



6 May 2011

### **“YOUR EUROPE, YOUR SAY!” – AN INVITATION FROM THE EESC FOR STUDENTS (16-17 YEARS OLD) TO ANALYZE THE OPINION ON THE COMMISSION “YOUTH ON THE MOVE” INITIATIVE, AND WRITE AMENDMENTS.**

#### **PLENARY SESSION, 2:30-3:30 PM “ENHANCING YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY”**

#### **ADDRESS BY GUILLAUME CRAVERO**

I would like to thank you for inviting BUSINESSEUROPE today. I hope the workshops were fruitful for you this morning. I must say that youth is high on the agenda of the European Union, as well as Member States, with unemployment figures reaching 40% in Spain for instance.

First of all, let me introduce BUSINESSEUROPE. We are the main employers' representative and an EU Social Partner. We represent more than 20 million companies located in 34 countries. Our members are national employer organizations.

Together with the EU Social Partners, we have the ability and the task to discuss EU employment and social policies, with the objective to make labour markets more resilient and competitive in a rapidly changing world.

The EESC has launched this interesting initiative to consult young people like you who are actors for one day, but who will also be actors in our Labour Markets tomorrow. You will provide ideas in response to the “Youth on the move” initiative, and I am sure that you look at your upcoming professional choices as exciting moments.

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I will not report on the situation of young people across Europe that we all know, but will present the factors enhancing youth employability.

Indeed, it is of utmost importance to foster young people's ability to better manage their transition into the labour market. This is a key for tackling youth unemployment and to take advantage of the many opportunities available out there.

Finding a job requires that there are jobs available. And the precondition for that is economic growth, and dynamic and flexible labour markets in Europe.

For young people, finding their first job, whatever the form it will take is a matter of having the right skills and qualifications.



The situation appears to be a paradox today because young people are more educated than ever, but youth unemployment remains high.

To provide a stronger connection between education and work, there must be efforts both in education and from the business community. But the responsibility and the own initiatives of the individual are also important.

Some examples:

- In Denmark, 90% of youth who has undertaken vocational training find employment within one year
- British companies found that the best thing they could do to facilitate young people's transition into the labour market was to tackling opportunities for work place learning.
- There are also initiatives aimed at tackling gender segregation thanks to the promotion of STEM academic paths for girls (girls day in Germany).
- The systematization of experiences abroad could also lead to valuable qualifications.

The priority should be to find ways to increase the amount of experience that young people can actually have:

- In the Inclusive Labour Markets agreement, EU Social Partners highlighted the promotion of more and better apprenticeship and traineeship contracts as an important challenge.
- It is also necessary to foster better-informed choices and to be confronted with the real working life (keep focusing on the quality of work placements is counterproductive).

And let me add that young people should, on top of that, take advantage of their sense of curiosity: using social networks and the internet to look for information on the companies they like, contacting alumni and managers to find out more of the content of a job thanks to insiders feedbacks, or creating blogs to promote their centre of interests.

We live in a time of openness and in my opinion young people should keep aiming at it, with a proactive spirit rather than closing the door to the many opportunities that exist for them. This is how I view your contribution to the EESC opinion paper.

Thank you.

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