

Executive summary

The youth unemployment crisis that has unravelled in Europe since 2008 has had a dramatic impact on young people in terms of their autonomy, well-being and levels of social inclusion. In some cases it has also significantly impacted on the demographic balance and entire economic performance of entire regions. Despite diverging and isolated measures at national and regional level to deal with the issue, youth unemployment has remained intractably high. This publication gives an overview of the potential of the youth guarantee to address these issues and the role of youth organisations in the design, monitoring and implementation of the youth guarantee. It shows that the youth guarantee provides an unprecedented opportunity to enact progressive change in Europe that could improve the economic situation of young people, as well as their well-being and level of social inclusion. The youth guarantee has enormous potential and this potential must be seized and embraced in order to bring about real change for young people in Europe. Youth organisations are ready to play their part in this.

List of Abbreviations

CJE	Consejo de la Juventud de España
CNAJEP	Comité pour les relations Nationales et internationales des Associations de Jeunesse et d'Education Populaire
CNJ	Portuguese National Youth Council
ENL	Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FNG	Forum Nazionale Giovani
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MM	Mreža mladih Hrvatske
MSS	Mladinski svet Slovenije
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
SME	Small to Medium-sized Enterprises
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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INTRODUCTION

The youth unemployment crisis that has unravelled in Europe since 2008 has had a dramatic impact on young people. In some cases the crisis has significantly impacted the demographic balance and entire economic performance of regions. Despite isolated measures and efforts to diverge at national and regional levels to deal with the issue, youth unemployment has remained intractably high. At the end of 2013 the youth unemployment rate was 23.2% in the EU, more than double the rate of unemployment for the total population.¹

As the youth unemployment crisis lingers on, more and more young people are experiencing increased levels of poverty and social exclusion and there is a widening economic gap between older and younger generations. The European Youth Forum believes that young people need tailored and specialised services, as well as targeted investment, in order to successfully make the transition from education to employment. The European Youth Forum and its member organisations have been calling for a comprehensive and ambitious approach to tackle youth unemployment, on both a short-term and a long-term basis, since the onset of the economic crisis.² The European Youth Forum stated:

‘The European Youth Forum strongly believes that a Youth Guarantee can be an efficient and proactive approach to overcoming the disproportionate unemployment among young people and contributing to their social inclusion.’

European Youth Forum, Position Paper on Youth Guarantee, p.4³

1. Eurostat News Release (2014) December 2013: *Euro area unemployment rate at 12.0%* [Pdf], available: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-31012014-AP/EN/3-31012014-AP-EN.PDF [31 January 2014].
2. European Youth Forum (2010) *Position Paper on Youth Guarantee (0570-10)* [Pdf], available: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0570-10_YFJ_Position_Paper_Youth_Guarantee.pdf [13 Feb 2014].
3. Ibid.

Specifically, the European Youth Forum and its members have called for a youth guarantee, a policy where governments, regional authorities and public employment services, with the involvement of youth organisations, commit to offering a young person a quality job, training, further education or an internship or apprenticeship within a certain period of being made unemployed or leaving formal education.

For the youth guarantee to work it must be founded on a rights-based approach to youth employment. Young people are holders of certain rights that states have the duty to uphold. As such, the youth guarantee must be founded on the recognition that young people can expect certain services and provisions from the state and their community.

The April 2013 European Council Recommendation on establishing a youth guarantee has provided an important opportunity for youth organisations, social partners, civil society organisations and European, national and regional decision makers to bring forward a comprehensive strategy for tackling youth unemployment and for reinforcing the right of young people to quality and dignified employment. Youth organisations, as representatives of young people and in their proven capacity to reach out to young people and enhance their employability, have a vital role to play with regards to the youth guarantee, in the design implementation and monitoring of the schemes on a national, regional and municipal level.

In particular the European Youth Forum has contributed to the evolution of youth employment policy at European level with its publication on Quality Jobs for Young People, emphasising the need to end precarious employment and inequality in the labour market.⁴ This publication, aimed at both youth organisations and those in charge of designing youth guarantee schemes at national and regional level, will outline the role of youth organisations in the design, implementation and monitoring of the youth guarantee in Europe, as well as detailing the inherent benefits of maximising the involvement youth organisations in youth employment policy. A particular area of focus will be the need for the youth guarantee to be implemented in a way that deals with the heterogeneous nature of youth unemployment and the need for a fair and inclusive youth guarantee that prevents young people from being discriminated against or marginalised further. In this area the European Youth Forum feels that youth organisations have an important role to play.

4. European Youth Forum (2013) *Quality Jobs for Young People* [online], available: http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/yfj_qualityjobs_en_issuu_ [10 Feb 2014].

BACKGROUND OF THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

The concept of young people receiving an employment or educational opportunity whenever they find themselves unemployed is not new. Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union already commits to ensuring a high level of employment, a guarantee of adequate social protection and a high level of education and training.⁵ However, the concept of committing to tailored and specific employment services for young people within a certain period of time is one which is rooted in the Nordic social model. Such a model has been in effect in some form in Finland and Scandinavia for quite some time. The need for an early intervention in these countries arose due to the cognitive impact of long term unemployment, both on individual young people and the broader society.

The youth guarantee began to emerge in Finland and Scandinavia in the 1980s and early 1990s. Each scheme had national and regional variations, which took into account the specific nature of respective labour markets. Similarly, each scheme has evolved over time with each suffering from their respective limitations and weaknesses.

Denmark, for example, first introduced its youth guarantee in 1990. It was originally targeted towards 18 and 19 year olds who were unemployed and did not have access to unemployment benefits. The scheme was eventually rolled out to all young people under the age of 30. Focusing on vocational training and education and general training, the Danish youth guarantee showed positive early results in reducing youth unemployment.⁶ However, the condition of not being able to receive unemployment benefits if you do not participate in the scheme as well as the possibility of municipalities investigating the payment of social benefits for families not wishing to participate in the scheme has had a negative impact: it has affected the way young people perceive the scheme as well as the level of interaction between young people and public employment services.⁷

5. *Official Journal of the European Union* (2010) 'consolidated version of the treaty on the functioning of the European Union', C83/47

6. Price, R. McDonald, P. Bailey, J. and Pini, B. (eds.) (2011) *Labouring in New Times: Young People and Work*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

7. *Ibid.*

Sweden has a youth guarantee scheme aimed at providing young people under the age of 25 with a job or training within 100 days of being unemployed. Despite a municipal follow up for finding young people under the age of 20 who are no longer studying, the coordination of measures has proven to be an issue due to unclear divisions of responsibilities between secondary schools, social services and the labour market. The scheme has suffered from a lack of emphasis on training from the fact that training and education for unemployed people has not yet been adequately tailored to those under the age of 25.⁸

Finland has its own specific conditions with regards to the youth guarantee. In Finland the youth guarantee involved the prospect of a job being offered to a young unemployed person under the age of 25, or a recent graduate under the age of 30, within 3 months of being made unemployed or leaving education. Schemes are tailored according to the needs and age of the young person in question; for younger unemployed people educational programmes are given preference, whereas for young people over the age of 25 finding a job is prioritised.⁹ More details on Finnish specific conditions are included further on in this publication.

Rather than being an immediate measure to reduce youth unemployment, the youth guarantee in these countries has aimed at reducing youth unemployment on a medium to long-term basis, and to significantly reduce the number of young people that are Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET). In 2011, Sweden and Denmark had among the lowest NEET rates in Europe.¹⁰

Since 2010 the European Youth Forum, with the support of its member organisations, has lobbied intensively for the adoption of a standardised youth guarantee that would offer young people a job, training or re-training within 4 months of unemployment. Such a policy should lead the way towards reducing the number of young people without a job, and towards ultimately ensuring that young people are not in a grave position of social exclusion as and when growth occurs and the European economy recovers. The European Youth Forum emphasises that the youth guarantee should not be limited to some young people or to those who already have all the necessary skills. The youth guarantee should be universal and applicable to all young people of various educational and social backgrounds up until the age of 30. The European Youth Forum also highlights that the youth guarantee must include resources to reintroduce long-term unemployed young people to training, further education or new employment. It must focus on the need to connect young people to jobs that match their educational level and make sure that young people

8. Ibid.

9. Mascherini M. (2012) *Youth Guarantee: Experiences from Finland and Sweden* [Pdf], downloadable: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1242.htm> [10 Feb 2014].

