

# Social inclusion of young people







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## Country codes

### Country codes for EU Member States

<b>AT</b>	Austria
<b>BE</b>	Belgium
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus
<b>CZ</b>	Czech Republic
<b>DE</b>	Germany
<b>DK</b>	Denmark
<b>EE</b>	Estonia
<b>EL</b>	Greece
<b>ES</b>	Spain
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<b>HU</b>	Hungary

<b>IE</b>	Ireland
<b>IT</b>	Italy
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<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg
<b>LV</b>	Latvia
<b>MT</b>	Malta
<b>NL</b>	Netherlands
<b>PL</b>	Poland
<b>PT</b>	Portugal
<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>SK</b>	Slovakia
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008, young people have experienced difficulties in gaining a foothold in the labour market. While the situation has improved in recent times, in some Member States the youth unemployment rates are still a cause for concern. As a result of the crisis, young people are now the group at highest risk of social exclusion in Europe. The disengagement of young people can have serious consequences for an individual, for society and for the economy as a whole.

This report investigates the social inclusion of young people in Europe. It first reviews the situation facing young people in Europe today and the cumulative disadvantages arising from disengagement from the labour market and education. It then goes on to explore recent EU strategies aimed at promoting the social inclusion of young people, focusing in particular on the operation of the Youth Guarantee initiative to combat youth unemployment in 10 EU Member States. Finally, the report examines several broader approaches to support social inclusion, including strands designed to promote youth empowerment and participation in society.

## Policy context

The Europe 2020 strategy commits EU Member States to lifting at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion. Unfortunately, this target is likely to be missed because since the crisis the share of people at risk of social exclusion has increased. To tackle the worsening situation, the EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018 was developed with the objective of providing opportunities in education and the labour market and to support young people in becoming active citizens. The emphasis has been on promoting youth employment as the key pathway to achieving social inclusion. In this regard, major efforts have been made by the European Commission and Member States to implement the Youth Guarantee, an umbrella policy for fighting youth unemployment. Moreover, policymakers have started to pay more attention to the broad approach needed to address the challenge of youth unemployment and social exclusion.

## Key findings

### Exclusion is harmful for young people

While young people can deal relatively well with short spells of unemployment, lasting unemployment or disengagement has a strong negative impact on their future labour market outcomes and their well-being generally. Evidence shows that the more protracted the disengagement is, the more serious are its consequences. In particular, long-term disengagement from the labour market results in financial strain and a lower level of psychological and social well-being for young people that can be long-lasting.

### Social inclusion through employment

Given the high unemployment rates, Member States have emphasised concrete initiatives for reintegrating young people into the labour market, as well as for their inclusion in education and training. In this regard, the Youth Guarantee aims to provide all young people up to the age of 25 with a good quality offer within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Evidence collected across 10 countries reveals that Member States are following their own strategies in implementing the scheme.

The need for major reforms to improve the capacity and capability of public employment services (PES) and increase the provision of apprenticeships, vocational education and training (VET)

and education opportunities has arisen in many countries, as well as the need for more effective partnerships among stakeholders.

In terms of concrete measures, most countries are focusing on improving young people's school-to-work transitions and introducing dual apprenticeship systems. Greater effort is needed, however, to reach the most vulnerable age groups.

### **A broader approach to social inclusion**

There is a need for initiatives for social inclusion which go beyond the labour market. However, evidence from the case studies does not indicate a clear trend of growing public investment in this field. Overall, social inclusion policies include the following: community-based measures, with a focus on civic participation and community development; personalised training and life skills programmes; awareness-raising and advocacy measures with the aim of tackling structural barriers to youth inclusion; and training and capacity building for professionals working with socially excluded young people.

All these initiatives, mainly provided by non-profit organisations, feature mentoring and counselling support, volunteering and civic engagement, education and housing as the main entry points. The general tools used are based on human relations (information, counselling, capacity building), further supported by the provision of resources (financial assistance, facilities).

### **Policy pointers**

- A stronger focus on social inclusion is needed at EU level to help all young people to become active members of society and to facilitate easier entry into the labour market. The social investment approach is a promising starting point for this, as it affirms the principle that investing in early life stages has effects on later social outcomes.
- Regarding Youth Guarantee implementation, Member States should refrain from adopting a narrow, employment-centred approach but rather adopt a broader, holistic approach which aims to also reach those who are not job-ready and are more difficult to reintegrate.
- Major reforms are needed to implement the Youth Guarantee, including reforms to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of the PES and the absorption capacity of VET and education systems.
- For a successful Youth Guarantee, Member States need to ensure that national, regional and local actors work together in partnership. This will require time and further effort, especially in including social partners and youth organisations.
- Young people, including those currently disengaged from the labour market, are not a homogeneous group and therefore need targeted interventions. Youth Guarantee schemes previously in place in some Nordic countries have shown that a personalised approach works well.
- Sustainability of policy interventions is key for the successful integration of young people into the labour market. In the framework of the Youth Guarantee, Member States need to ensure that the opportunities created are of good quality and ultimately lead to sustainable employment.
- While significant EU funding is available for the Youth Guarantee implementation through the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative, Member States also need to prioritise youth employment using national resources. Broader measures for the social inclusion



of young people seem to be affected by financial constraints also linked to fiscal consolidation and prioritising employment-related initiatives.

- Good practices promoting the broader social inclusion of young people exist but they deserve more support in terms of public investment. These initiatives are in many cases run by private non-profit actors and involve diverse partnerships. Yet, scaling up these initiatives has been challenging due to a lack of financial stability and lack of support from public authorities.
- An approach that puts much more emphasis on motivation and the active engagement of beneficiaries, as well as networks of human relations (between peers, social workers and service agencies) works better than the traditional, conditionality approach and could inspire broader social policies.
- Financial constraints are not the only obstacle to initiatives that promote active engagement. Resistance from adults and institutions can also be a challenge. Much more can be done to increase the sensitivity of policymakers and social service workers towards the participation of young people.



# Introduction

While concepts of poverty and disadvantage have a long history, the use of the term ‘social exclusion’ is quite recent and originally emerged in France to describe those who were excluded from the social insurance system (Lenoir, 1974). These were the disabled, lone parents and the uninsured unemployed. Such people, known as *les exclus* by virtue of their lack of opportunities, were excluded from a broad range of areas of social and economic participation (Saunders et al, 2007). The concept of social exclusion goes beyond the concept of poverty, taking on board the consequences of poverty which prevent the individual from participating fully in society.

In recent decades, the concept of social inclusion has continuously evolved within the policy agenda of the European Union and its Member States and is now firmly anchored in the European governance system. While the initial milestone of this development can be traced back to 1975 with the first anti-poverty programme of the European Union and the adoption of a common definition of poverty, it was with the Lisbon Council conclusion of March 2000 that social exclusion became a major topic on the policy agenda. Since then, Member States have worked together and shared experiences within the framework of the open method of coordination. Furthermore, with the Europe 2020 strategy EU heads of states and governments committed themselves to reducing poverty and social exclusion in the EU by at least 20 million people by 2020. This target is one of three integrated objectives (together with employment and education) to contribute to inclusive growth in the EU, defined as ‘building a cohesive society in which people are empowered to anticipate and manage change and consequently to actively participate in society and the economy’ (Council of the European Union, 2010).

Despite its central role in the current European political discourse, due to the economic crisis, social exclusion is increasing in many parts of the European Union, both within and between Member States. The labour market prospects of many EU citizens are endangered, leading to increasing inequalities and the marginalisation of certain groups and/or communities.

Among these groups, young people have suffered the most during the crisis period and their risk of social inclusion has increased the most during the period 2008–2012. While in 2013 24.5% of the entire population in Europe were at risk of poverty and social exclusion (according to Eurostat’s AROPE indicator – see p. 14 below), this value was almost 4 percentage points higher for youth: 28.2%. Moreover, the population of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) reached a level of around 15 million among those aged 15–29 (Eurofound, 2012a).

The route to adulthood is often conceptualised as one where various investments are made. These investments can be understood as different forms of capital and it is the possession of economic, human and social forms of capital (and their combination) that defines a young person’s place in the social topography. While various mechanisms can hinder the acquisition of these forms of capital, the first consequence of being socially excluded is that further economic, social and human capital acquisition is hindered.

The consequences of young people’s disengagement can be dramatic for the individual, the society and the economy. The results of their exclusion include a wide range of social disadvantages, such as disaffection, insecure and poor future employment, youth offending, and mental and physical health problems, and it can seriously undermine a young person’s future prospects.

In particular, evidence from literature reveals that the consequences of being socially excluded are not a temporary problematic situation, but may have wide-ranging effects over the life course. Studies on the future incidence of unemployment based on experiences of youth unemployment find that,

depending on certain background characteristics, an extra three months of youth unemployment (before the age of 23) leads to an additional 1.3 months out of work between the ages of 28 and 33 (Nickell et al, 1999). Young workers who had lost their jobs and experienced a spell of unemployment tended to work at a lower rate of pay and often suffered a permanent pay reduction. Gregg and Tominey (2004) estimate that youth unemployment imposes a negative impact of 12%–15% on individual wages by the age of 42 years; this penalty is lower, at 8%–10%, if individuals avoid a repeated incidence of unemployment. Furthermore, exclusion not only has negative consequences on employment perspectives but it also creates psychological distress, such as feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, restlessness, anxiety and depression (Creed and Reynolds, 2001; Hagquist and Starrin, 1996; Hammer, 2000; Furnham, 1994), as well as the risk of being involved in asocial lifestyles that might lead to further social exclusion.

To prevent the lifelong exclusion of youth, it is vital that Member States are equipped with strategies and tools for ‘adequately assessing the realities and addressing existing challenges in a more proactive, constructive and holistic way, so that they may become better prepared for new challenges and more resilient in confronting them and better able to adjust to emerging imbalances’ (United Nations, 2010).

In this regard, with the European Youth Strategy 2010–2018 (European Commission, 2009; European Parliament, 2010) the EU has taken a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to the empowerment and social inclusion of young people. While one of the goals of the Youth Strategy is to provide educational and labour market opportunities for young people, the other one goes beyond these aspects and recalls the importance of encouraging young people to participate actively in society more broadly. The strategy has eight fields of action: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, and creativity and culture. Social inclusion of all young people is a specific ‘field of action’ which is addressed in interconnection with the other fields in the wider ‘participation’ context.

The European Youth Strategy has been implemented along two directions at the EU level. Firstly, due to the crisis and rising youth unemployment levels, there has been a strong emphasis on promoting youth employment through employability and education-to-labour market transitions as the key pathway to achieve social inclusion for young people. This has been the focus, for instance, of the 2010 Council Resolution on the ‘active inclusion of young people: combating unemployment and poverty’ and of the various EU initiatives that have followed (Youth on the Move flagship initiative (European Commission, 2010), the Youth Opportunities Initiative (European Commission, 2011), the Youth Employment Package (European Commission, 2012j), the Youth Employment Initiative (European Commission, 2013g)).

Central to this strategy is the implementation of the European Youth Guarantee at the national level, whose aim is to fight youth unemployment. The Youth Guarantee aims to provide an opportunity to all young people within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education. This opportunity can be a good quality offer of a job, further education or work-focused training. The European Youth Guarantee takes inspiration from the well-functioning and previously established models of Sweden, Finland and Austria. Interestingly, these three countries are characterised by very low levels of long-term unemployment among young people.

As part of a holistic view, the implementation of the Youth Strategy is characterised by a broader approach towards social inclusion. This broader approach has been continued by expanding support for youth participation and by covering a large range of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature – by, with, and for young people. Increasingly, such activities also include sports and services for young people. In addition, special initiatives have been taken at EU level to fight child poverty and prevent social exclusion of youth. A further impetus for a broad, yet youth-specific inclusion policy was recently provided by the Social Investment Package (SIP). It is true, as some stakeholders interviewed in this study pointed out, that the SIP focuses on childhood rather than youth. This nonetheless reiterates the important approach of early investment in young people's lives with the aim of preventing the accumulation of multiple disadvantages. This was also stressed at the 2013 Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, where one workshop was specifically devoted to 'Policy solutions for youth experiencing disadvantage'.

Moreover, the provision of adequate income support for young people is also key in preventing the social exclusion of this group. The importance of adequate income support was stressed by the Commission's 2008 active inclusion recommendation which 'recognize[d] the individual's basic right to resources and social assistance sufficient to lead a life that is compatible with human dignity as part of a comprehensive, consistent drive to combat social exclusion' (European Commission, 2008). While this report does not focus on access to income support measures, the annex provides a discussion of recent developments in this area.

According to this framework, the aim of this report is to discuss the concept of social inclusion and to highlight and discuss initiatives recently implemented in Europe that aim to promote the social inclusion of young people. The report is organised as follows: Chapter 1 discusses the situation of young people in Europe today and provides an overview of the origins of the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion and of key themes and emerging debates on social inclusion in Europe. The chapter also discusses the concept of social inclusion of young people and the consequences of their exclusion in detail. Chapter 2 gives an overview of how the concept of social inclusion entered the European policy agenda and discusses recent EU strategies that aim to promote the social inclusion of young people. The chapter also discusses social inclusion through employment. Chapter 3 focuses on the Youth Guarantee and investigates its early implementation in 10 selected Member States. In particular, the chapter investigates the different starting points of Member States in its implementation and the first concrete measures put in place. In addition, challenges and barriers to successful Youth Guarantee implementation are discussed. Chapter 4 gives an overview of initiatives for a broader approach to social inclusion and presents and discusses selected initiatives in 11 Member States that promote social inclusion among young people. The report concludes with a discussion of lessons learned from this research that points to factors that favour the successful promotion of social inclusion of young people.



# Social inclusion of young people: Concept, challenges, indicators

Young people have been hit hard by the economic crisis. At the European level, the labour market participation of young people slumped from 37.2% in 2007 to 32.5% in 2014. Youth unemployment soared from 15.6% in 2007 to 21.6% in 2014, showing that young people are the group which has been worst affected by the economic crisis. As access to paid employment is the first step towards the acquisition of financial independence, which forms the basis for a full transition into adulthood, concerns over the consequences of this weaker labour market participation are manifold, not least the observed decline in youth living and working conditions.

In fact, lack of participation in the labour market and education hold young people back from accumulating human, social and economic capital. The longer the period of disengagement from the labour market and education, the higher is the risk of social exclusion. This is particularly true for young people who accumulate several disadvantages such as disability, immigration background and low educational level, which may compromise or pose additional difficulties to entering the labour market and for a successful transition into and through adulthood. Supporting social inclusion of youth, through a holistic approach which includes initiatives for their reintegration in the labour market and education, such as the Youth Guarantee, or broader initiatives for their reintegration in society, is key to fighting youth exclusion which, if protracted, can result in lifelong exclusion.

This chapter reviews the concept and various definitions of social inclusion, before discussing what social inclusion means for youth and what the consequences of their exclusion are. It describes measures of social inclusion and presents a wider set of indicators depicting the situation of young people in the labour market and their living conditions.

## Concept of social inclusion

The concept of social inclusion is nowadays central to the European policy agenda, as well as the discourse and advocacy of other international organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations (UN), UNESCO and the World Bank (IILS, 1997; Estivill, 2003).

The terms 'social inclusion' and 'social exclusion' are used in very different ways by different people. For some, social exclusion is synonymous with poverty, while others emphasise the aspect of inadequate social participation originating from a lack of social integration and lack of power. While related to poverty, social exclusion is a quite distinct concept that is also linked to the important notions of social capital, trust and social participation. While the concepts of poverty, deprivation and disadvantage have a long history, despite its current centrality in the political discourse the concept of social inclusion is relatively recent.

According to Pantazis et al (2006), discussion of the modern use of the concept of social inclusion originated in France with the publication of *Les exclus* (Lenoir, 1974). The publication draws attention to those excluded from social protection and their lack of opportunities to participate in society. In this regard, the rupture of social inclusion was seen to reflect ruptures in solidarity and the social bond (Allman, 2013). Around the same time, in the UK, the concept of social exclusion arose from the work of Townsend, who argued that the understanding of poverty should go beyond material poverty to include people's inability to participate in the life of society. According to Townsend, individuals can be considered as poor when their resources are so scarce that they are excluded from ordinary living patterns and activities (Townsend, 1979).

Since the 1980s, the concept of social inclusion has been increasingly used in Europe, including at EU level, to capture the consequences of poverty, together with its multifaceted dimensions. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the term has since been increasingly adopted in mainstream European policy frameworks.

Going beyond the EU, although the concept of social inclusion has gained relatively little traction in the United States, increasing attention has been paid to the possible relevance of the concept for social policy analysis in developing countries (IILS, 1997; IDS, 1998), and it has been widely adopted by development agencies and in development studies as another way of understanding and reducing poverty (Jackson, 1999, p. 125). In Australia, the interest in social inclusion or exclusion has been more recent than in Europe and the UK (Bradshaw, 2003) and the concept gained policy interest in the first decade of this century.

### Defining social inclusion

Social inclusion is a broad concept with multiple definitions which have evolved continually over time and vary considerably depending on the policy context (Hayes et al, 2008). Social inclusion is often defined through its opposite, social exclusion. One of the challenges facing social inclusion agendas is that there is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes social exclusion. Equally, the definition of social exclusion also varies in available literature. Social exclusion has been defined as ‘the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live’ (de Haan, 1998; Francis, 1997). Davis (2011) puts forward an argument that the notion of social exclusion has been developed to expand research on poverty beyond financial aspects. Silver (1994) argues that social inclusion stems from complex interactions between status, class and political power. Interestingly, social exclusion has also been linked to both groups’ social identity (such as gender, race and religion) and social location (rural areas). The UN has proposed yet another dimension to be kept in mind – social status, which can include health status or level of occupation (United Nations, 2004).

Atkinson (1998) also made the important point that exclusion may be the ‘property of a group of individuals rather than of individuals’ and it therefore may manifest itself at a community level (geographical or social community). Another common theme in discussions of social exclusion is that it is multidimensional and reflects a combination of interrelated factors (Saunders, 2003). The features outlined above also emphasise that social exclusion is a process rather than an outcome at a particular point in time (such as living in poverty), and understanding what is causing the social exclusion of an individual or group is important. Social exclusion can therefore be looked at from both an individual and a collective perspective. Policies that address the former focus on tackling the individual lack of access or capacity to access the opportunities brought about by being included in society. From the collective perspective, social exclusion can hamper and break the glue that holds society together. In connection with this, it is important to recognise that social exclusion encompasses those who are excluded (individuals) and the excluders (more systemic factors).

In this framework, one of the more influential definitions is that of the UK Social Exclusion Unit, which defined social exclusion as a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown (Social Exclusion Unit, 1997).

Estivill (2003), exploring the transferability of the concept beyond Europe, offers a less individualised but more abstract definition: ‘Social exclusion may be understood as an accumulation of confluent



processes with successive ruptures arising from the heart of the economy, politics and society, which gradually distances and places persons, groups, communities and territories in a position of inferiority in relation to centres of power, resources and prevailing values' (p. 19).

Moreover, Sen (1999) noted that social exclusion may occur as a result of a lack of the capabilities required to participate in the experiences that lead to social inclusion. Furthermore, Levitas (2006) offered the following definition:

*Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in society, whether in economic, social, cultural, or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.*

Despite the fact that social exclusion has been defined in many different and complex ways, there seems to be consensus that social exclusion goes beyond income poverty and that there are other dimensions involved. Social exclusion manifests itself through a series of interlinked problems, and it is an accumulation of challenges: a dynamic process over time that carries a risk of producing scarring effects on generations (Markovic and Evrard, 2014).

Cameron further argues that due to an inadequate understanding of what is meant by social inclusion, attention has been focused on the problems and deficits of being 'excluded' (Cameron, 2006, p. 397). Moreover, it has been argued that the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion are no less ambiguous than the concept of poverty. Importantly, from a European perspective, social exclusion is country-specific. One has to bear in mind the specificities of the Member States and the fact that different countries may apply definitions and consequently policies that are based on a set of national or ideological notions of what it means to be socially included or excluded.

Taking into account these problems and limitations, the European Commission's Joint Report on Social Inclusion (Council of the European Union, 2004) defines social inclusion as:

*a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights.*

This definition reflects the multidimensional nature of social inclusion with a 'large number of factors, such as income and living standards, the need for educational and decent work opportunities, effective social protection systems, housing, access to good quality health and other services, as well as active citizenship', playing a role (European Parliament and the Council, 2008). After having embraced the concept of social inclusion, like other international actors and country-level policies, the European Union has started focusing on 'a variety of individuals and groups who are unable to fully participate in their societies' activities' (World Bank, 2007). Traditionally, several groups have received special policy attention as so-called at-risk groups for social exclusion. These at-risk groups generally include: the unemployed, people with disabilities, ethnic/language minorities (such as Roma), migrants and those with a migration background, drug abusers, the homeless, (disadvantaged) children and youth, the elderly, women, single-parent families and families with

a large number of children, and people leaving institutions (such as care or correction facilities) (European Commission, 2014a; World Bank, 2007).

### Social inclusion/exclusion and young people

From the perspective of a young person, social inclusion can be understood as a process of realising one's potential within society and recognition by the society of that potential and the contribution that young people make. This contribution can manifest itself through work, study, volunteering and other forms of participation. The concept of social inclusion resonates in a particular way with young people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. For those groups, social inclusion also means tackling and dealing with specific and additional barriers so that they can fulfil their full potential.

The route to adulthood is often conceptualised as one where various investments in human, economic and social capital are made (Eurofound, 2014a). For instance, individuals succeed in the labour market and are socially included due to their educational, social and psychological characteristics, resources and opportunities (Côté, 2000). It is the possession of human, economic and social capital which defines a young person's place in the social topography (Bourdieu, 1986). It is well established that, when the acquisition of these forms of capital is hindered, young people's potential is lost and the risk of youth ending up socially excluded increases (Eurofound, 2012a).

As outlined above, social inclusion is a multidimensional concept in that it affects many areas of life: economic, cultural and social. If protracted, it can lead to lifelong exclusion. For this reason, the social exclusion of young people should be a deep source of concern for society and should be tackled vigorously.

There is general agreement in the literature that spending protracted time in a status of disengagement from employment and education, hence without accumulating human capital through formal channels, can lead to exclusion and have long-lasting consequences for youth (OECD, 2010; Eurofound, 2012a). In particular, there is widespread agreement that early exclusion from the labour market can have a long-term 'scarring' effect on young people's labour market performance both in terms of labour force participation and future earnings (Smith, 1985; Gardecki and Neumark, 1997; Arulampalam et al, 2001). Moreover, early exclusion from the labour market poses a 'wage penalty' on future earnings and this wage penalty persists even if individuals do not become unemployed again. Empirical evidence for the wage penalty is found by Gregg and Tominey (2004) who estimate that youth unemployment imposes a negative impact of 12%–15% on individual wages by the age of 42 years; this penalty is lower, at 8%–10%, if individuals avoid a repeated incidence of unemployment. The notions of scarring and wage penalties are extremely important because they imply that early exclusion from the labour market is not only a temporarily problematic situation but can have wide-reaching effects over the life course, hence confirming the risk of lifelong consequences arising from early social exclusion.

Furthermore, the social exclusion of young people has negative consequences on their physical and mental health. In this respect, exclusion not only has adverse economic consequences for the individual, but it also creates psychological distress such as feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, restlessness, anxiety and depression (Creed and Reynolds, 2001; Hagquist and Starrin, 1996; Hammer, 2000; Furnham, 1994; Becker, 1989). Moreover, because it prevents people from accumulating social and human capital, being excluded is often associated with other risk behaviours such as drug and alcohol misuse. Research also reveals an inextricable link between disengagement and criminal activities (Fergusson et al, 2001; Mitchell et al, 2002; Winefield, 1997). Generally, youth offending

is often linked to educational underachievement and studies have shown a causal link between an individual's education and labour market prospects and their probability of turning to economic-related crime. Conversely, disengagement not only makes crime more likely, but a criminal record also makes future disengagement more likely. Many studies agree that incarceration at a young age is very likely to have a long-term and significant impact on an individual's life, which may lead to further and lifelong exclusion (Fletcher et al, 1998; Sampson and Laub, 1995; Western et al, 2001; Western, 2002).

Being excluded may also be associated with early motherhood for women. Bynner and Parsons (2002) show that disengagement from the labour market and education has a negative effect on the adult outcomes associated with identity capital formation, particularly for young women. For them, the disengagement not only affects their labour market outcomes but is also linked to early marriage or cohabiting, feelings of dissatisfaction with life, lack of a sense of control and other problems in life.

Finally, at the societal level, the consequences of social exclusion in terms of the participation of young people in society are a major concern. In contemporary societies, accumulation of human and social capital and paid employment represents an 'entry ticket' to a number of activities and influences an individual's skills, abilities and social standing. Young people who are disengaged from the labour market and education must relinquish the possibility of participating in a number of activities and they are excluded from the relationships and social networks created in the work or educational environment (Bay and Blekesaune, 2002; Eurofound, 2012a). As a result of these monetary and non-monetary barriers to participation in society, young people who are disengaged from the labour market and education are more likely to accumulate traumatic experiences, which may turn into a general disaffection with and resentment towards society as a whole and the governments that represent it. There is a danger that this resentment may lead some young people to opt out of participation in civil society or to engage at the extremes of the political spectrum.

In this regard, fighting social exclusion and fostering the accumulation of human, social and economic capital of youth is crucial. The role of education is critical as it equips young people with resources including skills, knowledge and attitudes, which are all resources that young people use in other life domains when moving into adulthood. Furthermore, the role of employment is central as it provides income to reach financial independence and the means to obtain the above-mentioned entry ticket for full participation in the wide range of activities in society. Also extremely important is the role of social capital, which permits young people to be fully engaged in society through active citizenship (Putnam, 1995).

## Measuring the social inclusion of young people

Measuring social inclusion is critical to determine the challenges that individuals are facing and to provide a suitable framework for identifying outcomes and processes to design policies aimed at preventing exclusion.

If disentangling poverty and social exclusion is conceptually difficult, establishing appropriate measures and indicators is even more challenging. Given the complexity and multidimensionality of the concept, social inclusion cannot be measured directly. Measurement of social inclusion is context-specific and depends on variables such as time, place and identity. For example, the concepts of exclusion and inclusion can be understood differently in different parts of Europe, and an issue that is relevant today may no longer be relevant in 15 years. Moreover, social inclusion and exclusion are multidimensional concepts which go beyond poverty and labour market participation, and as

such they require sets of indicators rather than single ones. For these reasons, social inclusion is usually measured with different data sources and various indicators. Which indicators are chosen, and which are seen as the most important ones, depends on the understanding of both the nature of social exclusion and its causal connection with poverty, which frequently remains implicit rather than explicit (Levitas, 2006).

Moreover, social inclusion can vary according to gender, location, age and ethnicity. Disaggregating outcomes by identity is a way of identifying the groups more at risk. For this reason, the social inclusion of young people can be different, and measured with different indicators, than the social inclusion of adults or of elderly people.

### **AROPE indicator**

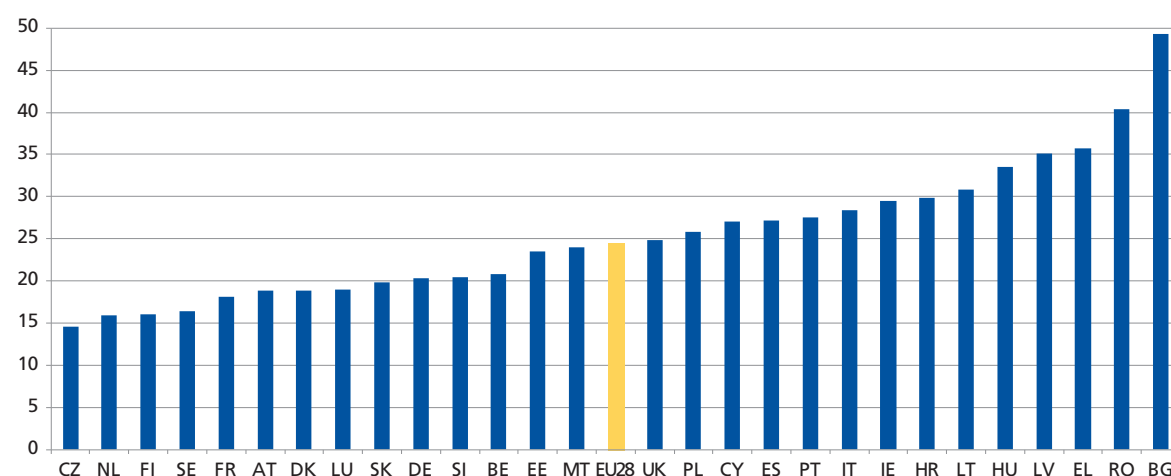
The measurement of social inclusion has been widely discussed at the EU level. In June 2010, following the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Council adopted a social inclusion target of lifting at least 20 million people from the risk of poverty and exclusion by 2020. As part of the social inclusion strand of the open method of coordination, social inclusion is measured through 13 primary indicators encompassing various dimensions of employment, education, housing and deprivation (the Eurostat AROPE indicator; see below) and one headline indicator. To monitor progress towards the target of the Europe 2020 agenda, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council configuration (EPSCO) of the Council of the European Union agreed on an 'at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion' indicator (AROPE), which measures the share/number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU. This is sourced from the EU Statistics on Income and Living conditions (EU-SILC).<sup>1</sup> The AROPE consists of three subindicators measuring monetary poverty, material deprivation and exclusion from labour market.

According to Eurostat, in 2013 there were about 122 million people in the EU28, equivalent to 24.5% of the entire population, who were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Among them, 14 million were both at risk of poverty and living in households with very low work intensity; about 13 million were at risk of poverty and severely materially deprived; just under three million were both severely materially deprived and in households with very low work intensity; and eight million were experiencing all three poverty and social exclusion situations. Clearly there are marked differences between countries: the proportion of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion varies from 40% or above in Romania and Bulgaria, to 20% or less in Slovakia, Luxembourg, Denmark, Austria, France, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic (Figure 1). The comparison with 2008 reveals that, despite remaining almost unchanged at the European level, 20 countries have seen their AROPE indicator increase. The highest increases have been recorded in Greece (+7 percentage points) and Ireland (+6 points). Conversely, Poland (-5 points) and Romania (-4 points) recorded a marked decrease in the share of the population at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> EU-SILC is frequently used as a reference for comparative data on income distribution and social inclusion in the EU. The survey collects data at household and household members' level, including data on income, labour market participation, education, health, housing and material deprivation. Additional information is included in its annual ad-hoc modules.

Figure 1: AROPE indicator, EU28, 2013 (%)



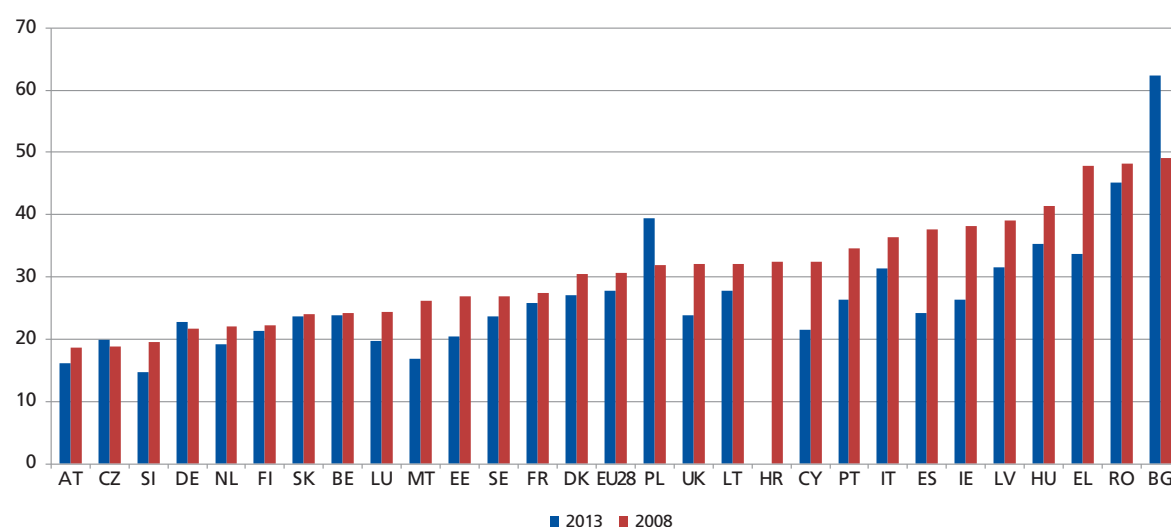
Source: Eurostat

Following the Eurostat framework, the youth AROPE rate refers to the proportion of the youth population which is either at risk of poverty, severely materially deprived or living in a household with very low work intensity.

Comparing data for this age group (16–24) with other age cohorts shows that young people are the group most at risk of poverty and social exclusion today. The contrast with people aged 65 and older is particularly stark and the gap between the two groups has actually increased in the majority of countries in recent years.

While 23 Member States had a higher proportion of young people in this category in 2013 compared with 2008, the situation varies widely between countries. In 2013, the lowest proportion of at-risk youth was observed in Austria at 18.6%, while the highest share was reported in Bulgaria, where nearly half of all young people (49.1%) were at risk. Figure 2 gives an overview of the situation in 2013 and change since 2008 with regard to this indicator across Member States.

Figure 2: Youth AROPE rate, EU28, 2008 and 2013 (%)



Source: Eurostat

### Further indicators related to social inclusion of youth

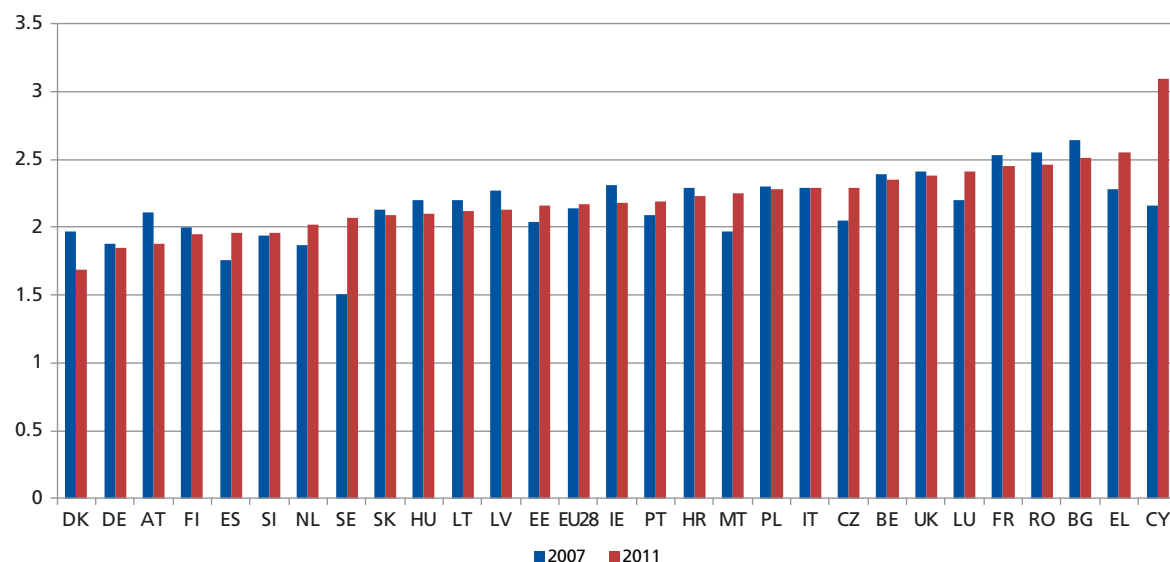
Given the multidimensional nature of social inclusion, to better understand the situation for youth today, it is important to expand the understanding of the phenomenon by going beyond the analysis of a single indicator. For this reason, it is important to widen the picture provided by the AROPE indicator and to look at a range of other indicators describing aspects of social exclusion and specific subgroups most at risk which may complement the situation of young people in relation to social inclusion.

Earlier reports on the subject have found that there is an overall lack of comparative data, in particular with the desired level of detail for specific subgroups. For instance, young people with severe disadvantages have been described as ‘statistically invisible’, for example young people in care or leaving care. Nonetheless, a number of insightful indicators exist, shedding light on the situation with regard to social inclusion of young people in Europe. This report provides a comparative picture of further indicators related to the social inclusion of young people, including the perceived social exclusion of young people and the NEET group. Furthermore, five dimensions of social inclusion are analysed: employment, education, housing, health and social participation.

### Perceived social exclusion

The perceived social exclusion index based on Eurofound’s European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) represents a valuable complement to the AROPE rate. The index measures the extent to which young people *feel* excluded, based on responses to several questions.<sup>2</sup> In 2011, the lowest levels of perceived social exclusion were found among young respondents from Denmark, Germany, Austria and Finland and the highest among those from Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Perceived social exclusion index among young people, EU28, 2007 and 2011)**



Note: 1 = ‘strongly disagree’; 5 = ‘strongly agree’.

Source: Authors’ own elaboration

<sup>2</sup> The perceived social exclusion index refers to the overall average score from responses to the four statements: ‘I feel left out of society’, ‘Life has become so complicated today that I almost can’t find my way’, ‘I don’t feel that the value of what I do is recognised by others’, ‘Some people look down on me because of my job situation or income’, where 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 = ‘strongly agree’.



On the whole, few young people agree that they feel excluded from society, but many of them say that their life has become so complicated that they almost cannot find their way (20% of all young people), and that the value of what they do is not recognised by others (21%). A feeling of being excluded from society is most prevalent for unemployed young people (13%), and feeling that their value is not being recognised is most common among inactive young people (30%) (Eurofound, 2014b). The comparison with 2007 reveals that the perception of social exclusion among youth increased slightly at EU level in the period 2007–2011. The increase in the perception of social exclusion was more marked in southern European countries, such as Cyprus and Greece.

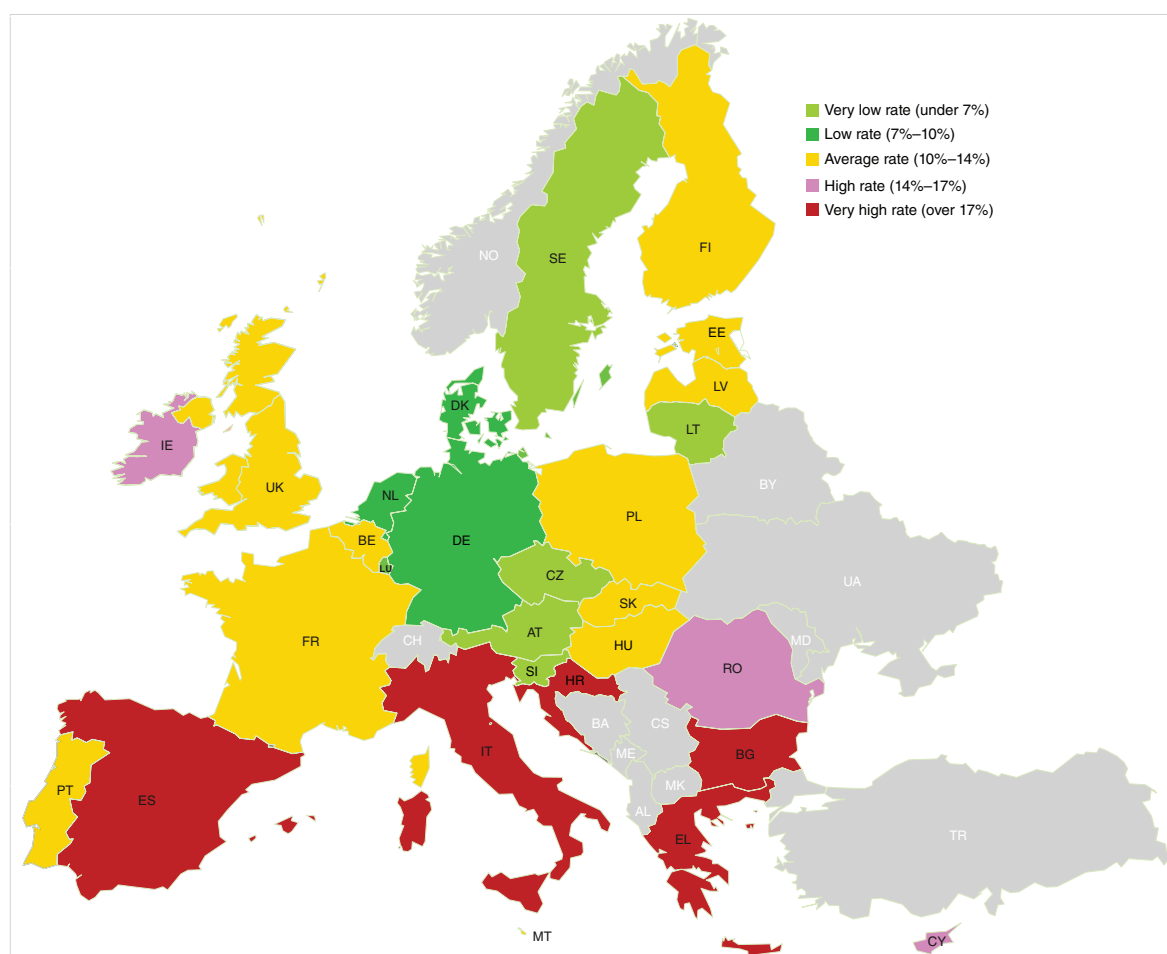
## NEETs

NEETs are those young people not in employment, education and training, who do not acquire human capital through formal channels and are more likely to accumulate several disadvantages (Eurofound, 2012a). As their accumulation of human, social and economic capital is hindered, NEETs are the population most at risk of social exclusion. The list of NEETs at risk of social exclusion is very long and includes young unemployed, people with disabilities, young carers, young people with an immigration background, homeless youth, young offenders and so on. In this regard, Eurofound (2012a) identified three categories of NEETs who are most at risk of social exclusion:

- the conventionally unemployed, which can be further subdivided into long-term and short-term unemployed;
- the unavailable, which includes young carers, young people with family responsibilities and young people who are sick or disabled;
- the disengaged, which can be those young people who are not seeking jobs or education and are not constrained from doing so by other obligations or incapacities; this group includes discouraged workers and other young people who are pursuing dangerous and asocial lifestyles.

The NEET population aged 15–24 has increased considerably since the onset of the recession. It rose from 10.9% in 2007 to 12.4% in 2014 across the EU (Eurostat data). In many Member States, NEET rates are still close to the upper levels recorded since 2008. This is particularly true for some Member States with the highest rates: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Romania and Spain. In particular, the rate has risen significantly during the crisis in some European countries: from 2007 to 2014, the rate increased from 11.5% to 19.1% in Greece, from 12% to 17.1% in Spain, from 10.7% to 15.2% in Ireland, and from 16.2% to 22.1% in Italy. Conversely, low and decreasing levels of NEETs are recorded in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden. The NEET phenomenon is primarily due to an increase in youth unemployment, but also to non-education-linked inactivity. In some Member States (Bulgaria, Romania and Italy), inactive NEET rates account for half of the total NEET rate. Across the EU27, the percentage of NEETs is higher for the 20–24 age group than for the 15–19 age group (17.8% and 6.4% respectively in 2014). This is not surprising as many 15–19 year-olds are still attending school (the compulsory school-leaving age is at least 16 in all countries in the sample except for Greece, where it is 15).

Figure 4: NEET rate, age 15–24, EU28, 2014



Source: Eurofound, based on Eurostat data

The consequences of long-term disengagement of young people from the labour market are dramatic at the economic, societal and individual level (Eurofound, 2012a). Eurofound estimated the economic cost that Europe is paying for having a large cohort of young people in a NEET situation at €162 billion in 2013, which represents an increase of €9 billion compared to the 2012 estimate (Eurofound, 2014a and 2012a). Moreover, disengagement from the labour market and education may also trigger disengagement from civic participation in society with the risk of disruption of interpersonal and institutional trust and extremist political behaviour. There is widespread agreement that being disengaged from the labour market and education for a long period can lead to further social exclusion. From this perspective, the size of the NEET population can be seen as an additional indicator quantifying the size of the population of young people at risk of further social exclusion.

