



## How is Youth Guarantee (not) working in Italy?

Interview to

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**Tag:** #YouthGuarantee #Italy #LabourMarket

**On twitter you stated that Youth Guarantee is not working in Italy. Why? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Youth Guarantee according to you?**

Youth Guarantee still represents an opportunity to review the future of work in Italy. There are many issues that affect the successful implementation of the plan: inadequate employment services, certain cultural resistance to apprenticeship, the inability to create synergies between the different actors of the labor market and training. Six months have passed by since the formal implementation of the plan, but Youth Guarantee does not seem to work: regional administrations face delays, employers are not involved in the plan and they are frequently wary of the complex activation procedures, with young people who are waiting for solutions that are yet to be provided. For the time being, the only thing that has been created in relation to Youth Guarantee is a badly structured website, where employment and training opportunities are listed in 500 pages without any logic. This tool is useless and does not promote the matching of labour supply and demand.

Moreover, for what concern weaknesses, I would highlight a huge problem. For the past five days on Youth Guarantee Italian web portal, offers has been published for student: “We are looking for graduate student working as a loader or porter.”

But Youth Guarantee hasn't been created for this purpose. As far as I think, probably the lack of adequate offers is one of the main causes for what the programme doesn't work as well as it should do. Meanwhile offers published for student have no sense because Youth Guarantee policy is direct to young people called NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

**What is the youth unemployment rate of Italy at this moment? How many young people has the Youth Guarantee helped?**

Undoubtedly, young people are those that has been affected the most by the current employment crisis. The unemployment rate among young Italians reached a new record high in August 2014 (44.2%), while the employment levels continue to decrease. Most worryingly, the number of NEETs – people in the 15 to 24 age group who do not work nor study – has been estimated at 1.27 million (including 181 thousand foreign citizens) that is 21% of people in this age cohort. This percentage rises to 30% in the Southern regions (Campania, Calabria and Sicily). As of 3 October 2014, only 223,729 people were registered with the Youth Guarantee website; 49,597 were contacted by the employment services for a first interview, but no information is available on how the story ends. The monitoring system does not allow us to collect information on the results

achieved, which makes it impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative and devise possible corrective measures.

### **How is the Youth Guarantee compatible with the youth (un)employment policy in Italy?**

Legislative Decree No. 81 of 21 April 2000 (the actual version following a number of amendments) already makes provisions for “the proposal to take part in initiatives concerning inclusion/training/professional requalification/any other measure favouring professional integration”, targeting young people (up to 25 years old, or 29 years old if holding university qualifications) within four months from entering the status of unemployed. For those who are registered with the employment services (Legislative Decree N. 181), The “Youth Guarantee” plan is already contained in national legislation since 2002 (the year of enforcement of this provision). The aspect which is not yet regulated concerns those who are not part of formal education nor are registered with the employment services. While “essential levels of performance”, at least for some beneficiaries, are already provided, this piece of legislation is not fully implemented and there is no standardized system to monitor these services and evaluate their effectiveness. As for the involvement of young people exiting formal education, there is also a need to make the most of this system as a “starting point” for information and guidance. For the reasons described above, the implementation of the Guarantee constitutes both a challenge and an opportunity to assess a more effective system for taking charge of and analyzing the needs of applicants, encouraging their active participation on the basis of a *mutual obligation*.

### **To be more successful. Does the age limit of the Youth Guarantee need to be increased?**

In Italy, the age limit has already been risen to 29 years old. I think that this is a good move, in consideration of the national context. Yet we need to work harder to decrease the skills mismatch and promote an adequate school-to-work among young people.

### **How can the EC make sure that the Youth Guarantee isn't only a tool to make young people disappear from unemployment statistics?**

The EC must demand a real commitment to the “youth unemployment” problem. We need to implement Youth Guarantee especially in terms of funding. The reference to ‘quality’ employment was a major concern of the European plan urged by László Andor, EU Social Affairs Commissioner. It ensures that young people are offered genuine opportunities, especially their transition towards apprenticeships. Of course we need to take action to tackle youth unemployment but the EU cannot just create jobs or apprenticeships. National governments need to do all they can to promote youth employment. If governments believe a Youth Guarantee plan will work for them then they should implement it at national level but this should not be another one-size-fits-all initiative to be implemented at the European level. Rather than focusing on theoretical assumptions, perhaps the Commission should consider measures to tackle the red tape characterizing the employment procedures and initiatives to benefit employers. The best way to help young people to get into employment is a flexible labour market. Unfortunately, the provisions laid down by the EU has made employing people increasingly cumbersome and costly for businesses, forcing young people out of the labour market.

### **What would realistic funding from the EU for Youth Guarantee look like? Is Europe failing to ensure that the youth guarantee is implemented?**

Tackling youth employment means focusing on young people. Throughout Europe, only Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Denmark and Holland offer apprenticeships based on the dual model, that is a combination of apprenticeships and public vocational education. Most Western European and Mediterranean countries are only aware of full-time education. At the height of the economic downturn in autumn 2009, the five countries previously mentioned offering vocational education and training reported an average unemployment rate of 8 percent, whilst that of Switzerland was at 5.5 percent. Conversely, ten comparable Western Europe and Mediterranean countries reported an average youth unemployment rate of 25 percent, almost three times that of the foregoing countries. The youth unemployment rate is the best indicator to assess whether the education and training system is suitable for helping people access the labour market. There is no doubt that vocational education and training is more appropriate than full-time educational programmes. In countries where apprenticeships are not implemented, those possessing practical skills but also deficiencies in some subjects run the risk of being left behind.