10. Eurofound (2012) *Young People not in Employment, Education or Training: Characteristics, Costs and Policy Responses in Europe*, [Pdf], available: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/54/en/1/EF1254EN.pdf> [10 Feb 2014].

are not subject to obligatory or underpaid labour in order to retain their social benefits. The European Youth Forum's vision of the scheme is to include all young people up to the age of 30.

A EUROPEAN EVOLUTION

Following several months of advocacy from youth and other civil society organisations as well as requests from the European Council and the European Parliament, the European Commission brought forward a package of measures to tackle youth employment in December 2012.¹¹ Part of this package proposed a Recommendation to introduce the youth guarantee and ensure that all young people up to age of 25 receive a quality offer of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

The proposed Recommendation¹² urged member states to:

- Establish strong partnerships with stakeholders
- Ensure early intervention by employment services and other partners supporting young people
- Take supportive measures to enable labour integration
- Make full use of the European Social Fund (ESF) and other structural funds to that end
- Assess and continuously improve the youth guarantee schemes
- Implement the schemes rapidly

To facilitate school-to-work-transitions, the Package also launched a consultation of European social partners on a Quality Framework for Traineeships so as to enable young people to acquire high quality work experience under safe conditions.

11. European Commission (2012) *Youth employment: Commission proposes package of measures* [online], available: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1731> [10 Feb 2014].

12. European Commission (2012) *Youth employment: Commission proposes package of measures* [online], available: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1731> [10 Feb 2014].

The European Commission's Communication called for a proactive approach to youth unemployment, recognised the heterogeneous nature of youth unemployment and highlighted the vulnerability of young people to social exclusion. However, the Communication had a more limited focus with regards to the age range of the youth guarantee, foreseeing the measure for young people up to the age of 25 only.

Following the original position and emphasis of the European Commission, the European Council adopted a Recommendation on establishing a youth guarantee in April 2013¹³. The final Recommendation emphasised the need for partnership-based approaches, early intervention and activation, supportive measures enabling labour market integration, the use of Union funds and assessment and continuous improvement of the scheme. Finally, the Recommendation emphasised its swift implementation. Specifically, the Recommendation called on member states to develop partnerships with youth organisations and specialised youth services. Clearly recognising the importance of the youth sector and the work that youth organisations had already done on the youth guarantee, the Recommendation explicitly called on member states to:

‘Ensure the consultation or involvement of young people and/or youth organisations in designing and further developing the youth guarantee scheme to tailor services to the needs of beneficiaries and to have them act as multipliers in awareness-raising activities.’

European Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013, p.4 ¹⁴

The European Council also followed-up on the European Commission's Communication by proposing the Youth Employment Initiative in March 2013¹⁵. The Youth Employment Initiative will have a budget of €6 billion for the period 2014-2016. This Initiative is designed to support young NEETs in the Union's regions where the youth unemployment rate was above 25% in 2012. It will support NEETs by integrating them into the labour market via the youth guarantee. The Youth Employment Initiative is complementary to other projects undertaken at national level, including those with European Social Fund (ESF)¹⁶ support with a view to setting up or implementing the youth guarantee schemes. €3 billion will be made available from a dedicated Youth Employment budget line complemented by at least €3 billion from the ESF. Although funding under the Youth Employment

13. Coveney S. (2013) ‘Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01)’, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 120/1

14. Coveney S. (2013) ‘Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01)’, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 120/1

15. European Commission (2013) *Youth Employment Initiative*, available : <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0144:FIN:EN:PDF> [12.3.2013].

16. European Commission (2012) Youth employment: Commission proposes package of measures [online], available: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1731> [10 Feb 2014].

Initiative was only available to specific member states, all European Union (EU) member states were committed to implement the youth guarantee under the European Council Recommendation.

Although this investment in the youth guarantee was welcomed, it fell short of expectations. In 2012, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) asserted that implementing a youth guarantee across the Eurozone would cost around €21 billion, which in itself was less than 0.5% of government spending in the single-currency area. They believed this to be “a modest figure vis-à-vis expected benefits”.¹⁷ The ILO pointed to the success of the Nordic countries that already have youth guarantee programmes in place. They highlighted that the Finnish Public Employment Service estimated its success rate at more than 80% in 2011 and that in Sweden, 46% of participants of the programme had successful outcomes.¹⁸ Successful outcomes are usually evaluated in terms of having been offered an appropriate job, training or internship opportunity.

The need for a substantial investment in the youth guarantee was further reinforced by Eurofound research conducted in 2012. This research showed that the costs of young NEETs came to €153 billion in 2011, which is a figure calculated based on costs by the state for paying unemployment insurance and other welfare benefits to NEETs, as well as the indirect costs of the loss of income and output for the economy as a whole.¹⁹ A lack of ambition with regards to investment has been disappointing, particularly considering previous studies demonstrating the cost-benefit ratio of the Finnish and Swedish schemes. A study of Swedish measures concluded that the average investment of €7,809 is usually recouped within one year and that average profitability in the first year is €4,200 per participant, with profitability accumulating over time.²⁰

‘Considering the high short-and long-term costs of youth unemployment and inactivity for individuals and the society, the benefits of youth guarantees can potentially outweigh the costs.’

ILO Policy Brief, p.5 ²¹

17. ILO (2012) *Youth guarantees can boost Eurozone recovery* [online], available: http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_185166/lang-en/index.htm [10 Feb 2014].

18. Ibid.

19. Eurofound (2012) *NEETs: Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe* [Pdf], available: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/54/en/1/EF1254EN.pdf> [10Feb 2014].

20. European Commission (2012) *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee* [Pdf], available: ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9222&langId=en [10 Feb 2014].

21. ILO (2013) *Youth guarantees: A response to the youth employment crisis?* [Pdf], available: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/...ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_209468.pdf [12 Feb 2014].

The message was clear: the youth guarantee is a financial investment that will pay dividends over time. Avoiding long-term unemployment and a gradual deterioration of skills among young people should lead to long-term benefits, both for the individuals concerned and the broader economy. Such benefits include fewer and less protracted spells of unemployment over the course of a life cycle. On a long-term basis, this leads to higher incomes, to higher income tax and social security contributions, and ultimately can contribute to a society with fewer social and health problems.²²

In June 2013 the European Commission laid out its future plans for the implementation of the youth guarantee schemes on a European level via the Communication 'Working together for Europe's young people: A call to action on youth unemployment.' The European Commission encouraged the European Council to adopt the proposed Country Specific Recommendations on the Youth Guarantee and on youth employment more generally. The European Commission also called for member states to implement these recommendations as swiftly as possible. Member states with regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25% were asked to submit a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan before the end of 2013. Member states that were not eligible to receive funds under the Youth Employment Initiative were encouraged to submit similar plans by Spring 2014.²³

In addition, the Commission called for better use of the European Social Fund (ESF) and suggested that €80 billion be reserved for ESF 2014-2020. Following an agreement by the European Parliament and the Council, the final ESF came to around €74 billion,²⁴ marginally less than what had been reserved for the period 2007-2013 and less than what had been originally expected.²⁵ In its resolution on the ESF in November the European Parliament placed a specific emphasis on the need to combat youth unemployment. A second emphasis was placed on the importance of the Youth Employment Initiative to help young people who are not in education, employment or training in regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25%. The Parliament also advocated strongly for the youth guarantee to be available to all young people up to the age of 25, and recent graduates up to the age of 30.²⁶

22. European Commission (2012) *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee* [Pdf], available: ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9222&langId=en [10 Feb 2014].

23. European Commission (2013) *Working together for Europe's young people: A call to action on youth unemployment* [Pdf], available: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/youth_en.pdf [10 Feb 2014].

24. European Social Fund (2013) *Adoption of the ESF Regulation by the European Parliament* [online], available: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newsId=8229> [10 Feb 2014].

25. See European Social Fund: Frequently Asked Questions [online], available: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=278> [10 Feb 2014].

26. European Parliament (2013) *Resolution of 16 January 2013 on a Youth Guarantee* [online], available: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0016+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> [10 Feb 2014].

A NATIONAL OBLIGATION

Despite the strong emphasis on the need for a comprehensive and swift approach for tackling youth unemployment on a European level, it has not always been reflected on the national level. In December 2013, it was reported that a number of countries had not submitted their Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans in time for the December European Council, although the majority managed to submit them before the end of the year. In addition, some of the plans submitted partly or mostly included recycled schemes.²⁷ This lack of immediate action can partly be attributed to a lack of political ambition in EU member states.

