



European Year of Youth



Youth Employment Magazine

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2022: the European Year of Youth

The Commission welcomes the political agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council to make 2022 the European Year of Youth. Following the announcement by President **von der Leyen** in her [2021 State of the Union address](#) that 2022 should be a year dedicated to those who have dedicated so much to others, the Commission submitted in October [its formal proposal](#) to designate 2022 the European Year of Youth to the co-legislators.

The Commission will coordinate throughout 2022 a range of activities in close contact with the European Parliament, the Member States, regional and local authorities, youth organisations and young people themselves. The initiatives being developed under the European Year of Youth will be supported by €8 million from Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the European Year of Youth dedicated top-up decided by the budgetary authority for 2022. Other Union programmes and instruments will also significantly contribute to the objectives and activities of the Year. Young Europeans will benefit from many opportunities to gain knowledge, skills, and competences for their professional development, and to strengthen their civic engagement to shape Europe's future.



Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinias** said: «*This agreement is a key building block in our policy for the youth. The budget dedicated to this European Year will support our flagship actions. With 2022 European Year of Youth, we are supporting young Europeans to defend and promote freedom, values, opportunities and solidarity. We owe it to the generations who suffered most in the pandemic and now need to take back their lives*».



Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel** said: «*I thank the co-legislators for having found an agreement on the European Year of Youth in a record time. We all understand the importance of putting young people in the spotlight and celebrate their resilience after two very challenging years. I invite all young Europeans to participate in the numerous engagements, initiatives and actions that we will launch as from January 2022. We want to make their voice heard and to inform the decisions we will take for their future. We want this Year to lead into concrete actions that will last well beyond 2022. Together, we will make this Year a success*».

To honour, support and engage with young people at all levels, the European Year of Youth will pursue **four objectives**:

- Renewing the positive perspectives for young people, with a particular focus on the negative effects the COVID-19 pandemic had on them, while highlighting how the **green and digital transitions** and other Union policies offer opportunities for young people and for the society at large;
- Supporting young people, including through youth work, especially young people with fewer opportunities, from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds or belonging to vulnerable and marginalised groups, to acquire relevant knowledge and competences and thus become **active and engaged citizens**, inspired by a European sense of belonging;

- Supporting young people to acquire a **better understanding of, and actively promoting the various opportunities available to them**, be it from the EU, national, regional or local level, to support their personal, social, economic and professional development.
- **Mainstreaming youth policy across all relevant Union policy fields** in line with the [EU Youth Strategy 2019 – 2027](#) to encourage that a youth perspective is brought into policy-making at all levels.

The impact and legacy of all activities and engagement opportunities should be long-lasting, beyond 2022. While existing EU programmes dedicated to youth, like [Erasmus+](#) and the [European Solidarity Corps](#), will obviously play a central role in the implementation and funding of the activities, the European Year of Youth aims at being cross-sectoral and building on all EU policies.

The Year will also be linked [Conference on the future of Europe](#), where young people play a pivotal role. One-third of each of the European Citizens' Panels is made up of young people, from 16-25 years, and an equal proportion of young people are among the Panel ambassadors', who relay recommendations to Conference Plenaries and discuss with MEPs, national politicians, Commissioners, and other plenary members from EU bodies and civil society. The President of the European Youth Forum is also a member of the Conference Plenary.

Next Steps

The political agreement reached by the European Parliament, Council and Commission is now subject to formal approval by the European Parliament and the Council.

The European year of Youth is planned to be launched in January under the French Presidency.

The full programme of activities and further information will be available on the [Youth Portal](#).

By the end of 2023, the Commission will submit a report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the initiatives, which shall also include ideas for further common endeavours in the field of youth to cement the legacy of the Year.



Tirana European Youth Capital 2022: 8 Programs and Thousands of Opportunities for Youth Empowerment and Activism

Tirana is a vibrant city that has undergone a rapid urban transformation in recent years becoming a lively and inclusive metropolis in the region. The city has a lot to offer to young people's cultural and leisure life, such as art galleries, exhibitions, concerts, sports, outdoor activities, fine to mid-range and cheap dining, amazing nightlife, shopping, and many more. Youth of the city is always the driving force behind innovation, social development initiatives, active lifestyle, arts and culture.



On 21 November 2019, an amazing event happened to the youth of this capital city. Tirana won the “European Youth Capital” title for 2022 (EYC 2022) - a title given by the European Youth Forum (European Youth Forum) to empower young people, promote their participation in society and strengthen European identity.

The National Youth Congress of Albania, an umbrella organization of youth organizations with the aim of exchanging information, highlighting youth issues as well as advocating and lobbying for the resolution of these issues, in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana, designed and created a macro-program for Tirana EYC 2022.

From public transport and infrastructure to socio-cultural programmes, education and participation in policy-making, the title European Youth Capital invites cities to rethink how to engage and involve young people in all aspects of city life.

Tirana EYC 2022 brings 8 programs and thousands of opportunities for young people's empowerment and participation in diverse activities. Under the slogan Activate Youth, these programs serve to give priority to various areas that concern youth.

Furthermore, this program aims to empower youth by creating new opportunities and giving them a European dimension. It aims to bring about positive change, encourage active participation, transform the city into an international meeting point as well as create networks and synergies among young people from all over Europe.

In the focus of this macro-program lie 8 programs: Youth Makes Creative Economy and Innovation, Youth Creates Culture, Youth Develops Capacity, Youth Participates, Youth Diversity, Youth are Europeans, Youth and Eco-Health, Youth Spaces.

To learn more about it, visit the official website www.tiranaeyc2022.al.



Director's Editorial

Dear All,

Happy new Year! And what a year we have in front of us!

As you know, 2022 has been officially recognised, following the announcement of the President Ursula Von der Leyen, as the European Year of Youth, «a year dedicated to those who have dedicated so much to others», as the European Commission said.



We also welcome our colleagues from Tirana, the National Youth Congress of Albania in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana has been designed by the European Youth Forum as the “European Youth Capital” for 2022 (EYC 2022), congratulations first and good luck for this challenge coinciding also with the European Year of Youth (EYY2022).

I am sure this is for the Fund for Youth Employment, and in general for the Regional Funds thus including our brothers and sisters of the Regional Cooperation, a great opportunity. I am sure that we will create innovative and fruitful collaborations, starting from positive insights, best practices and success stories. The reason is simple: for 12 months, our main target – Youth – will be celebrated around Europe with initiatives, events (hopefully in presence), debates, etc.

I believe that we must run and be on the crest of this wave, we have to be an active part!

Therefore, I am of the opinion that we should start having a look at the Youth Portal, opened some days ago, not only to see what is already there, but especially to understand together how we can go beyond. Not because we are better than others. Simply because our Projects need to continue being further stimulated, also by external hints, as this is.

I also totally agree with the point of view of some commissioners, which underlined that Youth is the generation that suffered the most during this never-ending pandemic. We all have been suffering, among lockdowns, restrictions, lack of socialisation, etc. But I think that younger people have been a little more deprived of their serenity than 'us grown-ups'. Perhaps simply because they lacked someone who could lead them. We have all made efforts, but we have all been limited. And maybe we have not always managed, in the difficulty of the moment, to give the youngest really positive stimuli and hints. I don't think it's our fault, because everything has stopped. But now it's time to restart, and we can, and want to, do it great. We all deserve to get back our positiveness (I am not talking about the result of a Covid test...) and the entire Fund Operator is convinced that we have in our hands a big possibility, that is why we are ready to support all of you.

Our Online Magazines, for example, have always been a tool, and they can be an active mean you can use for free for that occasion. What's better than having a free place to make your initiatives known and disseminated? So, please, if you have any idea, we are ready to exploit our Mags for that.

Of course, I don't want to forget the rest. We are almost ready to define with you the next steps, especially in terms of editorial lines and topics, but at the same time, we can reason together to understand how we could create a direct link, since as I already said, finding solution for Youth is already our main activity (and objective).

Talking about this specific issue, as you see it is all linked together. As per our Friends, starting from our Tom, we have asked to follow the main theme we are promoting, but you can simply read his words to understand the sense of my reasoning when I say that we are not going "off topic". At the contrary: as anyone can see leafing through the pages, it is all in line. Therefore, as usual, my compliments to our Projects for their engagement. Some of them are increasing the number of contributions and that is exactly what we expected. This means that our Mag is an important tool for dissemination.

I am sure we will have other occasion to exchange our thoughts about this themes... we will shortly come back to you! In this YE MAG you may found the Press Release of the EC related to the EC initiative of the EYY2022, a first presentation of the Tirana EYC 2022 and other interesting articles from external supporters and the ones form our "YE family" projects. To conclude please save the date 28, 29 and 30 March 2022; we will be shortly back to you in providing for more information about the proposed activities "Empowering Young People Across Europe".

For the moment, I am leaving you to our Mag, but also remembering you to start having a look here: https://europa.eu/youth/year-of-youth_en.

Gian Luca Bombarda
The Fund Director



European Year of Youth: Carpe Diem or Caveat Emptor for Young People?

The year 2022 has been dedicated to Youth. The launch of the 'European Year of Youth' (EYY) by the European Commission President, frames youth as a major policy priority for the coming year. In her 'State of the Union' address to the European Parliament last September, President Ursula Von Der Leyen said: *"We propose to make 2022 the year of European Youth. A year dedicated to empowering those who have dedicated so much to others."*

With consolidated EU institutional support and buffered by a wide spectrum of machinery and resources, youth have been firmly placed under the spotlight in a year of compelling policies and problems – the continuing pandemic, the climate crisis, green and digital revolutions, external relations problems in the near and far East, democratic fragmentation in some EU States...So, how do Youth perceive, and act on this initiative?

In the past many of these eponymous 'years' dedicated to - women, artists, journalists, etc. have faltered in the race from commitment to delivery. Often, the accompanying fanfare and choreography have proved no more than high-profile set pieces that conceal the lack of genuine ambitions, partnership structures, achievable strategies and public acceptance. However, there is a perceptive change in the

mood music in Europe today following the deaths and deprivations caused by two years of the pandemic.

While the roll call of deaths and serious illnesses in the (ongoing) pandemic are the stuff of horror headlines, it is widely recognised that young people have suffered most in social and economic terms from the Covid-19 crisis: closed schools, universities and training centres; unemployment and social restrictions; lack of material support and exclusion from social-security systems; restrictions on travel and mobility. All this has worsened, directly and drastically, the living situation of many young Europeans.

Yet youth opportunities were already limited in many European countries even before the pandemic. The consequences of the 2008 financial crash still affect the lives of many today, especially through persistent youth unemployment and emigration.

And so, against these backgrounds, the European Year of Youth will organise youth-focused and centric activities and initiatives across all member states in 2022. Young people will be engaged in key consultation processes, such as the below 'Conference on the Future of Europe,' and in other public policies at EU, national and local levels. increased efforts will be made to include youth

priorities in relevant EU policy areas and at every level of the EU's decision-making process.

The year will contain conferences, initiatives promoting youth participation in policy making, awareness-raising campaigns on a more inclusive, green and digital EU, as well as studies and research on the situation in which young people in the EU find themselves.

The Commission is wary against creating new divides, and thus there will be a special focus on young people with fewer opportunities and on dealing with mental health issues. *"Europe needs all of its youth. We must step up our support to those who fall into the gaps – those not in any kind of employment, education or training. For them, we will put in place a new programme, ALMA. (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve).*

ALMA will help these young Europeans to find temporary work experience in another Member State. Because they too deserve an experience like Erasmus. To gain skills, to create bonds and help forge their own European identity." (President Von Der Leyen)

There are many echoes for our 'Family' in those words as they resonate with so much work already done by the fund's many projects with NEETS. This work deserves, profile, partnering, being put in the window of best practises. As does so much other work being done across the board, aided by the imaginative and generous financing.

With careful communication and strategic direction this work and the diverse projects can act as entry points for the 'Family' into wider consortiums of solidarity for youth, vaulting on the opportunities offered by the EYY's activities.

The EYY coincides with the final months of the yearlong 'Conference on the Future of Europe', to which valuable inputs can still be made to the debates. Young people in particular have a huge stake in these discussions that will impact their current and future realities, and the futures of generations of young Europeans to come. It is essential that these views are heard and acted upon during the Conference process and beyond the immediate lifetime of this exercise.

The European Youth Forum has already outlined its wish-list and laid down a marker for the Conference's outcomes. They include:

Meaningful, diverse youth participation continues throughout the Conference and in all future EU decision making;

A binding legacy mechanism is enshrined in the Conference follow up to ensure institutional accountability for implementing the Conference recommendations;

A Positive Youth Employment Journey is a priority theme factored into the recommendations for action coming out of the Conference process.

The political, institutional and financing stars are aligning for youth in 2022 with the EYY and the Conference. The stage is set, the supports and props are there, the casts are gathering. This year can be a breakthrough year for youth, and a defining year for the 'Family.'

The last words are left for Jacques Delors: "How can we ever build Europe if young people do not see it as a collective project and a vision of their own future?"

Thomas Mc Grath
Our Irish Journalist

Thomas Mc Grath



Being an inclusive youth in a more (hopefully) inclusive world Is it possible? Questions and tentative answers on today's goals and results

The Coronavirus pandemic has slowed down the entire framework of actions that, until some years ago, were thought to ameliorate the place of Youth into a changing society. This does not mean that those aims are disappeared; however, while they are still laying at the core of our strategies, they have to be renovated and strengthened. Our younger generations have been the most hit in terms of both education and work opportunities. It is like they have been put 'on hold': we need to de-freeze them.

