



EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT

Brussels, 24 May 2013

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At our next European Council, in June, we should make further progress towards the goals we have set ourselves to exit the crisis. Our common strategy comprises four elements, four 'keys' to unlock our way to recovery. First: preserving financial stability, where we are on the right track. Second, improving the resilience of our economies, through sound public finances and improved competitiveness. Here, we begin to see the first results. Third: strengthening our economic and monetary union, especially the banking union, for which the months ahead of us will be crucial. And fourth, fighting unemployment and supporting growth in the near term.

In June, I would like to put the fight against unemployment high on our agenda. The number of unemployed people in our Union, especially of young people, is at record levels. It has become one of the most pressing issues in most, if not all, of our Member States. That is why we must do our utmost to deal with it together.

The June European Council will be an opportunity to mobilise efforts at all levels around one shared objective: to get motivated young people back to work or education. We must give them the guarantee that they will be either in training, further education or employment within four months of leaving school. I call on all actors to rally around this objective.

Member States are key actors in this regard. The huge differences in youth unemployment rates within our Union demonstrate that national policies and situations matter. The National Job Plans which you submitted to the European Commission as part of the National Reform Programmes also illustrate your key role.

In recent days, several of you announced that they would come forward with ideas to foster youth employment or share best practices. I welcome and encourage these initiatives. Based on your experiences, I invite you to actively contribute, also through your collaborators, to the preparation of our June meeting. Moreover, I also look forward to working on the follow-up of this June European Council, for instance at the meeting organised by Chancellor Angela Merkel on July 3, in Berlin.

In my meetings with the social partners, I notice that the fight against youth unemployment goes to the heart of their work. I call on them to continue to engage actively and jointly on this issue. I hope that they will be able to agree together on concrete steps ahead of the European Council. I stand ready to support them in this endeavour.

We have to keep moving forward on the actions which have already been deployed at the Union level. The European Commission has proposed a series of measures in the framework of the Youth Employment Package; the European Alliance for Apprenticeships will be launched early July. The recommendation to establish a Youth Guarantee has been swiftly adopted by the Council. And in the European Council, we have repeatedly underlined the importance of tackling youth unemployment, notably in the Compact for Growth and Jobs. We have followed up with concrete decisions: in June last year, we agreed to redirect considerable amounts of EU funds, helping 800,000 young people in the eight most affected countries. In February, we set aside €6 billion for the Youth Employment Initiative in the Union's next seven year budget, notably to support Youth Guarantee schemes. We should make sure that all the preparatory work is carried out at the latest by our October summit, so that this initiative can be fully operational by 1st of January 2014. I also call on the Council and the Parliament, who both attach great importance to the fight against youth unemployment, to jointly work towards that end.

At our last meeting just three days ago, we illustrated once again our strong determination to foster Europe's competitiveness and to stimulate growth and jobs in our Union. I am confident that this same determination will also guide our work at the June European Council, to the benefit of an entire generation of young Europeans.

&salutations

H. VAN ROMPUY