### Labour market inclusion

Participation in paid employment is the entry ticket to several activities in society. In this regard, young people have been hit very hard in their employment perspectives since the onset of the crisis (Table 1). Youth unemployment rates across the EU are generally much higher than unemployment rates for all ages (Eurostat, ‘Statistics explained’: unemployment statistics).



Table 1: Youth unemployment rate, age 15–24, EU28, 2005–2014 (%)

Country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
AT	11.0	9.8	9.4	8.5	10.7	9.5	8.9	9.4	9.7	10.3
BE	21.5	20.5	18.8	18.0	21.9	22.4	18.7	19.8	23.7	23.2
BG	22.3	19.5	15.1	12.7	16.2	23.2	25.0	28.1	28.4	23.8
CY	13.9	10.0	10.2	9.0	13.8	16.6	22.4	27.7	38.9	35.9
CZ	19.2	17.5	10.7	9.9	16.6	18.3	18.1	19.5	19.0	15.9
DE	15.5	13.8	11.9	10.6	11.2	9.9	8.5	8.0	7.8	7.7
DK	8.6	7.7	7.5	8.0	11.8	14.0	14.2	14.1	13.1	12.6
EE	15.1	12.1	10.1	12.0	27.4	32.9	22.4	20.9	18.7	15.0
EL	25.8	25.0	22.7	21.9	25.7	33.0	44.7	55.3	58.3	52.4
ES	19.6	17.9	18.1	24.5	37.7	41.5	46.2	52.9	55.5	53.2
FI	20.1	18.7	16.5	16.5	21.5	21.4	20.1	19.0	19.9	20.5
FR	20.6	21.6	19.1	18.6	23.2	22.9	22.1	23.9	23.9	23.2
HR	32.3	28.9	25.2	23.7	25.2	32.4	36.7	42.1	50.0	45.5
HU	19.4	19.1	18.0	19.5	26.4	26.4	26.0	28.2	26.6	20.4
IE	8.6	8.6	9.1	13.3	24.0	27.6	29.1	30.4	26.8	23.9
IT	24.1	21.8	20.4	21.2	25.3	27.9	29.2	35.3	40.0	42.7
LT	15.8	10.0	8.4	13.3	29.6	35.7	32.6	26.7	21.9	19.3
LU	13.7	16.2	15.2	17.9	17.2	14.2	16.8	18.8	15.5	22.6
LV	15.1	13.6	10.6	13.6	33.3	36.2	31.0	28.5	23.2	19.6
MT	16.1	15.5	13.5	11.7	14.5	13.2	13.3	14.1	13.0	11.8
NL	8.2	6.6	5.9	5.3	6.6	8.7	7.6	9.5	11.0	10.5
PL	36.9	29.8	21.7	17.3	20.6	23.7	25.8	26.5	27.3	23.9
PT	16.2	16.5	16.7	16.7	20.3	22.8	30.3	37.9	38.1	34.8
RO	20.2	21.4	20.1	18.6	20.8	22.1	23.9	22.6	23.7	24.0
SE	22.8	21.5	19.3	20.2	25.0	24.8	22.8	23.6	23.5	22.9
SI	15.9	13.9	10.1	10.4	13.6	14.7	15.7	20.6	21.6	20.2
SK	30.1	26.6	20.3	19.0	27.3	33.6	33.4	34.0	33.7	29.7
UK	12.8	13.9	14.3	15.0	19.1	19.9	21.3	21.2	20.7	16.9
EU28	18.7	17.4	15.6	15.6	19.9	21.0	21.5	23.1	23.5	21.9

Source: Eurostat

Inclusion in the labour market is the first step towards full social inclusion of the individual in society; for this reason, high unemployment rates among young people are a source of deep concern. Youth unemployment is generally sensitive to macroeconomic developments and has reacted strongly across the EU to the financial and economic crisis from 2008 onwards. According to Eurostat, since 2008 the youth unemployment rate has been on an upward trend, peaking at 23.5% in 2013, before falling back to 21.9% in 2014. The situation kept improving over the course of 2014 and in April 2015 the youth unemployment rate (15–24 years) in the EU28 decreased to 20.7% – the same level as that recorded in July 2009. There is a wide variation in the youth unemployment rate between Member States, ranging in April 2015 from 7.2% in Germany and 10.0% in Austria to 49.6% in Spain and 52.5% in Greece. While the pace of divergence among Member States has slowed down, it remains large at the European level. The situation has improved moderately in recent years, but overall in the EU more than 20% of young people are still looking for a job.

## Long-term unemployment

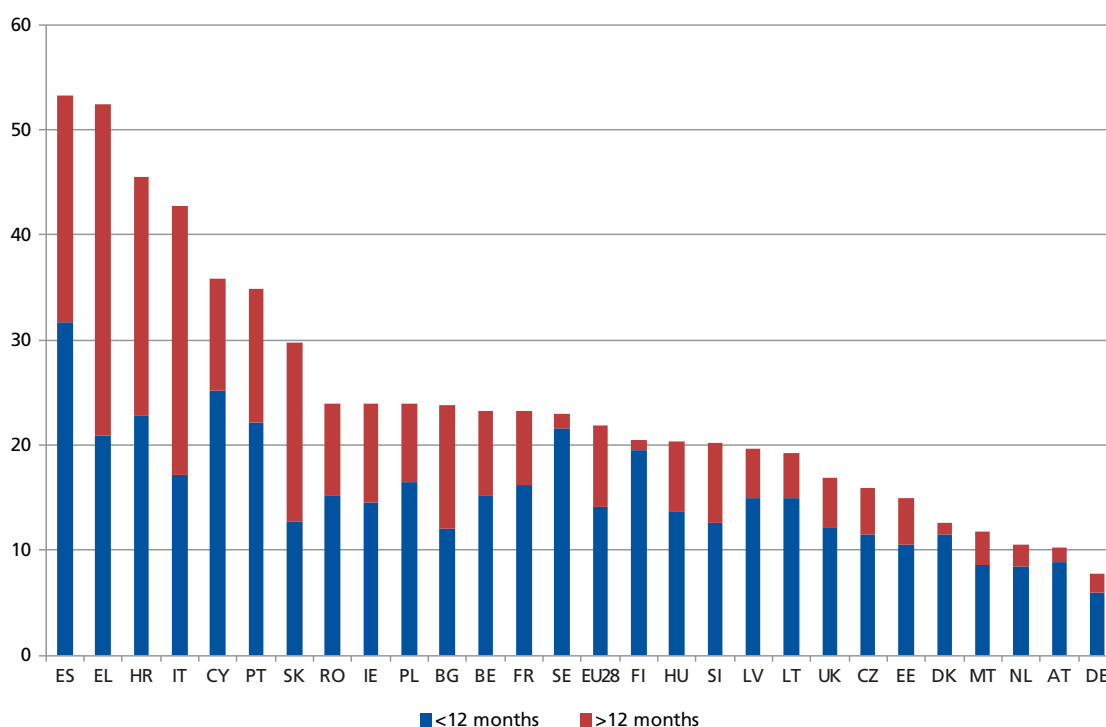
The crisis has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of long-term unemployed youth in Europe. The protracted disengagement of young people from the labour market is a source of deep concern for European societies as long-term disengagement from the labour market at an early age can cause lifelong consequences in terms of poor employment outcomes, salary penalties, an increased risk of disengagement and an asocial lifestyle – all furthering social exclusion.

Regardless of initiatives to reintegrate and include unemployed youth in the labour market put in place at Member State or European level, by the end of 2013 European countries not only exhibited quite different youth unemployment rates but also varying proportions of long-term youth unemployment. Figure 5 shows the composition of youth unemployment in all EU28 countries in 2014, distinguishing between short-term (less than 12 months) and long-term unemployment (more than 12 months).

In the EU28 as a whole, long-term unemployment accounts for about one-third of the total while short-term unemployment makes up about two-thirds of total youth unemployment. This situation varies greatly between countries.

In some countries, high rates of youth unemployment coincide with high proportions of long-term youth unemployment. Countries with very high proportions of long-term youth unemployment are Greece, Italy, Croatia and Slovakia. In Greece, around 52% of young people were unemployed in 2014, with more than half (60%) in long-term unemployment. Although youth unemployment was lower in the other three countries, the rate of long-term unemployed youth was similarly high – Italy (59.7% of total unemployed youth), Slovakia (57.2%) and Croatia (49.4%). Conversely, countries with low rates of long-term youth unemployment are Finland, Denmark and Sweden (all below 10% of total unemployment), followed by Austria. All of these countries have Youth Guarantee schemes already implemented and functioning well.

**Figure 5: Length of youth unemployment, age 15–24 years, 2014 (% of total unemployment)**



Notes: Authors' own calculation based on youth unemployment rate and youth long-term unemployment rate (LTU)  
Source: Eurostat data, 2014

A report of the European Commission (2012c) points to the fact that geographical location is an important risk factor in long-term unemployment, with differences reflecting varying levels of growth, industrial structure and skill composition of the workforce. Differences may be based on a rural–urban divide, geographical divisions of a country or exist between poorer and richer regions. Immigrant status and/or being a member of an ethnic minority, as well as working in a certain sector or job/occupation is also related to a higher risk of long-term unemployment: ‘Workers in manufacturing and industry, construction, information and financial activities and the agriculture sector experienced an increased risk of becoming long-term unemployed as a result of the crisis, while the occupations most affected by LTU [long-term unemployment] include unskilled, semi-skilled, craft and agricultural workers’ (European Commission, 2012c, p. 14).

Long-term unemployment might impact quite strongly on the situation of youth and their risk of social exclusion. In particular, while unemployment is detrimental for all areas of well-being, the duration of unemployment is the key to determining the extent of this damage. In particular, research shows that spending protracted time in unemployment not only strongly affects all dimension of psychological well-being and quality of life of the young person but also decreases their level of social and family life, their standard of living and their future employment outcomes. Moreover, it decreases their level of trust in institutions and their level and opportunities to become involved in volunteering and being engaged in civic society.

## Other factors affecting the social inclusion of young people

Apart from the employment situation of young people, the following four dimensions also play a crucial role in the social inclusion of young people and put them at risk of further exclusion.

### Education and early school-leaving

Exclusion from education is a strong determinant of ending up NEET and may lead to further social exclusion. When it comes to inclusion in education, 12.7% of all young people aged 18–24 are early leavers from education and training across Europe (Eurostat data, 2012).<sup>3</sup> While there has been a positive trend of decreasing early school-leaving rates across Europe that is close to the Europe 2020 target of 10%, vast differences between Member States persist. The highest rates are observed in Spain, where 24.9% of young people are early school-leavers, while the lowest rates are in Croatia (4.2%) and Slovenia (4.4%). High early school-leaving rates tend to mean that young people lack skills and qualifications, which may result in a higher risk of unemployment and consequently poverty and social exclusion. Similarly to Spain, in Bulgaria almost 50% of young people registered as unemployed have secondary or lower levels of education. The diminishing rate of early school-leavers in a number of countries suggests that young people are choosing to stay on at school given the lack of jobs and employment prospects.

### Housing

Regarding the housing situation of young people, in 2012 the age at which 50% of young people in the EU were leaving the parental home was 26.3 for men and 23.8 for women. The age at which young people leave their parental home has remained stable during the crisis (Eurofound, 2014a). While young people leave the parental home when they are older than 30 in Greece, Malta and Slovakia, young people are on average less than 22 years old when leaving the parental home in Sweden, Finland and Denmark. Regardless of whether they lived in their parental home or not,

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<sup>3</sup> The early school-leaving rate is calculated as the proportion of young people aged 18 to 24 who have finished no more than a lower secondary education and are not involved in further education or training among the total population of 18–24 year-olds.

overall 8.2% of young people aged 15–29 in the EU lived in a severely deprived housing situation in 2011 – a rate that has been decreasing since before the crisis.<sup>4</sup> Yet, Eurostat data show that some countries stand out in displaying especially high housing deprivation rates, such as Romania (31.7% in 2012), Hungary (23.7%) and Latvia (21.2%).

### Health

When it comes to the health status of young people (aged 16–29), in 2011 a total of 8.1% reported that they perceived their overall health as fair, bad or very bad across the EU28, according to Eurofound's third EQLS. Self-reported health status was on average poorest in Latvia (15.1% fair, bad or very bad) and Portugal (14.5%), while fewer young people reported poor health status in Greece (2.3%), Cyprus (3.2%), Bulgaria (3.3%), Romania (3.8%) and Spain (4%). While it has been noted that cross-country differences are difficult to interpret in this context due to social and cultural factors influencing the response (OECD, 2010), analysing differences within countries is more meaningful. The health status of young people within the lowest income quintile is lower than those in the highest quintile in all EU Member States, with the exception of Greece and Ireland. The gap between these two groups with regard to reporting fair, bad or very bad health status can be larger than 10% (in 2011: Portugal and Slovenia).

According to the third EQLS, although the level of psychological well-being of young people is generally higher than for the population as a whole, unemployed and inactive young people give a comparatively low rating for their subjective well-being (Eurofound, 2014b). Young people have significantly better-than-average mental well-being everywhere in eastern Europe and in some southern European countries (especially Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Slovenia) but for instance in Sweden young people score six points lower than the average population on the WHO-5 mental well-being scale which ranges from 1 to 100 (Eurofound, 2014b). Furthermore, a significant proportion of young people in Europe (4.2%) reported an unmet need for medical examination for reasons of barriers to access in 2011. This unmet need is 4.5% higher among those from the lowest income percentile compared to those in the highest. The majority of countries (except the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Malta and Poland) show this effect, with a particularly high gap of 14.3% in Bulgaria in 2011.

Difficulties in access to healthcare by young people also emerge in the third EQLS. A total of 44% of young respondents indicated that waiting time has made access to medical care at least a little difficult, while 37% indicate that they experienced a delay in getting an appointment. Finding time to go to the doctor (due to work or care responsibilities) is an issue for 32% of young people, and cost of medical care is a problem for 31%. The distance to travel to the doctor or hospital is a less frequent problem, experienced by 18%. There is variation between countries in the importance of these barriers: cost is a major barrier in Cyprus and Ireland but not so much in the UK and Denmark, while in Greece and Italy delays, waiting time and cost all seem to be issues. Compared with 2007, barriers in accessing healthcare, especially cost, have become more prevalent in some countries, especially Greece, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands and Slovakia (Eurofound, 2014b).

### Social participation

Turning to the wider participation and inclusion of young people in society, a 2012 Eurofound study on NEETs found that young people excluded from education, employment or training are at

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<sup>4</sup> As defined by Eurostat, a severely deprived housing situation is one which is overcrowded and features at least one of the following: a leaking roof, no bath/shower and indoor toilet, or insufficient light/too dark.

a higher risk of political and social disengagement than their non-NEET peers (Eurofound, 2012a). They show overall lower levels of trust, political interest and political and social engagement in comparison to non-NEETs, although differences can be found between country clusters/types of welfare regimes. Based on data from the third EQLS, young people aged 18–24 are less likely to participate in meetings of political organisations and to contact politicians, while they slightly more often attend protests or demonstrations. The lowest level of engagement in political acts is in Hungary (10.9%), Bulgaria (11%) and Malta (12.6%), while the highest is in Sweden (54.4%), Finland (42%) and Denmark (38.7%) (Eurofound, 2012a). Occasional volunteering is relatively common among young people: overall, one-third had participated in volunteering activities in the previous 12 months, while 11% had volunteered on at least a monthly basis. These are similar rates to those of older age groups. However, there are strong geographical variations also in this case: about half of the young population volunteer at least occasionally in Austria, Finland and Ireland, but less than one-quarter do so in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary and Poland (Eurofound, 2012a). Inactive and unemployed young people are the least likely to volunteer, probably because they have no access to volunteering opportunities through employment or education.

## Conclusions

Young people were hit hard by the recent economic crisis. As a result of an increase in the unemployment rate among young people, the proportion of youth disengaged from the labour market and education has increased considerably in recent years. While in April 2015 the youth unemployment rate decreased to 20.7% and signs of improvements are visible, the share of unemployed young people is still very high in several Member States. As a result of the crisis, young people as a group face the highest risk of social exclusion and around 13% of those aged 15–24 are currently not in employment, education and training (NEET). Moreover, during the crisis a significant deterioration of living conditions of young people was recorded, impacting on aspects of their lives such as housing, health and social participation.

This can be seen in a corresponding increase in NEET and long-term unemployment rates across the majority of European Member States. Disengagement from the labour market and education hinders the accumulation of human, social and economic capital for young people. There are many consequences of youth disengagement: poor future employment outcomes, an additional risk of experiencing physical and mental health issues, a deterioration of well-being and general living conditions, and increased risk of asocial lifestyles, including an increased risk of crime and drug misuse, with only partial participation in economic, social and cultural life and a lower standard of living and well-being than is considered normal in European societies. This set of consequences may lead to further social exclusion which can be lifelong. This can seriously impair young people's likelihood of fully participating in the labour market and in society, leaving them to rely permanently on social welfare systems.

For all these reasons, ensuring full participation in society and fostering the active inclusion of young people in society is of key importance.

While the concept of social inclusion in its current understanding has only recently been defined, social inclusion is now central to the European policy agenda, and the concept is also in the spotlight in other areas of the world. The following chapters discuss the concept of social inclusion in terms of the EU policy agenda and detail recent initiatives for fostering the social inclusion of young people.





# Social inclusion of young people on the EU policy agenda

The impact of the great recession and its aftermath on young people has been a central topic on the EU policy agenda in recent years. While the majority of policy initiatives focus on the issue of labour market inclusion of young people, statistics highlight that the situation of young people in Europe has worsened beyond their employment situation and affects their social inclusion more broadly.

The European Union has a long track record of introducing measures with the aim of fostering social inclusion and has recently focused more of its resources specifically on fostering the social inclusion of young people. To provide a full picture of social inclusion policies targeting young people, this chapter will start by giving a broad overview of the evolution of social inclusion on the European policy agenda. Then it will discuss EU-level policies centred on fostering youth employment with a special focus on the Youth Guarantee.

## Social inclusion in the EU: Background

Social inclusion is a concept which is predominantly used at the European level and much less so at the Member State level (with the exception of Ireland and the UK) (Engsted, 2012). It was in the early 1970s that the concept of social inclusion first entered the European policy discourse, gradually replacing the concept of poverty and opening the door for a more dynamic and multifaceted concept capturing social disadvantage (Aasland and Fløtten, 2001). Many EU policies still refer to both poverty and social exclusion, however.

In 1975, the first European anti-poverty programmes were adopted which defined those in poverty as 'individuals or families whose resources are so small as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life of the Member State in which they live' (Eurostat, 2013). Between 1975 and 1984, this concept evolved further and poverty was no longer associated only with material deprivation but also encompassed cultural and social resources (Engsted, 2012). While this enhanced definition resembles today's concept of social inclusion, until this point EU action was mostly limited to advancing research in this policy area and fostering the exchange of good practice examples. Since then, the EU has not only reached a common understanding of social inclusion and social exclusion but has also agreed on a set of indicators which try to adequately reflect developments in the social exclusion of its citizens, including young people (see Chapter 1 for more details on indicators capturing the social inclusion of young people). Moreover, working towards social cohesion has become a more integrated part of EU policymaking. While social policy remains a shared competence (with major policy instruments, for example social security systems, in the competency area of the Member States), the EU has gained influence through a 'soft law approach' which was subsequently institutionalised in the framework of the European Semester under the Europe 2020 strategy (Engsted, 2012).

Regarding the content of social inclusion policies, it can be argued that the emergence of this policy field has 'not developed as an abstract intellectual project, but rather as a pragmatic response to the reality of Member States and the competencies of European institution in this field' (Engsted, 2012). Two White Papers from 1993 and 1994 (European Commission, 1993 and 1994), both important milestones in 'establishing social exclusion as a key issue for European government' (Colley, 2007), illustrate this development. Both documents refer to the need for governments to foster social cohesion and mention young people leaving school early and without skills as at-risk groups for becoming (long-term) unemployed and thus a prime cause of social exclusion, which is considered an undesirable situation due to a lack of human capital accumulation and the amount of resources needed for sustaining these people. Developing young people's human capital by increasing their skills levels through better education and training was the chosen approach to deal with this issue

at the time. The same approach continues to be applied in the 2000s when, against the background of persistently high school dropout rates, policy attention was given to improving the education and skills of young people (Colley, 2007).

The Lisbon Strategy set out from 2000 to transform Europe into ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’ (European Council, 2000). This was another important step in the process by which social inclusion became a vital element of the EU political agenda (Levitas, 2006). Half way through the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, the strategy was reviewed and a European Youth Pact (European Commission, 2005) was put in place providing further EU actions targeting youth. The Youth Pact is another important milestone as it can be argued that it was the first time that ‘youth policy has focused on employment for young people in addition to its traditional emphasis on active citizenship’ (Colley, 2007). This example illustrates that over the years the policy focus on youth has not only become stronger and more comprehensive but also that special attention has been paid to fostering young people’s employability.

Fostering the social inclusion of young people, combating poverty and social exclusion also feature prominently in the Europe 2020 strategy put in place in 2010. Setting an anti-poverty target was first achieved in the framework of this strategy, which aims at reducing the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 20 million by 2020 (European Commission, 2011). In monitoring achievements in poverty reduction, specific attention has been paid to child poverty (although not equally so to young people as a specific age group). Moreover, in the framework of the same strategy, the EU committed itself to increasing the employment rate to 75% among 20–64 year-olds, to reducing the rate of early school-leaving to below 10% and to increasing the proportion of young graduates to at least 40%. These are also important policy objectives with relevance for the social inclusion of young people. The Europe 2020 strategy continues to provide the strategic guidance for current EU policy initiatives and social inclusion has become a permanent feature in the European Semester. As part of this exercise, Member States submit their Strategic Social Reports (SSRs) and National Social Reports (NSRs) demonstrating their progress in achieving the five EU targets set out in the Europe 2020 strategy. Within this framework, Member States’ actions in the fields of social inclusion, pensions, healthcare and long-term care are analysed in depth, which also underpins the social dimension of the Europe 2020 process (European Commission, 2014a).

The discussion of the social inclusion of young people can be traced back to 2001 when the European Commission published the White Paper ‘A new impetus for European youth’ in which it identified four priorities for further and more in-depth cooperation in the field of youth to be pursued within the open method of coordination (see European Commission, 2015b). These priorities were: participation and active citizenship of young people, enhancing the information addressed to young people and the tools used in services aimed at young people, promotion of voluntary activities among young people and, finally, encouraging a broader and greater understanding of the knowledge on youth. The White Paper had at its core the broad social inclusion of young people, albeit expressed indirectly. The White Paper has also resulted in several Council resolutions on these topics. Another important milestone from an EU policy perspective that has applied a broad social and employment dimension was the ‘Youth in action programme’ (2007–2013). The programme’s main objective was to deepen active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and also to involve young people in shaping Europe’s future. This ambitious goal resonates well with the current overarching objective of President Juncker to reform and connect the EU with its citizens. Furthermore, the programme focused on promoting mobility, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue. Particular attention was paid to supporting young people in various disadvantaged situations.



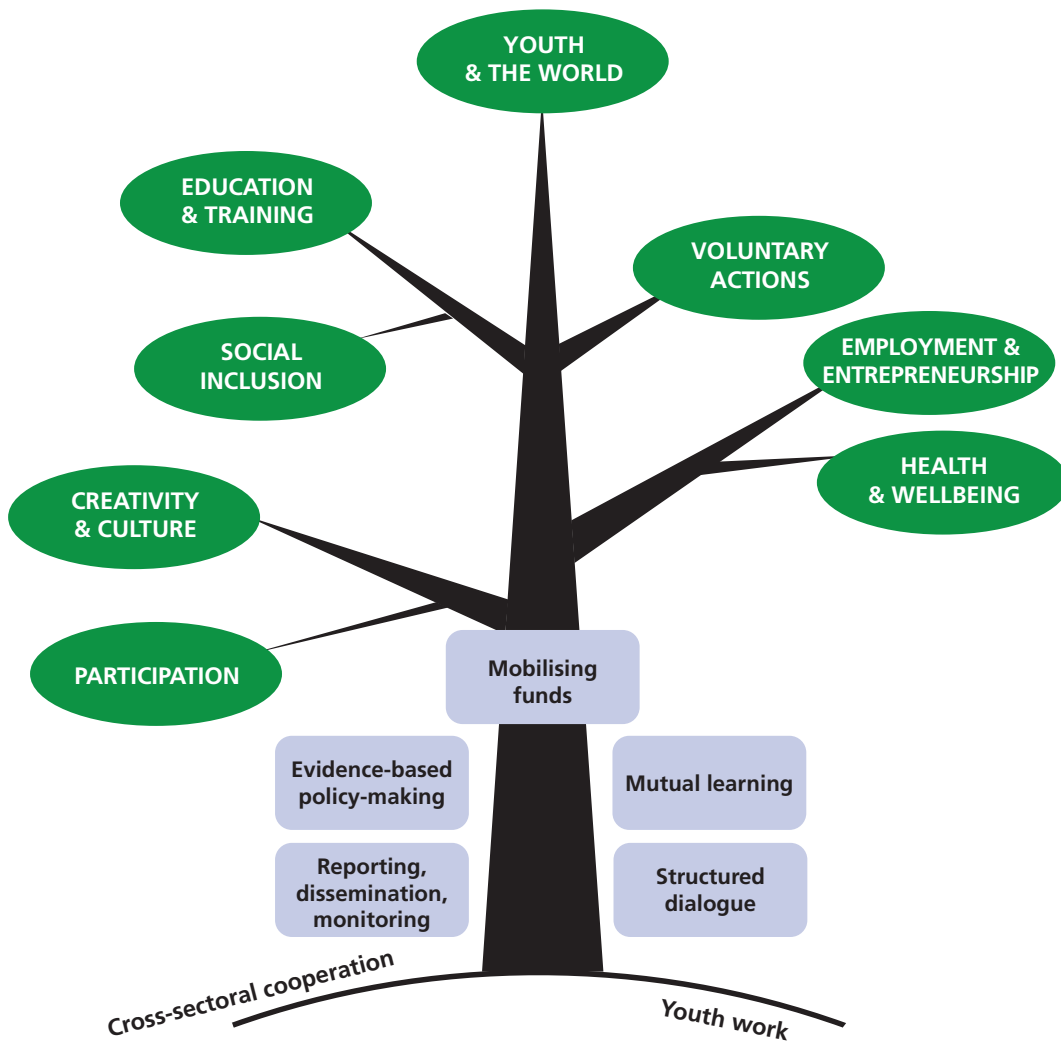
First proposed in 2009 and reinforced by the Europe 2020 strategy, the current overarching strategy for young people at EU level is the EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018 (European Parliament, 2010) which has the challenging objectives of:

- providing more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market;
- encouraging young people to be active citizens and to participate in society.

The EU Youth Strategy is based on cross-sectoral cooperation and in addition to the mobilisation of funds, this cooperation is shaped around evidence-based policymaking, mutual learning and structured dialogue, as well as reporting, dissemination and monitoring. Progress made under the EU Youth Strategy is published at the end of each three-year cycle in the form of the European Youth Report.

The strategy has eight fields of action (see Figure 6), namely: Education and training; Employment and entrepreneurship; Health and well-being; Participation; Voluntary actions; Social inclusion; Youth and the world; and Creativity and culture.

Figure 6: EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018



Source: EU Youth Report (European Commission, 2012d, p. 9)

With its different fields of action, the EU Youth Strategy forms a comprehensive and multidimensional framework for policies to further the empowerment and social inclusion of young people. By bringing these different policy fields together, the EU Youth Strategy represents an important step in the development of a holistic EU youth policy.

The notion of youth participation and active citizenship continues to be the focus for European policymakers. The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (which took place in the first half of 2011) led to the European Council adopting a resolution on ‘Encouraging new and effective forms of participation of all young people in democratic life in Europe’. In the same year, the European Commission unveiled a new programme, ‘Erasmus for all’, which focuses on education, training, youth and sport. This programme, which was rolled out in 2014, is based on the underlying principle that investing in education and training is key to unlocking the potential of all people.

The Youth Strategy again acknowledges the complexity of the current situation of young people on the one hand being one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market and at the highest risk of social exclusion and on the other hand having incredible potential and representing a major resource for Europe. The strategy puts emphasis on a cross-sectoral approach that can address the different dimensions of the current situation of young people.

An important step towards promoting a broad approach to youth inclusion (not only focusing on the labour market) was taken in the Council Conclusions of 13 November 2012 on the participation and social inclusion of young people with an emphasis on those with a migrant background. In paragraph 7 of the Conclusions, the multi-sector definition of social inclusion was clearly restated and applied to youth in general, while addressing a specific at-risk group such as migrant young people:

*Social inclusion of young people entails access to services such as health, formal education and non-formal and informal learning, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), culture, housing, social services and employment, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.*

The importance of mentioning access to a wide range of goods and services is not just related to the multidimensional aspect of social inclusion. It equally emphasises the prevention of social exclusion.

Moreover, in 2013, under the Lithuanian Presidency, the Council adopted Conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of NEETs. These Conclusions seek to address the problem of NEETs in a more systematic way, by including a series of policy measures covering prevention, education, training and non-formal learning, voluntary activities, the transition from education to employment, and employment itself.

In Europe, besides the European Union actors, the Council of Europe is yet another organisation that has been very active in promoting the social inclusion of young people. Broad social inclusion for all is one of the four priorities of the Council’s Agenda 2020, a document that steers and guides the Council’s actions in the area of youth. The objective of social inclusion puts emphasis on:

- supporting the integration of excluded young people;
- promoting the recognition of non-formal education/learning, strengthening young people’s opportunities to reconcile private and working life;
- ensuring equal access to decent living conditions and to cultural, sporting and creative activities;

- encouraging intergenerational dialogue and solidarity.

All these actions have an underpinning foundation of human rights. The European Commission and the Council of Europe have joined forces to work together in the area of youth.

### **Social inclusion of young people through employment**

While a broader approach to fostering the social inclusion of young people continues to play an important role in the EU agenda, notably by expanding support to youth participation and youth work, in recent years there has been strong emphasis on promoting youth employment, employability and school-to-work transitions as key pathways to achieving the social inclusion of young people in Europe. In fact, addressing the youth employment crisis is at the top of the EU's political agenda, giving rise to a number of policy initiatives including the current Youth Employment Package with the Youth Guarantee at its centre. As the Council of the European Union highlights:

*Young women and men are an important resource of Europe. They represent potential for today and the future; however, they face many challenges such as unemployment and related social problems. In order to emerge from the current crisis and to prevent similar problems in the future, Member States have to take immediate actions aimed at promoting youth employment, education and training, participation and social inclusion of young people.*

(Council of the European Union, 2013c)

### **Recent policy initiatives and frameworks fostering youth employment**

In view of the significant impact the crisis has had on youth unemployment levels across the European Union, in recent years the European Commission has put forward a number of proposals to address youth unemployment. These proposals mainly focus on the following areas (European Parliament, 2010):

- reducing early school-leaving;
- modernising education and training, including VET;
- facilitating access of young people to the labour market;
- promoting mobility across the EU;
- ensuring a more efficient use of European funds for activities in the field of youth employment.

These overarching objectives are largely reflected in the EU policy initiatives targeting young people put in place over the past few years. In light of the impact the crisis has had on youth unemployment, this issue moved further to the forefront of EU youth policies. In 2010, the Commission launched the Youth on the Move flagship initiative (2010–2014) (European Commission, 2010), one of seven flagship initiatives under the Europe 2020 strategy. With a focus on both education and employment, this policy initiative contained four main lines of action: lifelong learning; promoting higher education; promoting mobility; and improving the employment situation of young people. Concrete measures included the 'Your first EURES job' initiative (an online job portal) launched in 2012 and the Youth Opportunities Initiative (YOI) launched in 2011 (European Commission, 2012e). Under the YOI initiative, a set of measures were introduced to boost youth employment in 2012 and 2013. Activities focused mainly on preventing early school-leaving, developing skills relevant for the labour market, fostering first work experiences and promoting on-the-job training. One year into the initiative, both

the European Council and the European Parliament continued to express their concern over the youth unemployment crisis and called for further measures to address this issue such as ‘initiatives on youth guarantees and on a quality framework for traineeships’ (European Commission, 2012i).

This was picked up in the Youth Employment Package 2014–2020, which follows up on youth actions outlined in the wider EU Employment Package (European Commission, 2012b). The European Commission first announced the Youth Employment Package in December 2012 and it comprises a range of different measures with the aim of boosting youth employment (European Commission, 2012h). The Youth Guarantee is at the core of the Youth Employment Package which responds to the dramatic increase in youth unemployment. Other measures included in the Youth Employment Package are:

- **Quality Framework for Traineeships:** This measure foresees the setting up of a quality framework for traineeships, which over the past two decades have become a widespread entry path for young people into the labour market. With this, the European Commission is responding to the findings of a Eurobarometer survey from 2013, which shows that across the EU one in three traineeships lack quality in terms of working conditions and learning content (European Commission, 2013c). To ensure that traineeships include quality learning and appropriate working conditions and cannot be considered as a substitute for regular jobs, the European Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (European Commission, 2013b), including the launch of the second-stage consultation of EU-level social partners on the content of this proposal (European Commission, 2012i). The objective of this initiative is to provide Member States with a common understanding of what a traineeship is and the minimum standards that should be attached to it.
- **European Alliance for Apprenticeships:** In an attempt to increase the supply, quality and attractiveness of apprenticeships in Europe, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships was launched in July 2013. The Alliance acknowledges the important role that high-quality apprenticeship schemes can play in dealing with the current youth unemployment issue by promoting smooth school-to-work transitions, fostering skills with relevance to the labour market and improving skills mismatches across the EU (Council of the European Union, 2013a). Concrete measures include supporting the reform of apprenticeship systems through peer learning and review, ensuring the smart use of EU funds and resources, and exploring the option of including apprenticeships in the EURES network (European Commission, 2013a).
- **Integrated mobility plan for young people (EURES):** With the help of the EURES European job mobility portal, young EU nationals aged between 18 and 30 should be encouraged to find work in another European Member State. The ‘Your first EURES Job’ pilot, for example, tries to promote the labour mobility of young people by making them aware of existing job offers, traineeships and apprenticeships (European Commission, 2012a).

From a financial point of view, the EU’s commitment to combating youth disengagement and unemployment is supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds as well as a number of targeted financial programmes.<sup>5</sup> Support for actions fostering youth employment predominantly originates from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the new Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

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<sup>5</sup> Besides the ESF, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) could also contribute to reducing youth unemployment through its overall mission of strengthening economic and social cohesion in the European Union. More concretely, the ERDF supports new business start-ups and entrepreneurship, supports job creation at different skills levels, and supports SMEs in taking on apprentices, trainees and placements.

The ESF in its current programming period 2014–2020 finances operational programmes which among other topics focus specifically on youth unemployment. EU Member States make use of ESF funds in various forms including through investing them in the modernisation of education and VET or more generally in addressing the social inclusion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The ESF spends more than €10 billion per year and in the previous seven-year programming period (2007–2013), 68% of funding went towards projects targeting young people (European Commission, 2014g). To better target ESF funds in those Member States worst affected by youth unemployment, so-called Youth Employment Action Teams made up of Commission officials and Member State representatives were set up (European Commission, 2013f). These action teams managed to mobilise EU structural funding still available in the 2007–2013 programming period to support job opportunities for young people and to facilitate access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This resulted in the reallocation of a total of €4.2 billion of ESF funds by March 2014 which helped to address specific vulnerable groups, including young people, with the potential of supporting around 1.2 million young people in the countries most affected by high youth unemployment (at that time, youth unemployment was highest in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain).

In 2013, the YEI was set up with the aim of helping Member States most affected by youth unemployment to deliver measures to all young NEETs aged 15–24 residing in eligible regions (European Commission, 2013g). Financing from the YEI is available for regions experiencing youth unemployment rates exceeding 25% and will help Member States affected in setting up their Youth Guarantee schemes.<sup>6</sup> The YEI funding will bring together €3.2 billion from a specific EU budget line dedicated to youth unemployment and €3.2 billion from the ESF national allocations resulting in a total sum of €6.4 billion for the period 2014–2020 (European Commission, 2013g). Member States will, however, need to complement the assistance provided by this fund with additional investment from the ESF and national budgets.

### **Youth Guarantee: Combating youth unemployment**

Against the background of alarmingly high youth unemployment rates, the European Commission proposed the implementation of a Youth Guarantee across all EU Member States in December 2012 (European Commission, 2012g). The fact that young people were disproportionately affected by unemployment in the aftermath of the crisis, as well as the very high cost linked to the increased prevalence of NEETs, were important motivations for establishing the Youth Guarantee. (For more information on the cost of NEETs, see Eurofound, 2014a and Eurofound, 2012a.) Combating unemployment and preventing the long-term disengagement of young people by reengaging them within four months of becoming unemployed or finishing education is at the centre of this new ‘umbrella’ policy for youth employment policy at EU level which draws on the successful experiences of Austria, Finland and Sweden.

On 22 April 2013, the Council of the European Union issued a Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee which was followed by an endorsement at the June 2013 European Council. As paragraph 5 of the recommendation specifies:

*The term ‘Youth Guarantee’ refers to a situation in which young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving*

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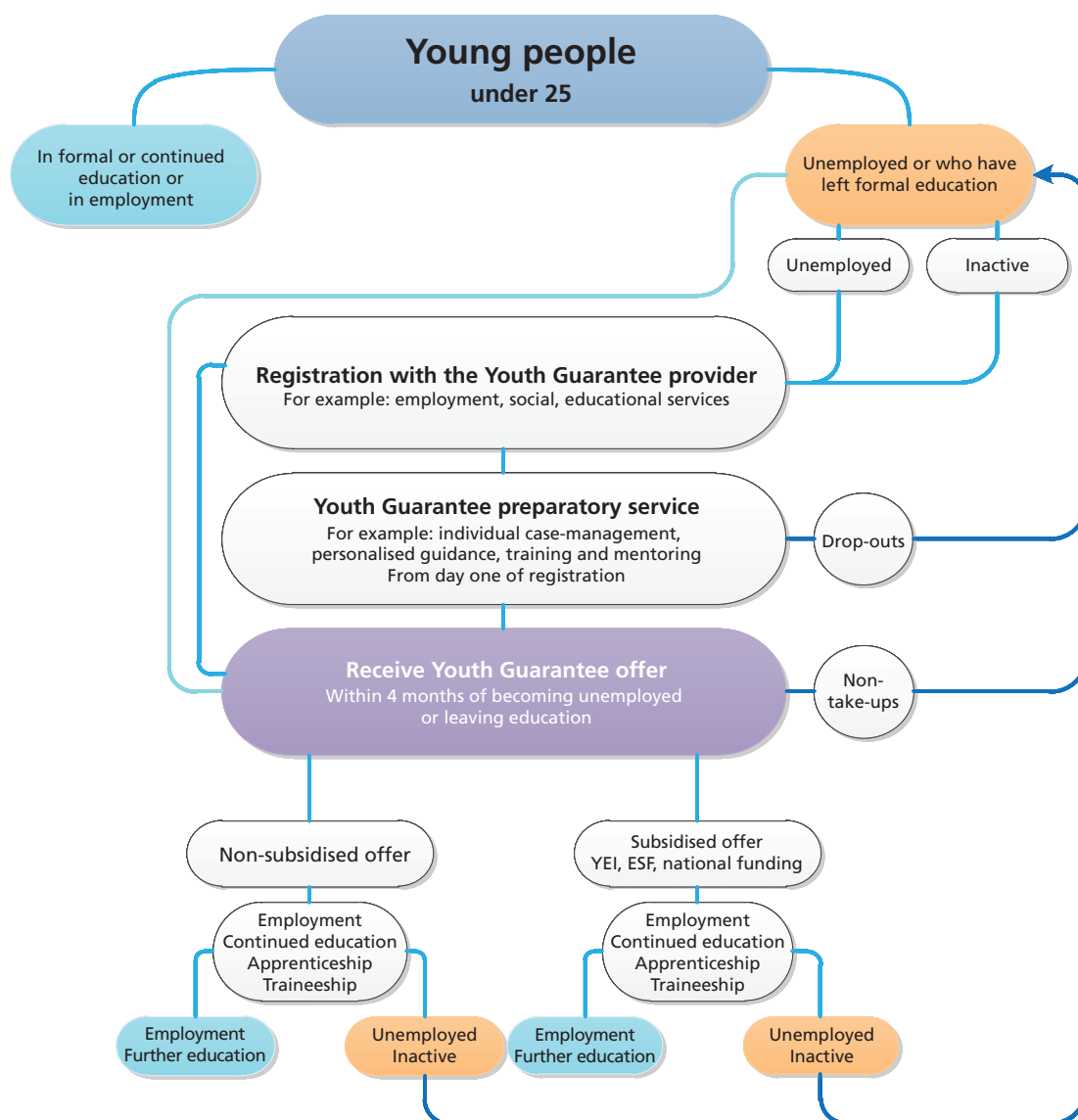
<sup>6</sup> Regions at NUTS 2 level with youth unemployment rates above 25% in 2012 and in Member States where the youth unemployment rate (at least 20% in 2012) increased by more than 30% in 2012.

*formal education. An offer of continued education could also encompass quality training programmes leading to a recognised vocational qualification.'*

(Council of the European Union, 2013b)

In line with the Council Recommendation, EU Member States committed themselves to setting up a Youth Guarantee in their country offering every young person under the age of 25 a good quality offer within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. To do so, Member States were requested to design their pathways towards a Youth Guarantee in the form of Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans (YGIP), which were submitted to the European Commission in late 2013 and early 2014 (see European Commission, 2015f for some of the publicly available YGIPs). In parallel, Member States set about drafting their youth-related Operational Programmes as these will form the basis for the financial support for Youth Guarantee implementation from European sources (ESF and YEI). Figure 7 illustrates the different Youth Guarantee pathways.

**Figure 7: Youth Guarantee pathways**



Source: European Commission, 2014b



By design, the Youth Guarantee is set out as an intervention with immediate and mid-term to long-term implications. While helping young people into jobs immediately, the Youth Guarantee is also designed to foster more structural reforms with the aim of considerably improving young people's school-to-work transitions. More concretely, Member States will use ESF and national funding to invest in structural reforms – modernising employment, social and education services for young people, strengthening the capacities of relevant structures and improving access to education, as well as the quality of education, training and VET and its links to the labour market (European Commission, 2014g).

Youth Guarantee schemes need to be implemented by Member States at the relevant level of governance (national, regional, local – coordinating body) while considering the needs of different groups of young people. As set out in the Council Recommendation, Youth Guarantee delivery should be built around the six axes described below (Council of the European Union, 2013b).

### **Building strong partnerships between all stakeholders**

Setting up partnerships between crucial stakeholders in the youth field is a central element of Youth Guarantee delivery. First, the relevant public authority for the management of the Youth Guarantee needs to be identified, offering a single point of contact for Youth Guarantee implementation. This entity should then cooperate with social partners, youth organisations, public and private employment services, career guidance services, other youth services such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), youth centres and associations to help smooth the transition from inactivity back into education, training or employment (Council of the European Union, 2013a).

### **Early intervention and activation**

The four-month intervention point of the Youth Guarantee is one of its distinctive features. With this, the Youth Guarantee goes beyond previous activation targets. Developing effective outreach strategies addressing young people and NEETs in particular, as well as personalised guidance provided to young people, are at the centre of the early intervention and activation principle. This also implies that before leaving school young people have full information on their options with regard to education, employment and support services available to them.

