

**Briefing file for Commissioner Thyssen**  
**Bilateral meeting with H.E. Monsignor Lebeaupin, Apostolic Nuncio**  
**to the European Union**  
**29 March 2019, 11:00, Berlaymont**

**Scene-setter**

You will meet, at his request, with H.E. Monsignor Lebeaupin, Apostolic Nuncio, Head of Mission of the Holy See to the EU. He has requested a meeting with you to discuss Europe's social and cultural dimensions and its future perspectives.

On 20 March 2018, you met him previously to exchange on Social Europe including the integration of migrants. In November 2016, you visited the Vatican for a keynote speech at the Vatican International Conference on "Business Leaders as agents of economic and social inclusion". The Nuncio is meeting regularly with EU political and senior officials, latest meetings (January-March 2019): Commissioners Dombrovskis, Moscovici, Avramopoulos, Gabriel, Navracsics and Moedas; Cabinet of Csr Mimica and SG Selmayr. In November 2018 he met with Cabinet of Pres Juncker.

EU-Holy See relations are "multidimensional": both intra-EU/Member States and international relations. The EU and the Holy are allies when it comes to issues such as peace, international cooperation, multilateral governance, human rights, climate change, development, social policy and the protection of people in need, including migrants. Divergences remain on several ethical issues (birth regulation, euthanasia, definition of marriage, aspects of research such as the use of human cells). In 2015 HRVP Mogherini and Msgr. Lebeaupin had established the "EU-Holy See Foreign Policy and Global Issues Dialogue"; since then relations have increased considerably.

Social policy is 'core business' in the Vatican. Thus, the EU and the Holy See share an interest in promoting enhancing social policies world-wide. Regarding the dignity of work and the rights of workers, the Catholic Church teaches that the economy must serve the people. This includes the rights to productive work, decent and fair wages, the organisation of unions, private property, and economic initiative. Particular concerns of the Pope refer to (Youth) unemployment and the working poor.

You may also take this opportunity to underline the social nature of the European Pillar of Social Rights, to also inform the Nuncio regarding the future of work, youth employment, social inclusion as regards disability, housing, and migrants. As well as this, you could point out the resources we are devoting and will devote to social inclusion via the proposed ESF+.

**Main topics on the agenda:**

- (1) Future of Social Europe**
- (2) Future of the Cultural Dimension of Europe**
- (3) Integration of Migrants**
- (4) Homelessness**
- (5) Inclusion of the disabled**
- (6) Work-Life Balance- helping families and carers**
- (7) Youth employment**

**Annexes**

- 1. CV of Monsignor Lebeaupin**
- 2. Flash HE Lebeaupin meeting VP VD 4 March 2019**

## **1. Future of Social Europe**

### **Speaking points**

- Solemnly proclaimed by all European Institutions at the Gothenburg Summit in November 2017, the **European Pillar of Social Rights is our foundation to build on**, when striving for upward convergence and better living conditions.
- **The Pillar provides both the inspiration and the concrete tools to address current and emerging challenges.** As such, it is at the heart of the **future of social Europe**.
- **The Pillar is eminently ‘social’** - half of its 20 principles directly concern social protection and inclusion.
- These principles aim at ensuring access to **adequate social protection throughout the life cycle**: starting at an early age tackling child poverty, then for the active age population, and also ensuring rights for adequate old age income support.
- **At EU level, the Pillar will be implemented using** the European Semester, well-targeted legislation, and the European Funds.
- The principles and rights enshrined in the Pillar fall under the competence of the EU, the Member States, and social and civil partners. **So the Pillar is essentially a joint endeavour.**
- I would also like to take this time to recall that the Pillar **not a legislative instrument and it fully respects subsidiarity.**

### ***[The European Semester]***

- **The Pillar is reflected in all stages of the European Semester – the annual cycle of economic policy governance.**
- **Annual country-specific recommendations** encourage Member States to advance national reforms addressing the three chapters of the Pillar.

### ***[Legislation]***

- We have passed a **limited number of European legislative and non-legislative initiatives**.
- We have already seen the formal adoption of the European Accessibility Act, and we are hoping to see **in April** the formal adoption of Batch III of Carcinogens, Work-Life Balance, Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions, and the European Labour Authority.

