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The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on

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[1] Flagship measures and reforms include significant reforms, innovative or promising measures, as well as large scale projects, playing a central role in the Youth Guarantee's implementation in their respective Member State. Many are financially supported by ESF or the YEI. Sources for the flagship measures include the YG questionnaire and EEPO report.

1. INTRODUCTION

While young people often experience difficulties in transitioning from school to work, the recession of the late 2000s exacerbated their already fragile position, with a peak in youth unemployment at 23.7 % in 2013 in the EU and annual rates exceeding 40 % in four Member States during that year. The economic crisis also increased youth disengagement from the labour market, captured by the growing number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), which totalled 7.3 million young people in 2013 (13 % of all young people aged 15-24 years).

This results from youth unemployment being particularly sensitive to the business cycle, but also from structural issues that were prevalent before the crisis. These issues include the lack of bridges between education systems and the world of work, inefficiencies in labour market institutions and labour market segmentation affecting young people particularly in several Member States. Such lost potential takes a heavy toll on European economies and calls for early intervention and activation: experiencing unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, at the beginning of one's career can have negative long-term consequences in terms of future earnings and employment prospects of the individual (the 'scarring effect'[2]) and may lead to lower productivity levels overall.

Promoting youth employment and improving school-to-work transitions has been an important priority in the EU agenda. A comprehensive set of initiatives was put in place, in particular further to the December 2012 Youth Employment Package. Through the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee adopted in April 2013,[3] all Member States committed to 'ensure that all young people up to the age of 25 years receive a quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education'.[4]

The Youth Guarantee has become a reality across the EU and has yielded encouraging results. Swift implementation began from 2014 onwards and a range of policies and financial instruments have been put in place to roll it out successfully. Significant EU financial support is provided notably by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), which provides targeted funding of EUR 6.4 billion to support young people not in employment, education or training in regions struggling most with youth unemployment and inactivity, and by the European Social Fund (ESF). Three years on, there are 1.4 million fewer young unemployed in the EU and the number of young people not in employment, education or training dropped by 700 000 between 2013 and 2015.[5]

This staff working document (SWD) complements the Commission Communication 'The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on' which responds to a request from the June 2013 European Council. **It reviews steps taken by Member States and at EU level to implement the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative between April 2013 and July 2016**.

It examines the first results and successes to date and identifies challenges, bearing in mind that implementation of national Youth Guarantee schemes began in most Member

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[2] Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee, COM(2012) 729 final.
[3] 2013/C 120/01.
[4] Fourteen Member States have extended the upper age limit beyond 25, see section 2.1.1.2 below.
[5] In 2015, 6.6 million (or 12 %) of young people aged 15-24 years were NEETs.

States in 2014 and that structural reforms are still being implemented. Finally, it highlights how these challenges could be addressed and proposes additional guidance and clarifications ('lessons learnt') emerging from the three years of implementation.

This staff working document is meant as a **tool which policy makers can draw upon to understand how the Youth Guarantee is being delivered across the EU** and support the continued implementation of their national Youth Guarantee schemes in the future. Practical examples aim to provide inspiration to countries facing similar challenges. Moreover, flagship examples highlighted in boxes – and proposed by Member States[6] - present significant reforms and innovative or promising measures that are playing a central role in the Youth Guarantee's implementation in their respective Member State. Where possible, success factors and innovative practices have been highlighted.

This staff working document is also designed as a **reference document of European and national resources on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation**. It is supported by a wealth of references to studies and reports and provides electronic links to further national and European resources. The reader is also oriented towards the European Commission's website as it provides a valuable platform of resources that support national efforts.[7] In particular, Section 2.2.2. provides an overview of key measures taken by Member States to support the implementation of their national Youth Guarantee schemes.

Reporting builds on a range of evidence and inputs, including the results of the Employment Committee's (EMCO) ongoing multilateral surveillance on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, which comprises two rounds of data collection on Youth Guarantee schemes (covering the years 2014 and 2015) under a common Indicator Framework and EMCO key messages endorsed by the EPSCO[8] Council on 7 March 2016.[9] This staff working document also draws on Member States' response to a questionnaire on implementation submitted to the Commission by 29 February 2016, a strategic dialogue with civil society held on 29 January 2016, an exchange with social partners during the 17 February 2016 Social Dialogue Committee meeting, and a consultation with young people at the European Youth Event that took place in the European Parliament in Strasbourg from 20-21 May 2016. Finally, it draws upon a report prepared by the European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO) on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

A staff working document has also been published regarding the Quality Framework for Traineeships (QFT),[10] one of the flagship measures supporting the Youth Guarantee's implementation, on which Member States were asked to report on measures taken in accordance with the Quality Framework for Traineeships to the Commission by the end of 2015.

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[6] Eleven out of the thirteen examples of best practice were proposed by Member States in their response to a questionnaire on implementation of the Youth Guarantee submitted to the Commission by 29 February 2016.

[7] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079

[8] Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council configuration (EPSCO).

[9] *Key messages on the way forward for the Youth Guarantee post-2016, incorporating EMCO's report on the state of play of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee,* ST 6154 2016 INIT.

[10] European Commission (2016), staff working document, Applying the quality framework for traineeships.

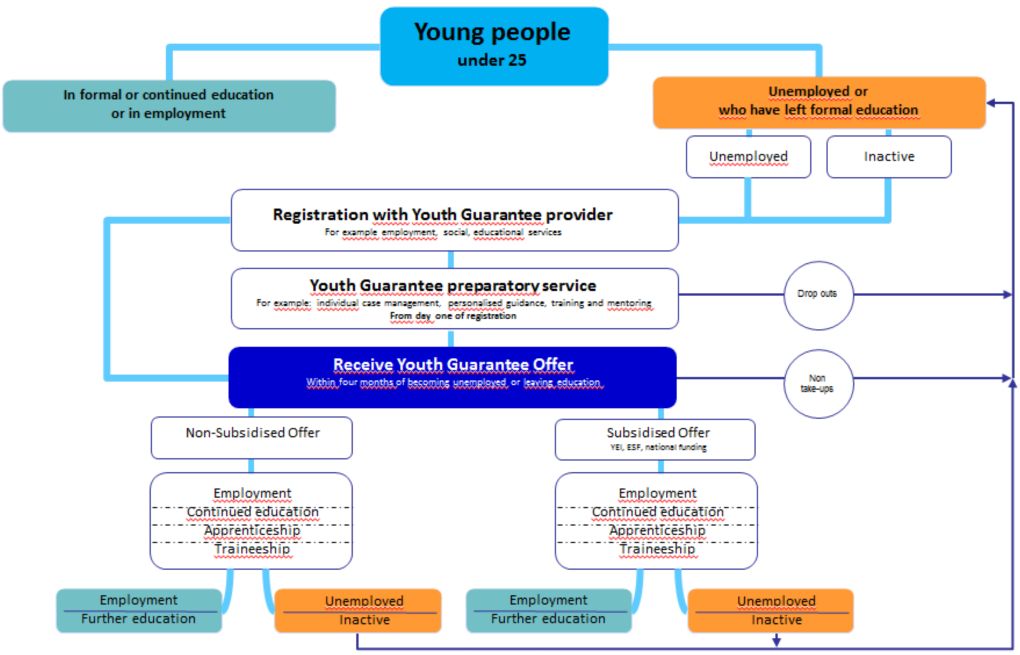
2. The Youth Guarantee in practice: progress towards the Recommendation's implementation

2.1. The Youth Guarantee across the EU

The Youth Guarantee (YG) has become a reality, just three years after the Recommendation's adoption. The typical setup sees young people registering with a provider, which most commonly is a public employment service (PES). Following an individual assessment, the registered then receive an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship. The YG's tailor-made approach means that young people will be offered different pathways to sustainable employment depending on their needs and situation (*see Figure 1 below*).

National Youth Guarantee schemes vary significantly across the EU. This section reviews how Youth Guarantee schemes have been delivered, with a particular focus on the implementation of points 1, 2 and 27 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to Member States.

Figure 1: The Youth Guarantee Pathways



2.1.1. *Key features*

2.1.1.1. Planning and implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes (points 2 and 27)[11]

In line with point 2 of the part of the YG Recommendation which is addressed to Member States, all Member States identified the "relevant **public authority in charge of establishing and managing the Youth Guarantee and of coordinating partnerships across all levels and sectors".** Coordination falls in most Member States upon the ministry in charge of labour (or equivalent). However it can also be the responsibility of the ministry in charge of education and/or youth (as in Finland since 2015) or be shared

[11] More information on key features of national YG schemes can be found in Annex B.

between several ministries (as in Latvia, where both the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Education and Science are steering the YG's implementation).

All Member States identified a **Youth Guarantee Coordinator**[12], usually an official from this authority and the main point of contact on YG implementation. Regional authorities also play a key role in managing or implementing the Youth Guarantee in several Member States, such as Belgium, Spain and Italy.

All Member States submitted **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans** (YGIPs) by May 2014, most of which have been published online under the responsibility of the respective Member States[13]. The YGIPs identify steps to be taken to implement the Youth Guarantee, outlining the timeframe for key reforms and measures, the roles of public authorities and other partners, as well as how it will be financed. Several Member States (such as Finland, Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Malta) have already adopted revised YGIPs to respond more decisively to remaining challenges and to adapt activities and better align them with ESF- and YEI-programmed actions. By early March 2016, Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Finland, Ireland were planning revisions to their YGIPs, as a result of changes in governments and/or policy orientations, or in the light of experience.

Implementation started in 2014, with key measures being rolled out progressively. However, large scale reforms are still being deployed in many Member States including with EU funding support from both the 2007-13 and the 2014-20 programming periods. Pursuant to point 27 of the part of the YG Recommendation which is addressed to Member States, a few Member States opted for a gradual implementation and prioritised specific groups in the scheme's initial phase. Hungary focused in a first instance on providing offers to the long-term unemployed within 6 months, then on those registered for more than 4 months. Full roll-out is expected in 2018. In Bulgaria, priority was given in 2014 to early school leavers, with a more limited scope of measures for other young people. Full implementation started in 2015.

2.1.1.2. Set up for delivery (point 1)[14]

While a majority of Member States target **young people under 25**, thirteen have extended the upper age limit to young people under 30 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland,[15] Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain) or under 27 (in the Netherlands), among others to align with practices under the YEI. Some Member States apply differentiated age eligibility criteria for some types of support. Slovakia raised the age limit to 29 years, with a priority to the long-term unemployed in the 25-29 age group. In Finland, while the Youth Guarantee generally targets the under 25, it is open to recent graduates in the age group 25-29.

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[12] The list of YG Coordinators can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11490&langId=en

[13] YGIPs can be found on: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1090&langId=en

[14] More information on the provision of quality offers within four months is provided under Section 2.1.2.

[15] Finland has extended the Youth Guarantee's age limit to 30 for recent graduates only.

Registration takes place with specific **Youth Guarantee providers**[16], mostly commonly Public Employment Services (PES). Though less than half of the Member States have defined clear alternative entry points, other types of providers operate, typically for education offers or for the hardest to reach among the target group. These can be regions, Chambers of Commerce or third sector organisations (Spain), agencies responsible for general or vocational education, youth centres and agencies (Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg), agencies responsible for education (Portugal), or municipalities (Netherlands).

Online registration with the Youth Guarantee is possible in eighteen Member States, mainly on the PES website. In order to provide targeted information about the services available to young people, Italy, Portugal and Spain have created specific online portals for registering with the Youth Guarantee. In Lithuania, a YG portal is currently being designed.

As regards the **time limit for delivering an offer**, seventeen Member States set a four months period as proposed in the Recommendation. Five apply a shorter period, namely Austria (as soon as possible), Finland (3 months), Sweden (a 90-day guarantee), Denmark, and the Netherlands (with differentiated limits apply depending on the type of support). A longer time limit is applied for long term unemployed and non-qualified school leavers in Hungary (in the first phase of YG implementation) and in two Belgium regions – Flanders and Brussels – which apply a 6-month time limit. However, practice can differ significantly from the Recommendation, with **the time limit being defined – in most Member States – from the moment of registration with the PES** rather than at the moment when the young person leaves education or becomes unemployed.

Youth Guarantee offers generally fall within the four categories identified in the Recommendation. **Typical examples include**:

- Employment: open labour market employment (subsidised or not), self-employment supported through start-up and dedicated subsidies;
- Continued Education: education opportunities including job-related training, reinsertion into the regular education system, bridging courses supporting this reinsertion, second chance education;
- Apprenticeships;
- Traineeships: open-market and ALMP traineeships.

Ten Member States report applying a 'quality' definition to offers made within the framework of the Youth Guarantee (AT, BE, BG, CY, HU, IE, LV, LU, MT, PT, planned in HR in 2016), while 4 Member States report applying the same quality standards as those used to support all jobseekers (CZ, DK, LT, SK)[17]. Only a few Member States (AT, BE, MT, PT) report having set up minimum quality criteria for the purpose of reporting data under the common Indicator Framework for Monitoring the

[16] In accordance with the definition provided in the Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee. "A YG scheme may be delivered by one or more YG providers. For the purpose of monitoring a YG provider means an organisation that has responsibility for the initial registration of young people into the YG scheme. Organisations whose only role is to deliver the actual YG offers (e.g. training providers) are not considered YG providers".

[17] Member States' questionnaire on YG implementation submitted to the Commission by 29 February 2016.

Youth Guarantee (see Section 2.3.1.3). Most Member States define quality elements in the context of YEI-supported actions.

Definitions of a 'quality offer' can be classified following a **six-fold categorisation**, with Member States typically applying a definition that encompasses several categories:

- *A sustainable offer* (outcome-focussed): A 'quality' offer leads to a young person's transition towards sustainable labour market integration[18]. National reporting on a young person's labour market situation 6, 12 and 18 months after receiving an offer supports assessment of this qualitative criterion (reflecting the approach applied in the context of the common Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee). This is the case in among others CY, HU, IE, LU, PT.

- *A tailored-made offer* (input-focused): A quality offer is a personalised offer tailored to the individual profile of a young person, including labour market status, level of skills/qualifications, previous professional experience, previous unemployment/inactivity spans, household situation (e.g. joblessness) and caring situation (e.g. lone parent), health status. This criterion is applied in among others BG, CZ, HU, IE, LT, LU, MT, PT, SK.

- *Minimum quality standards offer*: A few Member States introduced minimum quality standards for YG offers especially in the context of monitoring, including Austria (where training measures below 62 days and unpaid traineeships are not considered quality YG offers), Belgium-Wallonia (28 days for employment and traineeships), Portugal (with a minimum of 300 hours for training), Malta (where job offers below 6 months are not considered quality offers).

- *Intrinsic quality offer*: the intrinsic qualities of an 'employment' offer are also considered by a number of Member States, including health and safety requirements (BG), travel time (LT, limited to 3 hours, 2 hours for a person with a disability or with family obligations), social insurance coverage (AT), providing conditions for individual development (BG), permanent employment (BG).

- *A demand-led offer*: A quality offer is one which is aligned with current or future labour market needs (CZ, BG, IE)[19]. This is particularly relevant for offers of continued education and apprenticeships. For instance, Ireland's recently launched National Skills Strategy 2025 involves a range of stakeholders at the regional level (PES, social partners, employers, community organisations, school authorities) with a view to aligning offers within the educational and training system with the needs of the local labour market.

- *Subjective quality offer:* A number of Member States are investigating the perspective of young people who benefit from different offers. In Luxembourg, the National Youth Report published in February 2016 gives a detailed insight of the perspective of young people who benefit from different measures, the results of which are contributing to deepen discussion on quality criteria.

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[18] For an analysis of young people's transitions from education to the labour market, see Eurofound (2014), 'Mapping youth transitions in Europe', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

[19] OECD (2015), The OECD Skills Outlook 2015: Youth, Skills and Employability.

Regarding the YEI/ESF-supported offers, there is also variation as to the definition of a good quality offer across Member States. In many cases there is no specification in the operational programmes about what is understood as a good quality offer. Where a good quality offer is directly or indirectly defined this generally falls into one or more of the following categories: suitable (in view of the person's needs), sustainable (an offer likely to lead to sustainable employment), satisfactory (based on self-assessment surveys of participants), rapidly provided (in view of the person becoming unemployed or leaving the education system) or well-designed offer (e.g. an offer based on labour market intelligence regarding areas with growth potential where the person could be placed).

The aforementioned six composite categories that make up Member States' national definitions of a 'quality' offer lend themselves more or less easily to monitoring. While certain binary or clearly measurable variables (e.g. young person's labour market situation after 6, 12, 18 months, specific intrinsic qualities, or minimum quality standards) can support an assessment of an offer's quality, other (including a tailored-made offer) serve as qualitative standard against which offers should be considered.

In practice, however, important variations can be seen in the quality of Youth Guarantee offers. Introducing better mechanisms to ensure that young people receive offers of high quality is essential (*see Section 5.*3).

2.1.2. Timely delivery of quality offers (point 1): results of the first and second data collections on the Youth Guarantee at EU level

This section reviews Member States’ effectiveness in delivering timely, quality Youth Guarantee offers, as set out in point 1 of the part of the YG Recommendation which is addressed to Member States. It builds upon the results of the first and second data collection on Youth Guarantee schemes under the common Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee[20] endorsed by the Employment Committee in May 2015 (see also Section 2.3.1.3).

The Indicator Framework includes a set of aggregate (macroeconomic) indicators intended to provide an overview of the situation of youth in the labour market and (in the future) to indirectly monitor the impact of YG schemes on young people's labour market performance. Since the primary aim of YG schemes is to ensure that all young NEETs benefit from a quality offer within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, the Framework also comprises direct monitoring indicators focused on the extent to which delivery targets are being achieved and the target population reached. Finally, the real measure of the sustainability and the success of the schemes will be seen in the longer term integration of young people in the labour market. Follow-up indicators looking at the situation of participants 6, 12 and 18 months after exit are therefore crucial to the monitoring process. Indirect (macroeconomic) monitoring indicators should also show improvement in the medium-term.

The first data collection was launched by the European Commission at the end of June 2015 and covered the reference year 2014. The second was launched in March 2016,

[20] Employment Committee (2015), Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee, INDIC/10/12052015/EN-rev.

covering the reference year 2015. The 2016 data collection exercise will be followed by yearly waves of data collection in 2017 and 2018[21].

Overall, despite the difficulties and learning process inherent in starting an EU-wide data collection exercise with new indicators, the first and second data collections were successful in that all Member States submitted data and the data collected facilitated the calculation of key indicators for most Member States and represent a good starting point for monitoring progress on an ongoing basis.

The results of the first two data collection exercises provide a useful basis for monitoring the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in individual Member States, with the aim of enabling their continuous improvement. However, at this point in the process the results are not intended for making comparisons between Member States, given that for the time being data comparability across countries is limited. This can be explained by the fact that YG schemes have been launched in each country from very different starting points and as 2014 was the first year of monitoring, the late implementation of some YG schemes and the different methods that countries have chosen to report inflows to the schemes had an important impact on the results in each Member State and on their comparability. Also in some cases, results that appeared to be particularly good or bad are rather a reflection of the coverage of the data in this first year of monitoring rather than of the effectiveness of YG implementation[22]. The impact of some of these factors should be significantly reduced in data for 2015 and beyond.

2.1.2.1. Coverage within the NEET population and provision of timely offers: first results

Since 2014, more than 14 million young people have entered Youth Guarantee schemes, and an average of nearly two million young people registered at any one point in time. Around nine million young people have taken up an offer of employment, education, traineeship or apprenticeship under the Youth Guarantee[23]. The analysis below presents in-depth monitoring data for the reference year 2014 and 2015.

Nearly 5.5 million young people (3.0 million men and 2.5 million women) entered YG schemes in 2015, 1.4 million fewer than in 2014. The lower number of starts reflects partly the reduced inflows to unemployment in large countries such as Germany and the UK and partly the fact that the 2014 figures were bolstered by some countries that automatically transferred into the new scheme all young people that were already registered as unemployed on the launch date. At the same time, in Spain and Italy, the number of new starts during 2015 was significantly higher than in 2014 as awareness of the new schemes increased.

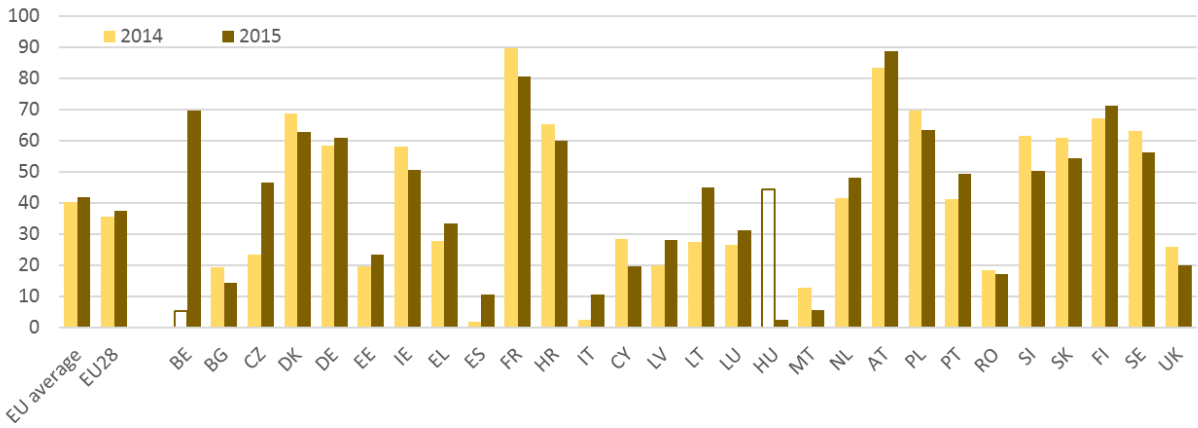
[21] The continuity and regularity of the exercise will be confirmed on the basis of the lessons learnt during the first four years of data collection.

[22] For 2014 results were strongly influenced by the state of YG implementation in each Member State in 2014, the reporting method and other data related issues and should therefore be treated with caution. As indicated, the impact of some of these factors should be significantly decreased in data for 2015 and beyond.

[23] These figures are based on data collected under the YG indicator framework for the reference years 2014 and 2015 and on estimations for 2016.

Just under 2.5 million young people (1.3 million men and 1.1 million women) were registered with a YG provider at any point during 2015, virtually the same as in 2014. YG schemes therefore covered 37.5% of all NEETs aged 15-24 in the EU, a slightly higher proportion than in 2014 (35.5%) as the number of NEETs fell from just under 7 million to 6.6 million. Across the EU, YG schemes reached on average a higher proportion of young male NEETs (40.6%) than young female NEETs (34.3%). Coverage rates varied considerably between countries (Figure 2), ranging from over 80% in Austria and France to just over 10% in Spain and Italy and less still in Malta (6%) and Hungary (3%)[24]. On average, the coverage rate of YG schemes ("EU average") in 2015 was 41.9% compared to 40.4% in 2014, the actual coverage in the EU as a whole ("EU28") being lower (37.5%) because of low coverage rates in three of the countries with the largest NEET populations (Italy, the UK and Spain)[25].

Figure 2 - Coverage of YG schemes, 2014 and 2015 (% NEET population aged 15-24)



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database

Note: Empty columns show data for 2014 that are not comparable with data for 2015 but which are included in the EU level figures for 2014: BE - data for 2014 cover the Walloon region only; HU – the YG scheme started on 1 January 2015, data for 2014 refer to all young people registered as unemployed.

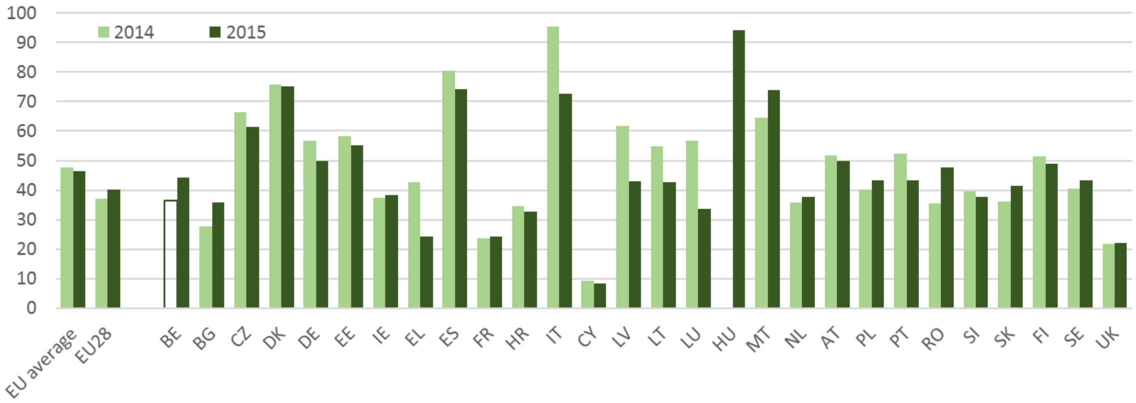
In general, therefore, YG schemes are still some way off the objective of reaching all young persons that become NEET after leaving school or becoming unemployed, though it should be noted that the data do not cover all of the support provided. It remains the case that in most countries the YG monitoring data only cover young people that have registered with the public employment services and miss young people accessing support delivered by other providers. In Ireland and the UK, for example, data cover only young people aged 18 or over that receive an unemployment benefit. Consequently, services for younger NEETs (mostly delivered by education authorities) and older NEETs not receiving an unemployment benefit are not covered. In other countries, support delivered by specialist youth services (youth organisations, centres and associations, NGOs) may be missed but it is not possible at this stage to estimate the extent to which these might improve coverage of the target population.

24 In Hungary the YG scheme was launched only on 1 January 2015.

25 Figures labelled "EU average" are unweighted averages of all available country figures. Figures labelled "EU28" (or in the case of follow-up data, "EU20") are based on EU level aggregates that take into account all affected NEETs in all countries for which data are available. These are effectively weighted averages that can be significantly influenced by the situation in larger countries.

Outflows from YG schemes in 2015 almost matched inflows with a total of 5.4 million young people (3.0 million men and 2.4 million women) exiting after taking up an offer or otherwise being deregistered[26] during the year, slightly fewer than in 2014 (5.6 million). Of these, 2.2 million (40.3%) took up an offer of employment, education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within 4 months of registration, though the real figure is likely to be higher as the reason for leaving is unknown for more than a fifth of cases[27]. The proportion of exits that were both timely and positive was slightly higher for women (41.3%) than for men (39.4%) and, at country level, varied from 94% in Hungary and over 70% in Denmark, Spain, Italy and Malta, to less than a quarter in Greece, France and the UK and less than 10% in Cyprus (Figure). On average across countries, 46.4% of exits were timely and positive in 2015 compared to 47.6% in 2014. The country average ("EU average") is higher than the overall EU figure ("EU28") because the better results (e.g. those over 60%) are mostly concentrated in countries where the YG covers relatively small numbers of NEETs, either because of the size of the NEET population (CZ, DK, MT) or because of low coverage rates (ES, HU and, to a lesser extent, IT).

Figure 3 – Timely and positive exits from the YG, 2014 and 2015 (% all exits)



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database

Note: Empty columns show data for 2014 that are not comparable with data for 2015 but which are included in the EU level figures for 2014: BE - data for 2014 cover the Walloon region only. HU – the YG scheme started on 1 January 2015, data on exits by duration were not available in 2014.

Of the 2.5 million young people (1.3 million men and 1.1 million women) enrolled in a national YG scheme and still waiting for an offer at any point during 2015, well over half (1.4 million or 58.1%) had been registered for more than 4 months (i.e. beyond the target period for delivering an offer). The proportion was slightly higher for women (59.3%) than for men (57.0%). This 2015 result (58.1%) represents a noticeable increase compared to 2014 (50.9%), a change that - at least in part - reflects the increasing maturity of the schemes in some countries[28]. When the proportion of those currently

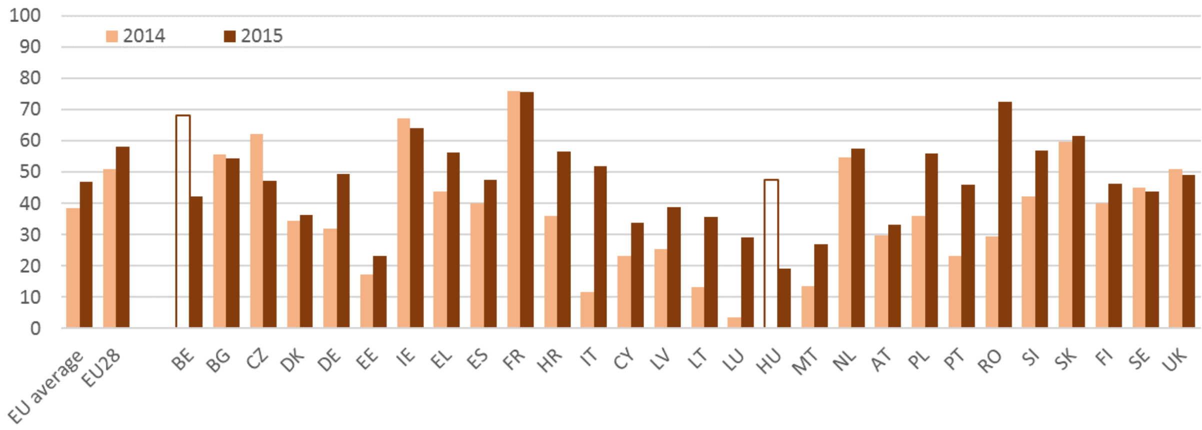
[26] Deregistration may occur for a variety of reasons including not being available to take up work (e.g. due to sickness, maternity or moving away), not fulfilling obligations (e.g. failing to attend interviews), and expiry of entitlement to YG services (e.g. in France the YG scheme lasts a maximum of 18 months and all young people that have not taken up an offer within this time are automatically deregistered).

[27] In 2015, destination was unknown for 21.2% of exits within 4 months of registration, down from 26.7% in 2014.

[28] In countries that launched the YG scheme as a new initiative in 2014 (rather than reinforcing existing practices) duration of participation in the scheme started from zero for all participants so that for one third of the year no participants could have a duration of more than 4 months. In 2015, durations of more than 4 months are possible throughout the year.

registered in the YG for more than 4 months is high this may flag a general difficulty to deliver offers within the target period and/or an accumulation of young people that are difficult to place (and who may also need longer accompanying measures), something that may occur alongside high flows of short-term participants. During 2015, the proportion of YG participants registered for more than 4 months varied from less than 30% in Estonia, Malta and Luxembourg to more than 60% in Ireland and Slovakia and over 70% in Romania and France, with an average of 46.4% (Figure). The fact that the overall EU figure (58.1%) is significantly higher than the country average (46.4%) is largely (but not only) attributable to the situation in France, which accounted for nearly four in ten (37.6%) of the young people registered for more than 4 months[29], and, to a much lesser extent, Poland (11.4%).

Figure 4 – Proportion of young people currently in a YG scheme and registered for more than 4 months, 2014 and 2015 (% annual average stock)



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database

Note: Empty columns show data for 2014 that are not comparable with data for 2015 but which are included in the EU level figures for 2014: BE - data for 2014 cover the Walloon region only; HU – the YG scheme started on 1 January 2015, data for 2014 refer to all young people registered as unemployed.

2.1.2.2. Distribution across types of YG offers

Of the 2.2 million young people that took up an offer of employment, education, an apprenticeship, or a traineeship within 4 months of registering in a YG scheme, 1.5 million, or 70.2% took up an employment opportunity (Figure , "EU28"). This includes open market jobs found on the own initiative of young people as well as those found with assistance from the YG provider, together with various forms of short and longer-term placements subsidised with public funds. The remaining 0.7 million mostly took up offers of a traineeship or continued education (13.6% and 12.1% of all timely offers respectively) while far fewer are reported to have taken up an apprenticeship (4.1%). There was very little difference between the sexes in terms of the types of offer taken up, except that a slightly higher proportion of women took up a traineeship (15.3% of timely offers compared to 12.2% for men).

In practice, the numbers taking up all types of offer are likely to be understated. Firstly, in some countries, there are significant numbers of young people that leave the YG

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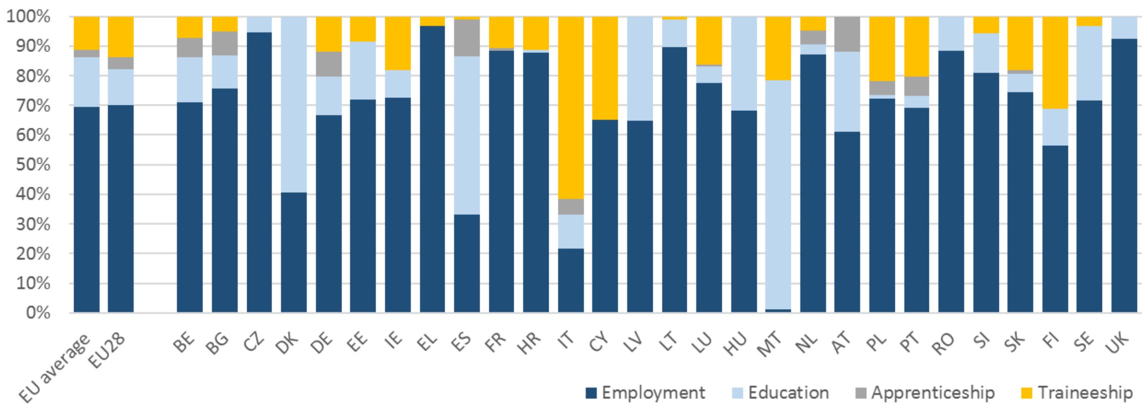
[29] Results in France are partially attributable to the fact that some accompanying services typically last longer than 4 months.

without any record of where they have gone[30] and it is likely that a significant proportion will have found a job or, to a lesser extent, re-entered education or training. Secondly, some countries have difficulties to monitor particular types of offer. For example, it may not be possible to track young people returning to the regular education system, apprenticeships may be recorded as a form of employment offer[31] and, in others, traineeships form part of the regular education system and are therefore recorded as education offers.

The distribution of timely and positive offers by type of offer in each country has to be viewed bearing in mind the limitations of the data noted above but, on the basis of the data available, it is clear that employment offers are most important in the large majority of countries, accounting for an average of 69.3% of timely offers (Figure , "EU average"). Exceptions are Denmark, Spain and Malta, where the YG schemes have a clear focus on improving the employability of young people through continued education (59.5%, 53.2%, and 77.1% of timely offers respectively, compared to an average of 16.8%) and Italy where traineeships are most important (61.7% compared to an average of 11.4%). Cyprus and Finland are the only other countries in which traineeships accounted for more than 30% of timely offers in 2015. On average, apprenticeships account for just 2.5% of known offers, with Spain and Austria the only countries to report than 10% apprenticeships (12.5% and 12.1% respectively).

Figure 5 - Distribution of timely and positive exits by type of offer, 2015 (% timely and positive exits)



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database

More than a quarter (just under 600 000 or 27.2%) of all known offers taken up within 4 months of registration were fully or partly subsidised with public money. This includes the majority of traineeships (87.8%), more than half of continued education offers (57.7%) and nearly half of apprenticeships (47.4%), but less than one in ten employment offers (8.9%). The proportion of timely offers that was subsidised varies from 100% in Spain and 98.8% in Malta to less than 1% in the Netherlands and the UK.

[30] For example, in some Member States if a young person fails to attend one or more compulsory interviews with the PES, unemployment (or other) benefits are terminated and they are deregistered from the YG with destination unknown.

