

**Welcome Address by Director-General
Mr Heinz Koller
Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs**

at the TLN Mobility Conference
"Tackling youth unemployment through
transnational mobility - a coordinated response
under the ESF 2014-2020"

25 November 2013, 13:00 hrs

Neue Mälzerei, Friedensstr. 91 Berlin

Mr Peter Stub Jorgensen,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you here in Berlin at the Conference of the Transnational Learning Network "Mobility measures for disadvantaged youth and young adults". A glance at the list of participants illustrates that about 100 experts from 16 European Member States have come together today - in spite of the fact that in these weeks our diaries all include a long list of succeeding European conferences dealing with youth unemployment.

This in itself is of course good and wise, as the promotion of youth employment in Europe is currently certainly one of the biggest and most important challenges of the EU. You are all familiar with the statistical data: A youth unemployment rate of 23.5 per cent on European average, affecting almost 6 million young people. There is talk of a **lost generation** which will presumably feel the negative effects of early unemployment throughout their entire lives.

In the last weeks quite a number of successful conferences were convened to deal with this topic: ...the Youth Employment Summit Meeting in Paris on 12 November, the Conference of the Presidency "Tackling youth unemployment in Europe" in Vilnius on 14 and 15 November, "New Ideas for the Integration of NEETs" in Belfast on 21 and 22 November - to mention but a few.

And now, in Berlin, too, today and tomorrow, yet another conference takes place "Tackling youth unemployment through transnational mobility". This does indeed bring up the question: Is there really more to say, something that has not been said before?

Indeed, I think we can, as the partners of the Transnational Learning Network "Mobility" will really present an entirely new approach to policy design and coordination within the European Social Fund at this conference. I will come back to this in more detail in a few minutes.

And I also believe that this approach is a real opportunity that the target group of youth and young adults experience a concrete practical improvement of their personal situation everywhere in Europe. The fates of individuals are often hidden behind figures and catchphrases to which we have to react with proposals for practical solutions in the responsible organisations at the European and national level.

The European Commission in Brussels has given an important impetus which has also been welcomed by the Council and the European Parliament. The most important examples include the **Youth Guarantee**, which is meant to offer every young people a job or a quality training place within four months and the **Youth Employment Initiative** with a budget of € 6 billion for the years 2014 to 2020. The summit meetings in Berlin on 3 July and in Paris two weeks ago with the participation of the Federal Chancellor and our Minister support the expeditious, effective and coordinated implementation at the level of the Member States, who, of course, are also mainly responsible for tackling youth unemployment.

It is common knowledge that youth unemployment is lower in Germany than on European average. A decisive reason for this is the dual vocational training system - young people's most important access to the labour market. Each year, more than two-thirds of all school leavers take up dual vocational education. 70 per cent of the apprentices obtain a contract of employment in their training company immediately after completing their training course.

This does, however, not mean that we can sit back and take things easy now:

Firstly, in spite of all the positive developments on the labour market, there are also people in Germany who have to cope with various problems, as e.g. a lack of school education or vocational training or a lack of German language skills preventing them from getting direct access to training and employment.

And secondly, despite the national responsibility it is also a pan-European task to tackle youth unemployment: This problem concerns us all and we have to work on joint solution proposals.

At the bilateral level Germany has thus concluded several **joint Memoranda of Understanding** with countries like Spain, Italy or Portugal over the last months.

They help to support these countries in coping with youth unemployment, in particular by introducing dual vocational training systems and by promoting mobility.

At the European level the **summit meetings in Berlin and Paris** contributed to setting up important new fora, including the network of the Heads of Public Employment Services. This network agreed on a sort of plan to align their work with the best placement systems and thus to allow all countries to benefit from this experience and to exchange views. Another decisive aspect is that the social partners were involved in the summit meetings, too, as they are responsible for the working conditions.

The **Transnational Learning Network Mobility** which has convened this conference in Berlin today, fits particularly nicely into this mosaic of bilateral and European activities for the promotion of youth employment.

It all began with a German ESF Programme called "**IdA - Integration Through Exchange**" with which many of you are probably familiar. At the latest after a major IdA Conference with over 300 participants from all over Europe in December 2011, "IdA" had earned a reputation as a "good example" - It is the objective of the Programme to facilitate the integration of young people into work and training through stays abroad where young people with particular problems to access the labour market can work as interns in a company. You will learn a good deal more about IdA during the first session of the conference before the coffee break. At any rate the results are very encouraging: 60 per cent of the IdA participants have found a job or a training place after their return, although most of them had been unemployed at some point - on average for 15 months - before they participated in the Programme. IdA has been successful in supporting these young people to get a foothold in the German labour market - and the results have made the European Commission and other EU Member States curious to find out more about the Programme.

