therefore supports the determination of the European institutions to tackle youth unemployment. The Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, the creation of a European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the strengthening of EURES to promote young people’s job related mobility and the principle of a European quality framework for traineeships should aim at and contribute to better integrating young people into the labour market.
- Complementing the Youth Package measures, UEAPME welcomes the Youth Employment Initiative adopted as part of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 by the European Council on 8 February 2013, focusing on regions with youth unemployment rates higher than 25%. However, it is essential that resources are spent in a cost-effective way to ensure the best possible outcomes.

### 1. The Youth Guarantee

- In view of the very worrying level of youth unemployment and the risks linked to it, UEAPME overall endorses the objective of the Youth Guarantee initiative. There is no time for complacency and Member States should try to get as many young people as possible back to work.

<sup>1</sup> UEAPME subscribes to the European Commission’s Register of Interest Representatives and to the related code of conduct as requested by the European Transparency Initiative. Our ID number is [55820581197-35](#).

<sup>2</sup> Eurofound publication on “NEETs – Young People not in employment, education or training”, 2012  
 UNION EUROPEENNE DE L’ARTISANAT ET DES PETITES ET MOYENNES ENTREPRISES  
 EUROPÄISCHE UNION DES HANDWERKS UND DER KLEIN- UND MITTELBETRIEBE  
 EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF CRAFT, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES  
 UNIONE EUROPEA DELL’ARTIGIANATO E DELLE PICCOLE E MEDIE IMPRESE

- The Youth Guarantee aims to ensure that young persons up to the age of 25 years obtain an offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. We consider the recommendations to Member States on six axes of supporting measures as pertinent, in particular the promotion of partnerships between different actors, including social partners.
- However, taking into account the diversity of national youth unemployment levels, the Youth Guarantee cannot be applied uniformly in each of the Member States. It is up to each country to define if and how such a Youth Guarantee should be established to tackle youth unemployment. The design, implementation and assessment should be done in close cooperation with national social partners.
- The aim cannot be to “guarantee” employment and/or training measures for all young people limited to this instrument alone. Youth unemployment was already high before the crisis in a certain number of Member States due a combination of factors, the lack of basic skills of young people and large number of early school leavers, lack of relevance of education and training systems alongside structural malfunctioning of labour markets as well as lack of growth and job creation measures. Thus, the Youth Guarantee should go hand in hand with tackling these underlying shortcomings, in order to achieve sustainable and long-term outcomes.
- For the Youth Guarantee to be cost-effective, the employment enhancing measures should avoid artificial subsidies for unsustainable jobs and sectors over a longer period. Moreover, despite the labour market challenges there should be a concrete reference to the individual responsibility of young people, including in searching for a job and/or education and training placement.
- As one of the key conditions for success, the Youth Guarantee should be accompanied by structural reforms, growth enhancing measures and a favourable business climate for SMEs to help overcome high unemployment levels and kick-start job creation in Europe.

For details, please see [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME\\_position\\_Youth\\_Guarantee\\_F.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME_position_Youth_Guarantee_F.pdf)

## 2. A European Quality Framework for Traineeships

- UEAPME acknowledges the role of traineeships as a valuable tool for facilitating transitions of young people from education and training to work, by providing practical work experience and promoting their employability.
- Traineeships must be clearly distinguished from apprenticeships and not be promoted to the detriment of well-established or newly created apprenticeship systems.
- For SMEs they can help screen potential future employees and enhance the attractiveness of the enterprise.
- UEAPME can support a EU Recommendation for a quality framework on traineeships covering all types of traineeships under the following conditions:
  - it is limited to general principles supporting the educational purpose of traineeships and the practical elements of learning;
  - the status of trainees is decided at national level and organised according to the respective industrial relations systems;
  - traineeships are made more appealing for SMEs and crafts businesses, as they can benefit from the intake of well-qualified persons, including tertiary level graduates. Any attempts to be over-prescriptive at EU level risks being counterproductive and reducing the stepping stone function of traineeships, at a time when it is urgent to integrate more young people into the labour market.
- Further, UEAPME does not consider a quality label for traineeships at European level as an adequate tool for companies. Its limited added value risks being largely outweighed by additional compliance burdens for companies.

- By contrast, UEAPME welcomes a user-friendly, up-dated information website such as in the context of the EURES Portal. It could help improving transparency and informing on different legal settings, rights and obligations both of employers and individuals.

For details, please see:

[http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME\\_reply\\_2nd\\_EU\\_SP\\_consultation\\_traineeships\\_120213.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME_reply_2nd_EU_SP_consultation_traineeships_120213.pdf)

### 3. A European Alliance for Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeship schemes are a cornerstone for more relevant education and training systems for labour markets needs and for combating youth unemployment.
- UEAPME strongly supports the setting-up of a European Alliance for Apprenticeships, with the objective of exchanging knowledge and practices in order to strengthen apprenticeships in quantitative and qualitative terms and the participation of young people therein.
- UEAPME together with its national members is willing to make a solid contribution to initiatives benefiting and supporting SMEs and crafts in the provision of apprenticeships and work-based learning. Since social partners and business organisations have a key role to play and intend to be actively engaged from the outset, UEAPME expresses its willingness to fully contribute to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

### 4. “EURES job for young people programme”

- An important objective of the free movement of workers is to better match demand and supply of labour in the European Union. Fostering cross-border mobility of young people in Europe is one of the best means to create a true citizenship, to improve generic skills, to enhance employability, to better overcome skills mismatches, to facilitate a better transition from school to work and to improve the functioning of labour markets.
- Therefore, UEAPME endorses the new EURES focus on young people, which should contribute to increase mobility throughout the EU for the benefits of youngsters and SMEs alike.
- In view of the high levels of unemployment and skills mismatch in Europe, UEAPME welcomes the re-launch of EURES, with a more targeted matching of skills and vacancies, and apprentices and trainees as a means to help jobseekers and young people find work or placements through greater intra-EU mobility.
- A crucial factor for matching skills and vacancies within this framework is the essential role performed by social partners in EURES activities. Thus, we would like to stress how important it is that EURES acknowledges social partners as full partners of the network in their capacity as core labour market actors, who help shape the national employment outlook, including skills.

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