### ***[EU Funds]***

- The ESF+ will be our main tool when it comes to investing in people. We propose a budget of **EUR 101.2 billion for the 2021-2027 period**. It will be guided by the principles of the Pillar.
- The European Commission's proposal has also included a 'ring-fencing' of **25% dedicated to social inclusion** – thus helping to ensure that help gets to those who need it most.
- And at least **4% will be dedicated to fighting material deprivation** in order to pursue the priorities and activities of the current FEAD (FEAD amounted to EUR 3.8 billion for the 2014–20 period).
- I also understand that the Holy Father is also preoccupied by the challenges posed **by climate change**. Our proposal for the Funds sets a solid, ambitious goal for climate mainstreaming across all EU programmes, with an **overall target of 25%** contributing to climate objectives.

### ***[Sustainable Development Goals and EU]***

- The Sustainable Development Goals will also play an important role in the future of Social Europe.
- We published recently the sixth Reflection Paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030".
- The Pillar is clearly identified as the instrument:

- to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in the social area;
  - and to screen how social considerations are taken up under the other sustainability dimensions.
- The reflection paper presents three scenarios:
  1. an overarching SDG strategy to guide the actions of the EU and its Member States.
  2. to tailor the SDG strategy to EU priorities but there would be no target setting at EU level.
  3. focusing efforts on the Union's external action.
- **With these scenarios the Commission provides a starting point** for a discussion on how we can best achieve sustainability.

## **Background**

### **What is the situation in Europe today?**

The fight against poverty and social exclusion is a key priority for the EU [as outlined by the EU2020 strategy]. There are signs that the improvements in the economic situation in Europe are also benefiting the most vulnerable. However, the crisis has left significant scars. The population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) rose considerably in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis (2008-2012), by 10 millions all in all.

With the economic and labour market recovery, the numbers at risk have started to fall. In the latest year for which data is available (2017), the number of people living at risk of poverty or social exclusion fell by over 5 million in the EU-28. The numbers are now below pre-crisis levels (of 2008), standing at 22.4% of the EU population in 2017. This is still far away from the EU2020 target, but showing some significant improvement.

Yet, still one in four Europeans is at risk of poverty or social exclusion and we are clearly off-track in reaching the EU 2020 poverty target. A further 16 million people would have to exit AROPE in the remaining three years for the target to be achieved. This would require that the next three years by the end of the decade (end 2020) would show an as positive improvement as the one registered in 2017. [It is not impossible but not the most likely].

Important challenges remain, in particular with regards to child poverty, in-work poverty, long-term unemployment and the relatively high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. While the number of people living in (quasi-)jobless households is decreasing, their poverty level remain persistently high if not increasing. It points to the low adequacy of social benefits.

### **Reorganising the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development**

The Vatican's Dicastery ('Ministry') for Promoting Integral Human Development, in place only since January 2017, is a 'product' of Pope Francis' Curia reform. Its first Prefect (chair) is Peter Cardinal Turkson. The Dicastery, not yet working on 'full speed', is a merger of four Pontifical Councils: Justice and Peace, Cor Unum, Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and Health Care Workers.

Its main objectives are to:

- express the Holy Father's care for suffering humanity, including the needy, the sick and the excluded, and pays special attention to the needs and issues of those who are forced to flee their homeland, the stateless, the marginalized, victims of armed conflicts and natural disasters, the imprisoned, the unemployed, victims of contemporary forms of slavery and torture, and others whose dignity is endangered.
- promote integral human development in the light of the Gospel and in the tradition of the Church's social teachings. To this end, it maintains relations with the Conferences of Bishops, offering them its cooperation so that values related to justice and peace as well as the care of creation may be promoted.
- to fostering among peoples: sensitivity for peace, commitment to justice and solidarity with those who are most vulnerable such as migrants and refugees

## **2. Future of the Cultural Dimension of Europe**

### **Speaking points**

- Europe attaches great importance to diversity. In Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union recognises the “richness of its cultural and linguistic diversity” and undertakes to promote “economic and social cohesion”.
- The parallel objectives of protecting diversity and promoting inclusion can, however, clash in the absence of a coherent policy. Phenomena linked to mobility and migration, as well as social and economic inequalities, are sources of tension and require effective management. Cultural policy can help us to face these challenges.
- In addition to economic and social policies, culture and cultural heritage have a role to play in facilitating the inclusion of the most deprived persons, to promote well-being and trust and to create jobs, especially for young people, and economic growth.
- Our cultural heritage is a heritage to be shared. Not only is it essential to bring people together; It also produces significant economic benefits. This is one of the key messages of last year’s European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018) — a year dedicated to the tangible and intangible cultural richness of our continent.
- As you mentioned at the January 2018 COMECE conference: ‘Promoting the Christian Heritage of Europe’ we should engage younger generations in common responsibility for Europe’s cultural heritage, including religious heritage.
- The transfer of cultural heritage to future generations is based not only on expertise, knowledge and financial means, but also on our ability to renew a sense of belonging and responsibility.