### **Supportive measures enabling labour market integration**

This can be further broken down into activities enhancing the skills of young people, especially for those who left school early or have not acquired any initial qualification, and labour market-related measures, such as recruitment incentives, wage subsidies, promotion of labour mobility or start-up support. The notion of providing a 'good quality offer' has, however, been subject to frequent criticism by different stakeholders. With a view to promoting the sustainability of youth employment measures, the European Youth Forum (EYF) for example pointed out that young people may be trapped in a circle of temporary measures without having access to sustainable opportunities. In a similar way, the European Parliament argues that providing jobs alone is not enough but that policymakers need to make sure that young people have decent jobs (European Parliament, 2010).

### **Full use of EU structural funds**

The Youth Guarantee is financed through three sources: national funding, ESF funding and YEI funding. The YEI was set up to give Member States the opportunity to deal proactively with youth unemployment issues, regardless of the state's current budgetary situation. Under the YEI, €6.4 billion is dedicated to the Youth Guarantee in the period 2014–2020. Regions eligible for this funding are those with youth unemployment rates exceeding 25%. To accelerate Youth Guarantee implementation, the European Commission proposed to front-load the YEI funds. In February 2015, the Commission pushed for the acceleration of pre-financing of the YEI (European Commission, 2015a). This was because some Member States were facing difficulties in starting the implementation of Youth Guarantee measures due to lack of funding to advance payments to beneficiaries.

### **Assessment and continuous improvement of schemes**

In addition to supporting Member States with funding, the EU also closely monitors the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes at Member State level in the framework of the European Semester exercise.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, awareness-raising and the exchange of good practice between Member States is being encouraged and facilitated by the European Commission. In the framework of the Mutual Learning Programme, Member States are encouraged to share their experiences of early implementation of the Youth Guarantee. In 2014, a toolkit for the evaluation of Youth Guarantee projects was made available online (European Commission, 2014c). Similarly, in September 2014 the Commission's Employment Committee (EMCO) proposed an indicator framework for monitoring the Youth Guarantee; this was made public at the beginning of February 2015 (see European Commission Employment Committee, 2014).

### **Rapid implementation**

While the Youth Guarantee was mainly conceptualised in 2012 and endorsed at EU level in 2013, with preparatory measures (European Commission, 2014e) and implementation starting in 2014, it can be argued that this policy measure is one of the most rapidly implemented schemes in the EU. The Youth Guarantee proposal was adopted very quickly, reflecting the urgency felt at EU level to rapidly deal with the youth employment crisis (European Commission, 2014e). This is especially relevant as in recent years national governments have been repeatedly criticised by the European Parliament and other stakeholders for their slow implementation, insufficient financial backing and overall lack of political ambition in the area of youth employment (European Parliament, 2014b). The European Commission moreover emphasises that Member States need to act urgently by putting in place the measures agreed at European level (European Commission, 2014g).

While the Council Recommendation highlights the importance of these six dimensions, it needs to be stressed that no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to implementing the Youth Guarantee will be able to adequately address the current youth unemployment situation. Rather, Member States need to

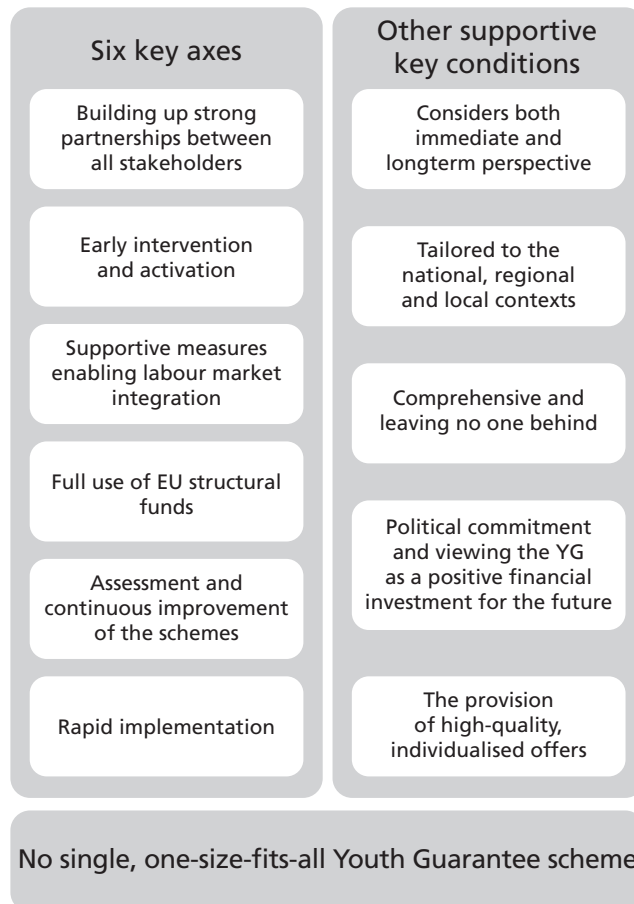
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<sup>7</sup> As part of its 2014 European Semester exercise with its country-specific recommendations, the European Commission already recognised that Member States are making substantial efforts to implement the Youth Guarantee. For more information, see European Commission, 2015f. Since the first European Semester in 2011, countries have been receiving country-specific recommendations in the field of youth unemployment and education.



take account of their national, regional and local specificities while still taking on board the above recommendations.

**Figure 8: Cornerstones of Youth Guarantee implementation**



Source: Adapted from European Commission, 2014d

## Conclusions

Measures fostering the social inclusion of young people have been high on the EU policy agenda for a number of years and have been further intensified in light of the impact of the crisis. While the policy actions described above suggest that the issue of youth unemployment is taken seriously at EU level, there has been criticism as to whether enough is being done in the area of youth employment.

Young people are indeed one of the groups at greatest risk of social exclusion and may be subject to additional risk factors such as disability, caring responsibilities, ethnic minority background, homelessness, drug abuse and leaving care or prison. Young people’s risk of social exclusion is also closely linked to their participation in the labour market. While not a homogeneous group, young NEETs are especially at risk of becoming socially excluded.

Two important milestones for social inclusion in the EU policy arena are the current Europe 2020 strategy and its predecessor, the Lisbon Strategy of 2000. Both strategies acknowledge the importance of social inclusion by aiming to reduce social exclusion. Moreover, over the past two decades, increased policy attention has been given to the social inclusion of young people, with this

policy focus becoming more pronounced since the beginning of the crisis. With a view to dealing with the significant impact the crisis has had on youth unemployment and the situation of youth in Europe more generally, a number of important policy initiatives have been put in place. The most important policy initiatives to address social inclusion of young people increasingly focus on improving young people's learning pathways, their mobility and employability as reflected in the current Youth Employment Package.

The measures taken can be broadly categorised into two strands: measures promoting youth employment, employability and labour market participation and more general support measures for youth participation and youth work. Ideally, these two strands complement each other by fostering improved labour market services and active labour market policies targeting young people in conjunction with youth work and welfare policies more generally supporting young people.

The Youth Guarantee, currently rolled out in all EU Member States with the aim of fighting youth unemployment in Europe, falls into the first category of measures with a specific employment focus. It is also an umbrella policy to foster youth employment, enabling more strategic and long-term improvements in young people's school-to-work transitions by reforming public employment services (PES) and training provisions to better take account of the situation and needs of young people.

# Youth Guarantee: Combating youth unemployment in Europe

As explained in Chapter 2, the Youth Guarantee is a new policy initiative, which allows Member States to intervene quickly to combat unemployment among their young citizens. The Youth Guarantee that is currently being implemented in all EU Member States is available for every young person up to the age of 25, guaranteeing them a high-quality offer of a job, training place or further education within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed.<sup>8,9</sup>

To provide young people with this offer, countries across the EU need to ensure that their legal, political and financial frameworks, and their institutional capacities, are equipped to do so. As the Youth Guarantee is a very new initiative, so far there have been only very limited assessments; little data are available to evaluate its implementation.

This chapter aims to offer a first assessment of Member States' efforts in setting up their Youth Guarantee schemes. It is based on research conducted in 2014 across 10 Member States involving a close assessment carried out by country experts, a series of stakeholder interviews, an analysis of the national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans (YGIPs), and a systematic review of early measures taken in the countries concerned.<sup>10</sup> To complement these qualitative findings, a section on intervention costs – in line with previous cost exercises – is added for completeness. As the YGIPs are 'living' plans, subject to continuous changes and improvements, some of the information collected and presented may have changed or been modified in the meantime. Hence, the information given refers solely to the first year of implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

This chapter begins with a brief summary of good practice examples from Austria, Finland and Sweden, where Youth Guarantee schemes have been in place for a number of years. This will help explain the logic behind the Youth Guarantee offer and the lessons learned in these three countries, which have to a large extent inspired the EU Youth Guarantee.

The chapter then summarises the findings from the examination of the early implementation of the Youth Guarantee in 10 selected Member States. This will allow the reader to understand the different starting positions of these countries as well as the actions taken and measures proposed to reach and engage young people in the framework of the Youth Guarantee. The chapter includes a cost exercise elaborating the costs of extending Youth Guarantee activities to all NEETs in the respective Member States. The final section highlights the barriers and challenges to effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee that came to light in the early experiences of implementing it in the 10 Member States under review.

This analysis is shaped around the following axes: governance arrangements; partnership approaches; infrastructure of the PES; monitoring and evaluation; and VET provisions and absorption capacity of the labour market.

## Learning from good practice: Youth Guarantee schemes in Austria, Finland and Sweden

While the Youth Guarantee is a new policy initiative at EU level, the concept of guaranteeing opportunities for all young people is not a new one. As the European Commission highlights, as far

<sup>8</sup> While the UK has submitted a YGIP and will be receiving YEI funding, the country has decided not to take part in the Youth Guarantee initiative – the only EU Member State to take this stance.

<sup>9</sup> In some cases, the age group was further extended, as in Italy where young people up to the age of 29 are eligible for the Youth Guarantee.

<sup>10</sup> With a view to providing a comprehensive picture that takes into account different country clusters, experiences from the following Member States were reviewed: Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK.

back as 1981 the Nordic Council of Ministers (an intergovernmental forum of Nordic states) referred to a concept of the Youth Guarantee that is very close to what the EU is aiming to achieve with its new initiative (European Commission, 2012g). For a number of years, some European countries have had policies guaranteeing training or education for young people. Because of their thorough approach, the examples of Austria, Finland and Sweden are frequently referred to in the European policy debate. (For an in-depth review of the Finnish and Swedish Youth Guarantee schemes, see Eurofound, 2012b.) With the objective of supporting young people's transition into work, education or training, the underlying principle of these Youth Guarantee systems is very similar. In all three countries, the respective Youth Guarantee scheme aims at intervening immediately to address youth unemployment with a view to preventing disengagement. Moreover, all three models place a particular emphasis on apprenticeships – for example, the Austrian training guarantee.

### **Austria: Access to apprenticeship training for all ('Ausbildungsgarantie' and 'Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung')**

The Austrian Youth Guarantee model has been in place for a number of years. Following a legal revision in 2008 (BMAK, 2012), young people under the age of 18 are guaranteed an apprenticeship training place. The dual apprenticeship scheme has a long history in Austria with about 40% of people aged under 18 choosing this pathway. However, the number of apprenticeship places offered by employers has been diminishing since the 1990s (Hofbauer et al, 2014). This is where the Austrian training guarantee comes in, targeting young people unable to secure an apprenticeship place with a company by offering a supra-company apprenticeship training place. This government-led subsidised measure has been in place since 2008 and offers young people a training place within three months. The programme is on an equal footing with company-based apprenticeship training, as it mirrors the practical experience gained in an employer's workplace, typically over a three-year period.

In a similar vein, the Swedish job guarantee for young people has been in place for a number of years. The Nordic Member States were pioneers of the Youth Guarantee approach, with Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden introducing their first schemes between the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

### **Sweden: The Youth Guarantee experience (Jobbgarantinförordningar/En jobbgaranti för ungdommar)**

The origins of the Swedish Youth Guarantee scheme date back to 1984 when the country first attempted to offer upper-secondary education or a temporary job to all young people. The current system was put in place in 2007 and focuses on 16–24 year-olds. Young people are referred to this programme as soon as they have been registered as unemployed for a total of 90 days (within the previous four months).

During the first three months, the activities of the job guarantee for young people include in-depth assessment, educational and vocational guidance, as well as job search activities combined with coaching. Thereafter, job search activities are intensified and typically involve active labour market measures, such as work experience placements, traineeships, support in accessing education and training and start-up funding.

Experiences from the existing Youth Guarantee schemes in Austria and Sweden have had an important impact on the design of the EU Youth Guarantee. The Youth Guarantee currently rolled out across the EU, however, most closely resembles the Finnish model.

### **Finland: The Youth Guarantee experience ('Nuorten Yhteiskuntatakuu')**

The Finnish scheme focuses largely on personalised plans for young people and tries to ensure that these plans are drawn up as quickly as possible, ultimately reducing unemployment. The personalised plan is followed by an assessment of needs and support for the young person, which will form the basis for a job or training offer. The Finnish PES is obliged to carry out these activities within the first three months of a young person being registered as unemployed.

The Finnish Youth Guarantee scheme has been revised several times. The current approach was first introduced in 2005 and underwent a major revision in 2010. Following the most recent revision in 2013, the target group for the Finnish Youth Guarantee has been extended to all those under 25, as well as graduates under the age of 30 who have been registered as unemployed for three months (OECD, 2014).

As the above boxes indicate, the design of the Austrian, Swedish and Finnish Youth Guarantee schemes differs considerably in terms of the general set-up, intentions, scope, eligibility criteria, types of measures offered, duration and costs of interventions. Each model, however, reflects the different starting positions and set-up in these Member States.

Despite a limited number of systematic policy evaluations, these approaches can be considered as efficient ways to prevent and deal with youth disengagement. For example, in Finland in 2012, some 83.5% of young job-seekers received a successful offer within three months of registering as unemployed (Eurofound, 2012b). Since then, the Finnish Youth Guarantee offer has been further extended to address the needs of young graduates up to the age of 30. In Sweden in 2010, 46% of young job-seekers had successful job outcomes as a result of the guarantee offer, while the programme had generally proved to be a success prior to the economic crisis. An evaluation by an Austrian trade union found that – on average – 70% of young people manage to enter the labour market after engaging in the Austrian scheme (Hofbauer et al, 2014). A high return on investment was also mentioned as one of the success factors of this provision.

Overall, these three Member States are among the countries with the lowest long-term disengagement of young people: long-term youth unemployment is at 1.5% in Sweden, 1.4% in Austria and 1.0% in Finland, compared with the EU average of 8% in 2013.<sup>11</sup> Besides these promising results, the three case study examples offer a useful insight into the intricacies of guaranteeing training or work to young people. Some of the success factors and lessons learned from the schemes in Austria, Finland and Sweden can be summarised as follows:

**Stakeholder cooperation:** In the three schemes, considerable emphasis is put on the cooperation between relevant stakeholders. In addition to the relevant ministries and the PES, the key partners are national and regional labour market institutions, national and municipal social and healthcare services and youth and education services, education providers, educational counsellors, youth outreach workers, youth workshops and rehabilitation specialists. Despite such well-functioning stakeholder cooperation, it should be noted that all three Member States have a history of social-

<sup>11</sup> Eurostat, Youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer) by sex and age [yth\_empl\_120], 15–24 year-olds, last update: 19 February 2015.

partner involvement in designing and implementing labour market measures, as well as efficient and well-resourced public employment systems that reach out to young people at an early stage (Bacher et al, 2014).

**Integrated and personalised approach in service provision:** The involvement of a combination of instruments is essential for achieving an integrated approach. Examples of this are the combination of educational guarantees, skills development programmes, employment and economic development services for young people (delivered by the PES) and rehabilitation services, including municipal social and healthcare services and other individual services for young people such as youth outreach work and youth workshop activities. Moreover, taking account of the fact that the reasons behind the difficulties young people are facing may differ from one person to another, the PES takes a personalised approach to assisting young people.

**Investment priority and specific budget allocation:** It is important that the Youth Guarantee scheme is clearly designated as an investment priority of the government, with a specific budget allocated to make it a success. It is, however, worth noting that all three good practice examples stem from countries that tend to spend a considerable amount of resources on youth employment measures. In Austria, for example, more than €500 million is dedicated to youth employment each year. Providing a Youth Guarantee can, however, be costly, with a place in the supra-company apprenticeship training costing €9,000 per participant per year (compared with €1,000 in the case of a regular apprenticeship).

**Young people at the centre of the initiative:** While young people are the target group of these interventions, the involvement of young people in the design of the measures varies. Whereas in Finland plans are developed in consultation with and according to the needs of young people, in Austria and Sweden young people are not involved to the same degree in the design phase.

### Youth Guarantee in 10 Member States

For the purposes of this study, Eurofound evaluated the preconditions for the implementation of a Youth Guarantee scheme and the first steps in putting in place measures under the Youth Guarantee framework. This section brings together the findings from 10 in-depth country case studies carried out in 2014 in Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK.<sup>12</sup> Information was collected through desk research and expert interviews. (As the national YGIPs are subject to change in response to national conditions, some of the information collected during 2015 may now be out of date.)

#### Different starting positions

Young people have been disproportionately affected by the most recent economic crisis and their employment prospects have been hit particularly hard. According to latest Eurostat statistics, youth employment dropped further to 32.5% in 2014, down from 37.0% in 2008.<sup>13</sup> This is, however, an improvement on the 32.2% recorded in 2013 and represents the first increase in the youth employment rate since 2007. Despite this moderate sign of improvement, youth unemployment remains high with an average of 20.9% of 15–24 year-olds unemployed across the EU in 2014.<sup>14</sup> Another crucial

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<sup>12</sup> In the framework of this project, 10 country reports have been written, one for each country of investigation. These reports are available for distribution on demand. If interested in receiving the country reports, please contact Massimiliano Mascherini: mam@eurofound.europa.eu

<sup>13</sup> Eurostat, Youth employment rate by sex, age and country of birth [yth\_empl\_020], 15–24 year-olds, last update: 12 June 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Eurostat, Youth unemployment rate by sex, age and country of birth [yth\_empl\_100], 15–24 year-olds, last update: 12 June 2015.



indicator is the NEETs rate, which, despite a considerable decrease observed in 2014, also remains high at 12.4% in the EU.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the prevalence of youth disengagement varies considerably across the EU and across the 10 Member States that form the basis of this review (see Table 2).

**Table 2: NEETs in 10 Member States (2004–2014) (%)**

Country	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Absolute numbers in 2014
BE	15.4(b)	13.0	11.2	11.2	10.1	11.1	10.9	11.8	12.3	12.7	12.0	160,234
BG	26.4	25.1	22.2	19.1	17.4	19.5	21.8	21.8	21.5	21.6	20.2	151,883
EE	12.5	10.6	8.8	8.9	8.7	14.5	14.0	11.6	12.2	11.3	11.7	17,194
EL	16.8	16.1	12.2	11.5	11.7	12.6	14.9	17.4	20.3	20.6	19.1	216,239
ES	12.5	13.0(b)	11.8	12.0	14.3	18.1	17.8	18.2	18.6	18.6	17.1	772,097
FR	10.6	10.9	11.0	10.3	10.2	12.4	12.4	11.9	12.1	11.2(b)	10.7	836,502
IE	11.9	10.9	10.1	10.7	14.9	18.6	19.2	18.8	18.7	16.1	15.2	79,898
IT	16.6	17.0	16.8	16.2	16.6	17.7	19.1	19.8	21.1	22.2	22.1	1,320,970
PL	15.0(b)	13.9	12.6	10.6	9.0	10.1	10.8	11.5	11.8	12.2	12.0	564,243
UK	8.4	8.4	8.5	11.9(b)	12.1	13.3	13.7	14.3	14.0	13.2	11.9	974,796
EU27	12.8	12.6	11.7	10.9	10.9	12.4	12.7	12.9	13.1	13.0	12.4	7,054,647

Note: Absolute numbers: calculated on the basis of the percentage of NEETs in relation to the total population of 15–24 year-olds; b = break in time series.

Source: Authors' calculation on the basis of Eurostat data (yth\_empl\_150) for 2004–2014

The divergence in the number of NEETs is a crucial element, as it implies that countries face very different starting positions – for example, in terms of the proportion of young disengaged people that they will be addressing through the Youth Guarantee. In the case of Italy, which has decided to make all young people up to the age of 29 eligible for the Youth Guarantee, public authorities need to deal with more than 2 million disengaged young people and provide them with suitable interventions (in Italy, the total number of NEETs aged 15–29 is 2,431,415, according to Eurofound's elaboration of Eurostat data). This large number is in stark contrast to the situation in other large Member States where around 1 million or fewer NEETs aged 15–24 need to be addressed (for example, in the UK, Spain and France). In some of the smaller countries, the absolute number of young people that need to be reached with a Youth Guarantee offer is considerably lower – in Ireland, fewer than 80,000 and in Estonia only around 17,000.

Besides the prevalence of disengagement, the composition and background characteristics of NEETs also vary across the Member States under review. (Eurofound is currently carrying out a research project further exploring the composition of the NEET group; see Eurofound, forthcoming). Early school-leaving, for example, an important risk factor for becoming NEET, varied considerably among the countries in 2013 – ranging from 8.4% in Ireland to 23.6% in Spain; the EU average was 11.9%.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat, Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex and NUTS 2 regions (NEET rates), 15–24 year-olds [edat\_lfse\_22], last update: 12 June 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Eurostat, Early leavers from education and training (%) [tsdsc410]



Moreover, rates for at-risk-of-poverty and exclusion for young people in 2012 vary across the country sample, ranging from 16.9% in Belgium to 48.4% in Bulgaria; the EU average was 28.3%.<sup>17</sup>

Another issue affecting the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is that young unemployed people, including NEETs, do not always register with the PES if they are unemployed. This leads to a lack of data on the characteristics of NEETs and to difficulties in reaching NEETs and involving them in the Youth Guarantee. One reason for this may be that young people in many instances do not expect to receive any help and have little confidence in institutions. This means that the number of NEETs, their background and the challenges they are facing, is not sufficiently known in a number of countries. The data situation with regard to NEETs is poor in many countries since adequate monitoring systems are not in place to track and follow them. Indeed, NEETs are not monitored in all the countries in the sample. For instance, in Bulgaria, no monitoring system for NEETs is in place; the only information available is the data on young unemployed people registered with the Employment Agency. Only about 34,000 young people aged 15–24 were registered as unemployed in March 2014, while the overall number of NEETs in Bulgaria is estimated at more than 175,000, corresponding to a NEETs rate of more than 20% of the overall youth population. This illustrates the severity of this issue in Bulgaria. In Estonia, only around 40% of young unemployed people were registered with the PES in 2013.<sup>18</sup> In Belgium, the proportion of young unemployed people registered with the PES in 2011 was around 63% (Eurostat LMP database, 2011 data). These large differences in registration rates partly reflect young people's lack of confidence in the system and in the prospect of receiving unemployment benefits or finding employment by registering.

While the Youth Guarantee should be a universal framework, a number of countries have specifically mentioned how many young people they are trying to reach with their Youth Guarantee offer. In the case of Belgium, for example, the YGIP intends to reach at least an additional 20,000 young people with different interventions in 2014 and 2015. According to the latest labour market statistics, however, there are more than 170,000 NEETs in Belgium. Around 100,000 are offered an intervention by existing PES services, including measures put in place under the Youth Guarantee framework. This means that about 70,000 NEETs are still not covered by any PES interventions. In the case of Italy, the country envisages addressing a total of 560,000 young people by 2018. The most frequent interventions foreseen will be job placements (160,000) followed closely by traineeships (151,000). In Bulgaria, some 808,073 young people are set to be covered by YGIP measures by the end of 2020; this compares with a 2011 census figure of 866,392 young people aged 15–24 in Bulgaria. The high number of participants envisaged in the Youth Guarantee can be explained by the efforts of the government to provide employment measures to all young people. According to the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, reaching out to a large number of young people is one of the perceived added values of the Youth Guarantee in this country.

Besides differences in terms of the scale of youth unemployment and disengagement, Member States have different starting positions in terms of legal, political and financial framework conditions for youth employment policies, as well as differences in PES structures and competencies. In some Member States, the responsibility for youth employment is spread across a number of government departments and other actors: this is the case in Ireland. In other countries, youth employment policy has been subject to frequent political disputes and energetic public debate, especially in France, Greece and Spain. In the case of Spain, a series of education and labour market reforms

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<sup>17</sup> Eurostat, Young people's at-risk-of-poverty or exclusion rate by sex and country of birth [youth\_incl\_020], last update: 15 October 2014

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Estonia data, [www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee)

implemented in recent years has led to growing disagreements over the content of these reforms and in turn has weakened social dialogue.<sup>19</sup> Against this background, the Youth Guarantee has been seen as a way of establishing a new basis for cooperation between the government and social partners. Other countries, such as Bulgaria and Poland, have been facing problems in terms of providing adequate assistance to young people through their national PES. Nevertheless, the two countries can draw on their experiences in delivering the Operational Programmes under the ESF. In some cases, such as in Flanders (Belgium), longstanding policies similar to the Youth Guarantee have been in place, while in other countries, such as Italy, offering a Youth Guarantee is a totally new approach to youth employment policy.

The absorption capacity of the education and training system, including VET, and the overall absorption capacity of the economy also play a role in the national policy environment. The impact of the recession, availability of funding and job creation more generally remain important challenges in this respect. While again these factors vary across different country clusters, generally speaking all European countries have limited absorption capacities in their labour markets and to a lesser degree also in their training systems. Different factors account for a lack of training places for young people; in general, shortcomings are linked to:

- the economic crisis and the significant increase in youth unemployment as a result of the economic downturn;
- a negative image and lower attractiveness of VET;
- underdeveloped and under-resourced apprenticeship systems.

In general, many countries still need to develop a culture of apprenticeships and dual trajectories, and even traineeships. Both the Quality Framework for Traineeships and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the measures accompanying the Youth Guarantee under the current Youth Employment Package, set out to support Member States in developing such cultures. While structures have been created to better assist young people in their transitions from education into the labour market, ultimately young people's chances remain subject to the general economic environment in the Member States.

Member States' starting positions also differ as to whether they are eligible for funding from the YEI to set up their Youth Guarantee offer. Financial framework conditions for youth employment policy generally differ from country to country. Moreover, budgets have come under pressure following the most recent economic crisis. Especially in Member States that currently are receiving or previously have received EU financial assistance, such as Greece, the Youth Guarantee is being implemented in a very difficult financial and political context, being financed partly through national funding. The YEI was set up to give Member States the opportunity to deal proactively with youth unemployment issues, regardless of the state's current budgetary situation. Under the YEI, €6.4 billion is dedicated to the Youth Guarantee between 2014 and 2020. Regions eligible for this funding are those with youth unemployment rates exceeding 25%.

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<sup>19</sup> Since 2010, the Spanish government has introduced three labour reforms (the last in 2012). The reforms more or less explicitly pursue three objectives: (1) establishing conditions to boost job creation or slow job destruction; (2) reducing labour market segmentation between permanent and temporary workers; and (3) raising labour market efficiency, increasing flexibility for companies and enhancing worker security. However, these reforms have not been very effective in creating jobs, slowing down job losses, reducing unemployment or increasing the proportion of permanent contracts; at the same time, collective redundancies have increased. The lack of agreement with social partners on these reforms has also weakened social dialogue. Workers' organisations in particular have described the reforms as inefficient while at the same time criticising what they see as an overemphasis on spending cuts and on greater flexibility for employers.

A number of European countries do not qualify for any YEI funding: Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands. Estonia is therefore the only Member State out of the 10 countries under review in this report that does not qualify for the additional YEI funding. The largest budgets made available under the Youth Guarantee framework will go to Italy, with a total of €1.1 billion (European Commission, 2014e) and France, with €620 million (European Commission, 2014f).

In February 2015, the European Commission proposed to front-load the YEI fund with €1 billion in an attempt to further accelerate the successful implementation of the Youth Guarantee (European Commission, 2015d). The accelerated pre-financing would help Member States that, due to a lack of national resources, face difficulties in starting implementation at national and regional level. Typically, national governments pre-finance projects in the framework of ESF operational programmes. The increased pre-financing, however, could help further increase the potential policy impact of the Youth Guarantee.

### First steps in implementing the Youth Guarantee

As the European Council Recommendation from April 2013 specifies, Member States need to ‘ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education’.

In line with the Council Recommendation, Member States need to set up the provisions for implementing the Youth Guarantee set out in the form of YGIPs. With the YGIPs, Member States outline how they intend to use the funding made available by the YEI and describe both concrete measures to be put in place or reinforced under the Youth Guarantee framework and more strategic plans for reforming Member States’ current approaches to youth employment. All Member States had submitted their YGIP to the Commission by the end of December 2013 or spring 2014 respectively. (Member States eligible for YEI funding had to submit their YGIPs in December 2013; the remaining Member States submitted their plans in 2014.) The national YGIPs were submitted alongside countries’ ESF Operational Programmes. Under the 2014 European Semester, Member States have also received country-specific recommendations on their YGIPs. Some of the national YGIPs are publicly available online (see European Commission, 2015f). Following the submission of their Youth Guarantee plans, some countries managed to put in place their Youth Guarantee offer in 2014 while others continued to prepare for its implementation.

Moreover, some countries began reporting numbers enrolled in the Youth Guarantee during the early months. In the case of Italy, for example, the first monitoring data show that 212,279 people enrolled in the Youth Guarantee between 1 May 2014 and 25 September 2014. On 25 September 2014, the national portal on the Youth Guarantee ([www.garanziagiovani.gov.it](http://www.garanziagiovani.gov.it)) showed 14,483 entries by companies with a total of 20,879 vacancies. Companies had made 14,483 requests, which equated to 20,879 effective jobs (some requests cover more than one job). The number of people registered at the time was 212,279. These numbers show that after the start of the programme, 37.9% of the potential recipients envisaged by the national YGIP had registered while only 10.2% of the envisaged vacancies had been posted. This gap is a cause for concern as it highlights a lack of job vacancies in relation to the number of job-seekers.

Following a request from the European Parliament, a total of 18 Youth Guarantee pilot projects were put in place across the EU (European Commission, 2014d), starting in August and December 2013

and set to run for around 12 months. Member States received initial YEI funding for these projects, which offered the opportunity to gather early experience in implementing the Youth Guarantee. The pilot projects are currently implemented in seven countries: Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain and the UK. The projects are split into two different groups (European Commission, 2015a). The first targets young people towards the end of their secondary education/training with the aim of smoothing their school-to-work transition. (For a detailed discussion of school-to-work transitions see Eurofound, 2014a.) The second group of measures looks at young NEETs more specifically and how to get them back into employment, education or training.

Early experiences of these Youth Guarantee pilot projects, for example those obtained in the framework of a review by the European Commission in September 2014, overall appear encouraging (European Commission, 2014g; 2014h). By mid-2014, more than 3,000 young people had taken part in these 18 pilot measures, which showed a positive effect on their employability. In many cases, this intervention was the first these young people had received since leaving education.

In the UK, pilot projects are being held in Croydon, Hartlepool and Pembrokeshire. In order to support students at risk of early school-leaving, the Hartlepool project involves 275 young people aged 15–16 (year 11) identified as being the most at risk of leaving school early or disengaging from post-16 education. The project offers 30 hours of mentoring and support. As a result, participants' confidence and relationship with their teachers improved, they became more aware of the options for their future and participation in the programme helped them focus on exams and school.

Another six pilot projects are taking place in Spain. These are located in the regions of Aragón, Avilés, Cartagena, Galicia, Gijón and Valencia. According to the organisers, the pilot projects have followed innovative approaches in bringing together different local and regional actors (public authorities, NGOs, associations, the academic sector), which have worked together for the first time to promote the education, training and employment of young people.

Another interesting example comes from the regional government of Canarias. In this case, the region did not receive funding from the Youth Guarantee Pilot Initiative but nevertheless decided to implement a Youth Guarantee scheme following the policy orientations of the Spanish Strategy for Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment (2013–2016).

Since its inception in January 2014, the Ballymun pilot project in Ireland has been frequently mentioned in the EU policy debate as a good practice example of Youth Guarantee implementation.

### **Ireland: Youth Guarantee pilot project in Ballymun**

The Youth Guarantee pilot project in Ballymun (Dublin), co-financed by the European Commission and national funding, was agreed in July 2013; implementation started in January 2014. Ballymun is a socially and economically disadvantaged neighbourhood in Dublin, close to the inner city. A detailed local implementation plan was prepared. This included an assessment of the problem of youth unemployment in the target area and profiling young people (18–24 year-olds) in that area, including their current labour market status. This was done to assess young people's distance from the labour market (in terms of education, skills, and employment experience and history). Analysis of the current situation enabled the identification of three target groups of young people and different intervention strategies to respond to their needs. The pilot involves an initial group engagement at the local Intreo office.<sup>20</sup> Each person is then referred to the Local Employment Service/Ballymun Jobs Club for a one-to-one interview with a career guidance worker. Following this meeting, a Personal Progression Plan is set up. Based on an assessment of needs, the young unemployed person is guaranteed an offer of basic skills development, further education or training, work experience or employment within four months of registration with the Intreo office.

As the above examples show, in implementing the Youth Guarantee Member States are starting from different positions. Important factors include:

- the size of the NEET cohort that needs to be reintegrated into the labour market and education system;
- whether young unemployed people register with the national PES;
- whether Member States qualify for YEI funding.

While some Member States have already had the chance to gain experiences through Youth Guarantee pilot projects, for the majority of countries implementing the Youth Guarantee is a new challenge. To ensure that they can deliver the Youth Guarantee, many countries will need to introduce important changes in the way youth employment policy is currently being delivered. The following section focuses on these changes by describing concrete measures and reforms put in place at national level to make the Youth Guarantee a reality.

### **Reforms needed to ensure effective implementation**

By design, the Youth Guarantee entails both structural reform to improve school-to-work transitions and measures to immediately help young people back into employment or education. Delivering the Youth Guarantee may equally require reforms of the national PES and VET system. To ensure that these reforms produce good outcomes for young people, strong cooperation between key stakeholders is needed. In line with the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, Member States are required to put a series of reforms in place to better equip their national structures to deal with young people and their needs. With the Youth Guarantee aiming to provide better coordinated policies for youth, a well-functioning partnership is essential for achieving this goal. The Council Recommendation specifically asks countries to combine their stakeholders' efforts by establishing a partnership approach in working towards Youth Guarantee implementation. In many cases, legal and policy provisions form the basis for the design and implementation of youth employment policies.

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<sup>20</sup> Intreo is a new service from the Department of Social Protection in Ireland. It is a single point of contact for all employment and income supports in Ireland.



For example, these provisions determine who is in charge of this policy area, whether government departments or such stakeholders as social partners and youth organisations. Moreover, the legal and political framework determines the scope of possible interventions – for example, what kind of vocational training and education is offered or whether and how employment conditions such as pay can differ for young people. In this light, the next section provides an overview of changes to the following aspects of countries' infrastructure.

- Legal provisions: what legal provisions have been amended in order to deliver the Youth Guarantee – for example, changing the legal basis for VET or allowing for discrimination on the basis of age?
- Policy provisions: what new governance structures have been set up in order to allow for better stakeholder cooperation?
- PES structures: what has been done to better equip PES with the resources needed to offer targeted and relevant measures to young people?
- Monitoring and evaluation: how do countries plan to monitor and evaluate the measures they put in place for young people under the Youth Guarantee framework?
- VET provisions and future prospects: what changes in the training and education system have been made? Are there sufficient training places available for young people?

### Legal reforms

The growing prominence of the issue of youth unemployment in recent years and the call for Member States to tackle the youth unemployment crisis has resulted in the Council Recommendations on setting up a Youth Guarantee. To deliver on this commitment, some Member States need to put in place a series of legal and political reforms. For instance, in Bulgaria, in parallel with the design of the national YGIP, a gradual update of the Labour Code started in February 2014. This legal update set out to ensure the provision of quality apprenticeships, work experience training, and guidance and counselling for young people. With the updated Labour Code, the rights of young people participating in such measures are better protected and the prerequisites for sustainable youth employment are set.

In Spain, Royal Decree 1529/2012 laid the foundations for a dual system in vocational training together with further development of the training and apprenticeship contract in the legislation on labour market reform. The legislation aims to prepare the ground for a progressive introduction of the dual principle in Spanish VET and to foster more collaboration and participation of companies. It rests on the principle that enterprises should participate more actively in the education process and VET should adapt to the demands and specific needs of businesses and industry. With a focus on transition policies, the new legal provisions equally target reforms in the education system. Here reforms aim at further linking the education systems to labour market needs, the validation of prior experience and reducing early school-leaving, and reforming/amending the curriculum.

In a similar vein, in the framework of its YGIP, Ireland is currently revising a series of legal provisions; new legislation has been drafted related to the setting up and operation of a reformed activation and further education and training system (with the legislation introduced in 2013 and final transfer of FÁS training centres (community training centres) to the new Education and Training Boards in mid-2014). Some further legislative change is required and planned as part of implementation of the Youth Guarantee to allow for positive discrimination in favour of young people aged under 25 in employment initiatives. This is required as it is currently not possible to discriminate in employment on the basis

of age. Furthermore, there is a legislative basis for the setting up of the new further education and training structures, SOLAS, and Education and Training Boards (introduced in October 2013). There is also a longstanding legislative base for apprenticeship training. Moreover, a new apprenticeship training system is slated to come on stream from 2014. This will require amendments to the existing legislation (initially brought into force in 1967 and amended in 1987).

In the case of Poland, at the same time that the drafting of the national YGIP took place, changes were introduced to the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions. The amendment of the Act closely follows the principles set out in the Youth Guarantee Recommendation. This concerns, for instance, the period in which a young person registered as unemployed must receive support. In line with the Council Recommendation, this period was reduced from six to four months. The legal amendment also introduces a number of new instruments related to tackling youth unemployment such as: apprenticeship schemes, employment and relocation vouchers; establishing a national database of internships and apprenticeships; modernising the VET system; and improving the monitoring of career choices of recent graduates. The amendment also prolonged the period of fee exemption from social security for employers hiring young people (up to 30 years of age).

In other cases, such as in France, legal reforms relevant to implementation of the Youth Guarantee are still underway, such as the reform of apprenticeships and the reorganisation of services for lifelong learning information and counselling.

### **Policy framework reforms: promoting a partnership approach**

Legal, policy and financial frameworks are important, but a pivotal element of the Youth Guarantee is the need to cooperate and to cross boundaries between different policy domains. This is especially important as in many cases youth employment is considered a joint responsibility of different ministries, the PES, local governments, youth work and the education sector. To overcome this divide, Youth Guarantee implementation calls for close cooperation between key stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of its activities.

Many countries have put in place new forums for stakeholder cooperation in the area of youth employment in recent years. In the case of the Ballymun (Ireland) pilot project for example, this is based on formalised partnership agreements and involves regular coordination meetings between different stakeholders. This pilot project can be considered a test run for Youth Guarantee implementation at national level. To do so, both local and national partnership boards were set up. The composition is the same but the local group is not only responsible for delivering the pilot project but also for communicating lessons learned and formulating policy recommendations. The national-level working group will later draw on this information for national Youth Guarantee implementation.

In the case of the UK, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been established. These LEPs are partnerships between local authorities and businesses, which have been charged with the task of managing a large part of the funds received through the YEI. In particular, LEPs are expected to extend the provision of apprenticeships, work experience placements and youth entrepreneurship programmes, among other activities (for further information on the LEPS, see Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012).

With a variety of different actors involved, the Youth Guarantee also calls for a clear managing authority to be put in place. Table 3 gives an overview of the different stakeholders involved in implementing the Youth Guarantee in the 10 Member States under review.



Table 3: Overview of actors involved in implementing Youth Guarantee in 10 Member States

	Ministry of Employment (or equivalent)	Ministry responsible for social benefits	Ministry/organisation responsible for ESF/YEI	Ministry of Education youth work	Ministry responsible for Other ministry (justice, defence, interior, health, housing)	PES (either at national, regional or local level)	Youth organisation (representative)	Local youth organisation (implementation)	Social partners	Education sector	Local governments	NGOs (minorities)	
BE*	XX	XX	X	XX	X		XXX	X	X	XX	X	XX	
BG	XXX	XX	XX	XX	XX		XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
EE	XX	X	XX	XXX	XXX	X	XX	XX	XX	XX		X	x
EL	XXX		X	X			XX			X	X	X	
ES**	XXX	XXX (employ- ment)	XX	XX		XX	XX	XX	X	X		XX	X
FR	XXX	XXX (employ- ment)	XX (employ- ment)	XX	XX	X	XX	X	XX				
IE	XX	XXX	XX	XX	XX		XX	X		X	XX		X
IT	XXX		XXX	XX	XX	XX	XX	X		X	X	XXX	X
PL	XX	X	XXX	X			XX		XX	X	X		
UK	XX		XX (LEP)***	X	X		XX			X		x	

Notes: XXX=authority/coordinator; XX=principal partner/stakeholder; and X=associated partner/stakeholder; \* A distinction needs to be made in Belgium between the federal and community/region level: social benefits are (still) the responsibility of the federal government, while education and PES are the responsibility of the regions/communities; \*\* Similar to Belgium, in Spain many responsibilities are delegated to the regional level; \*\*\* LEPs = Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Source: Authors, based on national YGIPs and expert interviews

In the majority of countries, the national Labour Ministry is in charge of implementing the Youth Guarantee. For instance, the Youth Guarantee coordinator in Spain is the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. It will be responsible for establishing the Youth Guarantee system and for coordinating actions at all levels and in all sectors. In addition to the Ministry, the national PES will promote the implementation of Youth Guarantee measures and will coordinate the regional PES (17 regional and 52 provincial offices). In a similar vein, in France the managing authority in place for the coordination of the Youth Guarantee has been clearly identified since the beginning of 2013 – namely, the Ministry of Labour, General Directorate for Employment and Vocational Training (DGEFP). The major stakeholders in this field and central to the Youth Guarantee in France are the PES (*Pôle Emploi*) and the Local Youth Centres (*Missions Locales*). In Belgium and Greece, it is the national PES, or the organisation that governs these, which coordinates the policies related to the Youth Guarantee. In Belgium, for instance, the PES at regional level coordinates the Youth Guarantee. The regions set up respective management structures in relation to this. In the Flemish Region, where a similar scheme was already implemented in 2008 (the so-called Youth Work Plan), a special coordinator has been appointed; in the Brussels Capital Region, a Youth Guarantee team (and office) has been established; and in the Walloon Region, a coordinator has been appointed within the mandate of the single point of contact of the Youth Guarantee in Belgium. In addition,

with the establishment of Synerjob, cross-regional work on this theme has increased.<sup>21</sup> In Ireland, the Department of Social Protection is responsible for Youth Guarantee implementation. This department is not just in charge of the payments of social benefits but also the PES – activating unemployed people and paying social welfare benefits. In Greece, responsibility for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee lies within the OAED (PES).

In contrast, some countries put the coordination and implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the hands of non-employment-focused bodies that typically work on youth issues. This is the case in both Estonia and Poland. In Estonia, youth policy and youth work are implemented by the Department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Education and Research, together with the Estonian Youth Work Centre (a government agency administered by the Ministry of Education and Research). In Poland, although the ministry responsible for implementing EU funds is the main body responsible for implementing the Youth Guarantee, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP) play a crucial role in tackling NEETs issues in terms of coordinating implementing Youth Guarantee measures.

### **Poland: Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP)**

The Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP) headquarters and its 900 units working at national, regional and local level create an effective network supporting young people in difficult situations or threatened by social exclusion, including NEETs. Even though the OHP is not a part of the educational system, this institution plays a key role in providing VET services for young people, which focus on current labour market needs. Due to the varied nature of the tasks involved, the primary OHP units are divided into two groups: education and care units, and units performing tasks for the labour market.

