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Let's act now, or risk losing a generation

Youth unemployment is one of Europe's most pressing challenges: five million people under 25 were unemployed at the end of last year. But some of the resources intended to tackle it, like the Youth Employment Initiative and the Youth Guarantee, are failing to reach those most in need. Working with, and allocating resources directly to, cities would help ensure that EU funds really make a difference.

Daniël Termont, mayor of Ghent and EUROCITIES vice president, explains:

"We hear that tackling youth unemployment is a priority for the EU, but results aren't coming quickly enough for our young people. We're at risk of losing a whole generation. Giving greater power and resources directly to cities would help reach those most in need, quickly."

The mayors of Europe's biggest cities today launched the EUROCITIES declaration on work, a political commitment to tackling Europe's urgent employment crisis. They call for recognition of the urban dimension to Europe's employment crisis. Any actions to create jobs, promote active labour markets and tackle unemployment must make sense in the local context or they will not be effective.

Europe is facing the very real threat of structural unemployment and a lost generation. Public budgets are struggling to cope with growing demands on employment and social services, and social cohesion is at risk. If we fail to address these challenges now, we will be dealing with the consequences for years to come. Cities, where three quarters of Europe's population lives, are key to tackling Europe's unemployment crisis. If help is to reach those most in need, the EU must work in partnership with local authorities.

Johanna Rolland, mayor of Nantes and EUROCITIES president, said:

"Europe's unemployment crisis is concentrated in cities. At the end of last year, 24 million Europeans were unemployed, many for a year or more. We have the local knowledge to make effective policies to get people back into work, but we often lack the resources and support to do so."

The urban dimension of the EU's unemployment crisis should no longer be overlooked. We propose a high level roundtable on work in 2015 where we will call on those with political responsibility in the EU institutions, national governments and key partners to engage with us. We believe there is an urgent need for a focus on the urban dimension of Europe's employment crisis.

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Notes to editors

- EUROCITIES declaration on work: <http://bit.ly/1wj5fIX>
- EUROCITIES media contact: Rose Montgomery, communications executive, rose.montgomery@eurocities.eu; +32 2 552 0843
- EUROCITIES: www.eurocities.eu
- EUROCITIES on Twitter: @eurocitiestweet via #citiesatwork