

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Nicolas Schmit
Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

Letter sent by e-mail:
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Youth Guarantee: The momentum for quality jobs is now!

Dear President von der Leyen,
Dear Commissioner Schmit,

In recent weeks every aspect of our life as we know it has been turned around. The European Union is once again under scrutiny and we are under strong pressure to demonstrate to the citizens that it can offer strategies on how to overcome the consequences of the pandemic.

You are certainly aware that one of the hardest hit groups in term of employment are young people. This is due to precarious working conditions and lack of access to social protection. The precarious contracts, the overrepresentation in strongly affected sectors and the size of the companies they work in mean that young people are often not protected by the short term work schemes delivered by social partners and governments in response to the pandemic. The impact on young workers will be worse than after the financial crisis in 2009.

In the aftermath of the crisis, we cannot leave the burden of choosing the quality job on the shoulders of individuals. Vulnerable workers will be in a situation where they prioritize any kind of income over working conditions and labour rights. The institutions and social partners have to show strong leadership and provide citizens with guarantees for stability and well-being.

In 2013 we pioneered the Youth Guarantee, adopted as a universal tool to fight record youth unemployment in Europe. Unfortunately, it did not counter existing tendencies in the labour market that gave fertile ground for precariousness, forcing workers to accept bad working conditions and salaries on a subsistence level, placing them beyond the reach of social security systems.

Today we have the chance to turn this tool into a Europe-wide mechanism that will contribute to the creation of quality jobs and the transition of young people to the labour market.

The evaluation of the mechanism proved that the low quality of the offer and timely intervention were the main obstacles to successful implementation.

We urge the European Commission to be bold and to secure the chances of the young generation for a stable future, to regain their trust in the European Project and to guarantee that the recovery from the pandemic is fair and gives everyone a chance to move on. For this, two concrete tools will be needed:

- **Youth Guarantee quality criteria framework negotiated with the social partners**

Quality criteria would help lead to quality employment creation and fight against bad practice, misuse of public money as well as disappointment and mistrust of young people in the institutions.

- **Effective synergies of the Youth Guarantee with the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights**

Lack of access to social protection has shown during this COVID-19 crisis that young people are not protected against sudden layoffs and wage cuts. Appropriate social protection is the best tool to support the insertion of all young people, including the most vulnerable groups, into permanent employment.

Tackling these challenges will only be possible through **appropriate financial resources** and a strong partnership for design and implementation. The European Social Fund should continue, in the MFF 2021-2027, to play a key role both in supporting the creation of new quality employment and in promoting social inclusion. We consider that the ESF remains the main EU instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities. We also call for extra financial resources for the Youth Employment Initiative that will help Member States to focus on quality employment for young people. The additional financial resources should be strongly linked to the improvement of the quality as well as enlarging the scope of beneficiaries that we believe should include every young citizen below the age of 30.

ETUC wants to seize the momentum to offer quality jobs, traineeships or further education to young unemployed, in a situation where many predict only dark scenarios. It is time to reinforce the Youth Guarantee and make it an effective tool in the short as well as the long-term perspective. We have learnt the lessons and this time we must not leave anyone behind!

Luca Visentini
General Secretary



Tea Jarc
President of ETUC Youth
Committee



Ludovic Voet
Confederal Secretary

