Youth Guarantee: Lessons from implementation

KEY FINDINGS

- There is evidence from comprehensive assessment reports prepared by the Commission that the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee has become a driver for policy reforms and better coordination in the fields of employment and education. All Member States have prepared implementation plans, nominated a Youth Guarantee Coordinator and launched reforms taking into account the national situation. From a quantitative perspective, results are impressing: 14 million NEETs (Neither in Employment, Education or Training) have entered a Youth Guarantee scheme and of these, 9 million have taken up an offer.

- Nevertheless, significant challenges remain: Reforms are limited in some of the countries most affected by youth unemployment where in addition public employment services face staff decreases. As consequence, there is a risk of increasing divergence in supporting services for young people in Europe. Further, in most countries most of the reforms are at a medium or initial stage of implementation. Even if a high number of young people received support, overall, less than half of the NEETs entered a Youth Guarantee scheme in 2015, and approximately one in two of them took up an offer within four months.

- It is probable that many young people repeatedly return to a NEET status and a Youth Guarantee scheme. Most young people (70% of those in YG schemes) took up an offer of employment, however, a high share was presumably hired on the basis of a temporary contract (43.4% of young employees in 2015). These tend to be of lower quality and in many countries of short duration (< 6 months).

- In general, the quality and sustainability of offers under the Youth Guarantee as well as continued, sufficient funding are of particular concern for the European Parliament and a broad range of stakeholders.

- A number of points may need further discussion and action. First, given the state of implementation, it is striking that only two countries received a related Country-specific recommendation in 2016. Second, further analysis and policy exchange on young people in temporary jobs could help to develop targeted policies to reduce labour market segmentation (e.g. preventive bridging systems). Third, the Commission plans to define quality elements for all types of offers under the Youth Guarantee (employment, apprenticeship, traineeship, education). These could be discussed with the Employment and Social Affairs Committee. Fourth, it could be considered to prepare another Commission assessment report in 2020 including external country reviews.

1. YOUTH GUARANTEE: SETUP

Recommendation to Member States to provide an offer to young people

Reacting to the steep rise of youth unemployment during the crisis since 2008, the European Commission committed itself in its Communication Towards a job-rich recovery (Employment Package), launched in April 2012, to present a proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Youth Guarantee by the end of the year. Such a youth guarantee had been pushed by the
European Parliament in its resolution of 6 July 2010 on promoting youth access to the labour market. The Council urged Member States in its conclusions of 29 June 2012 to take action that all young people leaving schools should 'receive a good quality offer'\(^3\). Conceptually, the envisaged Youth Guarantee filled a gap, as the Employment Guidelines issued under the Europe 2020 strategy did no longer include activation targets for adults and young people (Employment guidelines 2005: 6 months; employment guidelines 2008: 4 months for young school leavers)\(^4\).

On 5 December 2012, the European Commission launched a proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Youth Guarantee forming part of the so-called Youth employment package \(^5\). This encompassed further initiatives to facilitate the transition of young people from school to work, in particular a Quality Framework for Traineeships and the creation of a European Alliance of Apprenticeships. In April 2013, the Council adopted the proposal for a Youth Guarantee with minor changes\(^6\).

The Youth Guarantee integrates activation of young unemployed and young school leavers, sets a streamlined maximum period for providing an offer and underlines the importance of their quality. It is worth noting that this is a guarantee for an offer, not for a job:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Guarantee</th>
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<tr>
<td>Member States shall &quot;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.&quot;</td>
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Starting point: registration with an employment or other service

The Council Recommendation includes comprehensive guidelines how to implement the Youth Guarantee involving relevant areas of employment, education and VET-policies, defining key elements of governance and setting out a multi-layered monitoring mechanism.

