



To Dr Max Uebe, Head of Unit "Employment Strategy", DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

To whom it may concern within the framework of the Strategic Dialogue of DG EMPL with Civil Society

As Don Bosco International, we were glad to contribute together with other civil society organizations to the Strategic Dialogue Meeting on reinforcing the Youth Guarantee, which took place on March 2 in Brussels. We acknowledge and appreciate your commitment to this Strategic Dialogue. This letter is meant as a follow-up to the above-mentioned Meeting and as a possible further contribution to your work in drafting a reinforced Youth Guarantee.

Over the last five years, thanks to the dedicated work of our Don Bosco partners in 20 EU countries with young people in NEET situation, we were able to witness the positive outcomes of the implementation of the EU Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee. Therefore, we welcome the European Commission's efforts to reinforce this measure for the coming years.

Accordingly, we also attest that the “NEET” concept has been an extremely powerful tool in focusing public opinion and policymakers’ attention on the problems of young people. Nevertheless, we also believe that disentangling the heterogeneity of NEETs is essential for a better understanding of the characteristics and needs of the various subgroups and in tailoring effective policy measures and initiatives to re-integrate young people into the labour market or education. Therefore, we would like to suggest that a new EU Council Recommendation reinforcing the Youth Guarantee could invite Member States to better target their policy interventions by taking into account the different characteristics and needs of the various subgroups within the NEET population.

Furthermore, the assessment of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee revealed that, in many instances, Member States focused their efforts on job-ready young people rather than more disadvantaged groups.¹ Scientific evidence also suggests that young people can deal relatively well with short-term disengagement whereas protracted disengagement can become very problematic at both an individual and societal level, generating a scarring effect and a lifelong penalty in these young people (with subsequent possible intergenerational effects) and also putting the future of democracy in the European Union into question.² A pragmatic approach was understandable given the swift implementation of the first edition of the Youth Guarantee; however, we would like to suggest that a reinforced edition of this measure could invite Member States to pay special attention to providing a range of policies that target different groups of young people in NEET situations, prioritizing the disengaged ones and the ones experiencing long-term unemployment.

In doing so, a new EU Council Recommendation reinforcing the Youth Guarantee could also incorporate the indications included in the “Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market”, promoted by the European Commission and the Council of the European Union in 2016. Further cooperation between public institutions and civil society organizations could ameliorate what has already been achieved in this field. As a first step, the

¹ EUROFOUND, *Long-term unemployed youth. Characteristics and policy responses*, 2017.

² EUROFOUND, *Mapping youth transitions in Europe*, 2014; *Exploring the diversity of NEETs*, 2016.



Commission's proposal could ask Member States to foster the exchange of good practices among regional authorities in their interaction with civil society actors. Given the multiple levels of disadvantage that disengaged or long-term unemployed young people are more likely to face, civil society organizations could complement the essential role of Public Employment Services in reaching out to these young people and addressing their motivation levels, as well as trust and confidence in the relevant institutions.

We appreciate what the EU is doing for young people in NEET situations with the limited resources of its budget. Nonetheless, we hope for the new proposal of the European Commission for an EU Council Recommendation reinforcing the Youth Guarantee to ask Member States to address first those young people who were overlooked in the implementation of the first edition of this measure. We believe that this is key for the present and the future of Europe, and the Salesians of Don Bosco are eager to cooperate with Member States to make sure that no young people in the EU are left behind.

Don Bosco International

Brussels, 10 March 2020