For many countries the implementation of the youth guarantee will require structural reforms. In some countries, for example, public employment services are poorly equipped to ensure that young people receive appropriate advice on job, education and training opportunities most relevant to their situation. Also, in many member states employment services and educational services are disconnected and there is limited cooperation between the services.

The EU has recognised these structural difficulties and emphasised that they must be overcome if Europe is to exit the crisis and safeguard its own economic and social future. The December European Council stated that the fight against youth unemployment remained a key objective of the EU strategy to foster growth, competitiveness and jobs. They concluded:

‘Priority should be given to enhancing competitiveness, supporting job creation and fighting unemployment, particularly youth unemployment including through the full implementation of the youth guarantee, and to the follow-up of reforms regarding the functioning of labour markets.’

European Council ²⁸

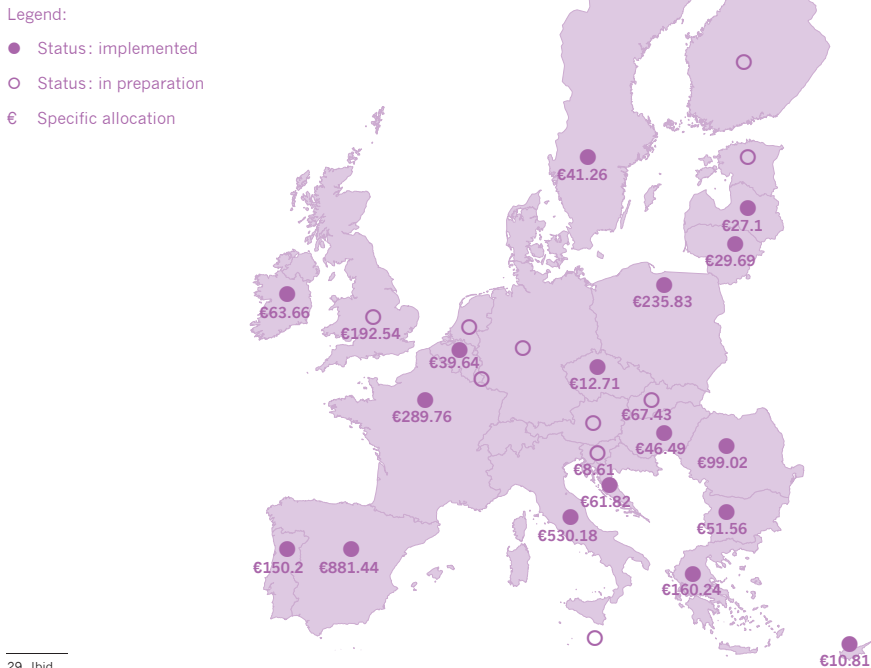
27. Euractiv (2013) [online], available: <http://www.euractiv.com/socialeurope/eu-summit-warn-youth-guarantee-l-news-532478> [11 Feb 2014]

28. General Secretariat of the Council (2013) *European Council Conclusions 19-20 December 2013* [Pdf], available: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/140245.pdf [11 Feb 2014].

Member states that had not submitted their Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan before the deadline of December 31 2013 were called to do so without delay²⁹. The European Council is committed to making the Youth Employment Initiative fully operational by January 2014. Figure 2 maps countries that have submitted their plan, those that are in preparation and how much will be allocated to them.³⁰

The European Youth Forum has noted that despite the need to radically evaluate public employment services for young people in certain countries, national governments, in spite of the European Council Recommendation and the guidance of the European Commission, have not given youth organisations or National Youth Councils the opportunity to play a leading role in the design, implementation and monitoring of the scheme. On the contrary, in a handful of member states the youth guarantee has been implemented alongside measures that National Youth Councils have expressly opposed.

Figure 1: Mapping of the youth guarantee



29. Ibid.
 30. Employment (2013) 17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

STATE OF PLAY: THE YOUTH GUARANTEE IN EUROPE

A youth guarantee, or a policy similar to a youth guarantee, is in place or is in the process of being put in place, in a number of European countries. There are often very different approaches to tackling youth unemployment in member states, and this is reflected in their plans for a youth guarantee. This section will look at some of the existing schemes and will analyse their impact on youth unemployment and the provision of quality jobs for young people. Further statements by youth councils are added in Annex 1.

Proposals for youth guarantee in Belgium



Proposals for a youth guarantee in Belgium have primarily focused on the provision of subsidised internships and apprenticeships. At the end of July 2012, the federal government budgeted the means to create 10,000 subsidised internships in 2013 for young people who are making the transition to the labour market without a secondary degree.³¹ Internship and apprenticeship schemes are due to be extended further under the youth guarantee.

The youth guarantee is due to be implemented in the Brussels Capital Region and the provinces of Liège and Hainaut to the tune of €120 million in 2014 and 2015. Just under €40 million is currently reserved for Belgium under the EU Youth Employment Initiative.³² The Brussels Employment Office, Actiris, subsequently announced that they would focus on internships, particularly in sales and administrative positions, in Brussels.³³ This scheme became operational in October 2013. From January 2014, it has been extended to also offer employment and training. Internships under the scheme have a maximum

31. Commission Staff Working Document (2012) *Moving Youth into Employment* [Pdf], available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [11 Feb 2014].
32. Employment (2013) 17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].
33. Actiris (2013) *Céline Fremault et Actiris s'attaquent Céline Fremault et Actiris s'attaquent au chômage des jeunes au chômage des jeunes avec l'ouverture du avec l'ouverture du Service Youth Guarantee* [online], available: http://www.actiris.be/Portals/37/youth_FR.pdf [11 Feb 2014].

duration of six months, with a €200 compensation to the employer and a further €660 by the state.³⁴

There has, to date, been little evaluation of the scheme, but the emphasis on internships could prove to be divisive. Some argue that the scheme can provide valuable experience for young people on the labour market, particularly those with a lower level of education. Others point to young people's already inferior conditions on the labour market and that, if poorly regulated, internships and recent restrictions to access social protection could reinforce labour market precariousness for young people and lead to greater levels of poverty and social exclusion.³⁵

The European Commission and civil society organisations have noted that the potential of the youth guarantee in Belgium could be hampered by intricate and complex federal and regional structures. It will be necessary for the federal government to coordinate different action plans and the different regional government departments involved. Additional challenges foreseen in the scheme are the need for inter-regional mobility and labour market integration by young people from a migrant background. At the time of publication, there has been no indication of a strategy to overcome these challenges.

Box 1: Perspectives of the Belgian-Francophone Youth Council

The Belgian-Francophone Youth Council has welcomed the youth guarantee as a necessary first step to addressing an issue of utmost concern in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. However, there has been only limited engagement with young people in the design of the scheme on a regional and Federal level. The Youth Council is committed to engage in designing the scheme at every opportunity.

The Youth Council feels that youth involvement is essential to investigate whether the chosen approach is the most efficient way to tackle youth unemployment, to ensure a fair evaluation of the scheme and to investigate whether it is actively working in the interests of young people. The Youth Council believes that the youth guarantee is not a magic solution. Rather, the youth guarantee should be seen as a new way of tackling youth unemployment and of engaging with the youth sector in a constructive way.

34. Deglume P. (2013) *La Garantie Jeunes est sur les rails* [online], available: <http://www.dhnet.be/regions/bruxelles/la-garantie-jeunes-est-sur-les-rails-5254d03c3570c13e8fa60eca> [11 Feb 2014].
35. Lorraine (2014) *Les jeunes veulent travailler mais pas dans ces conditions* [online], available: <http://blog.lesoir.be/hashtag25/2014/01/07/les-jeunes-veulent-travailler-mais-pas-dans-ces-conditions/> [11 Feb 2014].

Box 2: Perspectives of the Croatian Youth Council

Mreža mladih Hrvatske (MMH), or the Croatian Youth Council, was actively working on the youth guarantee long before it came on the policy agenda on a national level in Croatia. Even though MMH has been advocating for the youth guarantee to be added to the policy agenda for the past three years, decision makers only began to work on the policy in the context of Croatia's accession to the EU.

