

3 YEARS OF YOUTH GUARANTEE: WHAT NEXT?

A FOLLOW-UP REPORT
BY THE ETUC YOUTH COMMITTEE



**The ETUC Youth Committee represents
the young European generations in working life issues.**

It is a statutory body of the European Trade Union Confederation and is composed of one representative nominated by each national trade union confederation affiliated to the ETUC (90) from 39 Countries and the European Trade Union Federations (10).

It is steered by a bureau of 5 elected members, 2 Vice-Presidents, a President and by an ETUC coordinator. Its objective is to make the voice of young European workers and unemployed heard inside the trade union movement and wider in the society (policy makers at EU, national and local level, employers organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders).

This report was written by Salvatore Marra under the supervision of Thiébaud Weber, (ETUC Confederal Secretary), Ignacio Doreste (ETUC Advisor) and Kurt Vandaele (ETUI). The author thanks all trade union representatives who took part in the survey and Eleonora Cavazzoni for her collaboration in the realization of this follow up report. Usual disclaimer applies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Background information the Youth Guarantee	4
3. Main findings of the research “The Youth Guarantee in Europe” by the ETUC Youth Committee (2014)	6
4. The Youth Guarantee in the present policy framework of the EU	7
1. the YG and the Future of Europe	8
2. the YG and the European Pillar of Social Rights	8
3. the YG and the Skills Guarantee	9
4. the YG in the framework of the EU Semester and EU employment policies	10
5. Youth employment, unemployment and NEETs in Europe	11
6. An overview of the survey results	12
7. Recommendations	15
Annexes	16

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Youth Guarantee (YG) is, at the moment of writing this follow-up report, high in the agenda of the European institutions. Indeed, important decisions are being taken regarding the future of the measure, its future funding and further implementation.

The ETUC pushed EU institutions for the launch of the Youth Guarantee and welcomed its implementation. The establishment of such a guarantee in Europe was advocated by the ETUC and the ETUC Youth Committee as early as 2009 in its call "Towards a new social deal in Europe: Fight the crisis, put people first".

According to the ETUC Youth Committee members - who took part in the survey on which this analysis is based - the YG represents a good opportunity, in particular for some countries, to rethink and reorganise active labour market policies targeting young people. Further, its design and implementation can also help identify the linkages between the labour market and education systems. Such good intentions have nevertheless been highly challenged by the lack of proper and/or sufficient involvement of all stakeholders and other factors that have been analysed in the survey.

This report is composed of six parts: after a short introduction to the Youth Guarantee, the second part summarises the main findings of the research "The Youth Guarantee in Europe" by the ETUC Youth Committee, carried out already in 2014. The third part presents the Youth Guarantee in the present policy framework of the EU, trying to outline the connections with the present debate on the future of Europe, the establishment of a European Pillar of Social Rights, the proposal for a Skills Guarantee and the connections with the European Semester process. The fifth part presents the results of the survey conducted among the members of the ETUC Youth Committee. The conclusions propose some recommendations on the future developments of the YG and point out some potential obstacles that might be addressed in the future.

The main findings of this report are that:

- ▶ The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans are mainly built on existing national measures. This has resulted in a variety of approaches and designs of Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans (YGIPs).
- ▶ Public Employment Services (PES) played an important role in the implementation process of the YG measures and in some cases the cooperation among partners delivering the measure and active labour market policies to young people has increased.
- ▶ On the involvement of social partners (trade unions and employers' representatives) - despite being clearly mentioned in the Council Recommendation - only in very few countries trade unions have reported that they were satisfied with their

role in the design of the YG. Very often their involvement was partial and sporadic.

- ▶ National and or regional level monitoring bodies for the implementation of the YG have been set up in almost all countries, but their functioning is questionable; in some cases, unions are not part of them.
- ▶ In several countries it is still not clear how the YG will be monitored and assessed. The role and the involvement of trade unions is far from being clearly stated, and the satisfaction of youth has been assessed only in very few occasions.
- ▶ Most of the respondents express concern about the quality of the measures delivered by the YG and the lack of monitoring of it: particular worry has been expressed about the misuse of internships and the lack of attention to quality jobs and apprenticeships.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

What is the Youth Guarantee?

European institutions define it as a measure 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.”

EU countries endorsed the principle of the Youth Guarantee in April 2013. Some member states have extended the principle for example the increase of age, extension of the measures, etcetera.

The establishment of such a guarantee in Europe was advocated by the ETUC and the ETUC Youth Committee as early as 2009 in its call “Towards a new social deal in Europe: Fight the crisis, put people first” against the backdrop of already increasing inequality and unfair labour market conditions for young people.

One of the first responses to the youth unemployment crisis launched by the European Commission was the “flagship initiative” on youth named “Youth on the move”, included in the Europe 2020 strategy.

“Youth on the move” was launched in 2010 and already included measures like the initiative “Your First Eures Job” and paved the way for upcoming policy packages such as the Youth Opportunities

Initiative (2011) and the Youth Employment Package (2012). The first one put forward a set of measures to boost youth employment by preventing early school-leaving, developing skills, and measures aimed at offering concrete proposals for the (re)activation of young NEETs. The Youth Employment Package comprised a range of different measures – some of them clearly inspired by ETUC demands, like the Youth Guarantee or the Quality Framework for Traineeships - or projects initiated by European social partners like the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA).

The Council of the European Union adopted on April 2013 a Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee which was followed by an endorsement at the June 2013 European Council, and a financial mechanism of €6bn was made available for regions at NUTS 2 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) level suffering youth unemployment rates above 25% in 2012. This dedicated budget line came on top of the European Social Fund, which continued providing support for every member state in fostering youth employment initiatives also including the Youth Guarantee.