There have been attempts, the most of them producing important results, to make young the protagonist of more inclusive society, meaning that youth as well was becoming an inclusive one. We saw, before the Covid-19 pandemic, youth combating in first person for the world's climate, gender equality, job opportunities, and one could go on hours relocating the different cultural battles according to the different moment or year considered. Is this still possible? What can we do to give youth the right role of decision-makers in the society they were contributing to build all around the world?

The positive thing is that a lot can be done, intending these two past year as 'bridges',

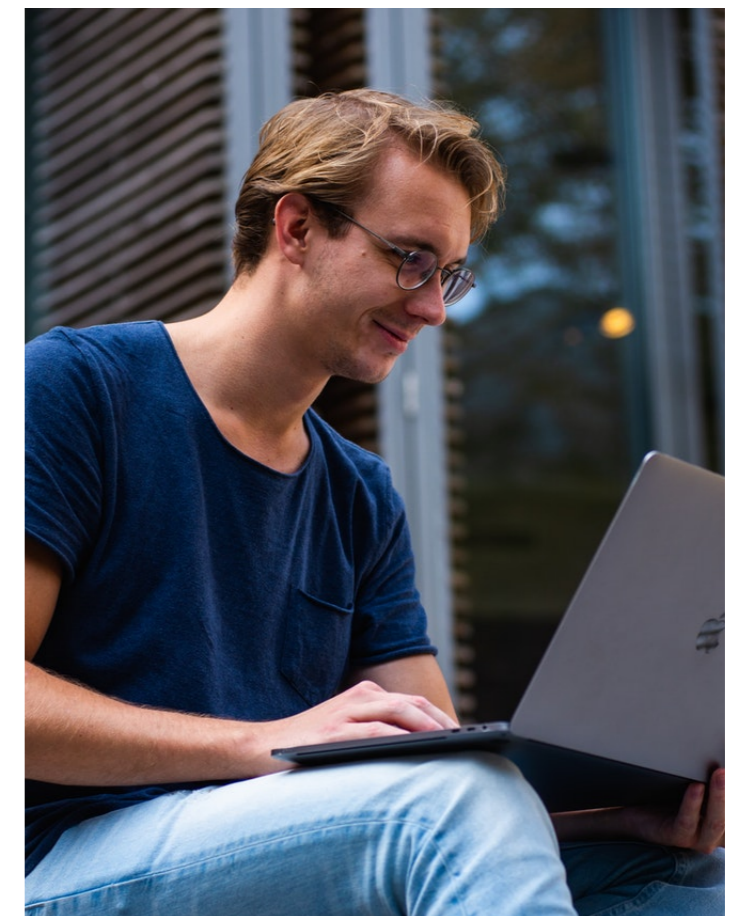
test benches used to make even better use and exploit what already existed before. The European Year of Youth starting in 2022 is a great chance to hear younger generations' voice. And inclusion will be the key word: what our society needs is to build a shared framework going beyond national identities. That is why we need a new, strengthened, horizontal approach.

Education and training opportunities needs to be open to everyone; an example could be insisting on having universal certificates, accepted across borders. The labour market of tomorrow doesn't need more brain drains: a fair and transparent exchange of skills and competences is what the future society needs.

Schools, companies, workers, authorities (national, regional and local), social partners and organisations and educational and employment services, however, should remain on the same unique path. There are important existing large-scale partnerships, some other are emerging.

But the final goal is ambitious. The European Year of youth, that does not come by chance, tries to translate this need for inclusion into a practice, the words we are hearing from years into concrete actions. Those are the 11

European Youth Goals: Connecting EU with Youth, Equality of All Genders, Inclusive Societies, Information & Constructive Dialogue, Mental Health & Wellbeing, Moving Rural Youth Forward, Quality Employment for All, Quality Learning, Space and Participation for All, Sustainable Green Europe, Youth Organisations & European Programmes.



Where are we? How many of them we reached or which ones do we have to change?

There are progresses, but also some decelerations and for sure the pandemic has not helped. 2022 can be the year of results, but for sure all stakeholders need to continue mobilising EU level policy instruments, continuing their actions at national, regional and local levels. Thanks to previous years' programming and results achieved, which we can further exploit re-starting from their successes, we do have the right instruments and tools to create and lay the foundation of a new, renovated framework for a European cooperation in the youth field. But we cannot do this alone.

One point, indeed, is more important than the rest. We need to talk to young people, but young people need to talk to us first. We all want a Europe where young people are engaged as active citizens involved in their democratic societies. But they have to tell us what is important for and to them. They need to be integrated as active protagonist of this dialogue.

Natasa Gospodjinacki



Youth work and recognition: an open debate for the better quality

Putting the scene

Since the early 2000s, the positive role that youth work based on the principles of non-formal education plays for social integration, active citizenship and the employability of young people has grown significantly.

This growing awareness has put youth work and non-formal learning high on the political agenda for many national governments and international institutions, but not always had concrete development into national policies.

This more positive attitude to youth work is largely the result of efforts made by youth work fields and organizations to gain recognition or to be better recognised. Their advocacy has resulted in a more strategic approach of the European institutions to encouraging governments to value, recognise and support this kind of work through dedicated policies, programmes and resources.

Recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education has been regularly on the agenda of European youth work since a first symposium was organized in 2000 by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and the European Commission White Paper on Youth in 2001 claimed for a better

recognition of non-formal learning. As a concrete result the European Portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers (2006, revised in 2014) and the Youthpass for Youth in Action activities (as of 2005, today within Erasmus+) have been developed in order to foster formal recognition. The first edition of the EU-Council of Europe joint working paper Pathways towards Validation and Recognition of Education, Training and Learning in the Youth Field (2004) paved the way for a coherent policy strategy, followed by - to name a few - the event [Bridges for recognition](#) (SALTO Inclusion, 2005), the Prague conference in the frame of the Czech EU Presidency (2008), the [1st Youth Work Convention](#) in the frame of the Belgian EU Presidency (2010), all those leading to the second version of the strategic paper Pathways 2.0 towards recognition of non-formal learning/education and of youth work in Europe (2011). The Pathways 2.0 paper has been discussed in a further symposium in 2011, leading to a Statement by participants in the symposium and a related Plan of Action. Since the preparatory work for the symposium an expert group is regularly exchanging on developments in the field.

Policy makers, youth work practitioners and researchers from all over Europe are all involved in trying to map out the best and

most strategic ways to ensure that youth work gets the recognition it needs in order to be able to deliver on its commitments to young people.

But why is it important to work for the recognition of youth work?

Youth work holds a social value as it is a practice in which young people interact with each other and with other members of society. It encourages them to become active within their community by taking on responsibilities.

Youth work holds a political value as its social nature involves relations with authorities and those who hold power in the communities.

Youth work as well holds an economic value as it is not happening outside any economic system. It is directly related to various resources, such as labour, capital, land and their use or consumption.

Youth work has a remarkable personal value, as it allows young people to experience, in a protected environment, different roles and to better understand their own skills and inclinations. It helps, like few other social and educational practices, to experience social and emotional learning and to use it in contexts other than the one in which it was learned.

What Kind of Recognition is Youth Work Looking For?

The kind of recognition that youth work (and youth workers) can look for are different and could be of interest at different levels and areas of their professional development and working framework.

Social recognition – is a process that leads to a better understanding and a more positive regard of what you are doing by others, it brings more visibility and more investment to your activities.

Formal recognition – is an official status for different aspects of youth work and non-formal education/ learning, (e.g. competencies acquired leading to formal qualifications; official accreditation of non- formal education/ learning programmes by formal accreditation bodies; licensing of youth workers and trainers; officially recognized occupation of youth worker by the state, etc.).

Political recognition – refers to the development of relevant policies around youth work and non- formal education/learning in the youth field. It is also about putting youth work on the political agenda as the European Youth Year.

Self-recognition – means that recognition sometimes starts with the youth workers and his/her perception of the value of their work.!

Economical recognition - is directly linked to social recognition, and is the monetary translation of the importance of the work you do for the benefit of people and society. The economic reward, besides serving to satisfy vital needs, is a very clear indicator of the importance of the role and the work that is done. Economic recognition not only concerns the payment of the youth worker's work, but in general the allocation of stable economic resources for youth work, allowing for multi-year work plans, as the result of strategic planning.

Working on better recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning is advocacy work that often aims at changes in relevant policies and official decisions, while working towards the establishment of new mechanisms. The process of recognition is fundamental for the growth of the sector and allows for better quality and suitability of the services that could be realized. Recognition in this sense it is linked with the idea of a long term strategy that will bring clear change at local, regional and national level for youth and their communities.

Competences needed for the youth workers

It is therefore important to stress out that in the field, the discussion on how to be recognised and recognisable from the “outside” (formal dimension, institutions, the target groups and the society in general), a

few elements are considered crucial. One of those is Quality in youth work, with indicators and criteria to inquire the impact in the society of youth work methodologies, theories and practices.

Quality is also defined by the people who are working in the field as the experience that they can bear and the competences necessary to achieve an impactful youth work. Non formal education methodologies have very clear structures in terms of tools, goals and assessment and this is not something that can be improvised, although experience and mistakes are welcomed as ways to learn and improve the day-to-day work.

Salto developed in the European Training Strategy a model to assess the competences needed to work in the international field of youth work. It is the result of consultation and research and it can be a useful tool for youth workers in Europe, as it can:

- Be used as a Mirror - help them self-assess their needs for learning and exploring in different directions (i.e: go deep into one competence or have a general understanding of many)
- Be used as a Roadmap - help them define their learning goals and objectives and share a strategy with relevant stakeholders and policy makers about the needs of the community

- Be used as a Descriptive Picture - help them clarify which role and responsibility a youth worker can have towards the society (to explain stakeholders and institutions how complex is youth work in terms of needed competences and)
- Be used as an Elastic Band - be questioned and flexible on how much general or descriptive it could be, according to the needs of those who use it (i.e: nothing specifically intended to be addressing topics or target groups, but the tool is easily “interpretable” and adaptable)

Written by

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Ilaria Mardocco

For more information



https://www.mobilnost.hr/cms_files/2017/08/1501669030_unlocking-doors-to-recognition-7-.pdf

[SALTO-YOUTH - ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally](#)

Theme of the month: Youth guarantee and related unemployment issues

Youth guarantee and related unemployment issues - Project FOLM

The Youth Guarantee was launched as a Council Recommendation adopted by all EU member states in 2013, in particular as a response to the high cyclical unemployment among youth in these countries. The Youth Guarantee meant, that all the people aged between 15 and 24 would receive a good quality offer of employment, training, education or apprenticeship within a period of four months from becoming unemployed or leaving formal education (being in NEET group – not in employment, education or training). The underlying philosophy of the YG was defined as *early intervention with personalized approach*. Following this recommendation, European Union member states took steps to introduce such a scheme, but with widely varying national approaches on target groups, timing, the time of intervention used and the types of partnership.

So what are the most important factors influencing the implementation of The Youth Guarantee in UE countries: financial resources, being the part of national policy making, challenges for the youth labour market and heterogeneity of the NEETs. Also we could mention here the design and implementation features of the YG and the role of the apprenticeship system in the Youth Guarantee as further significant factors.

To be aware of the scale of the unemployment problem, approx. 3,4 million out of 57 million young people aged between 15 and 24 in the European Union, were unemployed (data from Eurostat for the second quarter of 2018, so almost 5 years after the launch of YG). To have the wider view: the recent data on unemployment of young people in European Union shows (July 2021), that, 2.854 million young persons, under 25, are unemployed in the EU, of whom 2.339 million were in the euro area. The

difficulties for youth may be related to structural challenges or market failures. More precisely speaking: labour market segmentation – in which young people are overrepresented in temporary, part-time, non-permanent work; performance of the education and training system – low achievement of substantial section of youth in basic and transversal skills, limited availability of quality work experience.

The FOLM project (From Outdoors to Labour Market), addressed to the NEETs, has become a tool, a springboard for youth to return to the labour market or education. The project has been successful in 3 EU countries: Spain, Ireland and Poland. What is interesting, the market situation, unemployment and the group of NEETs itself differ in these 3 mentioned countries.

Good news is that in communication published in 2016, therefore 3 years after the launch of the Youth Guarantee, it was observed that the YG had become a reality across the EU states. Of course not only initial conditions but also the way member states implement the YG had an influence on its success.

Nowadays, the pandemic situation certainly influenced the youth situation in the labour market, unemployment, education and training. These analyzes are still waiting for in-depth research by experts. Apart from the negative aspects of Covid-19 pandemia, today we can observe the appreciation of the positive trends that appeared as a proposal a few years ago, but were not appreciated until now: remote learning, switching to online communication, returning to nature and appreciating that we need

it, which in turn translates into eco awareness and trends. In turn, the wider possibilities of remote work made it more accessible to young people who have the necessary skills, but, for example, due to their place of residence (small towns) or the economic situation, they could not move to work elsewhere.

The information about the Youth Guarantee has been based on the document: “Study on the Youth Guarantee in light of changes in the world of work”, prepared for the European Commission, written by Marco Caliendo, Jochen Kluge, Jonathan Stöterau and Stefan Tübbicke with contributions from Claire Dheret, Kari Hadjivassiliou and Francesco Pastore. European Union, 2018.

FOLM Project

Implementation of measures to combat youth unemployment in Croatia



The number of unemployed young people in Croatia has been very high for years, and Croatia is at the top in terms of the rate of unemployed young people in the EU. In September 2021, 28,000 young people in Croatia were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 20%, which means that every fifth young person in Croatia is unemployed. The average unemployment rate in all EU countries is 16%, although the figure is slowly falling after a temporary jump due to the pandemic. Unemployment or the inability to find work in the appropriate level of education or desired sector is a particular problem. It can be concluded that the media do not report enough on the problems and needs of young people who are unemployed. The global economic crisis has caused disruption in the labor market in the European Union and Croatia, and young people have proven to be the most vulnerable group. Increasing the employability of young people in Croatia should be one of the most important priorities for addressing. Croatia relies on EU funds to solve the problem of youth unemployment, and respects the goals set by the EU in this area.

