



POSITION PAPER

TWO YEARS AFTER: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

ADOPTED BY THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM BOARD IN AUGUST 2015

The European Youth Forum has always welcomed the ambition of the Youth Guarantee (YG) to provide all young people, especially the most disadvantaged, with a quality and accompanied transition to the labour market. Youth Forum views the Youth Guarantee as an active labour market measure and not as a job-creation tool. To get young people into quality jobs, the economy needs to create new jobs overall, thus supportive demand side economic and fiscal measures are also needed.

We believe, however, that, two years after the endorsement of the Council Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee, it is important to acknowledge its current limits in order to make the YG work beyond mere festive declarations of intent. The evaluation of the YG is crucial as its failure would be a wasted opportunity to impact positively on the long-term personal and professional development of young people but also on society as a whole.

The European Youth Forum conducted an extensive consultation with its Member Organisations that are closely following the progression of the Youth Guarantee on the national level. Based on this input, we urge Member States and the European Union to address the following areas of concern by implementing the following recommendations:

1) We deplore the implementation of counter-productive measures related to youth employment and social inclusion of young people.

We believe that some decisions such as cutting access to social benefits for young people or decreasing the share of national budgets dedicated to education are detrimental to the successful implementation of the YG. These decisions dramatically lead to the loss of confidence of young people in the state and in public services, which is a prerequisite for the success of the YG.

We therefore call for:

- The YG to be part of a horizontal policy and a comprehensive approach to youth employment and social inclusion as it cannot be enough in itself to solve the issue of youth unemployment;
- More structural reforms, including support to the education system, to complement the implementation of the YG;
- Greater commitment of Member States to implementing the YG with sufficient national funding even in countries that are not eligible to receive extra EU-funds.
- Parallel measures to the YG at the national level to stimulate job creation for young people;
- Better cooperation between the different state entities competent on the issue of youth employment (Federal, regional, etc.) to avoid inequalities among regions;

2) We identified the difficulty of reaching out to young people in general.

The registration on the YG scheme through public employment services is often the only way for young people to have access to the YG. This is a problem, as

employment services and their understanding of *service* and *job provision* tend to be quite far from young people's real needs. Moreover, young people do not always know how to get in touch with employment services or have lost trust in these institutions.

We therefore call for:

- One-stop-shops that can ensure that all services and guidance are available for young people at one location;
- A better cooperation between employment services and the education system, with the possibility for instance for teachers to be trained by the public employment services about the job research process and the YG schemes;
- A better communication of the scheme in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and in particular youth organisations;
- The possibility for projects run by youth organisations and youth workers to benefit from YG funding to help to reach out to more young people;

3) We identified the difficulty for the YG to prevent the social exclusion of young people by targeting the most vulnerable, far from the labour market and from other institutions such as education or training providers.

Member States should also consider as part of their YG schemes the need to give means to young people to be socially included.

We therefore call for:

- The implementation of inclusive employment measures as part of the YG, which would favour a preventive approach, based on personalised services and guidance, instead of a punitive one; basic social services, education and youth work for instance are important elements towards preventing young people's social exclusion and encouraging their participation in the labour market and in society.
- More incentives for young people to stay registered in the public employment services, a prerequisite for them to access the YG, by offering tailored services and guaranteeing them with minimum income support during the transitions periods;
- Special and innovative measures for young long-term unemployed and for young people with specific needs in the framework of the YG, for instance for young people leaving care;
- Better identification of young people in the most vulnerable situations, with, for instance, a national cartography of NEETs to better reach out to them;
- Strong involvement of youth organisations to reach out to the most vulnerable young people. Thanks to their network and their daily work, youth organisations can be intermediaries between young people and public employment services;

4) We are concerned about the low quality of offers under the YG schemes and consequently, the inability of the YG to contribute to long term and sustainable solutions for young people.

We believe that offers under the YG (such as internships or apprenticeships) can be great stepping-stones for young people into the labour market but Member States need to make sure that these short-term offers are not substitutes for quality employment. It should be also noted that increased supply of low quality offers and jobs suppresses overall demand in the economy.

We therefore call for:

- A clear definition at the European and the national level of what a quality offer means and entails in terms of social protection, minimum income, stability, employment protection, employment rights, mental and physical health;
- Strengthening vocational education and training systems by improving both the quality and the supply of apprenticeships;
- A genuine implementation of the provisions of quality internships and apprenticeships as part of the YG schemes; a decent remuneration of interns, as requested in the European Quality Charter on internships and apprenticeships of the European Youth Forum,¹ so that the most vulnerable young people are not discriminated in their access to the labour market;

5) We identified a huge diversity of measures under the title of the ‘Youth Guarantee’ requiring close monitoring and evaluation mechanism at the European and the national level.

Some countries have up to 36 measures, and some other countries have only repackaged already existing measures under the label of the YG.

We therefore call for:

- An efficient monitoring system at the national and the European level to ensure qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the implementation of the schemes; interviewing young people benefiting from the YG as part of the qualitative monitoring;
- The priority to be given to long-term measures and the allocation of enough financial resources in the coming budgets to ensure the sustainability of the YG;
- The involvement of young people in the monitoring process, for instance with the participation of ‘youth inspectors’ to assist labour inspectors in monitoring the YG;
- The reduction of bureaucracy in accessing YG measures and more flexibility to adapt to the needs of the young person or the needs of the YG provider to have a better chance of achieving long-term employment;

¹ <http://qualityinternships.eu/>

6) We deplore the lack of involvement and cooperation between all the stakeholders involved in youth policies and youth employment in particular.

Career guidance services for young people and the offers under the YG will be more relevant if they are based on a quality 'People-Public-Private partnerships'.

We therefore call for:

- A cross-sectorial approach to the YG; the YG should be integrated in national employment plans, but also in youth plans and education plans;
- Raising the 'social responsibility' of business organisations related to the YG, raising the awareness of the role they can have to ensure its efficient implementation;
- Encouraging SMEs to hire young people under the YG schemes through wage subsidies when employing young job-seekers or, for instance, via social security tax exemption for a period of two years when employing young job seekers on long-term contract; the participation of SMEs in the YG schemes would also be encouraged by decreasing bureaucracy of receiving support from the YG;
- Increasing the links between the education system and the business sector to ensure the quality of internships, trainings and apprenticeships, under the YG;
- Raising awareness of the role the NGO sector can have to ensure the efficient implementation of the YG in line with quality criteria;
- Public authorities, especially municipalities, to make use of social clause in public procurement rules set by European Commission, to request procurers to respect labour standards and to make provisions to offer quality jobs based on social considerations to vulnerable target groups such as young people and long term unemployed.