### Council Recommendation: Guidelines for implementation of the Youth Guarantee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTNERSHIPS</th>
<th>EARLY INTERVENTION, ACTIVATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating authority</td>
<td>Effective outreach strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about services / support</td>
<td>Focal points (one-stop shops)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships including employers, employment, career guidance services, education and training institutions, social partners, young people</td>
<td>Personalised guidance, individual action planning, continued follow-up preventing drop-out</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>MEASURES</th>
<th>MONITORING</th>
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<tr>
<td>Enhancing skills (e.g. re-enter education, labour market needs, digital skills, entrepreneurship)</td>
<td>Member States: Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour-market related measures (e.g. non-wage labour costs, targeted subsidies, labour mobility, start-up support, dropouts)</td>
<td>Public Employment Services network: Regular monitoring and reporting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

EMCO: Multilateral surveillance – European Semester, Mutual Learning Programme

(Compilation by the author based upon the Council Recommendation of 2013)
As innovative element, the Council Recommendation specifies a comprehensive monitoring mechanism: Member States shall evaluate measures to ensure continuous improvement; second, the Public Employment Services (PES) Network shall regularly monitor and report on developments of service delivery for young people as part of its annual work programme. Third, the Recommendation calls upon the Commission to make us of the European Employment Strategie’s mutual learning programme to share experiences and good practices. Youth Guarantee Coordinators and specialists from Member States and employment services could benefit from a series of conferences and mutual learning events at European level organised by the Commission (e.g. outreach strategies, targeting NEETs, cooperation at local level, working with employers)\(^8\).

Finally, EMCO, the Employment Committee working for the Council, shall monitor the Youth Guarantee within the European Semester through multilateral surveillance and Member States shall receive Country Specific Recommendations, if deemed necessary. EMCO has developed a dedicated indicator framework for monitoring the Youth Guarantee and started data collection in 2014\(^9\).  

### Youth Guarantee and country-specific recommendations: Sharp drop from 2015

In the beginning, in 2013, 16 countries received a recommendation and the figure even augmented to 20 in 2014 when Member States started to implement the Youth Guarantee. The number of countries receiving a recommendation sharply dropped to 6 countries (BG, FI, IT, PT, RO, ES) in 2015 and to 2 countries (BG, RO) in 2016 due to a reduction of the overall number of recommendations per country, declining youth unemployment and ongoing reforms at national level. Contrary to other countries, Bulgaria and Romania had shown limited implementation of the youth-specific recommendations received in 2015\(^{10}\).  

The low number of country-specific recommendations contrasts, however, with the state of implementation. As evidence from the Commission assessment report shows, reform was limited in a number of other countries, such as CY, ES, EL (exempted from CSR due to the economic adjustment programme). Moreover, implementation of most services and measures listed under the Youth Guarantee is partial or limited in most countries (see table below). Therefore, an effective mechanism could be put in place to discuss progress and problems with individual Member States in a strategic perspective if country-specific recommendations (CSR) cannot be applied.

### 2. STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

#### All countries prepared implementation plans covering key areas

All countries prepared implementation plans by May 2014. Based upon an analysis of Youth Guarantee plans for 14 countries, the ILO concludes that all countries had documented measures covering most of the main elements recommended:

- measures building up or improving partnerships
- early intervention fixing a maximum period of three to four months
- measures for labour market integration (e.g. employment intermediation, hiring incentives)
- measures for skills development (education and training for employment, measures to reduce school dropout and to provide second-chance education)

Most countries intended to promote start-up incentives. A small number of countries (5 in 14) planned direct employment creation, for example, temporary community services public employment programmes or other community projects. Interestingly, the ILO presents well-shaped, temporary public employment programmes as a viable option, if well designed, whilst these are not considered a good quality offer in the sense of the Youth Guarantee\(^{11}\).
Most policies, services and governance - partial or limited implementation

To conclude from the comprehensive Commission Assessment Report and a more recent Public Employment Services Assessment Report of 2016, Member States have undertaken significant efforts for implementation. However, most reforms have not yet been fully implemented so that considerable efforts and financial resources will be needed at a longer term to achieve the objectives as set by the Council Recommendation. Implementation is weakest in building partnerships and involving relevant and in supporting young with multiple barriers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities listed in the Council Recommendation</th>
<th>Implementation, % Member States</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strong implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth guarantee coordinator nominated</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registration with PES - starting point YG</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing YG as soon as possible</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of principle of mutual obligation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalised guidance / individual action planning</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific support – basic skills / rehabilitation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common ‘focal points’ / cooperation -&gt; school leavers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with employers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting point for NEETs not registered with PES</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full information on services + outreach strategies</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement of social partners</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement of young people</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk of cycles of inactivity / dropouts from system</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination partnerships across all levels / sectors</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on young people with multiple barriers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships employment, guidance, youth services, education and training institutions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compilation from Commission Assessment Report (European Employment Policy Observatory, country experts, 2016), SWD(2016) 323 final, part 1, pg. 21; the table can be used for the purpose of a qualitative approximate comparison. Further categories, not presented here: ‘implementation - none’ and ‘no response’.