- Digital tools enable us to widen access to culture and heritage, to attract new audiences. They also allow cultural institutions to get out of their walls to have a broader impact on society.
- It is also important not to miss opportunities to project Europe's rich and diverse cultural heritage on the international stage.

### **3. Integration of Migrants**

#### **Speaking points**

- The involvement of His Holiness Pope Francis for migrants and refugees is remarkable. The Commission shares the concerns of His Holiness concerning the treatment of migrants and refugees.
- President Juncker and Vice President Timmermans repeatedly reminded that Europe was not a fortress and did not have to become a fortress. Europe is a Union of values based on respect for human life and solidarity. These values have guided and must continue to guide our action.
- For migrants and third country nationals living in Europe to lead a life of dignity, and to contribute to where they live, we are working to encourage their integration.
- On 7 June 2016, the Commission presented an Action Plan on integration of third country nationals.
- The Commission has also been providing substantial support to Member States through funding and will continue to do so.
- In the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-27, particularly in the next ESF+, we place great emphasis on migrant integration objectives. We will continue to support targeted and mainstreamed initiatives across different policy areas – employment, housing, education and health.
- Actions in the early phases of integration would include basic language training, civic orientation courses, one-stop-shop advice centres, and assistance in areas such as housing and health care.
- These measures will be complemented by interventions addressing main employment and social inclusion concerns and interventions directed to vulnerable groups.



## **Background**

### **Integration**

In June 2016 the European Commission launched an Action Plan on the Integration of third country nationals, which sets out the framework of the work on integration at EU level. It contains a set of concrete actions to promote integration in five areas: pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, education, integration into the labour market, access to basic services such as housing and health, and active participation and social inclusion.

Work on integration at EU level is focusing on labour market integration, as there are still large gaps across the EU on employment outcomes of migrants compared to EU citizens.

The EU support investments of MS in this area through EU funding. We are already providing dedicated funding for integration, under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, with a total of 1 billion earmarked for integration in national programmes of Member States for the current seven year framework.

A call for proposals under the AMIF to support transnational projects in the field of integration has been launched in July 2018.

In addition, there is a substantial support available under the European Structural and Investment Funds in the 2014-2020 period, primarily in the areas of social inclusion, education and employment including infrastructure and access to services.

#### ***[Funds: current MFF 2014-2020]***

- The European Social Fund (ESF) supports the long-term integration of migrants and all measures related to their integration into the labour market, provided they have access to the labour market. Financial support for emergency measures, such as reception centres, mobile hospitals, tents, and containers primarily fall under the scope of AMIF programmes. In order to ensure an adequate and comprehensive response to the challenges Member States may face with the migrant crisis, the coordinated use of various European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) is vital.
- The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) can support migrants by providing them with immediate relief (food, basic material assistance) and promoting their social inclusion, regardless of their legal status. However, Member States define the target groups individually and the scope of support by FEAD depends on the scope of the national programme.
- The EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) funds transnational projects to test and implement innovative policy schemes and delivery mechanisms facilitating a swift labour market integration of the asylum seekers, and refugees and their family members.

#### ***[Funds: new proposed MFF 2021-2027]***

- The proposal on the future Multiannual Financial Framework has prioritised streamlining and simplifying the access to EU funds in the area of migrant integration.
- Under the new proposed MFF 2021-2027, there are three main budgetary chapters that deal with migrant, refugee and asylum seeking issues:
  - **Chapter II Cohesion and Values** will help deal with long-term migrant integration challenges, notably under the Investing in People, Social Cohesion and Values, and the Regional Development & Cohesion headings
  - **Chapter IV on Migration and Border Management** entails two funds: the reinforced Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF) and the new integrated

Border Management Fund. The former will deal with supporting the work of national authorities to provide reception to asylum seekers and migrants in the period immediately after arrival on EU territory, as well as developing a common asylum and migration policy and ensuring effective returns (early integration). The latter will provide vital and reinforced support to Member States in the shared responsibility of securing the common external borders of the Union. It will cover border management, visas and customs control equipment.