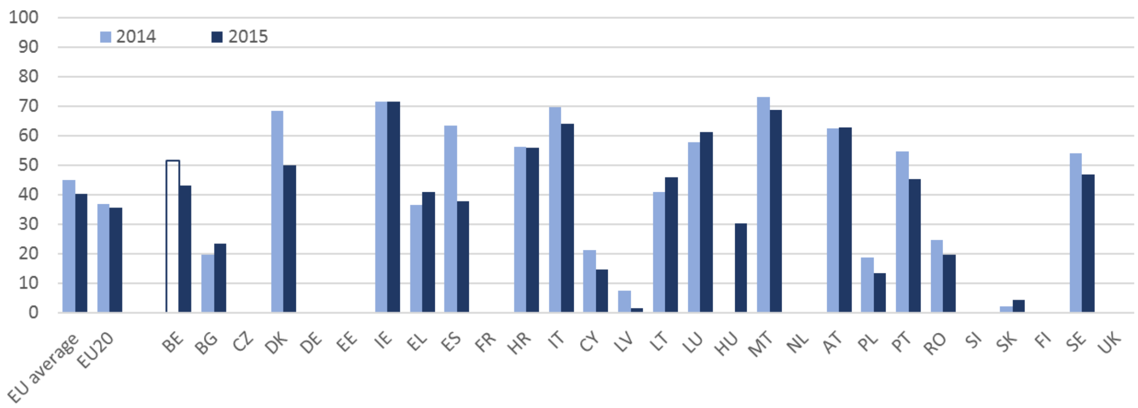
[31] For example, in the case that data come from the social security register which does not distinguish different forms of employment contract.

2.1.2.3. Sustainability of integration after taking up a YG offer

Data on the situation of young people 6, 12 or 18 months after leaving the YG are not yet available for 8 of the 28 EU Member States (CZ, DE, EE, FR, NL, SI, FI and UK). Of the 2.5 million young people that left YG schemes in the remaining 20 countries during 2015, less than 0.9 million (35.5%) were known to be in employment, education or training 6 months after exit. The proportion known to be in a positive situation was slightly higher for women (36.3%) than for men (34.8%). However, it should be clear that these figures are likely to be significantly understated because the situation of just over one million (40.5%) of this cohort was unknown. In addition to those not providing any follow-up data, several other countries have limited capacity to track all young people after they leave the YG and lose contact with the YG provider[32]. For example, the 6-month situation is unknown for almost 80% of exits in Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia, 75% in Bulgaria and nearly 70% in Poland. Indeed, the high proportion of unknowns in Poland, which accounts for more than a quarter of all young people followed-up in 2015, contributes to the overall EU figure of 35.5% in a positive situation (Figure , "EU20") being lower than the average across countries (40.1%, "EU average")

There are just five countries in which follow-up data for 2015 include less than 10% unknowns but even within this small group there is quite a wide range of results. The proportion of those leaving the YG in 2015 known to be in a positive situation 6 months later ranged from 71.4% in Ireland and 64.1% in Italy down to 37.7% in Spain and 30.4% in Hungary, with Denmark in the middle of the range at 49.9%.

Figure 6 – Proportion of young people leaving the YG known to be in a positive situation 6 months after exit, 2014 and 2015 (% exits)



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database

Note: Empty columns show data for 2014 that are not comparable with data for 2015 but which are included in the EU level figures for 2014: BE - data for 2014 cover the Walloon region only.

[32] In some cases, known situations cover only people that remain in contact with the YG provider because they are still participating in a subsidised offer or have returned to the unemployment register.

2.2. Policy developments in Member States

2.2.1. A driver for reforms and innovation

2.2.1.1. Impact on the policy environment

The Youth Guarantee acted as a powerful policy driver. Many Member States already had an array of relevant policies in place before the Recommendation's adoption. However, the focus on early intervention, the way in which services and programmes are packaged and delivered within a specific timeframe through systematic partnerships, as well the focus on the most "invisible" NEETs (i.e. those hardest to reach) has been a driver for change, including in Member States which already had comprehensive instruments in place[33]. The degree of impact on the policy environment, however, has not been homogenous across all Member States[34].

A combination of a high political momentum, significant financial resources through the ESF and YEI (backed up by a specific ex-ante conditionality) **and strong monitoring mechanisms at EU level was instrumental in supporting policy reform**. Significant progress can be seen both in short-term measures which were taken as an immediate response to the high levels of youth unemployment and inactivity, and in the push for longer-term structural reforms to improve school-to-work transitions. Nevertheless, much remains to be done towards full implementation of the Recommendation across Member States.

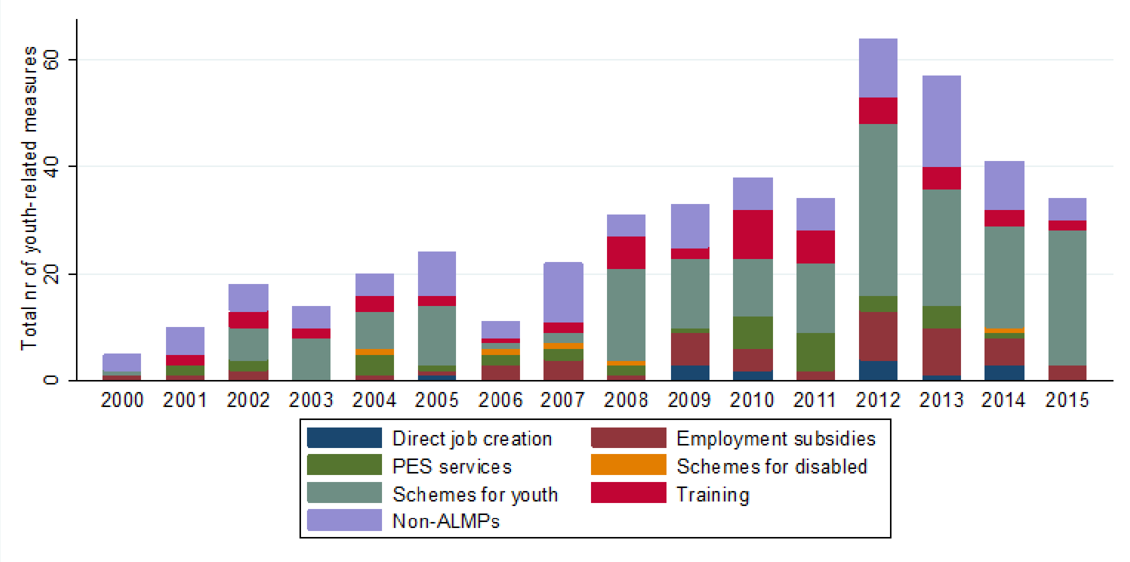
A total of 132 labour market reforms targeting young people were adopted in 27 Member States in 2013-2015, highlighting an important focus on youth. This marked increase in the number of youth-related reforms began already in 2012. They mostly concerned Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP), with a strong focus on employment subsidies, direct job creation measures, PES services and special schemes for youth (in many cases related to introducing new apprenticeship, work-based learning or traineeships type schemes) (*see Figure 7 below*).

Open market traineeships were another important area of reform. Half of the Member States have, or report plans to, undertake legal changes strengthening their national framework's alignment with the Quality Framework for Traineeships since its adoption in 2014

[33] European Policy Centre (2015), "One year after the youth guarantee: policy fatigue or signs of action?" by Claire Dhéret and Martina Morosi; Policy Brief 27 May 2015.

[34] Petmesidou, M. & González-Menéndez, M.C. (eds.) (2015). 'Policy learning and innovation processes drawing on EU and national policy frameworks on youth Synthesis report', electronically available at: http://www.style-research.eu/publications/working-papers.

Figure 7: Number of youth-related reforms classified by ALMP type



Note: "Schemes for youth" mostly (but not always) consist of the introduction of new apprenticeship type schemes.
Source: European Commission, LABREF database[35]

The adoption of the Youth Guarantee and the launch of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships in 2013 (*see Section 2.3.1.5*) have put more focus on apprenticeships as a measure to facilitate school-to-work transitions. Almost all Member States put in place measures to strengthen their apprenticeship system. In a number of countries, structural reforms have been carried out to existing apprenticeship systems (e.g. BE, FR, SI, UK), while in others apprenticeship systems have been created, where they previously did not exist or existed at a very small scale (e.g. BG, ES, LV, LT, SK).

Significant change can also be observed in PES structures and service delivery to young people. The majority of PES have expanded their existing service offer to young people, although this involved in most cases a modification of existing services rather than significant reorganisation or the creation of new services[36]. Similarly, the elaboration of the YGIPs sparked increased institutional co-operation across ministries and sectors, levels of government, and with a broader range of actors (including social partners and youth organisations) (*see Section 2.2.2.1*).

Besides, while the Youth Guarantee builds in many cases on existing measures and instruments, it has provided an opportunity to introduce new and **innovative approaches** (from a local, national but also international perspective), in particular in relation to reaching out to young people, establishing partnerships, improving service delivery, the prevention of early school leaving as well as recruitment subsidies (*for flagship examples, see boxes in Section 2.2.2*).

Member States can be divided into three groups according to the degree to which the Youth Guarantee has acted as a driver for reform. This grouping takes into

[35] LABREF is an inventory of labour market reform measures maintained by the European Commission in cooperation with the Employment Committee.
[36] European Network of Public Employment Services, *Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee*, July 2015.

account the different starting points in terms of institutional context and macroeconomic conditions of Member States at the time the Recommendation was adopted.[37]

- Group A (accelerated reform): the Youth Guarantee has provided a new impetus and has accelerated policy developments in a number of Member States, especially in those facing major challenges and receiving significant EU financial support (BE, BG, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SI), though stages of implementation might differ.
- Group B (reinforced policy framework): the Youth Guarantee has helped to reinforce well-established policies through the scaling-up or adjustment of existing measures in Member States that already had comprehensive instruments in place that are broadly in line with the Recommendation (AT, DE, DK, EE, FI, IE, LU, MT, NL, SE, UK).
- Group C (to date, reform is more limited): changes were more limited as a result of a variety of factors including a lower prioritisation, delays or discontinuity in key measures, or a focus on pre-existing schemes (CY, CZ, EL, ES, RO, SK).

2.2.1.2. Main areas of progress towards the Recommendation's implementation

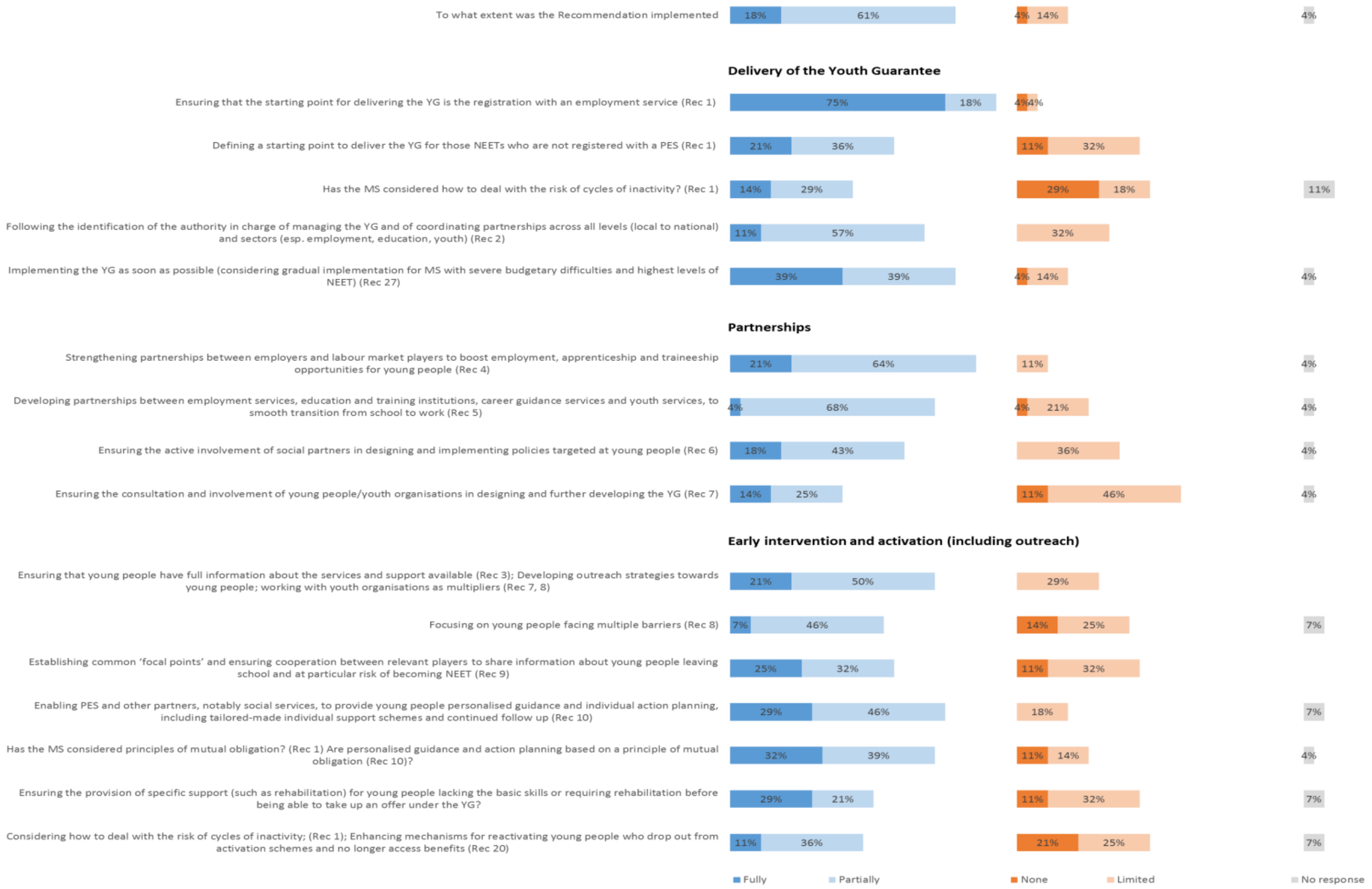
Through its independent national experts, the European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO) has assessed the degree to which various points of the part of the YG Recommendation which is addressed to Member States have been implemented (along the following scale: "full, partial, limited or null implementation", see Figure 8 below).

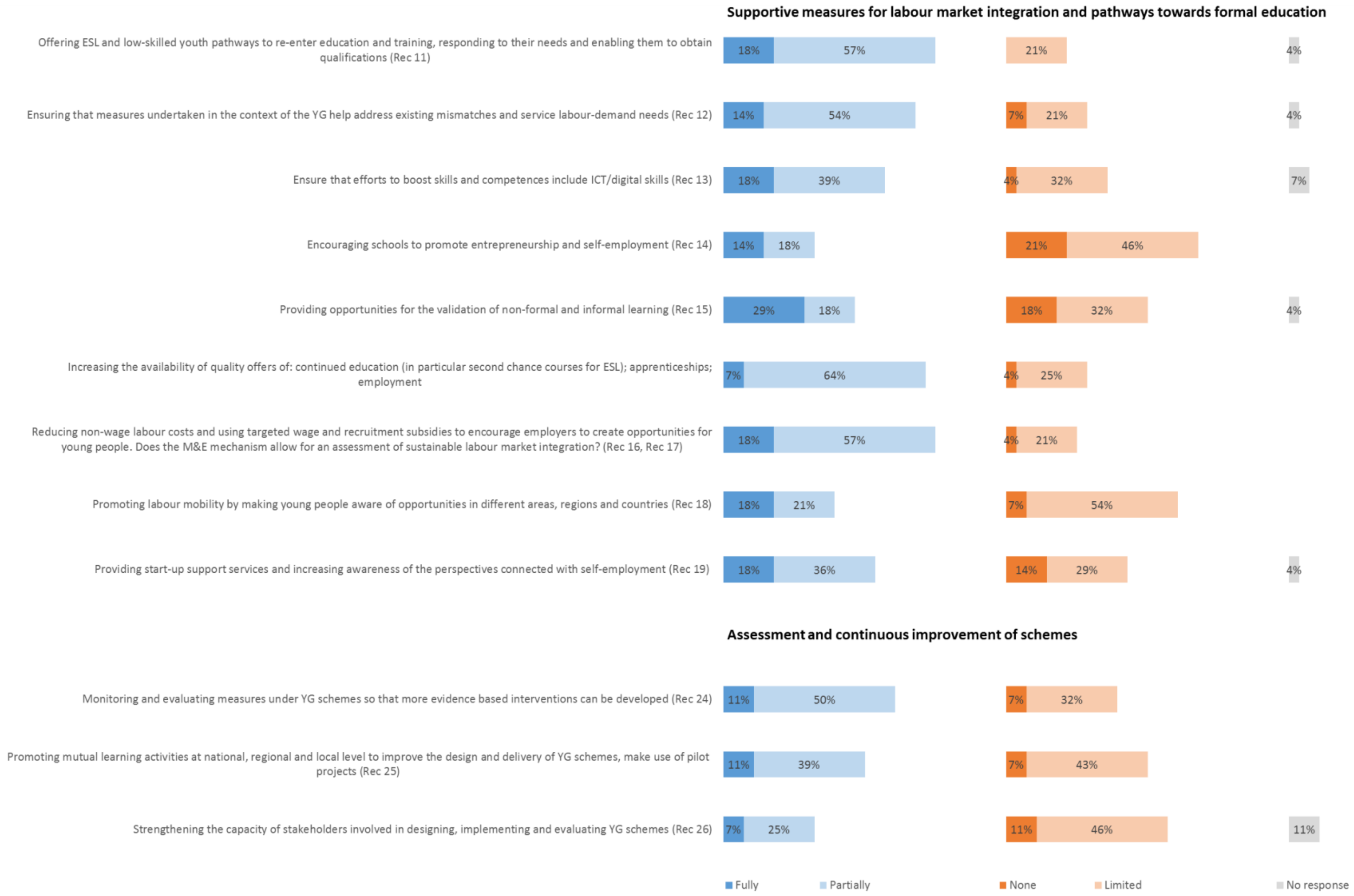
A cumulative, comparative assessment shows that **points in relation to which most countries are perceived as complying with the Recommendation** pertain in particular to the early stages of the setting up of the YG (e.g. starting points for delivery, swift implementation), strengthened partnerships, information and outreach (although engagement with those in the most vulnerable situations remains insufficient), reduction of non-wage labour costs, pathways to re-enter education. Points **which seem to have been more challenging to address** include, in particular the involvement of young people and youth organisations, the promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment as well as labour mobility, strengthening stakeholders' capacity and mutual learning activities[38].

[37] The clustering is based in particular on the number of youth-related measures in 2013-2015 as highlighted in the LABREF database. The outcomes were then reviewed in light of a more qualitative analysis focusing in particular on the state of implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the scope of measures (based on EMCO, European Commission country reports, European Employment Policy Observatory national expert analysis).

[38] The assessment is used here primarily for comparative purpose (e.g. highlighting main areas of progress and key challenges) and only through aggregate findings.

Figure 8: Proportion of Member States implementing the Council Recommendation





Source: Implementation of the 2013 Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, European Employment Policy Observatory, Synthesis Report (not published)

2.2.2. *Key measures taken in Member States*

This section provides an overview of key measures and reforms introduced in Member States, many of which have been triggered by the YG. As such, it is a **useful resources which policy-makers can draw upon to understand how the YG is being delivered across the EU**. Practical examples, including flagship examples that present significant reforms and innovative or promising measures, aim to provide inspiration to countries facing similar challenges.

This section also provides references to **European and national resources on the implementation of the YG Recommendation**. It is supported by a wealth of references to studies and reports and provides electronic links to further national and European resources.

Finally, the following analysis **examines the progress made in the implementation of the 28 points of the part of the YG recommendation that is addressed to the Member States**. In this regard, it provides a non-exhaustive overview of measures and reforms taken in the context of the Recommendation's implementation. It is structured along the following building blocks of the Recommendation: (1) Building up partnership-based approaches, (2) Early intervention and activation", (3) Supportive measures for labour market integration, (4) Assessment and continuous development of schemes.

Despite early successes, many challenges remain in order to achieve the full implementation of the Recommendation. This concerns, most notably,

- improving monitoring processes:
- strengthening governance arrangements and partnership design:
- ensuring sustainable implementation and financing:
- enhancing the quality of offers:
- better engaging with non-registered NEETs[39] and the low-skilled.

A dedicated chapter (Chapter 5) in this SWD highlights how these challenges could be addressed and proposes additional guidance and clarifications ("lessons learnt") emerging from the three years of implementation.

2.2.2.1. Building up partnership-based approaches (points 2 and points 4-7)

The mobilisation of a range of actors towards a common goal is crucial to successfully delivering the Youth Guarantee. A number of Member States have established a **two-tier partnership system**, with processes of cooperation operating both at national and local levels. In practice, national-level partnerships aim to provide political impetus and direction and serve to monitor the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, while local partnerships were designed to support flexibility and the operationalisation of an

[39] In the context of the Youth Guarantee, the term "registered NEET" refers to young people not in employment, education or training who are registered with a Youth Guarantee provider (typically a national or regional PES).

integrated service delivery on the ground. Besides, experience from Member States shows that **broad public-private-third sector partnerships** with actors from both preventive (e.g. schools, social services, guidance services) and reactive and reintegration sectors (e.g. those supporting unemployed and inactive youth) are most effective in delivering the Youth Guarantee.

While many Member States have taken steps to support the involvement of a wide range of actors and established institutional frameworks for partnerships, the functioning of these partnerships remains a challenge due to problems of design, which affects their ability to deliver (see Section 5.5).

Identifying a Youth Guarantee Coordinating Authority (point 2)

Establishing partnerships to implement the Youth Guarantee requires the designation of **a public authority in charge of establishing and managing the Youth Guarantee scheme** and coordinating partner actions nationally. All Member States have done so, assigning overall coordination responsibility the ministry of labour (or equivalent) and in a few limited cases (such as Finland) to the ministries in charge of youth or education.

Whether they are responsible for managing the Youth Guarantee or simply have a consultative role, newly established **multi-stakeholder bodies provide political impetus and support a coordinated policy strategy** at the stages of planning, implementation and/or monitoring of the Youth Guarantee. These coordinative bodies strengthen inter-ministerial cooperation and provide a valuable arena for exchange and consultation with a range of partners.

For instance, in **Bulgaria**, a multi-partite Coordination Council for the implementation and monitoring of the YGIP was established (bringing together the state institutions, social partners, the National Association of Bulgarian Municipalities, and heads of nationally-represented youth organisations) and a National Framework Agreement for implementing the YGIP was signed in October 2014.

The **Croatian** Council for the Development of the YGIP has been involved in the key stages of the YG's development and coordinates its implementation. It involves key ministries, social partners, youth organisations as well as other bodies (such as Government's Office for Cooperation with NGOs, Chambers of Economy and of Crafts). Similarly, in **Latvia,** an inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder Youth Guarantee Implementation Advisory Board (with 35 members, including, employers, social partners and youth organisations) was introduced to manage and coordinate YG activities.

In **Spain**, a large range of stakeholders are involved in the development, monitoring and implementation of the Youth Guarantee. They include in particular Social Partners, Public Administrations and Private sector agents: entrepreneurs', employers' and workers' organisations, and young entrepreneurs' organisations, the Youth Council and young people, organisations in the social economy, for self-employed workers and in equal opportunities, as well as private bodies in the third sector that participate in management of the European Social Fund.

Portugal has made important steps in creating a broad network of partners – made up of public entities and NGOs - to deliver the Youth Guarantee and increase outreach out to NEETs, though challenges remain to make it fully operational. Implementation involves Central and Local public administration services, youth organisations, trade organisations, as well as social partner organisations and other relevant institutions working on education and vocational training and social inclusion.

Overall, point 2 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is among the points with a high assessment of implementation by the EEPO, with full or partial implementation in 68% of Member States.

Local partnerships facilitate young people's transition into work

Local partnerships serve to develop strategies for implementation aligned with the needs of the local labour market as well as provide an integrated approach to service delivery. Evidence from Member States shows that integrated service delivery can help ensure that young people are 'caught' at different stages of their disengagement process and offer a more 'seamless' provision of services in line with his/her needs, in terms of work placement, education and training but also more broadly in terms of subsistence, housing, health services, and social and psychological support.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships at local level are in place in a number of Member States and sometimes mirror partnership structures organised at the national level[40]. In **Luxembourg**, for instance, an inter-ministerial steering group of three government administrations responsible for delivering the three pillars of the Youth Guarantee (employment, education, activation) is in place and supported by an inter-ministerial secretariat. This cross-sectorial partnership has filtered down to the municipal level, where local steering committees, responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, meet on a monthly basis to discuss individual cases. In **Poland**, the Youth Guarantee is delivered via a multi-tier system involving labour offices, NGOs and intermediary organisations such as ‘voluntary labour corps’ (focusing on school-to-work transitions). In **Austria**, the cooperation initiated at the local level in the past as part of the ESF-funded ‘territorial employment pacts’ is expected to support the work of the new coordination offices for the Youth Guarantee in every region. A specific challenge is to include schools as new partners.

Municipalities play a key role in the delivery of the Youth Guarantee in a number of Member States, where their involvement ranges from outreach activities and partnerships with local actors to the prevention of early school leaving and individual support[41]. In **Sweden**, municipalities have since 2015 a clarified responsibility regarding young people under 20 who have not completed or are not attending upper secondary education. They should map and follow up young peoples’ employment and education situation, as well as offer them support to motivate them to start or resume upper secondary education. In the **Netherlands**, municipalities play a key role in labour market policies and the reintegration of the unemployed. In **Belgium**, the city of Ghent signed a specific agreement to combat youth unemployment and runs two guidance programmes under the auspices of the YG. In **Latvia**, the development of strategic partnerships between municipalities, local NGOs, social services, local PES offices and youth organisations has been a cornerstone of the Youth Guarantee’s delivery, especially as regards outreach activities. In **Spain**, the Gijón City Council took part in Youth Guarantee Pilot Project run by the Youth Activation Agency with 5 local and regional partners (including the

[40] OECD (2014), The local implementation of Youth Guarantees: Emerging lessons from European Experiences.
[41] Internal EUROCITIES report on the implementation of the YG at local level.

PES, education authorities, a business Federation and Youth organisations). Among others, the project employed two dedicated street counsellors. This project was one of eighteen 1-year pilot projects launched in 2013 funded under the European Parliament Preparatory Action (EPPA) on the Youth Guarantee involved strong local partnerships at the municipal level[42] (see Section 2.3.1.2).

Regions have also taken ownership of the YG scheme, adjusting it to regional circumstances. In **Belgium**, supporting youth employment and stepping up the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is a key priority within the 2025 Strategy for the Brussels region, adopted in June 2015. Under direct responsibility of the Minister President, and with the support of the ESF, the strategy involves all the relevant ministers and is implemented in partnership between key governance levels, in order to build bridges between the employment, education and youth sectors.

A few Member States have sought to improve the design of local partnerships supporting the delivery of the YG, including through incentive structures and performance-based partnership agreements. For instance, within the context of its "Youth Engagement and Progression Framework", the Welsh Government employed 'funding letters' that make future state funding conditional on collaborative work between partners (e.g. Careers Wales – the organisation responsible for all career guidance in Wales – is required to work in partnership with local authorities and other organisations, including PES, to continue to benefit from state funding).

Developing partnerships between public and private employment services, education and training institutions and career guidance services (point 5)

Cooperation with education and training providers is an integral part of the Youth Guarantee. Schools' central role in supporting its implementation stems from their ability to (1) signal early exits from the education system to municipalities, PES or other relevant bodies, in order to ensure early intervention and (2) provide support and guidance to students on professional pathways and relevant services available to them.

Involving education and training providers in the design and implementation of tracking system is key to ensuring that early intervention is provided to students at risk of becoming NEETs. While this task often falls under the responsibility of schools or bodies linked to education authorities and/or different types of local 'youth agencies' and youth oriented social work (*see 2.2.2.2 early intervention*), PES (including specialised services) are increasingly encouraged to intervene by partnering and building network with actors in this area[43]. Several PES, which are the main providers of the YG in many Member States, report being involved in partnerships with vocational education and training institutions (CY, FR, DE MT, PL, PT) with a view to increasing employment, apprenticeship and traineeships opportunities for young people.

Similarly, **collaboration in the field of career guidance is central to better supporting students in their school-to-work transition**. In this regard, close collaboration between PES/schools, career guidance's institutions and other actors in the education and training sector is essential. According to a 2015 study on the PES Implementation of the Youth

[42] European Commission (2015), "Piloting Youth Guarantee Partnerships on the Ground. A Report on the European Parliament Preparatory Action (EPPA) on the Youth Guarantee.
[43] Peer Review on Youth Guarantee, Helsinki, Finland, 18-19 September 2014
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1070&newsId=2068&furtherNews=yes

Guarantee the majority of PES (26 out of 29) report that they have some partnerships in place to ensure that young people have full information and support available. Such PES partnerships are chiefly with schools, other educational institutions and NGO youth centres (e.g. BG, DE, FR, HR, LT, SI)[44].

A number of countries have strengthened the links between the PES, schools and guidance services. In **Belgium** (German-speaking community), all students are informed about the range of services and advantages offered when registered with the PES during the last school year. In **Estonia**, the PES initiated in 2015 a series of workshops on working life, job-search and employment opportunities aimed at all 8th and 12th grade students in cooperation with schools. In **Romania**, the Public Employment Services concluded a partnership with the National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, school inspectorates and schools to promote ALMPs or young people's participation in vocational training and education. 2.430 information sessions in schools took place in 2014-2015, reaching 100.620 pupils. In **Slovakia,** PES and schools typically work jointly to provide information and counselling services aimed at choosing a profession. Services are provided in group- or individual-based meetings in specialised PES premises or directly to students at secondary and primary schools. In **Italy**, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee has led to improvements in the coordination between PES and education institutions, an area which has traditionally been weak. This improved cooperation included the creation of a common informatics system integrating databases of the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education and the launch of dedicated initiatives to promote ALMPs and Youth Guarantee in schools[45]. Certain Member States have also established dedicated guidance institutions that support a partnership approach (see box on **Croatia** below).

A number of Member States have established dedicated guidance centres, as in Croatia (see box below). In **Denmark**, Youth Guidance Centres provide guidance services for young people up to the age of 25 years, focusing on the transition from compulsory to upper secondary education or the labour market. The 52 centres cover 98 municipalities. They play an important role especially for young people who are not registered with the PES and serve to collect data on young people's education and employment[46].

Croatia: Centres for Lifelong Career Guidance (CISOKs)

Eleven Centres for Lifelong Career Guidance (CISOKs) operate in Croatia and provide free lifelong career guidance services to all citizens with a special focus on youth, including inactive NEETs who are not registered with the PES. A total of 22 centres are foreseen by 2020.

Intervention combines web-based services (self-assessment questionnaires, a job exchange portal), via a web portal (www.cisok.hr), and face-to-face services, including individual/group counselling on career management skills and workshops on job-search techniques. 110,717 people used CISOK services between July 2013 and January 2016, 95.6% of which were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received.

[44] European Network of Public Employment Services, Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee, July 2015.
[45] Project Fixo-YEI financed through the YEI national OP.
[46] http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Guidance/Youth-Guidance-Centres?allowCookies=on

A number of innovative practices have contributed to the success of the Centres. The financing and delivery of services are based on a broad partnership model, involving municipalities, chambers, NGOs, youth organisations, employers, social partners, and schools. Similarly, CISOKs are built on a flexible service delivery model, where services are adapted to the local context including, labour market needs and partner organisations. Moreover, annual work plans and regular monitoring reports ensure a positive feed-back loop into delivery and service design activities. Counsellor support is based on a model of differentiated services tailored to the profile of individual clients. Finally, dislocation of CISOK offices from the PES premises helps to avoid negative preconceptions that some clients may have of the PES.

Originally established in 2013 and financed through an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), the project's sustainability has been assured through national funding and the ESF for the programming period 2014-2020.

Well-designed partnerships between public-private employment services can help to support the implementation of national YG schemes by enhancing Member States' capacity to meet increased demand for employment services (linked to changes in the economic cycle) and capitalising on the expertise and specialised services that private employment service can provide (which can complement existing PES provision). A tradition of cooperation exists in a number of countries (most notably in DK, FR, IE, NL, SE, UK). In **France**, for instance, since 2006 private placement agencies have supported the PES in placing hard-to-place jobseekers, such as young people and long-term unemployed[47]. In other Member States, public-private cooperation between employment services is a comparatively recent addition to the national policy agenda (amongst others in BG, CY, EE, HR, LT, LU, LV, PT, RO, SI, SK). For instance, cooperation between public-private employment services is one of the aims of Bulgaria's National Employment Strategy 2013-2020 as well as that of the 'National Employment Strategy of the Slovak Republic for 2020".

Overall, point 5 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is among the points with a high assessment of implementation by the EEPO, with full or partial implementation in 72% of Member States.

Ensuring the active involvement of social partners (point 6)

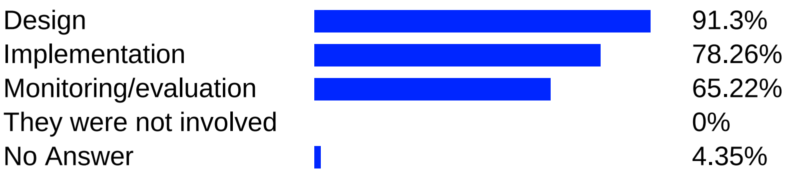
Social partners' involvement level is essential for better preparing young people to the expectations of the labour market and strengthening the provision of quality offers. It can be boosted at strategic level in particular through partnerships with employers' and workers' organisations.

While progress has been made in point 6 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States, full and partial implementation is assessed to be present in only 61% of Member States, underlining pre-

[47] However, a major U-turn in the PES strategy since mid-2015 means that the jobseekers furthest away from the labour market will be offered enhanced support in-house. Conversely, the placement of the 'most autonomous' jobseekers will be outsourced to private placement agencies.

existing practices and weak progress in this field. Member States' reporting indicates that social partners have been most involved during the phases of design and implementation of the Youth Guarantee (*see Figure 9 below*), though their level of involvement in practice varies significantly[48].

Figure 9: At which stage were social partners involved with the development of the Youth Guarantee scheme? (multiple answers possible)



Source: Member States' self-reporting, February 2016

At EU level, social partners negotiated a Framework of Actions (FoA) on Youth Employment in June 2013[49] and undertook a range of actions in this context. They were, among others, involved in VET and apprenticeship reforms, outreach and awareness raising (among their respective member organisations or to a wider public), as well as promoting the attractiveness of jobs in sectors and professions that are facing current, or projected, skills shortages[50].

A number of **EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees** (Chemical Industry, Commerce, Construction, Education, Electricity, Personal Services, Postal Services, Road Transport, Telecommunication) have reached joint positions on skills including specific actions on traineeships and some sectoral social partner organisations have made pledges under the European Alliance for Apprenticeships to raise the supply of apprenticeships and to improve their quality. Several sectors (Audio-visual, Commerce, Construction, Electricity, Extractive Industries, Footwear, Furniture, Graphical Industry, Life Performance, Maritime Transport, Metal Industry, Paper, Personal Services, Post Services, Ship Building, Steel, Tanning and Leather, Telecommunications, Textile and clothing, Woodworking) promote skills development and skills matching via specific projects and further joint activities.

Similarly, **European social partners actively support the European Alliance for Apprenticeships**, being the co-signatories of the 2013 Declaration with the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission. Through the Declaration, the European social partners commit themselves to contributing to specific actions on apprenticeships and the Youth Guarantee. In the spring of 2016, the European social partners, with financial support from the EU, completed two projects supporting the development of high quality apprenticeships. A BusinessEurope-led project on the cost-effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes identified possible ways to strengthen employer engagement in apprenticeships systems, and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and Unionlearn (TUC) project made a proposal for 20 quality

[48] Social Dialogue Committee meeting, 17 February 2016.
[49] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5314
[50] Since the adoption of the FoA, two follow-up reports have been published: "Framework of Actions on Youth Employment. First follow-up report, September 2014"; Framework of Actions on Youth Employment, Second implementation report, September 2015, ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP, UEAPME.

standards for apprenticeships. This proposal makes direct links to the guiding principles outlined in the Council Declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the "High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles" (see Section 2.3.1.2). On the basis of these two initiatives, the European social partners agreed on a joint statement "Towards a Shared Vision of Apprenticeships"[51] which calls for a wider debate to pave way for a tripartite opinion.

At national level, structured involvement takes place primarily through multi-stakeholder structures (*see Section above Identifying a Youth Guarantee Coordinating Authority (point 2)*), as well as through specific **ad hoc consultations (**especially during the YGIP's preparation), and **bipartite or multi-partite agreements**.