As regards labour-market-related measures and measures to enhance skills development, a similar discrepancy between planning and implementation exists. Most Member States (between 24 and 26) have set up measures for young NEETs covering both labour market interventions (use of subsidies, start-up support or promoting labour mobility) and skills development (second chance education, reducing skills mismatches, digital skills, entrepreneurial skills). A majority is promoting entrepreneurial skills (22) or skills validation for young people (16).

Implementation of measures was even at a more initial stage in 2016 compared to governance and service aspects analysed above. On average, experts indicated full implementation for less than one in five Member States.
3. RESULTS

From a quantitative perspective, results are impressing: Since January 2014, 14 million young people had access to Youth Guarantee schemes and 9 million, i.e. nearly two in three, have taken up an offer11!

Access and coverage: 14 million young people covered - but majority of NEETs in the EU not yet reached

Figure 1: Coverage of YG schemes, 2014 and 2015, (% NEET population, 15-24)

Source: Commission Assessment Report (2016), pg. 13 (Publication authorised by the European Commission)

Looking at the proportion of young NEETs covered so far, paints however a less rosy picture as less than half of young NEETs (41.9 % at EU average) could enter a Youth Guarantee scheme (even if data have to be interpreted with some caution as administrative data for registration are compared with data from the Labour Force Survey). In a number of South and East European countries (e.g. in BG, ES, IT, CY, HU, MT, RO), but also in the UK less than 20 % could be reached. In some of these countries (e.g. BG and HU) low coverage can be explained by a gradual strategy for implementation focusing at an initial stage on specific target groups (e.g; HU - long-term unemployed, Bulgaria - early school leavers).

Only in four countries (AT, BE, FR and FI) did more than two in three young NEETs (70 - 90 %) have access to a Youth Guarantee scheme. The majority of NEETs has to wait for further policy and service reforms to ensure a more comprehensive outreach.

There exists a risk for increasing divergence. In a number of countries ranking lowest in terms of reform efforts and coverage of NEETs, public employment services are facing a combination of detrimental factors: difficult labour markets with high youth unemployment, a lack of capacities and low engagement in capacity building. In a recent survey, these PES indicated staff decreases, they did not address outreach as an area for improvement and did not take part in mutual learning or technical assistance activities regarding youth. In the same vein, an analysis of six countries (EL, HR, IT, AT, SK and FI) by the EESC concludes that PES in countries facing high unemployment are administering rather than activating unemployed due to resource constraints and high caseloads. As consequence, users do not trust in PES capacities to help them, making outreach even more challenging13.

It could therefore be envisaged to set up continued learning exchanges within the PES Benchlearning programme or the EMCO Mutual Learning Programme on developing and implementing strategies to reach and support NEET youth. This could be organised along clusters, bringing together PES or countries with similar institutional or labour market problems (e.g. strong regionalisation, a high share of young people returning to the Youth Guarantee Scheme after the end of a temporary contract).
The **European Parliament** has launched several preparatory actions to support governance and measures in the context of youth employment policies and the Youth Guarantee. These can give further **impulses for policy exchange and learning**.

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**European Parliament - preparatory actions**

**Youth Guarantee partnerships on the ground (launched in 2012)**
The time needed for partnership formation, clarification of goals and responsibilities was underestimated. Approaching local employers, communicating with them was of benefit acknowledged by all sides. Employers got a better understanding of support available when recruiting. The project helped to develop cost-effective ways to work with young people.

**Quality employment for job starters through entrepreneurship (2016)**
The project shall establish whether youth entrepreneurship initiatives are effective in creating long-term employment. It will promote the development of an entrepreneurship policy self-assessment and guidance toolkit.

**A European Framework for mobility of apprentices: Developing European citizens and skills through integration into the Labour Market (2016)**
The project aims at facilitating long-term (6-12 months) two-way interregional mobility of apprentices. It tests different approaches for putting in place the necessary infrastructure and services to assist with placement from departure to return.

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**Offer in due time: On EU average one in two of those having entered the YG scheme took up an offer within four months**

On EU average, **nearly one in two** of those young NEETs covered by a Youth Guarantee scheme **took up an offer within four months in 2015**. Consequently, in total, **around one in five young NEETs benefitted from an offer** so far.