- **Chapter VI on Neighbourhood & the World** covers external migration aspects. The instruments under the external policy address the root causes of migration and support cooperation with third countries on migration management and security, thus contributing to the implementation of the Partnership Framework on migration.
- Overall, the EU budget for the management of external borders, migration and refugee flows will be significantly reinforced, totalling nearly EUR 33 billion, compared to EUR 12.4 billion for the period 2014-2020 (a 2.6 fold increase)

#### 4. Homelessness

##### Speaking points

- The Commission shares His Holiness' preoccupation regarding the plight of the homeless and the rise of homelessness in Europe. Indeed, **Homelessness levels have gone up** in all Member States these last years, except Finland.
- While Member States shoulder the main responsibility in this, the Commission has a key role in supporting, coordinating or supplementing their actions.
- Principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights now supports our action in this area steering policy guidance and the use of significant financial resources available to support housing solutions for the vulnerable groups in Member States.
- The new MFF and in particular the ESF+ as well as the future InvestEU Programme will be able to play a significant role. Indeed, they will support Member States in addressing social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, like people experiencing homelessness or at risk of housing exclusion.

## **Background**

### **Housing and homelessness in the ESF and the FEAD (2014-2020)**

The ESF can support the social inclusion of homeless people by funding integrated support services providing relief, counselling anti-eviction programmes; supporting the training of service providers working with the homeless; financing projects that aim at collecting statistical data on the homeless; establishing and operating training centres and social economy programmes aimed at facilitating the integration of homeless people into the labour market. EU Member States earmarked around 25.5% of their ESF financial resources (amounting to around EUR 21.2 billion) to the thematic objective 9 on social inclusion.

FEAD is used to address the needs of homeless people within the limitations of its scope. Although housing is not considered part of the “basic material assistance” provided in OPI (and the volume of FEAD funding would not allow to meet the cost of housing), advice on housing can be provided as an accompanying measure. Furthermore, advice on healthcare and social services that are important in the fight against homelessness can be provided. In OPII, social inclusion measures refer to non-financial, non-material assistance, which equally prevents any direct support to housing infrastructure; yet, well-designed inclusion measures can contribute strategically towards ending homelessness.

### **Housing and homelessness within the context of ESF+ (2021-2027)**

The ESF+ will have at its core the policy objectives and priorities set out by the European Pillar of Social Rights, which include the promotion of social cohesion and convergence. The Pillar identifies housing and assistance for the homeless as one of its 20 key social principles. Principle 19 on "Housing and assistance for the homeless" states that:

- Access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need.
- Vulnerable people have the right to appropriate assistance and protection against forced eviction.
- Adequate shelter and services shall be provided to the homeless in order to promote their social inclusion.

The above principle is included among the areas of investment of ESF+. It should however be kept in mind that homeless people often require complex, integrated types of support over a long period of time and therefore housing actions should not be isolated from other thematic areas such as education, employment, health etc. that can be also supported through ESF+.

In order to tackle (educational and) housing segregation, investment in social infrastructure requires improving the access to inclusive, non-segregated facilities, including dismantling existing segregated educational services and housing. This can include provision of assisted social housing, such as apartments, equipment supporting independent living, transport means in order to improve access to mainstream services, training facilities targeting the personnel of social services etc.

Moreover, under the post 2020 MFF, social investment opportunities will be mainstreamed across a wide range of other programmes including the European Regional Development Fund, Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, Erasmus, the Asylum and Migration Fund, the European Solidarity Corps, the Justice programme and the Rights and Values programme.

### **EU policy action on homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE)**

The Commission addresses HHE in the broader EU poverty and social inclusion policy framework, making sure that the interests of marginalised people are efficiently covered in our policy initiatives. For example, the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, the Migration Agenda and our active inclusion policies are of direct relevance.

Back in 2013, the Commission set out a package of initiatives, the Social Investment Package (SIP), which included a Staff Working Document on HHE putting the accent on housing-led solutions, to promote notably access to affordable housing.

