# Youth on the move: a framework for improving Europe's education and training systems

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PURPOSE: to propose “Youth on the Move”, an initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union.

BACKGROUND: the Europe 2020 Strategy sets ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. Quality education and training, successful labour market integration and more mobility of young people are key to **unleashing all young people's potential**.

There are close to 100 million in the EU, representing a fifth of its total population. Despite the unprecedented opportunities which modern Europe offers, young people face challenges – aggravated by the economic crisis - in education and training systems and in accessing the labour market. Youth unemployment is unacceptably high at almost 21%. In order to reach the 75% employment target for the population aged 20-64 years, the transition of young people to the labour market needs to be radically improved.

The communication states that fewer than one person in three in the EU (31.1%) has a higher education degree compared to over 40% in the US and over 50% in Japan. The Europe 2020 Strategy has agreed the EU headline target that by 2020, at least 40% of 30-34 years olds should have completed tertiary or equivalent education. Moreover, currently, 14.4% of 18-24 years old in the EU have less than upper secondary education and are not in further education and training. The EU benchmark is to reduce early school-leaving to 10%.

The Commission proposes this new initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union.

CONTENT: Youth on the Move is the **EU's flagship initiative torespond to the challenges young people face and to help them succeed in the knowledge economy**. It is a framework agenda announcing key new actions, reinforcing existing activities and ensuring the implementation of others at EU and national levels, while respecting the subsidiarity principle. Candidate countries should also be able to benefit from this initiative, through the appropriate mechanisms.

Youth on the Move will focus on **four main lines of action**:

**1. Education and lifelong learning**: smart and inclusive growth depends on actions throughout the lifelong learning system, to develop key competences and quality learning outcomes, in line with labour market needs. Europe needs to extend and broaden learning opportunities for young people as a whole, including supporting the acquisition of skills through non-formal educational activities.

Youth on the Move will support these actions, inter alia, by proposing:

- a Council Recommendation to encourage Member States to **tackle the high level of early school leaving**, through the 2011 European Year of Volunteering;

- a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The Commission is also promoting **apprenticeship-type vocational training** and **high quality traineeships** as workplace learning experiences, building bridges to the labour market.

**2. Promoting the attractiveness of higher education**: higher education is a major driver of economic competitiveness in the knowledge-driven economy, making high quality third-level education essential in achieving economic and social objectives. With an increasing number of jobs requiring high-level skills, more young people will need to enter and complete higher education in order for the EU to reach the Europe 2020 target of 40% attainment of higher education or equivalent. In addition, research should attract and retain more young people by providing attractive employment conditions. Realising these objectives will require a multi-faceted approach, aiming at modernising higher education, ensuring quality, excellence and transparency and stimulating partnerships in a globalised world. Member States need to step up efforts to **modernise higher education** in the areas of curricula, governance and funding**,** by implementing the priorities agreed in the context of the Bologna process, supporting **a new agenda for cooperation and reform** at EU level and focusing on the new challenges in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Higher education is becoming increasingly internationalised. More **mobility**, international openness and transparency are needed to attract the best students, teachers and researchers, to create and reinforce partnerships and academic cooperation with universities from other parts of the world. This will require a specific emphasis on reinforcing international cooperation, programmes and policy dialogue in higher education.

The Commission will also:

- present a Communication setting out the key challenges and actions needed for higher education in Europe in a 2020 perspective will be presented in 2011, including an EU internationalisation strategy;

- present in 2011 the results of a feasibility study to develop an alternative multi-dimensional global university ranking system, which takes into account the diversity of higher education institutions.

**3. Mobility**: learning mobility is an important way in which young people can strengthen their future employability and acquire new professional competences. The Commission's aim is to extend opportunities for learning mobility to all young people in Europe by 2020 by mobilising resources and **removing obstacles to pursuing a learning experience abroad.** It will also seek to develop a **Youth on the Move card** to speed up the integration process for mobile learners when moving abroad and provide other advantages in line with national youth or student cards. A dedicated website will also be created to give full transparency to all relevant EU programmes, opportunities and rights related to learning mobility for young people.

In addition, the Commission will propose in 2010 **EU benchmarks on learning mobility**, focusing in particular on students in higher education and VET.

The Commission will also propose a **European Skills Passport** (2011), based on existing elements of Europass, to record in a transparent and comparable way the competences acquired by people throughout their lives in a variety of learning settings, including e-skills and informal and non-formal learning. This should facilitate mobility by easing the recognition of skills across countries.

The Commission shall develop a new initiative: "**Your first EURES job**", as a pilot project (subject to it receiving the required financial support by the budgetary authority) to help young people with finding a job in any of the EU-27 Member States and moving abroad.

**4. Youth employment**: Europe must urgently improve the **employment situation of young people**. Youth on the Move presents a framework of policy priorities for action at national and EU level to reduce youth unemployment by facilitating the transition from school to work and reducing labour market segmentation. Particular focus is put on the role of **Public Employment Services**, encouraging a **Youth Guarantee** to ensure all young people are in a job, in education or in activation, creating a **European Vacancy Monitor** and **supporting young entrepreneurs**.

**Exploiting the full potential of EU funding programmes**: several existing programmes already support the Youth on the Move objectives. For education and training, the Lifelong Learning programme (including Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig), Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Marie Curie Actions address specific target groups. Their objectives should be strengthened, rationalised and better used to support the Youth on the Move objectives.

These programmes alone, however, will not be able to cater for all demands. Hence, there is a need to link up funding from many sources and have wider engagement of public authorities, civil society, business and others in support of the Youth on the Move objectives, to achieve the critical mass required.

It will harness the financial support of the relevant EU programmes on education, youth, and learning mobility, as well as the **Structural Funds**. **All existing programmes will be reviewed** to develop a more integrated approach to support the Youth on the Move initiative under the **next Financial Framework**.

**Future actions and review**: Youth on the Move will be implemented in close synergy with the "Agenda for New Skills and Jobs" flagship initiative, announced in Europe 2020. The actions announced in this Communication will be reviewed and updated over time, within the 2020 horizon. The Commission will launch an information campaign in 2010 to support the Youth on the Move initiative for the next decade.