When the Directorate General Employment launched a new call for tenders for new Transnational Learning Networks in the summer of 2012, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs together with partners from then ten, now thirteen, Member States and regions submitted a grant application. **The objective was that a Transnational Learning Network should determine joint framework conditions in order to implement ESF Programmes according to the IdA example in many other European Member States and regions.**

At this point I would like to thank Peter Stub Jorgensen because the Directorate General Employment actually approved this application. Without you, Mr Stub Jorgensen, we would not be here in Berlin today in order to learn more about the network's activities completed so far.

Since February 2013 experts from the participating 13 Member States and regions have been meeting [regularly] to determine these joint framework conditions for mobility programmes targeting young people who have particular problems in finding a job or training place for the new ESF programming period 2014 to 2020. While the network

makes use of the experience gained in the German IdA Programme, it is not intended to implement it one-to-one in other European Member States and regions. In particular the conditions for **mutual exchange projects** are to be improved as compared to IdA.

If everything goes according to plan, the Network will publish the joint framework conditions in a so-called **coordinated call** on its website in the second half of 2014 at the latest.

Today and tomorrow you will learn a lot more about this **coordinated call**, therefore I will be very brief on this point:

The coordinated call is not a Community Initiative, no instrument directly administered by the European Commission. It is rather the result of voluntary coordination in the Learning Network and its specific details must be agreed upon after its publication with the help of **national and/or regional calls** in the framework of the respective ESF-OPs. This means It is you in the Member States and regions who must implement your own ESF Programmes to promote the mobility of disadvantaged youth - only if you wish to do so, of course - but the Network's coordinated call will facilitate your successful implementation considerably. And this for two reasons:

- As all the interested Member States and regions put their ESF Programmes simultaneously to tender after the coordinated call has been published, the selected project managers can be matched via a data base and a partner forum - it is really like an online dating site - in order to find transnational partners. Because clearly: You cannot implement mobility measures alone. If e.g. a German project manager sends young people to Spain for job-experience schemes he needs a reliable local project partner. In the ideal case he then sends Spanish youth to Germany, too, so that the exchange scheme provides for a truly **mutual exchange**.
- Moreover, the coordinated call includes some central **policy criteria**, which have to be implemented by the Member States and regions in their national and regional calls. Let me give you an example: The Network has agreed that it is not only the internship abroad that is decisive for the success of the mobility programmes, but also an intensive preparation and follow-up phase. As the above policy criteria have to be observed in all national and regional calls, it can be guaranteed that the project managers **are generally pulling in the same direction** and fulfil defined minimum standards regarding their work.

This short introduction into the topic already demonstrates that the work in a Network includes many nitty-gritty and complex details. But I am convinced that this work also harbours a lot of potential:

This applies first of all and quite generally to **transnational cooperation in the European Social Fund**. It has become evident in the current programming period that this type of cooperation is very difficult without the framework of a Community Initiative like EQUAL because a certain degree of **coordination of policies and procedures** is required for the projects to cooperate efficiently and effectively across European borders. If Member States and regions agree voluntarily on such coordination mechanisms it can be expected that labour market policy cooperation will become significantly better in future. And as pointed out initially: Youth unemployment is a pan-European problem; it does not stop at the borders of the Member States. Therefore we need joint solutions - and the transnational cooperation in the framework of the ESF is a very good way to find such solutions.

The Learning Network Mobility creates the basis for the transnational implementation of one promising approach. If it reaches its goals young people will have an opportunity to participate in mobility programmes everywhere in Europe in the new ESF programming period 2014 to 2020. And this even though they are not highly qualified, privileged persons for whom there is a lot of demand on the labour market - "Mobility in Europe" intends to support also those young people who cannot get direct access to employment or training without outside help.

Therefore I wish the Transnational Learning Network Mobility every success with its future work. It will be worth the effort! At this point I would also like to thank all members [of the TLN] for their commitment to date. The Network has really carried out substantial work since February. Ladies and Gentlemen, you will see this for yourselves today and tomorrow. I wish everybody an exciting conference, many interesting discussions and even more inspiration for the new ESF programming period 2014 to 2020.