The 220 education and care units include 9 Education and Care Centres, 29 Training and Care Centres, 103 Labour Corps and 79 Environmental Labour Corps. Currently, there are over 33,500 young people in these units.

The units performing tasks for the labour market create a network of almost 620 entities. Among these are Youth Centres of Education and Labour, Mobile Centres of Occupational Information, Youth Employment Offices and their branches, Youth Career Centres, Job Placement Agencies, ESF Occupational Training Centres, and Employment Clubs.

Since 2004, the OHP has implemented projects and has undertaken measures focused on tackling social problems, unemployment, social exclusion and the vocational education of young people aged between 15 and 25. During this period, the OHP has had contact with many different institutions at regional and local level, through its 900 units. Today, the OHP is making use of this network to implement the Youth Guarantee.

In Italy, the leading authority is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which uses a special body, 'Struttura di Missione', set up in May 2013, to promote and monitor the entire course of implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

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<sup>21</sup> Synerjob is the Federation of Public Employment and Vocational Training services in Belgium; it was created on 3 July 2007 as a non-profit organisation according to Belgian law, bringing together five public services under one banner.

### Italy: New body set up for Youth Guarantee implementation

In Italy, a special body named 'Struttura di Missione' (SdM) was set up in November 2013 to design, promote, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the YGIP in Italy. Another important objective of this newly formed body is to coordinate the different levels of governance involved in Youth Guarantee implementation.

The SdM brings together the most important stakeholders in the field of youth employment – representatives of national administrations (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with its four directorates, Ministry of University and Research, Ministry of Economic Development, Youth Department), National Social Security Institute (INPS), State-Regions Conference, Italian Provinces Union and representatives of the Union of Chambers of Commerce, and agencies for technical assistance of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – that is, the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers (ISFOL) and Italia Lavoro.

Intermediate bodies – the Regions and the Autonomous Province of Trento – are in charge of carrying out a range of interventions, defined by regional implementation plans. The Department for Youth and National Civil Service of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the National Social Security Institute and the Minister of Education will act as Managing Authorities regarding different activities. ISFOL is in charge of monitoring and evaluating interventions. Italia Lavoro was chosen as the in-house technical assistance agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to help carry out measures to support PES personnel and to implement training, particularly addressing schools.

As the example of the setting up of the 'Struttura di Missione' in Italy suggests, coordinating Youth Guarantee design and implementation between different levels of governance has been taken on board by some Member States.

The interaction between national, regional and local stakeholders is an interesting aspect of Youth Guarantee design and delivery. While subsidiarity is not explicitly mentioned in the Council Recommendation, this document calls on Member States to set up supportive schemes geared towards national, regional and local circumstances. The interplay between different actors within a Member State and the interaction between both actors and strategies from the national, regional and local level are an interesting dimension of Youth Guarantee implementation. In the case of Belgium, for example, the national YGIP actually consists of four separate Youth Guarantee schemes – one for each region/community (the Flemish and Walloon regions, the Brussels Capital regions and the German-speaking community). This is due to the fact that the Belgian Constitution does not foresee a national coordination structure in the employment sphere, with each region remaining in charge of measures relating to the labour market. That there are in fact four plans may be considered as a positive circumstance which allows for greater flexibility in the Brussels Capital and the Walloon Region,<sup>22</sup> which are the two regions eligible for YEI funding. In other countries, there are also important local and regional dimensions of Youth Guarantee implementation. In France, for instance, the Youth Guarantee is a central initiative. However, Youth Guarantee delivery relies heavily on Local Youth Centres (*Missions Locales*). Currently, more than 400 of these centres are spread across the country. The UK is a very specific case as the country decided not to initiate a Youth Guarantee scheme at national level. However, the three devolved administrations, Scotland, Wales (Welsh

<sup>22</sup> Following the European Commission comments on the first version of Belgium's YGIP, an introductory section was added to the four plans to highlight their common elements.

Government, 2014) and Northern Ireland all either have or are planning to put in place their own Youth Guarantee schemes. In Italy, the involvement of regional actors is crucial. In particular, regional authorities in coordination with the Ministry of Labour are the main actors in offering and providing programmes and initiatives differentiated at the regional level and tailored according to the strengths and opportunities available in the different regions. Similarly, at the local level the role of NGOs is potentially important, as are local social partners at the regional level involved in apprenticeship and traineeship programmes. Also important is the role played by the Italian Ministry of Justice for the integration and involvement of young offenders in the Youth Guarantee programmes.

Bringing different government departments together is essential, but stakeholder cooperation with social partners and youth organisations is equally crucial in reaching out to young people and establishing adequate links between education and the world of work. As specified in the Council Recommendation, both social partners and youth organisations can contribute substantially to the design and further development of Youth Guarantee provisions and furthermore can ‘act as multipliers in awareness-raising activities’.

Bringing employers on board and engaging them in Youth Guarantee delivery has been an explicit objective in a number of countries. As the example of Spain and its recent changes to the legal provisions for VET show, Member States are actively trying to increase the involvement of employers in young people’s training provisions. Other examples highlight similar motivations in other Member States.

Many Member States cooperate with a range of stakeholders to ensure effective Youth Guarantee delivery, including social partners and youth organisations. Involving youth organisations can be especially useful as some of them are already involved in helping NEETs (re)enter employment or training. Local youth organisations can, moreover, play a pivotal role in reaching out to NEETs, preventing and reengaging early school-leavers and providing assistance on other youth-relevant topics. As the example of France shows, local youth organisations can provide the right ‘layer’ between disengaged youth and government structures that these young people do not always trust.

### **France: Role of youth organisations**

In France, there is strong consensus on the need for immediate, targeted and strong intervention in favour of youth employment. As in other countries, NEETs in France are confronted with social isolation; this calls for support including assistance in health, social matters, housing, employment and training. The aim here is to integrate young people fully in society and the labour market. As those excluded tend to avoid public establishments, there is a need to maintain local networks of solidarity to reach out to the most disadvantaged. In France, this is typically the role of Local Youth Centres (*Missions Locales*) which have more than 400 centres spread across the country.

A major stakeholder in this field and central to the Youth Guarantee in France is of course the PES (*Pôle Emploi*), with its own set of services; it also engages in local partnerships with Local Youth Centres and ‘Cap Emploi’ for people with disabilities.

The role of the Local Youth Centres is central in getting early support for young people with difficulties as, over the last 30 years, the network has developed considerable knowledge and know-how regarding integrated pathways to youth inclusion and employment. The network of Local Youth Centres is one of the few stakeholders recognising the legitimacy and the importance of non-formal education. Many of these centres have become involved in youth programmes at local, regional or European level, beyond traditional structural support (such as ERASMUS).

Of course, many other NGOs engage in supporting young people in entering into employment, with a variety of resources coming from private funds or public sources (such as cities and local communities). Local Youth Centres, remain, however, a unique neighbourhood solution for young people with difficulties in France.

### Reforms to PES structures

While PES play a crucial role in administering programmes like the Youth Guarantee, these structures differ considerably across the EU and the 10 Member States under review in terms of their underlying rationale of service delivery, their outreach and management capacities, their access to skilled staff, and the resources available to them more generally. Moreover, since the onset of the crisis, these structures have frequently been criticised for being unable to adequately address young people's needs and help them (back) into employment or education.

The development and implementation of the Youth Guarantee puts a heavy demand on the infrastructure and internal organisation of PES across Member States. These services need to adapt their working practices to the needs of young people and offer additional trajectories, as well as approaching employers to find suitable jobs and apprenticeship places for young people. This requires sufficient capacities and capabilities to do so. In Sweden, for example, within the PES in 2013, around 700 full-time employees worked on providing the Youth Guarantee scheme (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2011; 2014).

When looking at how PES capacities in the 10 countries under review have developed to operate the Youth Guarantee in terms of client, information and individual case-management services, as well as the administrative capacity in place for implementing the Youth Guarantee, some countries seem to have adapted their PES to support NEETs to move into employment or enrol in a training trajectory. This seems to be the case in Estonia, Belgium, France, and Poland. In contrast, experts from Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain report that they still have to take significant steps to bring the PES up to speed in order to effectively implement the Youth Guarantee. Fano et al (2015) highlight, for example, the need to reform PES in Italy in terms of capacities and capabilities.

### Belgium and France: Focus on young people in the PES

To facilitate cooperation between PES of the different regions in Belgium, Synerjob, the Federation of Public Employment and Vocational Training services, brings together the five PES from Belgium. This overarching structure was created in 2007. On the basis of young people's individual needs, they are offered tailored interventions ranging from no additional support (where the job-seeker is expected to find a job easily) to intensive guidance.

To provide all young people with the support they need, the government of Flanders has committed to employing people in around 310 full-time equivalent positions who will be looking after young people. In a similar vein, the Brussels Capital Region decided to set up a Youth Guarantee office employing 13 counsellors who focus on improving client services for young job-seekers. In the Walloon Region, a PES employee is the designated coordinator for all PES actions dedicated to youth. This person is also in charge of growing partnerships with organisations specialised in reaching out to NEETs, such as youth organisations. Moreover, a dozen social workers have been hired to provide specific counselling to young people within the PES. Le Forem, the PES for the Walloon Region, also provides training programmes for counsellors to better prepare them for providing services to young people.



In the case of France, several services of the French PES are particularly adapted to the target group of the Youth Guarantee (although available to all job-seekers). These services include:

- Hiring Simulation Method (*Méthode de Recrutement par Simulation*, MRS);
- CV-free recruitment (*Recrutement sans CV*);
- Work-based integration / On-the-job assessment (*Evaluation en milieu de travail*, EMT);
- The ‘Ambitions’ clubs.<sup>23</sup>

Over the past 10 years, various networks of youth information services (*Point Information Jeunesse* – PIJ, *Pôle d’Accueil d’Information et d’Orientation*, PAIO, *Centres d’animation, de ressources et d’information sur la formation*, CARIF, CIO) have merged with other services but the PES and Local Youth Centres remain the two main information providers in terms of access to employment and training. The case management model is widespread in the menu of services offered by PES and Local Youth Centres. The concept of the ‘inclusion pathway’ is also common practice and NEETs can benefit from extra support through these services. Administrative capacity is in place but there is a lot of pressure on social workers and advisers providing extra support to young people, due to the increasing demand. An additional burden for PES staff is the increasingly complex electronic recording of administrative and financial data for the monitoring of social benefits.

Given the characteristics of the cohort of young disengaged people, a few Member States have decided to further extend the target group for the Youth Guarantee offer to older age groups. While this is an important step in ensuring that young people at risk receive a timely intervention, these extensions are likely to put extra pressure on the PES.

### **Target groups: Extension of offer to older age groups**

According to the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, young people under 25 are eligible for the Youth Guarantee offer. However, a number of Member States have decided to further extend their offer to older age groups.

Most notably, Italy has decided to extend its Youth Guarantee offer to young people aged 25–29 years, in response to the substantial increase in youth unemployment among those aged under 25 and among the 18–29 age group. Between 2012 and 2013, the unemployment rate rose by 4.7% among the under-25s (touching a national average of 40% and 51.6% considering only southern Italy) and by 4.4% among the 18–29 year-olds (reaching 29.3% across Italy, and 42.6% in the south).

Similarly in Spain, eligibility for Youth Guarantee measures was extended to those aged under 29 in April 2015. Finally, in Poland, where the Youth Guarantee generally targets young people aged 15–24, start-up grants will also be available for those aged up to 29.

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<sup>23</sup> This is a collective action targeting young people furthest from the labour market to increase their self-confidence, provide them with job search techniques and help them identify their talents and competences. The service is organised together with local enterprises. The experiment was held over a 12-month period for 80 young people from a deprived urban neighbourhood (*Zone Urbaine Sensible*, ZUS), with an educational level lower than or equal to ISCED 4 (Bac+2), accompanied by a full-time coach. The initial results were encouraging: 70% went back to professional activity (work or vocational training) and 50% of young beneficiaries found a permanent job after three months.

The extension of the Guarantee to people in older age groups is, however, not a new phenomenon. For a number of years, Finland has had extended eligibility criteria in place. Here, young people with new qualifications under the age of 30 are equally part of the Youth Guarantee target group (Ministry of Education and Culture Finland, 2012, p. 31).

### Reforms to monitoring and evaluation

As set out in the Council Recommendations on establishing a Youth Guarantee, Member States are also encouraged to invest in assessing and continuously improving schemes – not least by putting in place monitoring and evaluating measures. This will allow for more evidence-based decision-making and will facilitate the identification and the exchange of good practices between countries. In many cases, monitoring and evaluation systems have, however, shown weaknesses in the past and some challenges continue to persist.

Some countries have started to invest more in monitoring and evaluation activities in recent years. This is the case in Estonia. Despite the fact that, since 2010, Estonia has used key indicators on youth (such as demographic factors, education, labour market, income and poverty, health, justice, youth work, attitudes of youth, free time), regularly publishes research on youth and records this research in an online database, the situation of NEETs remains under-researched: to date, only two publications focus on NEETs. Similarly, in Poland, monitoring of the labour market situation of young people has been fragmented. Under the Youth Guarantee framework, the monitoring system will allow for a systematic evaluation of the situation of youth including NEETs in the labour market. Special emphasis is given to following up participants' labour market status after having received a Youth Guarantee offer.

### Italy: New monitoring and evaluation provisions

Setting up the right conditions for the development of monitoring activities envisaged by the Youth Guarantee has featured prominently in Italy's preparation for implementing the Youth Guarantee, with the aim to build a broader 'information backbone' for active and passive labour market policies (based on Art. 8 of the Decree Law No. 76/2013 and Art. 4, paragraph 51, of Law No. 92 of 28 June 2012). In the case of Italy, the envisaged evaluation system will use the information gathered through online portals. This will enable the implementation of surveys and counterfactual analyses aimed at assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions.

The system will produce weekly reports including detailed information on registered users at both national and regional level, information on job vacancies and information on the placement of registered job-seekers. Moreover, the technological network of the Statistical Information System on Training (SISTAF), financed through regional public resources, will be strengthened over the next two years to integrate all training-related information at all levels (national and local). The system envisages an interface between such data and the Compulsory Communication System data on the labour market (hiring and dismissal) and the National Register of Students to enable increasingly accurate surveys and detailed analyses based on evidence.

The data generated may enable a review of the allocation of regional/national resources until the end of 2015 – for instance, by moving resources from one typology of intervention to the other in the event of unsatisfactory outcomes for a given policy measure.



The above provisions aim – through the availability of reliable and consistent information – to ensure a significant improvement in terms of the monitoring and evaluation of national and local policy impacts. The national-level system is already in place but its link to the regional level is not yet fully operational.

Similarly to the regular reporting foreseen in Italy (see box above), in Bulgaria the YGIP also foresees quarterly progress reports. The UK also has a well-developed monitoring system for NEETs: the Office for National Statistics publishes a quarterly bulletin specifically addressing the development of NEETs statistics.

Ireland proposed a comprehensive monitoring system in its YGIP and the types of evaluation studies and methods to be applied in implementation of the Youth Guarantee scheme are also identified in the plan. Work has been underway for some time to improve monitoring systems and to use existing datasets in evaluations to undertake counterfactual impact evaluation, including randomised control trial methodologies. A new tool for tracking clients from entry to the system, through the activation process and until they are recorded in employment through the income tax system is now operational. This will be used as the basis for monitoring outputs and in developing evaluation studies in the future, tracking impacts over a longer period after completion of the programme. In line with recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a new monitoring system has been set up, which places a stronger emphasis on quantitative methods. While a quantitative approach is essential, studies using qualitative methods should also be undertaken to build up an understanding of what works and what does not work – and why – for different categories of young unemployed people. Qualitative approaches are also necessary to build up the evidence base on process-related aspects of delivery and experiences of progression along employability pathways.

France is including a qualitative approach by involving the Bertrand Schwartz Institute, a social science department created by the umbrella organisation of Local Youth Centres, in Youth Guarantee evaluation activities. This institute will experiment and involve young people in collaborative research to identify the best policy options. The first conclusions of the research will feed into the monitoring of the Youth Guarantee.

In Spain, a new Executive Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Youth Guarantee has been set up to ensure effective coordination between central and regional administration. This committee is composed of all autonomous communities and the general state administration, and working groups will be set up to facilitate the work of the committee. Three working groups have already been created to coordinate the following aspects: information systems; good practices and pilot projects; and indicators. The committee will meet frequently, at least on a quarterly basis.

### **Reforms to VET and future labour market prospects**

VET systems and structures are currently subject to policy reforms in many European countries. One of the central aims of these reforms is to better align educational provision with labour market needs. Moreover, the revisions of current VET provisions should ultimately also make these systems more attractive for young people. In the long run, improving VET systems should therefore also reduce the share of young people without professional qualifications.

A number of countries are currently adapting VET curricula to meet labour market needs and to allow for dual-training provisions. For instance, in Spain, regulatory changes in recent years (such as the

Sustainable Economy Law of 2011) aim to reinforce the capacities of VET trainers in cooperation with autonomous communities. VET teachers are also offered the opportunity to be trained in companies to gain further hands-on experience that they can then transmit to VET students. At the same time, the content of VET has been changing to embed more work-based learning in its curriculum design and give it a greater labour market transition orientation. The education reforms aim to increase the number of people in VET by means of the following:

- increasing the permeability between the different education levels (from lower secondary to upper secondary to tertiary studies) from a lifelong learning perspective;
- offering flexibility to lower secondary students so they can follow initial vocational education and training (IVET) instead of upper secondary education;
- facilitating free access to VET;
- providing free training programmes to poorly qualified unemployed people, leading to professional certificates from the employment authorities.

In Greece, the new law for restructuring secondary education is an attempt to regulate VET and better link it to the labour market. According to Cedefop (2014a; 2014b), there are still major issues in the Greek VET system: the system requires closer links with the job market and economy; there is a need for more vigorous involvement of social partners (a sense of social co-responsibility and consensus on vocational training matters); the system should attract more young people into VET; and the quality of vocational training should be improved and better linked to continued vocation training. In addition, the system could benefit from decentralisation and the greater autonomy of schools.

With regard to the absorption capacity of the labour market, some positive signals can be observed. For instance in Ireland, where the recovery is taking root and forecasts of future job growth are quite positive, the situation is improving. In Greece, certain sectors, most importantly the tourism sector, also report signs of improvement. However, it also should be noted that while the Greek tourism sector has been doing better since 2013, this increase in activity has not translated into permanent jobs.

### Concrete Youth Guarantee measures in place

While one of the aims of the Youth Guarantee is to trigger institutional and strategic reforms in the area of youth employment policy, concrete measures are also needed to allow young people to get back into work or education. This section focuses on these concrete measures, based on what has been put in place in the 10 Member States under review. Generally speaking, there is a broad spectrum of activities included in the national YGIPs, ranging from outreach and information activities and the improvement of PES services for young people to more concrete measures such as the promotion of work experience or the prevention of early school-leaving. The Austrian, Finnish and Swedish examples show that a full spectrum of quality interventions is needed to provide a tailored approach to young disengaged people. The most important measures fall into the following categories of interventions.

**Reaching out and engaging young people:** Systems and structures for effectively reaching out to NEETs (such as by PES, municipal social services, healthcare services, youth organisations, rehabilitation services) are needed, including provisions to reach the most vulnerable.

**Information, counselling and guidance:** Systems and structures need to be put in place that provide targeted and personalised guidance and counselling to NEETS.

**Measures assisting young people's school-to-work transitions:** These bring together a range of measures such as an appropriate system that prevents early school-leaving, systems and structures for bringing young people back into education, fostering skills acquisition through civil engagement, recognising prior learning, as well as measures fostering young people's employability through employment incentives.

**Training and work experience placements:** An infrastructure is required that provides training to NEETS including through work placements.

**VET and apprenticeships:** These are systems and structures that provide NEETS with employment or training opportunities, such as apprenticeship or training places.

**Fostering youth entrepreneurship:** Measures that foster young people's capacities to set up their own businesses include the reduction of practical and financial barriers for entrepreneurship.

**Targeted measures for specific at-risk groups:** These are systems and structures addressing vulnerable groups within the youth cohort, including young people with disabilities or young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ideally, these measures are combined in an integrated approach to provide the necessary personalised support to young people. Based on the above categories, what follows is an overview of the concrete Youth Guarantee measures to be put in place, or already in place, in the 10 Member States under review.

### Reaching out and engaging young people

Outreach activities are necessary to identify young people who need support and to better understand their current situation and needs. Traditionally, reaching out to young unengaged people has been a challenge across most Member States. The four-month intervention point is, however, a distinctive feature of the Youth Guarantee and countries therefore need to identify and reach young people to deliver on this. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey (European Parliament, 2014a), young people across Europe remain largely unaware of the Youth Guarantee. The findings of this study show that 8 out of 10 young Europeans had not heard about the initiative. Only around 17% of respondents had heard of it and only 4% had detailed knowledge of it. Policymakers may find it tricky to engage with young people and initial feedback from the Youth Guarantee pilot projects revealed that marketing of the Youth Guarantee and its material need to be adapted to the language of the target group (European Commission, 2014d). The knowledge of actors that engage with young people on an ongoing basis, such as youth organisations or NGOs, may be helpful in ensuring that the content of measures and communication channels are youth-targeted.

Outreach activities are undoubtedly a crucial aspect of Youth Guarantee implementation. In very practical terms, countries can only provide an offer to those young people who are registered with a service provider. However, the proportion of young people registered with the PES varies considerably among the countries under review. Encouraging young people to register with the PES is an important prerequisite for delivering the Youth Guarantee and there are some successful examples of encouraging young people to register, for example with the help of financial incentives (as in Bulgaria) or through information campaigns (in Italy and Poland). Bulgaria, for instance, has

experienced a considerable increase in registration, as young people need to be registered to become eligible for participation in ESF training programmes.

To facilitate outreach measures and to better engage with young people, a number of Member States have put in place online tools for both outreach and engagement with young people. In Italy, for example, access to the Youth Guarantee is provided through a national online portal ([www.garanziagiovani.gov.it](http://www.garanziagiovani.gov.it)) or regional portals where young people must register to benefit from regional services. In the coming months, the national and regional online portals will be interlinked to make the system of registering even more user-friendly and efficient, also with regard to monitoring and evaluation activities. Data on registration trends and actual job interviews and/or participation in training are published on the national portal on a weekly basis. Once the young person is effectively registered with one or more regional portals they can receive a first guidance interview within 60 days.

Similarly, in Spain, the entry point to Youth Guarantee services is an online portal ([www.empleo.gob.es](http://www.empleo.gob.es)), operational since July 2014. The new portal is a meeting point for NEETs, the public administration, companies and the entities that participate in the management of the YGIP. Through this portal, NEETs have access to information about the Spanish Strategy for Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment 2013–2016 and the YGIP. Since the online portal was only established in July 2014, it is not yet clear how exactly the autonomous communities will process each registration – whether they will use the regional PES or the regional Institute of Youth (INJUVE) office or other local/regional actors to develop NEET profiling and a list of proposed actions for NEETs.<sup>24</sup>

In Poland, a new website (<http://gwarancje.edu.pl/>) set up in September 2014 provides information on the implementation and the institutions involved in the Youth Guarantee, on the target groups' eligibility and on the planned actions and measures. Poland also has an information centre – the Green Line – which facilitates access to information about the services of labour offices over the internet and telephone.

### **Poland: The Green Line and ECAM**

Green Line Service – PES Information Centre (ZielonaLinia) is directed primarily towards unemployed people, providing them with information about vacancies as well as training and education opportunities.<sup>25</sup> The centre focuses on questions concerning labour market policy and law, benefits and different forms of support offered by district labour offices and also provides information relating to the national Labour Code. This 24/7 system collects and provides information on: current job offers (in Poland and abroad); professional licences; sources of business financing; possibilities for vocational training and retraining; trial periods and vocational training at the workplace; public works; recruitment of new employees; benefits from district labour offices; and databases of PES, employment agencies, centres for information and career planning and other institutions.

Within the framework of the Green Line, a website has been designed only for young people aged 15–25. The website is called the E-Centre for Youth Employment (ECAM) and provides young people with information concerning education, vocational education, labour market and job counselling. These are tools supporting labour offices that will be widely used in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

<sup>24</sup> INJUVE is a public body attached to the Ministry of Health, whose main activity aims to promote actions to benefit young people.

### Information, counselling and guidance

In principle, PES are available for the whole population including young people. However, in many cases national PES are not equipped, or not sufficiently equipped, to deal with the needs of young people or are simply not attractive to this target group. In view of this, Member States are trying to better target their PES offer to young people. In most Member States, the PES are the main actors in implementing the Youth Guarantee and the initial assistance for young people tends to be in line with overall information and guidance provisions offered by the PES. In other countries, a small number of particularly innovative schemes are being promoted but generally core services are being made more accessible to young people. This is particularly important in countries where the PES is not very attractive for young people and reaching out to young people is an issue. This is the case in Bulgaria and Spain, for example, where the image of the PES as a potential source of support and work opportunities is not wholly positive. PES are being made more attractive to young people to encourage them to register and become more visible and thus more easily reached. In Belgium, the ‘integration allowance’ for young people who have left school and are looking for a job provides a strong incentive for young people to register with their regional PES branch for the first time.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the Youth Guarantee Scheme for Ireland will be implemented within the framework of the Pathways to Work initiative, with specific allocations for young people within existing further education and training (FET) and employment support programmes and some additional elements ‘tailored’ to unemployed young people.

Traditional PES service offers such as information, counselling and career guidance play a central role in the majority of the national YGIPs. In the framework of the Youth Guarantee, this service offer for young people often includes profiling and assessing their current needs in terms of employability. An example of this is the information, counselling and career guidance provisions included in the Italian Service Pacts described below.

#### **Italy: Service Pacts – Information, counselling and guidance for young people**

During a young person’s first interview with the PES, the Service Pact guidelines (Level I Guidance) are established; if the PES advisor deems it appropriate, the young person will be invited for a second interview (Level II guidance).<sup>27</sup> During the second interview, recipients’ specific needs are identified. At the end of this initial process, a Service Pact between the young person and the PES, containing detailed information on the further steps, is signed. This suggests that ownership is an important feature of this set-up.

Within four months of signing, the young person has the chance to take up a set of opportunities that are set out in the pact. The young person has to answer specific questions in an online form. Some of the questions serve to create a profile of the young person which is assigned to one of the four categories describing their specific disadvantage level (low, medium-low, medium-high, high). This theoretically corresponds to the ‘distance to target’ in terms of activities that have to be done to achieve the goal of entering or re-entering employment or education. These profiles also play a major role in determining payments, which will be allocated to accredited services.

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<sup>25</sup> This information centre was set up in 2007 in the Podlaskie region during the previous programming period, then, as an innovative approach to the counselling, it was adopted in 2013 by state institutions and expanded to national level. Currently, the OHP runs the Green Line.

<sup>26</sup> School-leavers in Belgium are entitled to receive the so-called integration allowance if within one year of graduation they have not found a job. The integration allowance is dependent on a person’s age and family situation. The maximum duration is three years.



### Assisting school-to-work transitions

Due to the effects of the economic crisis on the situation of young people in the labour market, young people's transitions from school to (sustained) work have become more complicated and unpredictable in recent years (see Eurofound, 2014a). Member States, however, have a range of policy options available to help young people transition smoothly from education into work. Measures assisting a young person's pathway to employment can be broadly grouped according to which of these five goals they aim to meet:<sup>28</sup>

- preventing early school-leaving;
- reintegrating early school-leavers;
- facilitating transitions from school to work;
- fostering young people's employability;
- removing practical/logistical barriers and offering employer incentives.

Many countries have integrated at least one set of the above measures into their national YGIPs reflecting the most prominent barrier for smooth school-to-work transitions in their country.

### Preventing early school-leaving and reintegrating early school-leavers

Particularly popular in national YGIPs are measures to prevent early school-leaving, to develop second-chance education programmes and to support a return to education. In a number of countries, particularly Spain, early school-leaving is a serious problem leading to a lack of skills, qualifications and employment prospects. The fight against early school-leaving is also a major feature of the Youth Guarantee in France. Targeted services for early school-leavers combine three elements that are embedded in the French system for career information, counselling and guidance:

- platforms to combat early school-leaving (*Plateformes de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs*);<sup>29</sup>
- networks for training, qualification and employment (FOQUALE);<sup>30</sup>
- mobile applications and a website ([www.masecondechance.fr](http://www.masecondechance.fr)).

### Civic engagement

Other countries, for example Italy, try to smooth young people's school-to-work transitions by offering them the opportunity to participate in a range of civic service activities.

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<sup>27</sup> Level II guidance is financed by the programme whereas Level I is not, due to the fact that Level I guidance is included in the services already currently provided by the PES. Level II guidance envisages several activities designed to further assist the young person in making an informed choice about the pathways ahead. Furthermore, this approach helps in creating a better profile, especially relevant for job-seekers with a high level of disadvantage.

<sup>28</sup> Offering training and apprenticeship places can also be considered as a measure to foster the employability of young people; however, because of the prominence of these approaches in many Member States, such interventions are discussed separately below.

<sup>29</sup> Some 372 platforms reporting to the representatives of the government in the regions (*préfets de département*) provide a coordinated approach to early school-leavers linked to other initiatives such as the newly set up career guidance service.

<sup>30</sup> The network provides advice to young people. After an initial interview with specialised staff to assess the needs, skills and educational attainment of the young person, a return pathway to education and training is proposed. An educational counsellor accompanies each young participant.



### **Civic service in Italy**

In Italy, young people aged 18–28 may apply to the regional office of the National Agency for Civic Service (UNSC) for information or to participate in calls for proposals. The goal is to provide young people with the opportunity to improve their citizenship skills while developing their knowledge and awareness of relevant areas of civil society.

The accredited provider offers a reimbursement to the young person for the service duration (12 months). If the provider hires the young person, an employment bonus will be granted.

Civic engagement is equally important in France, which has a track record of encouraging young NEETs into civic engagement. In 2012, a total of 26,000 participants engaged in community work with a monthly wage.

### **Skills recognition**

Another prominent feature in Youth Guarantee measures is ensuring skills recognition. Such provisions are already in place in a number of countries – for example, Belgium, Greece, Italy and Poland. In France, an accreditation of prior learning (APL) system is well advanced.

### **Employment incentives**

Offering financial incentives to employers who train or hire a young person who was previously disengaged is a popular measure across many countries. In the framework of the Youth Guarantee, some of these pre-existing measures will be further reinforced. In Belgium, for example, under the ‘starting-job-framework’ (*Startbanenstelsel / régime des premiers emplois*) employers receive a wage subsidy if they hire a low-educated young person who has signed a starting-job contract; for an employer who hires very low-skilled young people, an additional temporary wage subsidy is paid from the social benefit allowance. Similar provisions also exist in Italy and Poland and, in an attempt to increase young people’s chances in the labour market, Spain is also planning to lower the minimum wages of young people, hence making it less costly for employers to hire them.

### **Training and work experience placements**

Another very common feature of concrete Youth Guarantee measures laid out in national YGIPs is the provision of work placements and work experience, including the provision of wage subsidies for young workers. These measures can be found in all 10 Member States under review.

A number of countries provide additional financial incentives to businesses to employ young people under the Youth Guarantee framework or reinforce existing measures. In Italy, for example, employers hiring a young person for at least six months can receive a bonus. The bonus is assigned subject to the terms of the contract (its duration) and the recipient’s profile. In Poland, the costs for employment incentives cover measures that facilitate the recruitment of young unemployed persons (under 25) and other target groups, or that help to ensure the continued employment of people at risk of job loss. In Belgium, the ACTIVA wage subsidy programme has the aim of reducing the cost of recruiting young workers. Employers are entitled to a monthly allowance of €1,000–€1,100 for a period of 12 months if they hire a person under 26 with at most a secondary level of education. Job-seekers hired under this programme continue to receive part of their unemployment benefits, which employers can deduct from their net wage.

A number of countries (Estonia, France, Italy and Spain) specifically provide ‘first job support’ for young people. First job support is geared towards encouraging employers to take on young people with no experience and low qualifications by subsidising their wages and training.

### **Estonia: First job support**

In Estonia, the employer receives a wage subsidy of up to 50% and also compensation for training costs in the first year of employment if they guarantee the job for two years. Young people aged 17–29 who have been registered as unemployed for at least four months and who have little or no work experience and no specialised education (in other words, those who have only primary, basic or general secondary education) are eligible. Some €18.9 million has been allocated to this measure from the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund for the period 2015–2020.

In Italy, traineeships are designed to encourage young people and help the unemployed to enter or re-enter the education and training system or employment.

### **Italy: Traineeships under the Youth Guarantee framework**

One of the main actions funded under the YGIP in Italy are traineeships: 21.3% of the overall YGIP budget is expected to be spent on these. A range of different traineeship types is envisaged. These typically last a maximum of six months but, if the recipients who benefit from the service are disabled or disadvantaged, they may be extended for up to 12 months. The intervention supports:

- the promotion of traineeships;
- job placement measures and the definition of a training plan;
- the reimbursement of the costs of participating in traineeship pathways, including travel;
- the validation of competences and skills;
- the promotion of a contract favouring the placement of the young person.

Reimbursements to the service providers are based on the results achieved and the positive conclusion of the pathway. The measure funds a participation allowance for the duration of six months to both the young person and the hosting company if required by regional regulations. Some 151,000 people are expected to participate in these traineeships by 2018.

Similarly, under the Youth Guarantee framework, Belgium will reinforce the existing ‘integration traineeships’, with the federal government having reserved a total of €41.8 million for 10,000 integration traineeships in the period 2014–2015.

### **Focus on VET and apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are often described as one of the main options for implementing the Youth Guarantee, and VET reforms are considered a crucial pillar of the Youth Guarantee (Council of the European Union, 2013c). Many countries that currently do not have a functioning apprenticeship system plan to reform their VET system to provide for dual learning pathways in line with practices in Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

Vocational training is a crucial feature of almost all national YGIPs. It includes training to develop skills needed for specific occupations or industries, and certification of these skills. In Greece, for

example, specific measures for the development of skills in growing sectors are foreseen under the Youth Guarantee framework (for the tourism, agricultural production, shipping, and information technology, or IT, sectors).

Apprenticeships are a key feature in the majority of the national YGIPs. While some countries have already had experiences of apprenticeships in the past (Belgium, France, Ireland and the UK), others have started to implement a dual system more recently (for example, Bulgaria, Italy, Poland and Spain). Apprenticeships in Italy, for example, have been and still are the object of a longstanding series of reforms and debates that involve the main stakeholders (the government, the regions, trade unions and education and training providers). The apprenticeship system has not been fully developed as its form is constantly changing and the stakeholders/regions involved are numerous and diverse. The absorption capacity of employers to provide jobs/apprenticeships is also limited. The Youth Guarantee envisages incentives for companies in Italy to hire young people using the apprenticeship contract. However, while the importance of apprenticeships is increasingly mentioned in the public discourse as a key measure to integrate education and work, the actual number of apprenticeship contracts put in place is in fact decreasing. These types of contracts are still not very attractive for employers and tend to be used more as a tax break than as a quality system of on-the-job training for young people.

### **Poland: Quality standards for apprenticeships**

In Poland, an initiative of the Polish Association of Human Resource Management (PSZK) in cooperation with the Polish Lewiatan confederation aims to implement a quality framework for apprenticeships and internships.<sup>31</sup> The two organisations will introduce this quality framework together with trade union and employer representatives. The main idea is to make apprenticeships and internships an integrated part of education rather than solely labour market instruments. The quality framework will include provisions on supervising, programming, auditing and implementing a database of good-quality apprenticeships and internships, as well as a certification system.

European actors are especially interested in promoting high-quality apprenticeships, which is also taken account of in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. The OECD and the European Commission have repeatedly underlined the need for quality apprenticeships, pointing out that the willingness of young people to undertake an apprenticeship will also be limited if the training is of poor quality, working conditions and pay are not competitive, and the programme does not lead to the acquisition of skills valued by employers. In line with this, the emphasis in Bulgaria and Ireland is on raising the quality of apprenticeships. In Bulgaria, changes in the Labour Code have ensured that the labour rights of young people taking part in training and apprenticeships are better protected, as regular contracts must be signed as a legal requirement. If permanent contracts are signed after the end of the apprenticeship, the state covers the social insurance payments for the young people for a period of six months.

In Ireland, a review of apprenticeship training was carried out in 2013 in the framework of modernising the further education and training offer. The review recommends creating a modern apprenticeship training model with greater emphasis on the need to strengthen links between employers and education and training providers. It also proposes that apprenticeships should be enterprise-led and

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<sup>31</sup> Lewiatan was established in January 1999 as a nationwide representation of employers to the state and trade unions. Today it is an organisation of 62 sectoral and regional associations of private employers and 25 individual members. Thus, in total it covers about 3,750 companies employing over 700,000 workers.

that employers should have an active role in identifying occupational standards and in shaping the content of the curriculum in collaboration with education and training providers. It also proposes the establishment of an Apprenticeship Council, hosted by SOLAS (the training authority) working closely with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in all aspects of planning and delivery. The function of the Apprenticeship Council will be to advise on ‘the design, duration, entry levels and on-going provision of apprenticeships’. Membership should include representatives of employers and trade unions.

### Fostering youth entrepreneurship

The Youth Guarantee also aims at fostering youth entrepreneurship by ensuring greater availability of start-up support services for young people. The Council Recommendation emphasises this aim by highlighting the need for ‘fostering entrepreneurial mind-sets, making start-up support services and microfinance more available, and establishing schemes for converting unemployment benefits into start-up grants ... also for young people’ (Council of the European Union, 2013c). Moreover, Recommendation 19 states that the Youth Guarantee seeks to ‘make available more start-up support services, and increase awareness of the possible chances and perspectives connected with self-employment, including through closer cooperation between employment services, business support and (micro) finance providers’ (Council of the European Union, 2013c). While self-employment and entrepreneurship alone are not a panacea for unprecedented high levels of youth unemployment, making Europe a more business-friendly environment and supporting young people in transforming their creative ideas into successful business plans by removing barriers to entrepreneurship has a number of benefits. These include both direct and indirect job creation and the development of human capital and new skills. (For more on youth entrepreneurship, see Eurofound, 2015a,

Entrepreneurship measures specifically feature in eight of the 10 countries under review. These measures also include support for young people wanting to set up social enterprises in Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain. The underlying idea here is to support the entrepreneurship of young unemployed people as a means of enabling them to enter the labour market.

In Spain, there is strong emphasis on self-employment and entrepreneurship in the national YGIP, which translates into a range of measures that include a fixed tariff for the self-employed, self-employment support to young NEETs, the promotion of an entrepreneurship culture in education, and advice and counselling through special offices to be set up within the PES. Another concrete measure set up in Spain is the so-called ‘compatibility measure’ aiming to guarantee a minimum income for NEETs who start their own business. In the framework of this measure, young NEETs who decide to start their own business may receive full unemployment benefit for a maximum of nine months. This is an alternative to another measure, the ‘capitalisation of the unemployment benefit’, which allows young entrepreneurs to capitalise on up to 100% of their unemployment benefit (as a one-off payment) and use this as start-up capital for their business. Likewise, unemployment benefits can be capitalised upon as support for self-employment in Greece. In the case of Greece, start-up incentives are offered in the context of the Action Plan for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (APYEE). This plan typically targets young people up to the age of 35 years. Within the Greek YGIP, start-up incentives are specifically targeted at young people aged 19–24. Activities may include a combination of subsidies for start-ups (operational costs, social security contributions and wage costs for one person for one year) and training and counselling of young entrepreneurs. Some activities include a further focus on – for instance – innovative business ideas and start-ups, young unemployed women, young people in rural areas and the creation of social cooperatives as a channel for absorbing young unemployed people.

In Italy, services to support self-employment are designed to help young people develop their business plans and facilitate access to employment incentives from national and regional sources. Typically, interventions comprise tutoring or mentoring with a view to drafting a business plan or accessing loans to start a company. Stakeholders, including the chambers of commerce, the PES and the regions, are actively involved in these measures, taking advantage of a variety of financial engineering tools. Some of these tools are very innovative, such as the entrepreneurial microcredit, funded within the framework of the Italian National Partnership Agreement in which the priorities for the ESF funding for the 2014–2020 programming period are laid out.

In Bulgaria, for the new ESF programming period (2014–2020), measures supporting youth entrepreneurship will draw on the lessons learned from the previous programming cycle. In the new programming cycle, training will become more practical and young people will be supported in developing and sustaining their business ideas. Social partners will be invited to support the design of specific training programmes and to provide free consultation services to future entrepreneurs.

### Targeted measures for specific at-risk groups

As Eurofound has previously demonstrated (Eurofound, 2012a), the group of NEETs is actually a very heterogeneous group bringing together young people from a variety of backgrounds and characteristics. Hence, some young people may require additional assistance and this need is reflected in some national YGIPs.

Although not very common, some Member States' YGIPs include specific provisions for young people with disabilities. In the German-speaking community in Belgium, for example, supported employment is specifically available for young job-seekers with disabilities (JuGA-UB). In the case of Greece, the national YGIP includes measures from the PES for young people with disabilities. These measures comprise vocational training measures and special actions for facilitating the employability of young people with disabilities who face a greater risk of social exclusion. 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. While young people with disabilities are offered the same Youth Guarantee interventions as their peers in Spain, eligibility for the Youth Guarantee offer is extended to all those aged under 29 in the case of disability.

In Belgium, the government puts special emphasis on vulnerable young people and has allocated €12 million to sectoral projects targeting training, integration and employment for at-risk groups of young people (for 2014 and 2015).

Similarly, the CIVIS measure in France targets young people who find it especially difficult to enter the labour market – for example, those with low levels of qualifications.

#### **France: Social inclusion contract**

The CIVIS contract (*Contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale*) targets young people aged 16–25 with vocational inclusion difficulties. In 2012, some 169,464 young CIVIS contracts were signed (52% with young women) (Conseil National des Missions Locales, 2013). Exit rates are positive, with 40% finding a job after 18 months and 24% getting a long-term employment contract (lasting more than six months).

The young person involved in CIVIS has a single case manager and can access activation measures or training programmes with enhanced support and assistance (*accompagnement renforcé*).



The CIVIS support scheme requires the commitment of the young person, reflected in the signing of a CIVIS contract. This contract defines general inclusion objectives and operational steps to reach the goals of the scheme. It is mainly a commitment to accept enhanced support. The maximum duration is six months with a possibility of suspension or renewal. Regular interviews are planned, typically once a week for the first three months (for people with low skills or more considerable challenges), then one every second week and finally once a month. A short-term allowance is available to provide a bridge between the different steps (for example, housing allowance and transport allowance). This enhanced support can be suspended if the young person decides to stop or if they find a stable job.

## Potential costs of extending interventions to all NEETs

### Introduction and data situation

Despite the fact that only limited data are as yet available on funding, this section aims to explore the potential cost of offering interventions to all NEETs. This calculation focuses on the intervention costs and not as such on the costs of putting a Youth Guarantee in place. The nature of the Youth Guarantee, an umbrella policy encompassing many different policy fields, makes it difficult to come up with a firm estimate of costs for setting up Youth Guarantee schemes as it includes tangible and non-tangible costs – such as reforming legislation, reforming PES services and training of staff. For this reason, the exercise carried out here is based on the calculation of the unit costs (the average costs per participant) of current measures targeted at young people, and what it would cost to offer interventions to all NEETs.

The country-specific information is based on two main sources.

**Eurostat Labour Market Policy (LMP) database:** These data derive from 2011. In each case, the information in the Eurostat LMP database was discussed, validated and improved through contacts with the statistical offices at Member State level;

**National sources on youth-related measures:** These include information from the national YGIPs, data from the statistical offices, employment agencies, unemployment insurance funds and specific studies – for instance, on apprenticeship schemes, employment measures or youth unemployment. There was also the option for data to be provided directly by relevant ministries or by monitoring reports on the use of ESF.

