



European
Commission



The EU Youth Employment Initiative

Investing in young people

Social Europe

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016

ISBN 978-92-79-63446-8 - doi: 10.2767/174144 (print)

ISBN 978-92-79-63448-2 - doi: 10.2767/565961 (PDF)

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Printed in xxx

Printed on elemental chlorine-free bleached paper (ECF)

Introducing the Youth Employment Initiative

The Youth Employment Initiative¹ (YEI) aims to reduce the levels of youth unemployment in the worst affected regions of the European Union (EU). Launched in 2013, the YEI is providing **EUR 6.4 billion** of targeted funding for the period 2014-2020 to support actions that help young people access the labour market in these regions.

Why is the YEI needed?

Almost 4.2 million people under the age of 25 in the EU were unemployed as of August 2016, which represents an unemployment rate of 18.6 %. While this is an improvement over the peak of 23.7 % in 2013, it still means that almost 1 in every 5 young people is out of work. This number is even higher in some Member States, for instance Greece (42.7 %), Spain (43.2 %) and Italy (38.8 %) which are particularly affected.

The EU recognises that reducing the level of youth unemployment is essential for Europe's future and resources like the YEI are already helping to improve the situation for young people across the EU.

Who the YEI is for

The YEI supports young people aged 15-24 (or 15-29 in some EU Member States) who are **not in education, employment or training** (NEETs). This can include long-term unemployed young people and those not registered as job-seekers.

In order to be eligible to receive YEI support, these young people must be living in regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25 % in 2012. Currently there are regions in 20 Member States benefiting from YEI support.



“

Europe's future is in the hands of our youth. Young people are our greatest asset. We cannot afford to leave the brightest, most resourceful part of our society behind while many regions still face unacceptably high levels of youth unemployment.

The EU Youth Employment Initiative directly provides support and job opportunities to those young people who need a helping hand into the labour market or into further education and training. So far, 1.4 million young people have directly benefitted from this support and more will follow. The Initiative allows Member States to fund targeted measures through their Youth Guarantee schemes and supports their efforts for policy reforms to address youth challenges.

”

Marianne Thyssen

European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs,
Skills and Labour Mobility

1. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1176>

How the YEI works

The funding provided by the YEI is used in the implementation of the Youth Employment Package², and in particular national Youth Guarantee³ (YG) schemes in the EU Member States that benefit from the YEI.

The YEI is able to reach out directly to NEETs and support them on a personal level. The “offers” that are funded by the YEI and provided to young people through YG schemes range from apprenticeships and training courses to subsidies for employers and start-up support, depending on the specific needs of each young person.

In this way the YEI complements the support from other EU financial resources such as the European Social Fund⁴ (ESF), which reaches beyond individuals and helps to bring about educational and employment reforms.

Of the total EUR 6.4 billion budget of the YEI, half is provided by a specific EU budget line and the other half comes from the ESF.

What are Youth Guarantee schemes?

Youth Guarantee (YG) schemes are tailored national programmes that aim to ensure all young people under the age of 25 (or 29 in some countries) receive a good quality, concrete offer of support within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed.

To achieve this, the YG includes direct measures targeting young people, as well as comprehensive, longer-term reforms of employment and education systems, based on wide-ranging partnerships between all relevant stakeholders.

The YEI's achievements so far

While the YEI was only launched in 2013, its positive impact on the lives of young people across Europe can already be felt.

By providing financial support to the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes in the 20 beneficiary Member States, the YEI has contributed to the success of the Youth Guarantee schemes as well as a significant drop in the average EU youth unemployment rate since 2013. Some key YEI achievements include:

6.4 


billion euros

of funding provided by the YEI

4.7 

billion euros

of the total YEI funding has
already been allocated to
concrete YEI actions

1.4  **million**
young people

have been supported by
YEI-funded actions

 **404,500**
young people

have completed a
YEI-supported operation

In October 2016 the Commission published a detailed report on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the YEI in the three years since their launch.⁵

2. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1176>

3. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

4. <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp>

5. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1176&newsId=2629&furtherNews=yes>

Measures supported by the YEI

The majority of Member State beneficiaries implement a range of measures under the YEI, all revolving around the idea of supporting young people to take up employment, education or training. Across these measures there is a strong focus on providing funding for first job experiences and on the provision of traineeship and apprenticeships. More than half of the Member States also support young entrepreneurs or provide job and training mobility measures. The most popular types of measures are shown below.