President Juncker stated, in his State of the Union speech of September 2016, his commitment to continue supporting the implementation of the Youth Guarantee through the Youth Employment Initiative. On September 14, the European Commission in its “Mid-term review/revision of the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020: An EU budget focused on results” committed to allocate €1 billion to the YEI, an amount which is to be matched by €1 billion from the European Social Fund for the period 2017 - 2020. The EC



envisages that this new funding will make it possible to support around 1 million more young people in those EU regions most affected by youth unemployment.

However, it should be taken into consideration that at present only two thirds of the € 6.4bn allocated to the YEI in 2013 were actually used by those countries which were eligible. Unused YEI budget, as it is provided to other ESF instruments, runs the risk of being diverted to other budgetary lines.

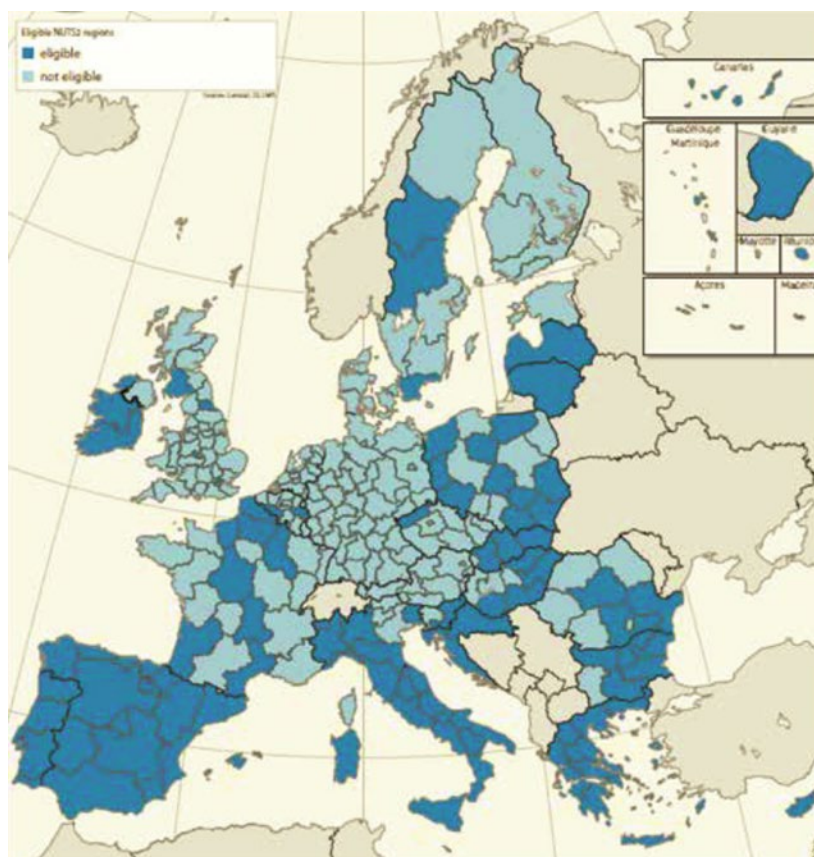
Taking into consideration the precarious situation of young people in the European labour market and their rocketing inactive and unemployment rates, especially in Southern and Central-Eastern European countries, it is unacceptable that national governments are not making use of the resources available for fighting this. Also, this proposed additional funding and the previous one is far

from reaching the amount which is calculated by the International Labour Organisation for an effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Europe (€ 21bn per year). The cost of not acting has been estimated to be over € 150 billion per year (1.2% of European GDP, Eurofound 2015).

At the moment of writing this report, crucial decisions are being discussed about the future of the Youth Guarantee, and its potential to be an effective measure to fight against youth unemployment is being questioned.

With this follow-up report, the ETUC Youth Committee aims to analyse the opinion of the trade unions on the Youth Guarantee at this stage of its implementation in order to provide policy markers and stakeholders with recommendations from a trade union perspective.

European Regions eligible for YEI funding: source EC



3. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH “THE YOUTH GUARANTEE IN EUROPE” BY THE ETUC YOUTH COMMITTEE (2014)¹

In 2014 the ETUC Youth Committee already published research investigating the first implementation phase of the youth guarantee, and the publication “The Youth Guarantee in Europe” was published and widely disseminated.

In 2014 most of the concerned countries had established a national Youth Guarantee either by drafting a national implementation plan or, at least, clearly stating their intention to follow the European blueprint. This was positive news of course, but at the same time the first challenges were already clear.

From the start, the Youth Guarantee represented, in the eyes of most stakeholders, a good opportunity, in particular for some countries, to rethink and reorganize active labour market policies targeting young people and to help identify the linkages between the labour market, education and the welfare systems that need to be improved in order to ensure smoother transitions into the labour market.

Based on the results of a survey carried out among the members of the ETUC Youth Committee concerning their involvement in the development of YG schemes and the analysis of the national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans available until June 2014, the main findings were that:

- ▶ The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans (YGIPs) are mainly built on existing national and regional measures and institutions.
- ▶ A strong reliance on EU funds with no national short/medium term support and lacking resources in the long run might reduce the sustainability and coherence of the programmes and interventions funded.
- ▶ The availability of funding is a necessary but not sufficient condition for an effective implementation of the YGIPs.
- ▶ The involvement of social partners in the Youth Guarantee is clearly mentioned in the Council Recommendation. However, only in very few countries did trade unions report that they were satisfied with their role in the design of the YG.
- ▶ Unclear process in terms of monitoring and assessment of the YG.
- ▶ Uncertainty about the level of involvement of Public Employment Services (PES) and their ability to meet the challenge posed by an effective implementation of the measure. Need to strongly link the YG and other measures concerning young NEETs and unemployed to education, youth, and welfare policies as well as to the bigger macro-economic context.