**Figure 2: Timely and positive exits from the YG, 2014 and 2015 (% all exits)**

Take-up considerably varies across Europe, ranging from less than 10 % in Cyprus faced with shrinking PES expenditure and a high of more than 90 % in Hungary.

**Offers: Placement into (temporary) jobs most frequent**

Most young people (**around 70 %**) were placed into employment within a Youth Guarantee scheme. Only in a few countries did other offers prevail (e.g. traineeships in IT and MT, continued education in DK, ES and MT). These are results or rather indications from monitoring based upon the EMCO indicator framework. Current caveats are some data and comparability issues. 

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**Source:** Commission Assessment Report (2016), pg. 14 (Publication authorised by the European Commission);
As regards the type of job, employers hire young people increasingly on a temporary basis. More than four in ten young workers on EU average (43.4 %) have a temporary contract and the proportion is particularly high (>60 %) in a number of East and South European countries. It can be assumed that a similar pattern holds true for job placements within a Youth Guarantee scheme. According to a recent study for the European Parliament, the quality of these jobs tends to be lower than in open-ended, full-time employment contracts. In general, they offer less job security, less pay and lower satisfaction with working conditions. Moreover, more than half of all fixed-term workers would prefer a permanent contract and again, in some East and South European countries this share amounts to 80 % and more.

**Figure 3:** Young temporary employees as share of the total number of employees (15 - 24), 2015, %

The same study provides evidence that in temporary contracts sustainability of employment may suffer from a short duration and low transition rates into permanent employment. In many countries, most temporary contracts last less than 6 months. The overall transition rate to permanent employment has been decreasing since 2007, down to an EU-average of 23 % in 2013 compared to 28 % in 2007. The rate is particularly low in a number of countries where the share of young people in temporary employment is highest, for example in France (10 %), Spain (12 %), Poland (16 %) or Italy, Croatia and Portugal (< 25 %)\(^16\).

In countries where the proportion of young people in temporary contracts is high, many young people will repeatedly return to unemployment and need support from Youth Guarantee schemes. As an analysis by ILO and OECD of 2014 concludes, “the reality is often that many low-skilled youth get locked into such jobs or leave the labour market altogether”\(^17\).

How to reduce labour market segmentation is a recurring topic of the EMCO mutual learning programme, and a recent expert exchange included a view to young people. A number of policy measures have been identified to reduce an extensive use of temporary contracts (e.g. restricting the use of successive temporary contracts, incentivising employers to employ temporary workers on a permanent basis, single open-ended contract, extending unemployment benefit coverage with better activation and job matching services or strengthening preventive measures in case of at-risk youth)\(^18\).
Further research and policy exchange with a view to transitions of young unemployed could help to develop policies in order to better balance flexibility with the quality of job offers and sustainability of labour market integration.

First indications for medium sustainability of Youth Guarantee schemes (after 6 months) though results may be understated

As an EU average, 40 % of those young people having left the Youth Guarantee scheme, were known to be in a positive situation, i.e. in a job, education, training or a traineeship six months afterwards. Indeed, many young people may therefore need reiterated support from a Youth Guarantee scheme. There are indications that sustainability is highest in countries with a focus on education (e.g. Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Malta) and lowest in a number of countries where most young people take up an offer of employment.

Figure 4: Proportion of young people leaving the YG known to be in a positive situation 6 months after exit, 2014 - 2015 (% exits)

Source: Commission Assessment Report (2016), pg. 17 (Publication authorised by the European Commission). Data are only available for 6 months, not for 12 or 18 months given the initial state of implementation.

The results presented are likely to understate the real situation as data show a number of caveats. Not all countries were able to deliver data and in those countries for which data exist, the status of many young people is not known due to problems in tracking them. It can be positive, i.e. in employment, education, training or a traineeship, or negative or unknown, where a number of young people may be in a positive situation.

Even if education is more sustainable in the short term, it is probable that a considerable proportion of young people from this group will return to a NEET status when looking for a job. The same holds true for ALMPs and internships (if not provided as a real probationary period).