In general, the data situation in the countries is far from transparent. Reasons for the lack of quality information include the fact that detailed information is not included in the Eurostat LMP database, not all measures are included in the LMP database, and information from non-PES services is not accessible. In the box overleaf, examples are provided of the data situation in the countries.



## Data situation in selected countries

### Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, national and ESF funding is allocated for the implementation of activities under the programme 'Provision of employment and increasing the quality of the labour force' (2007–2013) – promoting measures under the Law on Encouragement of Employment and Training (see Annual National Plans on Employment). In the existing data from the reports on the implementation of the Annual National Plans on Employment, it is difficult to determine either the funds allocated or the number of participants up to the age of 25, since the reports do not give information about the profile of participants covered – only the total number of people covered.

Measures supporting young people were started in 2011 under the Youth in Employment Initiative. The largest number of participants was recorded in the period 2011–2013. Since Eurostat data on active labour market policy (ALMP) does not reflect these measures, the Employment Agency and the Managing Authority of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development kindly provided data on participants and costs for 2012 and 2013. Data provided by the Managing Authority also covers the period from 1 January to 31 April 2014.

### Greece

The latest available Eurostat data is only from 2010 and does not pick up recent programmes targeted at young people (especially the Action Plan for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship, APYEE) and equally does not include training provided by other actors (especially social partners). Another weakness of the Eurostat data is that there are many gaps: for instance, for some training categories there is information on the total number of participants but no expenditure data; or there are categories for which there are data on expenditure but none on participants.

In the absence of a unified monitoring system, there are no statistics available that group together the training offered by different actors (such as OAED, GSEE, GSEVEE, SEV). With the exception of the APYEE, which lists activities specifically targeted at young people (many of these activities are implemented by the Greek PES), the other actors (social partners) do not collect data specifically on young people. To obtain such data, one would have to go file by file per beneficiary to identify their age group. As a consequence, there are no additional data available to complement the data provided by Eurostat at the moment.

### Italy

In Italy, the implementation of ALMP is characterised by a significant devolution of responsibilities from the central government to the regions.

Eurostat data on labour market policy (LMP) costs do not describe the Italian context in detail. This is mostly due to the fact that the Italian regulatory framework envisages the majority of the resources to be invested in regional policies, mostly through the ESF. The lack of detailed information makes the reading and interpretation of data difficult. Information regarding national interventions is available per measure in the form of total costs. Such costs are rarely reported by age group.

Only the statistics regarding the use of incentives, a measure widely used in Italian labour market policy, have a high level of accuracy. However, a significant amount of resources used for incentives are not shown in Eurostat statistics.

For this reason, additional information on interventions aimed at young people carried out at regional level and financed by the ESF is provided to give, at least, an idea of the percentage of participants by age group and the standard costs of the interventions envisaged by the National Operational Programme for the Youth Employment Initiative. To this end, Italy has decided to introduce an innovative measure that will vastly improve the efficiency of interventions and the reading of their results – the standard costs for each single intervention. This method allows costs for recipients per type of intervention to be estimated. The following table provides the average standard cost per intervention envisaged by the Youth Guarantee.

### Italy: Average cost for typology of intervention

Interventions	Standard cost
Welcome and first level guidance	No cost envisaged by the national YGIP
Second level guidance	€34 per hour (maximum 20 hours per person)
Training A	€4,000 *
Training B	€73–€117 per hour
Job placement measure	€1,500–€3,000 by profiling €1,200–€3,000 by contract
Apprenticeship I level	€7,000 per 400-hour training course over one year €2,000 per year for those aged under 18 €3,000 per year for those aged over 18
High apprenticeship	Over €6,000
Traineeship	€200–€500 if finalised
Civic service	€5,900 per year
Entrepreneurship	40-hour tutoring variable
Transnational mobility	€1,500–€3,000 by profiling €1,200–€3,000 by contract

Note:\* Total cost of reimbursement if job placement – 70% costs reimbursement without job placement.

Source: NOP YEI 2014 Italy

### Belgium

Financial data are mainly provided by two sources: firstly, the Eurostat LMP database (2011), validated and corrected by the Federal Ministry responsible for delivering the data to Eurostat, and secondly, the national YGIP (April 2014). Each region is responsible for gathering its own LMP data and for providing data to the Federal Ministry. From the interviews and analyses, it appeared that there is no overlap in measures and budgets between the two sources: what is mentioned in the YGIP is additional to current LMP measures and no regular LMP measures are included in the YGIP. The additional measures as included in the YGIP are categorised under the ALMP categories. The data provided have been validated and discussed with stakeholders involved in gathering and providing the data.

### Estimate of average intervention costs

Despite the less-than-perfect data situation, on the basis of the available sources a database has been created in which all interventions that address young people from the 10 countries are included. In total, more than 300 interventions were included in the database. The inventory includes measures from different years ranging from 2011 to 2014, depending on the availability of financial data on

measures. Also, some interventions included in the YGIPs are included in the analysis. For each intervention at least the costs per participant are recorded. Other indicators on which information is gathered (if available) concern total costs in millions of euro, total number of participants, and total number of participants aged under 25.

In classifying the costs, the database stays as close as possible to the definitions used by Eurostat to identify the costs of Labour Market Policies (LMP); costs for outreach strategies are therefore not included here. In line with the Eurostat database, the following activity domains are identified, each including various sub-activities (Eurostat, 2013).

**Training:** Costs for training cover measures that aim to improve the employability of young people through training and that are financed by public bodies (institutional training, workplace training, or dual, including workshops, courses, re-entry, initial education and professional training).

**Employment incentives:** Costs for employment incentives cover measures that facilitate the recruitment of young unemployed persons (under 25) and other target groups, or help to ensure the continued employment of persons at risk of involuntary job loss. Employment incentives refer to subsidies for open market jobs that might exist or be created without the public subsidy and that will hopefully be sustainable after the end of the subsidy period. This includes measures that facilitate the recruitment of unemployed young people and other target groups (including tax subsidies/wage compensation).

**Supported/sheltered employment and rehabilitation:** Costs for supported employment cover measures that aim to promote the labour market integration of people with reduced working capacity through sheltered or supported employment or through rehabilitation. People with reduced working capacity primarily means those registered as disabled according to national definitions. However, it also covers people temporarily incapacitated after an accident or illness, recovering from drug addiction and people from other groups who are not work-ready and may benefit from rehabilitation.

**Direct job creation:** Costs for job creation cover measures that create additional jobs, usually of community benefit or socially useful employment, in order to find employment for the long-term unemployed or people who otherwise would be difficult to place. Direct job creation refers to subsidies for temporary, non-market jobs that would not exist or be created without public intervention (meaning the jobs are additional to normal market demand). The jobs are created in order to provide an opportunity for people to maintain an ability to work, to improve skills and generally increase employability; typically, they involve work of benefit to the community. Measures in this category should always be temporary in the sense that duration should be limited by design.

**Start-up incentives:** Costs for start-up incentives cover measures that promote entrepreneurship by encouraging the unemployed and other target groups to start their own business or to become self-employed. Assistance may take the form of direct cash benefits or indirect support including loans, provision of facilities and business advice.

In addition, although not explicitly mentioned as a separate category in the Eurostat classification, guidance and counselling activities are included as well. Costs for guidance and counselling activities cover assessment of needs, advice, mentoring, and counselling activities provided by external parties (otherwise this cost category is part of the services of the implementing body).

On the basis of the average costs per participant for the clusters of interventions, corrected for differences in price levels between countries, average unit costs are calculated to offer an intervention

to a young person. Table 4 provides an overview of the calculated average costs per intervention (corrected for price levels).<sup>32</sup>

**Table 4: Overview of costs per participant per type of intervention**

Type of intervention	Average unit costs (corrected price levels)	Number of interventions on which the calculation is based (included in database)
Training	€5,340	91
Employment incentives	€3,860	75
Supported employment and rehabilitation	€5,206	17
Direct job creation	€10,061	39
Start-up incentives	€10,249	22
Guidance	€544	31

Source: Compiled by authors on the basis of Eurostat LMP database and national sources.

Besides the types of interventions for which a unit cost is indicated, there are also other measures that are not directly targeted at individuals or that are only loosely associated with the Youth Guarantee. These include negotiating sectoral agreements, transport and accommodation benefits, and civil service trajectories. These costs are not included in this estimation.

#### Estimate of total cost of extending measures to cover all NEETs

On the basis of the average intervention costs and the total number of NEETs per country, an estimate is given of the total intervention costs per country. To do this, four steps are taken:

**Calculation of the unit costs of measures:** As the intervention costs per type of intervention differ, it was first piloted whether it was possible to use the average costs per type of intervention to make an estimation of the total costs. This, however, appeared not to be feasible due to a lack of information on the distribution of NEETs on the basis of their characteristics and across types of interventions. For this reason, a distinction is proposed between light and intense intervention. This distinction is made to allow for the calculation of the total costs to provide an intervention to all NEETs on the basis of the assumption that each NEET requires a light intervention (some guidance) and an intense intervention (be it training, employment incentive, and so on). The average cost for intense interventions is €6,129 (based on 240 interventions). The average cost for a light intervention (guidance) is €544 (based on 31 interventions).

**Calculation of the number of NEETs:** The total number of NEETs is taken from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) database.

**Estimation of total costs (unit costs multiplied by the number of NEETs):** Here, the assumption is made that each NEET requires a guidance trajectory (light intervention) and an intense intervention such as training, a subsidised workplace, or a start-up incentive.

**Relating total costs of measures to GDP:** The estimation of the total intervention costs is related to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the countries under review.

<sup>32</sup> For each of the more than 300 interventions the unit cost is identified (cost per intervention per young person). This unit cost is multiplied by the standard price levels of the countries (Belgium: 112.8; Bulgaria: 45.9; Estonia: 74.0; France: 112.6; Greece: 85.7; Ireland: 109.8; Italy: 101.2; Poland: 57.9; Spain: 91.0; UK: 109.0). Source: Eurostat, purchasing power parities (PPPs), price level indices and real expenditures for ESA95 aggregates [prc\_ppp\_ind], reference year 2013). On the basis of the price-corrected unit costs of more than 300 interventions, an average unit cost is calculated per type of intervention (training, employment incentive and so on).

Table 5 shows the data leading to the estimate of the total intervention costs for all 28 EU Member States.

**Table 5: Estimate of intervention costs and number and cost of NEETs**

	Price index (EU28=100) based on GDP	Average unit costs (intense interventions)	Average unit costs (light interventions: guidance)	Number of NEETs (2013, LFS)	Estimate of total intervention costs (in million euro)	Intervention costs in relation to GDP (%)	Annual costs of NEETs (in million euro)	% of GDP
AT	111	€6,827	€606	72,365	€538	0.17%	€3,174	1.06%
BE	113	€6,913	€613	170,525	€1,283	0.34%	€5,213	1.42%
BG	46	€2,813	€250	171,341	€525	1.31%	€1,272	3.31%
CY	86	€5,271	€468	24,246	€139	0.84%	€425	2.39%
CZ	69	€4,241	€376	106,502	€492	0.33%	€1,800	1.16%
DE	104	€6,392	€567	564,313	€3,927	0.14%	€15,464	0.60%
DK	138	€8,464	€751	43,071	€397	0.16%	€1,287	0.54%
EE	74	€4,535	€402	17,653	€87	0.47%	€309	1.93%
EL	86	€5,252	€466	239,021	€1,367	0.75%	€7,066	3.28%
ES	91	€5,577	€495	857,320	€5,205	0.51%	€15,735	1.47%
FI	124	€7,587	€673	61,424	€507	0.26%	€2,020	1.07%
FR	113	€6,901	€612	887,642	€6,669	0.32%	€22,179	1.11%
HR	65	€3,977	€353	98,066	€425	0.98%	No data	No data
HU	58	€3,530	€313	184,246	€708	0.72%	€2,133	2.12%
IE	110	€6,729	€597	86,628	€635	0.39%	€4,327	2.77%
IT	101	€6,202	€550	1,312,308	€8,861	0.57%	€32,613	2.06%
LT	61	€3,757	€333	44,687	€183	0.53%	€328	1.07%
LU	123	€7,526	€668	3,266	€27	0.06%	€97	0.23%
LV	67	€4,106	€364	31,622	€141	0.60%	€536	2.67%
MT	76	€4,633	€411	5,569	€28	0.39%	No data	No data
NL	110	€6,741	€598	104,526	€767	0.13%	€3,957	0.66%
PL	58	€3,548	€315	599,711	€2,317	0.59%	€7,536	2.04%
PT	82	€4,995	€443	158,356	€861	0.52%	€2,680	1.57%
RO	51	€3,132	€278	406,784	€1,387	0.98%	€2,103	1.54%
SE	134	€8,225	€730	92,384	€827	0.20%	€1,260	0.33%
SI	81	€4,940	€438	19,866	€107	0.30%	€466	1.31%
SK	68	€4,161	€369	96,574	€438	0.61%	€686	0.99%
UK	109	€6,680	€593	1,096,340	€7,973	0.42%	€18,347	1.05%
EU28	100	€6,129	€544	7,556,355	€50,417	0.39%	€153,013 (EU26)	1.21% (EU26)

Note: EU26 = All Member States with the exclusion of Croatia and Malta.

Source: Eurostat, LFS (2013), Eurostat GDP (2013), Eurostat Price index (2013), inventory of interventions: Eurostat LMP (2012) and national sources; Last two columns: Eurofound, 2012a

It should be emphasised that any estimate of costs is a theoretical exercise: it is based on assumptions – for instance, that all NEETs require both a light intervention (guidance) and an intense intervention

(such as training or an employment incentive). Moreover, such estimates are subject to limited data availability. Not included in the costs estimation, due to a lack of data, are costs for outreach services (which are an essential part of successful youth work) and figures on return to education or second-chance schools, and the costs of setting up the service – although these are sometimes included in the YGIPs. Moreover, the averaging among the different interventions is a simplified approach as the NEETs population is heterogeneous and each group would need an approach that would match their individual needs. However, as information on the characteristics and needs of NEETs is not available, the assumption of using the average cost is in the view of the authors justified.

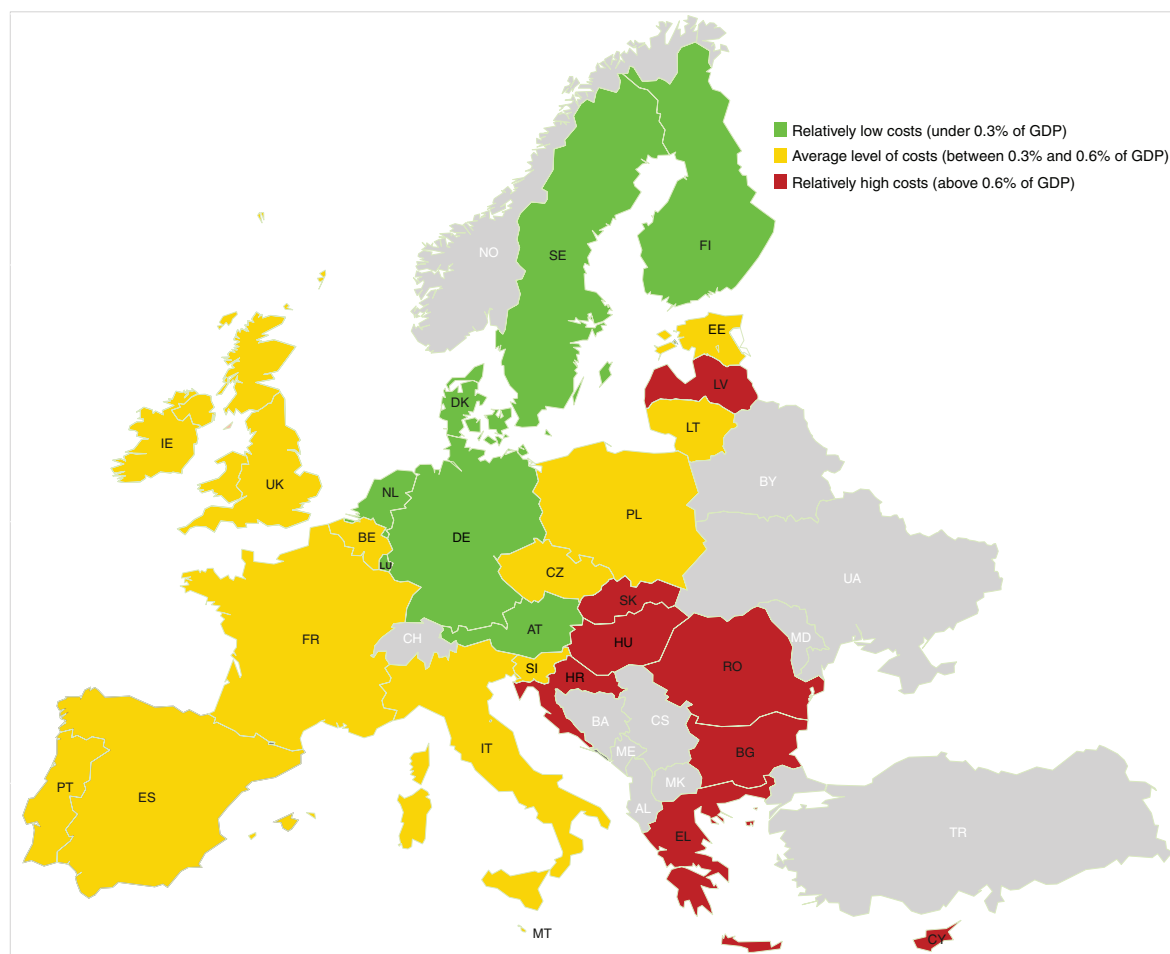
On the basis of the current study, the estimated yearly costs for offering interventions to all NEETs (according to the LFS data) aged 15–24 for the EU28 is €50 billion. This represents 0.39% of total EU GDP. There are major differences between countries: for example, the percentage of costs in GDP terms ranges from 0.06% in Luxembourg to 1.31% in Bulgaria. Three groups of countries can nevertheless be identified:

- countries with relatively low estimated yearly costs (under 0.3% of GDP): Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden;
- countries with an average level of estimated yearly costs (between 0.3% and 0.6% of GDP): Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the UK;
- countries with high estimated yearly costs (above 0.6% of GDP): Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia.

Figure 9 gives an overview of the three country clusters.



Figure 9: Overview of the estimated total expenditure for NEETs intervention by country cluster (EU28)



Source: Eurofound estimate

According to the ILO report *EuroZone job crisis: Trends and policy responses*, the costs of the Youth Guarantee schemes vary (IILS, 2012, p. 47). Programme costs (based on the Swedish example) are estimated at €6,000 per unemployed youth plus administrative costs, in terms of resources needed for PES to serve the programme at €600 per participant. The ILO cost estimates suggest that youth guarantees can be implemented at an annual cost of approximately 0.5% to 1.5% of GDP, including administrative and compensation costs (ILO, 2013, p. 5). Both the estimates from the ILO and the current study, based on different methods of calculation, show a similar range of estimated costs as a percentage of GDP. Inaction would, however, be much more costly. The costs associated with the failure to integrate young NEETs into employment are estimated to reach €162 billion annually (equivalent to 1.26% of EU GDP) in benefits, foregone earnings and taxes (for the year 2012: see Eurofound, 2014a). The potential benefits of providing adequate support measures therefore appear to represent savings of more than €110 billion.

### Barriers and challenges to effective implementation

Countries differ in how they approach youth unemployment but based on the assessment of the state of play in the 10 Member States, a number of common challenges have been identified related to establishing effective youth-related policies and implementing the Youth Guarantee. Based on the

success factors of the three existing Youth Guarantee schemes in Austria, Finland and Sweden, the following important dimensions are used to groups these barriers and challenges:

- governance arrangements: legal and policy frameworks;
- partnership approaches;
- infrastructure of the PES and monitoring and evaluation provisions;
- VET provisions and absorption capacity of the labour market.

Shaped around these four dimensions, the main challenges concern the following aspects which are discussed below.

### **Governance arrangements: legal and policy frameworks**

Stakeholder cooperation is an essential prerequisite for effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee . Given the often complex framework conditions for youth employment policy, a range of potential barriers and challenges for effective implementation have been identified.

In many cases, specific legal acts related to apprenticeship and dual training provisions are not yet fully implemented but are still underway, as the following examples show.

Although in Belgium the legal framework is generally in place to implement the Youth Guarantee and to provide a suitable offer to NEETs within a short period of becoming/being unemployed, the legal framework could be improved in some instances. This concerns, for example, the strong separation between the world of work and education. Before young people turn 18, the employment offices cannot provide an offer as these young people still have the right to be in school. This is particularly problematic for early school-leavers, as they have only one option – to return to the education they dropped out of. There are legal barriers to implementing learning-working trajectories and it is hardly possible to follow traineeships before turning 18. The regions are aware of this issue and propose policy measures. For instance, in the Walloon region in February 2014, a decree was passed, targeting students in upper secondary schools (aged 16–18). In Flanders, regulations for combining learning and working exist, but until now, these trajectories have only rarely been used.

In France, despite the fact that the legal framework for NEET policies is set by two National Plans ('Fight against Poverty' from January 2013 and 'Priority: Youth' from February 2013), some legal acts influencing the implementation of the Youth Guarantee are still underway, such as the reform of apprenticeships and the reorganisation of services for information and counselling in lifelong learning .

In Ireland, the types of interventions relevant to implementation of the Youth Guarantee all have a legislative base. In addition, there has been a draft of new legislation related to the setting up and operation of a reformed activation and further education and training system (with the legislation introduced in 2013 and final transfer of FÁS training centres to the new Education and Training Boards taking place mid-2014). Some further legislative change is required and planned as part of implementation of the Youth Guarantee, as indicated in the YGIP. This is to allow for positive discrimination in employment initiatives in favour of people aged under 25. Furthermore, there is a legislative basis for the setting up of the new further education and training structures, SOLAS, and the Education and Training Boards (introduced in October 2013). There is also a longstanding legislative base for apprenticeship training. A new apprenticeship training system, to come on stream from 2014, is proposed that requires amendments to the existing legislation.

In Greece, the legal framework for the introduction of a dual system in VET needs to be further developed. There is still a lack of an integrated legal framework for practical training. Apprenticeship in Greece is not yet defined in the context of a purely dual system and hence practical training in an enterprise is still limited. In addition, there is still no diagnosis of the labour market needs: therefore, information on which enterprises would offer practical training, specific programmes of practical training, or any follow-up mechanism to ensure that apprenticeships lead to job creation is not available.

Countries report that there is a difference between arrangements made at national level and cooperation at local level (Belgium, Estonia, Ireland, Spain and the UK). In Estonia, for example, the latter is still underdeveloped. At national level, cooperation and partnership among social partners, education providers and labour market players is fully developed and operational. However, at the local level the situation differs across counties and the level of cooperation varies remarkably. In Ireland and the UK, on the other hand, cooperation is more developed at the local/regional level than at national level. The same is true for Belgium, where the principal responsibility for the Youth Guarantee lies at the regional/community level. Cooperation at national level is therefore in the process of catching up. (In Belgium, the National Youth Guarantee Plan actually consists of four regional plans with an extensive introduction).

Countries equally struggle with involving the right set of stakeholders and cooperation partners (for instance in Belgium, Bulgaria and Greece), both at national and at regional/local level. In Greece, for example, implementation of the Youth Guarantee relies heavily, some argue too much, on the (limited) capacities of one organisation. Although the PES (OAED) seems to be the natural national point of reference for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, there is a risk that it may become the only organisation responsible for implementing the YGIP. In that case, the pressure on the operator may be too much to handle given the current capacity of the OAED: expansion of tasks and reduction of budgets hamper the OAEDs' capacities to implement the YGIP. In the case of Greece, there is a clear need (stressed by all social partners and experts) to engage more stakeholders in the implementation of the YGIP.

Interestingly, the involvement of many key stakeholders in Bulgaria leads to difficulties as well. The main problem in this case lies in the partnership approach: a potential risk for the implementation of the YGIP is the relatively low level of effectiveness of the coordination among state institutions and other stakeholders. In this light, it is essential that cooperation agreements are clear and that the organisations involved know where their responsibility starts and ends in relation to the Youth Guarantee.

Implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Spain reveals a difficulty in relation to setting up coordination structures and cooperation agreements. The Ministry has developed an Agreement with INJUVE for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, aiming to make use of its large network of centres (around 3,500 all over Spain) to reach and engage NEETs. At the same time, the national PES has created a 'Unique Employment Portal' aiming to bring together information on the unemployed and the business sector. The PES and its network of regional/provincial offices could also play a role in outreach to NEETs, given that many of the unemployed registered with the PES are NEETs. The government seems to follow an approach where INJUVE acts as an entry point into the Youth Guarantee system and the autonomous communities then decide how to channel and process the information through their PES or other actors. This approach risks not taking advantage of the potential complementarities between INJUVE and PES structures. Despite significant progress in defining the coordination structure of the Youth Guarantee, it is still not clear how the PES and

INJUVE will interact. At the moment, it seems the two institutions work in parallel without much interaction or coordination of their efforts in regards to the Youth Guarantee.

### Partnership approaches

It is evident from the Austrian and Swedish, but especially the Finnish Youth Guarantee scheme, that major efforts are being made to include as broad a partnership as possible. In the Finnish example, the driving force behind the Youth Guarantee is the cooperation model, which has lowered barriers between administrations, enabling them to operate together to combat youth unemployment and the associated difficulties young people face. Stakeholder cooperation in design and delivery is therefore considered essential for implementing effective policies to combat youth unemployment. Many Member States cooperate with a range of stakeholders to ensure effective delivery of the Youth Guarantee. In some cases, new governance structures have been set up to bring different government departments working on youth closer together. However, in most countries, social partners and youth organisations have been involved to a very limited degree, and then only in the design of the YGIPs. This fact has been criticised by both youth organisations (see European Youth Forum, 2015b) as well as by the social partners, highlighting that their involvement was mentioned in the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee (ETUC, 2014). In Spain and Greece, for instance, social partners were only consulted about the plans for Youth Guarantee implementation at a very late stage. In Greece, last-minute consultations with social partners and youth organisations and limited transparency with respect to the content and mechanisms for implementing the Youth Guarantee are evidence of the weak social dialogue that is currently taking place. Social partner involvement seems especially important as in some Member States these organisations are very actively involved in activities such as VET, guidance and counselling. Again, this is the case in Greece, where workers' organisations and employers' organisations representing both small and large industries as well as some sectoral organisations engage in these activities.

The same applies to the involvement of youth organisations. While these organisations often have considerable knowledge of youth issues and can play an important role in reaching out to NEETs, in the initial stages of designing the Youth Guarantee these were overlooked in many cases. For instance in Belgium, although youth organisations are involved in various measures related to youth unemployment and outreach work, these organisations were involved too late in developing the YGIP. The Belgian YGIP foresees improvement in this regard to actively involve youth organisations in further developing policies related to youth unemployment. In Bulgaria, youth organisations were involved from the very beginning in drafting the YGIP; nevertheless, they are not active participants. One of the main reasons for this is that these organisations lack the specific expertise and capacity to participate in the policymaking process. In Greece, there is very little involvement of youth organisations; however, in Spain, youth organisations play an important role in designing and implementing initiatives for youth. In France, despite the important role of youth organisations, there is little room for consultation. The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), the national umbrella organisation of youth sector organisations, is involved in policymaking. It was among the organisations consulted as part of the preparation of the response to youth unemployment and the YGS (at the Stakeholders' Forum in October 2013). The NYCI is named as one of the national partners to participate in the delivery and/or review of the Youth Guarantee. A representative of NYCI is also on the steering group of the Youth Guarantee Pilot in Ballymun, Dublin. Although youth organisations in Poland were not consulted at the stage of planning, they were invited by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to express their opinion about the plan; in addition, they are foreseen to be involved in implementing the Youth Guarantee within the ESF programme.

### Infrastructure of the PES and monitoring and evaluation provisions

Besides putting in place immediate measures to bring young people back into education or employment, the Youth Guarantee also has the potential to improve PES targeted at young people. As a response, a number of countries outline reform plans for their PES in the national YGIPs. These reforms include plans to increase the pressure on PES to intervene (as in Belgium) or foresee an improvement of the current labour market guidance systems (in Spain). However, some of the national reports suggest that Member States do not have the necessary PES infrastructure in place to guarantee effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Moreover, successful stakeholder cooperation also concerns the exchange of information between different stakeholders – for instance, on tracking young people in different systems (education, PES, health services and so on). Without sufficient information on who is at risk of being overlooked, it remains difficult to set up a holistic approach to preventing and tackling the NEET crisis.

To monitor the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, the European Commission assesses the national plans and their implementation in the context of the European Semester, the EU's reinforced economic surveillance framework. Furthermore, the Employment Committee (EMCO) – in its preparation of Council deliberations – also carries out multilateral surveillance on its implementation. EMCO has developed an indicators framework for monitoring the Youth Guarantee (European Commission Employment Committee, 2014). The proposed framework contains indicators from three different areas: macroeconomic indicators, indicators for direct monitoring of delivery of the Youth Guarantee, and indicators that follow up individuals who have received a Youth Guarantee offer. The EPSCO Council endorsed key messages on this indicators framework in December 2014 and called upon EU Member States to put in place evidence-based approaches. It also called on the Commission to monitor and report regularly on Youth Guarantee schemes, attributing an essential role to EMCO, particularly through its multilateral surveillance.

As part of their Youth Guarantee framework, most Member States commit themselves to put an emphasis on monitoring and evaluation provisions. This is also required to track progress and generate learning in terms of what works. Monitoring and evaluation activities have been fragmented in many Member States, with few opportunities to systematically monitor the situation of young people – including NEETs – in the labour market. The availability of these systems varies considerably across the countries under review, ranging from adequate provisions to the absence of basic monitoring provisions.

In the case of Spain for example, the national YGIP includes provisions for monitoring and evaluation, including an ongoing as well as a mid-term evaluation. However, the description lacks a more technical approach with detail on the evaluation process, judgement criteria, indicators and targets. The detailed system for management and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee has not been fully elaborated. The availability of comprehensive and well-coordinated monitoring and evaluation is a key challenge for the effective implementation of the YGIP in Spain. The European Commission's assessment of the Spanish YGIP (see European Commission, 2015f) stresses the lack of comprehensive ex-ante evaluation of the effectiveness and adequacy of YGIP measures as well as the need for continuous monitoring and effective coordination between central and regional authorities responsible for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Another challenge concerns the setting of common standards for monitoring and evaluation activities. In the case of Belgium, for example, where regional PES are in charge of delivering



the Youth Guarantee offer, a lack of joint monitoring and evaluation standards was identified. A further common challenge in this area is the lack of integration of different monitoring systems as – for example – in Bulgaria, where currently statistical information is only available for registered unemployed young people and early school-leavers; however, these two cohorts are not merged in the same database.

### **VET provisions and absorption capacity of the labour market**

A final necessary condition for successful implementation of the Youth Guarantee is that the education and training systems as well as the labour market be able to absorb young unemployed people, including NEETs. For the majority of the countries under review, the absorption capacity of both the training system and the labour market is currently limited; in some countries, the training system has a better absorption capacity than the labour market. This seems to be the case in Belgium, Bulgaria, France and Spain.

Different factors may account for the limited absorption capacity in Member States' training systems. One common issue is the economic crisis, which has resulted in a significant increase in the number of unemployed young people. This is the case in Spain, where due to insufficient budgets not every young unemployed person can be offered a suitable training trajectory. Another issue stems from the fact that VET continues to be a less attractive career option for young people in a number of Member States. In the UK, engaging in vocational education and training is frequently considered as inferior compared with third-level education and is therefore perceived as less attractive by young people partly due to the social stigma attached to it.

One issue in relation to the absorption capacity of VET and the labour market more generally is the issue of regional disparity. This is the case in Estonia, for example. A national framework for VET is in place, but the offer varies considerably between different schools and regions. In the majority of cases where different interest groups (local municipalities, education providers, youth work organisations, employers) are active, the absorption capacity of the economy is better. There are different regional initiatives to deal with NEETs' problems: for example, in Pärnu and Võru counties, outreach to NEETs is provided along with personal counselling to help young people return to education or to the labour market. Such initiatives provide good examples of how NEETs can be helped to enter the labour market and/or return to school. Usually there is a need for a couple of active officials in local municipalities to initiate different activities. At the same time, in other regions, the interest groups seem quite passive and the absorption capacity is therefore more limited.

In Italy, absorption difficulties in the VET system are partly due to the information gap between the labour demand expressed by companies and the ability of the VET system to respond satisfactorily to it (Mandrone, 2012). The greatest challenge for the Youth Guarantee here lies in improving the transition from education/training to the job market. This represents a longstanding difficulty in the Italian system, which can only be tackled through a clearer distribution of roles and objectives among all the stakeholders involved. In addition, an effective monitoring system is necessary to assess the quality of the related services. On top of these challenges, the absorption capacity of employers to provide jobs and apprenticeships for young people in Italy remains limited. The factors related to the limited absorption of NEETs in the labour market are similar to those related to absorption to the VET system:

**Employers have limited capacity to provide jobs/apprenticeships:** In Italy, the regulatory system has promoted the use of apprenticeships as one of the key instruments in the creation of jobs, but



labour demand remains weak and, in some cases, is even decreasing (in the industrial sector, for example). Numerous interventions for the promotion of youth employment (incentives) are in place and other opportunities will be offered with the implementation of ESF programmes. However, the ability to select more clearly the areas of training in which to invest in order to promote employment opportunities remains very limited. Improving this ability would help to better define the areas in which to improve the absorption of NEETs and to boost the confidence of entrepreneurs who, in the absence of such guidance, keep hiring in line with short-sighted strategies.

**Difficulty in matching supply and demand:** In Ireland, it is recognised that considerable work needs to be done with employers (whether private sector, public sector and community/voluntary sector) and with young unemployed people to establish a good match in the placement process, and to improve the quality and appropriateness of the offers (in other words, to build sustainable pathways to employability – not quick or temporary fixes). At the same time, resources are limited and there is pressure to deliver results. This is also indicated as the main barrier in Greece: without an analysis of labour market needs, it is difficult to assess both the needs of employers and their capacity to meet these needs through the provision of jobs/apprenticeships. Also, currently in Greece, the link between supply and demand for skills is evaluated on a fragmented basis.

**Prevalence of small companies:** This is the case in both Bulgaria and Ireland. There is potential to focus more on recruitment in small companies, which are a key source of employment. Based on the most recent data from JobBridge in Ireland, some 63% of total internship placements to date (28,786) were into companies with fewer than 50 employees.<sup>33</sup>

In general, a culture of apprenticeships and dual trajectories and even internships still needs to be developed in most countries. In recent years, many countries have set up policy initiatives in this direction (for instance Belgium, Spain, Greece), but implementing a balanced apprenticeship system requires a mentality change, both for education providers and employers as well as strong partnership approaches (Council of the European Union, 2013a).

## Conclusions

This chapter has investigated the early implementation of the Youth Guarantee on the basis of evidence collected in 10 Member States during 2014. As the YGIP is subject to ongoing changes depending on conditions in the countries concerned, some of the features described may be changed over the course of 2015.

The Youth Guarantee is a new approach to combating youth unemployment at European level. The G20, for example, considers this policy framework as a major reform of youth employment measures (European Commission, 2015d). The main added value of the Youth Guarantee lies in the following factors.

**Early intervention:** The four-month intervention point guarantees early activation so that young people are not left stranded. This short intervention time is a key success factor that limits the potential scarring effect of long-term unemployment on young people (see Chapter 1).

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<sup>33</sup> JobBridge is Ireland's National Internship Scheme, which provides work experience placements for interns for a six- or nine-month period. The aim of JobBridge is to help break the cycle whereby job-seekers are unable to get a job without experience, either as new entrants to the labour market after education or training or as unemployed workers wishing to learn new skills. The scheme provides for up to 8,500 work experience placements in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. Interns receive an allowance of €50 per week on top of their existing social welfare entitlement. This is payable for the period of their internship.

**Immediate measures combined with long-term reforms:** The Youth Guarantee is an opportunity for Member States to put in place education, training (including VET) and PES reforms to make these structures more relevant and efficient for young people in the long run, while providing immediate solutions to youth disengagement.

**Personalised and integrated approach:** Under the Youth Guarantee framework, young people receive a personalised offer for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or a place in further education. Integrated policies enable special attention to be paid to young people at risk of long-term disengagement.

**Additional funding:** There is ring-fencing of existing funds for young people aged between 15 and 24 as well as additional funds for regions hit hardest by youth unemployment through the YEI.

**Policy learning and support:** Member States get the opportunity to rethink their current approach to youth employment policy and to engage in policy learning and sharing good practice with other European countries.

Some of the above features of the European Youth Guarantee were inspired by the good practice examples in countries such as Austria, Finland and Sweden. The central aim of the Youth Guarantee across all countries is to fight youth unemployment and to prevent long-term disengagement of young people. The examples from Austria, Finland and Sweden, which all have well-functioning Youth Guarantee schemes in place, provide evidence of their impact on reducing youth unemployment. Moreover, these countries have the lowest levels of long-term unemployment in Europe. This is a crucial aspect, as previous Eurofound research has shown that young people can deal comparatively well with short spells of unemployment. Long-term disengagement, however, has a range of adverse effects, negatively affecting both individuals and society as a whole. Rebuilding trust in institutions is another important added value that the Youth Guarantee can deliver. As evidence shows, young people regain their trust in institutions even if the solution found was not successful for the young job-seeker.

More generally, the Youth Guarantee is an umbrella policy that provides a framework (and funding) to explore avenues to raising youth employment levels. This includes the possibility for innovative new approaches (see, for example, a newly set up public–private partnership in PES service delivery in Italy) and for the adoption of good practices from other countries (which is encouraged by the Mutual Learning Programme of the European Commission).

Despite the potential added value of a Youth Guarantee Scheme, a number of possible limitations of such schemes can be identified.

A first possible limitation is linked to the funding of the Youth Guarantee. While it is difficult to estimate how much it costs to set up a Youth Guarantee Scheme in each Member State, the European Commission believes that the benefits are much higher than the costs associated with this policy provision. According to estimates by the ILO, establishing a Youth Guarantee in the Eurozone would cost €21 billion per year (0.22% of EU GDP). This amount seems comparatively small compared to Eurofound's previous research findings highlighting that the NEET phenomenon is associated with a yearly cost of €162 billion for the EU, which corresponds to 1.26% of its GDP.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, this report estimates that a total of €50 billion would be needed to extend the Youth Guarantee offer to the entire cohort of NEETs currently in the EU. A total of €6.4 billion of EU funds will be made available for

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<sup>34</sup> This is the estimated cost of having 14.6 million young people (under 30 years of age) outside the labour market in 2012. For 2011, this cost was €153 billion, which represents an increase in costs of €9 billion in one year. See Eurofound, 2012a and 2014a.

the period 2014–2020 to address this issue of inactivity. The European Commission also emphasises that not all measures under the Youth Guarantee framework are expensive (such as increasing cooperation between stakeholders) and calls on Member States to prioritise youth employment in their national budgets (European Commission, 2015g). However, other stakeholders have criticised the European Commission for having planned insufficient funding for the Youth Guarantee. Among them is the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which ‘believes that the 6,000 million euros earmarked for this is not enough to cope with the magnitude of the problem and the urgent need to resolve it’ (EESC, 2013).

Other critical voices stress the importance of reducing the structural disadvantages that young people are facing in the labour market in combination with the focus on new job creation (Eichhorst et al, 2013). Frequent arguments are that the Youth Guarantee commitment is very generalist and not quantified while in a number of Member States those who should be reached by the Youth Guarantee offer are not often identified or in other cases (such as in Italy, France and Spain) the number of potential recipients is very high. Another point closely linked to the previous one is the question of the quality of the offer and sustainability of opportunities created under the Youth Guarantee framework. As the OECD (2014) states, ‘European and national policy makers may need to consider the distinction between a guarantee of opportunity (offering of a service) and a guarantee of outcome’. Youth organisations in particular have repeatedly expressed their concerns over the quality of Youth Guarantee offers and whether or not young people risk receiving low-quality, one-off support rather than genuine support that helps them find sustainable employment (European Youth Forum, 2015a).

A final issue concerns the transferability of the Youth Guarantee framework to other European countries. While this policy intervention has worked well and produced positive results in countries such as Austria, Finland and Sweden, there might be underlying factors in these countries that play an important role in the effectiveness of these measures but cannot be easily replicated in other settings.

Despite these concerns, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee has now started and compared with other structural reforms in Europe, it is probably one of the most rapidly implemented policies ever. All Member States have put in place their implementation plan, adapting it when necessary in order to better address issues, challenges and the needs of young people. While the Youth Guarantee will provide beneficial effects in the short term, the greatest potential is for the long term, when all systems will be well rooted and running smoothly, hopefully removing the structural barriers of young people’s access to the labour market.

# Broader approaches to the social inclusion of young people

## Introduction

Social inclusion, as outlined previously, is a process that aims to ensure that all citizens have the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live (Council of the European Union, 2004). It encompasses, but is not restricted to, social integration or better access to the labour market, and it also includes equal access to services and benefits.

Going beyond employment-focused approaches, this chapter discusses a set of policy measures and good practices aimed at ensuring the social inclusion of young people in 11 Member States (Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the UK).<sup>35</sup>

## Country selection

The objective was to offer a good geographical balance in terms of the countries covered. For the purpose of the analysis, the 11 countries were chosen from the various EU country clusters: Baltic (Latvia), Continental (France, Netherlands), central and eastern European (Bulgaria, Slovenia), English-speaking (Ireland, UK), Nordic (Denmark, Sweden) and Mediterranean (Greece, Spain) clusters. During the selection process, several key indicators, presented in Table 6, were taken into account as important sources of information in relation to the complex situation of young people in the respective countries.

**Table 6: Youth unemployment, NEET and at risk of poverty and social exclusion rates in the Member States selected for the study**

Youth unemployment 2014 (%)												
EU28 min												EU28 max
	NL	DK	UK	LV	SI	EU28	SE	FR	BG	IE	EL	ES
7.7	10.5	12.6	16.9	19.6	20.2	21.9	22.9	23.2	23.8	23.9	52.4	53.2
NEET 2014 (%)												
EU28 min												EU28 max
NL	DK	SE	SI	FR	UK	LV	EU28	IE	ES	EL	BG	
5.0	5.8	7.2	9.4	10.7	11.9	12	12.4	15.2	17.1	19.1	20.2	22.1
At risk of poverty or social exclusion 2013 (%)												
EU28 min												EU28 max
	SI	NL	FR	SE	EU28	UK	ES	LV	IE	DK	BG	EL
18.1	20.1	25.7	27.5	30.6	31.6	32.5	36.9	38.7	38.8	39.8	48.1	48.6

Note: 15–24 year-olds; 16–24 in the case of ‘at risk of poverty’. Data are from 2013 for social exclusion and 2014 for NEETs and unemployment rate.

Source: Eurostat, edat\_lfse\_20, lfsa\_urgan, ilc\_peps01

<sup>35</sup> Country case studies were conducted by: Dafina Dimitrova (Bulgaria), Bent Greve (Denmark), Vicki Donlevy and Sophie Lehouelleur (France), Yannis Eustathopoulos (Greece), Anna Ludwinek (Ireland), Ilze Trapenciere (Latvia), Annemieke Pickles (Netherlands), Anita Ramsak (Slovenia), Valentina Patrini (Spain), Lidija Kolouh-Söderlund (Sweden), and Jenny Williams (UK).

Table 6 shows a clear division between Nordic and Continental countries on the left-hand side of the EU28 average, meaning they are performing better than average on some of the social inclusion indicators, and the Mediterranean and Baltic cluster on the right-hand side of the EU28 average, performing worse. The English-speaking and the central and eastern European clusters have countries on both sides of the EU average.