While it was still premature to assess the completeness and the potential success of the YG at that time, we could say that most of the concerns that emerged from the report in 2014 are still relevant today and that the response of policy makers to these concerns has unfortunately overall been lacking or inadequate.

Since the measure was announced by the European Union, the ETUC and its Youth Committee have been engaged in a series of actions at EU, national, interregional and local level often in cooperation with NGOs and notably with the European Youth Forum (YFJ)² and National Youth Councils to advocate for this opportunity not to be missed. A series of recommendations have been drafted and submitted to all policy-makers in order to raise awareness about the potential of the measure and to implement some changes to it that could have positively impacted on the outcomes and well being of young people.

¹ Bussi, M. “The Youth Guarantee in Europe”. ETUI, Brussels. 2014

² See <http://www.youthforum.org/policypaper/youth-organisations-and-the-youth-guarantee-in-europe/>

4. THE YOUTH GUARANTEE IN THE PRESENT POLICY FRAMEWORK OF THE EU

Youth unemployment and precariousness are still at unacceptable levels in Europe. Unemployment rates for young people in Europe were already significantly higher (if not double) than those of the total workforce before the crisis, however the situation skyrocketed once the world economy collapsed and the European governments and institutions opted for facing the situation by austerity policies.

Statistics show a recent modest decrease of youth unemployment at European level, with significant divergences between European countries and regions. In July 2016 the unemployment rate of young people under 25 was 21,1% in the eurozone and 18,8% in the EU28.

At the same time, these figures tell nothing about under-employment, young people working involuntarily in part-time jobs, poor quality jobs among youth or young people that gave up looking for a job.

A glance at subgroups shows that young women and migrant workers have been even more badly hit by unemployment and the degradation of the labour market. The inactive population, long-term youth unemployed and young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) increased.

When it comes to analysing the quality of the jobs available for young people, underemployment is growing, considered as involuntary part-time and fixed term work or working below the qualification levels of the workers. Many youngsters are in precarious jobs: zero-hour contracts, bogus self-employment and undeclared work are becoming the negative features of the labour market for European youth. When it comes to wages, young people are overrepresented among workers earning a minimum wage or even below minimum wages, because of special arrangements mainly targeting young people. Young people have been particularly affected in those countries where a decision has been taken to cut or to freeze these wages. Behind quantitative figures that show a relative decrease of unemployment, precariousness is taking a toll among young people.

Improving the labour market opportunities for young people has been high on the ETUC agenda for many years. The need to boost quality jobs for young people is included in the Congress resolutions of Paris and the ETUC plan for investment "A New path for Europe"³.

In July 2013 the European social partners adopted the Framework of Actions on Youth Employment, and the ETUC and its national affiliates are working now in the third year of follow-up of this

agreement. The ETUC is currently undertaking negotiations towards a framework agreement on inter-generational solidarity and active ageing. With this agreement social partners seek to agree concrete proposals to facilitate the access of young people into the labour market in an inter-generational perspective.

The ETUC Youth Committee has been defending quality measures for young workers in Europe, denouncing the precarious working conditions for young people, and identifying and sharing best practices in organizing and representing young workers.

Organising young workers today, when the labour market is more and more fragmented, is a key task for trade unions. It is important to share knowledge among unions at EU-level and even globally in order to promote through capacity building an idea of unions that are open to the contribution and active participation of youth and that fully represent their needs.

The ETUC proposal for a Youth Guarantee calls for a strong partnership approach, where social partners, youth organisations, schools and training institutions, private employment providers and third sector organisations, are involved in the design, implementation, delivering and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee.

Concerning the effective mobilisation of the EU dedicated funds for the Youth Guarantee, the European Commission made public in December 2015 that only 2/3 of the allocated budget had been used by member states. Taking into consideration the precarious situation of young people in the European labour market, the inactivity and unemployment rates of younger generations, especially in Southern and Eastern European countries, the ETUC finds unacceptable that some national governments are not making use of the resources available.

The Commission decided to prolong and to extend the funding for this initiative after an assessment of the Member States' reports on the implementation and impact of the Youth Employment Initiative. On 5 July 2015 a group of youth organisations⁴, including the ETUC Youth Committee, demanded a continued investment in the YG through extending the Youth Employment Initiative. Substantial funding, as well as simplifying access to YEI and ESF, is needed to ensure quality offers and real long-term impact of the Youth Guarantee schemes, as it was stated when the measure was introduced in 2013.

³ <http://www.etuc.org/a/11715>

⁴ https://www.etuc.org/documents/joint-statement-youth-guarantee-lets-live-our-ambitions#.V_UgS7Pf_IY

On 4 October 2016 Commissioner Thyssen stated that the YEI and YG will be prolonged and have an extended funding of € 2 billion for the period of 2017-2020. With the ILO benchmark of € 21 billion per year, these proposed funds do not match the good intentions.

The Commission will decide whether or not to extend the funding for this initiative into 2016 based on the member states' reports on the implementation and impact of the Youth Employment Initiative, which are both due for submission at the end of this year. Due to the lack of mobilisation of member states, the budget allocated to the Youth Employment Initiative (that covers the Youth Guarantee) is threatened and risks being put into question in the debate on the midterm review of the multi-annual financial framework (MFF) for the EU.