The Youth Guarantee is a new approach in solving the issue of youth unemployment, which seeks to activate all persons under the age of 25 (in the Republic of Croatia under the age of 30!) As quickly as possible on the labor market. The measures of the Youth Guarantee in the Republic of Croatia may include all young NEETs who have reached the age of 15 and are under 30 years of age. Although the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on the Establishment of the Youth Guarantee Scheme stipulates that the Guarantee should cover persons aged 15 to 25, at the initiative of Croatia and several other members, it also enables persons under 30 to be included in the measures. Today, most states have moved the age limit to 30. In Croatia, the priority is young people in NEET status with lower qualifications and highly educated young people without work experience because analyzes show that they have the hardest time finding employment. Also, priority is given to inactive young people, ie young NEETs who are not registered in the records of the Croatian Employment Service.

In the process of preparation for employment, the Croatian Employment Service organizes numerous activities to ensure the fastest possible employment of young people, which includes active employment policy measures. These measures are implemented with the aim of encouraging employment, additional education of workers and preservation of jobs, taking into account the specific needs of users.

ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT POLICY MEASURES

Through active employment measures, entrepreneurship is developed throughout Croatia, employment is increased and, through support for education, training, investments are made in the competitiveness of workers in the labor market. Young people, as a target group, can be found in all measures.

- **Employment aid**- which aims to encourage the employment of disadvantaged or extremely disadvantaged persons and persons with disabilities by co-financing the cost of the gross amount of salary to employers for a period of 12 months or 24 months. The Institute awards a monthly lump sum amount of support, regardless of the actual cost of the employer in accordance with the level of education and the possibility of using the tax relief for the co-financed person.
- **Support for self-employment** - is granted to unemployed persons to cover the costs of establishing and starting a business entity in the following organizational forms: crafts, companies, self-employed and institutions. Support may also be granted to several unemployed persons if they will jointly establish and start a new business entity, or continue with the business of the existing business entity they have taken over. The aim of this measure is to provide financial support to unemployed people who decide to start their own business, which lasts 24 months. The amount of subsidy for this measure is up to 120 thousand kuna.
- In addition to measures related to green and digital jobs, the measure Biram Hrvatska as an extension of measures for self-employment attracted the greatest public attention. The measure I choose Croatia after January 1, 2022 can be used by returnees from the European Economic Area. The measure provides additional support of HRK 50,000 to returnees who decide to become self-employed. People who decide to relocate their business to less developed regions can receive support of HRK 25,000.
- **Traineeships** - traineeship grants can be granted to employers who, as natural or legal persons, and persons established on the basis of special regulations, independently and permanently perform economic activities, as low-value employment grants that do not have the characteristics of state employment aid. The aim of this measure is to enable persons to work independently by encouraging the employment of persons by co-financing the cost of their gross salary and other costs to employers, all in accordance with this measure. The duration of this measure is 12 months, and the amount of the subsidy is 100% of the amount

according to the amount of the trainee's gross salary, which is 85% of the gross salary of the job, which does not include the amount of overtime, night, shift, field or any other right in accordance with the provisions of the Labor Law of other applicable regulations and acts.

An internship can lead to employment, but no intern is guaranteed a job. Namely, internships can also be accepted in activities for which young people are not directly educated or are not sure that they would like to do that job in the future. Nevertheless, such an internship can bring new experiences, knowledge and acquaintances that may be useful in the future.

FISCAL FACILITIES

Young people can be employed in Croatia completely independently without the support or mediation of the employment service and without subsidies, and the employer who hires them may be exempt from certain benefits. When concluding an employment contract, the employer may use one of the two fiscal reliefs in the form of exemption from the obligation to calculate and pay contributions to the salary, according to the Law on Contributions. Thus, we have a first employment allowance of one year for persons without registered pension insurance and a five-year permanent employment allowance for young people, provided that the young person has not previously had an indefinite employment contract with the same employer.

The latest measure that has been introduced is tax relief for young people, under which young people under 25 will not pay income tax, and young people aged 25 to 30 will pay only 50% of the planned amount.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MEASURES

From year to year, the Republic of Croatia is trying to reduce the youth unemployment rate through various measures. For 2022, measures for green and digital activities have been introduced, the documentation that grant applicants must submit has been reduced, the maximum support for self-employment will be raised to HRK 150,000 and a number of other activities.

According to the Croatian Employment Service, almost 28 percent of new users of self-employment funds were under 29 years of age. Although young unemployed people decide independently, depending on their business plan, whether to start a business, a limited liability company or the simplest form of company, most of them start a business. Out of 1,054 newly enrolled young people, 70 percent of them received support for self-employment from the Croatian Employment Service.

Active youth policy measures in Croatia have so far proved to be effective and significantly improve the labor market perspective of young people who choose to use them. Whether it is self-employment measures that teach us entrepreneurial spirit, internship measures that lead us to work, training measures, employment support and others. Many measures such as job retention due to the economic crisis caused by the pandemic have proven effective because many jobs have been saved. Various measures and activities seek to reduce youth unemployment and emigration, as well as their return because young people are the driving force of any society.

RAISE Youth Project

Spanish National Youth Guarantee Plan



Spain has one of the **highest unemployment rates** compared to other OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. Although unemployment is a problem in other OECD countries, data shows that the extent of increase and the persistence is much larger in Spain.

This unemployment, especially affects some specific groups of population, between them, young people, affecting in addition in slightly increasing figures to young women than young men. The group of young people who are neither working nor studying is a very mixed population group covering both young people at the end of adolescence who have dropped out of school early or did not continue their training after finishing their compulsory education and therefore have no skills or work experience, as well as those who have high-level qualifications, extensive skills and even work experience, but have been unsuccessful in finding an employment.

From the economic and social crisis that began in 2008 to the current social and health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the position of young people in the Spanish job market has deteriorated exponentially, considering as well that high unemployment, instability, temporality and low wages are not recent characteristics of youth employment. In fact, the increase of youth unemployment is being considered a European problem led by southern countries. In response, the European Union has proposed

various initiatives oriented toward the establishment of “youth guarantees” to ensure that all young people work or study.

Youth unemployment in Spain rises faster than in the EU

The youth unemployment rate in Spain for young people aged 15 to 24, according to Eurostat data, referring to the fourth quarter of 2020 for some of the most recent Member States, the latest available, is the one that has increased the most in the last year, by 9.6 pp compared to less than 1.1 pp in the first quarter of 2020. year, by 9.6 pp compared to less than 1.5 pp in France. Compared with the EU-27 average, which stood at 16.9%, 2.1 pp higher than a year ago, more than doubles. Among the countries with the lowest youth unemployment rate are Austria and the Austria and the Netherlands, with youth unemployment rates of around 10%, while in the 10%, although in the last year it has risen by around 2/3 pp.

In the first quarter of 2020, the difference between unemployment among educated young people and those with a low level of education has increased slightly, being more marked among young people up to 29 years of age.

Main causes of the labour situation for young people

A number of structural problems can be identified which have had a decisive effect on the labour situation for the young people. The following should be stressed:

- High rate of early school leaving
- Low percentage of young people with medium levels of training
- Poor language skills
- Low level of entrepreneurship and self-employment

Spanish National Youth Guarantee Plan

The [Spanish National Youth Guarantee Plan](#) was created to reduce the youth unemployment figures in Spain, guaranteeing that all young people aged under 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, on-going education, an apprenticeship or work experience within four months after finishing formal education or becoming unemployed. This Youth Guarantee Plan analyses the context for the young people who are not in employment, education or training in Spain.

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Spain started in 2013 with the approval of the National Plan for the Implementation of Youth Guarantee in Spain (NPIYGS), which brought together a set of measures that had been previously approved for the Strategy for Young Entrepreneurship and Employment 2013-2016 (SYEE) and which extended through the 2014- 2020 planning period. In 2014, Act 18/2014 established the rules for implementing the National System of Youth Guarantee (NSYG). In 2018, some management improvement measures were introduced by means of the Shock Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021.



The Government of Spain approves the Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021-2027

Last 8th of June, the Council of Ministers of Spain approved the **Youth Guarantee Plus Plan 2021-2027** for decent work for young people, which aims to improve their qualifications so that they acquire the professional and technical skills necessary to access the labour market.

Government representatives explained that this Plan is part of the Strategic Plan for Youth Advances, which brings together all the actions for youth employment and which will involve 4,950 million Euros: "This is the largest investment by the Spanish Government in the history of democracy to tackle the main problem facing our country, unemployment, especially youth unemployment".

It was also stated that "there cannot be a country without young people, without the talent of our young people in companies. Failing to take advantage of the talent of young people in Spain today is, without a doubt, a mistake".

Information resources:

<https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/councilministers/Paginas/2021/20210608council.asp>

https://www.mites.gob.es/ficheros/ministerio/sec_trabajo/analisis_mercado_trabajo/jovenes/2021/Junio_2021.pdf

file:///C:/Users/Comunicacion/Downloads/plannacionalgarantiajuvenilanexo_en%20(1).pdf

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPagId=3353>

<https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil/que-es-garantia-juvenil.html>

RAISE Youth Project

Promotion of employment and youth policies in Bulgaria

The youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) for Bulgaria continues to be lower than the average for EU. According to Eurostat data, the average for the nine months of 2020 the value of the indicator for Bulgaria is 14.2% compared to 16.7% on average for the EU-27.

Also, the level of young people not in employment, education and training aged 15-24 (NEET's) in Bulgaria has been steadily declining from 2014 to 2019, but remains higher than the EU average. According to the latest Eurostat data, in the first nine months of 2020 the level of young people who are not in employment, education and training in Bulgaria is increasing on an annual basis by 1.2 percentage points and reached 14.6% compared to the EU-27 average of 11.0%.

In support of youth employment on July 1, 2020, the EC published a package of measures "Support for youth employment: a bridge to jobs for the next generation." It includes: a proposal for a Council Recommendation "A bridge to jobs - strengthening the Youth Guarantee"; Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training; A new incentive for apprenticeships; additional measures to support youth employment. The proposal for a Council Recommendation "A bridge to jobs - strengthening the Youth Guarantee" and repealing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on the establishment of the Youth Guarantee aims to renew the policy framework to better support fitness for youth employment in order to avoid another crisis of youth unemployment.

However, what are the specific measures to promote youth employment in Bulgaria?

One of them is the measure "Youth employment", providing unemployed young people up to 29 years of age opportunities to acquire practical skills and experience through internships or training while working with a

mentor, and the measure "Training and employment for young people", including training for acquisition of professional qualification and / or key competencies against vouchers and subsequent employment. Priority is given to young people with primary and lower education, the long-term unemployed, young people with permanent disabilities, activated young people who have registered as unemployed in the directorates of the Labor Office.

The package of measures also includes training of employees from the labor offices in order to profile for work with young people aged 16 to 21 using residential services; providing opportunities for vocational guidance, qualification and employment of young people; development and approbation of activities on the principle of "Social Enterprise" (jobs specially created for these young people, for example: cafe, restaurant, studio, etc., places where to acquire work habits in practice, in a form of support for the development of work habits and social skills).

What are the benefits for young people and employers of specific measures?

The Youth Employment Scheme enables employers to hire young people in two main areas:

- **Internship:** The employer or an employee asked by his boss acts as a mentor to the youth employed under the scheme. The aim is the maximum acquisition of practical skills in the acquired profession or specialty within the internship.
- **On-the-job training:** During the work process, the employee is trained in a certain profession or specialty, and for this purpose the employer or an employee appointed by him is expected to act as a mentor to the young people involved in on-the-job training.

Employers who provide internships under the scheme will be reimbursed for:

- remuneration in the amount of the minimum insurance income for the respective main economic activity and qualification group of professions for the respective year to which the opened internship refers;
- health and social insurance of young people for a period of 6 months.

If after the end of the internship the young person stays at work and concludes an indefinite employment contract, the employer will be additionally covered the costs of social and health insurance for a period of another 6 months. The costs of the mentor's remuneration during the internship will not be covered by the scheme and will remain at the expense of the employer.

Employers who provide training under the scheme will be reimbursed for:

- remuneration of the employee in the amount of 90% of the minimum wage for the country;
- the costs of health and social insurance for a period of 6 months.

The costs of remuneration of the mentor appointed by the employer will be covered by the program (1/2 of the minimum wage for the country)

The financing of the activities under the scheme for Sofia-city and the country is from two different sources - the European Social Fund and the Youth Employment Initiative - youth employment procedure.

Another measure of the Employment Agency at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is the Career Start Program, which aims to provide opportunities for unemployed young people who have completed higher education to facilitate the transition between education and employment. . Their starting salary is BGN 800, and a mentor also receives funds, and the term for appointment is 1 year.

There are also many incentives to increase the competencies of young people and acquire additional professional qualifications.

For example:

- Training for acquiring the first degree of professional qualification (with a duration of not less than 300 study hours) - BGN 660 maximum amount for unemployed persons;
- Training for acquiring the second degree of professional qualification (with a duration of not less than 660 study hours) - BGN 1,320 maximum amount for unemployed persons;
- Training for acquiring the third degree of professional qualification (with a duration of not less than 960 study hours) - BGN 1,980 maximum amount for unemployed persons;
- Training for acquiring qualification in part of the profession - BGN 660 maximum amount at 300 school hours, in proportion to the school hours, for unemployed persons.

The territorial mobility of the unemployed is also encouraged by reimbursing part of the transport costs by the employer.

