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PROVIDING PERSPECTIVES FOR THE YOUNG: NO TIME TO LOSE

The youth employment package published today by the European Commission is an important initiative. 14 million young people are currently not in employment, education or training (NEETs), including 5.5 million young unemployed. According to Eurofound, the economic loss to society of not integrating NEETs is estimated at €153 billion for 2011. Youth unemployment is one of Europe's most pressing problems.

The key is to ensure that the skills acquired by young people in education are in tune with labour market needs. At the same time, hiring young people should be made an attractive option for companies. Both aspects are indispensable to ease young people's access to the labour market. It is important to recognise that they can best be addressed at national level.

Part of the solution is to promote work-based learning, in particular apprenticeships and traineeships. Business broadly supports the proposed European alliance for apprenticeships. On traineeships, we will assess whether the second-stage consultation published today provides a balanced basis for a social partner initiative.

European social partners are concerned about the economic and social effects of youth disengagement. For this reason, negotiations on a framework of actions on youth employment were initiated as a matter of priority last September. The objective is to finalise them in time for the Tripartite Social Summit in March 2013.

Philippe de Buck, Director General of BUSINESSEUROPE commented: "*Current levels of youth unemployment are unacceptable and unsustainable. Efforts must converge to provide perspectives to the young on the labour market. Investing in the right skills will be an important factor of Europe's innovation and competitiveness for the next decades.*"

NOTE TO THE EDITOR

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