The Youth Guarantee can be an effective measure only if it is assessed in the long run and as a structural reform aimed at improving the quality of the transitions of youth in the labour market. It is essential therefore that the YG is integrated in the overall policy frameworks that are being discussed at the moment by European institutions, notably the Future of Europe, the European Semester, the New Skills Agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

4.1 THE YG AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

The Brexit referendum, the ongoing immigration crisis, and the scarring effects of the economic downturn have significantly decreased the trust of workers and citizens towards the European Union and EU institutions in general. Despite the Brexit referendum demonstrating that young people were more inclined to defend the European project and vote in favour of the remain option, it must be noted that youth is not a homogenous groups and that there are significant divergences if we take into account social background, regional origin, race and other factors.

The ETUC, in the context of the wider debate about the future of Europe, is proposing a Platform for the Future of Europe in order to reshape and relaunch the EU project pledging different policies and a better involvement of citizens and workers and of the organisations representing them.

In this context the role of young people and their voice is crucial because the debate about the future of Europe deeply concerns those who will be living on the continent in the next decades. Wrong decisions taken now by policy-makers can potentially have a very strong impact on the quality of life of those citizens and on the levels of democratic participation. The austerity-led policies and the deregulatory agenda that made the working conditions of young people more and more precarious have indirectly impacted on the levels of trust and belonging to the European Union.

The ETUC is asking for an upward convergence in terms of living and working standards between and within countries, less inequality and more economic and social cohesion. Better living standards

for people have to be designed and stronger policies put in place to achieve them.

One of these being potentially the European Youth Guarantee. The ETUC asks for action in three areas: economic governance, social policies and reform of the EU institutions.

In the field of social policies the promotion of quality of work is one of the key demands. It is essential that frameworks are set for the protection and inclusion of the so-called "disadvantaged groups", among them young people. Securing the transition of young people by establishing a Youth Guarantee that meets the demands of the ETUC could be an instrument to achieve this goal.

4.2 THE YG AND THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS (EPSR)

The idea of adopting a European Pillar of Social Rights was launched by President Juncker in his State of the Union discourse in 2015 and was favourably welcomed by a number of social stakeholders including the European trade union movement. President Juncker affirmed the Pillar should take account "of the changing realities of the world of work and serve as a compass for the renewed convergence within the euro area". The idea is to start with the countries in the euro area and extend it optionally to the rest of the EU.

On 8 March 2016, the European Commission put forward a first draft of what should become the European Pillar of Social Rights. In this first outline a number of essential principles common to euro area Member States, with a focus on employment and social policies, was published in an annexed document to the Communication of the Commission.

The Commission is presently consulting with EU authorities, social partners, civil society and citizens on the content and role of the Pillar. A first consultation of the Commission with social partners, including the ETUC has taken place in June and a second one in October 2016.

According to the Commission, "the Pillar should build on, and complement, our EU social "acquis" in order to guide policies in a number of fields essential for well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. The principles proposed do not replace existing rights, but offer a way to assess and, in the future, approximate for the better the performance of national employment and social policies."

Nevertheless, notwithstanding that in principle the ETUC backs such intention, several doubts arose about the process, the outline and the consultation process with social partners.

The ETUC in the last few months has been adopting its own position outlining what should be the priorities and the objectives of the

EPSR. According to the ETUC, the priorities of the Pillar should include:

1. A fairer economy for quality job creation
2. A pay rise for fairness at work and economic justice
3. Improved enforcement of existing rights and establishing new rights
4. Fair mobility
5. Secure labour market transitions
6. Social protections and strong public services
7. Institutional change to ensure equal emphasis on promoting Social Europe

It is clear that in the Social Pillar there is a focus on transitions, recognising that this could be one of the areas to establish a set of common rights for all young people in the eurozone and beyond.

While on the one hand, the Commission pushed for re-opening the “flexicurity” agenda, on the other it is to be noted that there was a shift in the language, moving to “more secure” labour market transitions.

In its draft report on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament calls “for full implementation of the Youth Guarantee for all people under 30 and of the recommendation on the long-term unemployed; highlights these as important structural reforms and social investments that are in need of adequate financing.”

The report also stresses the importance of raising the MFF 2014-2020 (Multi-annual Financial Framework) ceilings to reinforce, amongst others, the YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) and calls for the development of two specific financial instruments including a fund for “renewed structural convergence and to restore upward social convergence including the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, Skills Guarantee and Child Guarantee.”

The ETUC in its position on the Social Pillar “Working on a better deal for all workers” also dedicates a priority to secure labour market transitions. Below is the position of the ETUC on this specific priority:

“The EPSR must support secure transitions between education and work, between work and periods of unemployment and career advancement in work by providing appropriate social security support so that workers remain secure during periods of unemployment along with taking steps to increase worker employability. This is delivered by promoting work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and Vocational Education Providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship. (...)

Youth unemployment deserves particular attention and the Social Pillar of Rights should see continuation and full Implementation of the European Youth Guarantee, including:

1. A guaranteed offer and intervention within four months after leaving the education system and/or unemployment. Implemented, in the long term, as a universal guarantee;
2. Guaranteed high quality standards of job offers, trainings, traineeships and apprenticeships, particularly in sectors where job creation will be important in the future;
3. Measures to improve trust in institutions and increase the institutional capacity for delivering services. Crucial aspects are adequate financing and human resources ensuring a high quality guidance service for young people;
4. Carefully design the interventions to meet the need of the target population in order to respond to the heterogeneity of the youth population;
5. Investing in more ambitious and long-term funding so as to guarantee effective outcomes from the implementation of the measure. The ETUC calls for the continuation of the budgetary lines beyond 2016. Our benchmark in terms of appropriate funding of the Youth Guarantee is the estimation of €21bn per year made by the ILO.”