Until 2023 There is also a project "Ready for work", aimed again at young people under 29 years of age who are neither in education or training, nor in employment and are not registered as unemployed in the Directorates "Labor Office", to improve opportunities for finding a job and realisation on the labor market Its main goal is to identify, motivate and guide at least 10,500 young people aged 15 to 24 and 7,000 between 25 and 29.

Are the incentives to deal with youth unemployment in Bulgaria sufficient?

According to the study and referring to the opinion of a number of experts, we can say that measures to promote youth employment in Bulgaria have several major disadvantages. In the first place, this is youth entrepreneurship. According to data from the MLSP, funds for starting an independent economic activity by unemployed persons who have registered a micro enterprise under the Small and Medium Enterprises Act (according to a business project approved by the territorial division of the Employment Agency) (Art. 30a, para 1, item 16).) are financed up to BGN 4,000 according to the approved business project. But this is the end of the concrete measures. There are a number of incentives for young people under 29 to develop European projects and use European funds, but there are no incentives at national level.

During the National Youth Conference "Creating Opportunities for Youth", held in February 2020 by the National Youth Forum, it became clear that the operational program "Growing Regions" is used as the main financial instrument for targeted promotion of regional development.

According to the participants in the conference, it is essential to improve the educational environment in small settlements and implement educational policy at the local level. They believe that proposals to improve current policies should come from the bottom up by the local community, which can best identify current challenges.

Among their proposals are organizing meetings at the local level with young people and representatives of youth organizations, creating opportunities for youth organizations from small settlements to unite and apply for projects together with other civil society organizations and validation of skills and competencies acquired in informal environment in order to expand career opportunities and recognize the capacity of young people. The main priority in the future should be the effective payment on the basis of qualifications, which will allow for flexibility of working hours and individual evaluation of good performance. Young people believe that it will eliminate gender discrimination for identical positions.

The participants in the discussion are also categorical that the dual training and the direct partnership between the business and specific educational institutions should be encouraged - classes, profiles with opportunities for receiving scholarships or part-time employment.

Another expert report entitled "Youth Policy in Bulgaria: Challenges and Prospects" concludes from an analysis of the National Youth Strategy (2010 - 2020) that young people are perceived mostly as audiences and recipients of certain services. They are not involved in policy-making. Information on consultations and advice involving young people is limited (with the exception of youth parliaments organized in some settlements).

The document also says that with regard to social exclusion, for example, it is noteworthy that for the entire study period (2017, 2018, 2019) the main measure to address the problem is financial assistance. The distribution of

funds is a necessary measure to prevent the exclusion of certain groups and encourage them to be an active part of society, but it is not enough and has little effect in the long run on preventing social exclusion, especially if the nature of the financial measure is compensatory and not stimulating development and participation, the report said.

An important conclusion is that the formulation, implementation and reporting of the results of youth policies is dominated by the approach that treats young people as an object of care and not as a partner in joint activities. Young people are perceived as more at risk or vulnerable and need to be protected from youth policies. Such policies target specific segments of the youth group with very limited coordination between sectors.

A prosperous society is made up of active and enterprising citizens who live in harmony with themselves, are able to seek and take on challenges and enjoy life. The new stage in the development of youth policies must set more ambitious goals for transforming youth from an object of care into a subject of their development policies. Differentiation, decentralization, interaction and promotion of effective leadership are the possible ways to develop a national youth policy of a fundamentally new quality and scale.

RAISE Youth Project

Assessing the European Youth Guarantee



Back in 2013, when the European Council first adopted the Youth Guarantee, Europe was still looking for a way to recover from the shock of the economic crisis and the subsequent long recession. Unemployment, particularly among youths, was rampant and countries like Greece were experiencing a “brain-drain” akin to a mass exodus. In that light, the Youth Guarantee looks very much of its time: “[Member states must] 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”. It was not only ambitious, but its reference to a “guarantee” and “ensuring” a job offer certainly stood out in a world of employment policies focusing on “incentives” and “personal improvement”.

In the midst of a new crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council recently adopted the Reinforced Youth Guarantee, broadening its scope and touting “individualised approaches”. But how individualised is the YG really; and how effective? The numbers presented by the Commission seem impressive: 1.7 million fewer NEETs, a record low youth unemployed rate at 14.9%. But these numbers mean little without taking the regional

perspective into account in order to compare and analyse them, and they don’t say much about cost effectiveness. The **Cowork4YOUTH** project is here precisely to examine the flexibility and the effectiveness of European youth employment policies.

The “Unlocking Youth Potential” call of the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment specifically referenced the “lack of studies evaluating these new initiatives [and] a need to build the capacity [...] to perform impact studies”. Cowork4YOUTH, a research and analysis project, undertakes to deal with these (among other) challenges, providing hard data and reliable analysis, employing PhD and post-doctoral researchers in different European countries to study the subject, and exploring improvements and solutions that may be provided by alternative economic sectors and practises. Outputs include a Transnational Research Network and an Observatory; 2 pilot & baseline studies; 3 scientific papers; 2 transnational reports; 2 review papers; and 2 PhD theses. Last but not least, Cowork4YOUTH will culminate in a set of policy recommendations that will contribute to the uptake by policymakers of research results on the subject.

The project’s kick off event (pictured above) was held in late 2021 in Athens. We didn’t know when submitting the proposal, but we can only consider it auspicious that 2022 has also been announced as the European year of Youth, with the aim (among others) “to promote opportunities provided by EU policies for young people to support their personal, social and professional development. The European Year of Youth will go hand in hand with the successful implementation of NextGenerationEU in providing quality jobs, education and training opportunities”. This gives everyone involved in the project even more motivation to do our best to “honour and support the generation that has sacrificed the most during the pandemic”, in the words of the Commission.

Collaborative and sharing workspaces: policies for youth in EEA peripheral regions Project

Nine years of Youth Guarantee: Between policy and politics



In common journalistic practice retrospective commentaries are written in decennial anniversaries. But politics and policies have their own time conceptualisation. Ten years is enough for a policy to be considered obsolete. This is even more so for the years after the 2008 economic crisis and the subsequent recession. The political time became so dense, especially in the European South, that assessing a policy and indeed an employment policy, is always relevant. During the ten years long crisis and the ensuing pandemic the impact on employment has been significantly harsh. The impact on youth has been moreover of particular interest because of the eventual risk of a very delayed introduction of a whole generation in the labour market. In that respect active labour market policies, which have always been a vantage point for social and economic intervention, came to the epicentre of youth policy. Under that light, the 2013 introduction of the Youth Guarantee marks a turning point. For the first time an employment policy tried to solve the problem of youth unemployment.

Any assessment requires the abandonment of prejudices; and the previous phrase includes several of them!

In the everyday practice the juxtaposition of problems, policies and solutions is almost self-understandable. “We design and implement policies in order to solve problems”. Nevertheless, a simple review of the aforementioned phrase reveals the limits of this approach. It is people that solve problems! Policies rather offer the conceptual framework that help people make sense of the problems. A further analysis would reveal the complexity of the concept of the problem itself. Not all public issues are “problems” irrespective of their urgency, potential risk or impact. They rather become problems when they are registered by the public as such. And the formation of public sentiment may range from apathy to moral panic. Political communication offers a plethora of expletive approaches. By transferring the above line of argumentation in the case of Youth Guarantee more issues arise. The relativization of the public problem is not a negation. In other words, youth unemployment is indeed a social problem and a serious one! The point lies with the time, the space and the way that a public policy, Youth Guarantee in that case, conceptually frames it as a problem.

The YOUTHShare project and many other researches before have highlighted the complexity of the phenomenon; structural, temporary, seasonal, friction unemployment and many other aspects. At the same time, the bibliography has pointed to, at least, two directions of reasons; the demand and the supply side.

If employment is a process involving at least two sides – the employer and the employee – its stimulation may focus on the support of employers to hire more employees.

In that case solutions including wage subsidies or tax relief for the re-investment of profit are the expected solutions. On the other hand, a supply side perspective would focus on the employee. Skills gap is understood as the primary cause of the “problem” and the solution is to be found in reskilling or upskilling which would improve the employability of unemployed youth.

It is apparent that both perspectives and their accompanied solutions are sound. The point is how a policy conceptually frames the process by making one of the perspectives “self-understandable”. In that respect Youth Guarantee has been calibrated around the unemployed person. Seminars, trainings, skills, entrepreneurial empowerment, coaching, counselling, enrolment offices are just few of the measures in the toolbox. Most importantly, however, the very concept of the Not in Employment Education or Training centralises the individual looking (or not) for job. It seems peculiar to imagine the respective concept from the demand side. Wouldn't the Unable To Hire Employees (UTHE) phenomenon sound like a joke?

Nine years after the introduction of the Youth Guarantee, marks a good point for the assessment of this emblematic active labour market policy. An assessment, however, that needs to be deep enough to include the fundamental concepts involved. And such an assessment reveals that a policy is much more than a bureaucratic response to a problem. It is rather the incorporation of the political ideologies involved in their making.

YOUTHShare Project

The Youth Guarantee is asking for improvements



It's been almost nine years since the Youth Guarantee was established in 2013; a policy that was developed and later approved as a result of the high youth unemployment rates that emerged all over Europe.

Millions of young people found themselves without work opportunities and the number of those who were neither working nor studying (NEETs) was rising. Under the rising pressure, the European Union (EU) developed the flagship policy that could help tackle that situation: the Youth Guarantee.

The new approach represented by the Youth Guarantee was the life line that a big part of the youth was waiting. Finally, an international institution like the EU said out loud that the future of the youth was a priority; that the continent would do its best to avoid leaving any youth behind. However, the intentions were not enough and such a goal could not be achieved through magic solutions. The EU did not have at the moment and still does not have the competence to implement the policy measures needed to deal with the problem of youth unemployment. Therefore, the Youth Guarantee could provide only the framework and the recommendations to be implemented by the Member States. In other words, it was more of a hope than a secured path to success.

A key aspect of the Youth Guarantee was its deemed novelty which underlines that, compared to other type of policies, the EU lacked the specific experience of implementation. In reality, however, it is neither a new policy nor a clearly structured one. On the one hand active labour market policies are not something new for the Member States. On the other hand, this top-down approach was creating a lax framework of implementation. The Member States have very different structures on how they implement active labour market policies. Some of them had centralised and other federated systems; some had no experience in focusing precisely on the Youth while some had departments specialized for them; some had no budget to implement those kinds of measures, etc. The central Youth Guarantee policy had also to take into consideration that youth unemployment and the NEET rate specifically did not have the same impact upon different countries. Some countries were really in need of said policy, while others could deal with the problem by themselves without the need for a structured policy. The budget was a significant issue but not the only one. Sharing experience and good practices on the effectiveness of measures were also essential. The Youth Guarantee failed in transferring that knowledge.

During the first years of the Youth Guarantee's implementation, the crisis deepened and the initial measures and budget were not enough. The numbers were not improving and it became obvious that the Youth Guarantee needed a boost to help more young people who were in need. So, the budget increased significantly and the measures were expanded. That seemed to work well: Youth unemployment decreased and the NEET rate was decreasing. The ensued pandemic of 2020, however, had a serious impact on the above rate. Nonetheless, the global nature of the crisis and the urgency of the health crisis transferred the focus away from youth unemployment and the Youth Guarantee. Yet, the pertinent rates remain high, especially in southern Europe and the initial interest on the impact of Youth Guarantee and the transforming motivation has withered away.

In the YOUTHShare project we have collected testimonials from key stakeholders that call for improvement in the Youth Guarantee scheme regarding measures, tools, networking and communication between stakeholders. After 9 years of implementation, there is valuable data available for the improvement of the policy. Significant ascertainments include the need for better database management, providing better ways to share information and good practices between local, regional and national agencies or identifying the different needs of the youth in the main urban areas compared to the rural ones. Such change ranging from technical support to improvements in communication and the regional sensitivity show that there is space to make the Youth Guarantee better. And by improving the policy, we can retain the youth as top priority.

Author

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YOUTHShare Project

Youth Guarantee in MED EEA: Great opportunity, ambivalent results



Back in 2013, the Youth Guarantee scheme was being established with the intention to offer to young people, under the age of 25, a quality inclusion in the labour market. As stated in the Journal of the European Commission, “The term ‘Youth Guarantee’ refers to a situation in which young people 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. An offer of continued education could also encompass quality training programmes leading to a recognised vocational qualification”. In 2020 the Reinforced Youth Guarantee was introduced, where people up to 30 years of age were included in the initiative.

But, how successful were those Active Labour Market Policy initiatives in real life? The YOUTHShare practitioners provide a mixed image.

Mari Badenes Galiana, Key Account Manager at the Spanish branch of the Transnational Employment Centre, underlines the need of Youth Guarantee and other similar plans to allow more young people to benefit from them. “The European Youth Guarantee initiative has been a key help for youth

facilitating their access to the labour market, whereas the reinforced Youth Guarantee plan will involve 15000 companies on the one hand and on the other plans for a stable job or training for young people within 4 months after signing up with the facilitating organisations. Spain is in great need of this initiative, since, according to latest research, the country still has higher unemployment rates compared to Italy, Greece or Cyprus. Youth Guarantee remains one of the more popular plans that keeps young people motivated and hopeful in getting employed soon”.

The Key Account Manager of the Cypriot branch of the Transnational Employment Centre, Anna Michael, stresses the significance of the Youth Guarantee to the success of the YOUTHShare project. “Youth Guarantee” was one of the biggest investments for youth employment in the last 10 years. After its implementation, it can undoubtedly be said that it created a bridge to the labor market for youth, especially during the years of the economic recession. The Youth Guarantee initiative has been a reinforcing agent for YOUTHShare in delivering impact through practice and research: In the Transnational Employment Centre, each individual receives a more personalised career plan. It has been noticed that the involved young people, along with their willingness to take part in the activities, they also expand their career choices in order to get a stable job. Through Youth Guarantee and YOUTHShare, youth have the opportunity to develop 3 of the most important employability factors: upskilling, experience and networking”.

