



Youth Guarantee in Western Balkans

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**.



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

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.

Youth Guarantee for Western Balkans

Combining the approaches of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, the Study on Youth Employment in the Western Balkans commissioned by the Regional Cooperation Council's (RCC) Employment & Social Affairs Platform (ESAP 2) project is recommending the following possible path to the Youth Guarantee in the Western Balkan economies, tailored to each economy context:

- ▷ **Phase 0: Awareness raising, Political Commitment and Creation of a Task Force** – includes mobilisation of political will, high-level promotion of concept, and establishment of a Task Force for development of the concepts and operational guidelines for the scheme.
- ▷ **Phase 1: Mapping and institutional and policy design** - 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: Operational preparation** – including capacity building in public employment services, 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 4a: Offer – pilot programme** – 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.
- ▷ **Phase 4b: Offer - 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

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
- ▷ EU funding through IPA III funding can support the introduction of the Youth Guarantee.

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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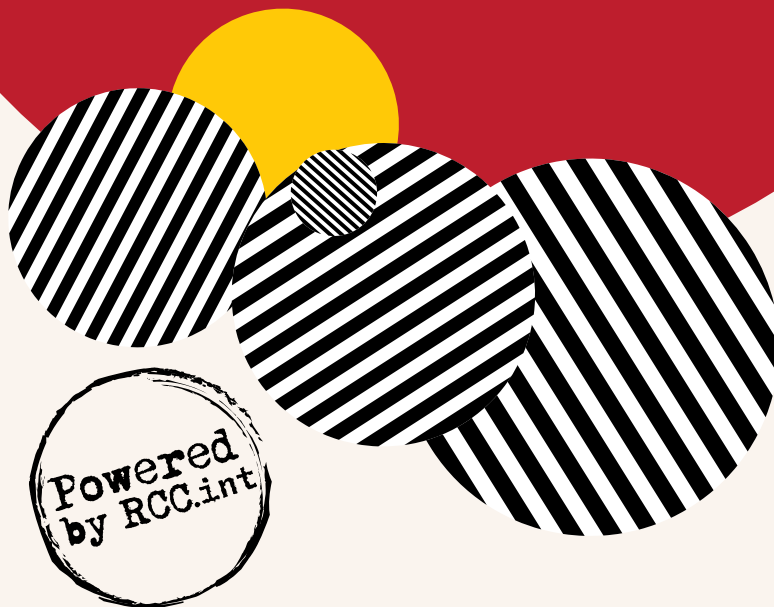
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