4.3 THE YG AND THE SKILLS GUARANTEE

The European Commission with a Communication launched in June 2016 proposed a roadmap for “A New Skills Agenda For Europe - Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness”.

The objective of this initiative is to “ensure that the right training, the right skills and the right support is available to people in the EU and will aim at making better use of the skills that are available; equip people with the new skills that are needed - to help them find quality jobs and improve their life chances.”

The Commission with the help of other relevant stakeholders, including unions, would like to improve the quality and relevance of skills formation, make skills more visible and comparable and to improve skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

The Commission proposes 10 actions to be taken forward in 2016 and 2017; some of these objectives have a relevance also in the framework of the implementation of the YG, in particular the Skills Guarantee.

The Skills Guarantee aims at helping low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification. They can be unemployed, but also those in employment and inactive with a need to strengthen basic skills.

Another requirement is that they are above 25 years, as otherwise covered by the Youth Guarantee. This is why it is important that there is a better coordination in terms of action between the YG and the Skills Guarantee so that there is equal treatment between the two age groups and that the same opportunities and quality of offer is ensured.

The ETUC welcomes the New Skills Agenda, and the Skills Guarantee, and considers it very positive. It is clear that the different measures don't have to be seen in competition but have to be part of a European ensemble of opportunities offered to young people and adults when they have to enter or secure their position in the labour market. It is therefore necessary that a strong link between the two measures is created, not only to avoid such competition, but for a better integration of the possible positive outcomes. Coordination efforts will have to be done by the different institution which play a significant role in the delivery of the measures and outputs.

acceptable that it only delivers internships or low-quality short-term jobs. The focus must again be on quality jobs. The ETUC calls for the continuation of the budgetary lines beyond 2016 and proposes that the benchmark in terms of appropriate funding of the Youth Guarantee is the estimation made by the ILO of € 21 billion per year.

4.4 THE YG AND THE EU SEMESTER AND EU EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

In the last few years another instrument used by the European Commission to foster the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is the European Semester. The Semester was launched in 2011 and is considered as one of the main pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy and a significant governance instrument.

The Country Specific Recommendations and the Semester policies more in general have also targeted national policies for unemployed young people. Proposed measures to deal with the skills mismatch, like education and training policies have been mainly the response to tackle the problem of youth unemployment.

For youth employment policies a total of 31 recommendations were adopted in 2014, 32 in 2015 and 37 in 2016. The recommendations in the European semester on the topic of youth employment highlighted school/education to work transitions, apprenticeships and work based learning, drop-outs and the Youth Guarantee.

The Country Specific Recommendations specifically addressing the implementation of the YG issued in 2014 were 12; in 2015 8, and 15 in 2016.

In particular, the countries which received the recommendations in the field of the Youth Guarantee in 2016 are Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and the Slovak Republic.

The ETUC, engaged in a renewed effort to participate in the Semester process, once again highlights the priorities of investing in quality jobs, the need to commit to high quality employment, the need for a pay rise through collective bargaining and protecting people with adequate social protection and decent and fair pension systems.

The ETUC also stresses the need for investments in active labour market policies (ALMPs), beyond long-term unemployment as they were often cut in reaction to the crises.

The ETUC contribution to the AGS also reports that taking into consideration the bad prospects for young Europeans in the labour market, a real and effective Youth Guarantee is still needed. It is not

5. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND NEETS IN EUROPE

NEET is an acronym which refers to young people from 15 to 29 years old who are not in employment, education or training.

The NEET rate is computed as the share of young people who are not in employment, education or training of the total youth population. It is therefore different to the youth unemployment rate as this last indicator measures the proportion of unemployed youth among the population of that age range who are economically active.

This concept gained popularity in youth-oriented policy making at EU level and national level from 2010 onwards.

The main risk factor for becoming a NEET found by Eurofound in 2012 was education. Those young people with the lowest educational attainment were three times more at risk of becoming NEET in comparison with young people with university studies.

HOW MANY NEETS ARE THERE IN EUROPE?

In 2015, there were 14 million NEETs in Europe in the 15–29 years age group, which meant 14.8% (Eurofound 2016).

Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Sweden are the countries with the lowest rates of young NEETs, whereas the highest ones are found in Greece and Italy, with rates above 24% (Eurofound 2016).

There is also a wide divergence in the categories of NEET throughout the different Member States. In Nordic and western countries, the largest NEET groups are generally the short-term unemployed, while the shares of long-term unemployed and discouraged workers in some southern and Mediterranean countries are higher. The majority of NEETs in eastern European countries are women, who are NEET due to family responsibilities (Eurofound 2016).

HOW DIVERSE ARE NEETS?

The NEET population includes a long list of subgroups, each of which has their own characteristics and needs.

Eurofound (2016) identified five categories within the NEET population, some vulnerable and some not, with very different characteristics and needs: conventionally unemployed; unavailable; disengaged; opportunity seekers; voluntary NEETs.

Two broad subcategories of NEETs emerge with very different characteristics and risk factors: the vulnerable NEETs – at risk of marginalisation, they also often lack social, cultural and human capital; the non-vulnerable NEETs – rich in cultural, social and human capital; despite being NEET, they are at little risk of marginalisation.