Cooperation covers a number of policy areas, including, youth engagement, VET programmes and traineeships. In **Romania**, the National Trade Union Bloc was actively involved in the design and running of 22 Youth Guarantee Pilot Centres aiming to identify NEETs and provide them with integrated packages of services[52]. In **Austria**, the trade unions and the Chamber of Labour have created a framework of quality traineeships, defining conditions such as the job profile of trainees, the training content and labour law standards for traineeships. An online platform has been created by the youth organisation of the trade unions. Its aim is to screen the traineeship advertisements posted by companies and to reveal illegal practices[53]. In the **United Kingdom**, the Trade Union Congress is developing a youth engagement strategy, working with affiliates and third party organisations that deliver career information to young people and promote apprenticeships.

The development and the implementation of quality apprenticeships requires involvement of many different stakeholders. **Active participation of employers as providers of work-based learning is crucial, but it is necessary to involve both sides of industry in the governance of apprenticeship systems**[54]. In a number of countries, key stakeholders have joined forces to ensure a coordinated approach for stronger results and impact. For instance, in **France,** in July 2014, the President, the government, the social partners and the regions agreed on a number of ambitious measures to promote apprenticeships, contributing thus to the objective of increasing the number of apprentices from 420,000 to 500,000 by 2017. In **Norway**, the government, the social partners and the regional authorities have signed a Social Contract, which includes a target to increase the number of apprenticeships by 20%. In **Germany**, in 2014, the Federal Government, together with the Länder, the private sector, trade unions and the Federal Employment Agency, launched the "Alliance for Initial and Further Training 2015-2018"[55]. The Alliance aims to improve the attractiveness of VET, upgrade young people's skills and improve school-to-work transitions. As part of the Alliance, the private sector has committed to offering 20,000 additional VET places each year (compared to the number of places registered with the PES in 2014) and to offer 500,000 traineeships each year for the purpose of career orientation.

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[51] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5470

[52] A further 5 regional YG centres were created in another project run by the Ministry, in partnership with a private consultancy and 2 NGOs.

[53] For details see internet: http://www.watchlist-praktikum.at

[54] European Commission (2015), High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles.

[55] http://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/EN/alliance-for-initial-and-further-training.pdf;jsessionid=51189874BC0179C06CC649D57A286262?__blob=publicationFile&v=2

Engaging directly with employers (point 4)

Equally important for the successful delivery of a Youth Guarantee scheme is the direct engagement of employers. In a number of Member States, public authorities have sought to **secure employer engagement through national or regional agreements** and joint initiatives in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility**.**

Similarly, **at the local level, PES have a key role to play in engaging with employers**, most notably SMEs who are central to job creation[56]. Overall, point 4 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States, remains among the areas where full and partial implementation is assessed the highest (with full or partial implementation in 85% of Member States).

In **Belgium**, the Public Employment and Training Services, acting through SynerJob, have signed a collaboration agreement with the Alliance For Youth, which includes 9 international companies. The agreement provides for the creation of 1,900 traineeships and employment opportunities in Belgium in 2016. Similarly, in the **Netherlands**, two labour market regions introduced networking events between youngsters and employers, whereby ten youngsters and ten employers meet in a relaxed ambiance, following which each employer presents a youngster through an “elevator pitch”. First results showed that 42% of the youngsters found work, 18% started education, 40% receives support by the local government[57]. In **Spain**, Chambers of commerce cooperate in the dissemination and implementation of the YG Scheme. They assist young people with registration and implement comprehensive qualification and employment programme (PICE), where they create an individualised itinerary for each young person’s integration in the labour market.

At the local level, the 18 pilot projects funded under the European Parliament Preparatory Action (EPPA) on the Youth Guarantee generated a number of valuable lessons on the issue of employer engagement, many of which conferred **a central role to the PES in the proactive identification and engagement of employers** within the framework of the Youth Guarantee[58]. In **Ireland**, the Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot project embraced a proactive, personal approach to employer engagement, done through telephone calls, face-to-face meetings and breakfast meetings. Similarly, appointing employer engagement officers, who act as single contact points for employers, also proved to be a successful strategy in the **Spanish** pilot projects of Gijon and Cartagena[59].

Evidence shows that employer engagement is best supported by **providing a varied 'menu' of possible involvement**, ranging from 'light' actions (participating in career and job fairs, offering in-company visits and work tasters, providing short interventions on recruitment practices) to stronger support (offer of traineeships or apprenticeships), in addition to subsidised employment[60] (*see Section 5.5*). This approach, adopted in the

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[56] Eurofound (2016), Job creation in SMEs: ERM annual report 2015.

[57] http://jongerenindelift.nl/

[58] European Commission (2015), "Piloting Youth Guarantee Partnerships on the Ground. A Report on the European Parliament Preparatory Action (EPPA) on the Youth Guarantee" .

[59] EPPA Case Study: Partnerships with employers – lessons on effective practices.

[60] EPPA Case Study: Partnerships with employers – lessons on effective practices. For more examples of best practices, see PES Knowledge Centre: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1163&intPageId=3455&langId=en.

Ballymun project in **Ireland**, recognises that employers have different needs, resources and motivation for engaging with PES to support youth employment. For instance, in the **Belgian** region of Wallonia, a recently launched innovative project, "Mentoring of young jobseekers" (*Parrainage des jeunes demandeurs d'emplois*) aims to encourage volunteering in the private sector, where employees or entrepreneurs act as mentors to young jobseekers, thereby providing them with valuable support (including in job-search methods) and insight into the world of work.

Involving young people and/or youth organisations (point 7)

Involving young people and/or youth organisations in the design, delivery and continuous development/improvement of the Youth Guarantee scheme is vital because it promotes transparency, supports awareness-raising and outreach activities (especially to youth furthest from the labour market), and ensures that policies and reforms are tailored to the specific needs of young people.

At the design stage, young people's involvement takes place primarily through multi-stakeholder coordination/monitoring structures at the national level (see *Section above Identifying a Youth Guarantee Coordinating Authority (point 2)*). The **Finnish** Youth Co-operation Allianssi is member of key working groups to monitor the implementation process and has an active and fruitful dialogue with public administration. In **Portugal**, the National Youth Council is a member of the Committee for Coordination and Monitoring of the Youth Guarantee and maintains a good working relationship with the national agency responsible for the coordination and implementation of the programme. However, the Council's influence on how the programme is being implemented in Portugal has remained limited to date and the Council has been directly involved in only a few key steps.

At the implementation stage, youth organisations can valuably support outreach activities to unregistered youth and provide placement activities to disadvantaged young people (*see Section 2.2.2.2 Early Intervention*). An example of national authorities partnering with youth organisations can be found in the **UK**. The government has begun working with social enterprises, the third sector, NGOs, and youth organisations to reach out to and activate disengaged youth. This partnership is based on a payment by results commissioning model where incremental payments are linked to measureable outcomes (predefined at the start of the collaboration), such as engaging with a certain number of NEETs and getting them into a job of further education. The **Slovenian** Youth Council launched in October 2013 a communication campaign to make young people aware of the YG, jointly with other youth organisations and with the support of the governmental office for Youth. Activities included press conferences, high-level meetings, the setting-up of a website and a Facebook page, an art competition (with best works exhibited at the opening conference).

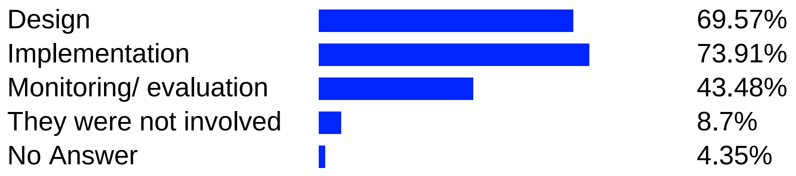
Because of their central role in delivering the Youth Guarantee, it is interesting to note that a growing number of PES are also harnessing the expertise and skills offered by non-governmental youth organisations[61]. In **Lithuania**, for example, the project 'Discover Yourself' implemented in all 60 municipalities involves a cross-sectoral partnership of

[61] European Network of Public Employment Services, *Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee,* July 2015.

local PES offices, the police, children rights protection services, social workers and local youth centres to support NEETs in gaining personal, social and professional skills.

Member State reporting indicates that youth organisations have primarily been involved in the design and implementation stages of the Youth Guarantee[62] (*see Figure 10 below*). Similarly, half of all PES (17 out of 29), which remain central actors within the YG's design and implementation, report that they involved young people and youth organisations in designing the organisation's Youth Guarantee services[63].

Figure 10: At which stage were youth organisations involved with the development of the Youth Guarantee scheme? (multiple answers possible)



Source: Member States' self-reporting, February 2016

Evidence, however, shows that youth organisations involvement has been rather limited, with major variations in practice across Member States[64]. The European Employment Policy Observatory concluded that compliance with point 7 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is assessed as limited or null in 57% of Member States and remains one of the most challenging aspects of the YG's governance model[65]. Moreover, the level and depth of involvement of youth organisations varies widely both across and within Member States[66].

An important consideration that has emerged from initiatives in the field pertains to the importance of ensuring that youth organisations are both able to effectively contribute to policy initiatives (i.e. have the capacity) and are representative of the plurality of young people[67].

2.2.2.2. Early intervention (points 3 and points 8-9)

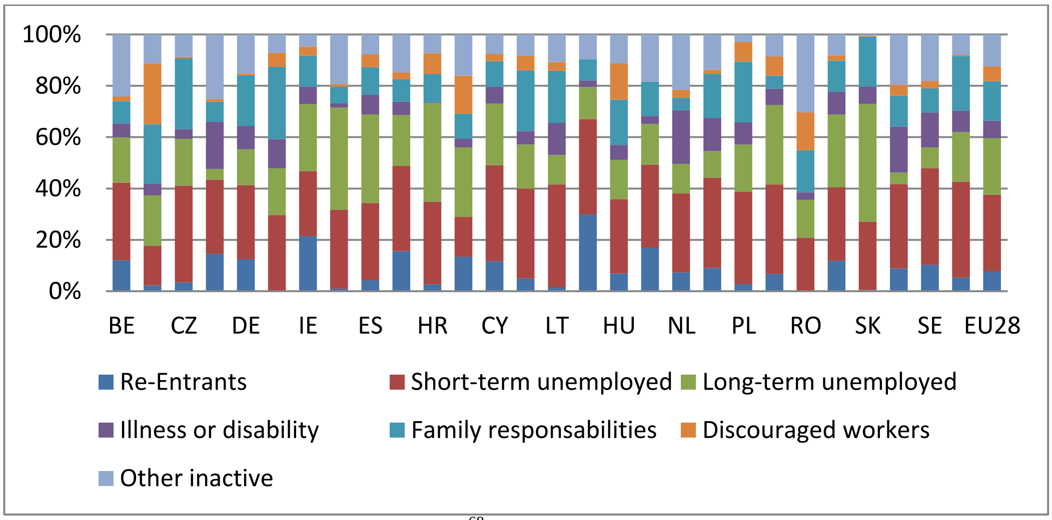
Information, outreach and awareness-raising in view of catchment and registration (points 3 and 8)

About half of the NEET population are economically inactive and not looking for a job, with large variations across Member States (*see Figure 11 below*). Inactivity can

[62] Member State self-reporting February 2016.
[63] European Network of Public Employment Services, *Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee*, July 2015.
[64] European Youth Forum (2014) "Youth Organisations and the Youth Guarantee in Europe", Strategic Dialogue with civil society, 31 January 2016.
[65] This assessment is also shared by the European Youth Forum which underlines the varying degree of consultation with youth organisations and other civil society organisations in the development of the youth guarantee implementation plans (YGIPs) and national youth guarantee schemes more generally. "European Youth Forum, Youth Guarantee Implementation, August 2015".
[66] Source: Strategic Dialogue with civil society, 31 January 2016, Social Dialogue Committee meeting, 17 February 2016.
[67] Peer Review YG Finland Key Policy messages; EEPO synthesis report.

result from a variety of factors, including family responsibilities and health issues but also discouragement and a lack of incentive to register as unemployed.

Figure 11: Composition of NEETs by Member States (young people aged 15-24) in 2013



Eurofound (2016), Exploring the Diversity of NEETs[68]

Overall, **in Europe there are slightly more female than male NEETs**. While there are variations between countries, overall the female NEET rate was 12.7% against 12.3% of male in 2014 among 15-24 years old. This gender gap of 0.4% is considerably smaller than that observed in 2000 and 2011, which were 3.4% and 0.9% respectively. This improvement can be explained by the increased participation of young women in the labour market and in education and the nature of the economic crisis[69].

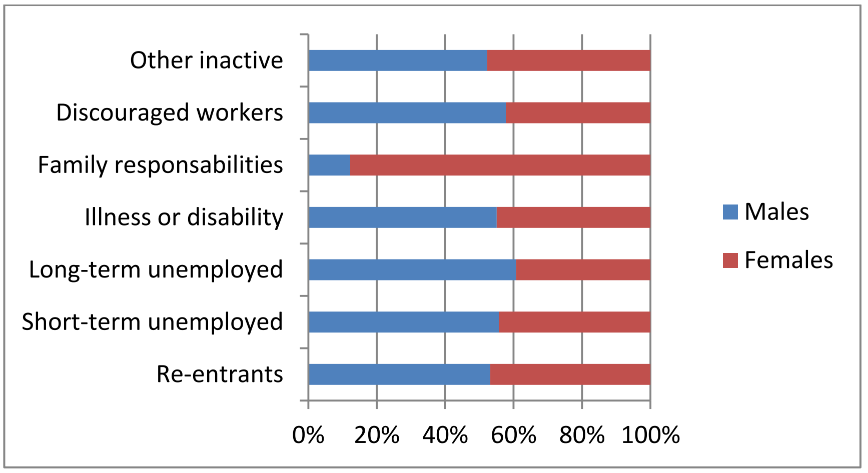
The gender composition of the different categories of NEETs shows that young women are disproportionately represented among NEETs with family responsibilities. The share of young women who are NEETs due to family responsibility represents 88% of the total of this category. Put differently, **one quarter of all young women who are NEETs fall within the category of NEETs unavailable due to family responsibilities** (see Figure 12 below). While it is not possible to say what share has taken on such responsibilities voluntarily, this data does point towards the importance of supporting young women's re-entry into the labour market or education through childcare and adult care[70].

[68] It should be noted that the share of inactive NEETS has been increasing in 2014-2015, primarily as a results of a decrease in the rate of unemployed NEETs.

[69] Eurofound (2016), Exploring the diversity of NEETs, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

[70] Eurofound (2016), Exploring the diversity of NEETs, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. See also, Eurofound (2012), 'NEETs young people not in employment education and training, characteristics, costs and policy responses', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

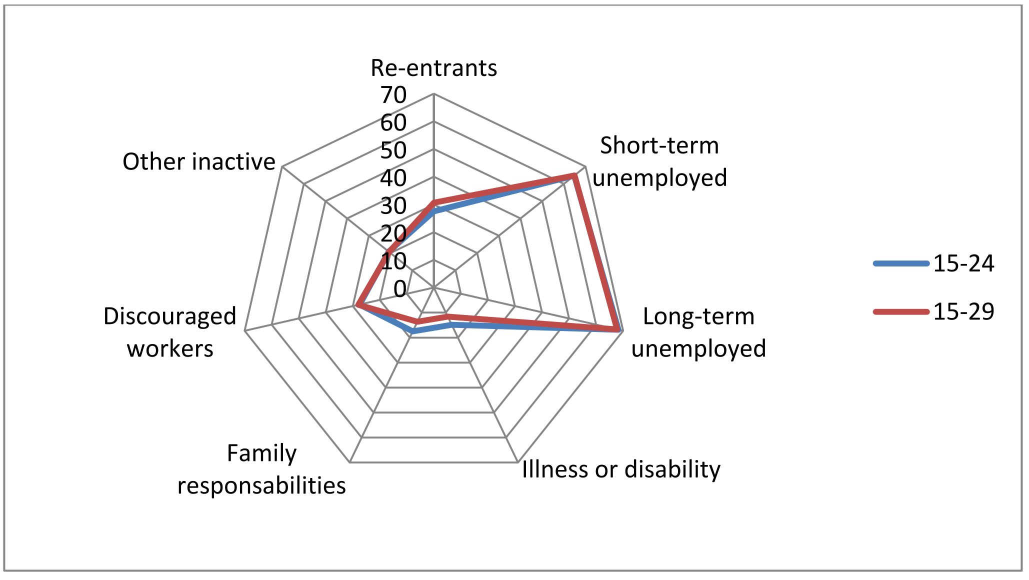
Figure 12: Gender composition of NEET categories (young people aged 15-24) in 2013



Eurofound (2016), Exploring the Diversity of NEETs[71]

Inactive NEETS are less likely to be registered with Public Employment Services or even local welfare services and, considering their low labour market attachment, are at higher risk of poverty and social exclusion[72] (*see Figure 13 below*). Ensuring their early activation is crucial but can be particularly challenging in the face of low capacity to support the NEETs already in the system and when limited trust in public services and a lack of financial incentives to register act as a barrier for requesting support[73].

Figure 13: NEET registered with Public Employment Services among the different subcategories, EU28 (young people aged 15-24) in 2013



Source: Eurostat, 2013/Eurofound elaboration

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[71] It should be noted that the share of inactive NEETS has been increasing in 2014-2015, primarily as a results of a decrease in the rate of unemployed NEETs.

[72] Carcillo, S., Fernández, R. and Königs, S., (2015). 'NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis: Challenges and Policies', *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper*s, OECD Publishing, Paris.

[73] Peer Review on 'Targeting NEETs – key ingredients for successful partnerships in improving labour market participation', Oslo, Norway, 24 - 25 September 2015 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1070&newsId=2261&furtherNews=yes.

Responsibility for outreach varies significantly across countries. In several Member States, including Austria, Denmark, Finland, Latvia and the Netherlands, it falls primarily upon municipalities or education/youth ministries[74]. At this level, youth workers have a central role to play as they are able to reach young people in ways other services cannot, thanks to a long tradition of working with a diversity of young people and supporting them in unlocking their potential and enhancing their social capital[75]. PES have more direct responsibilities or have been allocated funding to undertake outreach activities in, for instance, Croatia, Germany, and Lithuania. Finally, in the absence of institutional or legal arrangements for outreach work, a project-based, location or target group specific actions by NGOs and other bodies tends to prevail, as for instance in Romania[76].

Outreach and awareness-raising activities to ensure young people's catchment and registration are central to Member States' response to the Recommendation. The PES - which are key providers of the YG - have increased their pro-active work with NEETs; two-thirds are currently engaged in outreach work in the context of the YG implementation, for the most part relying on a network approach. Proactive work with schools and cooperation with NGOs and youth organisations are the outreach tools most frequently used by PES. Awareness-raising events or campaigns are also used by a majority of PES[77].

Point 3 (ensuring that young people have full information about services available to them) and point 8 (developing outreach strategies) are among the points where compliance with the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is assessed the highest by the EEPO (with full or partial compliance in 71% of Member States), highlighting steps forward in this field and its importance in implementing the Youth Guarantee. However, **engagement with those in the most vulnerable situations remains insufficient**: implementation of this specific aspect within point 8 is seen as limited or null in close to 39% of Member States.

Awareness-raising on support available

In a context where knowledge of Youth Guarantee schemes was rather limited[78], **information and awareness-raising activities were organised in 21 Member States** (including national activities in 13 and campaigns in specific areas of the YG in 8). They aimed primarily at raising the profile of support available to young people, but also at better informing employers of various possibilities of engagement.

Jointly with national authorities, **the Commission has also supported outreach and awareness-raising activities** in 8 Member States (FI, LV, PT, RO in a pilot phase, and BG, EL, LT, SI in a first call for proposals), while an additional 5 Member States will be

[74] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee; European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs.

[75] European Commission (2015) Expert group report on the contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment.

[76] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs.

[77] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

[78] Flash Eurobarometer of the European Parliament (EP EB395), European Youth in 2014, April 2014, analytical synthesis.

supported in 2016 (see *Section 2.3.1.4 awareness-raising*). Yet, adapting communication methods to a young audience remains a significant challenge[79].

Almost three quarters of PES report a **presence on social media**, but mostly to inform on their overall services and interventions for youth. In this regard, there is potential for PES to make increased use of youth-specific communication channels[80].

In **Belgium** (Brussels region), an online platform has been created to highlight actions and support available under the Youth Guarantee[81]. In **Croatia**, an awareness-raising campaign on the national YG scheme took place in 2015. In **Estonia,** a two-week Youth Guarantee awareness-raising campaign took place in November 2015, involving dissemination through internet (news Portal, Facebook, You Tube), radios, cinemas and supermarket screens. In **Italy,** a two-phase campaign was carried out to accompany the start of the YG's scheme in 2014. A first phase chiefly addressed companies, while a second phase directly targeted NEETs, including via online tools, presence on radio stations, TV, newspapers and cinemas, as well as participation in job and student fairs. Since late 2015, a television programme is broadcast that is dedicated to the promotion of initiatives offered within the framework of the Youth Guarantee and the sharing of success stories[82]. In **Luxembourg**, a national campaign supported the launch of the Youth Guarantee in 2014, which included radio spots, flyers and a specific internet portal, as well as specific presentations given to employers. In **Slovenia**, since 2014, the PES has increased awareness-raising activities aimed at young people by publishing information on social media, establishing a new information platform[83] and developing new applications for smartphones.

Overall **awareness of the Youth Guarantee among young people has increased in recent years**, from 21% in 2014 to 24% in 2016[84]. This improvement has been uneven across the EU, since in half of all Member States awareness has increased while in the other half it has remained stable or decreased. Yet figures indicate a significant surge in young people's awareness in countries which have invested in awareness-raising activities and/or in which media coverage of the YG was high, most notably, in Latvia (increase from 29% to 36%), Italy (25% to 50%), Portugal (17% to 31%), and Croatia (32% to 41%), Hungary (11% to 22%), and Austria (22% to 35%).

Improving services' accessibility

PES have expanded the delivery of services through user and youth-friendly channels and improved their accessibility through online tools, specific websites or detached models of interventions.

Fifteen Member States provide the possibility of online registration including through specific YG platforms in Spain, Italy and Portugal. **Several have set up alternative**

[79] European Commission (2015), Piloting Youth Guarantee partnerships on the ground. Case study: Learning from the pilot projects on effective communication with young people.
[80] European Network of Public Employment Services, Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee, July 2015.
[81] www.meandmyjob.be
[82] http://www.ilpostogiusto.rai.it/
[83] http://www.ess.gov.si/mladi
[84] Flash Eurobarometer of the European Parliament (EP EB395), European Youth in 2014; Special Eurobarometer of the European Parliament, European Youth in 2016. These figures refer to the share of young people who answer 'yes' in response to the questions "Have you ever heard of the EU's initiative called 'Youth Guarantee' which is intended to combat youth unemployment?".

channels for young people who have not registered with the PES or are not entitled to, typically targeting the hardest to reach or low-skilled youth.

Mobile or decentralised services can be a way to reach out to young people in their direct environment. In **Lithuania** dedicated information campaigns target the hardest to reach NEETs, through the use of promotional caravans which seek to engage young people in remote areas. A similar project is planned in Romania in late 2016. In **Germany**, PES have established several mobile career information centres (*BiZ-Mobil*) that drive to different training institutions and job fairs, offering mobile advice, information and counselling services to those who are living in smaller villages. In **Spain**, the region of Galicia launched a three-month information campaign in October 2015 targeting youth in rural areas. A bus provided information in 20 municipalities about opportunities available under the YG through collective seminars and individual assessment and guidance sessions. Staff also helped young people register with the YG.

One-stop-shops bringing together various youth-related services operate in several Member States with or alongside PES, providing a broad range of services in a flexible and accessible way. In **Luxembourg**, the House of Guidance ("Maison de l'Orientation") brings together existing government agencies in charge of employment, education and guidance in a single focal point for young jobseekers or any other young person seeking information and guidance. It guides them towards a training scheme, a job or career guidance. In **France**, Local Youth Centres ("Missions Locales"; part of the Public Employment Service) act as one-stop shops open to all young people aged 16-25. They provide employment and inclusion services and offer additional support and advice in different fields, from employment and training to health, housing, and citizenship.

The Finnish One-Stop Guidance Centre for youth

In 2015, Finland launched one-stop guidance centres for youth. Located in 35 municipalities so far, they provide low-threshold support to all young people below the age of 30, including personal advice and guidance, support in life management, career planning, social skills, as well as education and employment support.

This measure aims to strengthen and simplify services for young people and eliminate the duplication of activities. An innovative practice and long-term goal of this measure is to develop an integrated career guidance model, with parallel face-to-face and multi-channel online services. Professionals at a Centre work as employees of their host organisations but are based in the Centre's common premises. Beyond sharing a same physical space, partner organisations act under a common trademark and exist as a network, including within a common digital platform.

The Centre has access to functional services which both help in identifying the needs of young people as well as reinforcing their capacity to cope with day-to-day life. The One-Stop-Guidance Centre operates as a support for young people until a longer-term solution for their situation is found. This solution can be, for example, that the young person gains access to services offered by those within the cooperative network, or that they begin studies or start a new job.

Partnerships lie at the heart of this initiative. Participating in the Center's broad cooperative network are a number of government authorities, such as experts from PES, the municipal social and health services, the municipal youth services, the social security office, educational institutions and workshops. In addition to all these, there are also a number of participating third-sector organisations and groups involved in voluntary work or other youth-related activities. The One-Stop Guidance Centre also operates as a link between young people and entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial organisations. Young people themselves also have an active role in the design and evaluation of the Centres and are involved in the daily activities.

In order to improve accessibly, Centres are based in easy access locations for young people, such as shopping malls. Moreover, Centres do not only support the most vulnerable youth in order to avoid their stigmatisation within the target population.

Launched in 2015, the programme's implementation is being coordinated by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. It is funded mainly though ESF 2014-2020, with additional national funding. A dedicated national co-ordinating authority has been established to support the design and implementation of this measure, develop a common digital platform and internet-based guidance, and evaluate results. No evaluation has been carried out to date.

Pro-active outreach especially towards those facing multiple barriers

Engaging with young people furthest away from the labour market as early as possible is crucial in order to avoid long-term inactivity[85] but often requires pro-active, intensive interventions with a broader range of partners to address a broad range of barriers that they face, including behavioural, social, educational and health-related[86].

In **Finland**, outreach work is carried out by a network of outreach workers, active in most municipalities. They help young people reach public services that promote their growth, independence as well as access to education and work. Outreach workers meet young people in the most suitable place to them (such as at youth centres, school, office or café), are in close contact with student welfare teams, follow-up on school drop-outs and liaise as well with social workers, health care institutions, employment services[87].

Bulgaria: Youth Mediators

The 'Youth Mediator' measure was launched on 1 January 2015, with the aim of identifying, reaching-out, and activating NEETs who are not registered with the PES. By December 2015, 101 unemployed young people with tertiary education had been recruited and trained as "Youth Mediators", 98 of which are now working for municipalities across Bulgaria.

Youth mediators act as *intermediaries* between inactive young people and public institutions that provide social, health, educational and other services. Their responsibilities include: identifying and reaching out to unregistered NEETs, determining their individual needs, informing them about employment, education and training

[85] OECD (2016), the NEET challenge: what can be done for jobless and disengaged youth? March 2016.

[86] European Commission (2015), The contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment..

[87] European Commission (2015), Expert group report on the contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment, Peer Review on Youth Guarantee, Helsinki, Finland, 18-19 September 2014 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1070&newsId=2068&furtherNews=yes

opportunities, and directing them towards appropriate services.

More generally, youth mediators cooperate with local partners to support the further integration of service delivery for NEETs. They work, for instance, with local NGOs to support outreach activities, with PES labour mediators on exchange of vacancies and cooperation with employers, and with schools in order to facilitate NEETs' reintegration into the education system.

Early evaluations show promising results. During the period May-December 2015, youth mediators consulted with 5,078 youths, 2,030 were assisted in contacting organisation/institution in order to activate them; 1,398 were registered with Labour Offices. While not solely attributable to this measure, youth mediators played an important role in supporting registrations of young people with the PES: these increased by 17% during the January-February 2016, compared to the same period in 2015.

The creation of a new position of "Youth Mediators", placed within the municipalities' administrations, is an innovative move which has helped to build valuable bridges between unregistered NEETs and public institutions.

The measure is run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy under the programme "Activating the Inactive" and funded nationally. EUR 330,984 were dedicated for the training and employment of 100 youth mediators (including accommodation, transport and remuneration of EUR 220 per month). The measure's end date is December 2017 but an extension is possible if its objectives are met.

In **Ireland**, the Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot project has partnered up with designated 'street counsellors' who walk the streets in the Ballymun area of Dublin four evenings a week to meet young people in their own environment and begin the process of building trust. In **Germany,** as part of the ESF pilot programme for the local empowerment of young people (*JUGEND STÄRKEN im Quartier*)[88] running from 2015 to 2018, 178 pilot municipalities are creating social pedagogical counselling and mentoring services for young people in special need of assistance during the transition from school to work.

In **Romania**, 27 pilot Youth Guarantee Centres were established throughout the country, by the Ministry of Labour with partners from the business community, trade unions, NGO's, professional, associations, foundations. Their objective was to reach the young NEETs registered with the PES and provide them with counselling and guidance services, training courses or place them directly within apprenticeship or traineeship schemes at employers or smoothen their transition to the world of work by sending them to an authorized skills assessment centres.

Sweden: Multi-Skilled teams to support youth with complex needs

In Sweden, the UngKOMP aims to improve the efficiency of the PES and strengthen its cooperation with municipalities in supporting young unemployed through the creation of multi-skilled teams comprising employees from PES and municipalities. The measure will be established in 20 municipalities during 2015-2018; each multi-skilled team will be made up of 12-17 PES employees and 2 municipal employees and will include, *inter alia*, an employment advisor, a psychologist, a social counsellor, an education advisor and a social worker. The measure, financed by the ESF, PES-budget and municipalities,

[88] http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/kinder-und-jugend,did=12252.html

will support 5,000 young people who are long term-unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment, focusing on those with complex needs.

The project's key innovative element is the design of the measure from the viewpoint of the young person. Rather than making young people find their way through a complex web of public services, it provides a holistic approach with the individual placed at the centre and actors collaborating closely in order to support him/her as effectively as possible. This approach is especially valuable for young people with complex needs and who display a low incentive to get engage with authorities.

Another important success factor is considered to be welcoming and relaxed approach to engaging with young people. Participation is voluntary and meetings take place in a lounge-inspired environment which aims to give them a more casual feeling.

The present project is a scaling-up of the previous ESF-funded "Young In" project (Unga, 2012-14, restricted to 5 municipalities), which was shown to be cost effective. Early evaluative results are positive and show that 62% of UngKOMP participants leave the project to enter employment or education, 25% leave the project for other know reasons, 13% leave the project for unknown reasons. The average duration of a young person's engagement in the project is 8 months.

Poland: the Voluntary Labour Corps

A central role in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Poland in relation to outreach strategies is played by the Voluntary Labour Corps (Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy, OHP). Placed under the authority of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, the Voluntary Labour Corps is made up of 738 units operating at national, regional and local level. These units make up an effective network supporting young people aged 15-24 years, including NEETs, in difficult situations or at-risk of social exclusion.

The aim of the cooperation of OHP at local level is to ensure the widest outreach to young people requiring special support in terms of education and employment. OHP has a network of 721 units of care, education, training and labour market services, spread throughout the country (most often located in smaller towns). Due to the varied nature of their role, primary OHP units are divided into 2 groups: education and care units (217 units) and units performing tasks supporting young people's transition into the labour market (504 units), the later includes among others, youth centres, mobile centres for occupational information, youth employment offices, and ESF occupational training centres.

OHP units have developed an effective system of reaching young people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, through cooperation with schools, education offices, churches (parish communities) and other institutions. OHP cooperates also with local governments and its specialised units (social welfare centres, family assistance centres, etc.[89]).

When designing effective outreach strategies, Member States should take into consideration the diverse backgrounds of NEETs (due in particular to poverty, disability,

[89] Eurofound (2015) Social Inclusion of Young People 2015, European Commission (2015) Expert group on the contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment.

low educational attainment or ethnic minority/migrant background). In some countries, young asylum-seekers will be an increasing share of this group. In an approach to promote swift integration and prevent scarring effects and higher costs in the long-term, asylum-seekers under the age of 25 fall under the scope of the YG as soon as they have access to the labour market, or to vocational training, respectively (if earlier in time). Asylum-seekers under the age of 18 should be given particular attention when it comes to redirecting them to continued education in order to finish an upper secondary degree. Recognised refugees / refugees granted international protection under the age of 25 fully fall under the scope of the YG.

Besides, a number of Member States have adapted the provision of services to support young people with a migrant background. In **Belgium** (Flanders), the PES has received extra staff in order to support young people's integration in the labour market. In the German-speaking community, 150 places for intensive language courses have been created for 2016. The ESF operational programmes active in Belgium's Brussels region have integrated new arrived migrants in their target populations. In **Germany**, a total of 454 youth migration services counsel and mentor those between the ages of 12 and 27 years with a migrant background, offering assistance with their inclusion at school, at work, in society and with languages[90].

Prevention of early school leaving and drop out

Several Member States have geared efforts towards a preventative approach targeting young people at risk of becoming NEETs while they are still in the education system, though not necessarily in the context of the Youth Guarantee's implementation. Among others, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and Romania address the prevention of school drop-out specifically in the context of the Youth Guarantee's implementation.

In **France**, a comprehensive plan to reduce early school leaving is being implemented since end 2014. For pupils at risk aged 15 or more, a specific "adapted initial training path" combining regular education with out of school activities is being experimented. For early school leavers aged between 16 and 25 a "legal right to get back into education or training" has been introduced.

Austria: Youth Coaching

First introduced in January 2012 in two provinces, 'Youth Coaching' has been extended to the whole of Austria since 2013. The programme is run by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and the Ministry of Education and implemented by a specific service within the former Ministry.

Youth Coaching seeks to reduce early school leaving and facilitate school-to-work transitions by providing free customised support and guidance on education and employment, as well as personal or social issues that young people may be facing.

Youth Coaching works with three groups of young people: those who are at risk of dropping out of the education system, young people, who already left the education system (school, apprenticeship) up to 19 years of age; and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities up to 24 years of age. Youth Coaching is organised in three steps, with the most intense support (Case Management) being offered in step 3, which

[90] http://www.jmd-portal.de/_template.php?1=1

may last up to one year.

In 2015, 443 Youth Coaches delivered services to 39 360 young people, with an annual budget of EUR 27 million, this equates to EUR 700 per young person supported. Successful outcomes have been achieved for 85% of participants in 2013 and 80% of participants evaluated Youth Coaching as successful for them, while 98% were positive about their ability to find the right job.

Two factors have contributed to this programme's success. First, a flexible and holistic approach (based on a close partnership between the Youth Coaches, schools, the PES, social work, the young person's environment and where appropriate employers and other stakeholders, for instance, municipalities) means that service delivery is person-centred and can be tailored to support clients facing multiple disadvantages. Second, a good quality monitoring system supports its continued improvement.

In **Belgium** (Flanders), the Ministers for Education and for Welfare launched a strategic Action Plan "Together Against Early School Leaving" with more than 50 actions to reduce the number of early school leavers, combat truancy and guarantee the right to education. Exchange of data between educational partners and the PES is a priority. In **Denmark**, the "The Retention Task Force" cooperates with nearly half of the vocational schools to developing pedagogical practices improving retention of vulnerable youth. It offers teachers and headmasters four different pedagogical programmes/methods to improve their pedagogical capacity and teaching methods. In **Sweden,** the association of local authorities and regions, together with 5 regions and 45 local authorities ran the national project Plug In, supported by the ESF, aimed at helping young people to complete their upper secondary education. In total 7,700 individuals participated in a local workshop during a three year time frame until 2014. Its follow-up project, Plug In 2.0, will have a stronger focus on measures aiming at preventing drop out, and will include 8 regions and 50 to 60 municipalities.

