



“The European Employment Strategy and Young People”

Adopted by the Executive Committee,
Potsdam, Germany, 26-28 March 1999

The European Employment Strategy

Background

The inclusion of a Title on Employment in the Treaty of Amsterdam gave a formal basis to the European Employment Strategy and made increasing employment levels one of the key priorities of the European Union.

The European Employment Strategy aims to take a comprehensive approach to the strengthening of economic growth and high unemployment levels in the European Union by co-ordinating Member States' employment policies. The Luxembourg process is the name given to the annual cycle for the implementation and monitoring of the European Employment Strategy. It consists of three key steps:

- At the end of each year, the Council adopts Employment Guidelines for the following year.
- The Member States submit updated National Action Plans based on the Employment Guidelines for that year.
- The Commission and the Council then produce a Joint Employment Report, which analyses the performance of each of the Member States in implementing the Guidelines.

In 1997 the Youth Forum issued a leaflet entitled 'Fighting for our Future', which was followed-up by a conference in Cardiff in 1998. As the Treaty of Amsterdam will be ratified in the near future, and given the importance attached to the issue of employment by the current Presidency, it is crucial for the Youth Forum to develop further a position on Youth and the European Employment Strategy.

Youth Forum Policy on Youth Employment and the European Employment Strategy

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The European Youth Forum believes that high youth unemployment levels in all European countries should be tackled. A concerted effort should be made to raise employment levels. The Youth Forum commits itself to developing its policy in this area and enabling all member organisations to lobby effectively at the European and national level for an increased emphasis on improving youth employment policies.

The European Union Employment Strategy

The European Youth Forum supports the objective of increasing youth employment levels in the European Union. It welcomes the inclusion of an Employment Title in the Treaty of Amsterdam and the adoption of a coordinated approach by the Member States to achieve this.

In consideration of the structure for implementing and monitoring the European Employment Strategy, and the continuing high rates of youth unemployment in Europe, the Youth Forum will monitor the implementation of the annual Employment Guidelines through the NAPs, and develop a number of key demands concerning measures to improve youth employment levels.

A. Monitoring and evaluating the Luxembourg Process to ensure the representation of the interests of young people

- The Youth Forum will examine the way in which each Member State has implemented the particular guidelines that concern young people.
- The Youth Forum will encourage member organisations to monitor employment and training schemes at the national and local level. It will provide member organisations with regular updates on the European Employment Strategy, particularly on each year's Employment Guidelines, NAPs, and the Joint Employment Report.
- The Youth Forum and its member organisations will lobby Member States to ensure that national employment policies take full account of the measures for young people included in the Employment Guidelines

B. The implementation of the European Employment Strategy

- The Youth Forum demands that social security benefits should not be withdrawn from young people who refuse to participate in training and work experience schemes because of their participation in other

activities such as voluntary work. It must be recognised that participation and training within voluntary organisations provides a valuable form of non-formal education that benefits young people in the labour market.

- Training and employment schemes should not merely be used as temporary measures to reduce the youth unemployment statistics, but should genuinely aim to improve the employability of young people and lead to permanent employment. Training should be accredited and transferable, and to facilitate this we call for the creation of a European-wide system for the accreditation of vocational training.
- Young people should have the possibility of participating in a training or employment scheme according to their ultimate career objectives and their individual ability. Systems for advising and assisting young people in finding employment positions should be developed further, both at a national and a European level.
- Remuneration for work experience and on-the job training must be fair and sufficient to cover living expenses. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value should be respected in order to avoid young people becoming a source of cheap labour.

C. Key demands to improve youth employment levels.

- The Youth Forum will seek a quantitative commitment to increasing Youth employment. This would reinforce the aims of the guidelines and ensure that the Member States make a significant effort to reduce youth unemployment.
- The Youth Forum supports the emphasis placed on youth in the 'Employability' pillar of the Guidelines. The Youth Forum welcomes the measures to offer **all** young people training or work experience after six months of unemployment. However, the schemes established in response to this Guideline must be of a high quality and respond to both the modern labour market and the interests of young people.
- The Youth Forum believes that measures to improve the quality of the education system to prevent young people from leaving education early and to ensure that young people have the ability and skills to adapt to technological and economic change are vital. This should be done in consultation with third sector organisations working in the field of education.
- The Youth Forum supports the inclusion of measures to raise employment levels among those who suffer discrimination in the labour market, notably women, the disabled, the ethnic minorities and people

with different sexual orientations. It is also of importance that measures should exist to prevent any discrimination against these groups in the labour market.

- The support for youth entrepreneurs should be increased, with systems of technical assistance and grants for young people.