The short-term and long-term unemployed form just over half of the NEET population (29.8 % and 22% respectively). Almost 8% of NEETs are re-entrants, 15.4% are NEET due to family responsibilities, and 6.8% are NEET due to illness or disability. Just under 6% are discouraged workers. For the remaining 12.5%, it is not possible to identify the reason for being NEET (Eurofound 2016).

NEETS AND THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

NEETs were specifically targeted in the Youth Guarantee. The Youth Guarantee gives Member States the flexibility to provide measures that match the specific needs of their NEETs.

An early assessment by Eurofound (2014) of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee reveals that, in many instances, Member States focus their efforts on job-ready young people rather than more disadvantaged groups.

The different types of Youth Guarantee policies targeting NEETs could be categorised in the following 6 types: Information, counselling and guidance; outreach programmes; assisting school-to-work transitions; training and work experience placements; VET and apprenticeships; and youth entrepreneurship (Eurofound 2016).

6. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

THE SURVEY AND THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Following the research by the ETUC Youth Committee in 2014, a new follow-up questionnaire was disseminated in June 2016 among the members to evaluate the implementation process of the YG at this stage. All national representatives on the ETUC Youth Committee were involved in the survey. In some of the countries, like Italy, Spain and The Netherlands, trade unions decided to submit a common position and send only one survey.

For those countries where more than one answer was received, the different positions of trade unions are spelled out in the country sub-sections. The survey compares trade unions' opinions on the implementation process, on the role played by the different actors and the possible improvements in the cooperation level among them and on the variety and quality of the measures offered to NEETs. The survey also tries to analyse the level of involvement of trade unions in the design of the YGIP, its implementation, its daily management and its monitoring/evaluation.

This last element of the YG includes three types of partnerships and involvement of different stakeholders: first the cooperation between relevant private and public employment services providers; second the involvement of young people's representatives and, third, cooperation with the social partners. The questionnaire also analysed the degree of satisfaction of trade unions regarding the cooperation with the different stakeholders.

Trade unions were also requested to provide information about the creation of bodies in charge of monitoring the YG and if they were part of them, if they work properly and if all stakeholders had equal opportunities in the whole process.

The number of youngsters (with special attention to NEETs), and if their level of satisfaction regarding the measure has been assessed or not, are also other elements analysed.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE MEASURE

The Youth Guarantee programme started in the majority of the European states in 2014. In some countries (Austria, Finland etc.) a similar measure already existed, sometimes under different formats or name than the EYG.

Unions report **difficulties in accessing reliable data** about the number of NEETs involved due to the fact that in a number of countries – at this stage – reliable data are unavailable, or unions are not officially informed about them.

Respondents also reported several problems in answering the questions related to the **financing**. While on the one hand the Commission communicated clearly the amount of resources dedicated to the measure, it was in some case difficult for unions to report exactly the amount of national resources allocated in their respective countries.

In a large majority of cases, respondents were unclear or unaware (even after research) about the amount of unspent ESF funds until December 2015.

Most of the respondents reported that the **measures** generally offered to NEETs as an outcome of their enrolment in the YG are apprenticeships, internships, further training and vocational educational and training.

While these measures are made available in the majority of countries, several doubts are reported by respondents about their quality.

In some countries other additional measures have also been made available, e.g. job orientation, subsidies, vouchers, civil service and support for entrepreneurship.

Very **little attention has been reported on the measure of quality jobs**, which was one of the main demands of the ETUC and of its Youth Committee when campaigning for a European Youth Guarantee.

In the overall majority of countries the age group eligible for YG is 16-24. In some countries, like Italy, the age group has been extended to youngsters up to 30 years old.

The most common reported shortcoming of the YG programme concerns the implementation process of the programme.

A large majority of respondents also observed that the YG programme has not contributed to improving the quality of employment. The measures offered to NEETs are considered to be useful in the fight against youth unemployment and inactivity, but the quality of jobs has not enjoyed any positive effects. Some unions report that there are sometimes too many programmes with similar objectives and target groups and some of them are even in direct competition.

All trade unions reported that **PES (Public Employment Services)** play an important/very important role in the implementation of the YG. Thanks to the YG, the collaboration between PES and private employment services, employers and other welfare services (schools, third sector, social services) has generally been reported as having increased.

Some states have noticed also an increased cooperation between PES and trade union organisations. Latvian unions, on the other hand, have reported that the impact of the measure in this sphere was negative.

In most countries NEETs taken in charge under the YG receive some kind of **compensation/financial assistance**. In all countries the right to such compensation/financial assistance is subordinated to some conditions; not all NEETs enrolled in the YG qualify for compensation, as in many cases the financial support depends on the measure they receive as an output. For example, in Poland young people receive a financial support only if they have no professional qualifications or with low qualifications, or if they are not registered at PES.