MMH has identified a primary issue with the Croatian Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. This issue is that there was a lack of time to coordinate stakeholders around the most demanding interventions, such as professional career guidance. In addition, the scheme's comprehensiveness was clearly guided by the Finnish example: the Croatian youth guarantee focuses on young people under 25 and recent graduates under 30. It is questionable if the scheme is specifically tailored to the reality in Croatia, as the graduation rate of students enrolling in higher education is considerably lower than in other European countries.

MMH has also expressed disappointment that some ideas, strongly advocated by representatives of employers, trade unions and civil society organisations, were left out of the final draft without a clear explanation. MMH believes that there is a question of societal responsibility and a need for systematic efforts aimed at young people that are now long term unemployed as this scheme puts little focus on their predicaments. Young people in Croatia have come to represent the face of a continuous lack of motivation by the government to build a coherent system of labour market integration. They need urgent help.

MMH believes that it is imperative to use the momentum of the youth guarantee generated at European level to further develop the youth employment policy in Croatia and has welcomed the government's engagement with youth organisations, albeit delayed and unstructured.

The youth guarantee in Croatia



Croatia has the third highest rate of youth unemployment in the EU, standing at 49.7% in the third quarter of 2013.³⁶ In order to decrease youth unemployment, particularly in the crisis period, Croatia made commitments during the pre-accession processes to the EU. Specifically, Croatia committed to raising awareness of employment possibilities after secondary school education, to improve the link between the labour market and the education system through apprenticeships and probationary employment, tax reliefs and for developing incentives for recruiting young people and for stimulating the decentralised model of housing for youth through subsidised housing construction.³⁷

The Croatian Employment Service is establishing early intervention activities aimed at students in their final years of school, among which is a set of vocational guidance services, such as information and counselling. Improved access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) or tertiary education is recognised as a necessary measure to prevent long-term unemployment, although current schemes suffer from a lack of recognition from employers and are not widely available. The primary focus of measures in Croatia has been students who face limitations in entering the labour market, as well as young people with drug and addiction issues.³⁸

The Ministry of Labour and Pension Systems completed and delivered its Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan on 27 December 2013, thus successfully meeting the deadline set by the European Commission. This document recognised the role of youth and youth work organisations, primarily regarding outreach and support to the most vulnerable youth. Specific measures, referred to as Social Experiments, were integrated into the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, opening youth organisations' access to funds, which will enable them to scale up existing programmes and develop new ones. €61 million is currently reserved for Croatia under the EU Youth Employment Initiative.³⁹

36. Eurostat News Release (2013) *November 2013: Euro area unemployment rate at 12.1%* [Pdf], available: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-08012014-BP/EN/3-08012014-BP-EN.PDF [11 Feb 2014].

37. Commission Staff Working Document (2012) *Moving Youth into Employment* [Pdf], available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [11 Feb 2014].

38. Ibid

39. Employment (2013) *17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans* [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

Box 3: Perspectives of the Estonian Youth Council

The Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit (ENL) has engaged with the government on the development of the youth guarantee programme. The Youth Council has also engaged in internal dialogues with a range of youth organisations, including political party youth organisations. This consultation with relevant youth groups has ensured a structured and clear dialogue between youth and the government. As a result, the youth guarantee scheme is supported by most of the youth wings of major political parties in Estonia.

The Estonian Youth Council will continue negotiations so as to ensure that a comprehensive youth guarantee is implemented. The Youth Council believes that sufficient funding is crucial and has estimated that an investment of at least a €35 million is needed to support youth transition to the labour market over the next seven years.

Moving towards the youth guarantee in Estonia



Even before the adoption of the Council Recommendation, Estonia has been moving towards a youth guarantee programme, focusing on the improvement of the provision of opportunities for young people through public employment services.

Estonia has set a national target on combating youth unemployment. Under the EuroPlus Pact 2012 they made a further commitment to develop new programmes for improving employment among young people who were struggling to find work due to a lack of demonstrable skills or low levels of educational attainment. Programmes will be developed to offer formal education to young people aged 16-29 who lack specialised education. These programmes will include outreach to at risk youth and their inclusion in active labour market measures and education.⁴⁰

Public employment services' intervention is provided on the basis of individual action plans. There is also a degree of cooperation with youth centres and organisations, with 11 youth targeted workshops taking place during the first half of 2012.⁴¹ Young people entering the labour market are supported through career counselling services and work practice schemes provided by the public employment service. As such, an apprenticeship-training scheme is provided, which offers unemployed young people practical work experience and improves their professional skills and knowledge.

Following the adoption of the European Council Recommendation, a more comprehensive youth guarantee is being developed, but coherence between measures will need to be ensured. The European Commission has suggested further development of outreach work and targeted measures for the specific needs of young people.

40. Commission Staff Working Document (2012) *Moving Youth into Employment* [Pdf], available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [11 Feb 2014].

41. *Ibid.*

Box 4: Perspectives of the Finnish Youth Council

Allianssi, the national Finnish youth council, has been actively involved in the youth guarantee in Finland and has given input to the government on how to extend and improve the scheme. The Finnish youth council supports the youth guarantee and the renewed commitment of the government towards the scheme. A strong youth guarantee, which is well tailored to the needs of young people, can help to progressively reduce youth unemployment in Finland, which has been increasing over the past number of years.

Despite this renewed commitment of the government to the scheme, Allianssi feels that existing measures are still not sufficient. They believe that the youth guarantee must be the key theme of the 2014 state budget and that the potential of civil society to address youth unemployment must be fully realised. The third sector has specialised knowledge of working with young people and, in addition to being employers themselves, can offer specific opportunities to young job seekers, particularly in relation to Non-Formal Education (NFE).

Allianssi says that subsidies for hiring young people have been a particularly positive aspect of the Finnish youth guarantee as the first job is key to developing a stable and successful career. The youth guarantee in Finland has yet to be perfected, but some interesting first steps have been made.⁴⁴

The youth guarantee in Finland



The Finnish youth guarantee is one of the most frequently referenced schemes on the European level, mainly due to its comprehensive nature and its dual employment and educational components. According to the Finnish definition of the scheme every young person under 25 and recent graduates under 30 will be offered a job, a work trial, a study place, a workshop place or rehabilitation within 3 months after registering as unemployed. The educational specific aspect of the scheme guarantees that every person completing basic education can be granted a place in an upper secondary school, vocational education, apprenticeship, or a place in another form of study.⁴²

In addition to these two components, there is also a wage subsidy aspect to the scheme. Employers receive a subsidy of approximately €700 per month for a maximum of ten months. The employer can get full wage subsidies if the subsidised employee's working hours equal at least 85% of regular working hours in the given industry. Additional resources for the payment of higher training compensations have been granted to education providers that offer apprenticeship training in the form of vocational basic or further education and training. The increased training compensations are paid to employers for the implementation of such apprenticeship training of students who have completed their basic education or voluntary additional basic education in the same year. The amount of compensation is €800 per month for the first year, €500 for the second year and €300 for the third year.⁴³ The Finnish youth guarantee has made special provisions for reaching out to particularly vulnerable young people, such as young job seekers from a migrant background. Finland's youth guarantee has a Public-Private-People Partnership approach. Hence, the government has liaised with youth organisations regarding the implementation of the scheme, including the National Youth Council. The Finnish youth guarantee was re-launched in 2013 with renewed financial investment.

42. For more information, see the Youth Guarantee website, available: http://www.nuorisotakuu.fi/en/youth_guarantee [11 Feb 2014].

43. Employment (2013) 17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

44. For more information see <http://www.alli.fi/edunvalvonta/nuorisotakuu/>

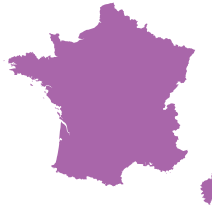
Box 5: Perspectives of the French Youth Council

Comité pour les relations Nationales et internationales des Associations de Jeunesse et d'Education Populaire (CNAJEP) sees the youth guarantee as a first step to dealing with some of the underlying issues behind youth unemployment in France. The emphasis on young people who are at risk of social exclusion is welcomed as an important area of focus. For CNAJEP the right to life-long education and training is vital and this must be reflected in the scheme. The current arrangement for the youth guarantee, with its experimental implementation and narrow remit, does not adequately address the issue of skills mismatch in the labour market.⁴⁹

CNAJEP believes that there needs to be an improvement in working conditions for young people and that the youth guarantee in France should commit to offering quality employment for young people. Often, young people entering the labour market are expected to work for low wages and under precarious contractual arrangements. CNAJEP therefore believes that it is crucial to ensure common rights for young people and tackle youth discrimination, as well as better inform young people of their working rights and rights to social protection.