But not all national implementation schemes are deemed successful. The Key Account Manager of the Italian branch of the YOUTHShare Employment Centre, Claudia Caggiano, is much more reserved in reference to the impact of the Youth Guarantee in Italy. “Even though the measures were developed with the best of intentions, the idea of the Youth Guarantee has failed in terms of increasing youth employment across the country. According to experts, there are several reasons for this.

The problems are to be found in the measures themselves and in the various contradictions of the labour market in Italy. In fact, it is commonly thought that, despite considerable participation in the program, the rates of young people that managed to remain employed are low. Some also claim that this system does nothing but favour the exploitation of the younger generation with promises of jobs that will never come true”.

Those difficulties are recognised by Anna Goudi, the Key Account Manager of the Greek branch of the Transnational Employment Centre. She notes that Youth Guarantee has given a light boost on youth employment, but the road is long, and synergies need to be developed in order to act quickly, especially now that the pandemic has hit hard. *“The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative had a positive impact on youth employability in Greece. During the third quarter of 2019, the share of young people (aged 15-24) not in Employment, Education or Training was at 13% and still 7% than the same quarter of 2013. Yet, the employment of young people remains a key challenge! In the 25-29 age group, the rate of NEETs reached 29.5% in 2018, far above the EU average of 17.1%. More than half a million people in this age group, mostly highly educated but with less or no experience moved abroad (brain drain) searching for better work opportunities since 2018.*

As the unprecedented crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately affect young people, it is a common belief that we need to act quickly. “Reinforced Youth Guarantee” alongside with the NextGenerationEU and Year of YOUTH 2022, validates the political will to act. But again, we need synergies and we need a collaborative approach with all actors!”.

Turning back to Claudia Caggiano, she highlights the gain points deducted from the friction of YOUTHShare in Youth Guarantee. *“It is clear that generalisations are inappropriate, but on the basis of national and regional experience, YOUTHShare intends to learn from the lessons of Youth Guarantee and build ongoing relationships and networks that ensure not only a learning experience, but also a real future possibility for NEETs. For this reason, YOUTHShare, together with all the actors working behind the*

scenes of the project, is committed to consultancy, support and getting to know the beneficiaries in order to give them the maximum help”.

Authors

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YOUTHShare Project

Youth Guarantee in the EU South: Following the Great Expectations or a Greek drama?



In the aftermath of the crisis, the EU member states committed to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG) action plan at the European Council Recommendation of April 2013, seeking to “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”. The YG builds on relevant youth welfare policies established in the Nordic countries during the 1980s and the 1990s, aiming to support youth labour markets. Below, we focus on the EU South and we try to offer fresh but also critical insights with regard to YG’s design and implementation in the regions of Italy and Spain (apart from Ceuta and Melilla located in the mainland of North Africa). Italy and Spain have suffered bigger losses in terms of youth employment and show a high spatial heterogeneity between their southern and northern regions in terms of inequality. Moreover, the high contribution of both countries to the total YG program in term of registrations puts them in the spotlight, as these countries, together with France, account for 47% of the total YG program enrolments. In addition, although we’d like to focus also in the Greek

regions, this is not possible, as the YG has a nationally-centred character in the country that excludes any kind of bottom-down initiatives.

Studying the YG enrolments ...

In regions that have high NEET rates, there is a high concentration of YG registrations, as well. This signifies a great reception of youth due to the limited job vacancies in these regions. In Italy, YG enrollees tend to concentrate in southern regions that record high NEET rates such as Sardinia, Sicily, Puglia and Basilicata, with the exception of Calabria and Campania, where there is an under-concentration of YG registrations or there are no deviations from the national trend. Calabria and Campania are amongst the least efficient Italian regions in terms of local employment offices’ capacity to organize the procedures required by the Initiative, such as individuals’ profiling. On the contrary, Tuscany, and Friuli Venezia Giulia, which have significantly lower NEET rates compared to the South, they present a bigger share of YG enrolments. These regions are amongst the Italian areas with the highest YG operational capacity, revealing the significance of the local key actors in the implementation of the Initiative.

Furthermore, YG may underperform region-wise. Lombardy (having a favourable position in the international division of labour) records the lowest share of YG registrations and at the same time has small NEETs rate. There is a similar motif in Spain, regarding the combination of YG registrations and NEETs rates. Andalusia and Extremadura in the Southwest, with low employment perspectives, present a big portion of YG registrations, while the same pattern is observed in the Canary Islands as well. In Galicia there is a moderate concentration of YG registrations, while the lowest number of YG registrations is observed in Catalonia and in the Valencian Community. Catalonia, with a prosperous economy that benefits greatly from industrial activity in the automotive, food and construction sectors, in addition to tourism, is not dependent on Active Labour Market Policies.

Thus, this differentiation creates expectations for regions that do not have enough job vacancies.

Discussing about YG ...

The socio-educational profile of young people registered in the YG is situated between two edges: On one hand, there are young individuals with low educational level who may also be facing poverty and are eventually caught in a vicious circle of precarious jobs. On the other hand, there are the young overqualified people that enrol in the Initiative, due to the limited opportunities offered by the local economy over time. They seek for waged labour posts not only for remuneration but also for upgrading their knowledge with a greater purpose of extending their networking. Eventually, as an Italian informant notes *“approximately half of the participants manage to sign a first contract but only a few succeed to sign long-term contracts”*.

Furthermore, jobless young people in disadvantageous regions pin their hopes on this policy to change their social status. As stated by a different Italian informant *“the higher the number of NEETs, the higher the number of potential young people who need to enter the social structures, which means more YG enrollments”*. Hence, many young people in less advantageous regions *“widely trust YG to provide a small first contact with employers”*.

To sum up, YG was implemented in a recessionary context, to provide ‘high quality offers’ of employment or training. While it intended to contribute to vacancy creation, YG eventually has not yet achieved its goals due to a series of factors related to its temporary and without further prospects neoliberal character. Despite the great expectations demonstrated, YG has significant drawbacks such as the limited outlets of offers in a highly precarious context that follow the regional disparities. Therefore, YG cannot guide youth to an integrated labour transition as its design is beyond the idiosyncrasies of the EU South, which are dominated by issues like the significant gap between NEETs and job vacancies. After all, *“Youth Guarantee was based on the Nordic models, and for better or worse, we live in the Mediterranean”* (Spanish informant).

Author

Efstratia Emmanouil, YOUTHShare PhD candidate University of the Aegean

YOUTHShare Project

News from the Projects

Innovative methods for employment services to improve outreach to young people

Dissemination workshop in Miskolc, Hungary at the 1st Innovation Society Forum - summary

Local NGOs may support public employment services in reaching young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and also by providing mentoring for youth or sensitization for employers.

All this was discussed by Ágota Scharle, Senior Researcher at BI, at the [1st Innovation Society Forum](#) organized by the [Regional Civil Centre \(ReCIK\) Foundation](#) on October 21, 2021, in Miskolc.

The main objective of the event was to bring together businesses, NGOs, and public institutions in the region to explore alternative solutions and opportunities that can help alleviate labour shortages. The forum also provided an opportunity for representatives of employment centers, local NGOs working in the field, and potential employers to exchange experiences and identify points where their activities could be connected or complemented by one another.

Among others, the speakers at the event included Dr. Szabolcs Menyhárt, Head of the Employment Department of the Government Office of B.-A.-Z. County, Ágnes Pető, Head of the Employment Pact Programme of the City of Miskolc, and Dóra Szendrák, Head of the Regional Civic Centre Foundation, the main organizer of the event.

In her [presentation](#), Ágota Scharle talked about innovative national and international methods to help young people in entering the labour market. Based on the results of our research in the framework of the [Youth](#)

[Employment PartnerSHIP](#) international project, she reported that the 90-day job trial programme, for example, has been shown to increase the chances of unemployed young people in finding a job, but does not always reach those most in need. She also stressed the need for public employment services to work more closely with local NGOs and communities who have a better understanding of the composition and needs of unemployed youth in their vicinity. Such local knowledge can come from social workers, mentors in student dorms, sports club coaches, Roma municipalities, etc. NGOs can also help in providing personalized mentoring for young people and in sensitizing employers to employ more disadvantaged young workers.

Ágota Scharle's participation in the 1st Innovation Society Forum was supported by the international project [Youth Employment PartnerSHIP](#) funded by the EEA and Norway Grants. One of the objectives of the research project, which started at the end of 2018, is to measure the effectiveness of labour market programs for young people in Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Spain.

Youth employment partnership Project

Overview of the situation of young people who are not in education, employment, or training in Hungary

Hungary has a high proportion of inactive young people, and their chances of entering the labour market has been made even worse by the COVID-19. What measures and programmes help them specifically? Are they effective?



The hybrid conference [IPS4NEETS](#), organised jointly by the [InterRegio Forum Association](#) and the [Hétfa Research Institute](#) on 17 November 2021, explored the situation of Hungarian NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), presenting some of the solutions that could help them, as well as their evaluation.

The event was organised because of two reasons: the realization of the project run by the InterRegio Forum Association, and the launch of a new one by the Hétfa Research Institute. Both projects are funded by the

[Norwegian Funds](#). The IPS4NEETS final conference was also an opportunity for researchers and organisations interested in the subject to share their knowledge and experience, thereby supporting young people that are out of the labour market and education.

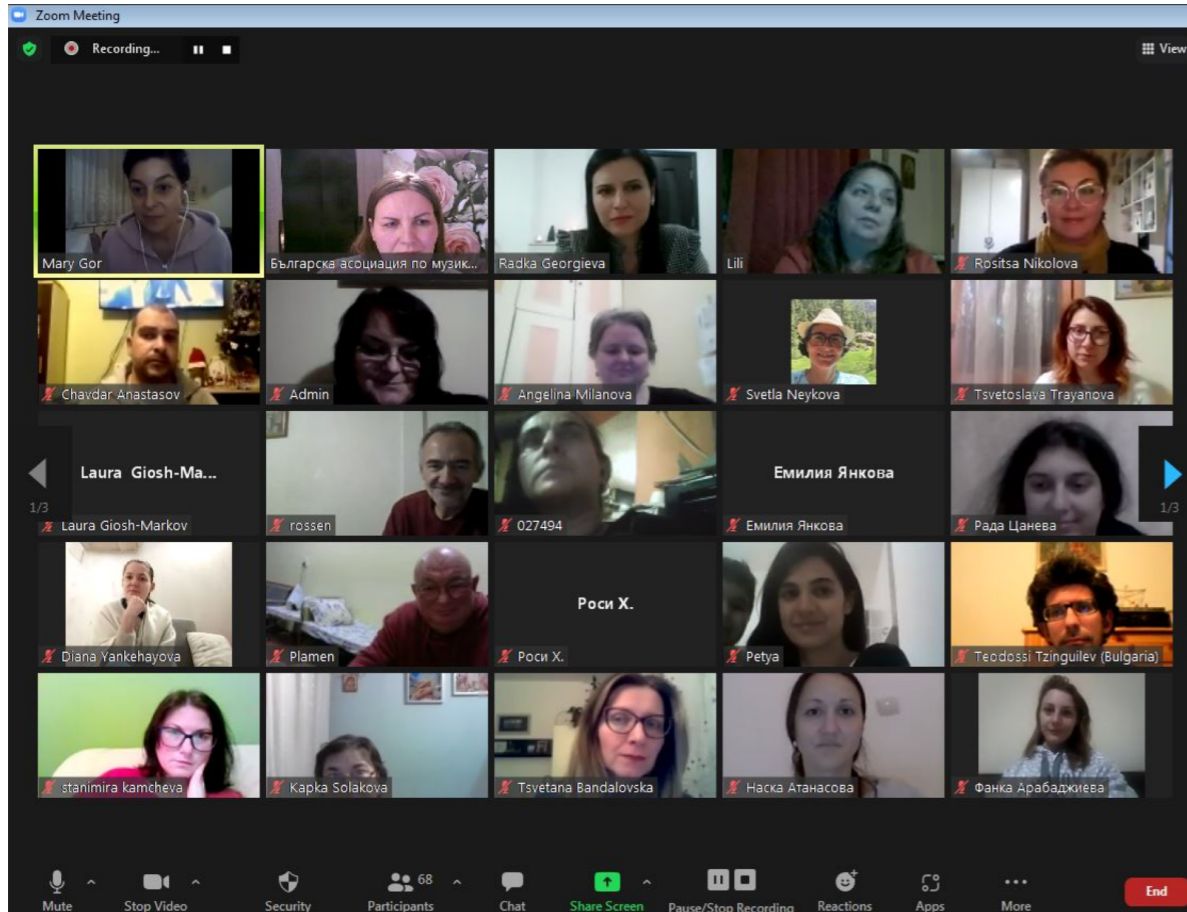
The main objective of the international research project [Individual Placement and Support for NEETs through Education Youth Technology Platform \(EYTP\)](#), which is conducted in partnership with the InterRegio Forum, is to enable counsellors working with inactive young people to develop their professional competencies through the "Maturing Model" (MM) and the "Individual Placement and Support" (IPS) methods, and thus to better find tailor-made solutions for youth in need.

The newly launched international research project "Lost Millennials: Transnational Research Network for the Evaluation of Initiatives Targeting 25+ NEETs", led by the HÉTFA Research Institute, will evaluate the impact of the programmes targeting the NEETs over 25 years old.