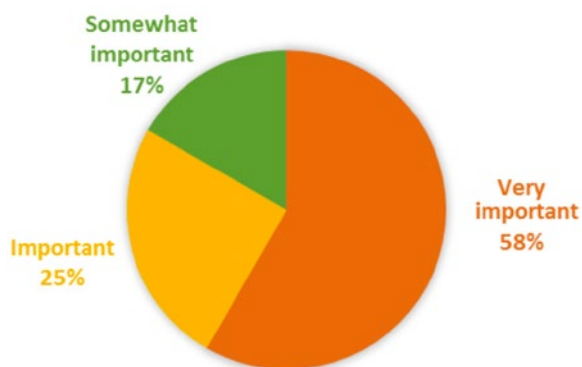
In Latvia, The Netherlands and Spain NEETs are not entitled to receive financial support.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

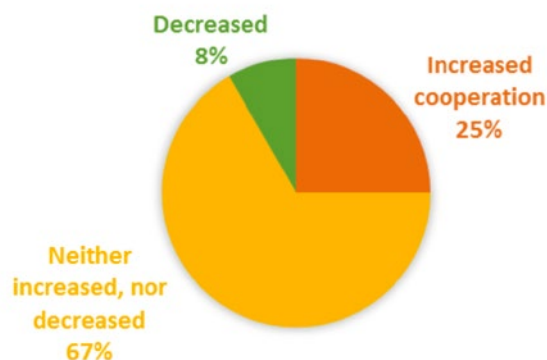
The majority of the respondents assessed as **unsatisfactory the role played by trade unions** in the implementation process of the YG. This is true also in the countries where the governments/ local authorities have created a body in charge of monitoring the YG programme (large majority of the cases).

In some cases trade unions are not part of such bodies, and often their opinions were not taken into account or taken into account in a small part. For example, Hungarian unions report that the body has been set up but no meetings have taken place up to the moment of publication of this report.

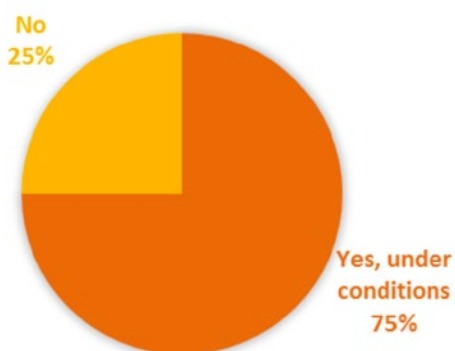
THE ROLE PLAYED BY PES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE YG



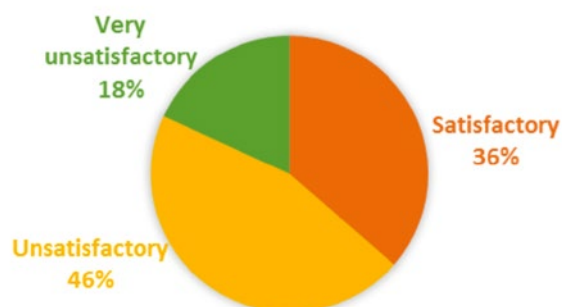
THE COOPERATION BETWEEN PES AND TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS



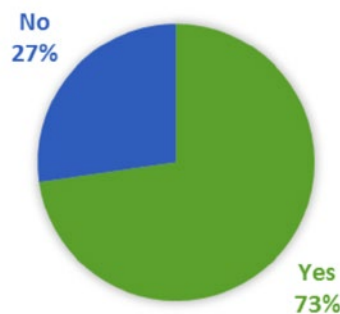
DO NEETS RECEIVE A FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE?



THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE YG



THE GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED A BODY IN CHARGE OF MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS?



Concerning the **design of the YG**, the survey also addressed the level of participation of all stakeholders (employers, trade unions, youth NGOs/third sector). According to the majority of European trade unions, stakeholders were not given equal opportunities to take part in this process. For examples, the trade union of Germany has reported an under representation of young people; while the Polish and Italian trade unions have reported a stronger voice/role given to employers.

The large **majority of respondents reports that involvement of social partners** in general and of unions in particular is unsatisfactory and report a lack of cooperation.

Some trade union confederations regretted that civil society organisations have been consulted in the design and implementation of the Youth Guarantee, but not the trade unions.

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE MEASURES

The levels of **satisfaction of the young people** who enrolled in the Youth Guarantee schemes has been assessed by few countries. In Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and France such evaluation has been performed by qualified institutes like Indecon (EI), DARES (FR), ISFOL (FIT) etc...

Concerning the **communication/campaigns** of the YG programme, the survey aimed at better understanding the existence and quality of the official communication developed by local authorities and/or government and the communication campaigns made by trade unions. The official advertisement has been assessed as unsatisfactory by the majority of the trade unions with the exception of Belgian and Portuguese respondents who have a positive opinion.

Only in few cases have unions developed their own communication campaigns: Ireland, Italy and Portugal.

The survey also investigated what are the main positive/negative effects of the measure registered at national level and potential good practices.

According to the respondents the YG programme has had the positive effect of **putting the topic of youth unemployment on the political agenda** and of raising awareness of the general public and youth about the specific concerns of younger populations in the labour market. **Bringing youngsters closer to the PES** and providing them with a chance for activation is also another positive aspect of the measure.

On the other hand, trade unions report a **lack of focus on quality jobs, a risk of a potential abuse of internships, lack of/insufficient information, and too much bureaucracy for the implementation of measures.**

Some good practices at local level have also been mentioned by unions and refer to specific actions that have been implemented in the YG. Some refer to specific action towards target groups, others refer to specific outputs (improving quality of internship, action in specific productive context or with tailored approaches through local services/authorities).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The ETUC is determined not to let the Youth Guarantee be abandoned or downgraded. A real and effective Youth Guarantee is still needed, as a right for all young Europeans to be guaranteed strong career guidance and counselling while they are entering the labour market.

It is not acceptable that the YG (as has happened in some countries) only delivers internships or low-quality short-term jobs. The focus must be put again on quality jobs.