The Commission also promotes the share of good practices, exchanges, innovative approaches and help building data and monitoring developments on housing markets as part of the SIP, and since then it has been implementing a number of policy actions directly related to HHE.

These include notably data development, as lack of comparable data is a major obstacle of evidence-based policy-making in this field.

### **Homelessness and housing exclusion (HHE) in the European Semester**

In the last few years, an increasing number of national reform programmes (NRP) and country reports (CR) refer to housing-related issues. The Commission has put more emphasis on homelessness and housing exclusion and has better stressed issues such as housing supply shortage, dysfunctional housing markets, macroeconomic imbalances, insufficient social housing, lack of access to affordable housing and housing cost overburden.

The CSR on housing adopted in 2018 focus primarily on restoring the healthy functioning of the housing market to avoid macroeconomic imbalances. Housing exclusion data have been used to underpin poverty situations in some country reports:

- **Ireland** received a CSR calling to "*Ensure the timely and effective implementation of the National Development Plan, including in terms of clean energy, transport, **housing**, water services and affordable quality childcare. Prioritise the upskilling of the adult working-age population, with a focus on digital skills*".
- For **the Netherlands**, the Commission recommends to take measures to reduce the debt bias for households and the remaining distortions in the housing market, in particular by supporting the development of the private rental sector.
- The **UK** CSR called again (as in 2017) for actions to boost housing supply, including through additional reforms to the planning system.

## **5. Inclusion of the disabled**

### **Speaking points**

- The Commission shares the Holy Father's vision of disabled people be included and be afforded their rightful human dignity.
- We are committed to improving the situation of persons with disabilities, who are disadvantaged in the society.
- We work in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which is the EU instrument for the implementation of the Convention.
- The Strategy contains eight areas for action, including employment, education and training, and social protection. It is in this framework that the Commission has, for example, proposed the European Accessibility Act, implemented a pilot project on a European Disability Card or developed an awareness-raising campaign on discrimination.
- We have started with the process for evaluation of implementation of **the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020**. Its results will be known by mid-2020. These results will base the decision of the future College on the next steps to followed in this policy area.

## **Background**

### **European Disability Strategy 2010-2020:**

The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (EDS) aims at empowering persons with disabilities to enjoy their full rights and benefit from participating in society on an equal basis with others. The strategy also aims to achieve an effective implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ('UNCRPD' or 'the Convention') by the EU. The Strategy covers eight areas of action: Accessibility, Participation, Equality, Employment, Education and Training, Social Protection, Health and External Action.

A Progress report on the implementation of the Disability Strategy 2010-2020 has been adopted in February 2017. It covers the work that has been developed up to the end of 2016. It describes the achievements and remaining challenges in the implementation of our Strategy.

The Commission is in the process of evaluating the European Disability Strategy to assess inter alia its influence on the implementation of the UNCRPD at EU level. Drawing on the available evidence, the results of the evaluation will be used as reference base for possible future policy development.

All stakeholders will be duly consulted during the evaluation process both through an Online Public Consultation, questionnaires and meetings.

### **European Accessibility Act:**

In December 2015, the Commission adopted a proposal for a European Accessibility Act - a business friendly Directive which harmonises accessibility requirements for a number of products and services.

The European Accessibility Act aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for certain accessible products and services by removing barriers created by divergent legislation. This will facilitate the work of companies and will bring benefits for disabled and older people in the EU. Some of these products and services are potentially important in the education area for disabled persons, for ex. computers, audio-visual services, e-books.

The European Accessibility Act has been adopted by EP in 1st reading by the plenary with a comfortable majority on 13 March. It will now go to Council for adoption (early April).

### **EU Disability Card - Pilot project 2016-2017**

Pilot projects in 8 countries: Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Romania, Slovenia with total amount of 1.3M€

The aim of the projects is to put in place the EU Disability Card and the system of associated benefits in 8 participating countries. The areas covered by these projects are culture, sports, leisure and in some countries also transport.

The Commission will evaluate the pilot action to see if it was successful and assess if another financial support should be provided to broaden it to more countries. Such assessment will be done by "a study assessing the implementation of the pilot action on the EU Disability Card and associated benefits".

