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Speech

Brussels, 10 May 2017

Speech by Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors

ECA conference on Youth Employment

Confronting Challenges and Finding Solutions

Brussels, 10 May 2017

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The spoken version shall take precedence.

ECA Press

Mark Rogerson – Spokesperson T: (+352) 4398 47063
Damijan Fišer – Press Officer T: (+352) 4398 45410
12, rue Alcide De Gasperi - L-1615 Luxembourg
E: press@eca.europa.eu @EUAuditors eca.europa.eu

M: (+352) 691 55 30 63
M: (+352) 621 55 22 24

Dear Vice-President Mr Telička

Dear Vice-President Mr Dombrovskis

Dear Members of Parliament and the Commission

Dear colleagues and distinguished guests

It is a great honour for me to welcome you all to this conference organised by my dear colleague Iliana Ivanova. The topic of this conference is of particular importance to me and I believe to each of every one of you.

Providing jobs and education to Europe's young generation is one of our biggest challenges no matter which institution we represent here today. It will shape the way the Union will be seen by its citizens in the future.

I am very happy about the opportunity to hold this conference in the European Parliament. It is the opportunity for us, the European Court of Auditors, to reach out to our main stakeholders, to the people for whom we prepare our reports. I would like to thank our colleagues from the Parliament for their support in organising this conference.

Youth employment is not a new phenomenon and has been an important issue for the European Court of Auditors since several years. In fact, we have already issued four Special Reports on this topic. In December 2015, the Court issued its Special Report on the Commission's support of the youth action teams which had been established for eight Member States experiencing particularly high levels of youth unemployment. In June 2016, we assessed whether the EU's education objectives had been adequately considered in the programmes and related projects supporting education measures.

You surely know that in 2013 the Council adopted the Commission's proposal to establish a "Youth Guarantee", a political commitment to help young people to either find a suitable job or to acquire the necessary education and skills to do so in the future. In March 2015, the Court published a Special Report on the Commission's support for Member States for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. The ECA's current Special report on this topic, which has just published, builds on this analysis and assesses the implementation of the Youth Guarantee at Member State level. I will not go into more detail here, since Ms. Ivanova, the reporting Member for this report, is much better placed than me to explain to you the Court's latest findings and recommendations.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must ensure that the Union gives young Europeans a perspective to base their lives upon – that the Union is their perspective. I believe that this conference today can make an important contribution to helping us achieve this goal.