While these differences between country clusters play a role, it is important to recognise differences within country clusters and crucially between various groups of young people. The overall approach was to include both high-performing and low-performing countries in terms of these various indicators in each cluster.

Sweden was chosen as a relatively less well-performing country within the Nordic cluster in terms of poverty and youth unemployment, while Denmark was arguably the Nordic country performing best in 2013 and 2014. In both Sweden and Denmark, many young people participate in education (Sweden had slightly higher rates of NEETs than Denmark), but in Sweden there are stronger persistent barriers to young people wishing to access the labour market. Almost a quarter of young people in Sweden do not receive proper qualifications, and those that do, are qualified for sectors with little demand for labour (UNRIC, 2012). Sweden had low levels of social exclusion perceived by young people in 2007, but this increased sharply in 2011. Denmark in 2013 had an above-average rate of youth being at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Non-ethnic Danes face a higher risk of social exclusion than their native Danish peers (Eurostat, 2015). While Danish youth seem to have a high risk of poverty and exclusion, it needs to be taken into account that many young people in this age group are still in education.

The English-speaking countries selected were Ireland and the UK. The UK performs relatively well with regard to unemployment and NEETs. Both rates are below the European average. However, the rate of NEETs has grown consistently since the beginning of the economic crisis, coinciding with a lack of employment opportunities and cuts to social benefits (for instance, housing benefits) for this age group. In Ireland, the unemployment and NEET rates in 2014 were above the European average. Youth unemployment, having tripled since 2008, is now one of the main challenges facing Ireland and one of its top political priorities.

France and the Netherlands respectively are the lowest-scoring and highest-scoring countries within the Continental cluster. France has a structurally high level of youth unemployment that has deteriorated further since the economic crisis. While unemployment rates are a little higher in France, the NEET rate in 2014 compared to that of the UK. In the Netherlands in 2014, some 10% of young people were unemployed and 5% were NEET, the lowest rate in the EU28. The Netherlands is among the best-scoring countries with regard to the risk of poverty and exclusion: in 2013, some 25.7% of young people were at risk of poverty (as against an EU average of 31.6%). Significant challenges however, persist in terms of the active inclusion of vulnerable groups – women, migrants and people with disabilities.

Greece and Spain represent the Mediterranean cluster and are placed on the right-hand side of the scale, meaning their performance is lower than the EU average. Both countries were badly affected by the economic crisis, and youth unemployment is one of the most urgent issues in both. A quarter of Spanish young people leave school before graduation, with insufficient skills and qualifications to meet modern labour market needs. Those in the labour market are often underemployed, or involuntarily working part-time. Young people in Spain and especially Greece have a high risk of

poverty or exclusion, as the figures for 2013 in Table 6 demonstrate. Greece also has one of the highest levels of perceived social exclusion among young people, while Spain scores better on this subjective indicator.

While most countries within the same cluster are also on the same side of the EU average, Slovenia and Bulgaria – though both central and eastern European countries – show different patterns. Slovenia was selected here as it is a relatively well-performing country, with Bulgaria one of the worst. Unemployed people in Bulgaria are often low skilled, without work experience. Women are overrepresented among the unemployed. Slovenia has an unemployment rate of 20.2%, which is comparable to the Swedish rate. Unemployed people in Slovenia are more often medium-skilled and do have some work experience. Slovenia and Bulgaria differ strongly with regard to NEET rates and the risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2014, Bulgaria had the second-highest NEET rate in the EU (20.1%) and the highest risk of poverty and exclusion (48.1%), more than double the percentages in Slovenia (9.4% NEETs and 20.1% at risk of poverty and exclusion). Slovenia has the lowest level of perceived social exclusion of all central and eastern European countries.

Latvia is the selected state that solely represents the Baltic cluster. It performs worse than average on all the presented indicators but in general better than Greece, Spain and Bulgaria. Women are more often in the NEET group than men. The share of young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2013 was substantial at 38.7%; here Latvia is centred between Spain, which performs a little better, and Denmark with a slightly higher percentage.

Of the selected countries, on average the Netherlands has the best scores with regard to youth unemployment, NEET and poverty and exclusion risks (on this measure, only Slovenia performs better), while Greece seems to be in the least favourable position. Most notable is the difference between Slovenia and Bulgaria, both within the central and eastern European cluster of countries.

### Youth policies approaches at Member-State level

Member States have recognised the need for action to tackle, in a more comprehensive way, the broad social inclusion of young people. The design of those actions varies significantly from country to country. Table 7 shows an overview of the existing policy initiatives for each country. It is important to keep in mind that the information shows the state of play at the time of data collection. Given that youth policy continues to be a policy priority in most if not all of the countries concerned, the number and nature of policies may have changed since then.

**Table 7: Overview of existing specific youth initiatives in the selected countries**

	Target group	BG	DK	EL	ES	FR	IE	LV	NL	SI	SE	UK
National youth strategy – Umbrella	General	X				X		X			X	X
	Specific	X										X
National youth strategy – Employment/ education	General	X			X		X					X
	Specific	X										
National youth strategy – Other measures	General											
	Specific											
National youth action plan – General/ Umbrella	General									X		
	Specific											
National youth action plan – Employment/ education	General	X		X		X	X					
	Specific			X			X		X		X	X



## Social inclusion of young people

	Target group	BG	DK	EL	ES	FR	IE	LV	NL	SI	SE	UK
National youth action plan – Other measures	General											
	Specific			X			X				X	X
Youth legislation			X	X			X	X	X	X		X

Source: Eurofound elaboration

Table 7 shows that there are six countries that do not have a dedicated national youth policy: Denmark, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain. In these countries, measures that might influence young people – for example, labour market policies – are integrated in sectoral policy strategies. Sweden, France and Latvia have all drafted a comprehensive general youth strategy that aims at achieving the full inclusion, autonomy, participation and citizenship of young people as a whole.

In all selected Member States, youth policy is approached in a cross-sectoral, integrated manner, which includes public, private and non-profit sector partners. Youth policies are drafted at the national level, where often one ministry is the main body responsible. France and Bulgaria have responsible ministries that have the term ‘Youth’ incorporated in their names. In the majority of other countries, the main responsibility lies with the ministries primarily accountable for education. Spain is the exception: here the main ministry responsible is the Ministry of Equality. In all countries, youth policy is drafted in cooperation with other ministerial departments, often in the field of employment, culture, health, welfare or social affairs. In Denmark and the Netherlands, no one specific actor is the main body responsible. Nor in these countries is there a specific youth policy; moreover, initiatives that might influence young people’s lives are part of broader sectoral policy initiatives.

The tasks of the main ministries responsible include: the preparation of regulations and measures in the field of youth; providing financial support; supervising the implementation of regulations and measures in the youth sector; and monitoring their impact and the situation of youth. The drafting and implementation of services and initiatives is most often executed at the regional and local level. The decentralised implementation of youth policy implies that disparities between territories in the youth field might exist.

Most private or not-for-profit organisations focus on specific vulnerable target groups or certain sectors. Many NGOs and organisations do not focus exclusively on young people but rather on broader groups like homeless people, people with physical or psychiatric disabilities or people with a criminal past. Organisations and NGOs that do focus specifically on young people offer targeted programmes in distinct fields such as education, unemployment or health. Also, social partners tend to focus on issues more closely related to the labour market.

Most countries have a national youth council and youth networks and organisations, which are represented in local bodies or are the youth representative body for national authorities. They are designed to promote the development and implementation of a coherent youth policy and the participation of young people in the decision-making process and in public life. They are also a consultative organ and publish recommendations on social policies.

In conclusion, there seems to be no pattern to be found in the position of the countries and the types of national strategies they have. In general, national strategies have a broad focus and the associated regional and local initiatives are primarily engaged with youth policy within a narrower set of parameters – mostly concerned with education and labour market status and perspectives of

young people. Countries pay modest attention to contrasting social risk factors by supporting access to a range of goods and services together with employment and education (such as housing, health, social support, ICT and transport) as well as opportunities for participation.

### Selection process of policy measures

Given the multidimensional nature of social inclusion, policy measures mirror this and strive to reduce social and economic distances and inequalities to increase a sense of belonging and acceptance, enhance the knowledge and skills of young people and contribute to making young people feel in control of their lives.

Selected policies and measures make an attempt to apply a holistic approach and showcase an essential link and the mutual impact between labour market integration and broader social inclusion. Some of the policy measures highlight labour market integration indirectly, by strengthening young people's important transversal skills, or by addressing the needs of specific vulnerable groups. Other measures address the broader consequences of lack of employment security on young people's living conditions and levels of engagement in society.

Further inclusion criteria related to the fact that policy measures should ideally focus on social investment and youth empowerment have proven their impact and effectiveness, as well as being innovative and transferable. Finally and importantly, selected policy measures have had to take into account the specific challenges faced by young people in a given country.

The selection process took place in multiple stages, moving from the production of a long list of promising measures to a short-list of potential 'good practices' for case study research. In a first step, country experts were asked to produce a list with an initial selection of at least five measures per country in line with the criteria outlined above in the form of a standardised template. For each measure, the experts identified (where available): aims and objectives; target group; details of the coordinating authority; partnerships, funding and governance; the intervention and support model; and timescales. They also provided information on the assessment framework, including: the extent of social investment; youth empowerment; effectiveness and impact; innovation and transferability; and an overall judgement on the fit of the measure for further case study research. The final selection was made with a view to ensuring a balance of key target groups.

**Table 8: Selected measures for social inclusion of young people**

Country	Name of measure	Description
BG	Power is Within You	Equips young people employed in social services and youth workers (aged 18 to 35) with specialist psychological knowledge, methods and techniques for counselling and supporting the empowerment of disadvantaged youth.
	Social Inclusion of Young People in Marginalised Rural Roma Communities	Establishment of six community development centres (one-stop-shops) targeting Roma youth in rural areas, staffed with trained moderators and with methodological support provided for the centres. Focus is on mediation between the target group and local government structures/municipal social services, counselling and support in the area of professional development.
	Dom Vazmojnost – House of Opportunity	Sheltered housing, services and life-skills training that aim to achieve rapid, targeted and effective professional development and social integration of young people brought up in closed institutions for children and youth deprived of parental care.

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Country	Name of measure	Description
DK	Cyberhus – Cyberhouse	Service providing online counselling to young people aged 9 to 23.
	Turbo	Housing and life-skills training for young people (14–23) with personal, psychological, social and behavioural problems.
	Ungeråd – Youth Council	Municipal initiative to include young people's voice in local decision-making in policy areas important to them.
EL	Youth Legal Aid Programme	Provision of free legal assistance and representation through young lawyers for young vulnerable people.
	Kallithea Second Chance School	Second-chance education provision for school drop-outs, focusing on innovative teaching, counselling and social literacy.
	Arsis – Association for the Social Support of Youth (Athens office)	NGO providing support and advocacy for youth and other social groups in difficulty or danger to prevent marginalisation, establishing policies defending their rights, to provide social support and social integration, as well as information activities.
ES	Banco y laboratorio de proyectos de deporte, creatividad e inclusión social – Bank and Lab for Sports, Creativity and Social Inclusion Projects	National initiative promoting the social inclusion of young people through sports by linking sports to social and psychological support, non-formal education, parental participation and drug and alcohol use prevention, with the objective of identifying existing projects in this field, generating a bank of best practices, disseminating the results and impact of these initiatives and creating new experiences that link sports to other disciplines.
	Red Juvenil Chavós Nebó – Chavós Nebó Youth Network	Roma-led network of youth information services across Spain, providing information and coordination of national, regional and local activities related to multiculturalism targeting the Roma community, as well as networking activities.
	Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers	Initiative fostering social entrepreneurship opportunities for young people (aged 14–24), including (life) skills training.
FR	Ecoles de la Deuxième Chance – Second Chance Schools	Second-chance education provision for young unemployed adults (18–25), who are school drop-outs and/or without qualifications, with a strong emphasis on innovative teaching, personal support, social and employability skills development.
	Le Service Civique – Civic Service	Voluntary programme for six to twelve-month civic service engagement of young people aged 15 to 25.
	Le Fonds d'Expérimentation pour la Jeunesse – Youth Experimentation Fund	Identification of and support for projects using social experimentation to deliver policies targeted at youth (under 25). Sound impact evaluations are central tools to identify effective, inclusive and innovative policies, which can be scaled up.
IE	Women for Election INFORM Programme	Programme to equip female students with the tools and knowledge to succeed in political and public life.
LV	Bebisu Maja – Baby House	Provision of shelter, food and life-skills training for teenage mothers with limited resources and coming from a background of domestic violence.
	Duke of Edinburgh's International Award	Structured activity for young people aged 14–25 years, focusing on personality development and building self-confidence.
	Inclusive Education for Youth at Risk of Social Exclusion	Project to develop and implement a support system for young people at risk of social exclusion, involving 15 municipalities and 25 educational institutions, with a focus on capacity building of the institutions and personnel involved.
NL	Paja – Participatory Audit for Homeless Young People	Method for conducting bottom-up service audits through young people who have frequent contact with government services – in particular, young homeless people, with a focus on empowering and developing young people's soft skills.
	Wijkschool – Neighbourhood School Programme	Second-chance education for NEETs (aged 16–23) with multiple problems, with a focus on civic participation and identity development, providing young people with pathways into the labour market.
	Eigen Kracht – Your Own Power	Innovative counselling model with emphasis on young people's empowerment and the involvement of their social network.
SE	Jobb I Sikte – Job in Sight	Single-entrance multi-professional support for students – with different kinds of disabilities – in their school-to-work transition, as well as advocacy work addressed at potential employers of young people with disabilities.
	Communicare	NGO working with youth at risk, providing coaching around becoming an entrepreneur of one's own life.
	Hakarat	Platform for discussion and civic engagement for young people (17–25) in socially deprived neighbourhoods.

Country	Name of measure	Description
SI	Certifikat Mladini prijazna občina – Youth Friendly Municipality Certificate	Certification scheme encouraging municipalities to design and implement youth policies and measures aimed at improving the situation of young people at local level, strengthening young people’s autonomy and encouraging their active involvement.
	Mreža Mlada ulica – Young Street Network	Street work by young people for young people gathering in public spaces with alternative ways to spend their free time in a way that takes account of their environment, health and other aspects of their behaviour.
	Mladi Hišni prijatelji – Young Household Friends	Grassroots social entrepreneurship project implementing small community-based activities under the motto ‘Who helps, wins’.
UK	Prince’s Trust Team Programme	12-week personal development course aimed at increasing young people’s (16–25) confidence and teamwork skills.
	National Citizen Service	National civic engagement programme for 16–17 year-olds with a focus on undertaking a project in their local community.
	Fair Chance Fund	Innovative financing measure for initiatives addressing homelessness, being NEET or other issues of youth exclusion.

The next part of the chapter starts with descriptive typologies of measures focusing on individualising versus structure-oriented measures. The most common entry points and tools applied are discussed.

Studies on youth inclusion highlight the limitations of the so-called ‘deficit model’, where interventions focus on the assumption that it is only the person who has to be fixed (for instance, through some form of education or training). This approach neglects the importance of modifying or looking also at structural conditions – for example, promoting young people’s resilience. To capture these dimensions, policy measures are classified according to whether they seek to address social exclusion through individualising or structure-related actions. The definitions provided by Walther and Pohl (2005) are as follows:

- individualising measures address individual capabilities to cope with labour market and societal demands;
- structure-related measures address either the socioeconomic aspects or the institutional set-up of youth transitions, be they the conditions under which young people develop human capital (like school or health structures) or the conditions under which they enter the labour market and societal life.

Given the multidimensional nature of the social inclusion approach, a range of possible sectors or entry points for intervention can be applied. These can include: education; mentoring/ counselling/ social support; childcare; healthcare; rehabilitation; access to housing; financial inclusion; ICT/ e-inclusion; sport/ leisure/ socialisation; transport/ mobility/ geographical inclusion; volunteering/ civic engagement. It is also clear that the majority of measures involved at least two of these sectors; moreover, they cannot always be divided into neat categories of ‘measures tackling inclusion through healthcare’ or ‘measures tackling inclusion through mentoring, counselling and social support’.

Within the sectors or entry points, policy measures employ a range of tools and strategies to address the social inclusion of young people, such as the provision of services, financial assistance, facilities, capacity building and information, advice and guidance. The majority of measures use multiple tools to address the multidimensional nature of young people’s social inclusion. As with the entry points, the use of tools applied varies depending on the nature of the measure.

The discussion continues with a description of measures within the compensatory or preventive approach. The chapter concludes with a review and analysis of measures in terms of their effectiveness

and desired outcomes based on several criteria, including social investment, youth empowerment (looking at participation and motivation), innovativeness and transferability.

### Individualising measures

By far the largest share of measures included in the study (12 out of 31) address the issue of youth social inclusion individually, by improving young people's individual capabilities or primarily filling individual skill and motivation gaps. An equal number of measures (nine) focus mainly on structural changes and adopt a mixed approach: both individual and structural changes.

The individualising measures are considerably more diverse in terms of their mechanisms and approach when compared with structure-oriented measures (perhaps due to the fact that the focus is on the target group, which is much more heterogeneous). Nonetheless, they have a common focus on individual capacity-building, skills development, and access of the individual to services and support. Many of the individualising schemes combine elements of training and personal development that might need to be accessed from multiple sources or be beyond the reach of young people experiencing social exclusion. They include measures to develop life skills, alongside volunteering or work experience gained through community projects – for example, Civic Service (Le Service Civique) in France, and the Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers programme in Spain. A number of the measures offer alternative education on a more formalised basis, often leading to a qualification, with the elements designed to reinforce and validate prior attainment (such as Kallithea's Second Chance School in Greece and the Prince's Trust Team Programme in the UK). Individual action planning is a further core element of these measures, regardless of their educational or wider personal development focus, with young people empowered to take greater control over their goals or accessing support – for example, Your Own Power (Eigen Kracht) in the Netherlands. Many of the individualising schemes include practical help and support to unlock barriers that might otherwise block participation in mainstream opportunities, such as childcare, therapeutic support, or access to housing and finance – for instance, Baby House (Bebisu Maja) in Latvia, and House of Opportunity in Bulgaria.

### Entry points or sector intervention

With regard to entry points and most commonly used sectors for intervention, a majority of measures (21 in all) feature an element of mentoring, counselling and social support as their primary entry point (6 measures in all) or more often their secondary entry point (15 measures). This strong prevalence reflects the recognition that whatever the origin of a young person's (risk of) exclusion, providing guidance alongside other support is crucial to tackling the multidimensional challenge these young people face. The measures that use mentoring, counselling and social support as a primary entry point for the social inclusion of young people do so by implementing innovative approaches for all young people – for instance, Cyberhouse (Cyberhus), an online advice service for children and young people in Denmark, or Your Own Power (Eigen Kracht), a counselling approach that involves the social network of young people in the Netherlands. They may also target specific groups – for instance, by promoting the social inclusion of young people in marginalised rural Roma communities in Bulgaria. Similarly, House of Opportunity (Dom Vazmojnost) aids the integration of youth leaving institutionalised care in Bulgaria; and the Association for the Social Support of Youth (Arsis) in Greece fosters the inclusion of young people who live under conditions of poverty, abandonment, discrimination, conflict or exploitation.

When mentoring, counselling and social support are combined with other entry points, these are most often education, access to housing and volunteering and civic engagement. Mentoring,

counselling and social support are important when offering second-chance education opportunities, acknowledging the fact that early school-leaving is caused by a ‘cumulative process of disengagement’ that encompasses different areas of a young person’s family, social and education life. Examples include second-chance schools in France (Ecoles de la Deuxième Chance), Greece (Kallithea’s Second Chance School) and the Netherlands (Neighbourhood School Programme, Wijksschool), and the development of a support system of Inclusive Education for Youth at Risk of Social Exclusion in Latvia. Mentoring, counselling and social support also play an important role alongside interventions tackling the housing issues of young people: in Denmark, Turbo addresses the housing needs of young people with social and behavioural problems; in Latvia, Baby House addresses the housing, psychological and life-skill needs of teenage mothers; in the UK, the Fair Chance Fund aims to improve the life chances of homeless young people; and in Greece, Arsis provides shelters for young vulnerable people.

The second most prominent entry point of measures for the social inclusion of young people is volunteering and civic engagement. Sixteen measures fall under this category, including at least one measure per country. Volunteering and civic engagement is most often combined with mentoring, counselling and social support (in seven measures), sport, leisure and socialisation (in five measures) and access to housing (in one). Two initiatives included in this study focus exclusively on volunteering and civic engagement: Hakarat is an initiative offering a platform for discussion, free speech and active participation in social issues for young people in socially deprived neighbourhoods in Stockholm and Gothenburg (Sweden); and Young Street Network (Mreža Mlada ulica) is a project offering young people alternative ways to spend time rather than simply gathering in public spaces in Ljubljana (Slovenia).

Several measures are delivered by young people themselves, who want to address the issue of social inclusion through the voluntary provision of their own mentoring, counselling and support services. Examples include:

- Power is Within You, a project with youth workers in Bulgaria;
- the Youth Legal Aid Programme in Greece, a project that provides free legal aid to young people;
- Chavós Nebó Youth Network (Red Juvenil Chavós Nebó), an information service for and led by Roma youth in Spain.

Measures addressing sport, leisure and socialisation alongside volunteering and civic engagement are mostly large-scale youth volunteering programmes, such as the National Citizen Service in the UK, the Civic Service in France, the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award in Latvia and the Youth Council (Ungeråd) in Denmark.

The third most prominent entry point (for eight measures) is education – either primary level (six measures) or secondary (two). Aside from the second-chance schools mentioned above, two measures included in this study aim to develop or identify effective inclusive education policies for young people – the Youth Experimentation Fund (Le Fonds d’Expérimentation pour la Jeunesse) in France and the development of a support system of Inclusive Education for Youth at Risk of Social Exclusion in Latvia. In Sweden, Job in Sight (Jobb I Sikte) uses education as an entry point to support young people with disabilities to get job experience or enter employment.



### Tools and instruments

A large majority of measures – 28 in all – feature an element of information, advice and guidance as a tool to support the social inclusion of young people in society. While this is prevalent across all sectors, target groups and delivery partners, there is a strong overlap between mentoring, counselling and social support measures and those using information, advice and guidance to deliver this support. Other more specialist measures use these tools to aid the empowerment of young people: the Dutch measure Your Own Power provides young people with guidance to devise and implement an action plan to exit their unfavourable situation; and Spanish initiative Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers aims to empower young people to become social entrepreneurs. Information, advice and guidance also play a significant role in the implementation of second-chance, alternative education measures facilitating school-to-work transitions and in volunteering and civic engagement.

The second most prominent strategy to support the social inclusion of young people into society, used in 26 measures, is capacity building, indicating that most measures aim to build the resilience of young people at risk of exclusion through the development of transversal or life skills. Again, capacity building is prevalent across all sectors, target groups and governance levels. The majority of such measures (18 in all) aim to build the capacity of target groups to deal with specific disadvantages, such as NEETs, young people with disabilities and health problems, Roma youth, homeless young people and those leaving care. Among these, a notable cluster of measures focus on the provision of housing and life-skills training (within this setting) for young people leaving care or at risk of homelessness, including House of Opportunity in Bulgaria, Turbo in Denmark and Baby House in Latvia. A smaller number of measures foster capacity building for the broader group of all young people, using volunteering and civic engagement as an entry point to develop young people's life skills and 'soft' skills. Examples include the Youth Council in Denmark, Hakarat in Sweden, the Civic Service in France and the National Citizen Service in the UK.

When analysing the individualising measures, it seems that a large group of measures have a strong focus on civic participation and community development. These measures are grounded at a locality or neighbourhood level, with the aim of engaging young people more actively in public life and increasing their participation in local decision-making processes. They typically emphasise young people's collective social inclusion, by focusing on youth-led projects, networks or committees that are managed by young people themselves (youth empowerment and participation are discussed later on in the chapter). They usually aim to address social or environmental issues within the local community, working in tandem with neighbourhood or municipal authorities and local residents. They sometimes include a multiculturalism dimension and aim to improve public recognition and acceptance of minority ethnic groups, with a few examples of targeted measures for Roma communities.

The individualising measures are also characterised by a strong focus on educational as well as social inclusion. These measures offer individual pathways for young people who are experiencing one or more forms of social disadvantage, helping them make a successful transition back into education, volunteering or (ultimately) employment. They differ in the extent to which they have a formal educational focus and objectives, ranging from enrolment at an alternative education institution at one end of the continuum, to entrepreneurship, volunteering or work experience programmes at the other. They are usually time-bound and offer progression through a structured programme, underpinned by an individual plan, with support from a tutor, coach or mentor. They often, but not always, culminate in a certificate or qualification.

## Structure-related measures

With regard to the structure-related measures, a cluster of examples are concerned with adjusting local planning and decision-making structures in order to strengthen young people's participation in democratic life (see Table 8 on p. 87). In most of the measures discussed, the emphasis is on soft infrastructure development, such as networking and intergenerational dialogue (Hakarat in Sweden and Young Household Friends in Slovenia); awareness-raising and developing youth-friendly planning tools and protocols (Youth Friendly Municipality Certificate in Slovenia); and forming decision-making structures (Youth Council, Denmark). In comparison, funding for 'harder' infrastructure such as the construction of youth facilities is less common. One such example is the Social Inclusion of Young People in Marginalised Rural Roma Communities measure, which involves the setting up of and support for six centres for community development in Bulgaria, Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The centres offer career counselling, psychological support and intermediation between the target group and local government structures.

Other primarily structure-related measures include financial assistance to help dismantle the barriers to young people's social inclusion, and measures to provide professional training and development to build the capacities and competences of adults who interact with young people. The Power is Within You measure in Bulgaria aims to equip young people employed in social services and youth workers (aged 18 to 35) with specialist psychological knowledge and concrete methods and techniques for counselling disadvantaged youth and supporting their empowerment. A key feature of the approach is the peer-to-peer element: the training is planned and delivered by the network of young psychologists, who ensure that the programme is by young people and for young people.

### Childcare and the gender dimension

The relative absence of measures related to childcare from those considered part of youth policies points to a broader issue – the very limited gender focus of youth policies. Previous studies have shown that in certain Member States young mothers who are unable to afford childcare, as well as young mothers with a high household income who voluntarily decide to exit the labour market to take care of their children, represent a significant segment of the NEET population.

## Tools and instruments

A substantial number of measures (24 in all) provide services as a main tool to integrate young people into society. These include: the provision of counselling services, such as the online Cyberhouse counselling service in Denmark; the establishment of service and information centres for Roma youth, like the Chavós Nebó Youth Network in Spain; and the provision of free legal services for young people from vulnerable backgrounds in Greece. Overall and in line with the strong prevalence of counselling, mentoring and social support, services most often revolve around the provision of counselling or hand-holding support that goes beyond the simple provision of information. Additionally, a number of provisions for specific target groups are included, such as the one-stop-shop service and community centres for Roma young people in Bulgaria and Spain.

Only six measures focus on providing financial assistance. These measures cut across all sectors and target groups, yet are mostly administered at national level. Measures using this tool either provide direct funding to projects, like the Fair Chance Fund in the UK which funds activities targeted at homeless young people) or the Bank and Lab for Sports, Creativity and Social Inclusion Projects in Spain (Banco y laboratorio de proyectos de deporte, creatividad e inclusión social) which funds sports-based social inclusion projects. Other measures provide funding at individual level

– for example, Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers in Spain, which offers seed capital to young social entrepreneurs. The remaining measures offer some financial support to young people during their participation in the programme, such as the French Civic Service and Second Chance Schools (Ecoles de la Deuxième Chance), as well as the Bulgarian House of Opportunity.

Only five measures focus on the provision of facilities as a means to foster the social inclusion of young people. Aside from the establishment of the above-mentioned information centres for Roma in Bulgaria, the other four measures provide housing facilities for young people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless and/or with specific vulnerabilities, such as teenage mothers. This includes the Danish measure Turbo, the Latvian Baby House, the Bulgarian House of Opportunity and the Greek Arsis.

There are two observations that can be made when reviewing the policy measures. Firstly there is a group of measures that aims to tackle structural barriers to social inclusion by focusing on information, awareness-raising and advocacy. These measures aim to promote the social inclusion of young people by: gathering evidence to highlight their circumstances and to strengthen the case for policy or funding reform; developing young people's skills and competences as peer advocates or evaluators; and brokering access to specialist advice information or legal representation. They have a common focus on the acquisition of knowledge to tackle barriers to inclusion – whether these be legal, practical, cultural or institutional. They also include a focus on structural and collectivising measures to advocate for the rights of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups (Roma or migrant youth, homeless young people), and to inform service improvement.

A second important commonality is the focus on training and capacity building of the professionals who work with socially excluded young people. These measures aim to improve the quality and efficacy of service provision for young people by building the skills and knowledge of the professionals who support them. They centre on trainer-training activities – ensuring that social workers, youth workers and other relevant professionals are equipped with the knowledge and expertise that they need to empower disadvantaged young people.

### Measures preventing exclusion and to compensate disadvantage

Another useful way to classify policy measures is on the basis of whether they are mainly compensatory in nature or preventive. This short section distils the most important and overarching key points. More information can be found in the country reports, which are available on request. The preventative–compensatory dimension is related to both the point in time when an intervention takes place (either before or after exclusion has occurred) and to a continuum from general to more targeted policies. The definitions formulated by Walther and Pohl (2005, p. 65) were used for this purpose:

- compensatory approaches are those that react to the specific articulations of disadvantage in terms of 'repairing' problematic transitions;
- preventive approaches should be understood as those aimed at preventing the development of disadvantage by addressing key background factors in a general perspective.

When applying these definitions, half of the measures (15 in all) include both preventative and compensatory actions, while 10 are predominantly compensatory and 6 are preventative. Further analysis shows that the compensatory nature of the measures is quite strongly determined by their intended target groups: a number of measures are designed to support young people for whom a

risky transition has already occurred, and which presents a defining characteristic in their continuing exclusion. Their objective is to remedy the effects of quite specific forms of situational disadvantage, including NEET status and prior educational underachievement (second-chance school provisions in Greece, France and the Netherlands), homelessness or the specific case of teenage mothers escaping domestic violence (Bebisu Maja in Latvia).

In other examples of compensatory measures, the relationship to the target groups is influenced more by longstanding issues arising from their status within society, and/or differential levels of access to support or services as defined by levels of need. These compensatory actions include developing tailored educational provision for young people with disabilities (Job in Sight, Sweden) and the provision of accommodation and mentoring for young people with social and behavioural problems (Turbo in Denmark).

### **Ireland: Women for Election INFORM Programme**

In the case of the Women for Election INFORM Programme in Ireland, a compensatory approach is adopted insofar as women already face quite substantial underrepresentation in political and public life. This specific measure looks at the underrepresentation of women in student unions and as student representatives in Irish universities (despite the fact that overall there are more female students). This is addressed as a systemic (politico-social) issue rather than a more selective course of action for women in specific circumstances. The programme seeks to remedy the situation by providing mentoring and support to young people to engage more effectively with decision-making structures and to redress a social imbalance.

Finally, two of the schemes adopt more generalised criteria for working with vulnerable social groups, and the compensatory action is more strongly defined by the mode or type of support provided. The Bank and Lab for Sports, Creativity and Social Inclusion Projects in Spain aims to promote youth inclusion through sporting activities (as a reentry point for 'already excluded' young people), and the Youth Legal Aid Programme in Greece provides legal aid and assistance as a compensatory measure to remedy the vulnerability of young people experiencing multiple forms of exclusion and their greater need for legal advice and representation.

In contrast to the above, those measures adopting a mainly preventive approach tend to be oriented towards larger populations of young people, and focus on their participation and empowerment rather than addressing specific social problems. Preventive measures include actions to challenge negative perceptions of young people, and the creation of opportunities for civic and social engagement, such as through environmental or community projects (Young Street Network in Slovenia) or through young people's active participation in project design or budget allocation (Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers programme in Spain). A strong intergenerational dimension is apparent in most of these examples, which also aim to bring about attitudinal changes among adult professionals and the wider community. The Cyberhouse measure in Denmark is more unusual among the preventive measures, as it aims to widen access to information and guidance as a means of empowering individual young people in relation to issues affecting their lives.

Most of the measures include both preventive and compensatory actions. By definition, these measures operate across a wider continuum of risk of social exclusion, but do so in different ways. As might be expected, around half of these measures (7 of 15) are universal in scope, and therefore encompass young people at varying degrees of risk of social exclusion. This is the case for Civic Service in France and the National Citizen Service in the UK, both large and nationally available

programmes aiming to give young people work experience and life skills through volunteering or participation in projects of general interest. These projects also cater for, but are not exclusively targeted at, young people experiencing social disadvantage. Similarly, the Prince's Trust Team Programme in the UK is open to all unemployed young people between 16 and 25 years of age. In this instance, the unemployment criterion focuses the target groups more towards the intervention/compensatory end of the continuum (as these young people are already disengaged from the labour market, although not necessarily experiencing other forms of social exclusion).

A further set of these measures is defined geographically, and therefore includes both preventive and compensatory actions to meet the need of a specific local population. In Latvia, Inclusive Education for Youth at Risk of Social Exclusion scheme works with 13–25 year-olds at varying degrees of risk in 15 target municipalities and 25 educational institutions, while Hakarat in Sweden aims to engage young people between 17 and 25 years in socially deprived neighbourhoods in Stockholm and Gothenburg in a structured dialogue regarding issues affecting their lives.

Several of the combined preventative and compensatory measures are specific to target groups but support young people at different points in their life and work transitions and therefore operate across the cycle from prevention to compensation. The House of Opportunity in Bulgaria provides tailored support for young people who are leaving institutional care, through life skills training alongside housing and financial advice, while the Chavós Nebó Youth Network in Spain empowers Roma young people to coordinate education, employment, culture and leisure activities on behalf of their local Roma community.

The cycle from prevention to compensation quite strongly reflects the level of need or social disadvantage faced by the young person. However, these categories do not exactly mirror the universal or targeted focus of measures, and indeed it is clear that the potential exists for preventive action even for young people who are already experiencing specific forms of disadvantage. The measures further serve to illustrate the subjective nature of efforts to locate individual measures on the continuum from prevention to compensation, and the relative nature of these categories according to the socioeconomic context within individual Member States.

### Youth empowerment

Youth empowerment is one of the key dimensions identified in the EU Youth Strategy as a vital component in ensuring the wider employment and social inclusion of young people. Policy measures in the selected Member States were reviewed and discussed based on the approaches taken to empower young people. This was carried out based on two interrelated components – 'motivation' and 'participation'. This section first deals with the definitions of these two terms and then looks at how youth empowerment was achieved within the measures.

#### Motivation

Socially excluded young people often lack trust in the adults, agencies and institutions they deal with, and have previous negative experiences of engagement. This is the reason why the presence of elements that strengthen the subjective or personal motivation of young people is critical for any successful inclusion trajectory. Conditionality may be insufficient if activation is not based on positive incentives that resonate with the young person's own interests. Motivation requires the identification of a goal, and also a sense of agency in the realisation of that goal (Walther and Pohl, 2005).



'Motivation' is a complex dimension and is rarely applied in a systematic way to the development of social policy initiatives. An OECD review undertaken in the context of lifelong learning provides a useful classification for learning measures. It distinguishes between two types of motivation: 'intrinsic' motivation – self-directed and relating to personal interests and beliefs; and 'extrinsic' motivation – guided by rewards or sanctions for certain behaviours (OECD, 2000).

Ideally, effective youth inclusion measures should compensate for a loss of intrinsic motivation as a result of past negative experiences. However, the relationship between the intrinsic and the extrinsic dimensions is potentially complex. A young person's disengagement from education or training is not necessarily due to a lack of interest; it can also arise from a fear of failure. Here, the act of disengagement is a form of self-protection. Walther and Pohl argue that the social structure also exerts a strong influence over motivation, in a context where young people with higher qualifications have better access to resources and greater opportunities to achieve external rewards. The challenge of harnessing young people's subjective motivation has arguably become ever more pronounced with the greater individualisation of youth transitions. Young people nowadays experience much more protracted transitions both into adulthood and into employment than those experienced by their parents or grandparents. Measures must appeal on multiple levels and offer more sophisticated forms of personalisation in order to influence young people's decision-making processes regarding their education, work, housing and relationships.

To summarise, therefore, it can be inferred that successful social inclusion measures must engage with young people on their own terms, provide a supportive environment (which reduces the fear of failure) and offer measurable progress towards an end goal. Many of the measures address the question of motivation by providing activities that are appealing and relevant to young people and widen their access to new opportunities. The use of sports, arts and cultural provision is a common feature in this respect – either as an initial 'hook' prior to engaging young people in other forms of social action, or as a mechanism for fostering personal development in its own right. The Bank and Lab for Sports, Creativity and Social Inclusion Projects in Spain provide young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to experience cultural or sporting events that would normally be considered prohibitive – either in terms of their cost, or their association with being the preserve of elite socioeconomic groups. These activities aim to challenge low levels of aspiration, where this has become entrenched, and to normalise curiosity and interest. The Social Inclusion of Young People in Marginalised Roma Communities measure in Bulgaria similarly offers arts, cultural and sporting activities to meet a specific gap in opportunities for young Roma within isolated rural communities, and also provides a stepping stone to other forms of civic and social engagement through the network of Community Development Centres that have been put in place.

Other ways in which the measures make an appeal to young people's motivation include offering young people the support to engage with services on their own terms, and following their own timescales (such as Turbo in Denmark) and emerging in social responsibility and civic pride (the Young Household Friends initiative in Slovenia and the Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers programme in Spain).



**Denmark: Cyberhouse – access to confidential peer-to-peer advice for youth issues**

The Cyberhouse (Cyberhus) digital youth advice service in Denmark takes quite a distinctive approach towards addressing the issue of ‘motivation’ within the measures that were considered for the study. It aims to appeal to young people who might be experiencing issues that put them at ‘risk’ (such as self-harm, teenage pregnancy, or abusive relationships), but lack confidence in institutionalised services or fear the consequences of discussing their situation. The online format of the service allows young people to seek advice from their peers, and to book a personalised chat with a trained peer counsellor if they wish to do so. Young people are afforded anonymity through the service, which is not limited to any specific issue and allows young people to set the agenda and decide what they wish to discuss. The peer-to-peer element also means that the advice is contextualised and relevant to young people.

A clear link emerges between motivation and conditionality. This is most apparent within the measures that are more individualising in their nature and aim to reengage young people in education, training and labour market orientation activities. In these measures, a basic willingness and readiness to engage in a structured programme is often a prerequisite for enrolment. This in turn is often identified as being a key factor in the subsequent high levels of retention in and completion of these programmes: young people are enrolled with realistic expectations and have an appropriate level of prior motivation to succeed. Indeed, a characteristic of some of the compensatory measures is that the young people have already experienced the negative consequences of disengagement (in terms of limited opportunities and low income) and therefore place a greater premium on having an opportunity to try again (indeed, this is a guiding principle of Second Chance Schools in France).

Other measures include a ‘contract’ of some kind, as a means of formalising young people’s commitment: for instance, the House of Opportunity in Bulgaria requires residents to adhere to a code of conduct and to contribute 20% of any earned income to the household.

A few of the measures are only loosely associated with any form of conditionality as such, and simply require that young people meet broad eligibility criteria. This is more typical of universal (and largely preventive) schemes that aim to provide more generalised personal development and do not have an equivalent ‘rehabilitative’ element. The National Citizen’s Service in the UK and Civic Service in France are two such examples. Here, the motivation is both intrinsic and extrinsic, with the measures set up to provide life experiences and to meet new people, while also resulting in a formal record of achievement applicable to future employment.

To address the fear of failure and low levels of self-esteem, many of the measures include an element of individual goal-setting and review. The aim is usually to give the young person a means of assessing their needs and of validating progress and achievements, and in some instances recording milestones towards a final qualification. These forms of individual assessment typically adopt a wider set of criteria than training or employment outcomes alone and also reward positive changes that are made in relation to relationships, communication skills, and self-care.

The goal-setting within the selected measures sometimes also has a collective aspect, through the involvement of peers in feedback and review.

### **Bulgaria: House of Opportunity**

In the House of Opportunity measure in Bulgaria, young people undertake a holistic self-assessment and draw up individual support plans with their professional mentor. The key competencies – communication, interpersonal relations, education, employment, housework and personal finances – are displayed prominently within the residential unit and progress is also assessed collectively by residents and staff. This approach helps to locate the needs of the individual within a group context, and places an emphasis on respect for others. There is a degree of peer group moderation where individual behaviours are checked and challenged by other young people. This collective approach provides an important socialising dimension to the young person's experiences on the programme.

A common motivating feature is that the participants very quickly see the results of their actions, with feedback loops in place to reinforce positive change. This is a feature both of individualising and more collective measures. Collective examples include the Youth Information Services Network (Chavós Nebó) in Spain, where national meetings are held for the regional groups with the goal of providing mutual recognition and a sense of common achievement and the Young Household Friends (Mladi Hišni prijatelji) measure in Slovenia, where the results of social action are demonstrated through improvements to the neighbourhood environment and in relationships with local residents.

In a number of policy measures led by young people themselves and overseen by some kind of youth-led structure (see also 'participation' below), the issue of 'motivation' operates on a number of different levels. First, there is the motivation of the young people who originally initiated the measure and are the driving force behind it. These are often highly driven individuals with entrepreneurial skills and a firm belief in the value of youth empowerment. Second, there is the motivation of the wider groups of young people who are the intended beneficiaries. The basic premise of these schemes is often that the young people leading them provide a source of inspiration for their peers. This was described in one measure as a 'call to action' approach.

Many of the measures also seek to redress perceived difficulties with the motivation of municipal leaders, officials and members of the community, challenging them to reassess young people's potential role and contribution to society. This approach also applies to employers, as the following case study explains.

### **Sweden: Job in Sight – a strengths-based approach to supporting young people**

The Job in Sight (Jobb i Sikte) measure aims to support young disabled people's transition from school to further education, employment or work experience, a difficult period in these young people's lives during which many more young people with a disability become NEET than their peer group.

The measure is based on a 'supported employment' (and education) concept, and works at two levels: increasing the social support around the individual young person; and challenging employers and educationalists to adopt a more positive view of young people with disabilities.

The measure has a central focus on motivation, with young people's strengths and abilities kept in sight at all times and reinforced from all sides. The young person is supported in gaining work experience, the onus being on the employer to make adjustments to accommodate their needs, working closely with the personal coach / employment consultant. The approach requires a 'can do' attitude, and has played an important role in raising the knowledge and awareness of employers about the capabilities of disabled young people and tackling workplace stigma.

There is a common theme amongst the measures of activating motivation by ‘regaining young people’s trust’. This is achieved by repairing past negative experiences of interactions with professionals (teachers or social workers). The role of the trusted ‘expert’ intermediary is crucial in this respect, and emerges throughout – whether in the form of a coach, key worker or mentor. The intensity of support provided through these intermediary roles is often quite stark. A number of the measures work from the premise that the role of the coach or mentor is to reverse the effects of social exclusion, which requires a remodelling of the relationship between the young person and professional to build and sustain the necessary levels of trust. Frequent (sometimes even daily) contact is often required, to reinforce positive behaviours and build self-esteem, along with a reassurance that the coach or mentor is there for as long as it takes.

Even the more structural-oriented measures usually include some kind of a coordinating mechanism – through a smaller group of ‘change agents’, peer advocates or community champions. The role and profile of these individuals often quite closely mirrors the attributes of the mentors or coaches for the more individualised measures, but more commonly focuses on civic participation rather than counselling or therapeutic support. Examples include the Youth Information Service Facilitators from the Chavós Nebó Youth Network in Spain, the ‘Street Workers’ who provide the training and advocacy for the Roma measure in Bulgaria, and the peer-led network that has overseen the Young Household Friends programme in Slovenia. Here, the synergy between ‘motivation’ and ‘participation’ is particularly evident, as it is the ‘leading by example’ or ‘role modelling’ element of the measures that provides much of the extrinsic motivation of such programmes. This includes young people demonstrating to their peers what can be achieved, or making an appeal for responsible citizenship.