Establishing preventive bridging systems may help to reduce the necessity of (reiterated cycles of) Youth Guarantee schemes. Prevention encompasses interventions, such as vocational orientation, career guidance and information about the labour market. Further, support services available at (VET) schools or career services at universities facilitate transitions by equipping young people with transition or career management skills. In a broader perspective, prevention and bridging systems relate also to young people completing an ALMP, an internship or a temporary job. Starting job search assistance before a programme or a job ends (job-to-job placement) can help to avoid that unemployment occurs. Overall, prevention tends to be more cost-effective than curing as evidence from comprehensive meta-analysis points out: “Even more important (than comprehensive and costly active labour market programs) may be earlier education system interventions to improve school-to-work transitions”.

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4. Policy pointers in resolutions of the European Parliament and stakeholder position papers

Quality of offers and funding - a shared concern

In all youth-related resolutions, the European Parliament strongly supports the Youth Guarantee. Resolutions adopted during the 7th legislature express concerns on the lack of outreach to NEETs, administrative capacity of public employment services, lack of engagement with partners and above all, the quality of offers. As regards quality of offers, the European Parliament called for a quality framework that should accompany the Youth Guarantee and further, for a European legal framework to introduce minimum standards for the implementation. It also asked for an extension of the age threshold up to 29 years to cover more unemployed graduates.

Resolutions adopted during the 8th legislature underline that the Youth Guarantee could be a step towards a rights-based approach. Further, they stress the qualitative aspect of decent work for young people. It also highlights the European Court of Auditors’ concerns regarding monitoring and reporting of results by the Commission, adequacy of funding and the definition of a good quality offer. In its most recent resolution of 27 October 2016, it calls for continued political commitment to the Youth Guarantee as a long-term, structural reform. It recalls that the age limit should be extended from 25 to 29 years. Further, the European Parliament reiterates that the quality and sustainability of job and other offers within the Youth Guarantee are key success factors.

Summaries of position papers demonstrate a shared concern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties / Stakeholders23.</th>
<th>Views on the Youth Guarantee</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)</strong></td>
<td>In its Opinion, adopted in November 2013, the EESC considers funding to be inadequate and calls for an extension of the age span up to the age of 30. The amount of EUR 6 billion earmarked is not considered sufficient to cope with the magnitude of the problems. Further, EESC regrets that “funding for the Youth Employment initiative has not come from an increase in funds from the Union, but [...] from a reduction in the overall budgetary envelope for cohesion”. In addition, the EESC calls on Member States not to cut back the financial commitment for promoting youth employment. Lastly, the threshold for eligibility to the YEI should be set at 20% instead of 25%.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PES ministers - Socialists and Democrats (October 2016)</strong></td>
<td>Ensuring the Youth guarantee is a European success story PES ministers want a permanent and extended European Youth Guarantee with sufficient re-funding for the YEI until 2020. They regret that the Commission did not follow the call by President Hollande and Prime Minister Renzi for a re-funding of 20 billion EUR for the YEI until 2020 and ask to further ease the pre-financing and co-financing requirements. Quality offers: The Youth Guarantee should foster high quality work standards and decent remuneration and ensure the principle of equal pay and equal treatment irrespective of age. Rights-based: Countries should entitle all beneficiaries to get a quality offer within the four months or even a shorter period. Broader scope: extension until the age of 30. Strengthen national implementation: Need for adequately staffed public employment services working in partnership.</td>
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<td><strong>Joint Statement (Juli 2016)</strong></td>
<td>Eurocities, ETUC, European Youth Forum, European Disability Forum, EASPD, FEANTSA, Coface, solidar, Age Platform Europe ask for <strong>continuous investment, substantial funding and simplifying access</strong> to ESF and YEI.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eurocities (October 2015)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Insufficient capacity to provide frontline services</strong> due to <strong>budget cuts and/or lack of investment</strong> is a challenge several cities experience. Cities call for <strong>better cooperation between the European, the national and the local level</strong> and close cooperation between cities and the national public employment services. Cities should be <strong>involved into programme and measure design</strong>. As regard funding, cities call for <strong>direct access to YEI funds</strong> and stronger involvement into programme planning for ESF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Youth Forum (August 2015)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Funding</strong>: Support the Commission proposal to allocate EUR 1 billion for/ to the Youth Employment Initiative within the MFF 2017 - 2020. Deplores the implementation of counter-productive measures (e.g. cutting <strong>access to social benefits</strong> for young people), identifies the difficulty of reaching out to young people and of targeting most vulnerable young people and a huge diversity of measures under the title of the Youth Guarantee requiring close monitoring. In addition, it expresses concerns about the low quality of offers under the YG schemes <strong>reducing its contribution to sustainable solutions</strong> for young people. It asks for a <strong>clear definition</strong> at the European and the national level <strong>what a quality offer means</strong> (including social and employment protection, employment rights, a decent remuneration of interns), and for improving the quality of apprenticeships. Short-term offers should not substitute for quality employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ETUC (June 2016)</strong></td>
<td>ETUC advocated the establishment of such a guarantee in Europe as early as 2009. A <strong>right to a Youth Guarantee</strong> must be at the core of a long-term strategy. The focus should be on <strong>quality job offers, trainings, traineeships and apprenticeships</strong>, not acceptable that in some countries YG only delivers internships or low-quality, short-term jobs. <strong>Partnership approach</strong> uneven across Europe and involvement of social partners often not sufficient (ETUC study). Right for all young European citizens to <strong>be guaranteed strong career guidance and counselling</strong> while they are entering the job market. Asks to increase institutional capacity (financing, human resources) to ensure high-quality services. ETUC also calls for including <strong>appropriate social protection</strong> in YG schemes. Need for <strong>more ambitious and long-term funding</strong> - benchmark is EUR 21 billion per year as estimated by the ILO.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BusinessEurope (April 2014)</strong></td>
<td>The <strong>Youth Guarantee can provide support</strong> to facilitate young people’s labour market integration, if it is complementary to <strong>necessary structural adaptations of national labour markets</strong> (e.g. specific minimum wage for young people, reducing non-wage labour costs, use of temporary employment as stepping stones) and <strong>education and training systems</strong> (alignment with needs of labour market, enterprises). It should not be seen as a structural reform in itself.</td>
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</table>
5. Way forward

