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Evaluating the EU Youth Guarantee

We have been fighting long and hard for the Youth Guarantee because we trusted in its good effects in the struggle against youth unemployment, especially in Southern Europe. After two years, it's the moment to critically reflect on its implementation. In mid-2013 political leaders of the EU were alarmed by the high number of more than six million young people being unemployed. This did not come as a surprise. It lies within the capitalist logic that in times of crisis especially young people are highly affected by unemployment. With the tenor "There must be no lost generation" EU leaders decided on a variety of measures and actions such as Youth Guarantee (an employment initiative for young people), a task force on cooperation in vocational training, Marshall Plan for Europe and a special programme on job mobility. All those programmes – widely covered in the media – aimed at decreasing youth unemployment.

Where does the Youth Guarantee stand now?

The EU announced to allocate six billion Euros for Youth Guarantee, which was, supposed to be implemented in 2014. The aim is to offer every young unemployed person in the EU a job, an internship, a training or further education within four months after graduation. What is left from these plans?

In 2013, only three countries suggested concrete approaches to combat the youth unemployment. It is therefore understandable that European Youth Trade Unions demand the EU to finally act on their promises. In July 2013, young trade unionists from Germany gathered in Berlin and protested under the slogan " Stop talking - act now". We are fighting precarious living and working conditions and demand effective measures to improve training opportunities that every young person can have a secure future and a self-determined life.

Not every initiative that claims to tackle youth-specific problems is necessarily in the interest of young people. All programmes need a critical analysis as they often increase the obligation to work and bind social needs to certain requirements.

Fundamental change is necessary

From our perspective, all measures to fight youth unemployment are ineffective as they assume that negative consequences of capitalism can be reduced within the existing system. Capitalism as such is not in question nor are neoliberal instruments.

Adapting this logic, any decrease of youth unemployment can only occur to the burden of another social group such as older employees. Young professionals are particularly affected by mistaken economic policies but it is not a youth specific problem as often claimed. There

is with no doubt a need for education and training for young people since they would not have a chance to find employment without.

Several surveys prove that it is not only a lack of qualification that would explain that the youth is excessively affected by unemployment. In Spain and Portugal, most of the young people looking for jobs have considerable working experience. In Greece, young women with good qualifications but hardly any job experience stop looking for work and are therefore not reflected in the unemployment statistics any longer.

In our opinion, it is clear: **The problem is “unemployment” and it affects us all likewise. The equality gap is not located between young and old but between the poor and the rich!**

Trying to reduce youth unemployment through the intended instruments can only be an aesthetic surgery to stabilise the neoliberal policies at EU level. This will certainly occur to the burden of other employees.

This is not our game! We will not accept that workers and employees are played off against each other.

The EU's austerity policies need to be stopped immediately. The belt-tightening programs that are imposed to countries in crisis change the situation for the countries' people to the worse and prevent necessary investments that would contribute to economic growth and higher employment.

It is by all means no surprise that the domestic economic activity collapses with no chance for recovery within the crisis if social welfare as well as pensions and salaries are cut and jobs in the public sector are economised.

From our perspective, the so-called Youth Guarantee will be unsuccessful to the greatest possible extent. Only a renunciation from the austerity policies and a turn towards anti-cyclical financial policies within the EU can be a solution to the problem of unemployment. This would also leave specific measures for particular target groups unnecessary.