

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentleman,

- It is an honour for me to be here with you today to discuss youth employment, which is an extremely important issue in today's reality, and we do indeed welcome the European Court of Auditors' Special Report.
- Youth Employment is very important for us all, as it is an essential part of our economy and its positive development. Member States have been working tirelessly in the post-financial crisis years to make sure that Youth Unemployment decreases. We welcome the fact that the Court of Auditors' Special Report acknowledged that progress has been made in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and that positive results have been achieved. However, we also understand that more work must be done.
- It is important to underline that NEETs have been that section of the youth population that have been mostly affected by the crisis. Reaching this heterogeneous group requires strong and persistent efforts of national authorities, however slow and effective results have been achieved.

- Today, we have seen a very interesting discussion on the different ways forward to address the issue of youth employment. The special report on youth employment presented by the European Court of Auditors, conducted in 7 different EU Member States, derived interesting conclusions regarding the situation of the Youth Employment.
- As already highlighted, the issue of youth employment is extremely important for the European Union. This issue came to the fore following the financial crisis we experienced in the past years. Those that have been mostly affected by this crisis were the youths themselves. Thus, youth unemployment continues to be a top priority for the European Institutions, but also for all Member States.
- The Youth Employment Initiative was imperative to deliver the results achieved in recent years, and helped in the development of the Youth Guarantee in several Member States. In the past few years' young people's labour market performance has, improved overall in the EU, however, more than 4 million young persons are still unemployed today. As I stated earlier, the

younger generations were severely hit by the economic and the financial crisis, and they continue to feel the repercussion of unemployment and the social effects till today.

- The Member States we currently have the honour of representing, as a Presidency, strongly believe that a complete employment recovery requires an adequate economic policy mix that favours not only a job-rich growth but also the integration of the unemployed, including the young unemployed, into the labour market, with investments and support playing an important role in supporting the recovery.
- We must guarantee that adequate financial resources are mobilised to strengthen and modernise the labour market institutions, and to support partnerships between the employment, education and the youth sectors, as well as to engage social partners and other stakeholders, in line with the diverse national practices. All efforts we put into this aim are worthwhile, as we cannot allow for an entire generation to solely suffer the consequence of the crises. Young people need to

know that we are there for them, and that we are doing our utmost to improve their situation.

- The EU and its Member States have made all possible efforts to improve the situation in recent years, through the development of programmes and funds, such as the Youth Guarantee, the Youth Employment Initiative, the European Solidarity Corps and the European Social Fund, but not only. Considerable national funds have been mobilised towards addressing this problem, to safeguard the interest of our younger generation. This effort was also recognised by the Court of Auditors Special Report. However, due consideration should be given to the recommendations made in the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors with a view to continuing efforts to tackle youth unemployment and inactivity and achieving the aims set out in the Youth Guarantee, specifically about setting realistic and achievable objectives and targets.
- The report presented today, together with the interesting points raised during the discussion, will continue to strengthen the Member States efforts in addressing one of our main common concerns-

Youth Employment. Together we can address this through the support of transnational project initiative aimed at promoting sustainable and quality youth employment. This will in turn help in achieving policy learning amongst participants, as well as the potential sharing of best practices in this area. I strongly believe in the benefit of such projects as we all can learn from each other to improve the lives of our NEETs. All this continues to strengthen our commitment towards social and economic cohesion across Europe, and together with other instruments will help to achieve results that will strengthen the European project and the belief of our citizens in it.

- It is important that all EU institutions collaborate closely with the European Court of Auditors in view of its role as guardian of the EU finances. This will ensure that the use of such funds is truly maximised and used to their full potential.
- I conclude by thanking the Court – in particular Mrs. Ivanova and her team – for identifying this subject as a basis for a Special Report. I thank you for your attention, and I encourage you all to continue working on this important issue to us all.