## **6. Work-Life Balance – helping families and carers**

### **Speaking points**

- I understand that His Holiness has expressed concern regarding the lack of time parents spend with their children due to economic reasons.
- The Commission shares this preoccupation. Indeed today's families struggle to reconcile their work, family, care and private lives.
- A lack of opportunities to combine work and family responsibilities leads many women dropping out of the labour market.
- As a result, the employment rate of women today is 12 percentage points lower than that of men.
- Thanks to the Directive on work-life balance, Europe will have a comprehensive set of binding minimum standards on an issue that is crucial for women, men, families and people's careers in Europe.
- The Directive will help women and men to reconcile their jobs with family responsibilities. It will give them a real choice in how they want to live their life, pursue their career and raise their children or care for family members in need.

### **Defensive**

***The Directive on work-life balance obliges Member States to grant the right to paternity leave to homosexual couples***

***[Art. 3 says: "paternity leave means leave from work for fathers or, where and in so far as recognised by national law, for equivalent second parents, on the occasion of the birth for the purposes of providing care"]***

- The Directive does not oblige Member States to grant paternity leave to homosexual couples.
- On the contrary – it fully respects the divergence among Member States and recognises Member States' competence in this area.
- The Directive grants the right to paternity leave ONLY in those Member States that do recognise, under their national laws, other persons than fathers for purposes of paternity leave.



## **7. Youth Employment**

### **Speaking points**

- The Commission shares the Holy Father's serious concern regarding youth unemployment and the dangers of having a 'lost generation'.
- As He let His views on this be known at the start of His Pontificate (2013), in the EU in 2013 Member States committed to making sure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education – **the Youth Guarantee**.
- **Extra resources** were provided for Member States with the biggest youth unemployment issue. Our efforts are paying off. Youth unemployment is at record low.
- But our work should not stop here. Youth unemployment is still far too high in many Member States. Inactivity among young people remains a challenge.
- In December 2016 the Commission launched the **European Solidarity Corps**, to give young people more opportunities to volunteer, work or do a traineeship in solidarity sectors.
- The launch of the European Solidarity Corps, is equally set to provide young people with opportunities to express solidarity and gain some work experience, either in their locality or abroad. We aim to place 10,000 young people in a solidarity job or traineeship by 2020.
- **In terms of funding**, the Commission's proposal for the future ESF – the ESF+ - maintains a focus on youth employment, whilst attempting to simplify funding. Member States with a NEET rate higher than the EU average will need to allocate at least 10% of their ESF resources to youth employment measures.

## **Background**

The EU youth (15-24) unemployment rate (14.9%) and the rate of young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET ) (10.3%) are the lowest on record. Youth unemployment has decreased in all Member States. Rates of young NEETs have also decreased in most Member States. However, the youth unemployment rate in the EU is still double the overall unemployment rate (6.6%) and significant differences remain across the EU. Youth unemployment rates are over 30% in Greece, Spain and Italy, compared to less than 7% in the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands.

The Youth Guarantee (YG) is the central plank in the Commission's efforts to tackle youth unemployment and facilitate school-to-work transitions. The Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is one of the main EU financial resources to support the YG's implementation, providing targeted support to NEETs living in regions with very high youth unemployment . The total budget of the YEI is EUR 8.8 billion for the period 2014-20.

The Commission proposal for the ESF post 2020 does not include the Youth Employment Initiative in its current form. Instead, it includes a provision stipulating that Member States with a NEET rate (15-29) of above EU average must earmark at least 10% of their ESF funds to addressing youth unemployment.

## **Results and remaining challenges**

Compared to the peak of the youth unemployment crisis there are now 2,4 million fewer young unemployed and 1,9 million fewer NEETs in the EU (these trends should be seen in the context of cyclical factors, yet the YG has contributed to these improvements by supporting demand-side measures that increased opportunities for young people and structural reforms).

Since 2014, when implementation of the YG started on the ground, every year more than 3.5 million young people registered in the YG took up an offer of employment, continued education, a traineeship or an apprenticeship.

While results are visible on the ground, Youth Guarantee schemes have not yet reached all young people who have become unemployed or left school. Accelerating and broadening the YG would require:

- Continued political commitment and financial support for the Youth Guarantee as a long-term, structural reform.
- Better engaging with non-registered NEETs and the low-skilled who are under-represented among beneficiaries.
- Strengthened capacity of partners (in particular public employment services) and better cooperation between education providers and employers to improve the quality of offers .

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