A final shared characteristic that seems to have helped make the measures appealing and to tackle stigma is the creation of a dedicated space for young people. Part of the role of these types of spaces is to differentiate the measure from institutional environments that might carry negative connotations for socially excluded youth. The Second Chance Schools in France are one such example, in that they specifically seek to provide a learning environment that is very different from a mainstream education setting. The organisational model developed by Communicare for youth at risk in Sweden also includes a ‘hub’ where young people can drop in at times that suit them to interact with the team of professionals or to spend time with their peers. As one stakeholder explained, the hub approach helps to ensure that ‘the young people are part of a wider social context, and get the sense that they belong to something and they have a place to go every day where people who work there really care for them’.

### Participation

Youth participation is identified as a key area within the EU Youth Strategy, where it is synonymous with youth empowerment and active citizenship. The concept of participation goes beyond simply ‘inclusion’, in which there is a tendency to treat young people as the recipients of services or support; rather, it concerns the ability of young people to exercise decision-making responsibility for their own transitions, including at the level of policy design and implementation. A rights-based view of participation takes as a reference point the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and in particular Article 12 (the ‘right to be heard’). According to Hart (1992):

*[Participation can be defined as] the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built, and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.*

Lansdown and O’Kane (2014) distinguish between three main forms of participation, which provides a useful framework for understanding and classifying different models of practice (Lansdown, 2011):

- **consultative** – adults seek young people’s views to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experience;
- **collaborative** – there is a greater degree of partnership between adults and young people, with the opportunity for active engagement at any stage of a decision, initiative, project or service;
- **youth-led** – young people are afforded the space and opportunity to initiate activities and advocate for themselves, thus they identify the issues, use adults as facilitators rather than leaders, and control the process.

These categories do not form a ‘hierarchy’ as such, but provide a useful means of framing some of the main forms of participation that are evident within the measures from the study.

There are varying levels of participation in the initial design of the measures. A few could be described as being fully ‘youth-led’ and initiated. The Hakarat project in Sweden was founded by four young people living in a suburb of Stockholm, who had become frustrated with the negative portrayals of young people in the media and wanted to demonstrate the potential contribution of local youth to community development through the creation of a new website.

In contrast, most of the measures in the study were conceived by NGOs or municipal authorities, either in collaboration with young people or on a more consultative basis. These measures have generally been able to expand more rapidly because they were initiated through an existing infrastructure. The Youth Council structure in Denmark emerged following concerns about the low levels of participation by young people in political processes, as illustrated by the 45% turnout in the 2011 general election among the 19–25 years age group compared with 80% overall. While Youth Councils are voluntary, they have been actively supported by municipal authorities and there is now a national network with young people taking a lead in their continuing operation.

A collaborative approach between young people and adults is evident in many of the measures. This is particularly the case with regard to young people’s participation in individual service planning and review processes. In measures following a specific pathway, a central premise is that ‘young people are partners in developing their own programmes’, according to one practitioner interviewed for this report. This partnership is quite often defined within parameters that are set by adults in a position of authority rather than young people, but nevertheless constitutes a form of collaborative participation. For example, in Second Chance Schools in France, the young person designs their own ‘professional project’, which is in line with their capabilities and interests and usually includes some element of work experience. The final project is discussed with peers and validated by a panel, prior to finalisation. This process encourages self-reflection and aligns the approach with young people’s intrinsic motivation. Similarly, the Job in Sight measure in Sweden involves a weekly review of the disabled young person’s school, home and work placement needs and with their designated key worker and allows for continuous adjustment. The key worker is there to help the young person achieve the right balance between these different ‘spheres’ of their lives.

The Your Own Power measure in the Netherlands is a particularly well developed example of putting young people in control, and making the best use of their social networks.

### **Netherlands: Your Own Power – Young people’s participation in individual service planning**

The measure is based on the ‘Family Group Conferencing’ model, which originated in New Zealand as a mechanism for utilising social networks to problem-solve or address a potential conflict; the model adopts the principles of mediation, which is provided by an independent coordinator.

Eigen Kracht has developed a similar model in the Netherlands, under the title of ‘Your Own Power’, which has proven effective in supporting youth at risk. An individual young person can initiate a conference, by making a request to the network of independent coordinators managed by Eigen Kracht. The young person works with the coordinator to identify and articulate the issue (for instance, this could be a relationship difficulty or drug/alcohol addiction) and to identify a panel of around 12 people from their immediate social network to participate in the conference. The meeting is led by the young person, with the aim of reaching a set of agreements or a ‘pathway’, with a tangible course of action for the young person. Tasks are typically assigned to ‘agents’ to implement the agreement – either members of the network or professionals. The model has undergone considerable expansion in recent years and benefits from being widely available across the Netherlands.

An advantage of a participatory approach towards service planning is that it ensures that the provision is based on young people’s individual needs rather than their ‘status’. In doing so, it helps to reduce the risk of causing stigma. The Communicare organisational model in Sweden avoids any notion that it is a service ‘for unemployed young people’ but instead positions itself as being open to young people from diverse circumstances in response to their needs.

It is common for the more individualised measures to include elements of collective decision-making among young people. For example, the Civic Service in France includes peer-to-peer exchanges between young people to foster a more collective feel to the programme and to keep channels of communication open. However, more variable levels of participation are found in relation to the governance arrangement of measures, where the predominant mode of participation is consultative. This typically includes young people’s representation on boards or committees, such as the advisory board in Communicare in Sweden, and the school councils that have been formed in many Second Chance Schools in France.

The analysis for the study makes it possible to identify a number of preconditions or enablers that have strengthened the degree of young people’s participation within the measures. These range from catalysts where some sort of crisis had to occur for the change to happen, to actions evolving beyond the sole focus on young people to ultimately question the legitimacy of organisations.

An initial ‘catalyst’ for social change is a recurrent feature in examples where meaningful participation has been achieved. In some instances, a social crisis of some kind was necessary to create sufficient official and public will to allow stronger forms of youth-led measures to emerge. This is the case in Sweden, where social unrest in the segregated suburbs of Stockholm and Gothenburg in 2013 contributed to greater interest in Megafonen as a potential model for tackling social unrest and which was a contributory factor in securing funds from the Swedish Inheritance Fund. Similarly, the Young Street Network measure in Slovenia came in the wake of youth unrest and social problems in public spaces in Slovenia. This led to a move by the Slovenian government to ban alcohol consumption in public spaces. Young Street Network was introduced by a network of NGOs to tackle the problem



from an alternative angle – by engaging more directly with young people and their ‘best interests’, following early signs that an entirely sanctions-based policy was alienating many young people.

A further common characteristic of effective participatory structures, and one that evidently helps to achieve greater sustainability, is that they have evolved beyond solely representing young people’s interests. Across the measures that advocate collective participation, an indicator of their success is often that they have become networked with other municipal planning structures, community organisations, or environmental groups (beyond a specific interest in ‘youth’ per se). This sometimes also relates to their financial viability – in the case of Young Household Friends, for example, an aspiration for the programme is that it becomes a fully fledged social enterprise.

Having a formal – and separate – organisational status has sometimes proven important to give the measure an identity and perceived legitimacy with other NGOs and municipal authorities. For example, it was initially planned that the management of the Community Development Centres (CDCs) for the Roma social inclusion project in Bulgaria would be taken on by municipalities. In practice, however, the CDCs have operated better as independent structures, as they perform a ‘brokerage’ function between public administration, other local services, and the Roma community.

### Challenges to meaningful participation

As outlined earlier, when discussing participation it is important to go beyond treating young people only as recipients and to attempt to engage them actively also at the level of policy design and implementation.

One of the main challenges to meaningful participation has been to achieve participation at the intended scale. The main benefits have sometimes accrued to the smaller number of young people acting in the coordinating role, and who often come from a different, less disadvantaged and more engaged social background than the target groups. This is a common and well documented pitfall of formal participatory structures or forums in general: the true extent of their representativeness is often questionable (European Commission, 2015c).

Levels of motivation for enrolment on programmes are also subject to variations according to social class and qualifications. Indeed, a review of the Civic Service programme in France revealed that awareness is generally much higher among more highly qualified young people than among disadvantaged groups and those who are younger (aged 15–16). The evaluation concluded that there is an overreliance on local structures – the Local Youth Centres – to reach socially excluded young people, and that information and identification mechanisms must improve to compensate for lower levels of motivation.

Challenges exist in relation to the scope of participation (the type of different activities) that has been achieved. On balance, the measures have had greater success in gaining young people’s interest in cultural and leisure activities, but less so in relation to political or social causes, which may hold less immediate widespread appeal (this has been a particular challenge for Young Household Friends in Slovenia).

The analysis of the measures also indicate that there is sometimes a tension between the desire to achieve collective participation, and the demand for personalisation. This dilemma is found to some extent within second-chance schools, where young people follow a flexible and modularised timetable and are therefore at varying points on their individual education and employment trajectories. The result is that participants can start and finish at any time, and that at quite a fundamental level



the building of any collective project is highly complicated. Moreover, the strength of individual measures is often dependent on their leadership, and changes are potentially destabilising.

Finally, attitudes within official institutions and among the wider community have also sometimes posed a barrier. In one of the measures, a survey of local residents showed that there was residual suspicion about young people's motives. Some perceived that the young people were only running the scheme to make money or to receive services for free, or that the coordinating body was politically motivated.

### Review and assessment of policy measures

This section analyses to what extent policy measures are meeting the criteria set out in the assessment framework outlined in Table 9 below. The review and assessment of policy measures focuses on the following analytical dimensions:

- **social investment** – investing in youth through putting in place more resources to develop policy areas that affect young people in their daily life and affect their well-being.
- **effectiveness and impact** – achieving the expected results both in terms of outputs and outcomes;
- **innovativeness** – including innovative elements, relating to the type of need addressed, the type of collaborations, the organisation of services or the way resources were obtained;
- **transferability** – what are the key conditions for transferability?

### Social investment

Social inclusion involves both ensuring that people are protected from adversities and that social investment be undertaken, as outlined in the European Commission document *Towards social investment for growth and cohesion* (European Commission, 2013d), emphasising that well-designed and functioning social policies are also a good investment. This is even more the case for children and young people, where investments in human capital and skills produce outcomes at later stages in life and generate a 'return' for many years. The investment dimension of a specific policy expenditure largely depends on its design features (conditionality, duration), on the specific national context (complementarity with other policies) and circumstances in time (economic cycle, growth path). To assess the social investment nature of policy measures, the elements outlined in Table 9 were considered essential for characterising measures as social investment (European Commission, 2013d).

**Table 9: Essential measures or elements of social investment**

Measure	Description
Resourcing	The existence of an adequate investment of financial and other resources to ensure relevant coverage of the target group.
Targeting	The existence of a mechanism to make sure that policies address those most in need. Targeting may be related to types of disadvantage (such as disabilities) and to the household income situation (for instance, means-tested measures).
Conditionality on activation	In the case of benefits and subsidies, it is relevant to establish whether some kind of conditionality is attached to them – for instance, in terms of attending school, training courses or accepting work experience and job offers. In other words, it is important to know whether some kind of activation is required from young beneficiaries.
Simplicity of access	It is important to map and review the value of the use of simplifying features for access to inclusion measures, such as one-stop-shops – especially for those most hard to reach.

Personalisation	An important element of effective social investment measures is personalisation to meet the specific needs of each individual beneficiary.
Integration	Integration is an important characteristic of effective and efficient service provision. Integration also entails complementarity between initiatives and policies in different sectors and policy domains.

Source: Eurofound elaboration based on the Social Investment Package (SIP)

## Resourcing

Before analysing whether the measures adopted criteria that are considered typical of the ‘social investment’ approach, it is important to consider whether they represented an investment; in other words, whether they were allocated sufficient resources to work. Funding requirements of the selected measures differ depending on the size and the approach adopted and it is difficult to make comparisons. However, an indication comes from the perceptions of those running or managing the measures of whether they have sufficient resources to carry out their activities.

Evidence present in the selected measures does not suggest a clear trend of *public* investment in social inclusion measures for young people, although this is compensated for by forms of *social* investment by other actors. This may be explained by the fact that most countries have so far been prioritising labour market integration.

Around half the measures (15 in all) are considered by their promoters to have sufficient financial resources. It should be noted that in only a few cases (mainly two programmes in France) is this due to stable or increased funding from the national government.

In the other cases, the sufficiency of resources is due to multiple actors contributing in cash or kind including municipalities, foundations, banks, companies, the local community and individual volunteers. EU funds are also sometimes used as a funding source.

Seven measures seem able to cope with the current level of activities, but they have had or would have problems in extending initiatives over time or replicating them in other settings. This may sometimes mean a lower return on initial investment either in developing the scope of the initiative or new methods and tools. The following examples give more detail of the issues.

**The Women for Election INFORM Programme (Ireland):** This has sufficient funding to deliver training in two universities. However, the ending of the grant from the current funders is forcing the organisation to spend more time looking for alternative sources. As a consequence of the lack of a sufficient and sustainable line of finance, Women for Election could not respond positively to the request of several universities to run similar programmes on their premises.

**The Youth Experimentation Fund (France):** This has not received state funding during the past two years, and private co-funders have already disbursed their contribution. As a result, funds are sufficient to sustain ongoing projects, but not to launch new ones.

**The Neighbourhood School Programme (the Netherlands):** The programme received significant investment from the national government in 2013. However, it is costly and very dependent on the political priorities of the government. Initially it was foreseen that the programme would be rolled out in seven locations, but due to financial constraints, implementation has taken place in only three.

Nine measures appear to have been affected by financial constraints, according to the promoters. In certain cases, this is clearly related to fiscal consolidation and sometimes reflects a prioritisation

of employment over social inclusion initiatives in the context of scarce resources. Three examples illustrate some of the challenges encountered.

**The Bank and Lab for Sports, Creativity and Social Inclusion (Spain):** The Bank was affected by significant budget cuts to the High Sports Council. The initiative is still currently being implemented, but on a smaller scale, by the organisation Idensitat, which independently finances individual projects and ideas on a case-by-case basis, and works on fundraising among private actors.

**The Chavós Nebó Youth Network (Spain):** Since 2010 this has experienced a constant reduction in the grant awarded by the Spanish Youth Institute; funding finally came to an end in 2013. One interviewee observed that the limited budget still available for the Institute is invested in youth entrepreneurship, leaving almost no resources for social inclusion.

**The Kallithea Second Chance School (Greece):** The school has suffered from the drastic reduction in teachers seconded from formal education as well as the suspension of educational seminars since 2008, due to fiscal adjustment.

### Targeting

The Social Investment Package strives to emphasise the need to ‘focus on simple, targeted and conditional social investment’ (European Commission, 2013d, p. 8). Targeting and conditionality can be considered two appropriate requirements to ensure that scarce resources are used to activate and enable people most in need (European Commission, 2013d, p. 10).

Assessing whether and how these criteria were applied (targeting, in particular means testing, and conditionality for participation) can only be done in broad terms, as the measures are not the typical welfare benefits to which the two criteria are normally applied but are mostly complex interventions with multiple approaches. It is also important to understand what types of mechanisms in terms of targeting and conditionality are used, to provide more evidence-based information in this under-researched area.

As far as targeting is concerned, it should be noted that most measures directed at specific vulnerable groups (which only make up part of the measures examined) have some criteria to identify the target groups. However, these almost never include financial criteria, the only exception being the Youth Legal Aid Programme in Greece, which uses a legally defined economic threshold: help is provided to individuals whose family income does not exceed two-thirds of the minimum annual remuneration provided for by the collective agreement.

In some cases, participants may have passed means tests to get the general welfare benefits that they continue using when participating in the measures, but they are not specifically tested for their eligibility with respect to the measures. For instance, the participants in the Swedish Communicare programme receive social benefits or unemployment allowances, as most participants are referred by the municipal social services or the State National Employment Agency. This lack of formal means testing reflects the focus on the broad and multidimensional definition of social exclusion used by these measures (as opposed to mere income poverty). Consistent with this approach, interviews with potential beneficiaries are often considered a more appropriate method to ascertain the existence of need rather than asking for formal proof of need. For instance, in the Latvian Baby House project for young pregnant teenage girls, each applicant has an interview in which she describes her life situation.

In other cases, targeting is implicit in the requirement that beneficiaries must be referred by social services. This is the case for instance in the Dutch Participatory Audit for Homeless Young People programme.

Sometimes attention is paid to ensuring that beneficiaries are those who cannot gain access to other more general measures, which indeed represents a form of targeting. For example the Fair Chance Fund is targeted at a specific disadvantaged group – young homeless people who are also NEET. Young people living in supported housing are not eligible for the Fair Chance Scheme, but those who have been evicted from supported housing (or have left it) are considered eligible, if they meet the other criterion (being NEET).

In other cases, targeting proceeds in various steps and implies needs assessment at the community level. For instance, in the Bulgarian project, the Social Inclusion of Young People of Marginalised Roma Communities, targeting is supported by the initial mapping of each community, based on an interview, which reveals pending problems at individual and household level. Such problems can be of various natures (material, health-related, psychological) and may prevent someone from coming to the community development centre and seeking support. Based on this large-scale initial screening, lists and groups are created, indicating the needs, problems and interests of young people. These lists allow for better and more focused targeting at a later stage.

A number of measures prefer to keep an open approach to participation and their promoters emphasise the difficulty of reaching potential beneficiaries rather than the difficulty of selecting them. This is in line with numerous findings of programmes and measures that often struggle with reaching out to the most marginalised or disadvantaged groups. The presence of a solid motivation on the part of participants to follow the programme seems an important requisite as well – for instance, in the case of the French Second Chance Schools. According to an interviewee, ‘to succeed, candidates should have become aware of their difficulties and be motivated to move on’; the rate of acceptance of applications at this stage is quite high in any case.

### Conditionality

As targeting methods are used in recruitment, conditionality is sometimes applied to ensure that there is commitment on the part of the beneficiary during implementation. This may take the form of a contract and is sometimes linked to the fulfilment of more general welfare benefits. For instance, in the House of Opportunity (Bulgaria) each beneficiary has to sign a contract, agreeing to the house rules, and also agreeing to contribute a share of their income (20%) towards the costs of maintaining the house (should they find employment). Moreover, each resident receives a small allowance every week to cover personal costs, but this can be discontinued if the person does not comply with the house rules. Similarly, the *Communicare* measure (Sweden) in itself does not provide any allowances or subsidies, participants receiving these instead from the Swedish employment office or the social office. Conditionality applies to these: if participants do not attend the measure, they will not receive any support. Participants have to sign a contract when they start and promise that they will actively attend for three months. This conditionality is seen as something positive, as all stakeholders know what is expected.

In most of the cases examined in this study, however, there is no conditionality as normally understood in social policy, and the emphasis is more on obtaining the desired behaviours by stressing moral obligation through social pressure instead of financial rewards. For instance, in the UK Prince's Trust Team Programme, young people sign a contract during week one – but this is a team contract,

not an individual contract. According to a project promoter ‘the group sits down and sets rules that they expect from each other in week one’ (such as not talking over each other, respecting each other) – ‘the young people set the rules which is really important in them taking ownership and signing up to the contract’ (each young person signs the group contract). It is done as an activity and then the contract is displayed on the wall for the next 12 weeks and if someone is persistently late or disruptive they are referred back to the contract that they all signed at the beginning as a team. In the Dutch Participatory Audit for Homeless Young People, the conditions that are imposed on the participants are related to their involvement: for example, they have to come to the training on time. The participants set the rules for these conditions together at the start of the training: by setting them together they have a sense of involvement and responsibility and tend to follow them.

### Simplicity of access

Another, related key requisite of social inclusion measures in the context of the ‘social investment approach’ is the absence of barriers of access such as complicated bureaucratic procedures and paperwork, or any other element that can discourage socially disadvantaged youth from applying. In this context, almost all promoters of the measures highlight that keeping access simple was an important aspect of the design. When formal questionnaires or forms are used, there has often been an effort to keep them simple and to provide assistance when needed:

- the questionnaire for enrolling in the Bulgarian House of Opportunity programme consists of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ questions, the interviews are done by experienced psychologists and social workers, and the contract is clearly explained;
- application forms for the Greek Youth Legal Aid Programme are filled in with the support of bar association representatives during the first meeting; young individuals only need to provide a copy of their ID and of their last tax declaration;
- in the Swedish Job in Sight programme, two job consultants bridge the link between school and work and help young participants with all the necessary paperwork.

In some cases, digitalisation has been introduced to streamline the application process. For instance, in Latvia the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award coordinators are trying to make application and participation simple, avoiding excessive paperwork for applicants. Earlier there was only a manual application form; recently, however, an electronic application form has been introduced (with separate application forms for youth aged 14–17, and 18+).

In standard enterprise creation programmes, documents and complex business plans are often requested from those asking support. In the Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers project, in order not to limit access to the programme, the project ideas to be submitted need not follow any specific format. One of the assumptions in the methodology is that rather than requiring youngsters to provide formal documents such as business plans and presentations, it is more important to identify an idea, so that they can get support for its development.

In reality, many measures go beyond simplifying access and actively engage in outreach work and train workers to identify and remove barriers to target groups’ participation:

- the Swedish Job in Sight measure actively approaches young people where they are (at school) and does not require a formal application;



- in the UK Prince's Trust Team Programme, team leaders receive eight days training in removing the barriers to participation and learning, ensuring the programme is accessible and the programme is friendly and informal to help young people feel positive and able to identify targets for their future;
- at the Danish Cyberhouse online counselling service, the project team is currently discussing ways to include young people who may find it easier to express themselves verbally, but still require anonymity.

### Personalisation

An important element of effective social investment measures is personalisation to meet the specific needs of each individual beneficiary. It is therefore worth exploring whether, in the selected measures, approaches and methods are applied to pursue this goal. Personalisation seems to be quite a widespread feature of the majority of policy measures. Around half the measures (16 in all) clearly show a personalising approach, and at least another eight display some elements of personalisation. Unsurprisingly, this approach is more evident in initiatives that are more compensatory in nature and addressed to specific vulnerable groups but it is also present in measures that stimulate entrepreneurship and personal development.

Given that many initiatives have an advisory/counselling component, personalisation is built into this component. For instance, in the House of Opportunity (Bulgaria), each resident receives individual counselling from the three staff members relating to issues such as household management and healthcare. A psychologist holds individual sessions with each participant.

Even in an IT-based service such as the Danish Cyberhouse, where the risk of an impersonal approach is higher given the lack of face-to-face contact, attention is paid to personalising support. The personalised chat with the young person often takes a long time and, according to the project leader, 'voluntary workers should not have the feeling of being in a hurry'. Promoters stress the importance of allowing every young person the necessary counselling time and providing them with individualised signposting towards places where they can receive further help.

In some initiatives, beneficiaries are supported in drafting a personal development plan and this is used to monitor their progress, as the three examples below demonstrate.

**Baby House Project (Latvia):** Young mothers make a personal plan for the practical life and social skills they want to develop, including how to find accommodation and a job after leaving the shelter when the child turns six months old.

**Second Chance Schools (France):** Each young participant develops a professional project, in line with their own interests and capacities, based on tools and information provided by the project (such as information on sectors and professions, visits to companies, personality tests, internships); in addition, each student meets a tutor every week to assess progress and receive guidance.

**House of Opportunity (Bulgaria):** The plan includes goals and targets in different areas; progress towards the achievement of personal goals is monitored and can under certain circumstances lead to additional small financial benefits in the form of supplements to the weekly allowance.

A few initiatives take the form of a full personal development programme: for instance, the Prince's Trust Team Programme is a 12-week personal development course offering work experience, qualifications, practical skills, community projects and a residential week, and the Dutch Neighbourhood School Programme shows a similar approach.



### **Netherlands: Neighbourhood School Programme**

The Neighbourhood School Programme (Wijkschool) has been designed to tackle the individual obstacles and needs of the young person. Each person is allocated a mentor, and each mentor has a maximum of seven students. The mentors' involvement gradually decreases as they provide most support at the start of the programme and then work towards greater ownership of the pathway on the part of the young person. The mentor conducts assessments and participates in decision-making regarding the most appropriate activity for the young person, who also has a say in this process. The coach furthermore personalises the reward system: this is intended to encourage the participant to continue with the programme and is based on demonstrating motivation and successes. Rewards are often gifts from the community – for example, free gym membership for a person who enjoys going to the gym. Another aspect in creating a personalised approach is the presence of a social worker, behavioural expert or nurse specialised in social and psychiatric issues. This team supports the young person based on a personalised plan.

The initiatives that have a lesser focus on personalisation are those that are based on a group approach and tend to achieve effects on individuals more indirectly through these group activities. However, even in these projects, some personalising components are present, as outlined below.

**Social Inclusion of Young People in Marginalised Rural Roma Communities (Bulgaria):** In this programme, the moderators employ a flexible approach. They host group activities and initiatives are conducted, such as discussions, festivals, fairs, interest clubs and courses. They also hold individual meetings and counselling with participants, and support at the micro level – for instance, for scholarship applications, support in preparation for university entrance exams, preventing school drop-out or brokering for job applications.

**Power is Within You (Bulgaria):** The majority of the training sessions are focused on group work, collaborations, reflection in small groups, seminars and role plays. However, individual training is also provided, and participants are encouraged to approach lecturers and trainers at any time, should they feel the need to.

**Participatory Audit for Homeless Young People (Netherlands):** The format of the audit and the process to set up the measure stay the same regardless of the skills and competences of the target group. However, the training is designed to overcome the individual barriers to participation related to questioning, negotiating, debating, presentation and other communicative skills and are based on a needs assessment. Moreover, the training is conducted in small groups and emphasises strengthening individual skills.

In initiatives where young people in general are targeted and encouraged to engage in economically and socially useful activities, the emphasis on personalisation is somewhat less (perhaps because the focus is not on individual weaknesses/skill gaps). Still, at least some form of adaptation and flexibility is possible to accommodate individual needs; for instance, in the Spanish Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers initiative, trainers and facilitators adapt their training sessions to the specificities of the group they are working with, taking into account the age and background of the youngsters. Similarly, in the French Civic Service, the individual assignments can be adapted to meet the emerging needs of the young person as long as the initial agreements are not greatly affected.

## Integration

Integration is an important characteristic of effective and efficient service provision. Integration also entails complementarity between initiatives and policies in different sectors and policy domains. An integrated approach is vital, especially when addressing the multidimensional nature of social inclusion where various interventions often need to take place at the same time.

The majority of the measures studied (17 in all) clearly adopt an integrated approach to the social inclusion of young people and at least another 7 show some elements of integration between sectors and domains.

One way in which integrated approaches are favoured, particularly in place-based measures in the public sector, is through rewarding the adoption of comprehensive youth strategies. This has been done – for example – by the Youth Friendly Municipality Certificate (Certifikat Mladini prijazna občina) in Slovenia. One of the key criteria for receiving the certificate is dealing with youth issues in a strategic fashion. According to the delivering institution, a number of municipalities have adopted youth strategies in an effort to receive the certificate.

However, a more limited number of initiatives pursue this integrated approach through some form of stable institutional coordination among agencies operating in different sectors. An example is the Dutch Neighbourhood School Programme, where the municipal coordinator (who is connected to other local social services) coordinates with professionals from other sectors both during the programme and the aftercare phase. The integrated approach of the programme most often involves other services related to preventing drop-out from education, the labour market (employment services, employers), care providers and neighbourhood organisations. Interestingly, the project has formalised the principles that enable cooperation with other professionals: trust, mutual benefits, short lines of communication, clear and direct agreements regarding finances, responsibility and continuity. Another relevant example is the Swedish Job in Sight programme, showing that putting integration into practice can require some effort.

### **Sweden: Job in Sight – learning to cooperate for an integrated approach to inclusion**

Due to the close cooperation between the national agencies involved – such as the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Employment Agency, the municipality, the project Activa and the employers and companies in the region – the measure focuses on an integrated approach between social, employment and education sectors. Every Friday, representatives from each of these agencies and organisations meet with the two job consultants and the project leader, where they discuss the progress of each participant and the next steps to be taken. Both the project leader and the director of the Swedish Employment Agency emphasised the initial challenges of cooperation between different sectors, agency and organisations, as they all use different professional ‘languages’ and regulatory frameworks. It took approximately six months for participants to understand each other’s systems and agree on the conditions for the cross-sectoral work.

Multiagency coordination is not limited to the public sector. NGOs also cooperate across sectors to address social inclusion in an integrated fashion, principally through local partnerships, as the following examples show.

**Arsis (Greece):** This NGO participates in the ‘Solidarity Now’ centre (first in Thessaloniki and now in Athens), an NGO partnership aimed at promoting complementary and comprehensive actions dealing with social exclusion. The Thessaloniki centre offers three categories of services provided by different organisations: legal services, medical assistance and social services.

**Young Household Friends (Slovenia):** This initiative mostly focuses on sports, leisure and socialisation combined with volunteering and civic engagement. It works in partnership with other organisations active in the Sava district, such as Prostoroz, whose projects aim more at structural changes such as the improvement of mobility and traffic safety in the district or the creation of public spaces for community engagement.

**Social Inclusion of Young People in Marginalised Rural Roma Communities (Bulgaria):** The adoption of an integrated focus is an important aspect of this measure. The team of the implementing NGO Amalipe brings about the integration through brokering between job-seekers and employers, as well as between the community and the municipality in relation to social services and health consultation, among other things.

### Effectiveness and impact

Systematic monitoring was part of all but two of the measures and usually included some form of target-setting and review. Participation data seems to be the most common, with systematic recording numbers of young people enrolled, or ‘starters’ and ‘completers’ where the measure takes the form of a structured programme. The richness of the data ranges from a straightforward ‘head count’ (Baby House, Latvia), through to more sophisticated sociodemographic profiling (National Citizen Service in UK and Civic Service in France). It is not uncommon for the lead organisation to maintain a database of some kind. Cyberhouse in Denmark has a monitoring system that is tailored to the online format of the programme, and records the numbers of contacts, chats and discussion topics.

Nearly all the measures that provide individualised training, mentoring or life skills support also capture progress and outcomes data in the form of assessments, supervision and progress reviews (although these are not always collated and analysed systematically for performance management purposes). These data are often supplemented with exit questionnaires to gather participants’ feedback, alongside surveys of teachers or members of the local community depending on the type of measure. A few of the measures place a greater emphasis on capturing participant data, including testimonials, internet blog posts and photographs or videos. For example, the Power is Within You initiative in Bulgaria uses a social networking platform, which allows former participants to ask questions, share experiences and exchange good practices about how they have applied their knowledge.

Of the two measures without any centralised monitoring (Ungerad in Denmark and the Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers programme in Spain), both cite a lack of resources as the main barrier to having a monitoring system in place.

The overall picture that emerges with regard to evaluation is mixed. A fair proportion of the measures have undertaken some form of internal evaluation, either at the level of the individual measures, or as part of a wider organisational review process. Fewer of the measures have been externally evaluated. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the resource constraints faced by many of the measures and the costs associated with commissioning an independent evaluator.

The formal outputs from the measures differ according to their scale and focus, including whether they provide a direct service to young people, provide infrastructure, training or capacity building, or act as a mechanism for funding experimental projects. A key output for most of the measures is the numbers of young people reached or supported. Policy measures vary in their scale from relatively small networks of several dozen young people, to multifaceted national programmes with many thousands of participants. Aside from the numbers of young people supported, various other types of outputs are documented within the measures considered for the study. They include the following:

- training of young people or professionals;
- new training materials developed for practitioners;
- new educational resources or curricula developed;
- new pilot projects commissioned or supported;
- new youth-led activities planned and delivered;
- auditing or benchmarking tools, or frameworks, developed;
- new networks created;
- community events planned and managed;
- acquisition of premises/youth centres developed.

A wide range of outcomes have been reported, covering short, medium and longer timescales. In relation to service satisfaction, data are routinely collected regarding young people's satisfaction with support or services provided. The results have generally been very positive – particularly for the measures concerned with personal development or civic participation. Some 89% of young people 'graduating' from Civic Service in France said that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their experiences of the programme, while 90% of young people who participated in the National Citizen Service in the UK (2011–2012) reported that they had enjoyed the experience and considered it 'worthwhile'. Satisfaction levels are slightly lower on some of the more formal, structured education programmes. This perhaps reflects their more ambitious objectives relating to preparation for training and employment. Nevertheless, the findings are broadly positive. For example, over half the participants (58%) in 2013 for Second Chance Schools in France reported a 'positive' learning experience.

Policy measures have demonstrated improvement in young people's confidence and self-esteem. These outcomes are often achieved by overcoming barriers relating to social isolation and loneliness (a particular issue for young mothers in Baby Home, Latvia), and improving young people's resilience to cope with negative environments, including through the use of sports activities as a tool for social inclusion. Improvements to young people's social and emotional well-being are also closely associated with actions to strengthen or repair difficult relationships with peers or family members. The high incidence of these problems underlines the importance of the psychological support provided by many of the measures.

These 'social' outcomes have often been experienced to a greater degree by young people with low qualifications or from a disadvantaged background. This is the case for the Civic Service programme in France, where the findings from the external evaluation of the Youth Experimentation Fund in

France concluded that, for young people with the lowest level of resources, the programme has allowed a net progression of their resources.

Improvements to physical and mental health are also evident within some of the measures. The Bulgarian initiative Social Inclusion of Young People in Marginalised Rural Roma Communities has made widespread use of health counselling and has provided tailored interventions relating to health problems with a high prevalence in the Roma population (including tuberculosis). The tracking of participants undertaken for the Your Own Power programme in the Netherlands identifies a reduction in the use of health and social care services among the participants at an interval of seven months compared with the situation upon commencing the programme.

A further cluster of outcomes can be identified under the broad heading of 'life skills', including communication skills, problem-solving, self-organisation, and self-management. These skills were particularly found within the personal development and volunteering programmes with a focus on teamwork and practical activities. A large-scale independent evaluation of the National Citizen Service in the UK found that the most significant impacts of the programme related to young people's teamwork, communication and leadership skills. Compared to a matched comparison group, the participants in the National Citizen Service were 17% more likely to report feeling confident about explaining their ideas clearly following the programme. The qualitative evidence showed that the young people particularly valued the supportive setting provided by the programme which gave them an opportunity to test and develop their communication skills with their peers before doing so with adults.

A similar process was documented in the Jóvenes Changemakers Programme in Spain, whereby young people gained confidence and motivation from the experience of being supported to set up their own social enterprise. Educational outcomes are apparent across many of the measures. As would be expected, the rates of educational reinsertion are highest for the programmes where reengagement is an explicit aim, and where young people are supported in completing a structured programme leading to an award or qualification. This is the case for the second-chance schools in France and Greece, and the Neighbourhood School Programme in the Netherlands. In the latter example, over one third (38%) of the 690 young people participating to date have returned to regular education.

The measures were selected for the study with a focus on social inclusion activities not designed principally with immediate labour market reinsertion in mind. In practice, however, employment outcomes were also realised across some of the projects.

The proportion of young people going on to find work following their participation in the measures was typically quite low, as might be expected given their focus. However, Job in Sight in Sweden forms the principal exception to this, with success rates of between 65% and 85% reported for young disabled people making a sustained transition to work as a direct result of the programme (compared with a 5% success rates for non-participants). This reflects the 'supported employment' model, with economic inclusion forming the main 'anchor' for other forms of social inclusion.

A number of the measures were more linked to young people's collective participation within a particular locality or neighbourhood and had a particular focus on civic participation and community development. One of the immediate and visible benefits of these types of schemes relates to the improved safety and accessibility of public spaces. The Young Street Network programme in Slovenia was initiated to tackle negative perceptions about young people gathering in public areas, and to



reduce the levels of noise and disruption. Through a series of street work actions involving between 50 and 350 young people at a time, the programme has seen a rapid reduction in the levels of noise, alcohol consumption and violent incidents. Testimonials gathered from both young people and local residents show greater feelings of security and heightened environmental awareness. The young people participating in the programme also demonstrated an improved awareness of their rights, as the street work provided a forum for open discussion about the use of public spaces and encouraged debate and reflection. The programme has substantially built capacity for street-based youth work, and the street workers have played an important mediation role in subsequent incidents involving young people and local residents, in liaison with the police.

### Innovativeness

The central importance of innovative approaches to meeting social needs has been highlighted in the European Commission's Social Investment Package (European Commission, 2013d). It emphasises that social policy needs to adapt to new challenges through the development, implementation and scaling up of measures that have been proven to be effective and efficient. In line with this, a further important aspect of the assessment framework of measures in this study was to what extent they feature innovative elements – relating to the type of needs addressed, the types of collaborations set up, the way the provision is organised or the way resources are obtained.

The measures included in this study are innovative in different ways. While displaying other strengths against the assessment framework, a policy such as the Youth Council in Denmark is an established and institutionalised policy, which has been in place in many countries for an extended period of time, and is therefore not particularly innovative. (A more detailed comparative analysis of youth forums and structures in EU Member States can be found in European Commission, 2015c.) Other measures reviewed in this study are standard provisions in many Member States, such as the second-chance schools in France, Greece and the Netherlands, but feature aspects of innovation in how education and support is delivered. Some measures see innovation as one of their defining features, such as the Fair Chance Fund in the UK, which aims to facilitate new forms of collaboration and new sources of funding. It should also be pointed out that while some initiatives may be innovative in their national context, others stand out from a transnational perspective.

### New methods

The majority of measures included in this study are innovative in that they reform mainstream or standard provisions through the implementation of innovative – and often more holistic – methods and approaches. In this way, they use new methods to address traditional needs such as those of young people in need of counselling, young school drop-outs or people leaving institutional care.

A number of outstanding measures from an innovation point of view can be found in the area of youth counselling. They include the following.

**Cyberhouse (Denmark):** This measure builds on the established delivery of anonymous phone helpline services by providing online counselling services and sign-posting online to young people in need of psychological support and advice.

**Power is Within You (Bulgaria):** This programme teaches youth counsellors and social workers a new method aimed at fostering the resilience of young people to overcome their challenging socioeconomic circumstances by focusing on individual development and self-discovery.



**Your Own Power (Netherlands):** This has received numerous awards for innovation (see box).

### **Netherlands: Your Own Power – innovative approach to counselling based on empowerment**

The 'Your Own Power' (Eigen Kracht) intervention aims to provide individuals in difficult circumstances with the tools to tackle their own problems with the help of their social network. It is innovative in that it empowers young people to improve their own situation, rather than prescribing solutions to their issues. The underlying approach is based on mediation and assumes that ownership and self-management increases self-confidence and self-sufficiency, and that the involvement of the social network strengthens social cohesion and participation in society at large. Young people, who are most often referred to the intervention by social services, include people from their own social network (friends, family and neighbours) in their personal action plan. The innovativeness of the measure has been recognised by a number of award committees, with the intervention receiving a nomination for the Youth Service Award (2005), the Social Enterprise of the Year (2007) and the Radical Renewer Prize (2013). The initiator of the measure was knighted in 2012 for his work on the programme.

Other measures in this category include those using education as an entry point, such as the second-chance provisions in France, Greece and the Netherlands and the development of an inclusive education system in Latvia. In Latvia, for example, new methods include the implementation of a school-based mentorship programme (Lakstīgala), where university students support pupils in developing social skills, long-term interests and motivation. Similarly, a number of measures address the issues of housing from a holistic perspective, adding on life-skills support and counselling. While these methods may be a novel and innovative approach in some Member States, notably the House of Opportunity in Bulgaria, they are not seen as innovative in other contexts – for example, Turbo in Denmark, which is part of a policy trend that began there over a decade ago.

### **Addressing new needs**

A smaller number of provisions included in this study respond to newly emerged needs, which mostly relate to the challenging economic environment in recent years and the associated rise in the number of young people not in employment, education and training in Europe. These measures go beyond the traditional provisions for early school-leavers and address the wider population of young people that has become unemployed during the most recent recession and is confronted with a depressed labour market – particularly so for young people. Measures included try to identify ways to satisfy this new need to integrate a large number of young people into society through alternative methods.

This includes the French Civic Service, which particularly targets NEETs and those with other disadvantages and allows young people to volunteer for an extended period of time (of six to twelve months) while receiving a subsidy. Similarly, the National Citizen Service in the UK, piloted in 2011, was introduced in the context of the London riots of 2011 and the growing number of NEETs in the UK. A related, yet less formalised measure, is the Slovenian initiative Young Street Network, which aims to offer alternative for young people to spend their time apart from gathering and drinking in public spaces in Ljubljana.

### **New forms of organisation**

A number of measures have also implemented new ways of organising service provisions, often through the implementation of local, bottom-up activities in the form of social entrepreneurship.

This includes measures such as Young Household Friends in Slovenia, which offers seemingly simple community development based on the personal initiative of a group of young social entrepreneurs. Other programmes, such as Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers in Spain have sought to actively promote this new grassroot-based organisation of social provisions (see box).

**Spain: Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers – linking youth and social change**

This initiative is dedicated to providing young people between 14 and 24 with the opportunity to promote social projects that benefit their community. The project also allows them to acquire life skills and competencies, such as empathy, leadership, personal initiative, ability to work in groups and change management. It was launched in Spain in 2012 on the basis of the ‘Dream it-Do it’ methodology developed in USA, where this programme was launched over a decade ago. The vision of Ashoka (a worldwide association of entrepreneurs) and of Jóvenes (Young) Changemakers is that ‘We can all change the world’. The Jóvenes Changemakers Programme provides young people with the tools, support and advice to develop plans, implement ideas and ultimately help society to change. This is done through calls, coaching, support and selection of innovative ideas of social projects, to which seed capital is provided (up to €800) for their launch and implementation. The approach is inclusive and based on the sharing and visibility of young people as agents of change.

Other measures experiment with a well-known approach to innovative organisation of public services – one-stop-shop support centres for specific target groups. Examples are the information and support centres for Roma youth in Bulgaria and Spain (Chavós Nebó Youth Network).

**New collaborations and new forms of resourcing**

A larger number of measures have implemented innovative approaches to collaboration in the area of youth social inclusion, which is also often linked with the introduction of new forms of resourcing.

New collaborations most often involved the engagement of non-public actors, such as the bar associations involved in the provision of free legal aid under the Youth Legal Aid Programme in Greece, or the involvement of the private for-profit company Serco as lead partner in the delivery of the National Citizen Service in the UK. This latter case gave rise to substantial criticism: the National Citizen Service is one of the key elements of the UK government’s Big Society strategy aiming to strengthen the voluntary sector and societal engagement (see, for example, *The Guardian*, 2012).

Linked to this is the discovery of new funding streams, most notably from the private sector, as is the case for:

- the Spanish Bank and Lab for Sports, Creativity and Social Inclusion Projects;
- Ashoka Jóvenes Changemakers in Spain, which counts on the financial support of private institutions, such as the Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria (BBVA Bank);
- the French Youth Experimentation Fund which received contributions of €50 million from the Total Foundation for 2009–2014 and €3 million from the Union of Industries and Metal Professions (UIMM);
- the UK’s Fair Chance Fund, which is based on an investment approach (see box).

### **UK: Fair Chance Fund – seeking investment into social projects**

The Fair Chance Fund, led by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the UK Cabinet Office, is designed to fund Social Impact Bonds, which address homelessness, being NEET and other issues of exclusion among young people. Social Impact Bonds are a relatively new development in the UK and are funding several relevant programmes. They are an innovative funding mechanism, including three parties: the government, the social sector organisation (delivery) and an investor. Social Impact Bonds require an upfront investment to finance the working capital requirements of delivery organisations and provide a return upon delivery. They are designed to deliver payment by results. The project is in its early stages; currently, expressions of interest from service providers are being evaluated.

