

Youth unemployment: The race to zero

Young people in Europe are eager to move up, to work and to participate in society, but more than 3.6 million of them are in a precarious position. How can we reduce youth unemployment to close to zero within the coming years? Has Europe taken decisive action for a real crackdown?

Youth unemployment is decreasing but labour market problems persist

In spring 2013, the youth unemployment rate peaked at 23.8 % and then declined sharply. In January 2018, the rate was at 16.1 % ([Eurostat](#)) meaning that 3.64 million young people (under 25) were unemployed in the European Union (EU). There has thus been a significant improvement in the past few years. Nevertheless, huge imbalances persist between EU Member States. The lowest rates were observed in the Czech Republic (5.8 %) and Germany (6.6 %) while the highest were recorded in Greece (43.7 %, November 2017, latest data available), Spain (36.0 %) and Italy (31.5 %). Youth unemployment still remains high compared to other age groups: young people are almost three times more likely to be unemployed than [people 25 years and older](#) (6.4 %). They are also more affected than other age groups by [long-term unemployment](#). The young are at much greater risk in terms of precariousness: 43.8 % of youth employees (15-24) were on [temporary contracts](#), and 32.4 % had [part-time jobs](#) in 2016. Last but not least, high youth unemployment rates sometimes co-exist with difficulties in filling job vacancies, pointing to a [skills mismatch](#).

Tackling youth unemployment: Is enough being done?

In 2014, the [European Parliament](#) warned that significant sustainable economic growth in the EU requires inequalities to be reduced, and recalled the importance of reducing unemployment, especially youth unemployment, and alleviating poverty. A [series of initiatives](#) aims to reduce youth unemployment in the EU.

Investing in youth. The [Youth Guarantee](#) (YG) seeks to ensure that all EU Member States make a good-quality offer – to all people up to age 25 – of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The YG aims to enable young people to find a job suited to their education, skills and experience, or to acquire the education, skills and experience to increase their chances of finding a job. Since 2014, significant EU investment has supported its establishment in Member States – most notably from the [European Social Fund](#) and the [Youth Employment Initiative](#) (YEI, €8 billion in total from 2014 to 2020). Early this year, Parliament stressed the need to [transform the YEI](#) into a more stable EU funding instrument and to improve the quality of offers under the YEI and YG.

Quality apprenticeships and traineeships. Effective vocational education and training systems, with a strong work-based learning component, appear to facilitate the transition of young people from education to work. Launched in 2013, the [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#), is to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU and to change mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning. In parallel, so that young people can gain high-quality work experience in safe and fair conditions, and increase their employability, Member States agreed on a [Quality Framework for Traineeships](#) (2014).

Labour mobility. The EU facilitates labour mobility, in particular by making young people aware of job opportunities in other EU countries. [Your first EURES Job](#) (YfEJ) is a platform that brings together the CVs of young jobseekers – aged 18 to 35, from all EU-28 countries plus Norway and Iceland, interested in finding professional experience abroad – and job/traineeship vacancies of employers looking for young workers.

Volunteering. The new [European Solidarity Corps](#) aims at creating opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in solidarity-related projects which benefit communities and people around Europe.

This note has been prepared for the [European Youth Event](#), taking place in Strasbourg in June 2018.

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