⁴⁹ CNAJEP (2013) [Pdf], available: http://www.cnajep.asso.fr/doc/position/EmploiJeunes_PositionnementCnajep_121113.pdf [11 Feb 2014].

Plans for increased youth employment in France



For several years, France has had a number of projects in place to provide young people with fewer skills personalised support. These include *Contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale* and the *Contrat d'autonomie*. The former is a contract between a young person and a local authority that is responsible for integrating young people both professionally and socially. The latter focuses on young people who face major difficulties in accessing employment. These young people receive guidance, training or an apprenticeship within six months. In addition, France has established a number of *Ecoles de la deuxième chance* (second-chance schools). These schools target young people under 26 who have left education and do not have a diploma or professional skills. 12,000 young people attended the *Ecoles de la deuxième chance* in 2012.⁴⁵

A provision for the implementation of a youth guarantee in France was made part of a multi-annual plan against poverty and social exclusion in the beginning of 2013. The French youth guarantee focuses specifically on young people under the age of 25, who are isolated, have few resources and who are at risk of social exclusion. The plan aims to ensure a minimum income for young people who are placed in work experience programmes and entry-level jobs.⁴⁶

The project is implemented on a local level, where a special committee identifies young people who are most in need of support. If the identified young person accepts to participate in the scheme they will sign a one-year renewable contract and will receive €450 in addition to existing benefits. In turn, they must participate fully in the scheme by being present at working groups and training sessions or must engage in work experience programmes in local businesses or organisations. If an employment opportunity presents itself the young person must accept the offer or withdraw from the scheme.⁴⁷

The project was piloted in Autumn 2013. 10 regions participated and had a remit of implementing the scheme for up to 10,000 young people. A second phase of the project will be implemented in 2014, with a goal of reaching up to 30,000 young people. €290 million in EU support is currently foreseen under the Youth Employment Initiative for the implementation of the youth guarantee in France.⁴⁸

45. Commission Staff Working Document (2012) *Moving Youth into Employment* [Pdf], available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [11 Feb 2014].

46. Portail du Gouvernement (2013) *Lancement de la "garantie jeunes": les territoires sont choisis* [online], available: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/presse/lancement-de-la-garantie-jeunes-les-territoires-sont-choisis> [11 Feb 2014].

47. BFMTV (2013) *Garantie Jeunes: La clé de la réinsertion des 18-25 ans?* [online], available: <http://rmc.bfmtv.com/info/509194/garantie-jeunes-cle-reinsertion-18-25-ans/> [11 Feb 2014].

48. Employment (2013) *17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans* [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

Box 6: Perspectives of the Irish Youth Council

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) has been working consistently on the youth guarantee since before the Irish Presidency of the EU. Based on the Swedish model, NYCI estimated that an investment of €273 million was required to implement the youth guarantee in Ireland. They cautioned that the cost of inaction would be even more significant. They pointed to research by Eurofound, which estimated the cost of youth unemployment in Ireland to have been ± €3.16 billion in 2011.⁵⁵

NYCI welcomed the initial investment of €14 million in the 2014 national budget, but warned that it was nowhere near sufficient. They reiterated that a long-term, structured investment was required.⁵⁶ In particular, NYCI expressed regret that the youth guarantee was introduced at the same time as cuts to social welfare benefits to young people under the age of 26 were made. They stated that these cuts were "disproportionate and unfair".⁵⁷ Young people in Ireland, who feel that they are being specifically targeted and that they are viewed as a "soft target" by the government, have largely met the cuts with anger.⁵⁸ NYCI highlight that youth unemployment and cuts to social benefits have spurred youth emigration from Ireland, which will significantly impact Ireland's economic development in the long-term.⁵⁹

55. National Youth Council of Ireland (n.d.) *Factsheet: The Youth Guarantee* [Pdf], available:

http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/NYCI_051_A4_accessible.pdf [11 Feb 2014].

56. National Youth Council of Ireland (2013) *Youth Guarantee: action needed now Youth Council to tell Social Protection Committee* [online], available:

<http://youth.ie/nyci/Youth-Guarantee-action-needed-now-Youth-Council-tell-Social-Protection-Committee> [11 Feb 2014].

57. National Youth Council of Ireland (2013), *Budget 2014: cuts to you jobseekers disproportionate and unfair* [online], available:

<http://youth.ie/nyci/Budget-2014-cuts-payments-young-jobseekers-disproportionate-and-unfair> [11 Feb 2014].

58. 'Youth groups form mock airport queue in protest over cuts', *Irish Times* (23 Oct 2013), available: <http://goo.gl/guuec7> [11 Feb 2014].

59. National Youth Council of Ireland (2013) *Time to go? A Qualitative Research Study Exploring the Experience & Impact of Emigration on Ireland's Youth* [Pdf], available: http://www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/NYCI_Youth_Emigration_Report.pdf [11 Feb 014].

Adopting the youth guarantee in Ireland



The adoption of the youth guarantee was one of Ireland's core priorities under its EU Presidency in the first half of 2013.⁵⁰ Despite its commitment to the scheme, it did not have its own version of the youth guarantee in place during its Presidency. Instead, the Irish government was addressing growing numbers of youth unemployment through the *Action Plan for Jobs* and *Pathways to Work* schemes. The aim of the Action Plan for Jobs is to support the creation of 100,000 new jobs by 2016, while the objective of Pathways to Work is to provide those who are unemployed with the appropriate training and skills to take advantage of job opportunities, which will arise as the economy recovers from the financial crisis.

The Government also rolled out a national internship scheme called *JobBridge* in 2012, which committed to giving young people work experience placements for a 6 or 9-month period. The Scheme provides up to 8,500 work experience placements in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. Interns receive an allowance of €50 per week on top of their existing social welfare entitlement.⁵¹ Supporters of the programme claim that it opens new job opportunities for young people who would not otherwise be able to find work. Critics of the scheme, however, claim that it exposes young people to exploitation, that internships are displacing real jobs and that employers are deliberately manipulating the scheme.⁵²

In October 2013, the Irish government announced that it was reserving €14 million in its 2014 Budget for the youth guarantee. In November 2013 the Taoiseach (or Prime Minister) confirmed that Ireland would submit its own Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan before the end of the year in order to access EU funding and to begin to implement the scheme in early 2014.⁵³ Over €63 million is currently reserved for Ireland under the EU Youth Employment Initiative.⁵⁴

50. EPSCO (2013) *Sustained Momentum Needed to Implement Youth Guarantee* [online], available: <http://www.eu2013.ie/news/news-items/20130620post-epsco-social-policy/#sthash.oBIDAIBk.dpuf> [11 Feb 2014].
51. For more information see Job Bridge, website, available: www.jobbridge.ie [11 Feb 2014].
52. 'Burton thanks JobBridge critics, says the scheme "isn't for everyone"', *thejournal.ie* (10 Jun 2013), available: <http://www.thejournal.ie/burton-thanks-jobbridge-critics-says-the-scheme-isnt-for-everyone-940834-Jun2013/> [11 Feb 2014].
53. 'Kenny reiterates commitment to youth jobs guarantee scheme Irish Time', *Irish Times* (12 Nov 2013), available: <http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/europe/kenny-reiterates-commitment-to-youth-jobs-guarantee-scheme-1.1592092> [11 Feb 2014].
54. Employment (2013) *17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans* [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

Box 7: Perspectives of the Italian Youth Council

The Forum Nazionale Giovani (FNG) has always prioritized the youth guarantee. They specify that it is not a magic solution to youth unemployment and that it must be implemented alongside policies aimed at economic growth and job creation. Only then will the youth guarantee be successful.

FNG remains optimistic that the youth guarantee could be used as an opportunity to introduce a new range of policies promoting youth access to the labour market. They assert that the youth guarantee can address a long-standing Italian legacy of reactive policies, which are much too often characterised by a passive approach towards the responsibilities of companies and the private sector.

In terms of implementation, FNG expresses some critical issues that could affect the success of the youth guarantee. They highlight the poor functioning of the employment centres and the ill-equipped nature of Italian regions. Lastly, they highlight the need to include young people up to the age of 30.