An **Norwegian** pilot project on PES tutors in upper secondary (run from 2013 to 2016) is considered a good practice example in this area[91]. The project aimed to prevent young people from dropping out of upper secondary school and to test a model of cross-sectoral and close collaboration between the PES and upper secondary schools. 45 PES tutors from 33 PES offices are located in 28 upper secondary schools across Norway. PES advisors were based in schools 3 days per week. Students were offered 'reality checks' (where they could talk through their aspirations), signposting to PES activities (but focusing on finishing education first), supporting in finding work experience opportunities, information on PES services, etc. The results were positive. In one school, the dropout has reduced from 4.8 % to 3.1 % from 2012/2013 to 2014/20515. Moreover, both parties' knowledge of each other was improved and the project helped to ensure that no young person was 'lost' between school and employment.

Bridging programmes and rehabilitation services

Low-threshold programmes can effectively support young people with multiple disadvantages in finding their way and re-accustoming themselves gradually to a learning and working environment, so they are ready to take up an offer under the Youth Guarantee.

[91] http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15226&langId=en

For instance, in **Austria**, 'production schools' support disadvantaged young people, or young people with disabilities, aged between 15 and 19 years (if necessary up to 25 years) who are lacking social and basic skills and who have not completed compulsory education. This programme combines social pedagogic support and work to learn basic skills. In **Cyprus,** the New Modern Apprenticeship Scheme includes preparatory apprenticeships that support early school leavers to enter apprenticeship programmes as well as core apprentice programmes.

In **Belgium** (Brussels region), personalised instruction workshops were set up within the Public Centres for Social Action (CPAS/OCMW) to support welfare recipients under 25 to undertake skills training or resume their studies. The project combines the strengths of CPAS/OCMW advisors (proximity, knowledge of the target groups and their economic and social constraints) and Social Promotion educators (educational flexibility, knowledge of local educational and training programmes) to develop alternative learning methods. In the German-speaking community in **Belgium**, apprentices who encounter difficulties in learning can receive individual learning support in small groups.

Denmark: Building bridges to education

In Denmark**,** 'Building Bridges to Education' seeks to prepare young people academically, socially and personally to start and complete a vocational education. Managed nationally by the PES, the project is implemented in 12 municipalities across the country and involves 44 partner VET schools and 52 local PES offices. Dedicated funding is provided to schools to support their involvement in the project.

Bridging courses take place in an educational environment at a vocational school, where beneficiaries mix with other young people enrolled in regular VET courses. All participants have a fixed schedule and typically have the opportunity to take part in various courses, short professional traineeships, and taster placements within VET courses. Where necessary, young people are offered basic literacy and numeracy classes. In addition, each young person is allocated a personal training mentor. The focus is on supporting young people in their transition from social assistance to vocational education and in finding the 'right' educational pathway for them. Bridging courses typically last 15 weeks, although the length may vary according to the needs of the young person.

An innovative element of this project is the close ('hand-held') guidance the young participants receive during their transition from social assistance to education, thus building bridges between the two systems. Key success factors are the close cooperation between the jobcentres and the educational institutions, and the dedicated training of mentors.

A counterfactual impact evaluation shows positive results. The share of young people commencing a VET programme 25 weeks after the start of a bridging course has almost doubled. The measure also doubles the probability for the young person completing his/her VET course. The PES and the Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality are working together to expand and scale up the "Building bridges to education" measure to a greater number of municipalities in 2016.

In **Germany**, assisted apprenticeships are designed to help a greater number of disadvantaged young people to successfully complete a dual vocational training course. Young people supported by this measure receive individual and continuous support and social pedagogical mentoring while receiving training in a company.

In **Lithuania** 4,000 young NEETs aged 16-25 participated in the ESF-funded project "Trust Yourself" from September 2013 to November 2015. They received 3 or 6 months social rehabilitation services and preparation for employment. 56% of the participants subsequently integrated into the labour market or the educational system.[92] In **Luxembourg,** the National Youth Service organises "creative workshops" for young people not yet ready to follow a PES programme or take up an education offer, who need an intermediate step. A large proportion of participants have started a vocational training, a voluntary service or followed a PES programme once the workshop finished.

Coordination and sharing of information across institutions (point 9)

Better understanding of the NEET population and tracking of young people in their journey from school to work is key to ensure that they receive adequate support and do not fall through the gaps of the system. The NEETs concept has been instrumental in shedding light on the multifaceted vulnerability of young people and the need to address the most "invisible" ones in policy efforts, however grasping the diversity of profiles and needs within this group remains difficult[93]. Besides, the lack of exchange of data across sectors (resulting from low cooperation between operators and concerns over the protection of personal data) limits opportunities to catch and support drop outs[94].

Efforts are being made to better identify the NEETS, improve the sharing of data and better track them, but **much remains to be done**. Compliance with point 9 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is seen as limited or null in 43% of Member States.

Luxembourg: the NEETs study

A study will be published in 2016 to provide in-depth knowledge on NEETs aged 16-30 years, address the challenges linked to existing data sources, and put an additional focus on trajectories. The Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER alongside the General Social Security Inspectorate, has been commissioned by the National Youth Service to carry out this study. It will inform policy-makers about specific needs of the NEET population and identify relevant policy interventions to address them, based on:

- The creation of a centralised database, combining sources of administrative data, which will allow a quantification of the NEET situation.
- An in-depth survey among 2,500 young people to create a classification of NEETs.
- A combination of the administrative database with the survey to gain an in-depth view of the young people's trajectories, and thus further sharpen NEET profiles and required interventions.

The situation of NEETs is usually analysed from a static point of view. An important innovative dimension of this study is that it combines, for the first time, a centralised longitudinal administrative database with an in-depth survey with a view to obtaining a

[92] http://www.ldb.lt/Informacija/ESParama/gyvendinti%20ES%20projektai/UserDispForm.aspx?ID=31

[93] Eurofound (2016), Exploring the diversity of NEETs, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

[94] Peer Review on 'Targeting NEETs – key ingredients for successful partnerships in improving labour market participation', Oslo, Norway, 24 - 25 September 2015

dynamic view of NEETs. In this regard, it seeks to shed light on the determinants of exit from the NEET situation as well as the factors that explain why some young people continue to remain in the NEET status.

The project started in 2013, with European Social Fund support as well as national funding (EUR 159,065 was ESF-financed, out of total funding of EUR 318,130). Publication will be followed by discussions with relevant ministries and other Youth Guarantee stakeholders in order define new programmes targeting NEETs.

With support from the ESF, **Croatia** is developing a NEETs tracking system that will enable detection of non-registered NEETs. It is based on a Cooperation Agreement on Data Exchange between the Ministry of Labour and Pension Systems, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, the Croatian Employment Service and the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute. The system will allow data and query management in databases, as well as the creation of reports with precise information on unregistered NEETs (such as age, residence, qualifications, etc.). In **Finland**, the Youth Act was amended in 2011 to include procedures for handling the exchange of contact information on young people between educational institutions, social services and PES. A two-year pilot (to be completed in 2016) is being conducted in 11 municipalities with the purpose of using a single system shared by different stakeholders. In **France**, an Inter-Ministerial System for the exchange of information allows (by the cross-checking of data) to identify young people who have dropped out of initial education without any qualifications.

In **Lithuania**, the YGIP foresees the creation of an Identification System to help identify NEETs aged 14-29 who are not registered in the Lithuanian Labour Exchange (PES). **Luxembourg**'s educational authorities employ a national digital register of pupils in secondary education ('fichier élèves') to track early school leavers. A dedicated service (under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education), the Local Action for Youth, is responsible for reaching out to dropouts, flagged on a monthly basis within the system, in order to determine their current status and provide guidance and support. In **Romania**, the PES developed in 2015 an integrated database of non-registered NEETs, with support from the ESF. It will be achieved through interoperability with the databases of the Ministry of Education, the National Authority for People with Disabilities, the National Agency of Fiscal Administration and the National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection.

Malta: the NEET Census

In Malta, a census was conducted between June and November 2015 aiming at identifying all young NEETs, as well as at analysing through one-to-one interviews their characteristics and expectations with regard to education and labour market in order to ensure that future policies and measures are targeted at their specific needs. The Census also constituted an important outreach instrument since interviewed NEETs were encouraged to register with the Youth Guarantee.

The report from the NEETs Census indicates three sub-categories within the young NEETs category:

1. Core NEETs. Individuals who are not currently employed or in education, have no future plans in relation to employment or education, have a negative educational experience, and have minimum motivation.
2. Floating NEETs. Individuals who would like to engage in some form of

education or employment, however, need guidance and support to develop a plan that suits their career ambitions, goals, and capabilities. These action plans are essential for keeping an individual on track and preventing him/her from becoming a core NEET.

3. Interim NEETs. These are individuals who are taking a short break from their education or employment plans. This could be due to transitioning from education into employment (i.e. searching for a job) but otherwise they have a set career or educational plan.

The Census' innovative aspect lies in its investigative nature since it aimed to shed light on the NEET population and the link between the needs of different categories of NEETs and ALMPs, with a view to further improving the effectiveness measures as well as their return on investment. Making the findings public will enable further analysis to be carried out by independent experts.

A key success factor was that NEETs were captured within the Census by crossing data of different registers (with the collaboration of the Data Protection Commission) in order to provide targeted measures on the basis of an evidence based research.

The Census was carried out with support from the European Social Fund and its results will help policy-makers in designing programmes better targeted to the needs of different groups.

2.2.2.3. Activation: personalised guidance and action planning (point 10)

Personalised guidance has proved its effectiveness for young people, provided that sufficient institutional capacity and resources in terms of funding, (front line) staff and expertise are present. While guidance tends to be most successful for the most ‘job ready', intensified support can also yield significant results for groups at risk when delivered through a person-centred approach, combining several components (counselling, training and various types of placement services)[95] and involving partnerships going beyond traditional ALMP interventions.

Counselling, guidance and individual action planning are core tasks in the delivery of the Youth Guarantee, and in many cases existed already. However, the Youth Guarantee has provided an impetus, particularly within Public Employment Services[96] for further modifying existing services to take better consideration of young people’s needs. Particular emphasis was placed on streamlining procedures and increasing the personalisation of counselling through a case management approach, better guiding young people from registration to individual action planning and placement (avoiding a multiplication of interlocutors and services). New approaches were also introduced or strengthened, such as e-services as well as non-formal and informal counselling methods[97].

[95] What works for the labour market integration of youth at risk, Mutual Learning Programme, thematic paper prepared for the High Level Learning Exchange, Stockholm, February 2016; Kluve, J. (2014), Youth labour market interventions, IZA World of Labour

[96] European Network of Public Employment Services, Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee, July 2015

[97] Peer review on the Guarantee for Youth, Paris, 7-8 April 2016.

Point 10 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is among the points with the highest assessment of implementation by the EEPO, with full or partial implementation in 75% of Member States. Yet providers' capacity to deliver services remains a matter of concern, in particular as a result of the combination of high caseloads and budgetary constraints[98].

Changes in processes, structures and the delivery of services to young people

Several Member States have reorganised processes and structures in place to reinforce individualisation of counselling to young people, including through specific services. In **Ireland**, the roll-out of the Intreo service, combining delivery of active and passive measures through the PES introduced process changes, some of which were further modified to enhance the effectiveness of engagement towards young people. They include a standard monthly engagement pattern for the Youth Guarantee, with Activation Review Meetings held every month.

Italy: the Youth Guarantee, a pilot for ALMP reforms

In Italy, the Youth Guarantee's implementation prompted changes that were reflected in the broader reform of Active Labour Market Policies initiated by the Jobs Act.

The ad-hoc commission bringing together institutional actors involved in the YG's design and implementation set the basis for the National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL). The Agency is in place since January 2016 to coordinate a wide network of institutions and agencies (e.g. INPS, INAIL, and employment services, chambers of commerce, schools).

With the Youth Guarantee, new methods of intervention were introduced on a national scale, including online registration on a dedicated portal and profiling of users; a standard set of nine YG interventions has been applied across the whole national territory. These methods will soon apply to all the unemployed registering online with the ANPAL portal and signing a personalised service agreement.

The Youth Guarantee also triggered a major process of strengthening of the Public Employment Services, which played a central role in the delivery of the scheme.

Finally, supporting these ongoing activities is the creation of a national database of young people registered with the Youth Guarantee scheme, which constitutes a first attempt to systematically monitor participants' progress (following initial registration and after accepting an offer), i.e. in terms of outcome, across the whole territory.

Many of the above measures are ESF-supported and/or developed in the context of YEI implementation.

In September 2013, Actiris, the PES in the Brussels region (**Belgium**) introduced an in-house Youth Guarantee Service to support jobseekers under 30 who have been registered for six months and need additional support. The service offers a specific methodology and works to improve matching with a pre-selection of candidates. The PES is the main implementing body and works in collaboration with training providers. While it is not the only factor, the PES' dedicated YG service has played an important role in supporting the decrease in the youth unemployment rate in Brussels over the last two years. In **Croatia**, counsellors for youth were introduced within the broader restructuring of the Public Employment Services. They work in dedicated Youth centres for employment which are

[98] Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, p.5.

an integral part of the PES. In **Luxembourg**, a structural reorganisation of the PES initiated in 2012 enhanced the provision of specialised services to young people. Three Youth Guarantee Services were set up in the seven regional agencies, with dedicated staff and specific knowledge.

Germany: Youth Employment Agencies

In Germany, Youth Employment Agencies were first established in 2007 with the aim of supporting the professional and social integration of young people up to the age of 25 years through the close cooperation between various local actors, including PES, schools and social welfare services. Co-operation activities cover at least one of the following pillars: transparency, exchange of information, harmonised procedures and measures, and one-stop-shops.

In practice, the target group and the concrete shape of youth employment agencies vary significantly by region. Local and regional players are typically involved in shaping and implementing the approach. In July 2015, there were 218 youth employment agencies across Germany, of which 166 had written cooperation agreements. 27 youth employment agencies provide services 'under one roof' and 15 are planning to do so in the future. Overall, 82% of employment agencies, 68% of joint institutions of municipalities and employment agencies, and 33% of licensed local authority agencies are active in cooperation projects.

Evaluations have shown positive results. In Mainz, for instance, the benefit for the target group was estimated to be very high (44%) or rather high (39%). In Hamburg, 14,000 young people benefited from an offer and the agency successfully found employment for almost 6,000 of them.

Looking to the future, the government coalition agreement 2013-2017 ascertained that youth employment agencies will be rolled out throughout the national territory. Policy-makers are now working to improve the quality of cooperation between local partners. To this end, the federal PES is developing an IT-based self-assessment tool. In 2016, the German Association for Public and Private Welfare published recommendations describing the defining characteristics of successful agencies, including, a shared vision, cooperation on equal footing, involvement of schools and other network partners, targeting young people, establishing a joint contact point, defining goals and indicators of success, harmonising procedures and services, transparency, exchanging information while respecting data privacy rules, and envisioning youth employment agencies as work in progress and as learning systems.

Staff capacity was also reinforced and PES have directed further resources towards YG implementation. While few have staff members exclusively dedicated to the YG, activities have generally been incorporated into staff functions and roles, combined with an increased focus on the role of the case manager offering a continuity of support. In 2014, staff training was provided by over half the PES on specific aspects of working with young people within the context of the Youth Guarantee[99].

In **Hungary**, a network of counsellor/coordinators was set up within the PES as part of the YGIP to strengthen co-operation with local stakeholders. Their duties also include

[99] European Network of Public Employment Services, Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee, July 2015.

registering young people, and assessing their needs, setting up an individual action plan, guiding them to an appropriate offer and monitoring outcomes. In **Slovenia**, the Youth Guarantee provided an impetus for strengthening front line staff within the PES and modernising of the counselling process to adapt them to the needs of young jobseekers. In **Latvia**, comprehensive individual counselling has become a mainstream practice available to all young jobseekers falling in the remit of the Youth Guarantee[100]. In **Lithuania**, since autumn 2014, a training programme has been delivered to 80 specialists from local labour exchanges and youth job centres to develop their counselling skills for working with young people with complex needs[101].

New methods were also introduced, such as group and peer support complementing individual guidance. The **Estonian** PES uses group methods to address career information and advice needs of young people. Job Clubs help those who are unsure of their career direction or ill-prepared to engage in job search and who need additional support. In **France**, group work and peer support is a key dimension within the Guarantee for Youth, specifically targeting young people with multiple disadvantages.

Profiling

Profiling has been further developed in several Member States, as a step to ensure young people receive the type and intensity of support they need, whilst allowing for an effective targeting of the most costly interventions[102].

In **Ireland**, a profiling system provides each jobseeker who registers with the PES with a 'PEX score' indicating the probability of exiting the unemployment register within 12 months. The intensity and the nature of engagement with jobseekers is differentiated on this basis, with more intensive support being given to those with a lower PEX score. In **Italy**, a methodology for the profiling of young people registering into the Youth Guarantee portal was developed on a national scale. It allows calculating the predicted probability of being a NEET and the degree of employability based on individual characteristics. In **Malta**, profiling takes place in the context of the NEETs activation scheme, with the three broad categories of NEETs being handed to youth workers in charge of mentoring and supporting young persons (see box above 'Malta: the NEET census).

Development of e -services

The use of e-services in the delivery of the Youth Guarantee is limited (and mostly used by PES in the context of registration and increasingly for matching and support for mobility) but is expanding into areas such as career guidance, individual action planning and training[103].

[100] European Network of Public Employment Services (2014), Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.
[101] PES knowledge centre fiche, to be found on: http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15222&langId=en .
[102] OECD (2016), the NEET challenge: what can be done for jobless and disengaged youth? March 2016; European Commission 2015 "Identification of latest trends and current developments in methods to profile jobseekers in European Public Employment Services: Final Report".
[103] European Network of Public Employment Services, *Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee,* July 2015.

The PES in **Portuga**l has developed a guidance portal that gives free access to information and to the development of citizens' capability to self-manage their careers. Since December 2015, the **German** PES has put in place a "Chat for online counselling and online information career guidance" (COBI). COBI includes a chat and e-mail service which provides advice to citizens, who may remain anonymous if they like. The consultation aims to cover all aspects of young people's search for suitable training[104]. In **Belgium** (Flanders), an online platform (Vick.Vlaanderen) was developed that provides innovative apps for young jobseekers. The apps were co-designed with youngsters and help them find a job, make a CV or submit an application. In **Poland**, a common job/apprenticeship/traineeship portal has been set up to strengthen partnerships and to boost employment, apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities.

Expanding offers of traineeships and apprenticeships within existing vacancy databases

Traineeship and apprenticeship vacancies are not always integrated with PES' vacancy databases, in part due to overall responsibility resting with another agency or organisation. Less than half of PES have access to a database of apprenticeships or traineeships[105].

However, a number of PES have taken steps, or report plans, to incorporate traineeship and apprenticeship positions into existing vacancy databases, develop a new training database, and/or improve young people's awareness of or access to training offers[106]. These recent initiatives have been supported by the new EURES Regulation which requires Member States to make apprenticeships and traineeships available to the EURES portal (Article 17), provided that successful applicants are subject to an employment relationship[107].

In the **UK**, the 'Universal Jobmatch' site advertises job and training positions, but a dedicated apprenticeships website is also available. Dedicated websites for advertising traineeships and/or apprenticeships are also available in **Ireland, Hungary and the Netherlands.** Similarly, in **Belgium** (German-speaking community), apprenticeship vacancies are published on the PES' online job portal since February 2014 and young jobseekers are informed about job and apprenticeship vacancies within three months after having registered as a jobseeker.

Short study or work trials

Short placements can help young people refine their career choices by testing various options. Provided they ensure an active involvement, they give employers an opportunity to test potential employees and allow young people to fully demonstrate their skills and motivation (as compared to a job interview whereby lack of experience can be a major

[104] European Network of Public Employment Services (2014), Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

[105] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), *Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee,* July 2015.

[106] European Network of Public Employment Services (2014), Catalogue of PES measures for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

[107] Regulation (EU) 2016/589 of E.P. and Council, 13/04/2016. See in particular Recitals 8 and 9. The Commission is cooperating with the Member States on the modalities to implement these developments.

obstacle)[108]. According to PES' self-assessment, 27 PES provide work experience and work trials to young job-seekers[109].

In **Finland**, the YG scheme introduced new services delivered by the PES such as education and work trials. In **Latvia**, youth workshops allow 15-24 year-olds with a low level of education or without work experience to try out up to three different full-time training opportunities in VET schools, each for three months. In **Hungary**, a job trial scheme provides young people under the age of 25 with the opportunity to try a job for up to 90 days, the PES covering up to 100 % of their labour cost.

Pathway approaches towards the hardest to reach

Interventions such as job search assistance, counselling and short training courses (typically CV writing and interview training) can be less expensive than upskilling and providing a formal qualification and can be sufficient for young people with low barriers to labour market participation[110]. However those more distant from the labour market need more intensive activation[111]. New forms of interventions were developed as part of the Youth Guarantee's implementation, such as pathway approaches ranging from outreach and guidance to rehabilitation (when necessary), placement and active follow-up. They generated an important shift in focus for some YG providers and in particular Public Employment Services, leading to the introduction of non-formal and informal methods and the development of broader partnerships.

In **Belgium**, Flanders, the ESF authority launched in 2014-2015 a "Preliminary phase for vulnerable groups" in partnership with the PES and not-for-profit entities such as the Public centre for social welfare. It targets hard-to-reach NEETs under 25 through active identification (visiting gathering places and building on grassroots organisations' activities); supported pathway (offering tailored guidance and guiding young people to PES services to prepare them for offers of employment or training); aftercare and follow-up on participants[112]. With support from the Erasmus+ programme, the Flemish Agency for Youth Welfare[113], **Belgium**, is developing a model for an After Care Guarantee aiming to better guide young people from residential care facilities in their transition to adulthood.

Latvia: Project "Know and Do"

In Latvia, the "Know and Do" project supports outreach work at the municipal level and aims to identify, motivate and activate NEETs aged 15 to 29 years, who are not registered with the PES, including those at risk of social exclusion, to return to education, employment or training.

The initiative is financed by the State budget and the ESF (EUR 1.35 million and EUR

[108] Peer review on the Guarantee for Youth, Paris, 7-8 April 2016.

[109] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee, July 2015.

[110] OECD (2016), the NEET challenge: what can be done for jobless and disengaged youth? March 2016.

[111] Caliendo M., Schmidl R., Youth Unemployment and Active Labor Market Policies in Europe, November 2015, IZA DP No. 9488.

[112] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs.

[113] In partnership with the Knowledge Center Social Europe FEANTSA, ENSA, the Regional government of Carinthia, Austria, Azienda Speciale Consortile Oves, Italy, the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports.

7.65 million respectively) and aims to support 5,260 young people. Young people will receive tailored support and a programme of individual measures consisting of four components: lifelong learning competencies, social inclusion, development of personality and working virtue. The duration of the programme is expected to be 0-4 months (in special cases up to 9 months). Positive outcomes are expected for around 3,600-3,800 young beneficiaries.

The project is innovative in two ways: it is the first activation measure that specifically addresses NEETs and it contains a strong local strategic partnerships component. The project is managed by the Agency for International Programmes for Youth, responsible for providing methodological guidelines, developing and delivering training courses for mentors and programme managers, supporting experience exchange, and evaluating the programme. Local partners, including the 119 municipalities, as well as NGOs, social services, and educational institutions, will collaboratively implement the programme on the ground.

A key success factor is expected to be the localised approach since municipalities and local youth organisations have in-depth knowledge of and links to NEETs in their area.

Implementation (development of design of outreach activities, training of youth experts, etc.) began in autumn 2015, while actual delivery of services to NEETs began in April-May 2016. Early evaluation results are expected in summer-autumn 2016. A strong monitoring element has been built into the project.

In **Malta**, through the NEETs activation scheme, NEETs are individually profiled and receive 40 hours of direct contact with a youth worker, another 80 hours of training including motivation and behaviour, labour market orientation sessions, communication skills and CV writing skills.

France: the Guarantee for Youth

Launched in the second semester 2013 as a pilot project and planned until December 2017, the "Guarantee for Youth" is now one of the main elements of France's YGIP. The measure aims to support vulnerable NEETs aged 18-25 years in improving their level of autonomy and entering a sustainable inclusion and employment pathway. Beneficiaries are selected by a multi-actor partnership commission composed of representatives of the PES (“Pôle Emploi” and “Missions locales”), social centre, prevention networks, departmental council, the ministry of education and other anti-poverty associations.

The measure combines reinforced counselling and professional immersion with a means-tested monthly allowance. It is based on a one-year contract of 'mutual reciprocity' (renewable once) between the young person and a local PES dedicated to young people (Missions Locales). The contract (including goals and training modules) is devised collaboratively with the young person. The 'pathway' begins with a 6-8 week period of collective workshops (on basic or soft skills) and is followed by a period of personalised support, delivered by a counsellor, during which time the young person will undertake several work experiences and may also engage in a training course.

The project involves key innovative elements including a work-first approach which aims to offer a plurality of professional experiences that can be completed by training opportunities, as well as a monthly allowance which constitutes a valuable safety net for many young people. An important success factor is well-performing partnerships with local employers.

An evaluation of the measure is currently ongoing and results are expected late 2016. Early reporting from 2013 shows that 48% of participants were involved in training or a job one year after their involvement, compared to 38% of those who were not involved. Qualitative results show increased self-confidence, sense of self-worth and autonomy among participants.

The measure's target group has increased over the years (10,000 people in 2014, 50,000 in 2015, 60,000 in 2016 and 100,000 in 2017). In November 2015, 72 (out of 100) departments were implementing the measure. The budget has also increased from EUR 132,75 million in 2015 to EUR 223,9 million in 2016. Substantial support is provided through YEI and ESF funding amounting to EUR 97 million engaged in 2014-2015 and to be spent between 2015 and 2018.

The new El Khomri Law, adopted in July, generalizes the scheme in the whole country, as of 1st January 2017, to every vulnerable NEET between 18 and 25 years of age. the target group should reach around 150,000 people for 2017.

Some Member States provide specific intervention for young people with disabilities. In **Greece**, the national YGIP includes PES measures for young people with disabilities, including vocational training. In **Italy**, financial incentives are available to convert apprenticeship contracts into permanent ones for young people with disabilities in the target group aged 15–29[114].

Mutual obligations (point 10)

Young people aged 18-24 are the most likely to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to any other age group[115]; more than 30% were at risk in 2013[116]. Access to unemployment and social benefits are thus particularly important to prevent poverty and prolonged dependency and, when linked to participation in activation measures, can act as a powerful incentive for young people to register. Such support should however be coupled with a rigorous mutual obligation, taking into account the overall labour market situation and the employability of a young person as well as potential impact on services' accessibility.

Implementation of the principle of mutual obligation (within point 1 and 10 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States) is assessed as high by the EEPO, with full or partial in compliance in 71% of Member States, reflecting in particular the importance of conditionality in programmes for the unemployed.

Mutual obligations are typically applied for registered unemployed in most Member States, though not specifically in the context of the Youth Guarantee. It can lead to incentives or sanctions in the provision of benefits upon failure to actively look for a job or comply with an individual action plan. Enforcement can however be limited in practice, among others due to lack of capacity and/or high caseload within PES.

[114] Eurofound (2015), Social Inclusion of Young People.
[115] Social Protection Committee (2013), Social protection and youth exclusion in the EU; https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/emplcms/social/BlobServlet?docId=14886&langId=en.
[116] Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

Besides, the **strong focus on unemployment benefits** limits coverage of the NEET population[117]. The insurance-based nature of unemployment benefits makes access difficult for young people with limited work experience, who are more often covered through social assistance, housing or family benefits[118], where conditionality or incentives are less frequently applied[119]. This is particularly true for young women, who work more often in temporary and/or part-time jobs and are less likely to fulfil eligibility requirements, and when they are eligible their entitlements may be lower[120]. Mutual obligations are more rarely applied in the field of education, despite examples in a few Member States for younger age groups.

In **France**, access to the programme newly launched "Guarantee for Youth" is based on the principle of voluntary adhesion: payment of the EUR 461 monthly allowance can be suspended if the young person does not respect his/her commitments. In **Denmark**, those aged 15-17 years are obliged to be in education, employment or another activity in accordance with their personal education plan. Non-compliance is treated by the youth counselling service as a pedagogical issue. In **Germany**, sanctions criteria are stricter for young people than for other groups[121]. In **Ireland** young people engaged in training programmes can receive higher rates of income support. In **Malta**, providing social benefits is conditional on participation in the NEETs activation scheme. In **Sweden**, municipalities may require young people to participate in activation measures when receiving benefits.

2.2.2.4. Improving the provision of quality offers: focus on apprenticeship and traineeship reforms

Though not within the direct scope of the Recommendation, structural reforms in the field of apprenticeships and traineeships (including reforms in legal frameworks and new support measures) played a major role in supporting the delivery of quality Youth Guarantee offers, which better equip young people to enter the labour market.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships and work-based learning in general help to equip young people with skills needed in the labour market and ease their school-to-work transition. This is why apprenticeships are seen as a part of the solution to youth unemployment and are one of the 'offers' foreseen under the Youth Guarantee.

Statistics have shown that **youth unemployment is lower in countries which have a long tradition in apprenticeships**, such as Austria, Germany and Denmark, who continue to reform and innovate the functioning of their long-standing apprenticeship systems. These countries serve as models for many Member States that are currently introducing or reforming their apprenticeship systems.

[117] European Youth Forum (2016), Social inclusion and young people – excluding youth: a threat to our future.
[118] Social Protection Committee (2013), Social protection and youth exclusion in the EU.
[119] Carcillo,S., et al. (2015), "NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis: Challenges and Policies", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 164, OECD Publishing, Paris.
[120] European Commission (2013), "Starting fragile - Gender differences in the Youth labour market"
[121] Sozialgesetzbuch (SGB) Zweites Buch (II) paragraph 31 a (2).

The adoption of the **Youth Guarantee and the launch of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships have led to an increased policy focus on apprenticeships**. Significant action has been taken in order to improve in particular the quality, supply, and attractiveness of apprenticeships, in the spirit of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships[122].

These improvements are being carried out at various levels: while some countries, such as **Belgium** and **Slovenia,** are making significant modifications to improve their current systems, in other countries. like in **Spain, Ireland, Italy, Malta, France** and the **United Kingdom** apprenticeship system reforms have been more profound. Recent reforms for instance in **Estonia** and **Croatia**, where apprenticeships are a relatively recent training form, have aimed at modernising out-dated curricula. Some countries have further pursued their VET/apprenticeship reforms, which had been initiated prior to introducing the Youth Guarantee. This is the case for **Cyprus**, **Hungary**, **Luxembourg**, **Poland** and **Sweden**. In addition, in countries where apprenticeship systems did not exist, or which existed on a very small scale, actions have been taken to introduce such systems as part of national vocational training offer (BG, ES, LV, LT, SK). In addition to past and current reforms, some countries are expected to start reforms shortly; e.g. **Finland** is preparing more comprehensive reforms for apprenticeships during 2016, and **Romania** has announced a national apprenticeship plan.

The focus of the apprenticeship reforms varies from one Member State to another depending on their respective starting points and specific needs. The chapters below take a look at various aims of these reforms.

Strengthening the status and the quality of apprenticeships to enhance their attractiveness

In order for apprenticeships to be an attractive option of initial vocational training, they need to have the same status as school-based VET and general education. These different education pathways should lead all to a formal qualification of equal status, giving access to further training possibilities. Apprenticeships should have their place in the National Qualifications Frameworks. Attractiveness of apprenticeships depends also on the attractiveness of the occupations they lead to and the possibilities of accessing the labour market.

While in some countries, apprenticeships are on equal footing with school-based vocational training (such as in the **Netherlands**[123] and in **Portugal**[124]), the status of apprenticeships remains a concern in many Member States.

The **Danish** apprenticeship reform, passed in 2013 and implemented from mid-2015 onwards, aims at offering apprentices the opportunity to obtain a general upper-

[122] For more information on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, please see box in Section 2.3.1.5. Other initiatives underpinning the Youth Guarantee's implementation.

[123] In the Netherlands, for several years now, it has been possible to obtain a VET qualification through two pathways: the work-based pathway (so-called "dual track") and the school-based pathway. Both pathways lead to nationally recognised qualifications which are at the same level and are of equal value. It is possible to progress from one pathway to another, and also from one level to another.

[124] In Portugal graduates from apprenticeship training obtain a double certification, a secondary education diploma and a vocational certificate, and can either pursue further studies or enter the labour market.

secondary qualification opening access to higher education. In **Italy**, the apprenticeship system was reformed in 2011, but a further reform was carried out in 2015. As part of this recent reform, apprenticeships leading to a professional certificate or a diploma have been integrated in regional VET systems. With an additional year of apprenticeship, they will give access to vocationally oriented tertiary education. In **Sweden**, apprenticeship education was introduced as an alternative route in all upper secondary VET programmes as part of the 2011 reform of upper secondary education.

Referencing apprenticeships in the National Qualifications Framework demonstrates clearly their value in the education and training system. Under the reformed apprenticeship system, **Ireland** will be offering apprenticeships at the European Qualifications Framework Levels 4 to 7, which means that apprenticeships will be available also at graduate level. This reform addresses specifically skills shortages in certain sectors and contributes to the National Skills Strategy commitment of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship places by 2020. In **Malta**, the apprenticeships are linked to the national Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). According to the National Reform Programme of 2016, there are now over 40 courses at MQF Levels 3 and 4 that form part of the Apprenticeship Scheme and around 700 apprentices are benefitting from such courses.

As for quality, the on-going VET reform process in **Slovenia** includes several measures that increase the role and the scope of practical training in companies, with the aim of increasing the quality and attractiveness of VET and facilitating the transition from education to work. In **Austria** the Reform of the Vocational Training Act in 2015 strengthened the quality management in the apprenticeship training system, and a key element in the **United Kingdom** apprenticeship reform is monitoring its quality. In **Sweden,** an apprenticeship centre has been established, and one of its tasks is to promote apprenticeships. **France** and **Cyprus** have used communication campaigns to improve the image of apprenticeships.

Reforming apprenticeship governance and legal framework

The aim of apprenticeship reforms can also be to strengthen and to simplify the apprenticeship governance as well as the rules regulating it, and thus making apprenticeships a more attractive option. **Belgium (Wallonia)** has decided to coordinate the governance of the 2 existing systems, and to harmonise the apprenticeship status for the under 18-year-olds (payments and allowances, training plans, mentoring promotion). In **Ireland**, a new Apprenticeship Council (involving trade unions and employers) has been established to enhance governance and to advise and support the development of new apprenticeships. Ireland is developing around 25 new apprenticeships in labour market relevant areas.

In 2013, in **Sweden**, it was decided to establish an apprenticeship centre to further support VET providers, employers and social partners in developing apprenticeships, and a year later modifications were made to the status of apprenticeships. In the **United Kingdom**, simplification of vocational training routes is underway[125] and in **Malta,** the authorities intend to develop a harmonised legal apprenticeships framework which would also define the employment status of apprentices. The VET-reform process in **Slovenia** includes new apprenticeship legislation, but agreement on its contents has not yet been

[125] The United Kingdom has a devolved framework for apprenticeship training, with different systems for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

reached. In **Luxembourg**, a draft law, linked to the recent reform and submitted to the Parliament in 2015, was blocked for constitutional reasons.

Expanding apprenticeships to new trades and modernising existing curricula

To support youth employment, it is important to link apprenticeships to the needs of the labour market. Some reforms aim at modernising outdated apprenticeships which are provided in trades that no longer are in demand, or where the curricula are not adapted to the needs of a modern labour market.

Hungary, where reforms were launched already in 2011, aims at ensuring that training and apprenticeships are relevant to the labour market needs, in particular by expanding and mainstreaming apprenticeship in the training for blue-collar jobs.

In **Ireland**, apprenticeships were over-dependant on the construction sector, which suffered from significant redundancies following the economic downturn. As part of the on-going reforms, new curricula are being rolled out in five of the most popular trades (ICT, financial services, transport and tourism and hospitality), to be put in place during 2016. A curriculum review and modernisation are underway in the remaining trades.

In **Cyprus**, the New Modern Apprenticeship Scheme, which since 2012-2013 has replaced the earlier apprenticeship programme, is being introduced in new occupations and new sectors, on the basis of forecasts of labour market needs. Also reforms in **Croatia** and **Estonia** aim at modernising vocational curricula which are considered out-dated. In addition, **Estonia** is increasing work-based learning which currently does not offer sufficient possibilities.

