



Youth Guarantee in Western Balkans



RegionalCooperationCouncil



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This leaflet aims at explaining the Youth Guarantee in EU and provides recommendations for its introduction and enhancement in the Western Balkans.

EU Youth Guarantee

Youth Guarantee in the European countries was launched by the European Commission in 2013 and reinforced in 2020 as a political commitment of all EU Member States to give **all young people under the age of 30** a **good quality offer** of

- ▷ **employment**
- ▷ **continued education**
- ▷ **an apprenticeship or**
- ▷ **a traineeship**

within 4 months of either **leaving formal education** or **becoming unemployed**.

EU Youth Guarantee Success Story

In about seven years' time, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were approximately **1.7 million FEWER young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs)** across the EU. Youth **UNEMPLOYMENT FELL** to a **RECORD LOW of 14.9% by February 2020**, before pandemic-related lockdowns were put in place across the EU.

Though an improving macroeconomic context certainly played a role, evidence suggests that the Youth Guarantee had a major transformative effect. **Over 24 million young people** who were once registered in **Youth Guarantee** schemes received an **offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship**.¹

North Macedonia is the first economy from the Western Balkans that has introduced a form of Youth Guarantee in 2018. There has been an almost 8.9% reduction in the share of long-term youth unemployment between 2017 and 2019.



¹ Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>



Youth Guarantee in the European Union

The EU Youth Guarantee was established through the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 and has received strong political backing since then. The European Council endorsed the Youth Guarantee during the June 2013 summit in response to the economic crisis, subsequently requesting its continuation with the conclusions of 15 December 2016.

In 2020, the European Union has further developed its successful policy instrument and has strategically strengthened the Youth Guarantee. It includes now youth in the age group 25-29 and reaches out to the most disadvantaged youth living in remote areas and belonging to ethnic minorities.

It builds on 4 phases of policy intervention and 3 cross-cutting enablers. Based on this common structure, the scheme is organised in accordance with national, regional and local circumstances, paying attention to the gender and diversity of the young people:

Four **phases of policy intervention** of the revised Youth Guarantee according to the Council recommendation of 30 October 2020 are as follows:

- ▷ **Phase 1: Mapping and early intervention** – Youth Guarantee should be designed and implemented jointly through partnerships involving governmental institutions at central, regional and local level, the private sector business sector, education and training institutions, NGOs and youth associations, given the cross-cutting nature of youth employment policies.
- ▷ **Phase 2: Outreach** to unregistered NEETs – involving design of the outreach programmes for the hard-to reach NEETs, identifying the best way to involve partnerships between the social

services, employment services, community groups and youth NGOs to reach out to marginalised NEET groups.

- ▷ **Phase 3: Preparation** – new activation measures; prevention measures to tackle early leaving from education and training by disadvantaged; strengthening of the existing, and more intensive measures of active employment policy for less advantaged young people such as NEETs with low and medium levels of education.
- ▷ **Phase 4: Offer** – labour market integration through making quality offers to young people.

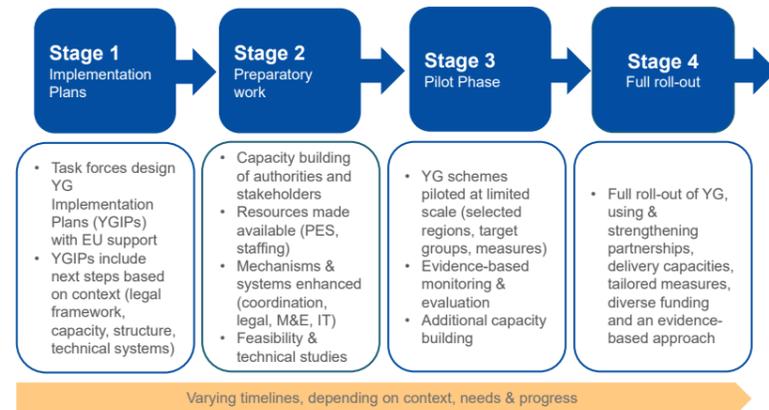
Effective use of the below cross-cutting enablers as is key for successfully implementing the scheme and achieving the delivery of quality offers to all young people.