**European Commission envisages to further define the quality of offers**

The **Commission** has been **developing definitions of quality over time**. A first distinction relates to the intrinsic dimension (personalised offer based upon an assessment of individual needs) and an outcome-based dimension, i.e. sustainable integration.

Further aspects of quality have been summarised in a guidance paper adopting the approach from the **Youth Employment Initiative**:

As regards **jobs**, the **Commission considers open-ended full-time and voluntary part-time contracts of superior quality**. Further quality aspects include the remuneration level, and the availability of job-related training. National and sectoral agreements should be respected, therefore the relative levels of remuneration may considerably vary.

**Quality aspects for apprenticeships** follow principles as set for the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** and for the **European Quality Assurance Framework for VET**. These include, for example, adequate integration into formal education and training systems and recognition; a high quality learning process, defined standards for learning outcomes, quality assurance; transferability across borders; strong work-based learning and training component including transversal skills; adequate remuneration and protection.

**Quality aspects listed for traineeships** follow the principles as set by the **European Quality Framework for Traineeships**. Traineeships can form part of an education or VET, an ALMP or are an open-market traineeship, mainly for graduates. Quality elements include a written agreement specifying the learning content, the working conditions, rights and obligations (e.g. financial compensation, illness/accident insurance) and a reasonable duration, in principle not exceeding six months. Remuneration is not included.

Interestingly, **ten Member States apply a “quality definition” and 4 Member States (AT, BE, MT, PT) have set up minimum criteria for their offers** under the Youth Guarantee used for reporting (e.g. training measures below 62 days and unpaid traineeships are not considered quality offers).

As the situation is very diverse in the Member States, **the Commission is cooperating with the ILO to develop quality aspects at a conceptual level** and with **EMCO**, to develop **quality criteria at the level of monitoring**. The aim is to identify **“the main elements that constitute a quality offer under a Youth Guarantee”**.

As part of **future mutual learning activities**, it could be envisaged to carry out a **targeted policy exchange among Member States on minimum quality standards** and their impact. This could help to promote a common understanding and give impulses for policy development including good practices.
1 See also the following notes prepared for the workshop: Youth Employment Initiative, Country Case: Spain, Summary Report, Presentations – forthcoming end of April.


15 GWD(2016) 323 final, part 1, pg. 16. see endnote 8.


30 GWD(2016) 323 final, part 1: pg. 9-11, 113, see endnote 8.

31 European Commission Communication (2016), pg. 20, see endnote 10.

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