Márton Csillag, the Senior Researcher at BI, [presented](#) the lessons learnt from the [Youth Employment PartnerSHIP](#) project. Concerning the 90-day job trial programme offered to young jobseekers under the [Youth Guarantee Programme](#), he highlighted that although it has had a positive impact (especially compared to public employment), the number of those most in need among the participants is relatively low. He also pointed out that only 40% of the participants were retained at the same firm after the end of the job trial, and many of them received lower wages than before

Youth employment partnership Project

Solutions promoted CODE motivational platform to stakeholders



The stakeholders were introduced to the motivational platform at <https://self-trainer.eu/>, created and developed by the Solutions Centre Ruse under the CODE project. They were invited to make use of the platform in any ways they find appropriate to their personal needs.

The platform was specially designed for the CODE project, with the possibility to be used after that in larger educational and consulting contexts. Its main purpose is to enhance the motivation of project participants, and to assist their personal development. This on-line tool can be used for free by all project participants, and by anyone willing to develop his/her language skills.

CODE Project

On 14 December 2021 Dr. Plamen Panayotov of Solutions Brief Therapy and Counselling Centre – Ruse attended an on-line meeting organized by the Bulgarian Music Therapy Association. 80 psychologists, therapists, counselors, teachers, and experts in the field of psychological assistance from all over Bulgaria and abroad took part in it.

The participants discussed several undergoing projects with therapeutic and counseling aspects, and the CODE project (Competent opportunities for digital employment) was presented to them as one such project.

Creative Center Ruse finished GAME DESIGN training course



These training courses are implemented under project CODE. The Project benefits from a 2 300 000 € grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants. The aim of the project CODE is to provide opportunities for quality employment to vulnerable young people in poverty risk.

CODE Project

At the beginning of January Mr Kalin Minev announced in [Radio Ruse](#) and public media about the successful completion of first level of the training course in game design that was organised by Creative Center Ruse and Human Resources Development Agency Ruse under CODE project.

The most ambitious students will be given the opportunity to improve their practical skills and knowledge during the next training course in Game design which will be held soon at Creative Center Ruse. The course will introduce to the trainees the specific softwares and job positions in the creative industries in order to support them in their career orientation. However, the aim will still be to provide specific practical skills, the unique opportunity to exchange ideas and to develop joint projects in the field of animation, gaming, etc. in the shared workspaces, which will increase their chances for professional realization on the labour market. Follow-up of the trainees will also be made and further support will be offered.

An online psychological tool supports the training of young people



Solutions Brief Therapy and Counseling Center- Ruse has created and launched an unique online tool available in English and Bulgarian. The motivational platform <https://self-trainer.eu/> has been developed especially for CODE project / Competent opportunities for digital employment / by the famous psychiatrist Dr.Plamen Panayotov, a member of the International Association for Family Therapy, as well as his team of specialists in area.

The platform was developed in the conditions of the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 and its main purpose is to support all trainees in the conditions of distance work and learning. Its main goal is to increase the motivation of the participants in the trainings under the project, as well as to support them in their personal development. It can be used by all participants in the project, as well as by persons who want to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

The creators of the motivational module are available for online and offline individual consultations. Each user can receive feedback from both

psychologists and other users, as well as could receive practical guidance on his future self-improvement and development.

You can learn more about its purpose and the motivational techniques used from the specially created short films, which you will find on the Youtube channel of the CODE project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VW0OWB0O0bE&t=44s>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjY0HBaxD04>, as well as in the help menu in the platform itself.

CODE Project

Blue Generation Project update

Blue Generation Project developed a 360° Virtual Reality Video in Aquaculture, the fastest growing food industry in the world. The video is the first from a series of VR videos that will give the NEETs the opportunity to e-xperience the work in various sectors of Blue Economy.

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROMKn1eR5Y&t=3s> to watch the video from a day at a Greek aquaculture unit.

health is deteriorating, but the involvement of young people with professions in the field of ocean economics has the power to reverse this trend.



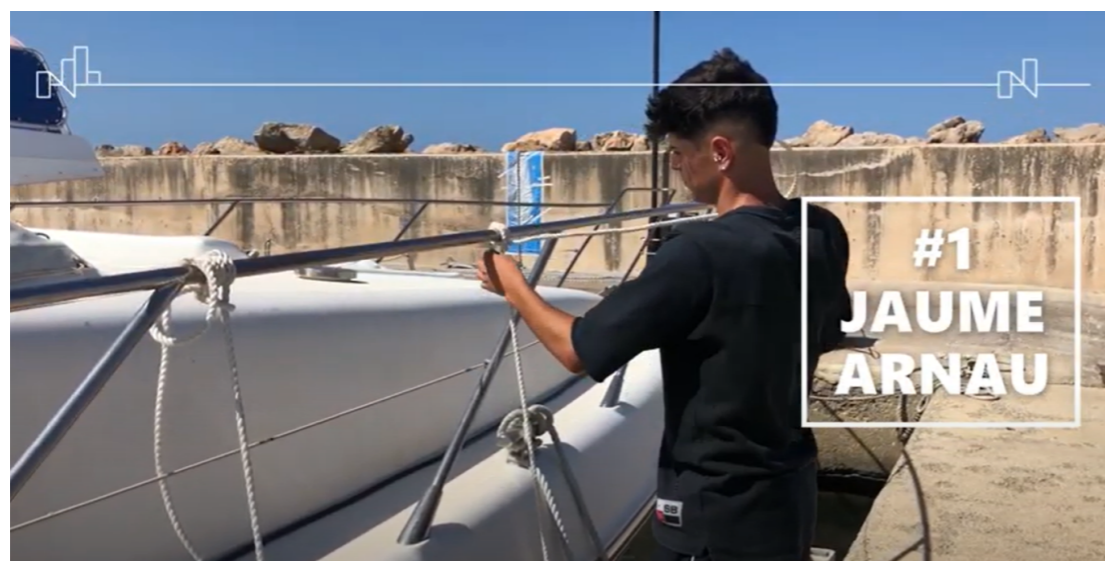
www.bluegeneration.org
The Blue Generation project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment

Blue Generation Project was highlighted in **The Fifth Sustainability Summit of The Economist Events for Greece, Cyprus, Malta, and southeast Europe** on 30/ 09/2021 by Mrs. Stavropoulou Olga, Director General, HELMEPA, and Militos Blue Generation Mentor during the discussion on "Ocean Governance and Blue Growth".

As she mentioned, Blue Generation Project, in the context of informing around 40,000 young people all over Europe, aims to attract young people aged 15-29 to the **Blue Economy**, challenging their conviction that they are "dirty" and "dangerous" and responding to their desire to integrate sustainability in their career expectations. It is a fact that the oceans'

Sea Teach is proud to present Jaume Arnau, whom we engaged, motivated, and guided to pursue a career in the **Blue Economy**. We met him when he was 16 years old. After finishing secondary school he did a professional certificate in boat maintenance and worked during the summer as a sailing instructor. Soon he will start a Dual VET Training in Leisure Boat Maintenance in Mallorca.

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LzTOyIshSk> to learn about his success story.



Blue Generation Project participated with Militos S.A in Climathon Piraeus 2021 on 20/11/2021 informing young men and women, who contributed with innovative 💡 ideas in the fight against Climate Change, about the employment prospects in Blue Economy.



Blue Generation Project has developed the [Blue Career Guide](#), an attractive and informative tool for young people between 15 to 29 years old to guide them for the career opportunities in the Blue Economy growth areas: coastal tourism, aquaculture, ocean energy, marine biotechnology, shipbuilding, maritime transport and fisheries.

The Career Guide provides valid information, gathered by the expert partners of the Blue Generation project about the job opportunities along with the employment status at national or EU level. It also contains special interviews from professionals in all sectors.



Below some of the latest activities of the Blue Generation Project:

Enterprising Society Development Foundation | Study Visit

After several months of preparation, we succeeded and between 21st and 26th November 2021 in Gdansk, in the north of Poland, a study visit for 10 participants of our project took place.

Young people for a period of 5 days, had the opportunity to see from the inside how important institutions for the maritime industry such as Galeon Sp. z o.o and Sunreef Yachts function and operate. They met with employees of Smart Garrison Hotel representing the hotel industry and with employees of Incubator Starter of Gdansk, who work daily with companies and enterprises from the entire central coast and have extensive experience in promoting career opportunities within the Blue Economy.

Throughout the entire visit the participants were accompanied by a qualified career counselor, acting as a mentor. Together with her, on the first day, a special workshop was held to introduce the topics of the study visit.

All participants emphasized that it was a valuable experience, and they were grateful for the opportunity to see how companies from different sectors of the Blue Economy function behind the scenes.



Blue Generation Project organized the round table “EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN BLUE ECONOMY” @ Regional Funds Week on 09.12.21.



change of economic paradigm at regional level as a means to bridge this gap.

- more than 8,000 youth have been informed about the employment opportunities in Blue Economy by the Blue Generation Team, but, as **Silja Teege**, Managing Director, Beneficiary Partner Sea Teach, stressed, the challenge is that Blue Economy is often overlooked as a sector of opportunities and many teachers, headmasters, mentors, or employment officers need to change their mindset and promote it to youth.

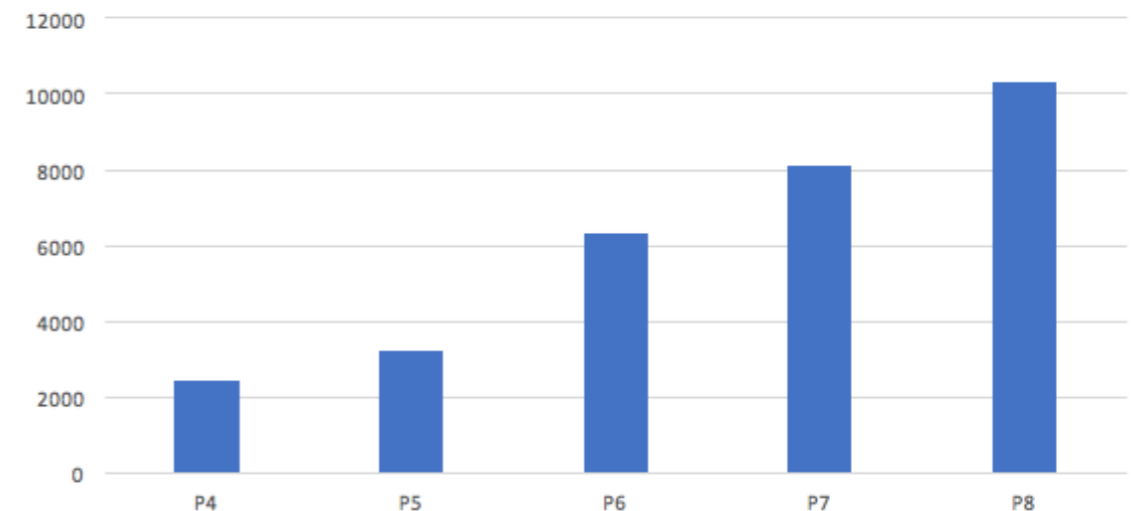
And some data: Blue Generation Project | Attracted Youth

The Blue Generation Project team committed to present to as many young people as possible the professions related with the sea and the job opportunities in the Blue Economy. Until now we have informed 10.316 people and counting...

Some of the main points highlighted by the participants answering the questions addressed by the moderator **Marianna Terzidaki**, Project Coordinator, Militos Consulting S.A:

- an optimistic view for growth in the recreational boating sector was presented by Philip Easthill, General Secretary, Expert Partner European Boating Industry. New trends accelerated by the pandemic have led to an increasing interest in outdoor activities and therefore in higher demand for employees to support it
- executives from the business sector with knowledge of biology are in need in order to run the plethora of start-ups emerging in #marine_biotechnology, the most innovative Blue Economy sector, as Dr. Euthalia, Arvaniti, Marine Biologist, Expert partner Submariner, mentioned
- the inverted skills gap that prevails in many Southern European countries, where the job market requires skills lower than those of the unemployed youth, was referred by Dr. Ioannis Papageorgiou, Communication Manager **Youth Share Project**, who identified the

Attracted Youth



Blue Generation Project

Thinking Space Paper No.38

Reducing self-doubts of NEETs

The lack of self-confidence is destructive for NEETs and (re-)gaining it can be difficult, especially for those who have faced major setbacks in their lives. If young people do not believe in themselves and their own potential, it will be far more difficult to integrate them into the labour market. The good news is that NEETs can work on themselves to reduce self-doubts. This paper shares some best practices and ideas on how to support NEETs to gain trust in themselves and self-respect.

Often, self-doubts are sub-conscious and originate from early childhood, seeping into adulthood and professional life. Self-doubts prevent young people from applying for a job, starting an internship or taking the entrepreneurial plunge – therefore, it is important to integrate modules that work on strengthening self-respect in NEETs programmes. Sharing self-doubts boldly requires a certain level of trust and feeling of ease between participants and coaches. Trust is key to be willing to pin down internal conflicts. Nevertheless, coaches should address self-doubts from the beginning of a program. For example, they can help the NEETs to cultivate gratitude by keeping a gratitude journal in which they write down what they are grateful for on a daily or weekly basis. Gratitude practices may seem basic and simple, but it helps the beneficiaries to affirm that there are good things in their lives. This does not mean that life is perfect; it does not ignore all burdens and hassles in their lives. However, gratitude journals encourage identifying some amount of goodness in their lives. Moreover, NEETs start to acknowledge positive traits in themselves but at the same time learn to appreciate the support and love of other people around them.