France has announced measures which include a reinforcement of the apprenticeship system and the extension of apprenticeship to new qualifications. In **Scotland (UK)**, under the Modern Apprenticeship programme, skills investment plans and regional skills assessments will be used to ensure that apprenticeships are closely linked to areas of economic growth and job opportunities. Particular focus will be on the creation of apprenticeships in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects.

Increasing the numbers of apprentices

To cater for a growing interest in apprenticeships, many countries are working to increase their offer. In this regard, increasing employer engagement remains crucial[126]. This has been the key element of reforms in **Malta**, as well as in **Denmark**, where over 50 placement centres have been established in recent years, responsible for cooperating with local businesses on creating apprenticeships and offering school-based traineeships.

The different regions in the **United Kingdom** have set particularly ambitious quantitative targets for apprenticeships: Under the Modern Apprenticeship programme **Scotland** aims at raising the number of apprenticeships from 25,000 in 2013-2014 to 30,000 in 2020. In 2014-2015 the number of apprenticeship increased for the first time since 2010-2011. In **Wales (UK)**, the government has also announced its aims to raise the number of

[126] In involving companies, incentives play a significant role. Incentives are discussed in section 'The reduction of non-wage labour costs (point 16) and wage and recruitment subsidies, (point 17)', p. 64.

apprentices. In **Luxembourg**, the need to increase the number of apprenticeships was reaffirmed through an evaluation of the vocational education and training system.

In **Portugal**, adjustments to apprenticeships resulted in a 60% increase in enrolments between 2011 and 2014, and from 21,056 young persons in the year 2011-12 to 33,666 persons in 2012-13.

Sometimes increasing apprenticeships can serve specific inclusion policies, like in **England (UK)**, where this increase is also expected to provide policy responses in the area of NEETs, or in **Estonia**, where it is expected to address the high number of VET dropouts. In **Austria**, new training offers, such as standardised curricula for low-threshold entry qualifications and partial qualifications, have been developed for disadvantaged young persons, following the 2015 reform of the VET act.

Introducing apprenticeship systems

A few European countries which did not have apprenticeships, or where they existed on a very limited scale, and often outside the formal education framework, apprenticeships have been introduced as a new system. This is the case for example in **Bulgaria**, which, as part of its VET reform, is introducing "dual training"[127] in the formal VET system.

In order to better align vocational skills with labour market needs, **Spain** has in recent years been strengthening its apprenticeship-like programmes. Participation has increased substantially; the number of participants in these programmes grew from 4,292 in the year 2012/13 to 15,304 in 2015/16, and the number of enterprises providing work-based learning grew from 513 to 5,665 during the same period.

In **Latvia**, the legislative amendments in 2015 introduced work-based learning[128] as one form of vocational training, in addition to crafts apprenticeships which have a long tradition but which are implemented separately from formal vocational education. In **Lithuania**, the 2014-2016 government's action plan for the development of vocational training envisages, among other matters, more on-the-job training, and a broader range of apprenticeship. A new law has been proposed. Both countries carried out pilots to test and to support the introduction of apprenticeships.

A "dual" vocational education training system has been introduced in **Slovakia** in 2015, but interest among potential learners remains limited. This is to be addressed through a campaign on the benefits of the system, planned for 2016. Prior to the introduction of the system, several pilot projects on dual approach were carried out in cooperation with Swiss, Austrian and German partners.

Traineeships[129]

Reforms related to the implementation of the Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (QFT) have accelerated. Eight Member States have

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[127] Apprenticeships that are inspired by the German/Austrian model, are often referred to as "dual" systems.

[128] In Latvia, the term 'work-based learning' (WBL) indicates the new approach in vocational education. It means that the student acquires practical skills and knowledge primarily in a real working environment of the company, and only a relatively small part of the time (in most cases less than half) is accompanied by mastering theoretical knowledge in an educational institution (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014).

[129] Additional information on specific reforms in the field of traineeships can be found in European Commission (2016), staff working document, Applying the quality framework for traineeships.

undertaken legal changes to strengthen the alignment of national frameworks with the QFT since the adoption of the Council Recommendation in 2014. In a further six Member States relevant legislative plans are underway. In addition, in two further Member States recent legislation complies to a large extent with the Council Recommendation.

Most reforms concern limiting the duration of traineeships to six months, clarifying conditions for longer traineeships and assigning mentors to provide guidance and supervise progress during the traineeship. **Bulgaria** has adapted its Labour Code in 2014 by introducing a traineeship employment contract, broadly in line with the QFT. This fixed-term contract for a period between 6 and 12 months which also sets the terms and conditions for remuneration of the trainees, which shall not be lower than the minimum wage. Besides, other Member States have launched ALMP programmes that comply with the QFT.

Brussels region (Belgium): Transition Traineeships

Initiated in May 2013, the transition traineeship is an ALMP measure in the Brussels region of Belgium, targeting young jobseekers and students registered at the PES, whose educational level does not exceed upper secondary education.

Participants can join a company for 3 to 6 months to gather a first professional experience and increase their skills through training on the field. The measure puts a particular focus on participants' coaching and follow-up.

From May 2013 until the end of 2015, 1,753 traineeships were concluded, mostly in four professional areas: administration, commerce and sales support, food industry as well as security and cleaning. The average age of trainees is 22 years.

12 months after the end of the traineeship the employment rate of participants is 64%, compared to 45% among similar young unemployed who did not take part in the programme. Total positive outputs (including employment and return to education) reached 73% for the trainees against 47% in a control group.

2.2.2.5. Supportive measures for labour market integration: enhancing skills (points 11-15)

Measures related to "enhancing skills" are foreseen in most YGIPs (see Figure 14 below), yet the degree of implementation of the Recommendation varies across areas. Pathways to re-renter education as second chance education opportunities for early school leavers and low-skilled youth (point 11) (with full or partial implementation in 75% of Member States) as well as measures addressing skills mismatches (point 12) (in 68% of Member States) are among the points where implementation of the Recommendation is assessed the highest by the EEPO.

However, implementation is seen as more limited as regards encouraging schools to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment (point 14) (67% of Member States with limited or null implementation), the validation of non-formal and informal learning (point 15) (50%) and to a lesser extent ICT skills (point 13) (36%). Such assessment might however also reflect the fact that many of these measures are not delivered primarily in the context of the Youth Guarantee.

Figure 14: Self-reporting from Member States 2016

Are the following measures envisaged in the YGIP?	*Yes (number of Member States)*	*No (number of Member States)*
Second chance education	AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK (26)	CY, HU(2)
Addressing skills mismatches	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK (26)	FI, FR (2)
Promotion of ICT/digital skills	AT, BE, BG,CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK, UK (22)	CY, FI, HU, LT, RO, SE (6)
Entrepreneurship and self-employment	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK (26)	EE, MT (2)
Validation of non-formal and informal learning	AT, BE, BG, CZ, DK, ES, HR, IE, IT, LU, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, UK (16)	CY, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, HU, LT, LV, MT, PL, SK (12)

Source: reporting from Member States, February 2016

Pathways to re-enter education and training and second chance education point 11)

A quality offer of continued education which provides young people with the chance to re-enter education and training or integrate a second-chance education programme can equip early school leavers and low-skilled youth with the skills and qualifications needed for their sustainable labour market integration[130]. Countries which have introduced re-integrative measures, include, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Spain and Sweden.

In **Finland**, an education guarantee secures every compulsory school graduate a place in further education or training (or a preparatory or rehabilitation programme). The principles for granting study places for upper secondary and vocational studies were changed to grant priority to applicants who have completed their basic education and do not hold a study place in general upper secondary and general vocational education[131]. In **Sweden**, education contracts with the PES and the municipality encourage unemployed young people aged 20-24 to complete upper secondary education within the adult education system or at a folk high school. Studies can be combined with a job, work placement or another part-time labour market programme.

In **Luxembourg**, a Second Chance School provides individual support to meet the requirements of NEETs and support their integration back into the mainstream education system. In **Latvia**, second chance education programmes of 1 to 1.5 years were initiated

[130] European Commission (2013), Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education.

[131] Peer Review on the Finnish Youth Guarantee, Host Country Paper.

in 2014 with the support of VET schools for those with very low skills. They are a key feature of the Youth Guarantee's implementation.

Skills mismatches (point 12)

Point 12 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States notes that measures undertaken in the context of a YG scheme should help to address existing skills mismatches and service labour-demand needs.

In October 2014, **Bulgaria** adopted a strategy on higher education including measures to set up an agency to forecast labour market needs. VET reforms are used in some countries (for instance, in both Poland and Croatia a VET reform strategy is currently being drafted) to facilitate, among other things, the acquisition of skills needs of the labour market. In **Portugal**, the Reform of the System of Educational and Professional Guidance planned in the context of the YG increased the coordination of guidance systems provided through schools, the national PES and at the Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education (ANQEP).

In some countries, such as **Greece** or the **United Kingdom,** apprenticeship reforms specifically address skills mismatches by engaging employers in apprenticeship governance. In **Northern Ireland** (**UK**), the government's overarching skills policy framework is the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, known as 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures' (this strategy was launched in 2011 and builds on a previous strategy dating back to 2006). The achievement of the strategic aims and the commitment to increase the skills of the workforce, including through the development of labour market relevant apprenticeships, is delivered through the Skills to Succeed programme.

Digital skills and competences (point 13)

In **Italy**, the initiative 'Growing up Digital' aims to increase digital skills amongst young people enrolled in the YG programme through a 50 hours online training programme, leading to traineeships in companies for some participants. By 15 April 2016, 52.877 young people were registered with the programme. In **Luxembourg,** the ESF-supported project Fit4 Coding has been launched to help young people acquire basic coding and programming skills. In **Malta**, the Alternative Learning Programme foresees 54 hours of ICT classes spread over 10 days, introducing basic internet skills and the use of the internet at work. In **Poland**, ICT/digital skills are addressed in training/workshops offered as part of projects implemented under the YG by Voluntary Labour Corps. In the **UK**, ensuring young people have the necessary ICT/digital skills is an integral part of the Youth Contract and Work Programme preparatory stages.

Promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment (point 14)

Only a fraction of young Europeans interested in becoming entrepreneurs actually go on to do so. A recently published report by Eurofound shows that almost half of young Europeans are interested in becoming entrepreneurs, and over 40% believe it is feasible. However, only 6.5% of young people in work are self-employed, and there are significant national and gender differences in Europe. Indeed, the share of youth self-employment varies from 15% or more in Italy and Greece to 3% or less in Germany and

Denmark. Youth self-employment is also a predominantly male activity as just 33% of young self-employed people in the EU28 in 2013 were women[132].

The number young people aged 20-24 years who are self-employed has stabilised across the EU since 2014, after a sizeable previous decline. Their share in total employment of 20-24 years old has remained constant, with a big increase in Romania versus large declines in the Czech Republic, Greece and Portugal[133].

In recent years, a number of Member States have put in place measures to boost youth entrepreneurship. In 2014, the **Bulgarian** Ministry of Economy launched the project "Technostart" to encourage young entrepreneurs who can win a grant for their start-up company in the fields of IT, research and development and manufacturing[134]. In **Estonia,** several ESF financed measures will be implemented during 2015-2018 to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment among youth across all educational levels. In **Finland**, workshops support young people interested in entrepreneurship as a career option. The objective is to open about 30 workshops by the end of 2016. In **Spain**, a programme by the Chambers of Commerce includes a specific training module on entrepreneurship skills (90 hours) for YG participants. Within the framework of the YG implementation, in 2014-2015 Enterprise **Lithuania** organised events for young people in connection with business start-up, and implemented the 'First business year' service baskets, which resulted in setting up several hundred new undertakings.

With support from the Erasmus+ programme, the transnational project "Innovation clusters for entrepreneurship education"[135] (led by Junior Achievement Young Enterprise Europe – Belgium) will identify and analyse hindrances and drivers, criteria and conditions for enabling young learners to have a practical entrepreneurial experience through mini-companies before leaving school. It will test a scenario of 50% participation among learners between 15 and 20 years old and develop a 'progression model' that should allow practical entrepreneurship experiences to flow from primary to upper secondary education. The transnational project "Youth Start– entrepreneurial challenges in European schools"[136] will develop a European-based approach in entrepreneurship and test a practical experiential learning programme at compulsory school level.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning (point 15)

Sixteen Member States foresee arrangements for the assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning (in the context of the YGIP) and almost two-thirds of PES provide skills assessment and validation of prior learning for young people[137].

With the Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, Member States committed to put in place validation arrangements by the end of 2018, and most countries are overall making progress towards this objective. The further development of validation policies and instruments at national level, in line

[132] Eurofound (2015), Youth Entrepreneurship in Europe: Values, attitudes, polices.
[133] Calculations based on LFS Eurostat.
[134] European Youth Forum, August 2015.
[135] http://www.jaeurope.org/education/initiatives/41-innovation-cluster-for-entrepreneurship-education.html
[136] http://www.youthstartproject.eu/
[137] PES study on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

with the Council Recommendation, thus supports the implementation of national youth guarantee schemes and could be better exploited in this context.

In **Bulgaria**, the legal framework for validation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning was developed in the context of the ongoing VET reform. In **Romania**, in the context of the YGIP, those unemployed for more than 6 months are now eligible for an assessment of their skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. In the **UK**, accreditation of prior learning is built into the Youth Contract and Work Programme, and apprenticeships also have provision for recognising previous experience, which can contribute towards the accumulation of credits.

2.2.2.6. Supporting measures for labour market intervention: labour market-related measures (points 16-20)

The Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee recognises that institutional features of the labour market are important determinants of labour market outcomes[138]. Labour market-related measures as outlined in the Council Recommendation are foreseen in most YGIPs (see Figure 15 below), yet their degree of implementation varies across areas. As detailed below, implementation has been strong in the area of wage and recruitment subsidies (point 16 and point 17), average/low in the area of start-up support (point 19) and the reactivation of young people who drop out of activation schemes (point 20), and weak in the area of the promotion of labour mobility (point 18).

Figure 15: Self-reporting from Member States 2016

Are the following measures envisaged in the YGIP?	*Yes*	*No*
Wage and recruitment subsidies	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK (25)	IT, MT, UK (3)
Promotion of labour mobility	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK (24)	EE, EL, MT, NL (4)
Start-up support	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK (24)	DK, EE, FR, MT (4)

Source: reporting from Member States, February 2016

The reduction of non-wage labour costs (point 16) and wage and recruitment subsidies, (point 17)

Employment is among the key type of offers under the Youth Guarantee. Member States make notably use of a wide variety of active labour market measures strengthening both labour supply and labour demand. Boosting the demand for young people’s labour may

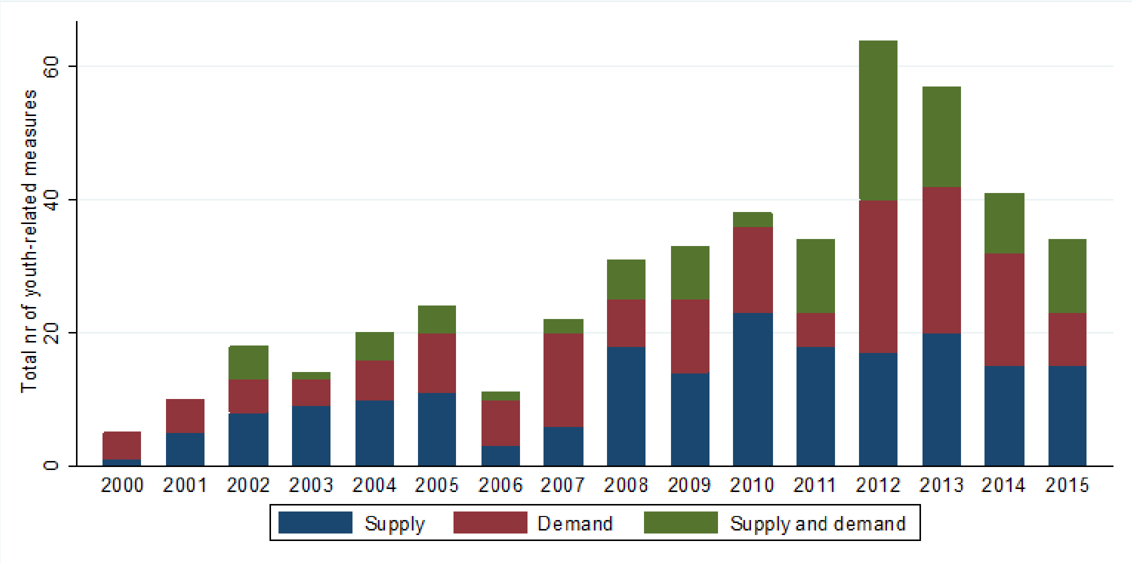
[138] Osterkamp, R. (2016), "International Experience on Labor Market Reforms", CES ifo Spring 2016

be necessary to successfully integrate those furthest from the labour market; these measures can play a countercyclical role in times of crisis and help address some 'structural' aspects of youth unemployment.

There is now some evidence that well-targeted hiring subsidies are among the ALMP measures that can have a positive effect on employment, in particular for youth if their design is well targeted[139]. Depending on the quality of the placement measure, such intervention can significantly boost skills and self-esteem and improve the employment prospects of low skilled youth[140]. Temporary public work schemes are not suitable for the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market and should not be considered for quality offers.

Indeed, demand-side measures have been central in Member States' response to the Youth Guarantee (see Figure 16 below).

Figure 16: Number of youth related labour market reforms, classified by labour demand/labour supply measure[141]



Source: European Commission, LABREF database

Compliance with point 16 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States, pertaining to the reduction of non-wage labour costs, and point 17, on the use of wage and recruitment subsidies, of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is reported as full

[139] Stimulating job demand: the design of effective hiring subsidies in Europe - EEPO Review (01/07/2014) http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7713

[140] Carcillo,S., et al. (2015), "NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis: Challenges and Policies", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 164, OECD Publishing, Paris.

[141] The following classification has been applied:

Supply side measures: ALMPs (training, most special schemes for youth, Public Employment Services, other ALMP measures not elsewhere classified); immigration/mobility measures; unemployment, disability and other welfare related benefit measures.

Demand side measures: ALMPs (direct job creation schemes, employment subsidy schemes, special schemes for disabled, some special schemes for youth); Labour taxation; Employment Protection Legistration; wage setting; working time measures.

Special schemes for youth consist predominantly of work-based learning/apprenticeship/traineeship measures, for which a training component is assumed but for which employers most often also receive a subsidy.

or partial in 75% of Member States, even if the quality of such schemes can be further enhanced (see Section 5.3.2).

Since 2015 in **Croatia**, an amendment of the Law on Contributions enables employers who offer young people under 30 years a permanent employment contract to be exempted from the calculation and payment of contributions for health insurance and employment contributions for a period of 5 years. **Estonia** launched ‘My First Job’ in 2015 which provides a one-year wage subsidy and coverage of training expenses during a two-year period. The measure targets young unemployed aged 17-29 with low educational attainment and lack of sufficient work experience who have not been able to find employment on their own during the first months of unemployment. In **Ireland**, JobsPlus Youth, an employment subsidy of either EUR 7,500 or EUR 10,000 over a two-year period is paid to employers to encourage the hiring of young jobseekers who have been unemployed for more than 4 months. In **Lithuania**, employers hiring youth registered with the PES can receive a reimbursement of 50% of the gross wage for up to 6 months. Priority is given to long-term unemployed youth, young parents of 2 children, and youth from families with two or more members registered with the PES. Sanctions are applied to employers who dismiss subsidised workers within six months after the subsidy period. In 2015, the measure involved 28% of all ALMP participants aged 16-29. Through the programme "Mentoring schemes for young people", **Slovenia** has promoted intergenerational transfer of experience, knowledge and skills and enabled companies to systematically introduce new employees into the work process. In **Italy**, employers hiring a trainee enrolled in the Youth Guarantee scheme can receive a subsidy up to EUR 12,000, according to the level of profiling.

In **Poland**, an amendment to the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions in 2014 introduced new support measures, including vouchers for training, traineeships, relocation, as well as an employment voucher enabling a refund of employment costs after 12 months (together with social security contributions equivalent to the amount of unemployment benefits for unemployed persons up to 30 years of age). Launched in 2012, the **French** 'Jobs for the Future' (*Emplois d'avenir*) scheme aimed to deliver 100,000 subsidised jobs in 2013 for low-skilled young people aged 16-25 (up to 30 years for young people with a disability) living in disadvantaged areas[142]. Employment contract were 1 to 3 years and dedicated to the non-profit sector. Most importantly, perhaps, the PES was involved in the selection of employers who could partake in the scheme on the basis of the quality of the job proposed (including the existence of an important training and mentoring component).

Financial and fiscal incentives play an important role in encouraging employers to create new employment opportunities for youth but also in providing placements in apprenticeship and traineeship schemes. In **France**, a fiscal reform in 2014 aimed at boosting the capacity of enterprises and training centres to develop apprenticeships and on-the-job training. The fiscal reform allows a re-deployment of EUR 280 million into the apprenticeship system. A new law also reduced the number of actors collecting the apprenticeship tax[143]. In **Sweden**, a new employment law from 2014 facilitates salaries for upper secondary school apprenticeships. In **Hungary**, the conditions of providing apprenticeships have been made significantly more favourable for companies, and financial support is given for SMEs which employ recent vocational graduates who had

[142] Peer Review on ‘Emplois d’avenir’ – ‘Jobs for the future’ scheme, Paris, France, 10-11 February 2014; see http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=fr&catId=1047&newsId=2028&furtherNews=yes
[143] The Sapin Law of 5 March 2014.

participated in apprenticeship training. The new policies announced by the **United Kingdom** government include imposing a 0.5% charge on employment costs of businesses to fund an apprenticeship levy, starting from April 2017. Employers will be able to recoup the levy only if they use the fund for training apprentices. This is expected to give a push to delivering 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020. The **Romanian** Youth Guarantee scheme provides various subsidies for apprenticeships and traineeships as well as funds from the unemployment insurance budget for employers entering into insertion contracts with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the **Czech Republic**, the PES launched in July 2013, 14 regional projects under the title 'Professional Traineeships for Young People under 30'. Built on a close partnership between the PES and regional employers, subsidised traineeship contracts (of 3 to 12 months) are proposed to school graduates with little or no work experience. The selection of trainees is carried out collaboratively by the PES and the employer.

Support for labour mobility (point 18)

Fact-finding evidence[144] shows that while many Member States have supported measures to foster in-country geographical mobility, fewer have invested in measures for intra-EU labour mobility. In this respect, they rely to a large extent on the EURES network services[145]. There are few measures on mobility besides EURES and most Member States did not develop any specific mobility activity for the young in the context of the Youth Guarantee's implementation, beyond EURES usual services. Some countries offer direct financial support and tailor made services for in-country (22 Member States) and/or intra-EU labour mobility (17 Member States).

For in-country mobility, all countries have either a legal or operational framework (acts, guidelines, information portals). In some Member States, jobseekers are obliged (by law) to become mobile within their country when there are no job opportunities in their region (AT, BE (WL), DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, LT, SI, SE). In 18 Member States specific provisions define the maximum acceptable geographical distance applicable to any in-country mobile worker. In general, support for in-country mobility can take different forms (e.g. support to cover transport costs, relocation costs, provision of information on nation-wide vacancies and other flanking measures targeting job search and job matching, vocational training or self-employment). Mobility promotion efforts are not targeted to young people and are not specific to the YG in most cases.

Regarding support for intra-EU labour mobility, services are essentially made available through EURES and these are not necessarily sufficiently well-known to the public[146]. Apart from the EURES services, 9 Member States have tailor-made schemes for young people (AT, BE, DE, ES, FR, LU, SE, PT, UK), with some countries having more than one scheme available[147], but the trend is that there are no systematic EU-wide schemes focusing on job work placements for young people (the focus being more often on education or youth work and voluntary activities). The geographical scope of these schemes involves in general a small number of countries. The schemes are tailored to different types of work placements (jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational

144 Survey "National services, measures and support for both in country and intra-EU geographical mobility", for European Commission by Deloitte Consulting, April 2015.

145 https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage

146 https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage

147 Study on the YFEJ mobility scheme and options for future EU measures on youth intra-EU labour mobility, Draft Interim Report, Ecorys UK, March 2016.

training or short term training) and their duration is typically less than 6 months. The most recent intra-EU mobility schemes are the 2013-2016 "Job of My Life" programme led by Germany (apprenticeships) and the ESF-funded project for jobs abroad led by Spain since 2014 (both involving EURES services and staff).

The EURES services in Member States are actively participating in the EU job mobility scheme for young people, "Your first EURES Job" (YFEJ), either as lead applicants (FR, IT, SE) or as co-applicants (involving in total 15 Member States). Their activities cover the EU-28 countries, as well as Norway and Iceland. The **Italian** YG programme encourages the intraregional and international mobility of youth, and YFEJ is being tested as part of the national YG scheme to provide work opportunities to unemployed young people abroad. Given the small-scale dimension of YFEJ the overall number of placements is limited as compared to the needs of the most vulnerable young people across Europe. The **Romanian** YGIP provides specific mobility bonuses, though take up remains low. In **Portugal**, the YG includes three specific initiatives for international mobility: 1) EURES Traineeships and Placement, 2) ‘Your First EURES Job’, and 3) ‘The Job of My Life’. The target numbers of participants of these measures are very low (a total of 280 for 2014).

Overall, compliance with point 18 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is assessed as limited or null in 61% of Member States and remains one of the most challenging aspects of the YG’s implementation.

Your First EURES Job

For intra-EU labour mobility, the Commission tested a mobility scheme called "Your first EURES job" (YFEJ) during three consecutive budget years (2011-2013) which aimed to help young EU citizens aged 18-30 to find a **job, traineeship or apprenticeship** in another EU Member State (remunerated, minimum 6-month contract). Priority was given to unemployed young people. It also supported employers to find workers in other EU countries for their unfilled vacancies. The scheme **provides information and support measures from pre- to post placement, combined with financial incentives** (for interview trip or relocation cost, language courses, recognition of qualifications or integration course by the employer (SME).

Between 2011 and 2014, a total of 15 projects were selected through three calls for proposals. The projects taken together resulted in **4,251 job placements** with an overall budget around EUR 12 million. Other relevant indicators on support given are the following: 1,733 job interviews in another Member, 607 language trainings and 405 integration trainings by SMEs.

Since 2014, YFEJ continues to be implemented in the framework of the 2014-2020 EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)[148] as a 'targeted mobility scheme' (TMS). A TMS is a tailor-made initiative to address the needs of specific target groups, economic sectors, occupations or countries. The TMS-YFEJ target groups are young nationals aged 18-35 and employers from the European Economic Area (EEA, i.e. the EU 28 countries, Norway and Iceland). **YFEJ can be an extension or a supplementary measure of any national Youth Guarantee scheme to support intra-**

[148] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081.

EU youth labour mobility.

Three projects are currently being led by Italy, Sweden and France respectively, involving co-applicant partners from 13 Member States (IE, CZ, DE, FR, ES, FI, SI, RO, HR, DK, PT, CY and BE-Brussels Capital Region). Activities carried out by Italy and Sweden combined resulted in 802 placements in another Member States in the period February – December 2015 (799 jobs, 2 traineeships and 1 apprenticeship).

Start up support and awareness of opportunities related to self-employment (point 19)

Support to entrepreneurship is provided to young people as YG interventions by the PES in a majority of Member States[149], in several cases as part of distinct programmes or projects. In **Cyprus**, a scheme for strengthening youth entrepreneurship was introduced in February 2015, subsidising projects with up to EUR 140,000 in manufacturing and EUR 100 000 in e-commerce, services and tourism. In **Italy**, the financial instrument "SELFIE-employment" was launched in March 2016 with support from the Youth Employment Initiative to enhance self-employment among young people enrolled through micro-credit (up to EUR 25,000) and small loans (up to EUR 50,000). Access to credit is conditional to participation to trainings supervised by the regional Chamber of Commerce. In **Poland**, grants for business start-ups by the unemployed within the framework of PES measures and loans from the Bank of National Economy are foreseen in the context of the Youth Guarantee. In **Spain**, the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Strategy 2013-2016 foresees among others rebates to employers' social security contributions, flat rate for young entrepreneurs and new contractual modalities. A recent Eurofound report on start-up support for young people[150] points to the lack of robust policy impact evaluations and the many shortcomings of those evaluation practices deployed.

Overall, compliance with point 19 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is reported as full or partial in half (54%) of Member States, indicating that more could be done in this area.

Reactivation of young people who drop out of activation schemes (point 20)

Reactivating young people who drop out of activation schemes and no longer access benefits appears as a major challenge for Member States, which partly results from limited monitoring capacity and tracking. Indeed, while the majority of PES have established processes to follow-up on young people once they have entered employment or training, the scope of follow-up is not comprehensive and monitoring remains relatively weak. More specifically, only one-in-five PES report following-up on young people who drop out of activation schemes or who no longer access benefits[151]. Overall, point 20 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is among the points where implementation is assessed as low by the EEPO, with full or partial compliance reported in only half (47%) of Member States.

[149] European Network of Public Employment Services, Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee, July 2015.
[150] Eurofound (2016), Start-up support for young people in the EU: From implementation to evaluation.
[151] European Network of Public Employment Services, Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee, July 2015.

Despite these weaknesses, a number of Member States are investing in the **prevention and reintegration of young people who drop out of activation schemes**. In **Finland**, for instance, drop-out prevention is an integral part of the development of YG measures. Similarly, in **Sweden**, a young person dropping out of the YG scheme, due to prolonged inactivity or other reasons (such as misconduct) can be re-integrated into the programme after consultation with caseworkers at the PES office.

In a number of countries, **outreach activities also target young people who have dropped out of activation schemes**. For instance, in **Germany**, as part of the ESF pilot programme for the local empowerment of young people (JUGEND STÄRKEN im Quartier) running from 2015 to 2018, youth social welfare offices in selected cities are piloting measures (e.g. via street work or mobile counselling) to reach out to disadvantaged youth and 'training drop-outs' with the objective to prepare them to return to vocational education and training, vocational preparation schemes or employment. Similarly, in **Hungary**, while practices vary across the country, in certain regions, PES contact young people who have dropped out of an ALMP via phone and mail. In **Latvia**, the flagship initiative of the Latvian YG, the ‘Know and Do’ project, (*for more information see box in Section 2.2.2.3 Activation: personalised guidance and action planning*) which is aimed at activating 5,260 NEETs, also seeks to re-activate those young people who have dropped out of activation schemes.

2.2.2.7. Assessment and continuous improvement of schemes (points 24-26)

The YG is a long-term structural reform, the design and implementation of which requires strong monitoring and evaluation systems and mutual learning activities in order to improve its design and delivery and ensure an efficient use of resources as well as a positive returns on investment. Similarly, the strengthening of the capacity of all YG stakeholders – including of young people and/or youth organisations – involved in designing, implementing and evaluating a YG scheme is central to establishing a facilitating environment and eliminating obstacles that would hinder its implementation.

While progress has been made in these three areas to overcome existing obstacles in, much remains to be done. Indeed, the promotion of monitoring and evaluation (point 24), as well as mutual learning (point 25) and the strengthening of stakeholders’ capacity (point 26) are among the points where implementation of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States is assessed the lowest by the EEPO, with null or limited compliance in respectively 39 %, 50 % and 57 % of Member States.

Monitoring and evaluation of measures under YG schemes (point 24)

Monitoring measures under national YG schemes emerged an important challenge at the time of the Youth Guarantee’s introduction, as many Member States did not have the necessary structures or processes in place. Since 2013 a number of Member States have taken steps towards strengthening their monitoring structures and evaluating specific measures of their national YG scheme. At a broader level, Member States monitor their national YG schemes through the common Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee (*see Section 2.1.2*). Since 2015 (covering the reference year 2014) all Member States submit annual data on the implementation of their YG scheme to the European Commission.

In **Slovenia**, a national Youth Guarantee Implementation working group was established to monitor the YG implementation and give young people a chance to be involved in the creation, programming, implementation and monitoring of activities. It allows for improved cooperation between key ministries, regular contact between the government and youth organisations, and faster problem identification. In **Hungary**, a new working group of the National Youth Expert Forum was set up in June 2015, to involve relevant stakeholders to monitor the Youth Guarantee. It comprises, beside governmental actors, representatives of non-governmental stakeholders (such as the National Youth Council and social partners).

In **Spain**, a Monitoring and Evaluation Delegate Commission for the Spanish Youth Guarantee Scheme was established by a Royal Decree[152]. The multi-stakeholder Commission – made up of representative of both national administration and autonomous regions - is responsible for the full evaluation of the YG scheme. Within the Commission, 3 technical Working Groups are responsible for: developing a national YG Information System and a registration database of all young people enrolled in scheme, identifying and promoting good practices and pilot projects; and designing YG indicators. Similarly, a single registration and information system (a platform) has been created to collect data regarding the YG – registrations (number and profile) as well as the number, type and quality of offers made – with the aim of coordinating the work of all involved stakeholders, avoiding duplication and blurring of responsibilities, and boosting commitment. Moreover, once fully operational, the platform should allow for an analysis of what works better for which categories of young people. Specifically, it will enable analyses to be carried out to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the specific mix of measures offered by the regions and the Chambers of Commerce.

In **Ireland**, data on post-programme outcomes are available from a database that records all the interaction of clients with the PES – the Jobseekers Longitudinal Dataset (JLD) – and preliminary figures for 2014 have been supplied under the Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee. The JLD will be the basis for more systematic counter-factual evaluations that will, where possible, capture age-differentiated impacts and inform analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the measures under the Youth Guarantee scheme. A review of overall progress is being undertaken in the first half of 2016 (with results due to become available in 2017) and will cover the examination of uptake of programmes intended to support the Youth Guarantee scheme.

In **Sweden**, for all young persons that are registered at the PES, information on their background (skills, experience, education etc.), activities/programmes undertaken, and results achieved are recorded. Similarly, a follow-up survey of all young people who have received services is done annually. In 2013, the Swedish National Audit Office (*Riksrevisionen*) carried out an evaluation on the PES work with youth. Areas for improvement highlighted in this study included: better outreach work, more focus on building relationships with employers, better tailoring support to individual needs, and establishing more structured cooperation between the PES and municipalities[153].

In **Latvia**, **Portugal and Spain**, a joint EC-ILO action launched in 2015 and currently ongoing aims at enhancing national capabilities to design, implement, and monitor and evaluate the Youth Guarantee's implementation (see Section 2.3.2). In **Italy**, results of

[152] Royal Degree establishing the national youth guarantee.
[153] http://www.riksrevisionen.se/PageFiles/17920/RiR_2013_6_Rapport_anpassad.pdf

the YG's monitoring are published weekly on the scheme's portal. In **Finland**, several independent studies have evaluated the YG's implementation. In **Malta**, an independent research entity was commissioned in 2015 to evaluate the implementation of the NEETs Activation Scheme and a number of other national measures under the YG scheme have been evaluated in relation to their cost-effectiveness.

Despite these improvements, much remains to be done to overcome existing technical, legal and other obstacles and ensuring a complete set of follow-up data[154]. Difficulties typically arise as a result of limited data exchange between various institutional actors, challenges associated with measuring the NEET population[155], and a lack of capacity to follow-up with users after they benefited from an intervention[156].

Mutual learning at national, regional and local levels (point 25)

The Recommendation highlights the importance of mutual learning at national, regional and local levels between all parties involved in combating youth unemployment.

In this regard, progress has been made in the design of **pilot projects for testing newly designed measures under the YG** (for instance in AT, DK, EE, FI, FR, MT, RO, NL). In France, lessons learnt from the pilot programme "Guarantee for Youth" (*see Section 2.2.2.3*) have been disseminated through a series of mutual learning activities within the Ministry of employment and the national network of locally based one-stop-shops for young people ('local missions').

Similarly, mutual learning activities take place on an ad-hoc basis in a number of Member States, whether through workshops or multi-stakeholder meetings at the regional and local levels, as is currently in place in **Lithuania** and **Poland**.

