

Youth Employment: Can Europe Help?

Proposals from young adults in Hauts-de-France

In the context of growing Euroscepticism and dissatisfaction towards the European project and political sphere, Confrontations Europe met with young adults in Hauts-de-France, none of whom regularly discuss European issues, in order to give them the opportunity to interact with political decision-makers through a series of three meetings, a public conference, and video interviews.

Proposals relating to the professional integration of young adults and European initiatives were developed from the accounts of the participants, partners, and the think tank Confrontations Europe. This is the summary of the resulting document published in December 2016.

The partners of the project are ADICE, Afev, Agence Erasmus+ France/Education Formation, Alliance emploi, the CFA régional Saint Louis, the CFDT Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the Hauts-de-France Regional Council, the CRIJ Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the École de la deuxième chance Grand Lille, the Fondation Hippocrène, the Institut Nicolas Barré, the Jeunes Européens-Lille Métropole, the French Ministry of European Affairs, the Mission locale de Lille, the Petits Débrouillards, the Representation of the European Commission in France, and the city of Lille.

European mobility as a factor in professional integration

The participants propose to:

- **Enable everyone to benefit from the different mobility programs.**
For mobility programs (e.g., Erasmus+ for students, apprentices, and job seekers; the European Voluntary Service) to benefit young adults with fewer opportunities, their publicity must be improved by seeking to:
 - **Promote information through peers** with the creation of an experience exchange network by young adults for young adults to reassure those concerned for the realities of life abroad.
 - **Launch larger program publicity campaigns at the national scale** (such as the European Voluntary Service, open to everyone).
 - **Involve teachers and scholastic intuitions** and develop terms in curricula to enable short mobility experiences.
 - **Open mobility programs** to young adults 25 to 30.
- **Ease the administrative measures** associated with mobility.
- **Create quality, personalized support systems** (information, education, etc.).
- **Ease the procedures required to intern abroad**, notably to Belgium and the United Kingdom, in Hauts-de-France by integrating the measures, files, duration, learning objectives, and funding procedures. Facilitate networking between actors welcoming young adults (i.e., the points of reference in companies and municipalities). Invest in language learning that could allow for greater cross-border mobility (e.g., Flemish classes in Hauts-de-France).

Concerning mobility by apprentices:

- **Give technical support to French training centers for apprentices (Centres de formation des Apprentis - CFAs) that want to pilot mobility projects** to help them establish a network of European partners. Enable the exchange of information on experiences and best practices between CFAs. Meet with the CFAs whose projects have been rejected by Agence Erasmus+

(which constitute a majority) to help improve the quality of their projects so that they meet Agence Erasmus+ standards.

- Encourage CFAs to **establish a mobility reference point** within their institution to shoulder the administrative work and ease the burden on professors. If need be, **these resources can be shared between several CFAs**.
- **Encourage large companies to enable mobility by their apprentices.** Learning must be considered a long-term investment in human capital. If the company wishes to keep an apprentice at the end of their apprenticeship, mobility experience can be as beneficial for the company as for the apprentice; in fact, upon their return, the apprentice can bring with them new techniques and an open mind, stimulating activity for the company.
 - o In order to promote mobility by apprentices, **the remuneration of the apprentice could be covered by public funding** (European, national, or regional) **at the time of mobility**.
 - o Mobility by apprentices can be promoted within companies that have partners, suppliers, or clients in other member states. It should be **coordinated through existing company networks**.

Personalized support and strategic cooperation for the professional integration of all (Youth Guarantee, Initiative for Youth Employment)

The participants propose to:

- **Reach the most remote audiences.** These programs are put in place for those furthest from the job market. However, they are largely unknown by the general public. The participants advocate targeting the young adults having the most difficulty through **a social network publicity campaign in the form of videos directed by young adults who have used these programs. Networking efforts between organizations** allow for the equal capture of even the most vulnerable audiences (by partnering with other organizations, for example).
- In a climate of growing Euroscepticism and distrust in the political sphere, **the European involvement in these programs should be publicized.** The active mediation methodology, found at the heart of the Youth Welfare scheme, previously existed in Austria and Finland. These experimental best practices in other member states have a certain influence on leading politics. **The European project is threatened by the lack of transparency on concrete actions that affect citizens in their daily life.**
- **Alleviate the administrative formalities** needed for companies to recruit apprentices.
- **Emphasize the investment in human capital.** The evaluation of these programs remains highly qualitative rather than quantitative. The qualitative dimension of individual journeys can't be prioritized. How does one evaluate reestablishing motivation and renewed self-confidence? It's difficult to measure the results of investment in human capital.

Valuing non-formal and informal learning

The participants and partners propose to:

- **Acknowledge that the CV is still important and must highlight all skills.** Volunteer activities, personal interests, and hobbies reveal other skills that can interest companies. However, the participants don't always know how to present them on their CV. The Europass CV is relatively unknown in France, both by young adults and by job recruiters. The participants recommend **supporting a paradigm shift in recruitment approaches and in the importance placed on education in general.**
- **Evaluate the eligibility conditions under the French process "Validation des Acquis de l'expérience" (VAE) to better include experience acquired in informal settings.**
The skills acquired from volunteer work can be recognized under the VAE system, yet the skills acquired from an internship cannot. The VAE procedure must be simplified. **Language skills need to be able to be measured by free digital programs.**
- Recognize the value of the participants' civic engagement. This recognition requires **a change in society's mentality, giving moral value to civic engagement.**
- **Promote volunteer missions as a part of education.**

Civic engagement

The participants propose to:

Discuss Europe differently.

- **Don't be confined to information provided by traditional media.** Use digital tools that publicize the politics and actions of European institutions and will prioritize unbiased reporting on the impact of proposed and adopted projects on citizen's daily lives. This space would be open to the public to publish posts.
- **Communicate more at regional and municipal levels** about adopted European projects and their impact on citizen's daily life on a local level.

Reduce the European democratic deficit through grassroots initiatives.

- **Multiply local actions discussed at participatory assemblies** and lead a reflection about the validation process for decisions made in these assemblies (deliberative democracy). **Voice these civil initiatives to European institutions.**
- **Organize more debates on European issues in, for example, universities or workplaces.** Ask the young and old for their opinions on laws up for debate in the European Parliament, on projects in the European Commission, etc.
- **Make young people's voices heard** through youth councils (in municipalities).
- **Recognize blank votes.**

Reestablish trust in European politicians.

- **Encourage public decision-makers to report progress on implementing policies and actions.** Implement (digital) tools to follow the progress of government-proposed reforms. These dashboards could be made visible at different stages of the decision process (e.g. for the consultation with social partners). If certain reforms are blocked, a mechanism for public interpellation could be conceived.