In this paper we like to share favourite practices of KIZ coaches and program participants that helped NEETs to quiet down self-doubts or learn how to deal with them. Being able to cope with anxiety and self-concerns is no guarantee for finding a job at the end of the program – but it is a skill that is useful far beyond the professional level.

- **Accept your insecurities** – Young people often feel alone with negative thoughts and emotions. They haven't learned to deal with negative emotions or drawbacks and this makes them feel ashamed and isolated. A first step to change the attitude toward self-doubts is the realization: Doubting yourself is normal. Everyone battles negative voices and feels insecure sometimes. The simple realization that self-doubt is part of the human experience helps people embrace it and find ways to control it. The main goal should not be to eliminate self-doubts but to stop oneself from overdosing with these emotions.

Therefore, coaches should try to have conversations around self-doubts and insecurities with their beneficiaries. It helps to be approachable and share own experiences. Participants should feel comfortable sharing inner conflicts. Especially in a NEET context, it is important to talk about self-doubts and negative emotions after a negative job interview or being criticized at work. Other target groups such as women may also require emotional support e.g. related to combining work with family life.

- **Change your point of view** – Doubting is not all bad. Doubt, anxiety and fear help us to stay away from dangerous situations and have been an important part of human survival in the past. Nowadays, the secret is to keep it down to a healthy level. Rather than treating doubts as an enemy, they can also be seen as an opportunity to look inward, reflect and constantly improve one's attitude and skills. Every time you doubt, you question yourself. What do I do? What could I have done better? This gives NEETs the chance to improve: "Tomorrow I want to do it differently; I want to do it better."

Coaches can help NEETs to look at self-doubts differently. For example, a NEET did not get a job because of a lack of a specific skill.

Rather than letting negative feelings of rejection grow and manifest in self-doubt and perceptions of worthlessness, the NEET can use this situation to his own advantage, invest in the development of a new skill, and apply again or in a different place afterwards.

Finding opportunities in the challenging circumstances (many NEETs live in areas with high youth unemployment rates, violence, drugs etc.) is not at all obvious. Coaches need to consider carefully the individual circumstances and backgrounds, before working on attitude, behaviour or skills. Some NEETs might be highly motivated and prepared but limited by the current economic situation. Here, the approach could be to work on creative alternatives, such as starting or involving NEETs in social enterprises, cooperatives or develop a community approach.

- **Find your optimal balance** – For self-doubts to decrease, it is important to find a balance between doubting and doing. If NEETs notice that the doubts become too mighty, remembering similar situations from the past can be helpful. Until now, they somehow always managed to move forward, it somehow always worked.¹

Coaches can ask questions to provide useful guidance when doubts become too powerful. This exercise gives NEETs the possibility to feel their emotions. Helpful questions could be: What exactly are you afraid of? Is it the possible interview rejection? The fear of not passing the final exam to finish school? Perhaps the fear is not even theirs, but something reflected on them by family, community or culture. Drilling down the root cause helps to understand certain patterns or negative affirmations. Each NEET should learn to find a balance between (reasonable) doubting and the boldness of doing.

- **Accept compliments** – People tend to remember every critique or rejection. Yet they struggle to accept compliments. Genuine compliments often emphasize the strengths, unique skills and talents of someone and can help to see the good in one's self. The ability to accept compliments is essential to overcome self-defeating thoughts and to start respecting and believe in oneself.

Coaches should teach their NEETs to better accept compliments. This is challenging in the beginning but highly rewarding once practiced. Some coaches' use a journal where the participants can collect all the compliments they have received during the program. Especially in difficult moments, it is of great value to skim the pages and be reminded of own capabilities and self-worth. The re-reading of received compliments makes it harder for self-destructive thoughts to gain power and to hinder people to move forward.

Self-doubts are familiar to most of us and can rapidly grow with rejections, failures and in difficult circumstances. Especially young people trying to find a job – regardless of their education, gender, the underlying economic situation or cultural background – may face rejections, disappointments and harsh criticism. Therefore, they need to learn that self-doubt and anxiety are normal human emotions that can actually be useful and balanced out. Talking about self-doubts and anxieties is the first step to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

¹ Strengthening self-confidence only works up to a certain degree. In case of backgrounds of drug abuse, violence, gang crimes and mental illness it is difficult to say: "It somehow always worked." Coaches cannot handle such issues in labour market integration programs and we recommend the involvement of specialists.

Dunja Buchhaupt, KIZ Sinnova, 2020

YES! Project

The benefits of mentoring on the mental health of young entrepreneurs

Youth Business International and its global network provide essential mentoring to young entrepreneurs around the world. Ensuring individuals are fueled with guidance, role models and knowledge to thrive in both a COVID-19 environment and a post-pandemic society.

Over a year dominated by protecting ourselves from the spread of COVID-19 has had a tumbling effect on the mental health of many, especially young entrepreneurs across the globe. National lockdowns and the pressure of keeping fledgling businesses afloat has put unimaginable pressure upon thousands of young entrepreneurs. A global study by King's Business School on the mental health of entrepreneurs during the pandemic found that 61% of entrepreneurs saw the existence of their business under severe threat. Only 50% of entrepreneurs in the study found sufficient time to recover from work stress and 44% reported a lack of sleep due to it.

Entrepreneurship can provide young adults with the opportunity to develop independence, creativity and financial stability, which is why YBI is so passionate about supporting young entrepreneurs to thrive and run their businesses without compromising their mental health.

The reassurance that mentoring provides is crucial for uplifting motivation and gives young business owners a sense of community, something that is key for maintaining mental health and wellbeing.

Empowering young people with the ability to cope with the rollercoaster ride of emotions, successes and failures that entrepreneurial life brings is the reason that mentoring forms a foundation of our work at YBI. Our report [Refocus, Retool, Reset: Insights from Youth Business International's COVID-19 Rapid Response and Recovery Programme](#) with Google.org found that the survival of some businesses relied on the relationship between mentor and mentee. Mentoring and accessible role models have

proven to increase confidence and emotional resilience and improve decision-making abilities, which in turn produces better business performance.

Our Rapid Response and Recovery Programme supported by Google.org saw a staggering 145,738 entrepreneurs access mentoring, coaching and advisory services, business clinics, and webinars and training to develop key skills to respond to the pandemic. Our member YCAB Foundation based in Indonesia supported the emotional resilience of female entrepreneurs when many found their incomes reduced by up to 70% due to the pandemic. With YCAB Foundation's chatbot system, 34,003 entrepreneurs accessed support and advice through mentoring and WhatsApp groups with other entrepreneurs to form an emotional support network. The combination of mentoring and establishing peer communities via clinics and social media groups enabled the thousands of young entrepreneurs we supported in our programme to share experiences and to create a safe space to combat the loneliness that COVID-19 inflicted upon many.

We believe that mentoring is the key to successful entrepreneurship in a post-pandemic world, instigating young entrepreneurs to build back stronger. Read more about our work and the impact it has had here: <https://www.youthbusiness.org/>.

YES! Project

Theme: Mental Health of the young NEETs as a result of the stress and isolation during COVID-19 pandemic

The other side of COVID-19 pandemic. Some thoughts on the indirect effect on NEETs



Recent research report that after COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and despite the activation of social safety nets, the employment rate has decreased all over Europe, but in Italy it has fallen more than the average, especially for what concerns women. According to the Eurostat data¹, youth employment rate has fallen from 45% of 2019 to 42.4%, with the youth unemployment rate which displays an increase from 31.2% to 31.8% for women. Figures are sobering if we consider the NEETs related ones. NEETs rate in Italy has risen from 22.2% in 2019 to 23.3% in 2020, when “disposable” people, ready to work but who are not actually searching for a job, are more than 3 million.

According to recent research from “Osservatorio Giovani”, even when the work opportunities are available, it is usually unsettled and volatile, and it contributes to generate a feeling of pessimism and anxiety at young people’s future. After the COVID-19 crisis the 41% of the interviewed under 35 NEETs, declared that it has postponed the job search, and the 33.8% stated that it has abandoned it (with the concrete risk of slipping into the spiral of despair and decommitment), while the 60% consider the health crisis as a factor which could negatively impact their plans.

COVID-19 had important effects on the economy and the access to the labor market, especially for young people. But we are witnessing severe direct impacts on people’s health, with almost 140.000 deaths in Italy, and more than 5.5 million in the world since the start of the pandemic². Its negative impact had also many indirect and side effects: in fact, COVID-19 has deep consequences on mental health of young people, especially on the most vulnerable ones. According to a recent analysis published on “Scientific Reports”³, “large disruptions to physical activity, sleep, time use and *mental health among young adults at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020*” have been reported, and after more than a year of pandemic, even if the vaccines began to roll out, deaths declined, and restrictions and physical distancing measures eased, “*persistent impacts of the pandemic on physical activity and mental health are shown in the research sample*”, with “*almost half of participants were at risk of clinical depression compared to a little over one-third prior to the pandemic*”, an increase of more than 35%. Moreover, according to a recent article published on “El Mundo”⁴ mental disorders claimed more lives of people under 50 in 2020 than the COVID-19.

Social and uncertain situation commonly experienced by vulnerable youth is generally related to mental health problems in young people, according to their occupational status. For this reason, when dealing with NEETs, being one of the most vulnerable groups which shows higher risk of depression and anxiety, difficulties related to social interactions, mood and external disorders, and when designing specific services addressed to this target, it is important to enforce a **holistic** approach. National authorities shall provide political guidelines to **promote the introduction of a newly educational offer** in line with the current and future needs of the labor market; on the other hand, youth organizations and youth serving agencies shall leverage on **formal and non- formal educational methods**, together with one-to-one after training support services (like coaching and mentoring). But it is key for them to be prepared to offer a wide range of services to **address diverse needs** of NEETs, and most of all, to build-up and strengthen a broader network, and to cooperate, and work alongside other professionals, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, to provide a joined-up service, creating a circle of trust, and maximizing the effectiveness of the interventions dedicated to young NEETs.

1 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>

2 <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>

3 Barbieri, P.N., Giuntella, O., Saccardo, S. *et al.* Lifestyle and mental health 1 year into COVID-19. *Sci Rep* **11**, 23349 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-02702-4>

4 www.elmundo.es/ciencia-y-salud/salud/2022/01/07/61bc7b19fc6c83660e8b4601.html

Ferraro Benedetta, and Solivo Matteo
Microfinanza Srl, January 2022

YES! Project

Mental health of the young NEETs as a result of the stress and isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic

The pandemic of COVID-19 disease has affected us all. People obviously fear the virus and all the health threats it comes with, including death. Such serious fear is a big factor impacting mental health. But this is a specific situation, as we face a virus disease that is spreading rapidly and is considered as highly contagious. This urged implementation of strict sanitary rules, including limiting personal meetings, wearing face masks and temporary lockdowns with many facilities remaining closed. Poor social life and uncertainty of the nearest future, causing the feeling of lack of control, lead to a notable increase in mental health issues in the global population. ¹

The repeating lockdowns and sanitary rules restricted people's physical contact. Also, facial expressions are limited due to the obligatory mask-wearing. These are suggested to make it more difficult for a healthy emotional regulation and feeling of empathy. Difficulty in keeping connections to others and to the natural environment during pandemic times may put a big impact on the development of anxiety, depression, stress and post-traumatic stress, loneliness, social isolation, and stigma. ²

Nevertheless, some groups might occur as more vulnerable to experience all the negative effects caused by the state of isolation and uncertainty. Amongst them, we can find the group known as NEET. That refers to the unemployed young people, aged between 15 and 29, who are neither in education, employment, or training. The imposed restrictions significantly limited their possibilities of finding an activity. Reduced opportunities and social isolation markedly increased the risk of mental health problems among these people. NEETs represented 13,2% of total European Union countries population at the end of June 2021. ³

At the end of the first quarter of 2020, when the whole pandemic situation was beginning, there were about 2,8 billion unemployed people aged

between 15 and 24 in the European Union. In June 2021, this number increased to 3,1 billion. ⁴ Young people are more likely to be employed in customer-facing industries such as accommodation, tourism, and food services. These are the sectors strongly affected by the crisis and young workers are often first to be let go during staff redundancy. This makes it even more difficult for NEETs to find and sustain a job and long-term unemployment also causes harm to mental health. ⁵



As an answer to this situation, there are features that youth employment policies should emphasise. Mitigation of the damages of the situation at the labour market is the prime objective of national governments and EU institutions. Some of the EU initiatives are already addressing these challenges and funding for youth employment has become a key priority in EU budgets. Most EU countries developed targeted youth support programmes already at an early stage, which helped to prevent some of the negative impact on youth employment. Long-lasting effects on the social situation and mental well-being of young people are still uncertain. Nevertheless, thanks to EU support programmes being developed, it is possible that the negative impact of the pandemic crisis on youth employment will be less severe than that of the global financial crisis. 6

Natalia Truskowska, The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre

Stay On Project

1 Gobbi, S., Płomecka, M. B., Ashraf, Z., Radziński, P., Neckels, R., Lazzeri, S., et al. (2020). Worsening of preexisting psychiatric conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Front. Psychiatry* 11:581426.

2 Stueck, M. (2021). The pandemic management theory. COVID-19 and biocentric development. *Health Psychol. Rep.* 9, 101–128.