Type of measure	Share of EU Member States implementing measure
First job experience	83 %
Traineeships and apprenticeships	72 %
Vocational education and training courses	65 %
Job and training mobility	59 %
Start-up support for young entrepreneurs	53 %
Wage and recruitment subsidies	47 %
Second chance programmes for early school leavers	44 %
Other (including job counselling and mentoring, national and regional civic service and activities to include early school leavers)	39 %
Reduction of non-wage labour costs	24 %

Source: *The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on, staff working document, European Commission (2016)*

Changes the YEI has brought about so far

As well as supporting NEETs directly, in order to ensure the relevant measures are put in place YEI funding has been a driver for a number of recently launched policy changes in the eligible Member States and regions:

- Overhaul of youth employment and labour market policies
- Structural and educational reforms
- New forms of cooperation between public and private employment services
- Scaling-up of existing programmes addressing youth unemployment
- Improved quality of services

The YEI until 2020

When the YEI was launched in 2013, 114 regions were eligible for support in 20 EU Member States. Based on 2015 youth unemployment data, 89 regions would be eligible in 15 EU Member States. This reflects the overall decrease in youth unemployment at EU level, although the problem still persists in a number of regions and Member States where youth unemployment remains at very high levels.

Based on the encouraging first results of the Initiative, in September 2016 the European Commission proposed to increase the YEI budget resource for 2017-2020 by EUR 2 billion, taking the total amount for the YEI to **EUR 8.4 billion** since it was launched in 2013. This proposal is currently under discussion by the European Parliament and the Council.

Examples of YEI-supported actions

Learning the job first-hand

On-the-job training helps Greece's unemployed young people find work

The Voucher Scheme is Greece's flagship programme for tackling youth unemployment and the country's lengthy school-to-work transition. The Scheme offers 18-29 year old NEETs the chance to take part in a tailored package combining training courses with an on-the-job traineeship. Through this training, they can develop skills employers are looking for, learn how to apply them in a real-world setting and gain valuable work experience. The Scheme prioritises four key areas – services; technology and information; agriculture; and processing and commerce – and also aims to place NEETs in traineeships that could lead to a job offer.

"Combining training with on-the-job experience has been particularly effective in rendering Greece's NEETs employable," Martha Triantafyllou, a representative of the ESF Actions Implementation Authority on the Youth Guarantee Committee, explains. "It's an added value of the Voucher Scheme and it's helping to generate a skilful and productive young workforce."

Christos Markou, 25, discovered the programme through a friend. "I'd been anticipating this programme for more than a year because I wanted real workplace experience, but I was struggling to find an internship. The Voucher Scheme gave me the opportunity to do that."

"Thanks to the programme, I've been working in wholesale distribution in the tobacco industry for nearly two years now," he adds. "I've been given projects of my own to supervise and it's great to feel I'm trusted by my colleagues. My confidence has also grown – I think I could be a good candidate for future jobs in Greece and across Europe now."

So far, the Voucher Scheme has seen 10-15 % of the young people it's supported receive a job offer from their traineeship employer or another similar company. 785 training courses have been held and with the programme ongoing, many more will be held – and many more young people supported – in the future.

“
The best moment was
when I learned I was
going to be offered a
full-time job contract
after my internship. ”

Christos Markou
Project participant



Name	Entrance Training Voucher in the private sector for young people aged 18-24 for acquiring job experience (Voucher Scheme)	Country	Greece
Duration	2014 - present	Budget	43,200,000 EUR
Implemented by Executive Structure of NSRF – Division of Employment and Social Economy			

9,747

unemployed young people
have been supported by the
Voucher Scheme

Find out more....