### **Social experimentation**

A small number of measures already apply the Commission approach to social innovation through the application of social experimentation – that is, implementing rigorous (often counterfactual) evaluation and realising the subsequent desire to upscale effective and efficient measures. Both the Youth Experimentation Fund in France and the Bank and Lab for Sports, Creativity and Social Inclusion Projects in Spain are large-scale national projects initiated by government ministries with the goal of identifying and sharing effective practices in the field of youth policy. They also have in common that they are implemented through calls for proposals, through which selected projects receive funding and technical support by a non-profit organisation, working in partnership with the government ministries responsible and providing on-the-ground support. Both measures encourage the integration of funding from private sources. These measures provide an interesting template for implementing large-scale social experimentation at national level. The French Youth Experimentation Fund is presented in more detail below:

### **France: Youth Experimentation Fund – social experimentation in youth policy**

The Youth Experimentation Fund (Le Fonds d'Expérimentation pour la Jeunesse), led by the Ministry of Women's Rights, Urban Development, Youth and Sports, was created in 2008 to facilitate social experimentation in the area of youth policy with a view to identifying innovative and scalable approaches that aid the social inclusion of young people (under the age of 25). The fund is implemented through calls for proposals in different fields of actions, such as access to housing, professional inclusion and civic engagement. Projects are selected by an assessment board. Evaluation is a central feature and sound impact evaluations are embedded in the measures at conception stage. It encourages innovation at three levels.

- At project level, it finances innovative approaches including in areas that are underdeveloped (for example, youth-led organisations).
- At national policy level, it encourages a bottom-up approach to policymaking and a transversal approach (interministerial), and includes systematically embedded experimental evaluations for evidence-based policymaking.
- At methodological level, it has favoured randomised control trials as evaluation methodology, which has contributed to the visibility of this evaluation method.

### **Transferability**

Measures tend to come with their own set of critical dependencies that are fundamental to their success. Looking across all of the measures, however, a set of more generic 'transferability conditions' can be identified, including the following.

**Financial stability:** A key challenge for many of the measures has been the uncertainty surrounding the availability of funding. Any replication of the measures included in the study would need to be supported with a realistic level of development funding, but in most instances would need to include provisions for their own revenue generation.

**Ensuring the active participation of young people in design and implementation:** While also an assessment criterion in its own right, the ‘participation’ of young people emerges as a fundamental aspect of the success of many of the measures. When seeking to transfer the measures from one context to another, the active engagement of young people in the design and development process is key to ensuring that the result is perceived as relevant and useful by the target groups.

**Challenging public attitudes:** Some of the more collectivising measures that aim at fostering grassroots participation of young people at a local level are dependent on a certain degree of existing activation among young people (or at least the conditions for mobilisation to take place). Moreover, it has become apparent that resistance to young people’s more active participation in society is a reality and should not be underestimated (particularly where measures have a dimension relating to gender or ethnicity). Many of the measures have required groundwork to engage with local communities and to raise awareness.

**Policy and regulatory compliance:** The transferability of measures greatly depends on the extent to which certain structural requirements are factored into the programme. This is particularly the case for more formalised programmes that rely on the official endorsement of qualifications or accreditation schemes. Education-oriented measures are therefore likely to be much more strongly dependent on national policy and regulatory frameworks within individual Member States. There is also a basic requirement for some degree of decentralisation to enable alternative institutional arrangements to be established – whether this is within the field of education, social care or housing.

## Conclusions

Social inclusion is a process that ensures citizens have the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It encompasses, but is not restricted to, social integration or better access to the labour market, and also includes equal access to facilities, services and benefits.

With its Youth Strategy, the EU has adopted a comprehensive approach to the social inclusion of young people. Until now, concrete initiatives have mostly concerned labour market reinsertion (such as the Youth Guarantee) and education and training. The EU policy framework in relation to youth inclusion is to be found at the interface of four policy domains: youth participation policies (centred mainly on civic engagement and volunteering); policies specific to disadvantaged groups; employment and education policies; and policies for access to services and income support.

Most of the policy measures identified and discussed in this chapter can be categorised as individualising measures that address individual capabilities to cope with labour market and societal demands. Structure-related measures that primarily address either the socioeconomic aspects or the institutional set-up of youth transitions, whether the conditions under which young people develop human capital (such as schools or health structures) or the conditions under which they enter the labour market and societal life, were less present among the policy measures. This may reflect the fact that institutional changes and reform are more challenging to implement.

Mentoring, counselling and social support, volunteering and civic engagement, and education and housing were the main entry points of initiatives for the social inclusion of young people (often combined with other themes). The scarcity of measures related to childcare might reflect a general lack of gender focus in policies and practices that explicitly target young people. Within these measures, tools based on human relations (information, advice, counselling, capacity building) are further assisted by the existence of tools based on the provision of resources (financial assistance, facilities). A large share of measures are delivered by non-profit organisations, and a multitude of stakeholders are often involved. Social inclusion measures can be classified as either preventive or compensatory. Compensatory measures are more often those targeted at 'already excluded' groups; however, preventative actions also exist for disadvantaged youth and a large number of initiatives mix prevention and compensation – increasingly so in the context of high levels of structural unemployment and the social problems this brings. Likewise, measures can be individualising, structure-oriented or a mixture of the two aspects.

Evidence from the policy measures does not suggest a clear trend of public investment in the social inclusion of young people outside the context of direct labour market reinsertion, although there is social investment by a wider range of actors and public finance has been more forthcoming for some of the educationally oriented measures leading to recognised qualifications. Several measures were affected by financial constraints, also related to fiscal consolidation, and the prioritisation of employment-related initiatives over social inclusion initiatives for young people.

Motivation and participation were investigated as two key elements of youth empowerment. The measures studied usually create motivation at a basic level by providing activities that are appealing to young people (such as sports, arts, and cultural provision) as a 'hook' to engage them in other forms of social action. Other motivating approaches include offering young people support to engage with services 'on their own terms', offering alternative services or support, or appealing to their social responsibility and civic pride. A clear link emerges between motivation and conditionality: willingness to engage in a structured programme is often a prerequisite for enrolment. Some initiatives include some form of goal-setting and review. Participants very quickly see the results of their actions, with feedback loops in place to reinforce positive change. This is particularly important in the context of socially excluded young people, who are often more likely to lack confidence and self-esteem and to have previous negative experiences of engaging with services; in addition, for such young people resilience sometimes takes the form of *resistance* to help. A common issue is regaining young people's trust. The role of the trusted intermediary is crucial.

Even collective measures include some kind of coordinating mechanism based on the leadership or brokering role of individuals – change agents, peer advocates, or community champions. The creation of a dedicated space for young people, making it safer for socially excluded youth, is an important feature in some initiatives, which stands in contrast to mainstream institutional environments. Having 'somewhere to go' to meet with peers also provides an identity-reinforcing and socialising purpose.

Participation is evident in these measures to various degrees. Only a few were designed to be completely youth-led. Most measures were started by NGOs or municipal authorities, either in collaboration with young people, or on a more consultative basis. However, a collaborative approach between service providers and young people can be found in the implementation of many measures. An initial catalyst for social change is a recurrent feature in examples where meaningful participation has been achieved. In some instances, a social crisis of some kind was necessary to create sufficient



official and public will to allow stronger forms of youth-led measures to emerge. Effective participatory structures often evolved beyond solely representing young people's interests and became networked with other municipal structures and community organisations. One pitfall is that benefits sometimes accrue to the smaller number of young people who have a coordination role, and who often come from a different social background than the target groups. Levels of motivation for enrolment are also subject to variations according to social class and qualifications. Furthermore, attitudes within official institutions and among the wider community have sometimes posed a barrier to realising young people's participation rights.

There were several aspects that were related to the social investment approach, but applied in a different manner from mainstream social policy. Most measures directed at specific target groups have criteria for identifying these targets; however, targeting is not done through traditional approaches used for welfare benefits (for example, means testing by submitting proof of income), but through interviews or other methods that are more suitable for understanding the multidimensional nature of needs and the appropriateness of the timing of the intervention and its likely success (with the young person's 'motivation' often forming a key eligibility criterion). There is rarely conditionality as normally understood in social policy, and the emphasis is more on obtaining the desired behaviours by motivating young people, stressing moral obligation and individual responsibility, and through social pressure instead of financial rewards. Access is kept simple and relatively free from bureaucracy. The majority of measures show a clear personalising approach and almost all have some personalisation element – even where the context for the social engagement of young people is collective. Some operate at two 'levels', with a highly personalised approach for young people acting in an intermediary role as change agents, and a more decentralised approach for cascading their knowledge and enthusiasm to a wider peer group. Content-wise, most initiatives adopt an integrated approach; however, a much more limited number pursue this through some form of stable institutional coordination among agencies.

Measures included in the study are innovative in various ways. While a number of provisions have developed new approaches to address existing needs and new partnership and funding arrangements are visible, a small number of measures have identified and addressed new social needs. While some initiatives are innovative only in their national context, others stand out from a transnational perspective.

Few of the policy measures meet all of the transferability criteria. Some of them can be considered as 'trailblazers': these measures share certain core elements relating to innovation, effectiveness, and a relative simplicity in the model that is less contingent on policy or legislative constraints. Other measures have good potential transferability on the basis that they are very well established and often large in scale, with a clear evidence base and accompanying tools and frameworks to offer a 'blueprint' for the development of equivalent measures elsewhere. Critical conditions for transferability of successful measures appear to be financial stability, ensuring the active participation of young people in implementation, and challenging public attitudes that indicate resistance towards the active participation of young people in society.





Young people have been hit hard by the economic crisis. Despite some recently recorded improvements, youth unemployment rates are still at dramatic levels in some Member States. Overall, young people in the EU have seen their living conditions deteriorating since the onset of the recession; they now constitute one of the age groups most at risk of social exclusion. Young people who experience certain disadvantages – for example, due to health problems or disabilities, low levels of education or a migration background – have become even more exposed both to exclusion from the labour market and to social exclusion.

Losing a generation is not an affordable option for Europe; hence, with its Youth Strategy 2010–2018, the EU has adopted a comprehensive and holistic approach to the social inclusion of young people. The policy framework for young people can be found at the intersection of four main policy domains: employment and education; youth participation (centred mainly on civic engagement and volunteering); policies specific to disadvantaged groups; and policies for access to services and income support. So far, the focus of policy actions both at the European and the national level has been mainly on the employment strand while other dimensions have yet to gain policy prominence.

Recognising that access to paid employment is the entry ticket to ensuring the full participation of youth in a wide range of activities in European societies, and is the key for supporting youth in their transition to adulthood, concrete initiatives have been implemented for young people's labour market reintegration and for their inclusion in education and training.

This emphasis seems well justified by existing evidence. As shown by Eurofound (2012a), not being in employment, education or training (NEET) has severe consequences that may affect several dimensions of young people's lives and their well-being. It is well established that falling into the NEET status means first and foremost a loss of young people's potential, which affects their participation in society (Williamson, 1997; Coles et al, 2002, 2010; Furlong, 2006; Eurofound, 2012a). Moreover, research suggests that spending time in the NEET status at a young age can produce long-lasting consequences or 'scars' (OECD, 2010). These scars can have a negative effect on future employment outcomes and earnings, as well as negative consequences on young people's physical and mental health. They can lead to difficult relationships, drug and substance abuse, involvement in criminal activities and disengagement from life and society. Moreover, these consequences can have a dramatic impact not only on the individual young person but also on their family and on society as a whole, in terms of economic loss due to their non-participation in the labour market and societal consequences stemming from their lack of civic engagement and the risk that their frustration may be exploited by political extremism and populism (Eurofound, 2012a; Bay and Blekesaune, 2002).

In this regard, the duration of young people's exclusion is key for understanding the extent of these negative consequences. Evidence shows that the more protracted the disengagement, the more serious are these consequences. In particular, evidence reveals that a long period of disengagement from the labour market results in financial strain upon young people and a lower level of psychological and social well-being. A long duration of unemployment induces a more pessimistic attitude to life, with a lower level of life satisfaction and happiness and an increased risk of mental health issues. Moreover, with a higher perception of social exclusion and a lower level of satisfaction with family and social life, young people seem to feel increasingly excluded as the duration of unemployment becomes longer. This is also confirmed by the trends of decreasing civic engagement and social participation among the young unemployed.

In order to fight youth unemployment and to prevent the long-term disengagement of young people while supporting their reintegration in the labour market or in education and training, in 2013 the Council of the European Union endorsed the European Commission's proposal for the European Youth Guarantee. The concept of the Youth Guarantee, that each young person will receive an offer of an opportunity in employment, education or training within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education, is not new. It has been implemented in Scandinavian countries since the 1980s to support youth in their transitions from school to work. All countries with well-functioning Youth Guarantee schemes in place provide evidence of their positive impact on reducing long-term youth disengagement.

Departing from different starting points, Member States have now begun the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Each country is building on its strengths and following its own trajectory in implementing the Guarantee. According to the evidence collected in this report, in 2014, the first year of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, it appears that some countries adopted a more holistic approach: they used the Youth Guarantee to improve the link between labour market and education, but also created a strong link with youth policies and social policies more generally, taking into account how to reach the most vulnerable. Conversely, others have adopted a narrower approach predominantly focused on employment policies and on those who are closer to the labour market and, in a sense, easier to reintegrate.

The Youth Guarantee is not just an 'umbrella' policy measure. Rather, it is a concept for newly designed and better coordinated youth policies based, as in Finland, on strong public-private-people partnerships. For this reason, it is important to understand that the Youth Guarantee is much more than the offer of the guarantee. An effective partnership between labour market actors and stakeholders and the provision of personalised and individual development plans for the young job-seekers are key to ensuring the effectiveness of the measure. Hence, the success of the Youth Guarantee is highly dependent on other public policies in place and on the infrastructure of the employment services of delivering ad-hoc tailored support for youth, optimising matching between the individual need of the job-seeker and the intervention.

For these reasons, there are several challenges that Member States faced in the first year of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Firstly, a clear need for structural reforms arose in many Member States. These include reforms to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of the public employment services, to enable them to provide ad-hoc services for youth. Similarly, the absorption capacity of VET and the education system more generally need to be improved in order to offer young people a sufficient number of good-quality offers that include apprenticeships, training and ultimately job opportunities. Moreover, special attention needs to be placed on the sustainability and the quality of these offers. The availability and sustainability of offers can be ensured through effective partnerships between all labour market actors, education providers and stakeholders. Achieving effective partnerships may not be easy and may require more time than expected. Finally, reaching young people can be difficult. In addition to online tools for reaching out to and engaging youth, more elaborated strategies should be developed to reach all youth, including those most hard to reach.

Going beyond the Youth Guarantee, as indicated in the Youth Strategy, addressing the current situation of young people more comprehensively – encompassing attention to health status, housing, participation and empowerment – requires policies and initiatives that focus not only narrowly on employment or education but also include more holistic approaches. Policies and services are needed

that bring together different services to address the multitude of issues that young people may be battling with. This holds particularly true for young people who are hard to reach, or face a range of challenges and problems.

Broader social inclusion policies include those for youth participation, specific policies for disadvantaged groups and policies for access to services and income support that aim to address the particular needs of special youth populations. (These populations require broader and additional approaches to support further interventions for their reintegration in the labour market.) Policies and practices that have been identified and analysed in this report apply this multidimensional approach and take into account that social inclusion is a process in which young people can fulfil their potential; they also recognise that it is a process in which society values and recognises the contribution young people make. However, in the majority of countries, the focus and the policy attention has been dominated by the employment dimension and a well-considered multidimensional strategy is something Member States have only recently started to look into and apply.

Where social inclusion measures are present, they tend to be individualising measures which address the issues and problems a young person faces. Some of them are of a preventive nature and focus on general, often participatory, policies and compensatory measures aimed at young people already feeling excluded. More structure-oriented measures are also beginning to emerge. This is in line with the recent policy developments that go beyond just 'fixing the individual' and recognise the importance of the environment in which services are designed and implemented. Such an approach can address the key factors underpinning the social exclusion of young people, which are the result of a series of interlinked problems and an accumulation of challenges that may be relevant to the group or a setting (for example a community) rather than an individual only. The review shows that some measures (albeit small in number in comparison to those focusing only on individuals) do pay attention to more structural issues when fighting social exclusion.

All these initiatives, provided mainly by non-profit organisations and involving a multitude of stakeholders, seem to be characterised by mentoring, counselling and social support, volunteering and civic engagement, and education and housing as the main entry points. In general they are also characterised by tools based on human relations (information, advice, counselling, capacity building), and are further assisted by the existence of tools based on the provision of resources (financial assistance, facilities).

While the funding of the Youth Guarantee is set at €6.4 billion through the Youth Employment Initiative, and Member States are called upon to top up this amount with national resources, the funding of the above-mentioned broader measures for social inclusion remains less certain. Evidence from the case studies does not indicate a clear trend of public investment in the social inclusion of young people (outside the context of direct labour market reintegration and in educationally oriented measures leading to recognised qualifications). Broader measures for the social inclusion of youth seem to be affected by financial constraints that are also related to fiscal consolidation and the prioritisation of employment-related initiatives.

In this regard, it is essential to call for more attention to be paid at EU level to the social exclusion of young people, beyond the issue of unemployment. In fact, while youth unemployment remains a clear emergency in the EU, evidence shows that many young Europeans are exposed to social exclusion much more broadly – in terms of access to education, access to housing, social and political participation. In light of this reality, the Youth Strategy provides a comprehensive framework in terms

of specific youth policy. However, much more can be done to mainstream the issue of social inclusion of young people into general EU and Member State policies for social inclusion, employment and access to public services of general interest.

Furthermore, rather than taking a narrow, employment-centred approach to their national Youth Guarantee implementation, Member States should follow the example of Sweden and Finland and adopt a broader, holistic approach. Such an approach would aim to reach those young people who are not job-ready and are more difficult to reintegrate and reactivate. In this context, promising approaches are being rolled out that promote the broader social inclusion of young people; these developments deserve more support in terms of public investment.

Existing and newly implemented practices should be more systematically evaluated in terms of their long-term effects on young people's employment perspectives and life chances, and their impact compared with 'no action'. There is the question about which evaluation methods are most appropriate to evaluate complex and multidimensional social inclusion approaches and policies. For example, many of the measures recorded positive outcomes in terms of client satisfaction, self-esteem, acquisition of skills, and better educational and employment outcomes. Community cohesion outcomes are also frequently reported, but are much more difficult to measure or validate. Appropriate monitoring tools should be applied to capture and evaluate these aspects.

While monitoring the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is a requirement set out in the Council of the European Union Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee (Council of the European Union, 2013b), initiatives aimed at the broader social inclusion of youth should be evaluated more thoroughly and more formally. It is clear that given the current scarcity of state resources for social policies in many Member States, no public investment is possible in the absence of a demonstrated impact. However, the most pertinent issue is that policymakers in charge of designing, implementing and monitoring youth-related policies, regardless of whether they focus mainly on employment or social aspects, should keep in mind the ultimate goal: an active, engaged, productive young person who can fulfil his or her life dreams and who can contribute, in many different ways, to family, community and society. It is only then that a coherent, coordinated approach can be said to have been successfully achieved.

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# Annex – Access to income support and other financial support

While this report has focused on employment-related initiatives and on broader approaches for the social inclusion of young people, it is important to highlight how measures to support young people economically can be important to ensure their social inclusion.

The access of young people to financial support when they are not in employment or are, for various reasons, outside the labour market, is of critical importance for their well-being, their future life opportunities, and their ability to re-enter the labour market. It has a major effect on whether they are able to continue in education or take up a training place but also how long they are able to look for a job given the costs involved. More generally, it may determine whether they can afford to move out of the parental home and live independently and, most importantly, to live above the poverty line.

This section maps the provision and access to financial income support in EU Member States. It also provides information on recent changes to income support systems caused mainly by the economic crisis.

The first part deals with the availability of income support for young people who are unemployed. This covers social insurance benefits (which are usually dependent on contributions having been paid over a given period) and social assistance (which is intended to provide a minimum level of income in the event of recipients not being eligible for benefits). It also covers any financial support that exists to help young people find a job or participate in training (which may be some distance away from where they live). The second part reviews information on special allowances to early school-leavers to help them return to education and acquire suitable qualifications. It discusses information on the recent policy changes with regard to access to income support and finally presents the views of the social partners.

## Income support

Income support for the unemployed takes one of two forms. On the one hand, it consists of unemployment insurance benefits. Eligibility for these benefits tends to depend on young people being part of the social insurance scheme and accumulating a minimum number of contributions – or being in employment for a certain amount of time – within a given period. The conditions for eligibility and the length of time over which benefits are payable vary across countries. On the other hand, income support takes the form of social assistance which in some countries is directly linked to being unemployed – in the sense of being out of work and actively looking for a job – and in others to being out of work and in need of support (in other words, it is part of a general social assistance or minimum income guarantee scheme). In both cases, schemes are non-contributory. The amount of support received is usually means-tested – normally at a household rather than an individual level. As in the case of unemployment insurance benefits, both the effective coverage rates of such schemes in respect of young people and the benefit amount also vary across countries depending on whether young people live with their parents.

The number of recipients of unemployment benefits among young people has increased along with the number of unemployed since the onset of the crisis, but the proportion of those registered as unemployed at Labour Offices in receipt of unemployment benefits declined in most countries between 2008 and 2013. In the latter year, therefore, only a fifth of those registered as unemployed in the EU (65.1%) were receiving benefits (13%). This low figure is particularly applicable to countries in which unemployment both increased most markedly and remained high, such as Ireland, Greece,

Portugal and Spain, where, in the latter two countries, less than a tenth of the young unemployed were in receipt of unemployment benefits in 2013 (5.0% and 6.4%, respectively). In Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland and Slovakia, the proportion of unemployed aged 15–24 receiving benefits was also below a tenth of those registered as unemployed in 2013 (in Italy, Latvia and Slovakia, below 5%). In stark contrast, around 60% of young people registered as unemployed in 2013 in Germany, Finland and Austria (2012 data) were in receipt of benefits. These figures give only a partial indication of the coverage rates of unemployment benefits as they reflect the share of those who receive unemployment benefits and are registered with the PES. However, and as discussed in the report, in several countries young people do not register with the PES, leading to an overestimation of the number of recipients of benefits in many countries. In fact, calculating the share of those receiving benefits as a share of all unemployed, regardless of their registration with the PES, it was found for example that in Bulgaria only 4.1% of young unemployed people received benefits and in Latvia just 1.6% – though this was still more than in Italy, where the figure was only 1.4% (Table A1). Indeed, there are 14 EU countries in total (of the 26 for which data are available) in which 7% or less of the unemployed in the age group were in receipt of unemployment benefits in 2013 and only six in which the proportion was over 20% (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and the UK).

**Table A1: Proportion of unemployed aged 15–24 registered with the PES and receiving benefits, 2008–2013**

	Percentage of unemployed registered			Percentage of unemployed receiving benefits		
	2008	2010	2013	2008	2010	2013
AT	69.4	46.4	40.1	40.7	30.0	24.7
BE	84.5	84.6	83.5	44.6	46.3	45.6
BG	29.9	32.1	32.2	3.5	3.8	4.1
CY	25.6	30.9	47.4	7.2	9.9	4.5
CZ	72.7	78.1	80.0	19.7	12.2	12.7
DE	89.9	78.1	99.6	54.3	48.2	61.6
DK	15.5	23.1	26.3	6.4	14.8	15.3
EE	18.7	37.5	35.6	7.3	16.8	14.2
EL	45.5	52.2	56.5	6.2	8.8	4.9
ES	59.0	70.1	72.6	12.4	13.0	6.4
FI	30.7	38.6	37.2	16.3	26.1	25.8
FR	60.9	70.9	71.0	15.8	24.0	21.4
HR	85.6	88.6	90.8	7.5	7.3	6.4
HU	64.0	67.5	59.8	27.8	27.9	16.8
IT	45.3	51.5	55.5	0.6	1.0	1.4
LT	23.0	71.7	68.0	8.9	16.9	19.6
LU	67.2	56.5	55.5	13.8	14.0	5.0
LV	22.7	41.5	27.5	7.3	8.6	1.6
MT	17.0	25.1	22.7	4.7	4.0	6.4
PL	57.2	61.4	65.9	5.7	5.6	3.8
PT	63.8	70.0	61.0	12.3	15.0	5.0
RO	13.6	28.4	27.1	6.3	14.6	14.6
SE	33.4	46.9	43.2	5.3	5.9	5.1

	Percentage of unemployed registered			Percentage of unemployed receiving benefits		
	2008	2010	2013	2008	2010	2013
SI	54.4	56.2	52.5	9.5	11.2	7.0
SK	75.0	86.2	90.4	2.9	4.1	2.5
UK	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	29.8	n.a.	34.6
EU28	58.4	63.1	65.1	17.9	17.4	13.0
NO	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	11.6	26.7	17.3

Note: The left side of the table shows the proportion of those recorded as being unemployed, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) standard definition, registered with public employment services; the right side shows the proportion of the unemployed defined in this way receiving benefits. No data for Ireland and the Netherlands. For the UK, no data are available for the registered unemployed. For Austria, the figures for 2013 relate to 2012.

In most countries, the same conditions of eligibility for unemployment benefits apply to all age groups. There are, however, some exceptions made for young people. For instance, in Belgium, the qualifying condition relates to the employment record over the previous 21 months rather than 42 months. Similarly, in Austria, the qualifying period relates to the previous 12 months for those under 25 rather than 24 months for those older than this, while in Slovenia fewer months of contributions are required for those under 30 (6 over the previous 24 months instead of 9). In Ireland, people beginning their first job are given pre-entry contribution credits to extend their insurance record, hence making it more likely that they qualify for unemployment benefits should they become unemployed. (These pre-entry credits are normally given to cover the period from the beginning of the tax year in which the person starts work up to the time they begin working, as well the previous two income tax years.)

To address the particularly harsh situation of young unemployed in a number of countries, financial support is available for the young unemployed who are unable to satisfy the normal eligibility conditions for receipt of benefits. In Denmark, those registered with the unemployment benefit fund for at least a year after finishing their education are entitled to receive around 82% of the maximum amount payable. In Greece, job-seekers aged 20–29 who have remained on the unemployment register for at least 12 months can claim a special allowance of around 20% of the regular unemployment insurance benefit for up to five months. In Luxembourg, after a waiting period of 26–39 weeks, young people without a prior employment record are entitled to an allowance of 40%–70% of the minimum wage. In Romania, after a waiting period of two months, school-leavers without a contributions record can receive an allowance of 50% of the value of the ‘reference social indicator’ (used to set social benefits) for a period of six months.

In addition to unemployment benefits, young people who are unemployed can in some countries receive financial support to help them look for a job or pursue a training course in another area, the main aim being to encourage mobility: this is the case in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Sweden and the UK.

### Relocation allowances in Austria

In Austria, according to data from the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, there were some 1,650 cases of the support being provided to people under 25 in 2012 (48% of the total), with the number of cases being around 60% higher than 10 years before. The overall budget for the relocation measure amounted to €3.1 million in 2012 and the average duration was 171 days, which implies an average amount paid to recipients of around €900 or just over €5 per day.



In a number of countries, income support is available to young people outside the unemployment benefit system either to help them participate in vocational training programmes, as in France, Lithuania and Slovakia, or to assist them to enter the labour market and to gain work experience, as for example, in Belgium.

### Support for training in France, Lithuania and Slovakia

In France, everyone who is unemployed is entitled to participate in training provided by the AFC (Action de formation conventionnée) and to support from the AREF (Allocation d'aide au retour à l'emploi formation) for the duration of the training. For young first-time job-seekers, €130.34 a month is payable to those under 18; €310.39 to those aged 18–20 and €339.35 to those aged 21–25. Young unemployed people can also apply for the RFF (*Rémunération de fin de formation*) of up to €652.02 a month.

In Lithuania, unemployed young people may be eligible for vocational training, which usually lasts 3–6 months, and to receive an education grant of 70% of the minimum wage for the period in which they participate. In Slovakia, graduates under the age of 26 who are unemployed and who participate in the 'Graduate Experience' programme (*Príspevok na vykonávanie absolventskej praxe*), which lasts for up to six months, receive a monthly benefit of 65% of the subsistence minimum.

### Support for labour market entry in Belgium

In Belgium, young people who are unemployed and have completed a 310-day integration programme after leaving secondary education become eligible for an integration allowance (*Allocations d'insertion professionnelle*), which varies from €314.34 a month to €817.36 a month according to age and family situation and which is payable for up to 36 months. Those living with their parents receive €266.50 a month if they are under 18 and €425.36 if they are older.

### Social assistance

Social assistance, in the sense of the general scheme of income support for those in need, is available to young people in nearly all countries. If they live with their parents, there is effectively no lower age limit as long as the income of the household concerned is below a minimum amount. If they live independently, in the majority of countries they need to be 18 or older in order to be eligible for support. In the UK, those in financial hardship may be able to receive support even if they are under 18.

In other countries (Finland, Hungary, Poland and Spain), the lower age limit is generally 25, though again support may be provided in exceptional circumstances to those younger than this. In France, guaranteed minimum income (*Revenu de solidarité active*) was extended to those aged under 25 in September 2010, though the conditions for eligibility are stricter than for those aged 25 and over. In particular, they must have worked for at least 3,214 hours (or two years of full-time employment) over the previous three years (or three and a half if on unemployment benefit or in training). In Luxembourg, social assistance is available for those under 25, but only if they are incapable of working, raising a child or taking care of someone with disabilities. In a number of countries too (such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland, Romania and Norway), students are not eligible for social assistance.

Access to social assistance is not straightforward everywhere. For instance, in the Netherlands, since 2012, there is a waiting period of four weeks before young people under 27 are entitled to receive assistance, the aim being to encourage young people to find employment.

Lower rates of assistance may also apply to younger people. For example, in the Netherlands, lower levels of assistance are paid to those aged between 18 and 20. In Denmark, those under 25 receive 48% of the standard rate of assistance if they have no children or live with their parents. In Slovenia, those under 26 receive 70% of the standard rate if they live in the parental home, while in Malta young people living at home are not eligible for social assistance at all. In Bulgaria, young people under 30 living with their parents are entitled to a monthly social assistance allowance as long as their income is less than three times the guaranteed minimum income.

According to the data (information is not available for 11 of the 28 EU countries), the number of young people receiving either unemployment assistance (which is specifically linked in countries where it exists to being out of work and actively seeking work) or social assistance increased between 2008 and 2010 in most countries as employment among young people declined markedly. This was the case both in absolute terms and relative to the population of young people. The latter is a more relevant indicator since the population aged 15–24 in the EU declined by 7% between 2008 and 2013 and by much more in some countries – by close to 20% in Estonia, over 20% in Bulgaria and around 30% in Latvia. In Estonia, for instance, the proportion of young recipients of social assistance relative to population increased from less than 3% to 8% between 2008 and 2010, which is in line with the rate of unemployment which rose from 4% to just under 11% over these two years. The proportion of recipients of social assistance then declined to under 5% between 2010 and 2013 while unemployment fell to just over 7% of the population in the age group.

In several countries, however, the number of recipients of social assistance declined after 2010 or remained much the same despite the continued rise in unemployment among young people. In the Netherlands, the proportion of young people (under 27 in this case) receiving social assistance increased from 1.2% of the population in 2008 to 1.9% in 2010, which is broadly in line with the increase in unemployment from just under 4% of the population to 6%, but social assistance recipients then declined to 1.7% in 2013 despite unemployment continuing to rise to almost 8% of the population in 2013.

Even more markedly, in Portugal, while the number of recipients of social assistance aged under 25 also rose between 2008 and 2010 as unemployment increased, it declined between then and 2012 when the proportion of unemployed increased from just over 8% of the age group to just over 14%, implying a substantial reduction in the proportion of the unemployed receiving assistance. A similar picture is evident for Slovenia, where between 2010 and 2012, the proportion of recipients of assistance fell from around 6% of the population aged 15–24 to only around 4%, while the rate of unemployment rose from just under 6% of the population to just over 7%.

In Malta, nevertheless, the data suggest a significant increase in the number of recipients of social assistance relative to the population of young people over the period, even though the proportion concerned remained small, which could reflect the low number of young people living independently from their parents (one of the smallest proportions in the EU). Between 2010 and 2013, therefore, the rate of young people receiving assistance rose from 0.6% of the population aged 15–24 to 1.6% while the rate of unemployment, again relative to population, was much the same in the two years.

### **Financial support to help early school-leavers return to education**

In most countries, there is no specific financial support available to help early school-leavers return to education unless they are unemployed, in which case they may receive training. There are, however, special programmes available in some countries. This is the case, in particular, in the Czech

Republic, Finland and Hungary. It is also the case in Latvia, where training vouchers provided to the unemployed can be used for this purpose.

In a number of other countries too, financial support coupled with the provision of training is available to help young people who have left school early to complete their education. In Poland, scholarships are available to support young people who are unemployed and have no vocational qualifications to participate in post-primary or post-secondary education (over 8,000 took up such scholarships in 2013). In Germany, income support in the form of a training allowance, as well as career guidance (*Berufsvorbereitende Maßnahmen, BvB*), is available for early school-leavers under 25 who have not succeeded in securing an apprenticeship or vocational training position, to help them to obtain a certificate of secondary education. In 2012, just under 81,000 were enrolled in the programme, significantly less than in 2008 when just under 108,600 were enrolled – a decline of 25% over these five years. This is largely explained by a reduction of almost 20% in the number of early school-leavers.

In Ireland, young early school-leavers are eligible for support from the Youthreach programme, which is targeted at those aged 15–20 with no qualifications. Participants receive an allowance which varies according to their age, as well as help with travel costs where relevant. In Slovenia, young people aged 15–25 who left school without adequate qualifications and are not in employment can participate in the Project Learning for Young Adults (PUM) programme. This lasts for one year and if participants are registered at the Employment Service, they are entitled to €1.10 for every hour they spend on the programme plus reimbursement of travel costs. The programme is relatively small in terms of both budget (€1.1 million a year) and participants (just 4,000 over the 13 years it has been in existence – around 0.1% of the age group), though it is also the case that the relative number of school drop-outs in Slovenia is among the smallest in the EU.

In France, several programmes exist to help early school-leavers return to education. There are second-chance schools which provide tuition for between nine months and a year to young people aged 18–25 with no qualifications who left the education system at least one year previously (these schools were described earlier in this report). Monthly income support from the region in which they live is available to the people concerned. In 2013, the number of enrolments totalled around 14,225 – three times the number in 2008 (4,737). Alternatively, training is provided under the ‘Contrat d’insertion dans la vie sociale’ (CIVIS) scheme to those aged 16–25 without qualifications who have been unemployed for at least 12 of the previous 18 months and who, accordingly, face difficulty in integrating into society. Of this group, those aged 18 can receive an allowance of €1,800 a year if they are not in receipt of any other income (including from the social security system). In addition, young people aged 18–25 without qualifications can receive basic education and vocational training under the ‘Etablissement public d’insertion de la défense’ (EPIDE) scheme, partly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, along with a one-off supplement (of €201) on top of their social benefits.

In Spain, there is no financial support available at national level to help early school-leavers attain qualifications but there is some support at regional level, although very limited and in the form of a one-off payment rather than income. In April 2013, therefore, the government of the Extremadura region, one of the poorest in the country and with a high rate of school drop-outs, allocated €3.9 million to a programme to help those aged 18–25 years who are unemployed and who left school early to complete their lower secondary education (that is, their compulsory schooling rather than an upper secondary programme as in the case of the schemes described for the countries listed above).

In addition to the 35 weeks of tuition provided, those successfully completing the programme receive a grant of €100.

In Sweden, young people who have failed to obtain a qualification are able to enter adult schools (Komvux) run by municipalities. Although conditions for entering these vary, most municipalities provide an opportunity for acquiring the basic qualifications needed to enter university, while others also enable them to obtain the qualifications for particular education programmes. Entry is free of charge and those over 20 can apply for student grants, of around €1,120 a month for full-time study. They can also study part time. In 2012, there were 189,567 students in these schools (around three times the number of people classed as early school-leavers), slightly more than in 2008 (176,698).

### Recent changes

In a number of countries there have been changes to the access criteria and the support amounts of different programmes. In some countries, these were tightened, shortened or the support amounts lowered, and in another group of countries the changes were made with the aim of increasing the number of young people who were eligible to make use of the programmes.

In Ireland, the rates of benefits for young people were reduced in successive budgets after the onset of the crisis in 2008, the perception being that their level acted as a disincentive for young people to take up employment or to remain in work. The rate of Jobseekers Allowance paid to new claimants under the age of 20 was more than halved in 2009, from €204 to €100 a week. By January 2014, the maximum allowance for those aged 20–24 had been cut to €100 a week if they had no children, while the maximum for those aged 25 had been reduced to €144 a week and for those aged 26 and over to €188 a week.

In Denmark, social assistance was withdrawn from January 2014 from all young people aged under 30 without a minimum level of educational qualifications and replaced by an education grant of lower value. The grant amounted to around €340 a month for those living with their parents and €785 for those living independently.

In the Netherlands, a waiting period of four weeks to access social assistance was introduced in 2012 for young people under 27, the effect apparently being to reduce the number of recipients.

In Greece, unemployment insurance was extended for the first time to the self-employed in 2013. In addition, young people became eligible for unemployment assistance (payable to those not qualifying for insurance benefits or who have exhausted their entitlement to benefits), as the minimum age of those entitled to claim support was reduced from 45 to 20. At the same time, although the level of assistance remained unchanged, qualifying conditions were eased further by increasing the maximum level of income (from €5,000 to €10,000 a year) which families could earn while still being eligible for assistance.

In Austria, the period for which contributions need to be paid to qualify for unemployment benefits was abolished for those under 25. In Slovenia, labour market reforms introduced in 2013 eased conditions for entitlement to unemployment benefits for those under 30 and raised benefit rates (from 70% to 80% of reference earnings for the first three months of receipt).

In France, access to RSA (*Revenu de Solidarité*), the minimum income guarantee scheme, was extended to those under 25 (but at least age 18) in December 2009, though the number of young

people eligible was limited by the fact that in order to qualify they had to have worked for at least 3,214 hours, or around two years on a full-time basis.<sup>36</sup>

In Sweden, a more substantive change in 2013 was the extension of relocation benefits to those aged 20–24 for a trial period of three years to provide support for those moving to another area to work. However, in order to qualify, the young people concerned have to be employed for at least 15 months (for those aged 25 and older, the minimum qualifying period is 6 months). The support payable, however, had been reduced earlier (in 2011).

### View of the social partners

The income support provided by the state to young people has not up to now been a major concern for social partners in most countries. Their main focus in public statements has been on the large number of young people out of work and the need for employment growth to create jobs for them. However, there are a few countries in which trade unions have voiced their concerns about the level of assistance given to those out of work, though in most cases to everyone rather than to young people specifically. Sweden is an exception, in that the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) has raised concerns about the level of protection afforded to young people in particular as a result of the changes made to the unemployment insurance scheme over recent years, which has made it more expensive and harder for young people to qualify for coverage. On the employers' side, while the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises (Svenskt Näringsliv) has acknowledged that many of the young unemployed are not covered by unemployment insurance, it has advocated a private solution rather than an extension of the public system.

In Bulgaria, too, the social partners, in this case together with representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) serving on the Economic and Social Council, have called for legislative changes to ensure more security for young unemployed people.<sup>37</sup> Among the measures suggested are making them eligible for social assistance if they have not succeeded in finding a job after four months of leaving the education system and giving those not employed on standard full-time contracts (such as seasonal workers or part-time employees) access to unemployment benefits.

In France, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) has called for the adoption of a minimum income for young people from the age of 18 to facilitate their ability to take up training or a first job. In Poland, unions have campaigned for an increase in financial support for young people, including through raising unemployment benefits, and a comprehensive policy to improve their economic and social situation, such as by limiting the use of non-standard employment contracts which give rise to a high level of job insecurity. The employers' organisations, on the other hand, have emphasised the need to improve education, especially vocational education, and to ensure that it is more in line with the demand for skills in the labour market.

In the UK, trade unions have been highly critical of cuts to benefits and to the provision of training for young people. They have expressed concern not only about the effect on financial support for young people, including as a result of the cut in Education Maintenance Allowances as well as benefits, but also about the damaging consequences of a significant reduction in funding for training opportunities for young people.

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<sup>36</sup> Some 160,000 people aged 18–25 were expected to be eligible to receive the support initially, a lot fewer than those without work in the age group as those who had worked part time when studying typically failed to qualify. Indeed, the motivation behind setting the qualifying period was precisely to avoid the measure becoming a means of income support for students.

<sup>37</sup> Economic and Social Council Resolution 'Actions in support of young people and tackling youth unemployment in Bulgaria' published in 2013.



In Latvia, the Free Trade Union Confederation (LBAS) has made several representations to government regarding the inadequacy of income support for the unemployed and low-paid workers, as well as about the employment difficulties faced by young people, who, it has pointed out, have been particularly hit by unemployment and, at the same time, have the lowest level of benefits. The Employers' Confederation (LDDK), like the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the UK, has stressed the need for young people to have access to income support for studying and have called for an improvement in the study credit system, as well as an increase in deductions from income tax for those bearing the costs of education. (At present, the maximum deduction from tax is €213 a year while education costs can amount to thousands of euros.)

## Conclusions

The extent to which such support is available to young people is a complex issue and challenging to report on due to the incomplete and inadequate nature of the data in most countries. While data might exist for the overall expenditure on the different forms of income support and for the total number in receipt of assistance, they are much less likely to be available for the payments to young people and the number of young people involved. This makes it hard to assess both the coverage of the various benefits and other forms of social assistance intended to provide support to young people in the event of them not being in work and, therefore, not having earnings from employment to rely on, and the amounts received by the people concerned. Although information is available on the conditions governing entitlement to support and on the levels of benefit payable, there is a lack of information on the number of young people who are able to comply with these conditions, the extent to which they are applied in practice and the actual levels of benefit paid.

Equally, the information which is available is not necessarily defined in the same terms or has the same coverage in the different countries, which makes it difficult to compare the situation across Europe. Where there are data, they often exist only for one or two years, making it hard to assess changes over time. Accordingly, it is not at all clear in many cases whether the support provided has increased or diminished over the crisis period, and even less the extent to which either has occurred.

Nevertheless, there are sufficient data available to indicate that in many countries, if not most, the availability of income support from governments is limited. There do not appear to be many instances either of where the support provided has been increased over the crisis period as the need for it has risen. Young people, therefore, seem to have been doubly disadvantaged by the crisis – by the lack of jobs, and increased vulnerability as a result of a long spell of unemployment, and by limited access to income support.

This stems in large measure from the nature of the social security system in European countries which is based predominantly on insurance principles, under which entitlement to benefit is conditional on the prior payment of social contributions and, accordingly, to being in employment for a minimum period of time before qualifying for benefits. It is this condition, rather than any specific regulation restricting their access to benefits, which tends to disadvantage young people who are out of work as compared with their older counterparts. However, this is coupled in many cases with the amount of benefit payable and/or the duration of payment being less for young than for older people.





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*Since the onset of the economic crisis, the unemployment level among young people has risen sharply and although an improvement is now being registered some EU countries still have stubbornly high youth unemployment rates. Young people, especially those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), are now the group at highest risk of social exclusion, with severe consequences not only for the individuals concerned but for the economy and society as a whole. Through its Youth Strategy 2010–2018, the EU has adopted a comprehensive and holistic approach to the social inclusion of young people. While the Youth Guarantee (which guarantees young people a work or training placement) seeks to intervene quickly and help young people back into the labour market, there are many other policies and measures at EU, Member State and regional level promoting the social inclusion of young people. This report discusses the first year of implementation of the Youth Guarantee and draws on case study findings showcasing successful initiatives aimed at preventing the social exclusion of young people in the EU.*

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