



Brussels, May 2013

Fighting youth unemployment in the EU

'EU-Starter', a collaborative initiative for 1 Million young people

Context

More than 5.7 million young people are without employment within the European Union and the number keeps increasing. From a political, social and economic point of view, this is a disaster and should be addressed through all possible means.

Last year, the European Council decided a "Compact for Growth and Jobs", which confirmed the engagement of European leaders to tackle unemployment, and fighting youth unemployment is a top priority for the current trio-Presidencies of the European Union (Ireland-Lithuania-Greece).

On 28th February 2013, the Council of Ministers (Employment and Social Policy) reached political agreement on a recommendation addressed to the Member States to establish "youth guarantee" schemes. These should be implemented as from 2014. EU leaders proposed that EUR 6 billion be made available to combat youth unemployment in the future EU budget. This still needs to be approved by the European Parliament, but the commitment is there.

The European Commission has proposed an amendment to the ESF regulation on 12th March 2013, proposing that unspent ESF money could be re-allocated to NUTS II with a level of youth unemployment above 25%. Both Commission President José Manuel Barroso, and European Council President Herman Van Rompuy have called for EU leaders to bring youth unemployment to the agenda of the European Summit on 27 and 28 June.

Based on the success of different experiences held in several member states, with the engagement of local and regional governments and their national associations, the CEMR proposes to launch a specific European initiative to offer work experience in local public services or NGOs for the young Europeans, accompanied by complementary training and a part-time remuneration (including social security). This initiative could be launched easily with the support of the European funds (ESF or Growth pack) and the mobilisation of the concerned member states, local and regional authorities and local NGOs. Furthermore, such an initiative would complement existing national initiatives and projects reflecting such objectives, and promote their further development and transferability. It is important to note that this does not aim to replace existing national programmes, but rather to bring them together and make the link between un-used European Social Funding and the aims of this EU Starter. The objective is to integrate 1 million young Europeans into our labour markets before the end of 2013

DESCRIPTION

Access criteria

Aimed at the regions with youth unemployment higher than 10%.

To ensure homogeneity of the EU Starter, a number of criteria may be defined. These criteria should include the age of the beneficiaries, their level of qualification, their social status...

Target group

Young Europeans between 16 and 27 that are currently without job, without training or education. The EU Starter can be an experimental initiative, implemented in the framework of the “youth guarantee” recently published by the European Commission.

Areas of activities

Services in public authorities, public institutions or non-profit organisations;

Local services of general interest, such as elderly homes, libraries, kindergarten, youth centres, hospitals, museums, sports facilities, local administration, schools etc.

The engagement of young people would not replace existing workforce, but rather offer additional services, and offering a higher quality of service to the local population.

Duration

One year, with option for renewal for one year.

Remuneration

The initiative should include a minimum remuneration modelled in the different member states in accordance of the cost of living and standard remuneration. From 200 € to 500 € paid by the EU budget (from the ESF, for example) with the possibility for the state to complete the remuneration through its own budget. In addition, social security should be paid by the state and support should be given for training; additional fees can be paid to cover travel costs or other daily expenses.

Legal basis

The Member States of the European Union should agree on a number of core quality standards. The basis for the engagement could, for example, comprise a description of the task, working conditions, training programmes, non-taxation of the remuneration and a certificate at the end of the initiative. This EU Starter should be open to unemployed young men and women aged 16 to 27. Each contract should be signed for one year with a possibility of extension for one extra year. It should, furthermore, concern all regions where youth unemployment reaches 10% or more.

Financing

The fees for the social security, training, food and travel expenses should be paid by the employer, the local, regional or national government. The European Union should cover the remuneration through the European Social Fund or Growth pack; the total cost for the EU budget could range between 3.6 - 5 Billion Euros per year.

As the European Council agreed at the meeting on 28&29 June 2012 to provide **€55bn** from unused structural funds in particular for small and medium enterprises and youth employment, this amount seems reasonable.

Benefits of the EU-Starter

1. The EU-Starter could help a large number of young Europeans to find their feet in working life, taking on a meaningful task and at the same time gaining practical, working experience. This learning-by-doing and the feeling that they are actually needed will help increase their employability.
2. With young people working where they are needed, it can in many ways help to improve the service of public facilities and non-profit organisations, which in turn is a benefit for our citizens.
3. It offers a chance of promoting the establishment of a civil society in the individual countries and encouraging self-responsibility in the various cities.
4. It is a clear signal of European solidarity for the young people and would boost the social cohesion within the EU.
5. The EU-Starter could be realised very quickly which, in the light of the massive unemployment and increasing lack of perspectives and social tension, is a particularly important factor.

Next steps

The initiative needs the support of the European Commission, the European Council and the national governments.

The CEMR secretariat and the CEMR member associations in all EU Member States are willing to engage to promote this initiative and mobilise local and regional authorities. We are convinced that this proposal which could be realised in a short time will be a fair chance for one million young people in the EU to re-integrate into our labour markets.