Voucher Vocational Training: <http://voucher.gov.gr/>

ESF Actions Implementation Authority: <http://www.eyekt.gr>

Putting young people through their paces

Young Italians demonstrate their soft skills to potential employers through physical activities

Boot Camp for the Job is an innovative project in the Veneto region of Italy, which brings together NEETs looking for work and companies looking for employees in a 'boot camp' setting. While the NEETs complete a fun and collaborative outdoor training circuit, including challenges such as military crawls, employers get the chance to see how each participant approaches the activities. They're also able to find out more about the participants later through one-to-one interviews.

Santo Romano, who is responsible for the YEI at Veneto Region, describes the rationale behind the project. "Companies can find it difficult to identify the right employees, particularly when they're looking for soft skills like collaboration, problem-solving and communication. The project helps them to assess the personal qualities and individual approaches of the participants, which is difficult to do through traditional methods."

It's an approach that has proved popular with both stakeholders and NEETs. Companies, training institutions and universities have united to support, promote and participate in the project, while

NEETs like Edoardo Piccioni, 25, have gained experience in an enjoyable and sociable environment. "I decided to get involved because I was looking for a job," he explains. "I thought it would be a great chance to meet several companies in a non-formal environment."

Through the Boot Camp, he was able to take part in his first interview. "I always thought that a job interview would be stressful, but I felt very relaxed when it was done. I learned that it is important to be yourself when you're in front of an interviewer."

The CVs of 500 NEETs have been identified as potential project beneficiaries and of these, 300 have participated in Boot Camps. 45 employers have also attended, giving those young people the chance to demonstrate their skills, gain experience and, potentially, find work.

“

I am very proud to have seen lots of different youths find concrete job opportunities after taking part in the Boot Camp.

”

Santo Romano,
YEI coordinator



Name	Boot Camp for the Job	Country	Italy
Duration	2016	Budget	40,000 EUR
Implemented by Veneto Region			

239

job interviews for young people have taken place through the project

Find out more....

Youth Guarantee Veneto Region: <http://www.garanzia Giovan Veneto.it/>

Helping young people take control of their futures

Young people in Poland receive both practical and emotional support to kick-start their journey into the labour market

The Equal in the Labour Market project helped NEETs aged 18-24 in Poland to access the labour market, particularly those who were in difficult family- or social-related situations. As well as giving them the chance to gain new competences and qualifications through training courses and traineeships, providing personal and emotional support was a key element of the project.

“Due to the difficult and unique situations of each participant, we started by identifying their specific needs and abilities,” Elżbieta Fydrych, Manager of Project Coordination, shares. “We then provided psychological support to help them overcome barriers preventing them from accessing the labour market and to teach them how to actively seek jobs.”

Eunika Zająć, 22, has fond memories of taking part in the programme. “I come from a small village where there are problems with communication. Thanks to the programme, I was able to gain a professional qualification as an office worker and take part in computer and entrepreneurship classes. But the most important thing was my six-month traineeship, which resulted in a job offer.”

“The people I met on the way, both participants and project staff, were wonderful, open and helpful. I still have contact with them now and I know I’ll be able to count on their support for a long time to come.”

The achievements of the Equal in the Labour Market project are impressive. 3,760 young people have been supported by the programme so far. Of these, 3,040 have completed six-month traineeships, 3,508 have achieved professional qualifications and 1,402 are now in employment. But for Elżbieta, it’s the achievements of the young people making up these statistics that are particularly important.

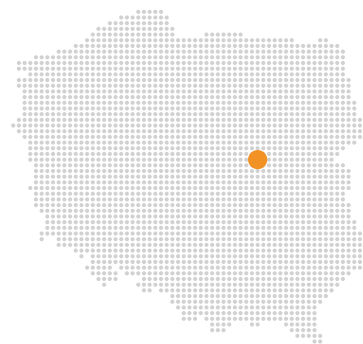
“I’m really proud of those youngsters,” she concludes. “They did not have the support of family or their environment. Until taking part in the project nobody believed they could cope with a job, but they’re doing really well.”