In a number of countries, **PES have an important role to play in supporting mutual learning** across regional and local offices. In Belgium, Synerjob (the forum supporting cooperation and exchanges of practices between the four PES) organised a one-day seminar on the theme 'NEETs need us' on April 23 2015. Likewise in **Hungary**, mutual learning activities are organised between local PES offices within a same region (cross-regional cooperation remains, however, limited). In the **Czech Republic**, a regional project has been implemented by the PES targeting exclusively registered jobseekers (including young people) living in socially excluded localities of the Usti Region. Activities included personalised guidance, regular and psychological counselling, soft skills development, and training and work placement opportunities. Thanks to a process of mutual learning across PES offices, the project has since been successfully transferred to Ostrava Region[157].

Institutionalising mutual learning through established processes and procedures supports the continued improvement in the design and delivery of the Youth Guarantee. In this regard, **a number of Member States have created shared platforms or databases of**

[154] Key messages on the way forward for the YG post-2016, incorporating EMCO's report on the state of play of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, ST 6154 2016 INIT.
[155] Eurofound (2015), Social Inclusion of Young People.
[156] For instance, half of PES (13 of 29) monitor young people after they leave the register of PES, PES study on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.
[157] http://www.esfcr.cz/projekty/socialne-vyloucene-lokality-usteckeho-kraje

good practices showcasing successful measures, the majority of which are accessible online (BG, DK, FI). Similarly, national councils/steering groups responsible for the implementation of the YG serve as platforms for mutual learning between national level institutions (EE, ES, HR, IE, LV, UK). In **Croatia**, mutual learning is supported through close cooperation among members of the YGIP Council, in charge of monitoring and evaluating measures under the YG scheme. Mutual learning is supported in some countries by legislative provisions establishing fixed processes and ensuring dedicated resources, or dedicated 'transfer agencies' as exist in **Germany** since 2013 as part of the programme 'Learning in the local environment[158]', aimed at providing guidance to interested stakeholders at the local level based on prior successful experiences.

Mutual learning across Member States in the area of apprenticeship reform

In the field of apprenticeship, beyond the national arena, **Member States are working together to learn from each other and share good practices**. In December 2012, Germany and 6 Member States (EL, ES, IT, LV, PT, SK,) which were planning reforms to their vocational training systems, signed, with the support of the European Commission, the "Memorandum on Cooperation in vocational Education and Trianing in Europe". The Memorandum contains concrete measures to develop a dual vocational training system, inspired by Germany, in these countries.

In 2015, Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg signed an agreement on strengthening cross-border collaboration in the area of apprenticeships. This agreement should help young people access apprenticeships easier by allowing them to have part of the apprenticeship in the education system of one country and part of the apprenticeship in a firm of another country. Such an agreement is particularly beneficial for Luxembourg, which due to the small size of the country cannot offer certain diplomas in the national education system.

In 2015, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, with EU support, including financial support, formed a Baltic Alliance for Apprenticeships in order to co-operate for the promotion of apprenticeships and work-based learning. The Nordic Countries (SE, FI, DK, Norway and Iceland) worked together in a 3-year project "work-based learning in the Nordic countries", financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. One of the aims of the project was to address common challenges in work-based learning and apprenticeships, and to exchange good practice on quality in work-based learning.

A Western Balkan Alliance for Work-Based Learning was created in the framework of the Berlin Process (on 18 May 2016) in order to promote greater cooperation between the public and the private sectors. Under this Alliance, the EU countries Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia cooperate together with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Building stakeholders' capacity (point 26)

In many countries, stakeholders' capacity is strengthened by 'doing', that is, through the day-to-day process of working together to design, implement and evaluate measures under the YG scheme. This is most evident in the case of new partnerships which support the design, delivery and monitoring of YG schemes and individual measures (*see Section*

[158] http://www.transferagenturen.de/129.php

2.2.2.1). National level partnerships in the form of multi-stakeholder YG bodies and locally-based partnerships serve to strengthen stakeholders' capacity to deliver services and programmes in an integrated manner. For instance, in **Latvia**, various stakeholders have strengthened their capacity to work collaboratively thanks to the close partnership between the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Education and Science (who share responsibility for the national YG scheme) and the creation of a Youth Guarantee Advisory Council that brings together, state, social partners and youth organisations.

Systematic efforts or resources specifically dedicated to strengthening the capacity of YG partners have been introduced in only a few countries. **Croatia** has taken steps in this direction; educational workshops, trainings and seminars organised by the Lifelong Career Guidance Centres as well as various Chambers aim to support capacity building among stakeholders involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the YG scheme. Similarly, in **Denmark**, efforts have been made to improve the capacity of stakeholders in the design and implementation of evaluation methods through written manuals and regular meetings of actors involved at national and regional levels.

Because of their central role as main YG provider, **many Member States have sought to strengthen the PES's capacity to implement the YG**. Self-reporting from PES shows that they are addressing previously identified weaknesses in YG implementation, focusing particularly on improving communication strategies, increasing vacancy notification capacity and strengthening the evaluation of services[159]. Regarding the latter area, a majority of PES have established processes to facilitate monitoring of YG measures placed within their remit, two-thirds have established targets for service delivery and over three-quarters indicate capacity to monitor how many young people receive an offer within 4 months. However, less than half declare having capacity to monitor young people that leave the employment register and PES capacity to evaluate effectiveness of their YG service offers remains weak and underdeveloped. Overall, findings indicate that there is potential for further improvement of PES capacity in the three areas mentioned above. Looking to the future, PES also need to widen partnership engagement (see Section 2.2.2.1) and to strengthen outreach activity aimed at disadvantaged NEETs (see Section 2.2.2.2) to ensure they effectively fulfil their role as key players in YG implementation.

As mentioned above, in **Latvia**, **Portugal and Spain**, **a joint EC-ILO action launched in 2015 and currently ongoing aims** (I) to strengthen national capacity for the implementation, monitoring of performance and assessment of results of measures implemented as part of Youth Guarantee schemes, and (ii) develop and implement quality apprenticeship systems and programmes through tripartite social dialogue (see Section 2.3.2). In particular, technical assistance is provided in the form of seminars and training workshops, guidelines and training materials, the application of good practices and policy toolkits.

2.3. At EU level

This section reviews actions taken at EU level by the Commission, other EU institutions and Member States, as well as by international organisations.

[159] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

2.3.1. *EU support to implementation*

The Council recommendation includes 7 points addressed to the European Commission that outline its role in supporting the Youth Guarantee.

2.3.1.1. Funding (points 1 and 2)

Substantial EU financial support to Youth Guarantee's implementation is provided by the ESF and the YEI. During the 2014-2020 programming period, both sources will directly invest at least EUR 12.7 billion in youth labour market integration measures. In addition, the ESF and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) invest considerable resources in modernising labour market institutions and education systems reform which will also impact youth employment. For instance, the total allocation by Member State to education measures, including higher education, amounts to over EUR 27 billion, with young people likely to be the main beneficiaries of this funding. Further to that, a total of EUR 6.24 billion from the ERDF are planned for investment in education infrastructure, with young people being the main beneficiaries of the funding.

The EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), as well as funds from the ESF Technical Assistance, managed directly by the European Commission, has supported policy developments and learning related to Youth Guarantee schemes, as well as young people's mobility and access to micro-finance.

Besides, since 2013, the European Investment Bank (EIB) provides the 'Skills and Jobs – Investing for Youth' programme, consisting of two pillars: 'Investing in Skills' and 'Jobs for Youth'. 'Investing in Skills' is aimed at investments into human capital (e.g. job-related skills and on-the-job-training, as well as vocational training, student loans and mobility programmes).[160] During the 2013-2014 period, the EIB signed almost EUR 5 bn via the 'Investing in Skills' pillar of the EIB programme. In 2015, a further EUR 1.9 bn in signatures was added. 'Jobs for Youth' provides access to finance linked to the employment of young people in SMEs. Between July 2013 and December 2015, over EUR 26 bn was allocated to beneficiary SMEs.

Some Erasmus+ support targets countries working together in the field of apprenticeships. In 2014, through a specific call, 10 projects were selected in which National Authorities cooperate on apprenticeship reforms. One example of these projects is a Danish-led project in which 5 leading apprenticeship countries in Europe are producing a resource base for approaches to dual vocational education and training, including a digital toolbox. In 2015, a new Erasmus+ call was launched, targeted at strengthening support structures for SMEs engaging in apprenticeships. 12 projects were selected for building partnerships (between, for instance, businesses, VET providers and intermediary organisations) with the aim of getting more SMEs involved in apprenticeships, and 4 projects of European level networks / organisations were selected to support SMEs through their national members or affiliates. These projects will run from 2016 to 2018. Still another specific call is foreseen to be launched later in 2016 for projects on partnerships between business and providers of vocational training. These projects will run from 2017 to 2019.

[160] For more information: http://www.eib.org/projects/priorities/investing-for-youth/index.htm?lang=en

On the initiative of the European Parliament, the Commission is financing a pilot project on long-term mobility for apprentices in 2016. The objective of this call is to enable young apprentices to develop their skills and enhance their employability, whilst also strengthening their sense of European citizenship. This will be done by testing different approaches for putting in place the infrastructure as well as the institutional and contractual frameworks (e.g. developing the service structures for the organisation of travel & accommodation, language courses, learning agreements, practical welcome information packs, coaching methods, insurance arrangements) necessary to organise the placements of apprentices from departure to return. Two selected projects will start implementation in autumn 2016 and will run until 2018. The projects have three main action lines: firstly, these will set out to test whether sufficient demand and uptake exists among relevant stakeholders for developing long-term (6-12 months) trans-national apprentice mobility placement schemes. Secondly, the projects will seek to identify obstacles (legal, practical, institutional, academic, etc.) that prevent apprentices from carrying out longer term stays abroad. Finally, lessons will be drawn to disseminate good practices and success factors on long-term work placements for apprentices.

2.3.1.2. Commission support for implementation, mutual learning, and the exchange of good practices (points 3 and 4)

Policy support and mutual learning activities helped Member States put in place the right infrastructures and measures. Three meetings of Heads of State or Government were organised in Berlin (3 July 2013), Paris (12 November 2013), and Milan (8 October 2014). A network of national **Youth Guarantee coordinators**[161] was established and meets twice a year to ensure a direct link between the Commission and the Member States' lead authority in charge of establishing and managing the YG. Until the end of 2014, the Commission provided **an advisory service on apprenticeship and traineeship schemes,** including research, events as well as a helpdesk providing strategic, operational and policy advice for policy makers, ESF Managing Authorities (MAs), relevant national and regional agencies, social partners or their members.

The Youth Guarantee has also been a priority on the agenda of the **European Network of Public Employment Services**, contributing to building PES capacity to provide tailored services to young people. The Network organises a range of mutual learning activities and undertakes annual monitoring of PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee. In 2014-2016, it published, among other reports, a “Catalogue of measures for implementation of the Youth Guarantee”, “PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs” and two report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee[162]. Furthermore, in 2016 a toolkit has been developed as part of the Mutual Learning Activities of the European Network of PES, which aims at providing concrete guidance and tools for PES to assess and address outreach to NEETs. This toolkit supports PES to draft and implement an Action Plan, thereby developing new tools and measures. The toolkit can however also be used to review and refine existing practices, while taking into account wider organisational and contextual factors.

The European Employment Strategy’s **Mutual Learning Programme** was also mobilised, with the publication of relevant practices on the programme’s database and

[161] http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11490&langId=en

[162] European Network of Public Employment Services (2015), Report on PES implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

the organisation of five peer reviews bringing together practitioners, experts and policy makers, a high level exchange at ministerial level, and two learning exchanges.

- Belgium: the European Commission organised a working and learning seminar on Practical support for the design and implementation of Youth Guarantee Schemes, 17-18/10/13[163].
- Netherlands: Youth unemployment: how to prevent and tackle it, 25/11/13
- France: Jobs for the Future, 10/02/14
- Finland: Youth Guarantee, 18/09/14
- Netherlands: Learning exchange on cooperation at local level in the fight against youth unemployment 28/10/2014
- Sweden: High level exchange on youth employment 18/02/15
- Norway: Targeting NEETs, 24/09/15
- France: Guarantee for Youth, 7/04/16.

In addition, the European Commission organised EU-wide events in Brussels for the exchange between, *inter alia*, national Youth Guarantee Coordinators, public employment services, education authorities, ESF MAs, youth representatives and international organisations:

- A dissemination conference of the 18 one-year pilot projects under an European Parliament Preparatory Action to showcase the outcomes and lessons learnt, 08/05/15[164];
- A high-level conference "Youth Guarantee – Making it Happen" under the patronage of President Barroso, attended by more than 350 participants, 08/04/14[165];
- A learning seminar to enhance knowledge on the evaluation of apprenticeship and traineeship schemes for those responsible for setting up and running schemes, 04-05/02/14[166];
- A working and learning seminar on Practical support for the design and implementation of Youth Guarantee Schemes, 17-18/10/13[167].
- A conference to exchange good practice in setting up and running apprenticeship and traineeship schemes and identify the need for assistance by the Member States, 05-06/06/13[168]

Cedefop and the European Commission organised two conferences to support partnerships wishing to apply in the framework of the specific Erasmus+ calls on apprenticeships (see Section 2.3.1.1.):

- Engaging SMEs in apprenticeships - 2nd European Apprenticeship Cedefop Conference (Thessaloniki, 9-10 November 2015)
- European Apprenticeship Conference - Steering Partnerships for growth (Thessaloniki, 7-8 May 2014)

New approaches on partnerships were tested and their findings widely disseminated. At the request of the European Parliament, the European Commission directly managed **18 pilot projects** in 7 Member States to test local partnerships for

[163] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1072&eventsId=931&furtherEvents=yes
[164] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1099&eventsId=1051&furtherEvents=yes
[165] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1079&eventsId=978&furtherEvents=yes
[166] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=943&furtherEvents=yes)
[167] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1072&eventsId=931&furtherEvents=yes
[168] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=891&furtherEvents=yes)

Youth Guarantee schemes (European Parliament Preparatory Action) and to provide Member States with practical experience for implementing their national Youth Guarantee schemes. Launched between August and December 2013 for one year in Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom, the projects directly involved 3,300 young people mainly from disadvantaged backgrounds. A further 1,600 young people benefited from the supporting activities, such as career and job fairs and needs assessments[169].

Major developments also took place in the context of the EU's education and youth policy. In the context of the **European Union Work Plan for Youth** for 2014-2015, the Member States and the Commission established an expert group to define the specific contribution of youth work and non-formal and informal learning to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment. The group started work in October 2014 and presented its findings at the end of 2015 including an overview of challenges, good practices examples, policy messages and recommendations[170]. The study '**Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe** – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education'[171] published in 2014 looked into the successful second-chance schemes to identify their key lessons and success factors. The ET2020 Working Group on Schools Policy worked from February 2014 until November 2015 on defining a **whole school approach to tackling early school leaving through collaborative approaches**. Its Policy Messages[172] describe the concept of the whole school approach through five relevant interconnected areas: school governance, learner support, teachers, parents and families, stakeholder involvement. The Working Group also gathered resources for school stakeholders to help them implement collaborative approaches within and beyond school – and developed a European Toolkit for Schools[173], which proposes documents and examples of measures implemented at school, local or national levels to improve school success for all.

In the field of apprenticeships, in June 2013, the Commission published the document **'Work-Based Learning in Europe - Practices and Policy Pointers**'[174]. The publication analyses successful work-based learning models, encourages more and better work-based learning (including apprenticeships), and is intended as a tool for policymakers and practitioners working on modernising and reforming vocational education and training systems. In the framework of this study, an expert workshop was organised on 28 June 2012 in Brussels.

The **working groups on Vocational Education and Training, operating in the framework of the "Education and Training 2020"**, composed of the representatives of Member States, Candidate Countries, EFTA countries and social partners, and supported by Cedefop and ETF, provide peer advice to countries in introducing and reforming apprenticeship systems. In 2015, such a working group produced the report "**High-**

[169] European Commission (2015), Piloting Youth Guarantee Partnerships on the Ground. A Report on the European Parliament Preparatory Action (EPPA) on the Youth Guarantee.

[170] European Commission (2015), Expert group report on the contribution of youth work to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment.

[171] European Commission (2013), Preventing Early School Leaving in Europe – Lessons Learned from Second Chance Education.

[172]European Commission (2015), Schools Policy. A while school appraoch to tackling early school leaving. Policy Messages.

[173] http://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/europeantoolkitforschools

[174] European Commission (2013), Work-based learning in Europe – Practices and Policy Pointers.

Performance Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning: 20 Guiding Principles"[175], which gives guidance and good-practice examples in the area of national governance, support for companies, attractiveness and career guidance as well as quality assurance in apprenticeships. This guidance is targeted at governments, businesses, social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders looking for inspiration on how to develop work-based learning and apprenticeship systems. A new working group has just started its 2.5-year mandate, and is working on VET teachers and trainers in work-based learning and in apprenticeships.

Cedefop and ILO, in cooperation with the Commission, are **supporting individual countries in analysing and improving their apprenticeship systems**. In 2015, Cedefop finalised Thematic Country Reviews on Malta and Lithuania, and it is currently working with Slovenia, Greece and Italy on similar projects. ILO has recently started similar work in Latvia, Spain and Portugal (see Section 2.3.2).

The Commission is also planning to develop a set of support services[176] to facilitate knowledge sharing, networking and cooperation on apprenticeships. It will back structural reforms through peer counselling and sharing best practices, including through social media.

2.3.1.3. Monitoring (points 5 and 6)

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee has been highly visible in the European Semester, the EU's annual cycle of economic policy guidance and surveillance. Point 6 addressed to the Commission refers to the monitoring role of the Commission through the European Semester, and a particular role is assigned to the Employment Committee (EMCO) and its multilateral surveillance. The Annual Growth Survey with which the Semester kicks off and which is the Commission's key policy guidance to Member States, refers since 2013 systematically to the need to implement the Youth Guarantee effectively. The 2016 Annual Growth Survey[177] highlights youth unemployment as a policy priority and calls on national, regional and local authorities to advance the work on youth unemployment in line with the Youth Guarantee through “systemic changes to school-to-work transitions, activation policies and well-functioning public employment services”.

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in each country has been assessed annually and systematically in the Commission's **Country Reports**, since 2014. **Country specific recommendations (CSRs)** on improving school to work transitions increased markedly in 2014, when a majority of Member States receiving a youth-specific CSR (see Annex E). These recommendations were mostly formulated in the context of particular reform efforts, such as reforms of the Public Employment Service, education and training systems, reforms related to active labour market policies or labour market challenges. In 2015 and 2016, fewer youth-specific recommendations have been issued due to the streamlining of the Semester which resulted in overall fewer recommendations the fall in

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[175] European Commission (2015), High-Performance Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning: 20 Guiding Principles.
[176] European Commission (2016), "A New Skills Agenda for Europe. Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness", COM(2016) 381/2.
[177] European Commission (2015), 'Annual Growth Survey 2016', COM(2015) 690 final.

youth unemployment since 2013 in most of the member states, and to Member States progress in addressing recommended reforms. A particular focus of the 2015 and 2016 CSRs has been the need for outreach to those young people neither in employment, education nor training that are not registered with a Public Employment Service (.

The EMCO has applied its multi-lateral surveillance role in the Semester through three annual thematic reviews since 2013. Two of these looked at all Member States, whilst the third looked mainly at those Member States with Country-Specific Recommendations related to the Youth Guarantee[178]. Among others, the 2015 review highlighted important progress in the areas of partnerships and institutional cooperation, tackling early school leaving. Key challenges were identified in particular as regards outreach to non-registered NEETs and young people facing multiple barriers, cooperation with employers, Public Employment Services' capacity as well as the quality of offers. With the support of the European Commission, the EMCO developed **an Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee** (see the box below). On this basis, the EMCO adopted "Key messages on the way forward for the YG post-2016" that were endorsed by the March 2016 EPSCO Council[179]. The results of two rounds of data collection (covering the years 2014 and 2015) are presented in Section 2.1.2.

Monitoring implementation through a specific Indicator Framework

To underpin monitoring and multi-lateral surveillance on the YG, the European Commission and EMCO worked on identifying the data requirements and indicators for monitoring the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes and assessing the impact of the Youth Guarantee. As a result, an **Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee** was developed, with support from the Commission, within the EMCO Indicators Group.

The framework was tested through a pilot data collection in October-November 2014. Following some revisions made on the basis of this experience, a final version of the Indicator Framework[180] and a methodological manual[181] were endorsed by EMCO on 28 May 2015. The first regular data collection (covering the year 2014) took place in 2015. The second data collection (covering the year 2015) was launched in March 2016.

The Indicator Framework comprises indicators related to three levels:

- Aggregate monitoring: Macroeconomic indicators monitoring the general situation of young people in the labour market (these include, among others, the NEET and youth unemployment rates);
- Direct monitoring: Implementation indicators measuring the direct impact of Youth Guarantee delivery (these include, among others, the proportion of young people in the Youth Guarantee service beyond four months);
- Follow-up monitoring: Follow-up indicators, assessing the sustainability of labour market integration or reintegration into formal continuing education and training after

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[178] Investing in Youth Employment: Implementation of the Youth Guarantee - Endorsement of the EMCO Key messages on the way forward for the Youth Guarantee post-2016. ST 6154 2016 INIT.

[179] 3453rd meeting of the Coucil of the European Union (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs).

[180] Employment Committee (2015), Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee, INDIC/10/12052015/EN-rev.

[181] Employment Committee (2016), " Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee (YG). Methodological Manual'. The manual is considered a "living document" that will be enriched with the lessons learnt after each data collection exercise. It was last updated on March 2016.

take-up of a YG offer.

Macroeconomic indicators are based on Labour Force Survey data, while direct and follow-up indicators rely on administrative data, data linking and survey data where available. The indicators to monitor the Youth Guarantee included in the Indicator Framework have also been integrated in the Joint Assessment Framework (JAF) through the creation of a new module[182].

Social partners and civil society organisations were also involved in monitoring and more specifically in the present SWD's preparation. In addition to ongoing work in the context of the Framework of Action on Youth Employment (see Section 2.2.2.1), social partners were consulted during the 17 February 2016 Social Dialogue Committee meeting. Interventions highlighted the success of the YG in opening up pathways to job creation for young people and the need to allow sufficient time to produce results. However, concerns were expressed in particular as regards the YG's real impact on positive trends, lack of social partner involvement in some Member States, the quality and sustainability of offers, underuse of EU funding, monitoring, the lack of exchange and upscaling of good practices. A stakeholder dialogue with civil society organisations on the implementation of the YG, YEI and the Quality Framework for Traineeships on 29 January 2016 highlighted in particular: the need for a more supportive macroeconomic environment, taking into account the heterogeneous nature of NEETs, improving services' accessibility and lowering the threshold for young people, links with income support measures and services, further improving partnerships with and involvement of civil society organisations, raising awareness, more reliable indicators and data on policy implementation (including on quality and user surveys), promoting and upscaling good practices, defining 'quality' work, more awareness of the QFT.

The EU also helps Member States to strengthen their capacity to monitor and evaluate measures under Youth Guarantee Schemes, in order to support the development of evidence-based polices and ensure an efficient use of resources (in line with point 24 of the part of the Youth Guarantee Recommendation which is addressed to the Member States (see Section 2.2.2.7). The **Centre for Research on Impact Evaluation (CRIE)** provides scientific expertise and methodological support for Counterfactual Impact Evaluation (CIE) to Member States for the impact evaluations of interventions funded by instruments managed by the European Commission, namely the ESF and the YEI[183].

The CRIE has recently launched a **Community of Practice on Counterfactual Impact Evaluation (CoP-CIE)** that supports the sharing of experiences, knowledge and expertise (between ESF MAs, the European Commission and researchers) and engages in joint activities with the aim of facilitating ESF and YEI evaluation. A first meeting was held in the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra (Italy) from 9 to 10 June 2016. One session focused on preparations for the 2018 Youth Employment Initiative evaluations. This event brought together civil servants working in ESF Managing Authorities (MAs), the European Commission, and CRIE, as well as external evaluators currently working with the ESF MAs on CIEs. Similarly, a recently launched **Data Fitness Initiative** aims to select suitable ESF interventions for which CRIE, in collaboration with MAs, will conduct a counterfactual impact evaluation. Among the

[182] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=115
[183] https://crie.jrc.ec.europa.eu/

shortlisted initiatives is a Latvian ESF-funded evaluation of training programme within the YG.

2.3.1.4. Awareness-raising (point 7)

Jointly with national authorities, the **Commission piloted outreach and awareness raising activities in Finland, Latvia, Romania, and Portugal** from March to September 2015 to encourage young people to register with their local Youth Guarantee providers. Activities included: collaborations with celebrities and sport clubs, radio spots, a social media app, ambient (outdoor) media, leaflets and posters, participation in job fairs and regional events, press conference and relations, presence on the web and social media, e-mail campaigning, business cards for youth workers, enhancement of the national websites.

The pilot generated important press coverage (RO, LV) and led to an increase in the visits to national websites (FI, PT) as well as followers on social media (FI). Besides, there are indications that the number of registrations with Youth Guarantee schemes increased in particular in Latvia and Portugal. The concept, products and visuals that were elaborated as part these awareness raising activities are available (on the Commission's website) to authorities who wish to make use of them as a communication toolkit[184].

Bulgaria, Slovenia, Greece and Lithuania are currently being supported and an additional 5 Member States will be supported in 2016-2017 through two dedicated calls for proposals launched by the Commission.

“Youth Guarantee: three steps to finding a job” : lessons from pilot awareness raising activities in FI, LV, PT and RO

The following activities can enhance impact:

- Testing planned materials/activities with target groups;
- Linking to/Setting up of a YG official webpage with key information and especially where (and how) young people can register;
- Use of social media channels (but need to be updated and managed regularly);
- Cooperation with celebrities, role models or You Tubers;
- Both online and outdoor media advertising;
- Going beyond online presence: events in rural areas and attendance to youth events (with presence of advisors);
- Catchy radio spots (also for Spotify).

The following issues needs to be considered when planning outreach and awareness raising activities:

- Wording « Youth Guarantee » can be seen as over-promising and needs

[184] Available on: https://circabc.europa.eu/faces/jsp/extension/wai/navigation/container.jsp

contextualisation (focusing on services provided and not only jobs);

- Testimonies are useful but need careful selection and planning[185];
- Collaboration with sports clubs is a good multiplier, however it is a two way process;
- Collaboration with youth workers can be very efficient;
- Information points such as Europe Direct[186] and Eurodesk[187] helps reach out all over the country, European Commission representations[188] can pass on the message, too;
- Media and social media training can be needed (among others for public authorities).

2.3.1.5. Other initiatives underpinning the Youth Guarantee's implementation

Various initiatives have underpinned the Youth Guarantee's deployment and contributed to enhancing the quality of offers.

Since its launch in 2013, the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** has mobilised 31 national governments and 120 stakeholders to improve the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships (see box below).

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships is a multi-stakeholder initiative involving Member States, social partners, chambers, companies, VET providers, professional bodies, youth organisations and regions.

It was launched at the World Skills in Leipzig on 2 July 2013 through a joint Declaration between the Commission, the European Social Partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP) and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. This was followed by a Council Declaration on 15 October 2013. The Alliance was given a new boost at the Meeting of Ministers in charge of vocational training in Riga on 22 June 2015.

EAfA Key facts[189]	Apprenticeship and traineeship offers
• **31 national commitments** • **121 pledges from stakeholders** • **170 companies with offers on Drop'pin**	• 250,000 in European Alliance for Apprenticeships • 100,000 in Pact for Youth

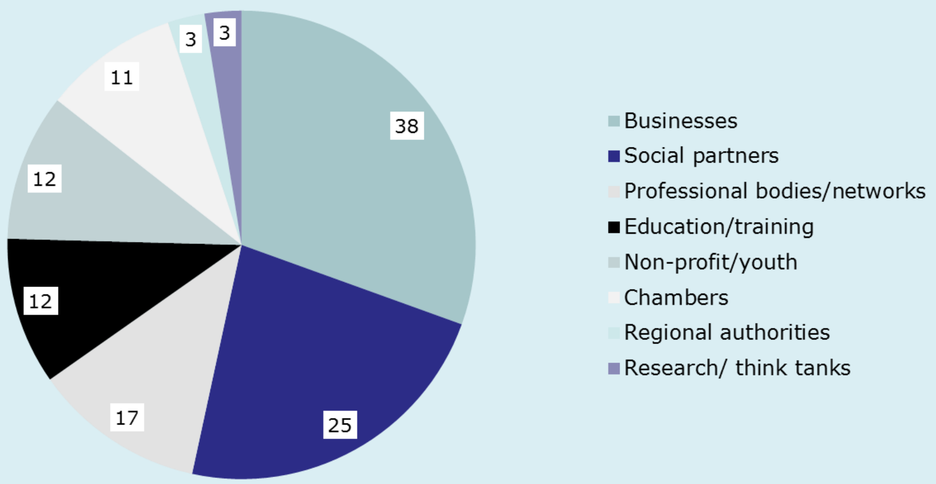
The European Alliance for Apprenticeships aims to strengthen the quality, the supply and the image of apprenticeships in Europe. Increased mobility for apprentices is also

[185] See for instance: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1079&newsId=2434&furtherNews=yes
[186] https://europa.eu/european-union/contact/meet-us_en
[187] https://eurodesk.eu/
[188] http://ec.europa.eu/contact/local_offices_en.htm
[189] Situation in July 2016. Numbers of pledges under the Alliance and companies with offers on Drop'pin are constantly increasing.

emerging as an important topic.

To date, 26 Member States and 5 EFTA and EU candidate countries (Norway, Switzerland, Albania, Turkey and Montenegro) have submitted commitments to take forward reforms for strengthening quality, supply and image of apprenticeships.

The chart below gives details of the 121 stakeholders of the Alliance.



The Commission provides financial support through specific calls for proposals under Erasmus+ and through other means (ESF, EaSI). The Alliance has developed an Action Plan for 2016 covering 12 key actions to be implemented during the year. In addition, Member States and other relevant stakeholders represented in the Education and Training 2020 Working Group on VET have developed 20 guiding principles on high-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning.[190]

The functioning of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships is being reviewed. This review is expected to be finalised early 2017.

Adopted by the Council on 10 March 2014, the Council Recommendation on a **Quality Framework for Traineeships** calls for traineeships to provide high quality learning content and fair working conditions, so that they support education-to-work transitions and increase the employability of trainees (see box below).

The Quality Framework for Traineeships

The Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships was adopted by the EPSCO Council in March 2014 and has been instrumental in supporting the provision of quality traineeship offers within the Youth Guarantee.

It aims to enhance the quality of traineeships (both within the open market and ALMPs) through 22 quality elements that are directly transposable to national legislation or social partner agreements. They relate in particular to learning content, working conditions, as

[190] European Commission (2015), Performance Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning: 20 Guiding Principles.

well as transparency regarding financial conditions and hiring practices.

- A detailed overview of steps taken by Member States in implementing the QFT can be found in a dedicated SWD accompanying the present report.[191]

Youth First Eures Job (YFEJ) (*see Section 2.2.2.6)* and the platform “Drop'pin" provide targeted support for employment and training in a European context.

Drop'pin, the online youth opportunities platform, was officially launched in June 2015. On 1 May 2016 it counted already 500 opportunities offered by the 205 organisations and companies registered and has more than 10,000 unique visitors per month. The main objective is to help young people boost their employability and skills by connecting them with concrete opportunities across Europe offered directly on the Drop'pin platform by companies and other organisations. Drop'pin supports for instance the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the ICT Grand Coalition by offering a place where the pledges made by companies and organisations can materialise into concrete offers of opportunities to young people. Companies may offer opportunities to young people either as a corporate social responsibility or with a view to attracting and nurturing potential candidates. Opportunities include apprenticeships, traineeships, training programmes, e-learning courses, language training, mentoring and coaching schemes, as well as various mobility support services (e.g. help with housing). The platform is designed to facilitate networking and collaboration, in particular to make different organisations work together to combine support for individuals.

With Drop'pin, the Commission seeks to mobilise and channel projects and initiatives by private actors in the area of youth employment and employability, thus filling a gap left open by existing national and EU instruments and tools. From the start, Drop'pin has also served as a place where young people find information on the Youth Guarantee, where they can find opportunities financed under the YG and where public and private organisations can come together to create new initiatives under the YG.

The **European Pact for Youth**, initiated by CSR Europe and supported by the European Commission, was launched on 17 November 2015 with the endorsement of the King of the Belgians, and several CEOs of major European companies. [192] It aims to build bridges between education and training and labour market by creating 10,000 quality business-education partnerships and providing 100,000 new, good-quality apprenticeships, traineeships, or entry-level jobs. These goals are to be achieved through action at national level taken forward by CSR Europe's national partner organisations, and through broader awareness-raising activities. The Pact commits to action in the following areas: 1) to boost the number and quality of business-education partnerships for youth employability and inclusion, 2) to reduce the skills gap, and 3) to contribute to EU and national policies on skills for competitiveness and employability. A Leaders Group composed of CEOs of major companies, MEPs, and directors of stakeholder groups will address three issues: 1) transition to jobs through apprenticeships and traineeships, 2) partnerships for key competences and career skills, and 3) entrepreneurship skills and opportunities. The

[191] European Commission (2016), Applying the Quality Framework for Traineeships.

results of the Pact will be showcased at the 1st European Enterprise-Education summit in November 2017.

2.3.1.6. European Court of Auditors reports on the Youth Guarantee

The European Court of Auditors' undertook a performance audit on the Commission's support to Member States in setting up YG schemes, and its assessment of possible implementation risks, covering mainly the period from April 2013 to June 2014. The Special Report of March 2015[193] provides an overall positive assessment and contains three recommendations: The first one is directed to the Member States and recommends providing a clear and complete overview of the costs of the YG schemes. The second and third ones, both directed to the Commission, call for the promotion of a set of qualitative attributes that should be fulfilled for jobs, traineeships and apprenticeships to be supported from the EU budget, and for putting in place a comprehensive monitoring system for the YG, covering both structural reforms and measures targeting individuals, to be reported to the European Parliament and the Council. Possible avenues on how these recommendations might be addressed are examined in Section 5 (Section 5 Post 2016: challenges, opportunities and lessons learnt") of this SWD.

2.3.2. The Youth Guarantee on the international agenda

Youth employment, and more specifically the Youth Guarantee, also plays an important role in the international arena.

Within the **International Cooperation and Development Policy**, impact results and good practices recorded so far under Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiatives constitute a valuable complementary source to design employment and skills development programmes for youth in developing partner countries in line with 2030 Agenda.

At **G20** level, youth employment was a priority in recent years. The G20 Task Force on Employment (transformed into the Employment Working Group in 2014) initially concentrated on assisting countries in sharing best practices to tackle youth unemployment, before covering also job creation, skills, quality apprenticeship, quality jobs, inter alia. Several G20 countries showed interest in the YG, which was specifically mentioned in the ministerial declaration in Melbourne in September 2014. G20 has acknowledged the Youth Guarantee as a new major reform for youth employment. Furthermore, under the Turkish Presidency, in November 2015, G20 leaders agreed on a first-time quantitative target on youth employment: to reduce the share of young people who are most at risk of being permanently left behind in the labour market by 15% by 2025 in G20 countries. OECD and ILO will assist in monitoring progress in achieving this goal, which is accompanied by “G20 Policy Principles for Promoting Better Youth Employment Outcomes”. The implementation of the YG across the EU is expected to contribute to this target through its specific efforts for NEETs and low-skilled youth.

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[192] http://www.csreurope.org/pactforyouth

[193] European Court of Auditors (2015), EU Youth Guarantee: first steps taken but implementation risks ahead, Special report no 3/2015.

Youth employment is embedded in the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose effective implementation is a key priority for the EU. Under SDG 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), a specific target (Target 8.6) aims to "substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training" by 2030.

The policy work of the EU and **the OECD** on youth employment are largely complementary. For example, the 2013 OECD Youth Action Plan outlining priority measures for national action plans entails many of the elements crucial to deliver a successful YG (though the YG is not explicitly mentioned). In this context, the OECD provided county-specific policy advice to the Irish Government on implementing a YG.[194] Offering a forum for exchange of views on good practices, also with non-EU countries, workshops and conferences on youth employment issues were held by or jointly with the OECD.[195] A recent study explicitly focuses on policies targeted at the most disadvantaged youth among the NEETs[196]. Furthermore, the OECD provides for an opportunity for other countries to learn from the YG implementation in Latvia and Lithuania as part of its international comparative series of reviews on *Investing in Youth.*[197]. The OECD Local Economic and Employment Development Programme (LEED) researched the local Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in seven countries[198], offering a set of practical policy recommendations relevant to national and local policy makers and practitioners, including through an exchange of experiences at its annual meetings 2014 and 2015.

