

## Youth unemployment: Down to zero?

Young people in Europe are eager to move on, to work and to participate, but more than 4 million of them are in a precarious position. How can we reduce youth unemployment to close to zero within 10 years? Has Europe taken decisive action for a real crackdown?

### Figures are stark

The economic crisis hit the young severely. From the second quarter of 2008 (15.2%), the [youth unemployment rate](#) has taken an upward trend, peaking at 23.8% in the first quarter of 2013, before receding to 21.4% at the end of 2014. In February 2016, [4.38 million young persons](#) (under 25) were unemployed in the European Union (19.4%). This means that almost one in five young Europeans on the labour market cannot find a job. In Greece (48.9%) and Spain (45.3%), it is almost one in two. The young are at much greater risk in terms of precariousness: 43% of youth employees (15-24) were on [temporary contracts](#), and 31.3% had part-time jobs in 2014. Young people have been disproportionately hit by the crisis. Over the past four years, the overall employment rates for young people fell three times as much as for adults. The potential of job mobility to help tackle youth unemployment remains to be further developed: the workforce in employment in the EU is around 217.8 million persons, of which only 7.5 million ([3.3%](#)) are working in another Member State. EU surveys show that young people are the group most likely to be [mobile](#). Unless current trends are reversed quickly, today's levels of youth unemployment risk damaging the [longer-term employment prospects](#) of young people, with serious implications for future growth and social cohesion. In a 2014 [resolution](#), the European Parliament warns that there will be no significant sustainable economic growth in the EU unless inequalities are reduced, and recalls that this starts with reducing unemployment, especially youth unemployment, and alleviating poverty.

### Tackling youth unemployment: is enough being done?

A [series of initiatives](#) is being carried out to attempt to reduce youth unemployment at EU level.

*Investing in youth.* The Youth Guarantee seeks to ensure that all EU Member States make a good-quality offer – to all young people up to age 25 – of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The Youth Guarantee should enable young people to find a job suited to their education, skills and experience, or to acquire the education, skills and experience directly relevant to increasing their chances of finding a job in the future. Significant EU financial instruments support its setting up in Member States – most notably from the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative (€6.4 billion).

*Quality apprenticeships and traineeships.* Effective vocational education and training systems, with a strong work-based learning component, appear to facilitate the transition of young people from education to work. On 2 July 2013, the European Commission launched the [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#), to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU and to change mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning. In parallel, so that young people can gain high-quality work experience in safe and fair conditions, and increase their employability, Member States agreed on a [Quality Framework for Traineeships](#) (2014).

*Labour mobility.* The EU facilitates labour mobility, in particular by making young people aware of job opportunities in other EU countries. [EURES](#) provides information, advice and recruitment/placement (job matching) services for the benefit of workers and employers. As part of this development, the European Commission has been testing a scheme called [Your first EURES Job](#) (YfEJ), to help young people aged 18-30 to find a job in any of the 28 Member States (remunerated, with a minimum six-month contract).

*This note has been prepared for the [European Youth Event](#), taking place in Strasbourg in May 2016.*