- ▶ Further efforts must be made to fully implement the core principle of the YG, i.e. **guaranteeing an offer and intervention within 4 months** after leaving the education system and/or unemployment. This guarantee for young people must be anchored to the developing European Pillar of Social Rights to have an impact in the long run.
 - ▶ Ensure **full participation of social partners**, civil society and young people in the implementation and the monitoring/assessment of the measure: the participation of social partners in the implementation makes the measure more effective and ensures better quality outcomes. The connection with social partners' and governments' programmes for the creation of youth employment is vital.
 - ▶ **Make available all possibilities listed in the European Council Recommendation** to the young people enrolling in the YG, i.e. good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship.
 - ▶ Guarantee **high quality standards of all outcomes, notably of internships, and provide a definition of quality with benchmarks**. In the European Pillar of Social Rights and in the Semester process the outcomes of the Youth Guarantee should be assessed and addressed also from the qualitative point of view.
 - ▶ Encourage **synergies between programmes and institutions** (public employment services, local authorities, etc.) in order to better fulfil the goals of the Youth Guarantee.
 - ▶ Carefully **design the target population and provide tailored approaches** in order to respond to the heterogeneity of NEETs and their specific needs at the moment of enrolment. Specific actions should be made available in particular for young refugees.
 - ▶ Invest in more ambitious and **long-term funding** so as to guarantee effective outcomes from the implementation of the measure. Our benchmark in terms of long-term appropriate funding of the Youth Guarantee is the estimation of € 21 bn per year made by the ILO. The majority of Member States has gone through structural reforms with an effect of excluding young people from social protection. It's necessary to reverse this trend and not leave young unemployed people at the margins of European society.
- ▶ Design specific actions for **reaching out to those NEETs who are further from the labour market** and not registered by public employment services (PES); targeted resources should be allocated for this and they should receive assistance during the whole process from the enrolment to placement. Full participation of trade unions and NGOs is of particular relevance for success.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF TRADE UNIONS/RESPONDENTS

- ▶ **BELGIUM**
ACV / CSC Confederation of Christian Trade Unions
(Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond / Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens)
- ▶ **CZECH REPUBLIC**
CMK OS Czech Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions
- ▶ **DENMARK**
LO-DK Danish Confederation of Trade Unions
(Landesorganisationen i Danmark)
- ▶ **FRANCE**
CFDT French Democratic Confederation of Labour

FO General Confederation of Labour - Workers' Power
(Confédération Générale du Travail - Force Ouvrière)
- ▶ **GERMANY**
DGB German Confederation of Trade Unions
(Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund Bundesvorstand)
- ▶ **GREECE**
GSEE Greek General Confederation of Labour
(Geniki Synomospondia Ergaton Ellados)
- ▶ **HUNGARY**
SZEF Forum for the Co-operation of Trade Unions
(Szakszervezetek Egyttmukodesi Forum)
- ▶ **IRELAND**
ICTU Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- ▶ **ITALY**
CGIL Italian General Confederation of Labour
(Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro)

CISL Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions
(Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori)

UIL Italian Union of Labour
(Unione Italiana del Lavoro)
- ▶ **LATVIA**
LBAS Union of Independent Trade Unions of Latvia
(Latvijas Brīvo Arodbiedrību Savienība)
- ▶ **NETHERLANDS**
CNV National Federation of Christian Trade Unions
(Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond)

FNV Netherlands Trade Union Confederation
(Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging)

VCP
Trade union federation for Professionals
(Vakcentrale voor Professionals)
- ▶ **POLAND**
NSZZ Solidarność Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarność"
(Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność”)
- ▶ **PORTUGAL**
UGT-P General Workers' Union - Portugal
(União Geral de Trabalhadores)
- ▶ **SLOVENIA**
ZSSS Slovenian Association of Free Trade Unions
(Zveza Svobodnih Sindikatov Slovenije)
- ▶ **SPAIN**
CC.OO Trade Union Confederation of Workers' Commissions
(Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras)

UGT-E General Workers' Union - Spain
(Union General de Trabajadores)

ANNEX 2

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABVV/FGTB

General Federation of Belgian Labour – Belgium

ALMPs

Active Labour Market Policies

CCOO

Comisiones obreras – Spain

CFDT

French Democratic Confederation of Labour – France

CGIL

Italian General Confederation of Labour

CISL

Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions

CMKOS

Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions – Czech Republic

CSR

Country Specific Recommendations

DGB

German Confederation of Trade Unions

EC

European Commission

EPSR

European Pillar of Social Rights

ETUC

European Trade Union Confederation

EYF

European Youth Forum

FNV

Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging – The Netherlands

FO

Force ouvrière – France

FZZ

Trade Unions Forum – Poland

GSEE

Greek General Confederation of Labour – Greece

IAP

Individual Action Plan

LBAS

Union of Independent Trade Unions of Latvia – Latvia

LIGA

Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions from Hungary

NEET

Not in Employment Education or Training

NSZZ Solidarnosc

Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarność – Poland

PES

Public Employment Service

SIPTU

Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union – Ireland

SZEF

Forum for the Co-operation of Trade Unions

TU

Trade Union(s)

UGT

Unión general de trabajadores- Spain

UGT-P

General Workers' Union – Portugal

UIL

Union of Italian Workers

YEI

Youth Employment Initiative

YG

Youth Guarantee

YGIP

Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

ZSSS

Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia – Slovenia

The ETUC is the voice of workers and represents 45 million members from 89 trade union organisations in 39 European countries, plus 10 European Trade Union Federations.



ETUC - European Trade Union Confederation
CES - Confédération européenne des syndicats

Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5
B - 1210 Brussels
Tel +32 (0)2 224 04 11
E-mail etuc@etuc.org
www.etuc.org