“

The programme has helped fulfil the dreams of a young girl with no prospects.

”

Eunika Zająć
Programme participant



Name	Equal in the Labour Market	Country	Poland
Duration	2014 - 2016	Budget	13,648,000 EUR
Implemented by Voluntary Labour Corps			

3,760

young people have participated in activities under the programme so far

Find out more....

Voluntary Labour Corps: http://ohp.pl/?page_id=570

Joining efforts to reach young people on the ground

Navigation Centres are 'one-stop-shops' for tackling youth unemployment in Sweden's Blekinge region

Connecting effectively with NEETs is a challenge for any project seeking to reduce youth unemployment. The Youth of Blekinge 'Take Off' project aims to overcome this through their Navigation Centres, which have been established in five locations across the region. These Centres engage with young people on their level and offer a place where they can drop in for career advice, training courses and to make connections with employers.

"The focus is on providing different methods to aid the school-to-work transition so that there's a suitable method for each individual," Magnus von Schneck, manager of the project, says. "All NEETs should find the Navigation Centres attractive enough to visit of their own free will."

As well as helping NEETs directly, the project has brought together stakeholders at local and regional level who are working to reduce youth unemployment. "All the municipalities in Blekinge, the Public Employment Service, and the regional and county councils have teamed up," Magnus shares. "They've expanded their efforts and recognised that they can have a greater impact through a joint effort."

Linnéa, 21, is one of the beneficiaries of this collaboration. "I decided to get involved because it sounded like fun," she explains. "I learned how to write my CV, where to look for jobs and much more. It also gave me a bigger social network."

As well as gaining practical knowledge, Linnéa experienced benefits on a personal level. "I learned how to talk to new people, which has made me more confident. I also learned that I can reach my goals if I just keep fighting."

Thanks to the project, 641 young people so far have moved on to further studies or into employment. This success has contributed to a significant drop in the number of NEETs in Blekinge, a trend that is likely to endure as the project continues.

“

It has been great to see young men and women walking the path towards the labour market and a brighter future!

”

Magnus von Schneck
Project Manager



Name	The Youth of Blekinge 'Take Off'	Country	Sweden
Duration	2015 - 2017	Budget	5,298,000 EUR
Implemented by Region Blekinge			