FNG has welcomed the general open approach, which the government has taken in designing the scheme. In particular, FNG has welcomed the involvement of youth organisations in the planning of the operational programme, in lobby and advocacy activities and in monitoring the progress at both national and local levels. FNG will be part of a formal consultative body on both the policies and the initiatives of the national implementation plan.

Going against youth unemployment in Italy



In recent years, Italy has had to cope with a rapidly increasing rate of youth unemployment, which nearly doubled from 2007 to 2013. The implementation of the European Council Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee in Italy has prioritised labour market activation policies for young people. The Italian implementation plan for the youth guarantee was finalised in December 2013 following a series of consultations with youth organisations and other stakeholders.

The focus of the strategy is NEETs between 14 and 24 years of age in the regions of the country where the youth unemployment rate is over 25%. The indicative target of the youth guarantee is to offer the scheme to 927,967 young people. Within six months after the launch of the implementation plan, a possible extension for taking in young people aged 25 to 29 will be assessed. If the plan is expanded, an additional 597,897 young people aged between 25 and 29 will be added. The ceiling for youth participation in the scheme is therefore 1,525,864 young people.

The implementation plan emphasises tools such as training, a combination of school and work and apprenticeship schemes. Young people who need further qualifications will receive personalised training programmes aimed at promoting inclusion in the labour market.

The Youth Corner project is part of the Italian youth guarantee. This project focuses on young people within employment centres, in school and university and aims at promoting attractive and informal contacts with the target groups. This includes youth organisations' participation as well. The overall estimated availability of funds, including EU funds and national funds, is €1,513,000.

Box 8: Perspectives of the Portuguese National Youth Council

The Portuguese National Youth Council (CNJ) has expressed serious concern at the rate of youth unemployment in Portugal and its impact on young people. They believe that the current youth unemployment crisis is exacerbating youth poverty in the country, thus condemning many young people to situations that limit their freedom and make them unable to assert their autonomy.

CNJ urges the government to build on the *Impulso Jovem* scheme by bringing in a comprehensive youth guarantee strategy and to promote the creation of a new social contract. Moreover, CNJ urges the government to ensure increased social responsibility and investment from the private sector, involving them further in finding solutions to youth unemployment.

CNJ believes that long-term solutions can only be found through stimulating growth and ensuring the protection of the right to quality employment. These must be underlying principles of the Portuguese youth guarantee. Specifically, the youth guarantee should include targeted measures on quality internships, tackling precarious work and promoting entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity, particularly among marginalised groups.

Developing the employability of youth in Portugal



The youth employment strategy in Portugal focuses on developing the employability of young people. The *Impulso Jovem* programme, which was launched in August 2012, offers 6-month professional internships. The programme established the compulsory provision of vocational training and the attribution of an integration bonus in cases where a subsequent employment contract is signed. The programme targets young people aged 18 to 30 who have been registered as unemployed in the public employment service for at least 4 months.⁶⁰ The scheme also includes measures to support entrepreneurship and investment in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME).

Portugal began work on the development of a youth guarantee scheme following the European Council Recommendation and submitted a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan.⁶¹ Although the European Commission indicated that plans for implementation seem relatively advanced, they expressed concern about the effectiveness of outreach programmes to NEETs.

Regions eligible for funding under the Youth Employment Initiative in Portugal are Alentejo, Algarve, Centro, Lisbon, Norte, Madeira and the Azores.⁶² €150 million in EU support under the Youth Employment Initiative is currently foreseen for the implementation of the youth guarantee in Portugal.⁶³

60. Commission Staff Working Document (2012) *Moving Youth into Employment* [Pdf], available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [11 Feb 2014].

61. Employment (2013) *17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans* [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

62. Commission Staff Working Document (2012) *Moving Youth into Employment* [Pdf], available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [11 Feb 2014].

63. Employment (2013) *17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans* [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

Box 9: Perspectives of the Slovenian Youth Council

The Slovenian Youth Council, Mladinski svet Slovenije (MSS), has been involved in extensive work on the youth guarantee on a national level. They have worked towards ensuring broad support for their youth guarantee campaign, entitled Jamstvo za mlade, particularly among youth trade unions and student organisations. Following the adoption of the European Council Recommendation on the youth guarantee, MSS and other youth organisations have met with the government on a number of occasions. At the time of publication, an agreement has not yet been reached on key aspects of the strategy.

MSS strongly advocates for the need for a strategy to tackle youth unemployment, which consists of more than only one new measure and a variety of already existing measures. So far, only a few of MSS' suggestions have been taken on-board, but MSS continues to work with the Ministry of Labour in a constructive way. Although the government has engaged with youth organisations, MSS has noted an expressed lack of cooperation between various ministries, which were supposed to develop a scheme in partnership in order to achieve synergies in the field of education, training and economic development.

MSS has offered to assist the Ministry for Labour in informing youth about possibilities they have under this Programme and to help promote the programme among employers and youth. The role of the Youth Council is to be made clear in 2014 when the scheme is being implemented.

Youth and employment in Slovenia



In recent years, Slovenia has attempted to address a rising youth unemployment rate through an Active Labour Market Policy, which encourages student work placements and the promotion of self-employment. The concept of a rights-based youth guarantee programme was not on the national agenda prior to the European Council Recommendation and national level advocacy work of the Slovenian Youth Council.

Current projects in place include *Learning for young adults and First challenge*.⁶⁴ The former is aimed towards unemployed people under the age of 26 who have left school and includes a number of activities to improve participants' general and practical knowledge necessary for successful reintegration in the school environment and everyday life. The latter encourages employment of the unemployed and of the first job seekers under 30 years of age.⁶⁵ A third project assists up to 500 first-time job seekers with a degree in social assistance in traineeships for a maximum period of 12 months in civil society and social welfare organisations, which include humanitarian organisations, geriatric care centres and working with the disabled.⁶⁶

Self-employment is a particular emphasis of the Slovenian strategy. The purpose of the national Self-employment Programme is to encourage entrepreneurship among the unemployed by offering self-employment subsidies. In 2011, 1,124 young people under 30 applied for the subsidy and 816 of them are now employed.

One region of Slovenia will be eligible to access the funds allocated under the Youth Employment Initiative in order to implement a youth guarantee. Existing indications suggest that the Slovenian youth guarantee currently consists of pre-existing measures and that it will include few new measures.

64. First challenge is a measure that was designed in cooperation with MSS as a result of numerous consultations between youth and decision-makers, organized during the structured dialogue process in 2012 and led by MSS.

65. Commission Staff Working Document (2012) *Moving Youth into Employment* [Pdf], available: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SWD:2012:0406:FIN:EN:PDF> [11 Feb 2014].

66. Ibid.

Box 10: Perspectives of the Spanish Youth Council

Consejo de la Juventud de España (CJE) has expressed disappointment at the government's lack of capacity to address the youth unemployment issue, spiralling levels of youth poverty and poor quality work for young people. Such negligence is unacceptable in times where labour market uncertainties for young people have increased in recent years. This has particularly been the case for the new contractual arrangements for internships, training and entrepreneurship.

Likewise, there has been little meaningful dialogue between the government and the youth council, youth organisations and other civil society organisations on the plan for a youth guarantee. This lack of consultation belies the fact that engagement with youth organisations and youth representatives were explicitly expressed in the European Council Recommendation and is further compounded by the fact that Spain is due to be the largest benefactor of the Youth Employment Initiative.

67. Eurostat News Release (2013) *November 2013: Euro area unemployment rate at 12.1%* [Pdf], available:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-08012014-BP/EN/3-08012014-BP-EN.PDF [11 Feb 2014].

68. Hawley J., Hall A. and Tina Weber (2012) *Effectiveness of policy measures to increase the employment participation of young people* [Pdf], available: www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/60/en/1/EF1260EN.pdf [11 Feb 2014].

69. Ibid.

70. Employment (2013) *17 Member States have submitted Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans* [online], available: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-13_en.htm [11 Feb 2014].

Strategizing for increased youth employment in Spain



In the third quarter of 2013, Spain had the highest rate of youth unemployment in the EU. Over 57% of young people were unemployed in this period.⁶⁷ Despite this, Spain had no plans for a youth guarantee prior to the European Council Recommendation. Instead of focusing on youth unemployment, the Spanish government focused on financing actions to support the employability of young people and to support public employment services in developing active labour market policies for them. A part of this strategy focuses on investment loans, primarily for SMEs.