The **International Labour Office** (ILO) strongly supports the Youth Guarantee initiative[199]. In 2012, it reviewed the functioning of the existing YG schemes. Using the Swedish Youth Guarantee scheme as an estimate of costs, the ILO developed a methodology for calculating the implementation costs of national Youth Guarantee schemes, recognizing the different starting points in terms of PES capacity and labour market situation of Member States[200]. This work allowed for estimating the costs of introducing the YG in the Eurozone countries at an average of around 0.45% of the Eurozone's GDP, or EUR 21 billion[201]. The findings of this work highlighted a number of features that were critical to the effective implementation of the YG. Representatives of

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194 OECD (2014), Options for an Irish Youth Guarantee.

195 Inter alia: July 2013, Workshop "Reforming European Labour Markets: Stimulating Job Creation and Better Outcomes for Youth", organised jointly by the Institute for the Study of Labour, Bonn (IZA) and the OECD; April 2014, a joint G20-OECD-EU Conference on Quality Apprenticeships for Giving Youth a Better Start in the Labour Market.

196 Carcillo,S., et al. (2015), NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis: Challenges and Policies, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 164, OECD Publishing, Paris; OECD (2016), Society at a Glance 2016: OECD Social Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris, see chapter "What can be done for jobless and disengaged NEETs?".

197 Covering so far Brazil (2014), Tunisia, Latvia (both 2015), Lithuania, Austrlia (both 2016), with the YG highlighted for the two EU countries. Reviews for Japan, Norway and Sweden are scheduled for 2016..

198 Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Poland and Sweden. In : OECD (2014) working paper, Local Implementation of Youth Guarantees : Emerging Lessons from European Experiences. October 2014..

199 ILO (2013) Youth guarantees: A response to the youth employment crisis? Employment Policy Brief'; ILO (2015), The Youth Guarantee programme in Europe: Features, implementation and challenges.

200 ILO (2012), 'Eurozone Job Crisis: Trends and Policy Responses', *Studies on Growth with Equity*, July 2012, pp48; ILO (2015), 'The Youth Guarantee programme in Europe: Features, implementation and challenges', footnote 1.

201 International Labour Organization (2012), 'Eurozone Job Crisis: Trends and Policy Responses', *Studies on Growth with Equity*, July 2012.

185 governments, employer organisations and trade unions unanimously adopted at the International Labour Conference (June 2012) the resolution "The youth employment crisis: A call for action".[202] YG schemes and apprenticeships are part of a balanced set of policy measures of the resolution that, together with employment and economic policies to increase aggregate demand and to improve access to finance, are considered instrumental to improve youth employment prospects. Collaborative work between the ILO and the European Commission in support of EU Member States in the design of YG schemes was undertaken between mid-2013 and 2014, particularly in Cyprus and Portugal. Subsequently, a joint EC-ILO action was launched in 2015 in support of Latvia, Portugal and Spain. It is currently ongoing and aims at enhancing national capabilities to assess and improve YG schemes, including through policy support on apprenticeship systems/programmes in key sectors through tripartite social dialogue.

Other world regions/non-EU countries have approached the European Commission to learn more about the YG. For example, the YG was positively mentioned in the **ASEM** Labour and Employment Ministers` Sofia Declaration of December 2015.[203] As a follow-up, Italy will organise an expert-level conference in 2016/2017 focusing on youth employment in Europe and Asia. Moreover, under the new European Neighbourhood Policy, the Commission is currently reflecting whether a Youth Guarantee-inspired pilot project could be implemented in one of the neighbourhood countries.

3. THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE: USE OF TARGETED EU FUNDING TO SUPPORT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

3.1. Key features

3.1.1. The YEI: an important tool supporting Youth Guarantee schemes

From the onset of the economic crisis, the European Commission made the need to improve the labour market prospects of young people one of its key priorities. The **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) was launched in order to provide targeted funding of EUR 6.4 billion**, comprising EUR 3.2 billion YEI specific allocation and EUR 3.2 billion ESF matched funding, to help NEETs aged 15-25 (or up to 29 years in some Member States) in regions struggling most with youth unemployment and inactivity. In this regard, the YEI was designed to financially underpin the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee.

The objective of the YEI is to complement national budget allocations and ESF provisions aimed at supporting the design and implementation of national Youth Guarantee schemes. The YEI is embedded in the ESF programming period 2014-2020 and the YEI specific allocation is additional to any other investments through the ESF. While the YEI directly supports young people, the ESF supports both individuals as well as structural reforms of national systems and services underpinning national Youth Guarantee schemes (for instance the modernising of labour market institutions). Taken together, EUR 12.7 billion of EU funds have been made available for youth labour

[202] http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/101stSession/texts-adopted/WCMS_185950/lang--en/index.htm

[203] "*We welcome the new stream of actions taken by the European Union (...) in particular the Youth Guarantee which gave impetus to a wide range of initiatives and cooperation with employers, structural reforms, and helped reduce youth unemployment.*" Sofia Declaration of ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers, December 2015.

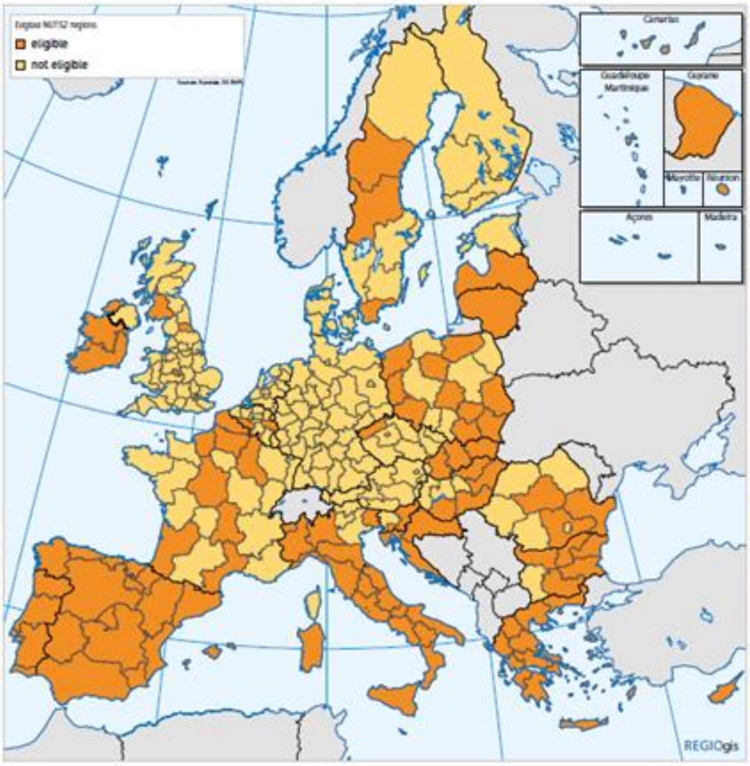
market integration measure for the programming period 2014-2020 (*see Section 2.3.1.1 Funding*).

In the context of the Youth Guarantee, **activities funded under the YEI target young people directly** in regions most in need of support; i.e. NUTS2 regions of the EU where the youth unemployment rate in 2012 was higher than 25%, or where youth unemployment was more than 20% but had increased by more than 30% in 2012[204]. Member States were able to invest in the implementation of the YEI from September 2013 onwards, with the opportunity to claim for the expenditure after the operational programmes had been formally adopted.

As illustrated in Figure 17, 20 Member States benefit from YEI support (BE, BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE, UK).

Across the 20 eligible Member States, the YEI is seen as a key mechanism or lever through which to operationalise national Youth Guarantee schemes. In some cases, the YEI is being used to support most or all measures planned under the YG schemes, while in others it is one funding source amongst others. Countries where large shares of YG funding comes from the YEI include Lithuania - where 2/3 of all YG actions are supported by the YEI, Poland - where 3/4 of all YG actions YEI funded and Spain - where 80% of all YG actions are funded through the YEI.

Figure 17: Regions eligible and YEI specific allocation



	Specific allocation to YEI
BE	42 435 070
BG	55 188 745
CZ	13 599 984
IE	68 145 419
EL	171 517 029
ES	943 496 315
FR	310 161 402
HR	66 177 144
IT	567 511 248
CY	11 572 101
LV	29 010 639
LT	31 782 633
HU	49 765 356
PL	252 437 822
PT	160 772 169
RO	105 994 315
SI	9 211 536
SK	72 175 259
SE	44 163 096
UK	206 098 124
Total	3 211 215 406

Member States have used the flexibility offered in the ESF regulation to programme the YEI. In the majority of operational programmes (OPs), the YEI is programmed in the context of a Priority Axis, which also either includes other ESF-funded youth

204 As established in Article 16 of Regulation (EU) No. 1304/2013.

interventions or other labour market interventions towards youth employment, in addition to the YEI. In six of the 22 OPs the YEI is implemented through a dedicated Priority Axis (ES, IE, PL, PT, RO, SK) while only France and Italy took advantage of the opportunity to programme the YEI under a dedicated OP only including YEI resources. Spain combined YEI and other ESF resources in a single programme "Youth Employment".

3.1.2. Modalities of implementation

YEI funding is implemented under the same conditions as the ESF 2014-2020, through the operational programmes drafted by the Member State and adopted by the Commission, and thereafter on the basis of measures designed and implemented in the Member States, e.g. through public calls for proposals (grants), financial instruments, etc. The Member State claims reimbursement from the Commission for already incurred and verified expenditure on YEI-relevant actions.

Public Employment Services (PES) are the main providers of YEI-funded activities across Member States, with 91% of Managing Authorities stating that PES are involved in the implementation of the YEI in their Member State (BE-BXL, BE-WL, BG, CY, CZ, ES, EL, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, RO). Other types of YEI-funded activities providers include other public bodies, such as regional and local authorities and – much less frequently cited - NGOs, training providers, social partners and private employers.

National evaluations[205] highlight some of the challenges around calls for proposals linked to complex national procedures, lengthy preparation of tender documents, lengthy appeal of decisions procedures, etc. These procedures are part of the mechanism for implementation of YEI (and other European structural and investment funds) measures. In addition, the need for better co-ordination between the responsible authorities at regional and national levels (in some Member States) as well as overall delays with programmes launch on the ground have also been noted in the national evaluation reports. These challenges are not YEI-specific and apply to the implementation of EU funds through calls for proposals more generally. However, they may have been intensified by the need for a quick set-up of the YEI and its shorter implementation period (compared to EU structural funds).

As a new approach, and in order to reach the specific aims of the YEI, some Member States (e.g. LT, PL, SE) made a particular effort to promote **multi-stakeholder working with the goal of delivering tailored approaches for young people**. In the case of Sweden, for example, the focus lies on regional collaboration between municipalities, employment offices, social assistance and healthcare in some of its YEI-funded measures. In other cases, the need for collaborative approaches is implicit, for example where the focus is on apprenticeship, traineeship or VET measures, which in any case involves VET providers and employers. Involving a wide range of partners not used to working together and having different capacity levels also could bear some risks for the quality and results of YEI actions, as flagged in a few national evaluations.

[205] The first national YEI evaluations, a regulatory requirement, were submitted by the end of 2015 and in the beginning of 2016. RO and the UK (England) did not submit evaluation reports. It should be noted that many of the evaluations had a very limited scope due to the absence of output and result data (due to the late start of programmes).

According to all the MAs[206], **youth employment activities implemented under YEI/ESF include the establishment of a personalised action plan for each beneficiary**, in which the various activities follow and/or complement each other. In some cases, the scope of actions which include personalised action plans was qualified, for example they would only be implemented for actions implemented by the PES (e.g. FR, HU) or those targeting specific age groups (e.g. EL). In the case of Slovakia, the national evaluation points out that it is not clear if a more personalised approach was induced through YEI/ESF funding, or was the result of a broader reform process with a view to putting in place a Youth Guarantee scheme.

3.2. Progress on the ground and financial implementation

3.2.1. Beneficiaries reached and first results

Progress on the ground in terms of outputs and results achieved so far has advanced dynamically and steadily, despite significant initial delays as explained further below. With the exception of Romania which has not yet launched YEI interventions[207], all MAs are now engaging young people in YEI-type activities.

To date, over **1.4 million young people have been covered by YEI-supported actions[208]**. This number largely exceeds the preliminary calculations accompanying the Commission's 2015 proposal to increase initial YEI pre-financing which had foreseen that around 640,000 young persons would be supported through this increase. At the same time, the number of young people supported to date varies widely across Member States. Some larger Member States and key recipients of the YEI, such as Greece, France, Italy and Portugal, already have large numbers of participating young people. Most Member States claim that overall they have been able to engage young people and have not faced difficulties recruiting participants in YEI-supported actions. In some Member States, demand for YEI measures is particularly high, for instance voucher schemes in Greece.

The vast majority of MAs agree or strongly agree that the YEI will have an important influence on the design of youth employment policy in their country. This influence can materialise in different ways: in the case of Hungary for example, the YEI is perceived as key to the rapid introduction of the Youth Guarantee, although its narrow scope, smaller scale of funding and additional administrative and monitoring requirements are noted negatively. In Greece and Lithuania, national evaluations highlight that the YEI has led to a shift to demand-based delivery of active labour market policies for young people, with a much stronger focus on individualised assistance for the young people themselves. It would however be important to ensure that new approaches are developed, in particular where difficult-to-reach target groups are to be engaged which are not reached through traditional measures.

In **Italy**, the YEI in Italy became the driver for a major reform and even setting up of new youth employment services. Within the framework of the national YEI OP, as of March 2016, 1 million young people had registered in the electronic system (865,000 persons

[206] European Commission (2016), First Results of the Youth Employment Initiative.

[207] According to the information available to the Commission, RO is currently in the process of carrying out preparatory actions on outreach to socially excluded NEET and provisions of personalised services.

[208] The data on persons covered by YEI-supported actions here and further down in the document are based on a request for information from the MAs following the EPSCO meeting of 7 March 2016 as well as information available to the Commission.

net after taking out cancellations and non-eligible persons). Of these, more than 640,000 have been profiled and waitlisted by public employment services, and over 285,000 have already received an offer of training, apprenticeship, traineeship or job. As end-March 2016, 194,000 young people had completed a YEI intervention. Close to 35% of all completers were employed after 4 weeks and 44% were had still been employed 6 months later. The Italian government has emphasised the visible impact of the YEI funding support in Italy: a decrease by 0.1 % of youth unemployment rate year-on-year. There is significant interest in YEI on the side of the target group, the programme is now performing at full speed and there is already a need to refinance some of the ongoing measures. Italy has already launched a major financial instrument - a revolving fund, to support youth entrepreneurship, with a budget of EUR 124 million, EUR 74 million of which are EU funds including the YEI-supported operational programme and a contribution from regional operational programmes under ESF.

In **France**, the national evaluation report on the YEI highlights that YEI-supported measures are of better quality than existing national programmes and are overachieving in relation to successful results (i.e. receiving a job, continued education or training) for young people compared to the national programmes. In France, in April 2016 around 161,500 young people had been covered by YEI measures and emphasis has been placed on reaching out to young people far from the labour market and with low qualification levels (who represent almost 50% of the targeted young persons in the national YEI OP).

In **Greece**, the largest share of the YEI funding is spent on a set of flagship actions relating to voucher schemes for labour market entry. The underlying principle of the voucher schemes, which combine training with on-the-job experience, is to provide young people with skills that are relevant to employers' needs and the opportunity to apply these in a real work setting. In this way, they seek to reduce the duration of school-to-work transition (which has historically been very lengthy in Greece) by allowing young people to acquire a first work experience, thus overcoming a major barrier to their labour market entry. The YEI has supports 39,000 young people in Greece.

In **Spain**, 276,880 young people eligible for the YEI are registered in the national Youth Guarantee/YEI electronic portal and waitlisted or already covered by YEI measures such as second chance education programmes, counselling and job orientation, and training courses. Around 40% of interventions cover second chance opportunity activities, 22% go towards labour market guidance and another 20% to language and ICT training. Spain has already allocated € 1.4 billion to YEI-supported measures.

In **Poland**, the YEI support focuses on the needs of young people finding it very difficult to enter the labour market. According to the Managing Authority, the added value of the YEI is that it enhances the number of supported young persons and supports more individual and comprehensive support as well as introduces new forms of support for specific target groups with complex needs (for instance, who are in particularly difficult situations due to family and social situations such as families with long-term unemployment, socially disadvantaged, or dysfunctional). By the end of June 2016, around 88,000 young persons NEET had benefited from YEI-supported measures.

Overall, during the initial phase of YEI implementation, the **focus of the YEI-funded interventions has been on the younger age group of 15-24 year olds** with the exception of Greece, where 71% of people supported to date are aged 25-29. Young females are supported somewhat more frequently than young men (51% vs. 49%), although the focus varies slightly between Member States.

YEI provision to date primarily targets young people with secondary and tertiary education which means that this group tends to prevail in the mix of NEET youth targeted by the Member States[209]. On average 22% of those supported only hold lower secondary education or below. Some countries such as France and Croatia have a clear stronger focus on those with low qualifications and early school leavers. Finally, the target population to date primarily consists of unemployed – rather than inactive – young NEETs. However, some Member States such as France or Portugal have a stronger focus on engaging inactive young people than the other Member States.

Several national YEI evaluations noted particular issues around low participation of the most vulnerable (e.g. ES, HR, PL), which may be due to a creaming effect, i.e. the engagement of those young people who are closest to the labour market, in some cases. In other cases, countries lack mechanisms to identify, register and monitor NEETs, so that the focus of intervention is on those young people who are registered with the PES.

Results of YEI actions are positive and the 2015 additional YEI pre-financing has helped speed up delivery of YEI actions. In France (national OP), results at the end of 2015 were above the targets set in the OP. 31% of participants who responded to the exit questionnaire had obtained a fixed-term contract of a more than 6-month duration or a permanent contract. In Italy, nearly 35% of the participants who have completed a measure are employed 4 weeks after completion. In Poland, 36% of those completing the YEI measure received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving. First indications of long-term results from some YEI projects in Poland show that, 2-6 months after participation, 69% of participants worked or were in education or training, and 57% were employed. These are significant achievements as regards the overall employability of the young people targeted, in particular given their profile and level of detachment from the labour market.

3.2.2. YEI-supported actions

In line with the YG Recommendation, the majority of countries implement a range of measures under the YEI, all revolving around the idea of supporting young people to take up employment, education or training. Most MAs provide traineeship or apprenticeships, a first work experience or quality VET (see Figure 18). More than half support young entrepreneurs (e.g. through financial instruments to support the measure for self-employment (IT, BG)) or offer job and training mobility measures. More than half support young entrepreneurs e.g. through financial instruments to support self-employment (IT, BG) or offer job and training mobility measures. Somewhat less prevalent are programmes for early school leavers, wage and recruitment subsidies and measures reducing non-wage labour costs. Some Member States have used YEI funding to increase the quality of measures (such as under the "Guarantee for Youth" programme in FR). Measures typically last 6 to 12 months and reporting on successful outcomes is only possible until after the completion of the intervention. In some Member States[210] the YEI is supporting financial instruments providing loans and guarantees to young people to become self-employed and set up their own business.

[209] In the Commission guidance note on programming and implementation of the YEI this aspect is discussed. While MS can themselves choose the mix of characteristics of targeted NEET population (unless these characteristics are explicitly defined in the OP), they are encouraged to pay special attention to low-educated and low-skilled NEETs, which tend to be harder to reach out to.

[210] Italy and Bulgaria.

The vast majority of Member States currently implement three or more types of measures under the YEI. Further, as pointed out by a number of national evaluations, activities supported by the YEI are not always new activities, but can be in addition to the activities funded through national funding sources. Examples include **France**, where Youth Guarantee activities and 'Emplois d'avenir' had already been set up through the national budget, and **Ireland**, where this is the case for the activities Youthreach, Tus, Momentum and Jobsplus.

Figure 18: Types of measures implemented under the YEI up to November 2015

Type of measure	% of MAs currently implementing such measures	MAs currently implementing such measures	MAs allocating main share of funding to such measures
Provision of first job experience	83%	BE-BXL, BE-WL, CZ, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, PL, PT, SE, SK	BE-WL, EL, IE, PT
Provision of traineeships and apprenticeships	72%	BE-BXL, BE-WL, BG, CY, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, PL, PT, SE, SK	BE-BXL, BG, CY, ES, IT, PL
Quality vocational education and training courses	65%	BE-BXL, BE-WL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, LV, SE, PL, PT	LV
Job and training mobility measures	59%	BE-BXL, CZ, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LV, PL, SE	
Start-up support for young entrepreneurs	53%	BE-WL, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LV, PL, SE	
Wage and recruitment subsidies	47%	BE-BXL, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, SK	HR, HU, SK
Second chance programmes for early school leavers	44%	BE-WL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, PL, SE	
Other[211]	39%	BE-WL, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT	FR
Reduction of non-wage labour costs	24%	HR, ES, IT, SK	

Sources: MA survey, self-reported data from MAs; as well as interviews, where data sources inconsistent; cross-validated with national evaluation reports

NB: SE is not indicated in the final column since it spreads its funding relatively evenly across measures. CZ and LT are not indicated in the final column as there is no information on the focus of activities.

3.2.3. Financial Implementation

Financial implementation significantly increased in 2015-16. Over half of the MAs started the financial implementation of the YEI after January 2015, while around one-

[211] This includes job counselling and mentoring (ES, FR, HU, IE, LT), national and regional civic service (IT) and activities to include Early School Leavers (BE-WL)

third started implementation already in 2014. A significant number of Member States have committed almost all their YEI resources to approved actions pending launch[212]. By end-August 2016 the Commission has received payment applications worth a total of EUR 682 million of YEI expenditure. Over 70% of these applications have already been reimbursed by the Commission (and further payments are in the process of being reimbursed). By end-July 2016 the total eligible cost of YEI operations selected for support was over €4 billion and over €800 million had been declared by beneficiaries. Over 73,400 operations have been selected for support by end-July 2016.

In 2015, in response to the political call from a number of Member States to receive additional financial liquidity to enable mobilisation of YEI-funded actions on the ground, the **Commission released an unprecedented increase of pre-financing payments from the dedicated YEI budget line, worth 30% of the YEI budget** (close to EUR 1 billion). The main purpose for providing an increased YEI pre-financing to Member States in 2015 was to make additional financial liquidity available to support project implementation.

While the 2015 additional YEI pre-financing did help speed up implementation in a number of eligible Member States, the initial phase of YEI implementation did not live up to the initial political expectations when budgeting all YEI resources in the first two years of the financial cycle (2014 and 2015). The most frequently cited reasons by MAs for not starting the financial implementation as of September 2013 were the late adoption of the related ESF operational programmes[213] and the lengthy preparation for their implementation, including the setting-up of structures and procedures required under the relevant ESF regulatory framework.

This complexity is characteristic of all European structural and investment funds programmes in the 2014-2020 period and is thus not specific to the YEI and is largely the result of additional requirements under the current legal framework, notably the obligations on the Member States to validate and formally designate the management systems for the programmes, including monitoring and information systems. This process led to severe delays which had a negative impact on the YEI implementation progress in particular in cases where the YEI resources were not programmed as a dedicated operational programme but as part of a multi-fund and multi-objective programme. This was the case in all YEI- eligible Member States except for Italy and France, which opted for dedicated YEI programmes. To a certain extent, delays observed in the initial stages of YEI implementation can partly be attributed to the administrative capacity constraints of the different responsible structures, also given the overlap between the two programming periods (closure of 2007-2013 vs. swift implementation of YEI).

While the late designation itself does not prevent Member States from launching actions as such, completing the designation process is an essential prerequisite for the Commission to be able to reimburse Member States for these actions. As of mid-September 2016, the Commission has received official notification of designation of authorities for 23 out of a total of 34 YEI-supported operational programmes.

[212] By end-November 2015, 12 MAs (BE-BXL, BE-WL, CY, CZ, EL, HU, IT, LV, LT, PT, SE, SK) had committed more than 75% of their funding to concrete YEI measures and 6 MAs (BE-BXL, BE-WL, EL, IT, LV, PT, SE) had contracted out more than 50% of the available funding to beneficiaries. Source: European Commission (2016), First Results of the Youth Employment Initiative.

[213] Only 2 Member States opted for separate operational programmes for YEI, while the others interlinked ESF and YEI-supported actions in the operational programmes.

In other cases, overall administrative reform or reforms of European structural and investment funds implementation structures, or of the Public Employment Service, have also led to delays. In addition, where structures existed in 2013, these were still involved in the delivery of the previous ESF programming period. This posed certain limitations on the capacity of public authorities to both launch additional activities and deliver services. As mentioned already, the PES structures play a key role in YEI implementation in the vast majority of eligible Member States.

At the same time, with regard to financial implementation, there is a need to distinguish between the process of implementation on the ground (financial progress of the ongoing activities at project level) and the interim payment applications from the Managing Authority towards the Commission. The certification and payment applications profile does not necessarily reflect the physical implementation of YEI actions on the ground, which is already advanced (as noted further above). In 2016, financial implementation progress has started to catch up with implementation on the ground and is steadily advancing in the majority of Member States both as regards the amount of expenditure declared by beneficiaries and expenditure pending certification to the Commission.

Despite initial delays, according to the results of an MAs survey[214], the **additional pre-financing did have a positive impact for half of the MAs** (including the main proponents of the pre-financing increase – PT, ES, IT), who were able to commit more funds to existing projects and/or launch more projects. An example of positive impact of the increased financing is Greece, which was able to kick-off its voucher scheme programmes for first job experience due to the increased pre-financing. In France, the offer of services, in particular accompanying services, has been improved, as well as their quality. In Italy, which made extensive use of the additional pre-financing support, important results in terms of young people NEET attached to the labour market are already clearly visible: 44% of those supported by YEI were still employed 6 months after the end of the support which points to the positive effects of the YEI on employability.

In financial terms, Member States needed the additional YEI pre-financing to a varying extent. While Member States such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and France were the strongest proponents of the 2015 proposal (and indeed have made use of pre-financing since 2015), others (e.g. UK, IE) indicated at the time they might not make use of this additional cash liquidity. This, however, has not necessarily hampered YEI implementation on the ground.

There are a few Member States which were unable to retain the full additional YEI pre-financing they received in 2015 (namely ES, CZ, SI, IE, LT, SK and UK). However, in the case of some Member States it was not due to lack of implementation on the ground. Some of these Member States have already generated, at the operational level, significant but not sufficient expenditure and have requested reimbursement from the Commission (ES). Others had generated sufficient expenditure but were unable to submit payment applications for not having designated their authorities yet. This was the case of Ireland that has already covered almost 14,000 young people NEET under measures, but that will only be able to submit payment applications after completion of the designation process, later in 2016.

[214] European Commission (2016), First Results of the Youth Employment Initiative.

Recovery of YEI additional pre-financing concerns 8 Member States (ES, CZ, SI, IE, LT, SK, RO, UK). Recovery letters have already been sent to these Member States. It is important to note that recovery of the 2015 additional pre-financing will not lead to a permanent loss of this funding for the Member States concerned. They will still be able to generate expenditure and have it reimbursed via the normal reimbursement process.

As implementation on the ground is now improving, payment claims will continue to be submitted in 2016[215]. For 2017, the forecasts of Member States for payment claims under YEI amount to approximately EUR 2 billion, which indicates that the current pace will continue and deliver the expected outcomes. Last but not least, some of the large YEI beneficiary Member States, such as France and Italy, have significantly speeded up their YEI financial implementation in the course of 2016 notably by making use of Simplified Cost Options for all or most of their YEI expenditure.

Several Member States, notably PT and IT have stated publicly that continuing EU funding support via the YEI is crucial for the future continuation of the supported measures.

3.3. The added value of the YEI[216]

The YEI was designed as a targeted instrument for specific regions and target groups in the EU. Its set-up and mission to directly contribute to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee by financing apprenticeships, traineeships and job offers constitute a step towards a more results-oriented EU funding support. Selected actions and programmes financed by the YEI are presented in the country fiches in Annex B.

YEI support has become a driver in several Member States for a complete overhaul of youth employment policies. **Italy** is one representative example, in that it is successfully using both the Youth Guarantee brand and the substantial support under its dedicated YEI operational programme to launch new apprenticeship and employment measures, including through working with large private sector business to improve matching. As stated in national evaluation reports, the YG scheme, supported by the YEI operational programme, has been a powerful driver for many recent reforms. Italy, facing significant challenges and receiving EU financial support through the ESF and YEI, took the opportunity to implement innovative, large scale measures and structural reforms. In particular, the combination of a strong political impetus and the considerable financial resources has triggered the introduction of new policies supporting young people as well as active labour market policies more in general.

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the YEI has led to the creation of new forms of cooperation between public and private employment services, a new method of profiling has been set up and an individual personalised approach to the participants has been developed – and is currently replicated in measures targeting other groups of

[215] Based on Member States payment forecasts as at July 2016.

[216] It should be noted that the reporting on the operation of the YEI in this Communication and the corresponding Staff Working Document do not constitute an evaluation. An evaluation assessing e.g. the effectiveness and efficiency of the YEI will be performed as part of the ex-post evaluation of the European Social Fund (ESF) in 2024.

unemployed people. At the same time, the reform of the education system has enhanced the use of work-based learning in upper secondary school and vocationally-oriented tertiary education. Furthermore, as well as other Member States Italy also developed a set of standard costs of the typical measures supported by the YEI at regional level, which not only simplifies YEI implementation but could serve as a reliable basis for costing of different job and training services – which feeds back into effective and efficient policy making.

Finally, not all measures supported by the YEI are new measures. YEI funding is often used to scale up existing programmes. In most Member States, YEI support has provided an impetus to improve the quality of services – another element called for by the Youth Guarantee Council recommendation (sustainable attachment to the labour market). While the first national evaluations of the YEI do not yet present a consistent picture across Member States, and while there are large variations in the national interpretations of the concept of quality offer, ensuring quality seems to be an important factor in the design by Member States of their YEI actions. Where a good quality offer is directly or indirectly defined, this generally falls into one or more of the following categories: suitable, sustainable, satisfactory, rapidly provided or well-designed offer.

3.4. Remaining YEI implementation challenges

While the MAs express a high degree of confidence regarding the achievement of the YEI objectives, evidence from the national evaluations suggests that there are implementation challenges in many Member States. These challenges risk inhibiting the success of the YEI, particularly in terms of the quality of delivery, effectiveness and monitoring. These challenges include:

- The shorter timeframe for YEI implementation compared to the ESF actions;
- Still present delays in the designation of authorities, although the Commission expects that this process will be completed for all operational programmes by end-2016;
- Insufficient capacity of some PES or other intermediary organisations to deliver the programme, noted in several Member States (e.g. BG, CY, ES, IT, LT, LV, PT, SK, RO);
- Difficulties in identifying inactive or administratively excluded NEETs in several countries (a number of Member States are addressing this by working more actively with the NGO sector and launching specific outreach measures);
- Delays in the implementation of integrated monitoring systems for the ESF operational programmes in general (a challenge particularly for regionalise MS such as ES).
- The sustainability of the offers made as a result of YEI-supported measures – in particular in a context of still very reduced labour demand in many Member States.

3.5. Youth unemployment, still a challenge in the EU regions

The YEI eligibility of the regions is based on the youth unemployment rate. The number of young unemployed persons (aged 15-24) serves to establish the budget allocation each region would be entitled to under the YEI. As regards the eligible regions, based on 2012 data, 114 (out of 276) EU NUTS 2 level regions are eligible for the YEI in 20 Member States. Based on 2015 data on the rate of youth unemployment in the region, 89 regions would be eligible in 15 Member States. 31 regions would no longer be eligible for the YEI, while 6 new regions would be added (including 1 region in Finland thus adding FI as a newly eligible Member States under YEI). All in all, 6 Member States would leave the YEI entirely (CZ, IE, LV, LT, SI, SE). Importantly, the regions most in need of support remain the same as in 2012: the Member States with the NUTS2 level regions with the highest youth unemployment rates and the highest number of young unemployed people are ES, IT, EL and PT.

The number of unemployed 15-24-year-olds in those regions that are eligible for support based on the latest (2015) annual data, is around 2,200,000 persons[217].

Given the persistently high levels of youth unemployment in many regions and the encouraging first results shown, in the context of the review of the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020, the Commission has proposed to supplement the original allocation of the YEI by EUR 1 billion over 2017 – 2020 (with another EUR 1 billion of matching funding to be provided from the European Social Fund), to thus reach a total amount of EUR 8.4 billion since the launch of the Initiative (COM(2016)603).

3.6 EU support to implementation of the YEI

Policy support and mutual learning activities provided by the European Commission (*see Section 2.3.1.2 good practices*) support the design of effective youth employment policy, in particular in the context of national Youth Guarantee schemes. These have been widely disseminated also to the YEI MAs in view of increasing the added value of YEI-supported measures. In April 2014, a high-level conference "Youth Guarantee – Making it Happen" under the patronage of President Barroso, was attended by more than 350 participants, including ESF and YEI MAs[218]. The use of the ESF and the YEI funds to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee was on the agenda.

Specifically on YEI processes, the Commission has been in regular contact with the Member States' MAs since the launch of the YEI. It has provided detailed technical guidance through guidance notes, two technical seminars for the Member States in Brussels as well as regular bilateral discussions at all levels. The Commission also produced detailed guidance on monitoring and evaluation of YEI interventions[219].

In particular, two dedicated technical seminars on YEI were organised with the MAs in July 2014 and January 2016 in Brussels, in addition to regular bilateral and multilateral discussions on implementation issues. The technical seminar in July 2014 aimed to support the services in charge of programming the YEI by clarifying outstanding issues. This event followed a number of previously organised training and information sessions and built further on the guidance already disseminated.

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[217] It should be noted that for several potentially eligible regions (some outermost regions of in FR and PT, and two regions in IT and PL) 2015 data are not (yet) available, so in reality the total number of young unemployed is certainly higher.

[218] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1079&eventsId=978&furtherEvents=yes

[219] European Commission (2015) Programming period 2014-2020. Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy. European Social Fund. Guidance document.

In order to help Member States speed up the designation of the authorities involved in the management of the YEI supported programmes, in January 2016 the Commission organised a technical seminar in Brussels for the concerned Member States to assess the bottlenecks and identify a way forward to speed up the process. In addition, YEI financial implementation progress has also been recalled as a point of attention in the context of EPSCO meetings, notably in March 2016.

Much policy 'good practice' has also been collected and disseminated through the Commission's work with Member States on the Youth Guarantee, in particular in the context of guidance and technical assistance support to setting up apprenticeships and traineeships schemes also in the context of ESF and YEI[220].

4. DELIVERING RESULTS

In order to identify to what extent the implementation of the YG might be linked to aspects of the overall labour market performance of youth, an analysis of youth labour market indicators was conducted[221].