- a. **Mobilising Partnerships:** Strengthening partnerships across government, providers and stakeholders, including employers, education and training institutions, social partners, youth work services, youth organisations, CSOs; promote protocols for cooperation; promote integrated service models, e.g. one-stop-shops.
- b. **Improving data collection and monitoring:** Strengthening systems to monitor long-term, sustainable labour market integration; encourage sharing of tracking, profiling and follow-up data between Youth Guarantee partners, while respecting data protection rules.
- c. **Make full & optimal use of funds:** Dedication of adequate national resources to the implementation of the policy measures; make full and optimal use of the current Union instruments and other Union funding sources available to Member States.

Youth Guarantee in the European Union

The Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans, published by the European Commission (EC) in October 2020, proposes the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes in the Western Balkans in four phases throughout the 2021-27 period. The different stages are described below:

Flagship 10 of the EIP for the Western Balkans



- ▷ **Stage 1: Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans**
- ▷ **Stage 2: Preparatory work** -- capacity building of stakeholders and authorities, resources made available, mechanism and systems enhanced, feasibility and technical studies
- ▷ **Stage 3: Pilot phase** -- to test the measures that have been planned on the new intake of NEETs who have been identified through the outreach programme in a selected number of local authority areas
- ▷ **Stage 4: Rollout to full implementation** – based on the evaluation of the pilot phase, modifications to be made to the Youth Guarantee plan, and commence with its full implementation

Stage 1 will commence once the WB6 commit to set up inter-ministerial task forces involving relevant stakeholders to design Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans (YGIPs), which are a key basis for implementing the Youth Guarantee.

Before implementing Stages 1-4 during 2021-27, a Stage 0 serves to build awareness and political agreement notably through technical-level regional and bilateral meetings and a political-level meeting. At the ministerial meeting of 8 July 2021, the ministers of employment and social affairs of the WB6 have endorsed the Youth Guarantee for the WB.

Detailed individual WB6 road maps related to youth employment and Youth Guarantee programmes, modelled on the EU Youth Guarantee, are set out in the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) ESAP2 Study on Youth Employment (www.esap.online)

While these individual roadmaps are important analytical inputs, they cannot replace or prejudice the individual economies' Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans.

Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkans - EU support

- [EU Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkan, which also refers to IPA III](#)

Youth employment policy recommendations

Upgrade Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs)

- ▷ Offer greater financial allocations for ALMPs
- ▷ Provide careers advice and job-search counselling services through independent provider organisations
- ▷ Provide business start-up advice and mentoring, start-up grants and loans targeted at higher education graduates in partnership with financial institutions and European agencies and institutions
- ▷ Provide subsidies to SMEs that hire young trainees or apprentices
- ▷ Improve childcare services and parental benefits for young mothers returning to work

Upgrade training and retraining programmes

- ▷ Intensify programmes for vocational training. Support education and training institutions to deliver practical courses and workshops
- ▷ Offer short-term booster training courses for graduates from VET schools in partnership with employers and vocational training centres
- ▷ Encourage schools and private businesses to collaborate to provide training and apprenticeships
- ▷ Provide focused measures for young people from disadvantaged families and ethnic minorities
- ▷ Raise awareness among youth through social media about available opportunities for NEETs to engage in education or training

Upgrade PES capacities

- ▷ Ensure adequate staff capacity and appoint dedicated youth outreach workers
- ▷ Develop integrated, individualised, case management for unemployed youth
- ▷ Carry out specialised surveys of marginalised youth to map the NEET population
- ▷ Deploy mobile PES units to reach out to NEETs
- ▷ Provide one-to-one counselling and remedial training programmes for younger NEETs
- ▷ Design targeted programmes for different NEET age groups

Improve co-ordination of national stakeholders

- ▷ Develop effective coordination and partnership across policy fields including employment, education, youth, gender equality and social affairs
- ▷ Encourage and support partnership working between CSWs and PES and the potential for establishing one-stop shops for young people
- ▷ Support collaboration between PES and Youth Organisations to provide information to unregistered NEETs
- ▷ Foster the exchange of information across all levels of government and policy areas (employment, education, housing and health)
- ▷ Build networks of practice between relevant actors (government agencies, public agencies, youth organisations, business associations, education institutions, housing associations, health provider associations)



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