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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto
on behalf of the European Commission
(17.7.2026)

1. Improving access to employment of young people is one of the specific objectives of the European Social Fund plus (ESF+). In Sicily, the regional ESF+ programme is investing EUR 204 million¹ in targeted actions supporting youth employment². The European Regional Development Fund supports small and medium-sized enterprises' investments in research, competitiveness and green transition; in the Regional Programme for Sicily around EUR 502 million are allocated to these purposes aiming to generate additional jobs. Also, the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan encompasses measures specifically aimed to support youth³ aiming at long-lasting structural effects, including in Southern areas facing deeper challenges.

2. The Commission is regularly analysing the comparatively low wage growth experienced by Italy over the past decades both under the European Semester and the Social Convergence Framework.

3. In 2025, Italy, as well as other Member States, received a recommendation to 'promote job quality and reduce labour market segmentation, also to support adequate wages'⁴, as well as a recommendation to 'make the tax system more supportive to growth'⁵. The Commission acknowledges the efforts already made by the Italian authorities in this regard and will continue to provide technical support to Member States wishing to press ahead with tax reforms aimed at supporting stable employment, particularly for young people.

¹ EU quota, programmed under Priority IV 'Youth', representing 19% of the ESF+ regional allocation.

² These include strengthening active labour market policies, promoting dual learning and apprenticeships as well consolidating and expanding vocational education and training pathways. More broadly, the programme also aims at supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment and strengthening the training offer to align it to labour market needs, with the goal to create more quality job opportunities and fight the brain drain.

³ For example, to reduce early school leaving, which undermines youth's opportunities particularly in the South, 820 100 beneficiaries received training and mentoring and more than 44 000 minors at risk of school drop-out in the South received support from non-governmental organisations. The Garanzia Occupabilit  Lavoratori programme reached more than 3 million beneficiaries to return to employment, including young unemployed in the South. Further targeted measures (e.g., infrastructural projects for the Special Economic Zone) support growth and competitiveness to sustain young people's employment prospects in the South.

⁴ European semester, Italy Country Specific recommendation n.8, 2025; COM(2025) 212 final.

⁵ European semester, Italy Country Specific recommendation n.1, 2025; COM(2025) 212 final.