4.1. Since 2013, a significant fall in NEET rates and youth unemployment has resulted in greater convergence

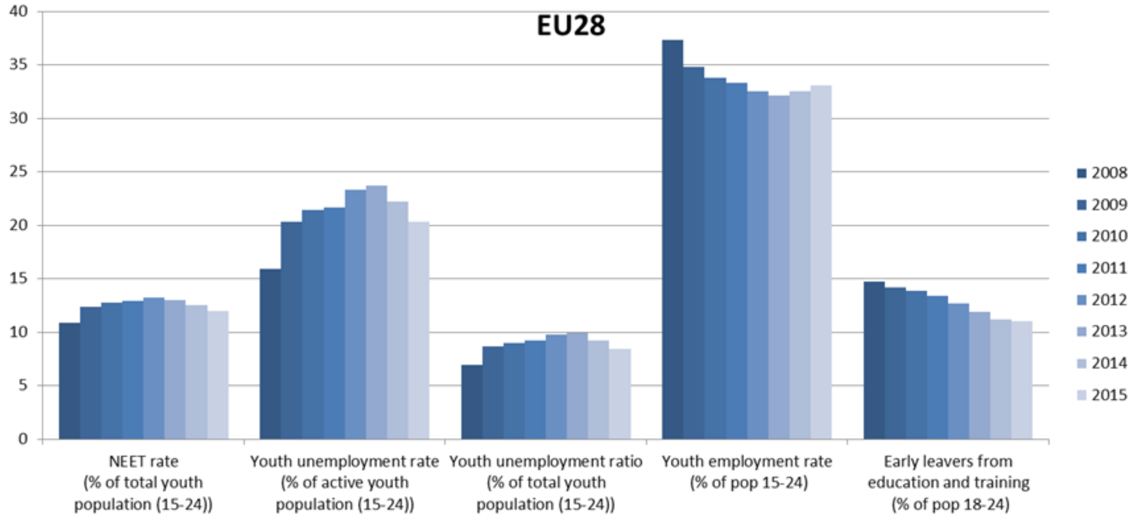
Young people were one of the most affected groups in the crisis. In 2008, when the crisis hit, the EU's labour market had attained its best performance levels. The EU economy then started and continued on a steady decline up to 2013 taking with it young people's previously improving labour performance. Unemployment levels compared to early 2008 levels increased more for young people 15-24 than for older workers. At the time of the agreement by the Council of the YG Recommendation in 2013, the EU youth unemployment rate had reached a historical high of 23.7% (from 15.8% in 2008), and the EU NEET rate peaked at 13.2% in 2012 (10.9% in 2008).

The trend reversed in 2014 and young people's labour market performance has since improved. By 2015, the annual EU youth unemployment rate dropped by 3.4 pp to 20.3% and the EU NEET rate decreased by 1 pp to 12%. Figure 19 clearly shows the evolution of young people's labour market performance in the EU from 2008 to 2015, highlighting the worsening context that led up to the adoption of the YG Recommendation, as well as the improving data in the first two years of its implementation.

[220] European Commission (2013), 'Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors. A guidebook for policy planners and practitioners , http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11348&langId=en

[221] The analysis presented in this section is based on the findings presented in greater detail in a technical paper to be published on the European Commission's website 'Analysis of the performance of Youth Guarantee in the EU Member States 2013 – 2015' (publication forthcoming).

Figure 19: Employment rate, unemployment ratio, NEET, early school leavers and unemployment rate in the EU, 2008-2015[222]



Source: Eurostat, LFS

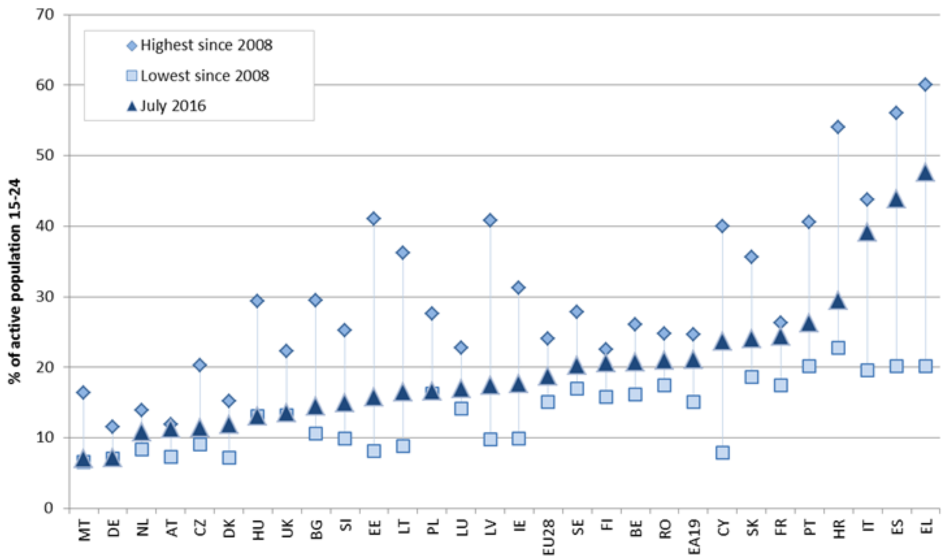
Since 2014, greater convergence among Member States' youth labour market performance can be observed, as a result of significant improvements in Member States that were particularly affected by the crisis (see Figure 20). During the period between 2008 and 2013, the impact of the crisis was markedly more dramatic for some Member States than others: Greece, Spain and Croatia saw their youth unemployment rates soar to over 50 %. Portugal, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia saw peaks of over or around 40%, with the latter four experiencing sharp hikes of around 30 pp. Conversely, a number of Member States saw their youth unemployment performance hardly affected during the crisis (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands).

A similar pattern can be observed for Member States' NEET rates, with a difference of more than 19 pp between countries with the highest and the lowest rates during the crisis years (Figure 21).

Since the reversal youth labour market trends in 2014, both youth unemployment and NEET rates have decreased in most EU Member States. However, NEET trends for some Member States with the highest rates in 2013, in particular Italy and Romania, have seen little movement. The overall the reduction in the NEET rate at the EU level appears to have been due to both transitions towards further education or towards employment, with differences across Member States.

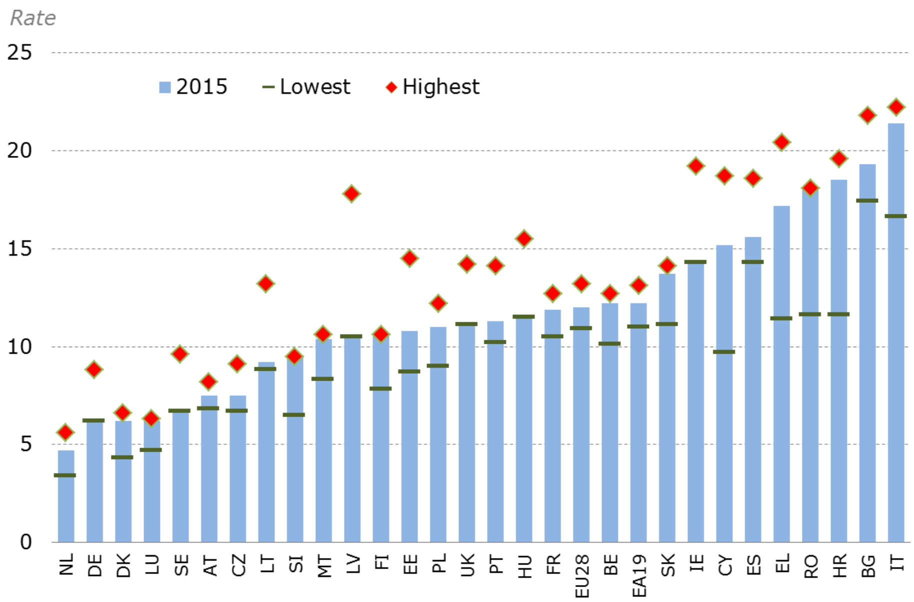
[222] Data extracted on 20.05.2016.

Figure 20: Youth unemployment rates in the EU Member States in July 2016 and the highest and lowest rates since 2008



Source: Eurostat, LFS, data seasonally adjusted [une_rt_m], Note: RO: March 2016, HU, UK, SI, EE, BE, CY, HR, EL June 2016

Figure 21: Young people (15-24 years old) not in employment, education or training (NEET) in EU Member States, 2015 and lowest and highest rates since 2008



Source: Eurostat, LFS, table: edat_lfse_20

4.2. NEET rates reductions driven by a fall in unemployed rather than inactive NEETs

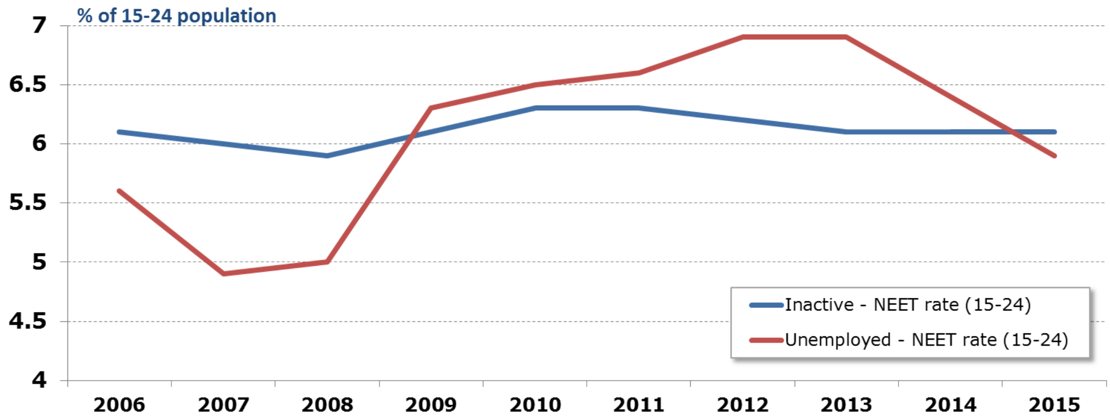
Activating NEETs is the main focus of the YG. However, NEETs are not a homogeneous group. Two broad sub-groups can be differentiated: the unemployed NEETs (those looking for work), and the inactive NEETs (those not actively looking for work and thus detached from the labour market).

The decrease in the EU NEET rate from 2013 onwards is largely due to a reduction of unemployed NEETs (see Figure 23). Throughout the crisis the unemployed NEET rate in the EU increased sharply and exceeded that of inactive NEETs however from 2013, it also saw a strong decrease from 7% to 6% in 2015. By contrast, the performance of inactive NEETs remained at around 6%. In 2015 the two categories reached the same level.

This suggests that policies may have been quicker in supporting unemployed NEETs and may take longer to effectively bring inactive NEETs back into employment, education or training. Decreases in the inactive NEETs can however be seen, among others, in Cyprus, Hungary and Portugal.

Comparing these developments country-by-country with the participation rate in the YG in 2014, **the observed reductions in NEET rates may be potentially associated with good participation rates of young NEETs in the Youth Guarantee** (e.g. Portugal, Netherlands and Sweden).

Figure 23: Inactive and unemployed NEET rate in the EU (15-24 years old)



Source: Eurostat, LFS [edat_lfse_20]

4.3. Signs of positive impact of structural changes

Youth unemployment rates in the EU as a whole have exceeded expected performance levels given the macroeconomic context in 2014 and 2015[223]. A large number of countries performed better than expected in many quarters and when compared to the performance of the total population this also occurred more frequently for youth unemployment rates. In some countries (Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Hungary, Luxembourg, UK, Slovakia), the points are clearly under the bands of the regression's residuals indicating a better performance than the expected one.

[223] For more details, see, European Commission (2016) 'Analysis of the performance of Youth Guarantee in the EU Member States 2013-2015' (publication forthcoming).

Besides, a discrepancy analysis comparing adult performance indicators with those of young people on the labour market (unemployment rates and unemployed/inactive NEET rates) shows that **unemployment rates and unemployed NEET rates dropped comparatively more for young people than for the adult population in many Member States** over the years 2014-2015[224]. In particular Latvia had the strongest comparative labour market performance in reducing youth unemployment and NEET unemployed compared to adult unemployment. This was followed by Hungary, Sweden, Cyprus, Netherlands and the UK.

Even though there could be other factors to take into account, such as a greater cyclical sensitivity of young people to macroeconomic conditions, structural reforms of labour market, education and training policies – supported by the Youth Guarantee – have been contributing factors to this over-performance.

5. POST 2016: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND LESSONS LEARNT

This section reviews some of the main challenges linked to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (focusing in particular on those highlighted in the EMCO key messages on the Youth Guarantee Post-2016[225] (as endorsed by the EPSCO Council in March 2016) as well as the YEI. It highlights how they could be addressed to strengthen the Youth Guarantee's and the YEI's impact and proposes additional guidance and clarification ('lessons learnt') based on three years of implementation.

5.1. Ensuring full and sustainable implementation

The Youth Guarantee has been rapidly implemented across the EU thanks to an unprecedented combination of political commitment, technical assistance, capacity building and financial support at EU level.

Full implementation is still recent or pending in several Member States, where the Youth Guarantee required substantial reforms and broad partnerships, and in many cases gradual implementation**.**[226] Sustainable implementation could also be jeopardized by changes in governments and policy priorities, especially in Member States where the Youth Guarantee generated over a short period an array of new measures which did not build on pre-existing practices.

Sufficient national funding sources are also essential for the long-term sustainability of measures. The YEI and the ESF have in many Member States provided a critical leverage for the Youth Guarantee's development and implementation. While this is positive, an over-reliance on EU funding entails the risk of policies being defined on an ad hoc or temporary basis and programmes being stopped while waiting for new calls.

[224] For more details see European Commission (2016) 'Analysis of the performance of Youth Guarantee in the EU Member States 2013-2015' (publication forthcoming).

[225] EMCO's key messages from the Employment Committee on the way forward for the Youth Guarantee post-2016, endorsed by the EPSCO on 7 March 2016. Similar challenges were also identified in a Eurofound study, Eurofound (2015), 'Beyond the Youth Guarantee. Lessons learned in the first year of implementation', Background document prepared by Eurofound as a contribution to the informal EPSCO meeting, 16-17 July 2015, Luxembourg.

[226] EMCO' key messages from the Employment Committee on the way forward for the Youth Guarantee post-2016, endorsed by the EPSCO on 7 March 2016.

Efforts to monitor the Youth Guarantee's implementation would contribute to underpinning national commitments to the YG. Such efforts could build on the common indicator framework, and streamlining processes over time. As underlined by the EPSCO Council in 2014[227] and again in early 2016,[228] the indicator framework is an important step forward in the development of 'evidence-based Youth Guarantee schemes' underpinned by credible data. The indicator framework is also a reference instrument for monitoring the schemes within the framework of the European Semester. The collection of administrative data on the implementation and follow-up levels requires that Member States allocate adequate administrative and financial resources. This data collection process has also posed a number challenges. While most of them have been overcome, in a number of cases there is a need for stronger efforts to surmount existing technical, legal or other obstacles. In this regard, the Council has emphasised that a strong political commitment is required to overcome remaining obstacles and ensure a sound monitoring system. Particular emphasis should also be put on improving follow-up data which will allow a better analysis of the impact of the Youth Guarantee on beneficiaries.

5.2. Better engaging with non-registered NEETs and the low-skilled

5.2.1. Supporting non-registered NEETs

Providing tailored solutions to a diverse group of young people and making the non-registered NEETs a key target group proved to be a novelty and a significant challenge in several Member States.

The Youth Guarantee applies to all young people and all young people must reap the benefits of the first signs of recovery.[229] This will help prevent social polarisation and radicalisation.

Despite significant efforts by Member States to improve outreach, identification of potential Youth Guarantee beneficiaries often remains partial. On average, in only 37.3% of the NEET population aged 15-24 registered with a Youth Guarantee provider in 2014 across the EU. This suggests that young people in the most vulnerable situations are under-represented among beneficiaries. A similar trend is observed with regard to YEI-supported interventions, where the share of inactive young people involved in YEI actions is also less prominent compared to the unemployed. This demonstrates the fact that the hard-to-reach groups and those furthest away from the labour market still require further attention. More generally, while awareness of the Youth Guarantee among young people has increased, further efforts are needed in this area.

Only a few Member States have identified clear alternative points for registration besides the public employment services, which often remain unattractive for young people facing multiple barriers. Despite important steps to reach out to a broader group of young people, interventions **often remain insufficiently adapted to the needs of those facing**

[227] Implementation of the Youth Guarantee and monitoring framework- Endorsement of the EMCO's key messages http://ec.europa.eu/social/contentAdmin/BlobServlet?docId=13305&langId=en

[228] Investing in Youth Employment: Implementation of the Youth Guarantee - Endorsement of the EMCO Key messages on the way forward for the Youth Guarantee post-2016.

[229] As outlined in the key messages on the Youth Guarantee Post-2016 as endorsed by the EPSCO Council in March 2016, incorporating EMCO's report on the state of play of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, ST 6154 2016 INIT.

multiple barriers (such as poverty, social exclusion, disability and discrimination), including those with a migrant background and asylum-seekers. This is the result of a number of factors, including limited knowledge of the diversity that exists within the NEET population and the specific needs of different categories of NEETs, path-dependency and the difficulties of developing new approaches, but also lack of low-threshold offers, insufficient geographical coverage, and registration procedure complexity (including problems related to online registration).[230] As a result, young people close to the labour market tend to be overrepresented in measures.[231]

In order to address this challenge, more efficient outreach would be required[232], as well as the broadening of the range of interventions proposed within the four types of Youth Guarantee offers. While the four-month timeline is essential to ensure swift activation into a Youth Guarantee offer, young people in the most vulnerable situations often need more complex, lengthier interventions before being able to take up an offer. Broadening the set of 'continued education' offers under the Youth Guarantee to include pathway approaches and intensified support delivered by a range of partners would be necessary to better address their needs. In this context, there could be great value in learning from those Member States that already have a strong focus on engaging inactive young people or early school leavers, as many of these Member States also combine activation measures with access to social benefits and additional services.

O**nly in a few Member States are there clear links between activation measures and social benefits as well as social services**. This presents a major obstacle for young people in the most vulnerable situations. Experiences from Member States would indicate that one effective manner of ensuring the sustainable integration in the labour market[233] of this group is to adopt a broader approach that combines with adequate income support and access to quality services, in addition to providing an incentive to register with the Youth Guarantee scheme.

Lessons learnt: Reaching out to young people facing multiple barriers

On the basis of what can be observed from the various ways that Member States implement the YG, the following aspects can be considered essential to best support young people facing multiple barriers, taking into account their diverse background:

Proactive engagement

- Preventative measures to avoid drop-out and the exchange of information across administrations,
- Proactive work and accessible services, including through street workers, mediators, one-stop-shops and accessible procedures,
- Clear definition of alternative registration points besides the public employment services.

A holistic approach

[230] ERGO (2015), Youth Guarantee – opportunities for young Roma Findings of a small scale field research in six EU countries, February 2015.

[231] According to a study initiated by the Commission on YEI implementation, 22% of YEI beneficiaries were inactive NEETs. Data samples related to labour market status cover seven Member States only.

[232] European Network of Public Employment Services (2016), Sustainable activation of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). PES Network practitioner’s toolkit.

[233] In line with the principles outlined in the Commission Recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (2008/867/EC).

- Pathway approach as part of the 'continued education' offer,
- Income support (based on the principle of mutual obligation) and access to services,
- Counselling, mentoring and post-placement follow-up to avoid drop-out.

Strong partnerships

- Between employment services, the education sector, youth work, social services and health services,
- With NGOs and youth organisations,
- Proactive strategy towards local employers.

Better monitoring

- Monitoring of the extent to which disadvantaged groups are being reached.

5.2.2. An opportunity to up-skill young people

The Youth Guarantee's potential to up-skill young people and to ensure that they gain necessary qualifications could be better exploited. Young people with a lower level of education (ISCED 0-2) represent 43 % of NEETs across the EU (aged 15-24), with rates of over 50 % in Spain, Malta and Germany. They are much more likely to become long-term unemployed or inactive.[234] However, young people with lower secondary education or below represent only 22 % of YEI beneficiaries, i.e. just above half their share in the total NEET population in the EU (41 % for the 15-24).[235]

Similarly, there is a relatively **low prominence of apprenticeship and education offers** (not always leading to qualifications) across a number of Member States. As elaborated on above (see Section 2.1.2), of all timely offers, the majority are to employment (average of 68.7 %), followed by education (16.5 %), traineeships (10.8 %) and apprenticeships (4.1 %). However, such figures should be interpreted with caution, taking into account the challenges associated with categorising offers, especially offers of apprenticeships and continued education offers. In Member States that do not report apprenticeships as a specific type of Youth Guarantee offer, it is still possible for young people registered with the Youth Guarantee to start an apprenticeship. In practice, in these Member States, apprenticeships are considered to be part of the regular education system and are recorded in the monitoring data as offers of continued education.

The Youth Guarantee's potential to up-skill young people can be improved, including through an approach that puts the emphasis first on upskilling. This approach has been taken in a number of Member States, especially in Northern Europe. Currently, low-qualified young people are in some cases encouraged to take up an offer of employment or an offer of training that does not lead to a qualification, an approach that may not benefit them in the long term.[236] Offers of employment to low-qualified young

[234] Eurofound (2016), Exploring the diversity of NEETs, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
[235] According to a study initiated by the Commission. Data samples related to education attainment cover seven Member States only.
[236] Key messages from the Peer Review on the Finnish Youth Guarantee, September 2014.

people lead to less sustainable outcomes since skills gained on the job may be ‘narrow’ and not certified, thus limiting possibilities for future career transitions.[237]

Youth Guarantee offers for low-qualified young people should ensure that they acquire the right skills to succeed in the labour market of today and tomorrow. This could be achieved by offering young people without an upper secondary qualification the same package of measures that would be offered to older low-qualified people under the proposed Skills Guarantee (see box below).[238] Strengthening cooperation with education providers will be important in this regard.

Lessons learnt: Finding the right combination of work, education and training to ensure successful transitions

It can be concluded – on the basis of what can be observed from the various ways that Member States implement the YG – that in order to strengthen the potential of YG schemes of upskilling young people schemes could benefit from being based on:

- A combination of education, guidance, training and work experience in a **real work environment** based on an understanding of how the young person learns best,
- Stronger training elements based on **in-work experiences** for the low-skilled (especially subsidised) that ideally lead to certification/qualification,
- An approach that puts the emphasis **upskilling** first, through the referral of young people without upper secondary education to a quality offer of apprenticeship or continued education (general, vocational or second chance, training), tailored to the young person’s specific situation and building on his/her existing skills. The offer should help them to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and lead to a qualification. Moreover, such an offer should be accompanied by a prior skills audit (thus enabling low-qualified young people to identify their existing skills and their need to upskill) and the validation of non-formal and informal learning and recognition of the skills acquired,
- Strengthened **public employment service guidance** and awareness of education and training offers,

Close cooperation between public employment services, education and vocational education and training providers, and social partners, in order to ensure that quality offers of **continued education and apprenticeships** are aligned with labour market needs.

Strengthening cooperation between the education and labour market sectors would be one key, contributing factor for Youth Guarantee schemes to live up to their full potential. To date, the Youth Guarantee’s delivery has been primarily driven by labour ministries (and, at operational level, the public employment services), with a generally weaker involvement of education and/or youth authorities.

Yet education ministries and schools are key actors in supporting young people’s transition into the labour market. At the national level, education ministries have an

[237] Leigh-Doyle, S., (2013), PES Approaches for Sustainable Activation of Low Skilled Adults and Youths: Work-first or Train-first?, Comparative Paper prepared for the European Commission’s PES to PES Dialogue.
[238] http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1224

important role in designing national skills forecasting instruments and in developing school curricula that will address the skills needs of the future.

At the local level, schools have a central role to play in preventing early school leaving, signalling early exits from the education system, providing guidance to students on professional pathways and relevant services available to them (such as those provided by the public employment services), and ensuring the young people benefit from the full range of opportunities available within Youth Guarantee schemes, most notably offers of continued education (and not only those related to employment and active labour market policies).

Experiences in Member States indicate that strengthening collaboration in the field of career guidance could be key to better preparing students for the challenge of transitioning to the labour market. Many countries opt for an integrated approach with close collaboration between public employment services, schools, career guidance institutions as well as other actors in the education and training sector. Public employment services support schools with additional knowledge about the world of work (including a ‘reality check’ of its difficulties and information on demand for skills), measures and services to prevent drop-out and ensure students leave with a qualification. However, there are large variations in the organisation of guidance services across Europe and only in some Member States is career guidance provision for all students compulsory in order to ensure that large numbers are reached.[239]

Moreover, closer collaboration across sectors **can also improve the identification and follow-up of those who have already dropped out** by ensuring they register with the public employment services and are given options, such as alternative training, work experience or an offer of continued education. This tends to limit the quality and range of continued education (especially non-vocational education or training) offers in many Member States, which tend to focus on offers active labour market policy training.

5.3. Strengthening capacity and partnerships and enhancing the quality of offers

5.3.1. Strengthening stakeholder capacity and partnerships

Strengthening stakeholder capacity

Implementing the Youth Guarantee has helped strengthen cooperation among public institutions, as well as with stakeholders. However, its wide scope has also **exposed pre-existing gaps and inefficiencies in governance structures.** This was particularly the case where implementation rests upon a compilation of measures and programmes, rather than a fully-fledged strategy.

Though the Youth Guarantee implementation plan defines the roles of different actors, in practice both duplication and ‘blurring’ of responsibilities can be observed in several Member States. At operational level, the Youth Guarantee tends to rely strongly on the **public employment services.** The central role played by the public employment services has provided the opportunity to enhance the role of the Youth Guarantee as labour

[239] PES Network Conference Report - Implementation of the Youth Guarantee – Challenges and success factors, 9 December 2015, Brussels.

market 'conductor' in the facilitation and management of partnerships.[240] Yet, although many public employment services have directed further resources into implementing the Youth Guarantee, **capacity remains an issue in view of the large and increasing range of tasks to be undertaken.** Tackling this challenge is a prerequisite for further strengthening the Youth Guarantee.[241]

Moreover, despite progress in this area, **social partners and youth organisations (together with other civil society organisations) were involved only to a limited degree** in many Member States, mostly in the design phase,[242] limiting the Youth Guarantee's effectiveness in particular as regards outreach. Strengthening stakeholders' capacity to engage young people would mean resources and responsibilities could be shared more efficiently.

Effective implementation is also hampered by **territorial imbalances in the rolling-out of the Youth Guarantee** in Member States where regions play a key role. Such disparities underline the importance of promoting **mutual learning at national, regional and local level** to ensure that good practices are spread throughout the country.

Improving partnership design

A review of evidence to date shows that while progress has been made in supporting a partnership approach in the design and implementation of the Youth Guarantee, including the involvement of a wide range of actors (*see Section 2.2.2.1*), **more could be done to improve the design of such partnerships**. Many countries have indeed taken steps towards creating broad multi-stakeholder partnerships both at the national level (to deliver a coordinated policy strategy) and the local level (to support an integrated service delivery). However, many partnerships have failed to have an impact on the ground because of problems linked to their design.

Fruitful cooperation and shared commitment among members of a partnership can be supported by a number of 'design' elements that affect a partnership's functioning and ability to deliver. These elements include a partnership agreement that outlines each member's role and responsibilities and sets clear goals and targets, a lead partner, an independent chair, sufficient resources, and the possibility to hold regular meetings and establish smaller worker groups based on mutual interest and objectives.[243] Incentives, such as funding extras or withdrawals, can also support a partnership by encouraging partners to work together, where future funding is conditional on collaborative work between partners.

As regards partnerships in the context of YEI implementation, there is limited evidence of the extent and success of partnership working to date, often because it is too early to judge the efficiency of such partnerships. In some cases, partnerships are seen as crucial to tailor the YEI provision to the local/regional context (PT), to facilitate greater flexibility in the implementation of activities, in particular in the context of resource constraints (IT) or to ensure the effective implementation of activities by building on pre-existing relationships (IE). Some Member States (LT, PL, SE) seem to have made conscious efforts to promote multi-stakeholder working with the goal of delivering

[240] European Commission (2014), Small Scale Study on PES Business Models.

[241] EMCO's key messages from the Employment Committee on the way forward for the Youth Guarantee post-2016, endorsed by the EPSCO on 7 March 2016.

[242] Eurofound (2015), Social Inclusion of young people.

[243] Peer Review 24-25 September 2015, Oslo on 'Targeting NEETs – Key ingredients for successful partnerships in improving labour market participation', EPPA final report.

tailored approaches for young people. In the context of YEI implementation in particular, France and Spain have intensified partnerships with local NGOs with a view to reaching out to and registering young NEETs who are not registered with the authorities. This is of course not the case in all Member States and also depends on the capacity of NGOs to deliver as partners in implementing such measures.

Strengthening cooperation with employers

Despite progress in this area, further **strengthening cooperation between Youth Guarantee providers and employers** could be key to **expanding the pool of good quality offers for young people**. Although Member States have sought to secure employer engagement though national, regional and municipal agreements, in practice their involvement has been rather limited so far, particularly in the case of SMEs. This results primarily from the economic crisis and a low absorption capacity. However, other factors also come into play. These include difficulties in matching labour demand and supply (this 'skills gaps' is also visible within the VET sector),[244] employers' low awareness of the benefits of engaging with the Youth Guarantee, their limited involvement in the design and delivery of the schemes, and limited structured cooperation with Youth Guarantee providers, especially the public employment services.

Enhanced employer involvement with the Youth Guarantee (be they from the private, public or community/voluntary sector) would not only contribute to helping young people better integrate in the labour market, but would also improve anticipation of future skills shortages. This would increase the labour market's responsiveness to preparatory interventions within the Youth Guarantee and help produce more sustainable results.

Evidence shows that employer involvement can be effectively fostered by a number of measures. However, challenges remain, most notably regarding weak coordination capacity of public employment services' employers services and a lack of tradition and know-how in proactively engaging with employers. The box below provides an overview of lessons learnt relating to employer engagement.

Fostering employer engagement

According to a 2015 study[245] beyond financial incentives, cooperation with employers can be fostered via a number of measures within which the PES have a central role to play:

Beyond financial incentives, cooperation with employers can be fostered via a number of measures,[246] within which the public employment services have a central role to play:

Developing an employer engagement strategy

- appointing an Employer Engagement Officer within the public employment services, who acts as a single contact point and engages in pro-active engagement with employers
- building trusting and mutual beneficial relationships with employers

[244] Eurofound (2015), Social Inclusion of Young People.

[245] European Parliament Preparatory Action on the Youth Guarantee - Case study: Partnering with employers - lessons on effective practices (2015).

[246] European Parliament Preparatory Action on the Youth Guarantee - Case study: Partnering with employers - lessons on effective practices (2015).

- involving employer organisations in national and local Youth Guarantee steering committees
- making a strong business case and recognising the corporate social responsibility opportunities
- creating awards or hallmarks that publicly recognise companies supporting the Youth Guarantee

Providing a 'menu of options' to employers showing how they can be involved, including light-tough cooperation

- participating in job fairs, giving motivational talks
- offering onsite visits to young jobseekers and providing short work sampling/experience opportunities
- helping students and jobseekers improve their job interview skills
- providing mentoring/coaching
- supporting new forms of work-based learning and collaborating in the development and delivery of blended learning opportunities
- providing quality offers of employment, apprenticeship or traineeship (subsidised or not).

Recruitment packages

- advertising vacancies, pre-selection and matching of candidates
- organising interviews, offering preparatory training
- post-placement follow-up of young people.

5.3.2. Better outcomes for young people: enhancing the quality of offers

Youth Guarantee offers can be an opportunity for young people to strengthen their skills and act as a real stepping stone into the labour market. However, there are **large variations among Member States as regards the quality of offers and their outcomes**. While such variations can be assumed to primarily depend on the overall macroeconomic context, they also result from how 'good quality' offers under the Youth Guarantee (including those supported by the YEI) have been defined and whether they are provided in practice.

Pressing challenges in relation to quality include those related to:

- the insufficient duration of employment and education offers provided under the Youth Guarantee (e.g. one-day training or employment),
- the lack of regulation of traineeship offers in the open market as regards transparency of hiring, duration and recognition,[247]
- a lack of recognition of qualifications provided as part of an offer of continued education (e.g. non-certified training), and
- lack of sound monitoring of young people's trajectory after taking up an offer.

While some of these issues have been addressed in the context of the first data collection on Youth Guarantee scheme where definitions were harmonised, challenges remain. Indeed, although clear criteria have been defined at EU level, in particular with regard to

[247] On further challenges in relation to the compliance of national legislation and social partner agreement provisions with the QFT, see the accompanying SWD on the QFT.

apprenticeships and traineeships, it has not been done to the same extent for offers of employment and continued education.

In order for young people to get as much value as possible out of an YG offer, a key aspect would be to introduce better mechanisms at EU and national level to ensure that the offers that they receive are of high quality. The box below highlights a number of quality criteria which could guide such efforts.

There are four types of offers available under the Youth Guarantee: employment, continued education, apprenticeships or traineeships. Several Member States provide offers not included in the Recommendation's list of four offers, including in particular active labour market policy services (such as counselling), rehabilitation workshops or volunteering. Clear guidance was provided through the monitoring process,[248] whereby active labour market policy services are excluded from Youth Guarantee offers.

Good quality Youth Guarantee offers: an overview of existing principles

The quality of a Youth Guarantee offer can be gauged along two dimensions:

- Intrinsic dimension: a quality offer is a personalised offer that meets a young person's individual needs and addresses the specific barriers he/she faces in gaining a strong foothold in the labour market,
- Outcome-based dimension: a quality offer leads to a young person's sustainable integration into the labour market. This qualitative dimension is supported by the common Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee that examines a young person's labour market situation 6, 12 and 18 months after receiving an offer.

In addition to these two dimensions, further guidance and criteria are provided at the EU level in relation to the four types of offer:[249]

- **Employment**: quality criteria include the duration of the contract, type of contract (full or part time), voluntary/involuntary part-time, remuneration level, level and type of qualification required, availability of job-related training.
- **Continued education**: such offers cover pathways to continue/re-enter formal education and training and include quality training programmes leading to recognised vocational qualification and second chance programmes.
- **Apprenticeships**: quality criteria include adequate integration of the apprenticeship into the formal education and training system, high-quality learning content, strong work-based high-quality learning and training component, adequate remuneration and social protection.
- **Traineeships**: quality criteria include a strong learning content, working conditions equivalent to those in regular employment, rights and obligations (financial compensation, illness/accident insurance), duration (not excessively long or repeated traineeships).

[248] European Commission, EMCO, Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee, Methodological Manual, http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14091&langId=en
[249] FAQs on the Youth Guarantee: http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11423&langId=en

Particular attention should be paid in this context to the **quality of demand-side measures**. Such measures should be viewed as social investments which enable young people to improve their employability and put their skills to productive use. This is in contrast to the skills obsolescence and de-motivation that often results from protracted inactivity. Moreover, creating the right kinds of incentives and hiring subsidies should motivate employers to engage in net *new* recruitment, thus creating jobs that would otherwise not be created.[250]

Subsidised schemes have been used by Member States as a means of cushioning the unemployment effects of the economic crisis (usually targeted at disadvantaged groups such as young people and long-term unemployed) and, as such, constitute a major pillar in the implementation of their Youth Guarantee schemes. The Youth Guarantee has also led to improvements in terms of design compared to previous schemes, such as a strengthening of their training component and follow-up. Moreover, hiring subsidies have been combined with additional measures to support young people in order to make their impact more sustainable.

However, more can be done to further increase the impact of such subsidised schemes. , and it would then be all the more important to avoid large deadweight and substitution effects in an improving macroeconomic context.

Furthermore, there is some concern about the impact in particular of the YEI funding support (notably hiring subsidies but also training support). This particularly concerns longer-term outcomes in a context of continued economic difficulties, fiscal consolidation and reduced public spending in some Member States (e.g. EL, IT). The YEI (and ESF funding) may not play a sustainable role where lack of labour demand remains unsolved and sustainable job prospects for young people are still very limited.

Lessons learnt: making subsidised schemes work[251]

Subsidies can take a number of forms, such as reducing social security contributions for employers or direct payments to participants.

To foster sustainable results, subsidised schemes should:

- be conditional on keeping the young person in employment for some period after the end of the subsidy and subject to monitoring/evaluation;
- be sufficiently targeted (in particular towards those further from the labour market) to avoid deadweight and substitution effects;
- provide the opportunity to learn on the job, and ideally combine the practical experience with theoretical training;
- encompass profiling and counselling/coaching;
- have a duration that is sufficient for a young person to prove her/himself sufficiently in the company;

[250] COM (2012) 173 Towards a job-rich recovery.

[251] HoPES note on criteria for sustainable wage subsidies, October 2013, results from the following Peer Reviews: Jobs for the Future Scheme, February 2014, Job creation incentives: how to better integrate policies to create sustainable jobs, June 2014. Stimulating job demand: the design of effective hiring subsidies in Europe - EEPO Review (01/07/2014) http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7713

- be certified and ideally lead to a qualification (otherwise, units of learning outcomes could be assessed, validated and accumulated so that eventually they will lead to qualification).