1,327

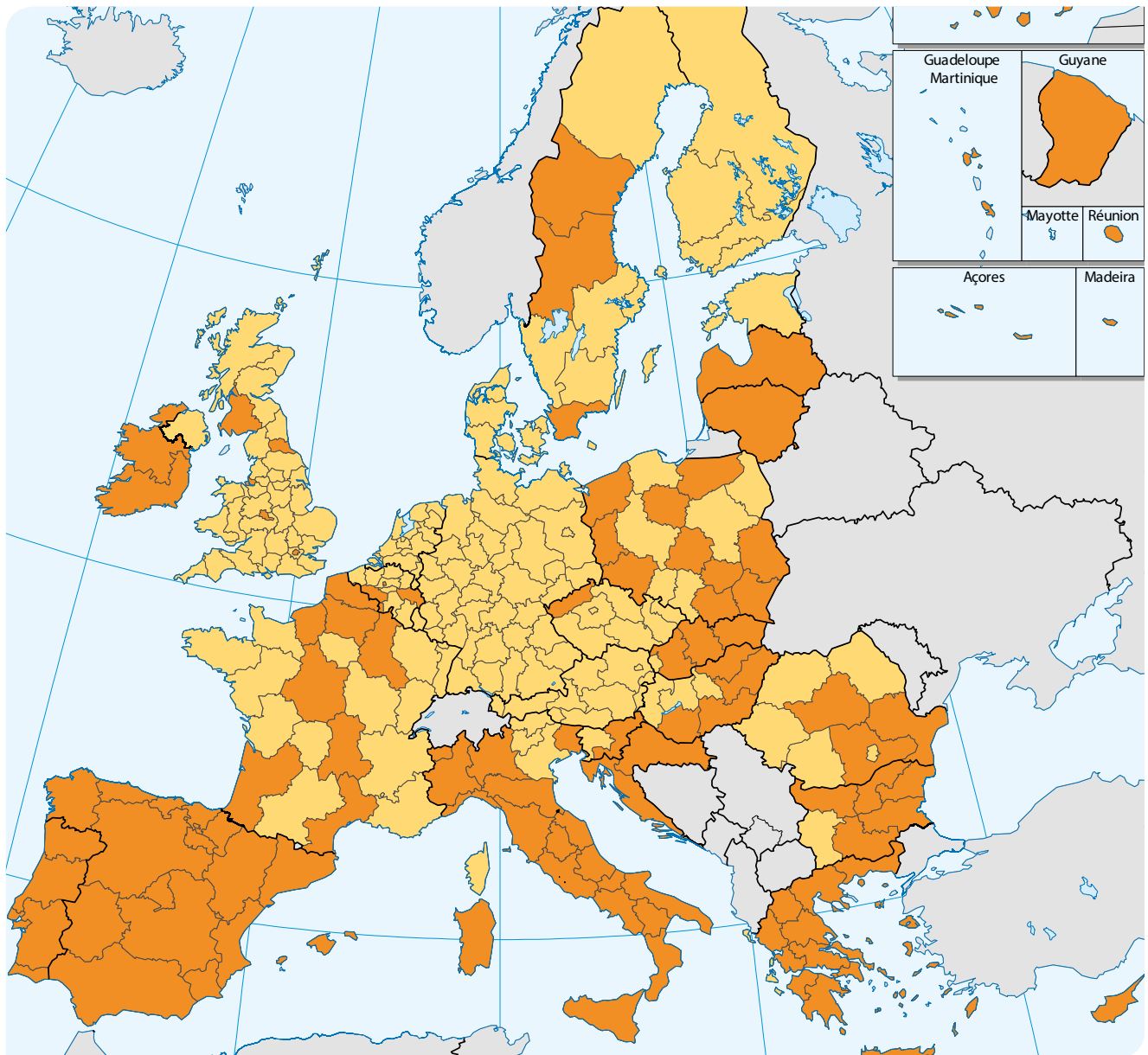
young people have received support through the Navigation Centres

Find out more....

Sölvesborgs Navigation Centre: www.solvesborg.se/navigatorcentrum
 Karlshamn Navigation Centre: www.karlshamn.se/navigatorcentrum
 Ronneby Navigation Centre: www.ronneby.se/sv/kommun-politik/kommunens-organisation/forvaltningar/kommunledningsforvaltningen/navigatorcentrum-ronneby/

Olofström Navigation Centre: <http://olofstrom.se/navigatorcentrum>
 Karlskrona Navigation Centre: www.karlskrona.se/navigatorcentrum

EU regions currently benefitting from the YEI (since 2013)



Find out more

- Youth Employment Initiative: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/yEI>
- European Commission Report "The Youth Guarantee and the YEI Three Years On", October 2016: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1176&newsId=2629&furtherNews=yes>
- Study on the First Results of the YEI (2014-2015) – Final Report: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7931>

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This brochure describes how the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) supports measures aiming to reduce youth unemployment in the worst affected areas of the EU. It explains the relationship between the YEI and Youth Guarantee schemes, shows how the YEI complements other EU funding instruments such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and highlights the YEI's achievements so far. The brochure also showcases a selection of the varied projects that are benefiting from YEI funding. Including personal experiences from both project organisers and the young people that took part, these stories demonstrate how YEI support is having a direct and positive impact on the lives of young Europeans across the EU.

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