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**On World Youth Skills Day 2016, the EESC calls for a skills offensive to combat youth unemployment and the skills mismatch in the labour market**

According to Eurostat figures, in May 2016 there were **4,197 million unemployed young people** **(18.6%) in the EU-28**. Although an improvement on the previous year (20.3%), the figure remains appalling and shows that the threat of a "lost generation", which has loomed large since the beginning of the economic and financial crisis, is still hanging dangerously over Europe. Despite this, businesses across the EU are struggling to find young people with the skills they need.

To tackle this twofold problem, the EESC believes that a **European skills offensive** is needed. This should aim to **combat the mismatch between the skills in demand on the labour market and young people's actual skills when they enter it**. The EESC is persuaded that the key ingredients of a strategy to solve this pressing problem should include **an education to entrepreneurship and the enhancement of ICT and soft skills**, **a well-functioning apprenticeship system** and **measures facilitating mobility**.

Entrepreneurship education should aim to give all learners the opportunity to develop the range of skills and competences required of entrepreneurs, including a sense of initiative, the ability to turn ideas into action, creativity, innovation, risk-taking, management, communication and team work expertise. It should be included at all levels of education and training so as to enable the continuous development of these skills across the curriculum. Digital knowledge and skills are now a core part of everyone's economic and social lives and should likewise cover all stages and forms of education.

Well-functioning apprenticeships and other quality forms of work-based learning can help young people make a smoother transition from school to employment. Dual learning systems have proven to be very effective in this respect and Member States which do not have such systems should explore the costs involved in developing them, compared with the benefits for companies' competitiveness and young peoples’ job opportunities. Partnerships between schools, training centres, trade unions and the business community are also important, and employers will get more involved in apprenticeship schemes when these genuinely meet their needs. As from 2017, the EESC plans to support the creation of such partnerships in the framework of a joint project with Cedefop.

Mobility is another key element in matching the employability of youths searching for jobs with the needs of the market. Language skills are essential to ensure that European citizens are able to move, work and learn freely and so is the recognition and transparency of skills and qualifications. A European Area of Skills and Qualifications would be crucial in this respect.

Finally, the EESC believes that investment to improve youth employability through skills enhancement is crucial for the future of European economies and societies and therefore recommends that Member States' resources allocated for quality education should not be considered as expenditure but as essential investment to build a better future for all.

The Committee welcomes the publication of the New skills agenda for Europe by the Commission and is currently preparing an opinion on it.

*"Improving young people's skills and employability is not a matter solely for young people. It is a responsibility that should be faced and shared by all stakeholders - governments, schools and universities, the social partners and others. Employers, workers and organised civil society players know what skills are needed in the world of work and are eager to share their reservoir of expertise and wealth of insights to ensure that Europe's next generation is equipped with the skills to actively shape its own present and future" says Vladimíra Drbalová, rapporteur of several EESC opinions on this subject.*

EESC recent opinions and studies on youth skills and employability:

[*Improving the performance of national dual training systems*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.34882)(2015)

[*Fostering creativity, entrepreneurship and mobility in education and training*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.33478) (2015)

[*Vocational development and training in rural areas*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.nat-opinions.34331)(2015)

[*Recognition of skills and qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.34487)(2015)

[Implementation of EU policies for youth employment: a civil society perspective](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.lmo-observatory-impact-study-youth) (2014)

[*Employability of young people*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.ccmi-opinions.29228) (2014)

[*Quality framework for traineeships*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.30306)(2014)

[*The role of business in relation to education in the EU*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.23967)(2013)

[*Youth Guarantee*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.27502)(2013)

[*Rethinking Education*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.25531) (2013)

[*Youth employment, technical skills and mobility*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.19327)(2012)

[*Youth Opportunities Initiative*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.21992)(2012)

[*The economic crisis, education and the labour market*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.14938) (2011)

[*Vocational education and training as an attractive alternative to higher education*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-voc-educ-training-presentations.19335) (2011)

[*An Agenda for new skills and jobs*](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.15046)(2011)

To learn more about World Youth Skills Day please visit the UN dedicated page at <http://www.un.org/en/events/youthskillsday/background.shtml> and read the [Secretary-general's statement](http://www.un.org/en/events/youthskillsday/) on World Youth Skills Day 2016.

For more information:

**Daniela Marangoni**- EESC Press Unit

Email: [press@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:press@eesc.europa.eu)

Tel: +32 2 546 8422

*The European Economic and Social Committee is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The Committee has 350 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union. It represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.*