Spanish policy promotes self-employment and the transition from temporary to open-ended contracts for young people. The previous government introduced the modification of the unemployment benefit capitalisation regime, which enables young unemployed people who want to start their own business to receive 80% of their total unemployment benefit entitlement in a single payment in order to support them in setting up a business.⁶⁸

Measures, such as exemptions from social security contributions for companies that hire young or long-term unemployed people on a part-time basis have also been introduced. This measure is combined with incentives for employers to change temporary contracts into open-ended ones. The focus is thus on sustainability of employment for young people.

For young people, being in temporary employment has consistently been one of the main features of the labour conditions of young people in Spain. The crisis brought a further 10% rise in young people working in temporary jobs.⁶⁹ 94% of new contracts for young people are now on a temporary basis and the youth job market in Spain remains defined by high job instability and poor training and progression opportunities.

Spain submitted its Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan shortly before the December European Council. The exact details of the plan are unclear as there was only limited consultation with civil society organisations. €881 million of the EU Youth Employment Initiative is reserved for Spain.⁷⁰

Spain has developed two new contracts for young people. The first is a contract for training and learning, which is oriented towards internships and training and allows an employee to receive less than the minimum salary. This contract has a duration of up to 3 years and can be renewed by the same company. The contract does not necessarily take into consideration the employee's previous experience. The second contract is for entrepreneurship, which is available for companies with less than 50 employees. This contract allows for a trial period of one year.

INVOLVING YOUTH IN THE DESIGN AND MONITORING OF THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

As we can see from the examples given above, there has been a varying degree of consultation with youth organisations and other civil society organisations in the development of youth guarantee Implementation Plans and in the design of the youth guarantee in general. However, despite the explicit reference to the need to conduct consultations with youth in the European Council Recommendation, the engagement with youth has sometimes been haphazard, superficial and in some cases non-existent.

A core aspect in the evaluation of the youth guarantee must be how much the scheme resonates with young people, the ability of governments and local authorities to engage young people with public employment services and other relevant private and public entities. A key indicator of success of the scheme in Finland and Sweden has been its uptake among young people, including those most at risk of social exclusion. For this goal to be realised in other member states, the scheme must be implemented in a way that supports young people's rights and autonomy. Most importantly, it must be positively communicated to young people.

Youth organisations have a core role to play in this regard. Through the European Youth Forum, National Youth Councils throughout Europe have been engaged in the debate on the youth guarantee on a European level. Often this debate took place long before the issue appeared on national agendas. Despite this, and the explicit wording of the European Council Recommendation, youth organisations have frequently found themselves ignored or marginalised on a national level.

There must be recognition that the youth guarantee is not simply the regurgitation or an upgrade of existing measures aimed at addressing youth unemployment. Rather, it is an opportunity for a progressive new departure, a new era of engagement with young people and youth organisations on employment and employability. Most importantly, it is a means to address the intergenerational injustice that has been perpetuated by the

economic crisis. This need to re-engage with youth and redefine youth employment policy has been recognised by the European Commission, the European Council and, most notably, the European Parliament.⁷¹ In his speech, the President of the European Parliament said:

‘Young people are paying with their life chances for a crisis for which they are in no way responsible. It is scandalous that we may soon be forced to watch as a lost generation grows up in our midst, on the richest continent in the world. These young people are being cheated of their futures, and the impact on the fabric of our societies is potentially catastrophic. (...) We must act now.’

President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz

It is disappointing that some member states have not seized the opportunity to act and that the structure of this engagement with youth was not better defined.

Involving young people in the design of the youth guarantee, in many cases, requires a change of attitude towards youth. Showing a finalised version of a youth guarantee strategy to youth organisations is not a constructive form of consultation. Youth organisations must be allowed to give input to youth employment strategies at the early stages of development, to table their own propositions and to have the right to sit with national and regional implementation bodies as a consultative partner. The youth guarantee cannot be forced upon young people; it must be done with and by young people.

Youth organisations also have a responsibility to ensure that they clearly communicate their capacities and motivations to be involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the youth guarantee. To this extent the examples of the National Youth Councils cited in this publication represent a collection of best practices on how youth organisations can drive the national debate on the youth guarantee, how they can advocate for an ambitious programme. The examples also show how National Youth Councils can hold relevant bodies accountable when the scheme is not enacted in coordination with, or in the interests of, young people. The member organisations of the European Youth Forum, as independent, democratic, and youth-led organisations are in a prime position to represent young people in the design and monitoring of the youth guarantee in this regard.

71. Speech to the European Council of 22 May by the President of the European Parliament. For the full speech see: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/press/press_release_speeches/speeches/sp-2013/sp-2013-may/pdf/speech-to-the-european-council-of-22-may-by-the-president-of-the-european-parliament-martin-schulz [11 Feb 2014].

YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMPLOYABILITY

An area that is frequently overlooked with regards to the youth guarantee is the role of youth organisations in the implementation of the scheme. Youth organisations may help to develop the employability of young people through NFE. They may also give young people confidence and help them develop a network that can be beneficial for their future careers. In particular, NFE and the informal learning taking place in youth organisations and civil society are a basic, yet, ideal environment for promoting a culture of creativity, personal and professional development, self-responsibility and self-expression. Youth organisations play the leading role in NFE, so they should be considered as experts on understanding and satisfying young people's needs for self-expression.

In October 2012, the European Youth Forum commissioned the University of Bath and GHK Consulting to carry out a study, involving participants from over 40 European countries, on the impact of NFE in youth organisations on young people's employability through the development of soft skills.⁷² This study contributed to the creation of an evidence base in the area of NFE and assessed the contribution of youth organisations as educational providers.

The aim of this study was to assess whether the competences and skills obtained through NFE activities in youth organisations contribute to the employability of young people and looked at a number of key areas, including:

- Which soft-skills and competences, and at what level, are demanded on the labour market
- Which soft-skills and competences are developed through NFE activities

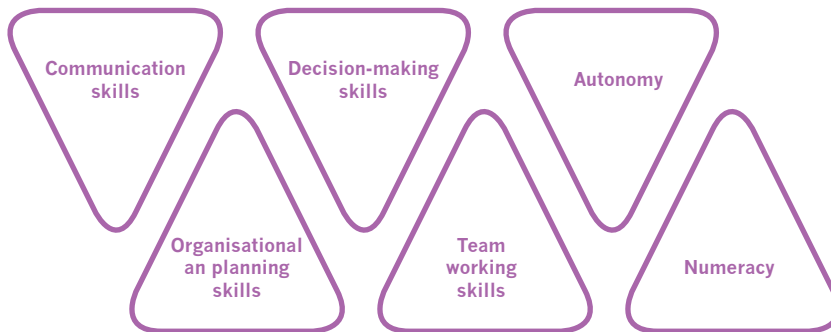
72. Souto-Otero M., Ulicna D., Schaepekens L. and Bognar V. (2012) *Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in youth organizations on young People's Employability* [Pdf], available: http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/reportnfe_print [11 Feb 2014].

- The extent to which young people are aware of those skills and competences and how these are presented to employers
- Other ways in which participation in youth organisations enhance employability

A range of conclusions and recommendations were formulated on the basis of the study findings. First, the study showed that there is a strong correlation between skills demanded by employers and skills developed in youth organisations. These include:

- Communication skills
- Decision-making skills
- Autonomy
- Organisational and planning skills
- Team working skills
- Numeracy

Figure 2: Soft skills acquired by youth in youth organisations



Five of the six most frequently demanded soft skills are amongst skills developed in youth organisations. The higher the involvement of young people in youth organisations the more a particular skill set is developed. The study iterated:

‘Formal Education providers should ensure that the benefits of involvement in youth organisations, as well as other volunteering opportunities are emphasized and recognised.’

GHK Consulting, p.5⁷³

The study concluded that young people are aware of the soft skills they develop and employers are positive about young people’s experience in youth organisations. However, young people need to be more confident in presenting the skills and competencies they developed in youth organisations. Beyond skills development, the study also showed that involvement in youth organisations creates networks and connections for young people, which can be particularly beneficial for those who previously had limited levels of social capital.

