

Youth Guarantee

Position Paper

I. Introduction

EASPD is the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities. We are a European not-for-profit organisation and represent over 10,000 social service provider organisations across Europe and disability. The main objective of EASPD is to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high-quality service systems.

One third of EASPD members is composed of employment-related service providers, most of which are sheltered workshops and supported employment settings.

EASPD is registered at the Transparency Register under the following number: 120906010805-50

Here is our reaction to the 'Youth Guarantee', commenting on the issues which are relevant for our sector.

Given the important role played by EASPD in terms of representation of employment services for persons with disabilities, we are available for further support to the discussions related to the Youth Guarantee.

II. Our position

EASPD welcomes and fully supports the engagement in this field shown by the European Commission and EPSCO. EASPD aims to improve employability and work inclusion for people with disabilities and one of our main goals is also to implement Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted, and equally remunerated in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to all.

The implementation of a youth guarantee is indeed a first step in bringing young people out of unemployment and ensuring a **rights-based approach** to employment in Europe.

EASPD is convinced that this programme is a **major step** towards tackling youth unemployment, potentially also for the young disabled, who suffer much higher unemployment rates than their non-disabled peers.

We also welcome the European Parliament's request to extend the target group of the Youth Guarantee for young people up to the age of 30 in order to also include "graduates and those leaving training systems without qualifications", a measure that would significantly reduce the number of those excluded by the programme.

However, EASPD would like to express its concern over some **key issues** regarding the Youth Guarantee:

- **EASPD expects that all programmes developed under this guarantee make provision for the real and active participation of school leavers and young people with disabilities** as young people with disabilities tend to be left behind and clear policies to help their transition from education to the labour market are absent.
- **EASPD also demands that young people with disabilities are supported into the open labour market**, also through their active inclusion in mainstream programmes such as the Youth Guarantee or Erasmus+.
- It is clear that social service providers play and will continue to play a key role in enabling vulnerable youth to get jobs, in our case persons with disabilities. As such, we **regret that the Youth Guarantee fails to mention the important role played by support provision in the employment of youth with disabilities and vulnerable people**. It is important that social service providers be **recognised for their role in enabling employment or training opportunities**.
- **The Commission and the member states should further invest in the Youth Guarantee, also by using means such as the European social fund (ESF)** as the €6 billion allocated for the programme seems largely insufficient. The current guidelines and provisions for the ESF and other structural funds and programmes should be reviewed to ensure that young persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual/learning disabilities and mental health disorders, are not excluded.
- **EASPD suggests that European policy makers should also invest in the development of high-quality vocational education and training systems**. In addition to this, accessibility and inclusion of the education and training systems for persons with disabilities should be improved, as stated by Articles 24 and 27 of the UNCRPD. **The Commission and the Member States must also guarantee the necessary support for young people with disabilities for the transition phase from fulltime education into work** and, in case of unemployment, tailored reintegration measures should be adopted.
- **EASPD wishes that European authorities and EU Member states take into consideration a wide range of support programmes** to ensure the accessibility of the Youth Guarantee for all persons with disabilities. **The programme should provide equity of access for the disabled young people, guarantee an adequate income and set specific programmes in order to match the individual's needs and their type of disability**.
- **EASPD recommends that EU Member States and regional and local authorities set up integrated territorial development strategies, including training and employment components and involve all relevant stakeholders** in the design and implementation of the national, regional and local action plans. The Commission and the Member States should also develop an action plan together with all relevant stakeholders in order to promote sustainable and high quality youth employment, including for young people with disabilities.