The need to promote a more holistic form of education was reiterated by the January 2014 McKinsey & Company report, entitled 'Education to employment: Getting Europe’s youth into work'. This report highlighted the skills mismatch in Europe and stated that more than a quarter of European employers are struggling to fill vacancies while young people face high levels of unemployment. The report highlighted soft-skills as an area where many young people are particularly lacking.⁷⁴ Thus, youth organisations should be eligible for funding under the youth guarantee, particularly in developing their activities to improve the employability and social inclusion of young people that find themselves at risk of social exclusion.

The youth guarantee must seek more than to match an unemployed young person with a job; it must provide means to addressing the social impact of the crisis on young people, and particularly the impact of unemployment on young people's confidence and levels of autonomy. For this, youth organisations have a key role to play as well.

Youth organisations themselves must step up to the challenge, particularly in promoting their activities. They should aim to provide documentation that details the nature and outcomes of participation in NFE activities and need to rebrand themselves to employers and national and local governments. Only then can governments become fully aware of youth organisations activities and the benefits of interacting with youth organisations.

73. Souto-Otero M., Ulicna D., Schaepkens L. and Bogнар V. (2012) *Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in youth organizations on young People’s Employability* [Pdf], available: http://issuu.com/yomag/docs/reportnfe_print [11 Feb 2014].

74. McKinsey & Company (2014) *Education to employment: Getting Europe’s youth into work* [online], available: http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/social_sector/converting_education_to_employment_in_europe [11 Feb 2014].

A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE YOUTH GUARANTEE

An utmost priority for youth organisations, public employment services, local authorities, and all those charged with the design, monitoring and implementation of the youth guarantee must be the need to ensure that it is open, fair and inclusive.

The longevity of the youth unemployment crisis in Europe has seen a rise in the number of young NEETs. Eurofound's research has shown that those with low levels of education are three times more likely to be out of education, employment or without training than those with tertiary level education. The risk is 70% higher for young people from a migrant background than nationals, while having a disability or health issue is also a strong risk factor. It is therefore vital to ensure that the youth guarantee is accessible to all and has strong anti-discrimination principles, both in its design and its implementation on a local level.

To simply offer employment opportunities or encourage self-employment of entrepreneurship to young people who already have a high-level of skills and employability will not address the youth unemployment issue and could potentially entrench deeper inequality in the labour market. Similarly, early activation measures must be complemented with schemes specifically addressed at young people that find themselves in a position of long-term unemployment.

In this regard, the French interpretation of the youth guarantee, with its focus on socially marginalised young people has been particularly interesting. Countries such as Finland, where language barriers can be particularly inhibiting for young people from a migrant background, have foreseen language acquisition as part of their youth guarantee, a measure that has been welcomed.

Cuts to youth and social services contradict the ethos of the youth guarantee and undermine the potential of the scheme to address youth unemployment. The youth guarantee must be implemented in a way that prevents the onset of long-term unemployment and helps reintegration of the long-term unemployed on the labour market.

Long-term unemployment has increased by 3.7% among young people since 2008, compared with an increase of 1.8% for the adult population. 30.1% of young unemployed people in the EU have been unemployed for 12 months or more.⁷⁵ This presents an enormous challenge. Considering that long-term unemployment when young can have profound effects on employability and career development in the medium to long-term, the poor implementation of the youth guarantee, or of a weak youth guarantee with a narrow focus, could mean an extension of the youth unemployment crisis in Europe over the next 20 years.

75. European Employment Observatory (2012) *Long term Unemployment 2012* [Pdf], available: ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8931&langId=en [11 Feb 2014].

CONCLUSION: A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH

The youth guarantee provides an unprecedented opportunity to address youth unemployment in a coordinated and comprehensive manner in Europe, to re-engage with young people, as well as to boost the European economy. Unfortunately, the youth sector has felt that, to date, the youth guarantee has not lived up to its potential due to a lack of financial investment and, in certain cases, a lack of political ambition.

The youth guarantee must stem from a major commitment from businesses, the youth sector, civil society organisations, public employment services, local authorities and national and European-level decision makers. A relabeling or re-packaging of current failed systems is not enough. In order to function, a youth guarantee must have a rigorous system of evaluation and be regularly updated to correspond to changing circumstances.

Secondly, the youth guarantee provides an unprecedented opportunity for youth organisations and employers – as well as private and public employment agencies – to interact. The youth guarantee should therefore be promoted as a means to raise awareness and bring visibility to the meaning and value of NFE in youth organisations, while reinforcing the trust of young people in the potential to enact progressive change in Europe that will improve their economic situation, well-being and levels of social inclusion.

To this extent, there should be close synergies with other European-level schemes and programmes designed to tackle youth unemployment and disadvantaged young people; namely the Quality Framework for Traineeships, the European platform against poverty and social exclusion, and the Social Investment Package. The youth guarantee has enormous potential. This potential must be seized and embraced in order to bring about real change for young people in Europe.

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Annex 1: Comments on the Youth Guarantee

Stéphanie Nowakowski

International Project Officer at the Belgian-Francophone Youth Council



“The Belgian-Francophone Youth Council welcomes the European youth guarantee initiative. However, the financial investments are not at a level we would expect and fall well short of ILO estimations. In Brussels and Wallonia the unemployment rate among young people is a major concern. The Brussels Employment Office (Actiris) made a proposal to set up a service especially dedicated to young unemployed people: they will be coached to help them make a smoother transition into the labour market. However, youth organisations only played a marginal role in the initial consultation and should have been involved more in the development of the action plan. The youth guarantee is just the first step and is not a panacea to solving youth unemployment.”

Nikola Bukovic

**Associate Expert on Youth Rights and Youth Policies
at the Croatian Youth Network**



“In Croatia the youth guarantee has created a relevant forum for structured discussion and collaboration among key players concerned with youth unemployment. However, even more important than funds allocated via the EU Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund is a common understanding that the youth guarantee Implementation Plans require constant monitoring and amendments and that some issues can be dealt with only through a long-term strategic approach. There is a question of societal responsibility and a need for systematic efforts aimed at young people that are now long-term unemployed as this scheme puts little focus on their predicaments. The now long-term unemployed represent the face of a continuous lack of motivation by government to build a coherent system of labour market integration and need urgent help.”

Hanna Sauli

Advocacy Coordinator at the Finnish Youth Co-Operation



“Allianssi has been involved in planning and promoting the Finnish youth guarantee from the very beginning. We are aware that in comparison with other European countries, Finland has one of the most comprehensive youth guarantee models. However, the youth guarantee has not eliminated youth unemployment or youth exclusion. Allianssi is particularly concerned about the lack of resources made available for preventive measures and basic youth work under the youth

guarantee. We would also like the third sector to have a stronger role in the implementation. Allianssi is committed to developing the youth guarantee further and believe it is crucial that the next Finnish government will continue to invest in it.”

Giovanni Corbo

Secretary-General of the Italian National Youth Council



“The youth guarantee in Italy represents an opportunity to implement a new range of employment policies for young people in the labour market. Some attempts have already been made in this direction, such as the simplification and strengthening of apprenticeships and the incentives for recruitment of young people. Unfortunately, this is still far from achieving a positive result, because our country is still largely dominated by passive or reactive policies. Much remains to be done in the field of youth employment starting with the revision of the contractual arrangements that generate insecurity and precariousness. In order for the youth guarantee to work, we must revert the trend of austerity and begin to genuinely promote economic growth. This is the only tool to create effective new opportunities for young people.”

Tea Jarc

President of the Slovenian Youth Council



“MSS has been very active on the youth guarantee as we believe that it has the potential to change the lives of young people in Slovenia. We gave concrete inputs during negotiations with the government. Unfortunately, we were unable to achieve an agreement on how to improve core areas of the scheme, which are crucial for young people’s employability in Slovenia. We have been disappointed to see that the proposed youth guarantee scheme consists mostly of existing measures and that there have been few indications on how these will be improved or how they will improve youth’s employability. Radical action is required in Slovenia as it has experienced one of the highest growths in youth unemployment in the EU over the past 5 years.”

Ricardo Ibarra

President of the Spanish Youth Council



“The youth guarantee has significant potential for Spain, but so far we have been disappointed by the lack of dialogue with youth organisations and representatives of young people. We have also not been satisfied with the approach of Spanish governments since the onset of the crisis. Labour market precarity for young people has not been addressed, and has even become reinforced in recent years. This has particularly been the case for the new contractual arrangements for internships, training and entrepreneurship.”