3 Eurostat, 2022, Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET), data extracted: January 2022, online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSI_NEET_Q_custom_1893742/default/table?lang=en

4 Eurostat, 2022, Statistics on unemployment (1000), data extracted: January 2022, online at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSQ_UGAD_custom_1894003/default/table?lang=en

5 Supporting young people's mental health through the Covid-19 crisis, OECD 2021, p.8, data extracted: January 2022, online at: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=1094_1094452-vvnq8dqm9u&title=Supporting-young-people-s-mental-health-through-the-COVID-19-crisis&_ga=2.236017025.1279677299.1623673416-1595378193.1598879284

6 Konle-Seidl R., Picarella f. (2021) Youth in Europe: Effects of COVID-19 on their economic and social situation. The study requested by the EMPL committee, Luxembourg, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662942/IPOL_STU\(2021\)662942_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662942/IPOL_STU(2021)662942_EN.pdf)

Worrying mental health trends for young NEETs during the pandemic

Mental wellbeing of youth worsened significantly during the pandemic, so we can suspect it is the same or even worse for the beneficiaries of our project StayOn (NEETs: not in employment, education or training young people), although we do not have much data.

Many national studies report an increase in the rates of anxiety, sleep disorders and depressive symptoms as well as diminished productivity among the adolescents and university students across European countries since the beginning of the pandemic. One survey (Eurofound, 2020) also shows that 18-34 year-olds in the EU were the age group most likely to report feeling lonely “more than half of the time”, “most of the time” or “all of the time” in both April/May 2020 and June/July 2020. The worrying mental health trends result from many factors: interruptions of their daily life and activities which also means loss of daily routine; absence of in-person contact with peers and subsequently a sense of belonging to a community, for too many even a loss of a safe space; feelings of helplessness and uncertainty about the future; fear of or actual sickness or death of a family member due to the virus; and last but not least unemployment and loss of income. We may add that when it comes to our youth’s mental wellbeing, some suggest the pandemic only highlighted an underlying problem society did not give enough attention to before. This is especially true for young people belonging to more vulnerable subgroups. While we have some data for youth mental health in general, it is, however, very hard to keep statistics or monitor those outside of social systems, whether of education or employment. Nonetheless, all the factors mentioned above, from social isolation, lack of individual control over the situation, to loss of emotional and financial security, also apply to young people who are not currently employed nor in education or training process. We could even suggest the consequences could be more significant combined with their already insecure life situation. The

pandemic resulted for many in a quasi-total loss of community and regular physical contact, which means further seclusion, solitude and precarity. We must also not overlook the disruptions in access to mental health services and other support systems, although they were partly substituted by online platforms and hotlines. For young people, educational institutions often not only represent their primary source of community, but also point of access to mental health services. For young people who are not part of these institutions, identifying mental health issues and addressing them is consequently harder even in less challenging times. Today, we can presume their mental health issues in better part went unreported and therefore unaddressed.

Additionally, there is no doubt the inequalities increased during the pandemic due to social disruptions and reduced social opportunities. There is an elevated risk of young people leaving school early or not being able to find the training, necessary to make the transition from school to work, as the internships and temporary work were suspended in some companies. Not to forget, young people are also more likely to lose their jobs during a crisis, considering the kind of jobs and positions they often hold as well as their shorter tenure. Those in search of employment are confronted with less quality jobs and very scarce openings which puts additional pressure on them and can be easily demotivating, the longer the process takes. NEETs represent a disadvantaged social group and we can observe they are as such even more vulnerable to social crisis. The current situation interrupted the present projects and made it hard to imagine future ones. They are in greater risk of not being able to create their own network and not learn as much as they could with gaining actual experiences. The resulting financial struggles are another aspect of stress young people face as well as another obstacle on the path to realisation of their future plans and their desired independence.

As we can see, the impact of COVID-19 on labour markets disproportionately affects young people, as suggested by the OECD: »Unemployment is a major risk factor for poor mental health: supporting young people in finding, keeping and staying in work must be an economic, social, and public health policy priority.« The already substantial importance of financing projects that directly address those excluded from traditional systems has grown further during the pandemic. They bear a heavier burden than some other social groups and are at the same time more likely to be left behind during a crisis. Youth empowerment projects like StayOn are vital to ensure youth's access to opportunities, benefits, services and jobs, especially in the rural areas where the risk of social exclusion is higher. Through the train-the-coach program we will equip the future rural change agents to positively affect 1450 young NEETs in 5 different countries. We will provide these young people with the necessary skills for the labour market, better perspective of the future and hopefully unlock their potential and thus reinsert them into their communities with meaning and purpose. Just as importantly, though, considering the many issues they are confronted with today, we will also offer them the much-needed individual support and coaching in navigating the many challenges they face, and a place of positive social interactions to at least partly offset the negative social and mental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. All this will, hopefully, directly confront their feelings of isolation, solitude, helplessness, uncertainty and both emotional and financial insecurity.

It is the mission of the project to develop adequate, innovative and caring support to the young people excluded from formal support systems to lift their potential and through this improve their local rural communities.

BB Consulting d.o.o. team

Stay On Project

Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development: Opportunities in Cyprus

On Friday January 21st more than 60 people attended the second online meeting with Stakeholders in Cyprus under the title '[Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development](#)'. It was organised by CARDET and the Cypriot branch of YOUTHShare Transnational Employment Centre.

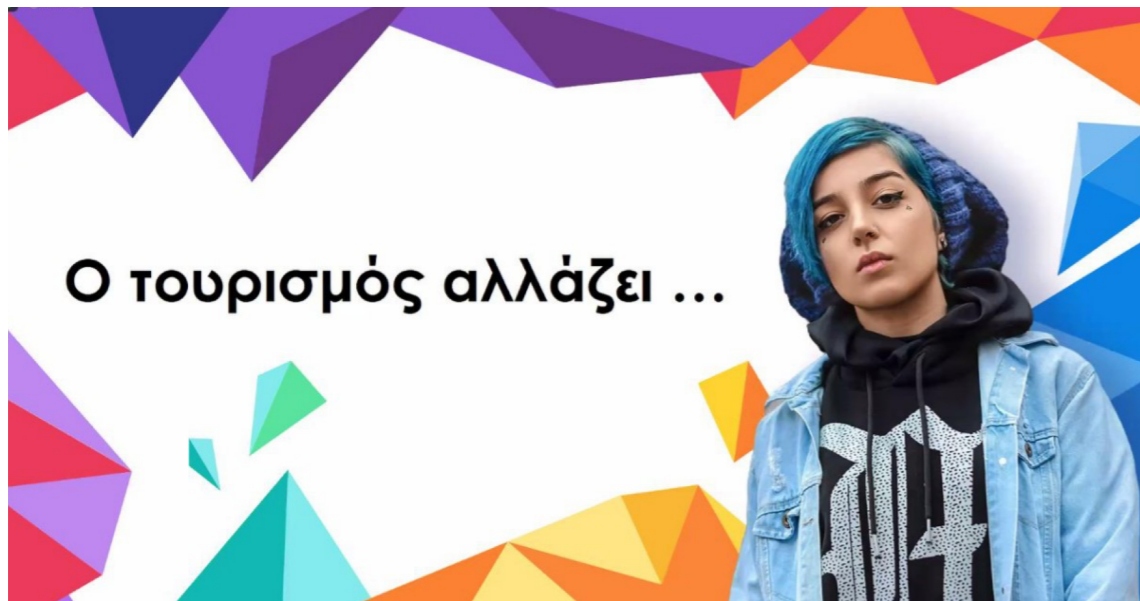
people have been in contact with the cypriot branch of the YOUTHShare Transnational Employment Center. Since May 2020 more than 60 counselling sessions have taken place, as well as 6 career-oriented workshops. Additionally, through 2 online training series in cooperation with the Neapolis University Pafos, 56 former NEETs have received accredited certificates for their skills in Resilient Sectors of the Mediterranean Economies, IT and Web Based Economies and Social Entrepreneurship, through the [YOUTHShare e-learning platform](#).

The results of the transnational research conducted in the framework of the YOUTHShare project at regional level in the 4 countries under focus, Greece, Cyprus, Spain and Italy, showed that young people aged 25-29 face the biggest challenges in finding a job; especially in Cyprus, women not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and people with a migration background.

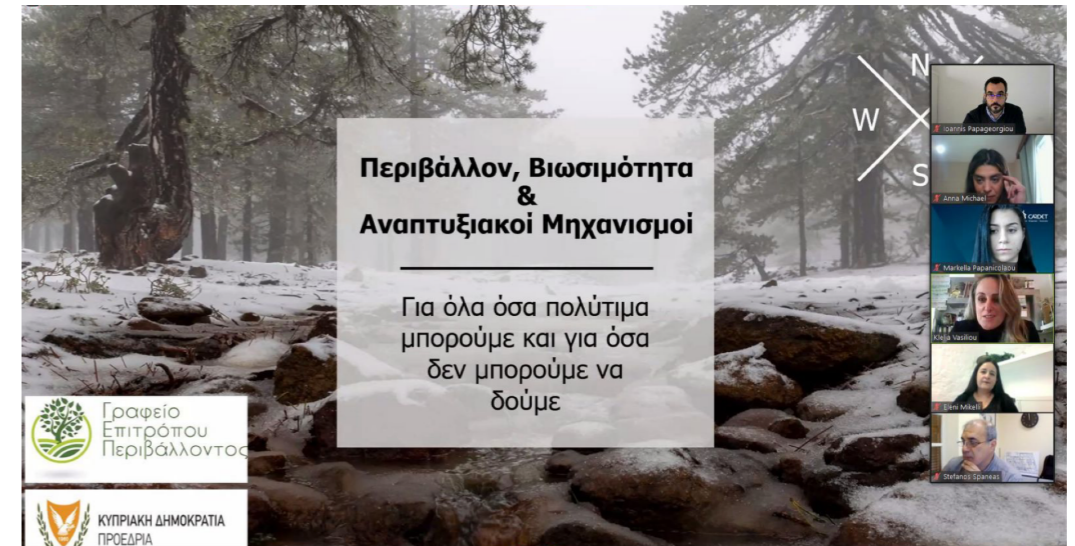
The local manager of CARDET stressed the importance of the [Join2Share – The Sharing Economy Platform](#), where Social Economy Entities, Experts and Mentors join their forces to share experiences and offer consulting services to beneficiaries of the program.

Aim of YOUTHShare is to introduce youth into employment by using innovative methods and personalised support. In doing so, over 230 young

The Stakeholders' representatives noted the synergies that can be developed between YOUTHShare and their organisations. Mr Kostas Champiaouris, Commissioner for the Development of Mountain Communities, talked about revitalising the Mountain Communities and the 400 million Euros budget in place for this purpose. He also discussed the detailed plan of the Cypriot government to ensure the most beneficial course of action for the 113 mountain communities situated at the mountainous areas of Cyprus.



Ms Elina Christofidou, Inspection Officer at the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in Cyprus, underlined that Covid-19 has indeed severely affected tourism on one hand, but mountainous parts of the country have benefited on the other, since tourists, in order to avoid overcrowding in coastal areas, choose alternative holiday destinations. Wine tasting, hiking or even relaxing walks in nature, camping, visitable farms, are only a few of the advantages of mountain tourism. Mrs Christofidou underlined the opportunities arising from this tourism trend shift for both local development and unemployed youth.



Mrs Klelia Vasileiou, Commissioner for the Environment in Cyprus, stated that, besides its importance, circular economy nowadays provides plenty of new job positions. Soil, water and air, Mrs Vasileiou emphasised, are the three main factors that are in need of our protection. She addressed the matter of soil health and the need for the proper operation of aquifers, noting that the circular economy is an emerging field for the employment of youth.

Dr Stefanos Spaneas, Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Nicosia, discussed the developments in the field of Social Entrepreneurship in Cyprus. He noted the key aspects of acknowledging opportunities by social entrepreneurs and the distinction between them and commercial entrepreneurs: Whereas the first are mainly motivated by social responsibility, the latter are motivated by personal gain and profit. Mr Christodoulou, from the Cypriot Agency for Cooperative Societies in his intervention clarified the legal provisions from the soon to come legislation on Social Economy.

Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway grants

YOUTHShare

Κοινωνική Επιχειρηματικότητα και
Βιώσιμη Ανάπτυξη

Η ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΜΑΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΥΠΡΟ

Δρ. Στέφανος Σπ
Spaneas.s@code

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. At the top left, there is a logo for 'Iceland Liechtenstein Norway grants'. The main content is a slide with the title 'YOUTHShare' in blue. Below it, the Greek text reads 'Κοινωνική Επιχειρηματικότητα και Βιώσιμη Ανάπτυξη' (Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development) and 'Η ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΜΑΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΥΠΡΟ' (Social Entrepreneurship in Cyprus). At the bottom right of the slide, the name 'Δρ. Στέφανος Σπ' and email 'Spaneas.s@code' are visible. On the right side of the slide, there is a vertical grid of seven video thumbnails showing participants in the meeting. The bottom left corner of the slide features a small circular logo with a green leaf and the text 'CODE'.

The meeting presented 2 cases of successful efforts on social entrepreneurship. Both Val's Place, a family run cafe/ bar where visitors can relax and enjoy the scenic views in Gialia, Paphos, and Casale Panayiotis Hotel, a traditional spa mountain hotel that offers the opportunity of wandering the trails and experiencing the life of locals, have managed to change not only the lives of their owners and employees but have identifiable impact upon the local communities. They are tangible examples of the enormous transforming effect of social entrepreneurship upon employment and social sustainability.

YOUTHShare Project

Regional Focus on Cyprus: YOUTHShare to have a substantial impact in youth employment

“What are the terms under which the youth is working after the “pandemic measures”?”

This is a question that arises whilst taking a look at Cyprus’ unemployment rates during the previous years.

The beginning of 2020 brought an overwhelming wave of instability in Europe due to the covid-19 pandemic, affecting relentlessly one country after the other, not leaving Cyprus out of its way. Businesses and service providers closing down or losing a hefty part of their market power naturally led to an abrupt rise of unemployment rates. Forward to a year later, though, things seem to be changing for the better. According to Eurostat, unemployment rates dropped to 6.4% in September 2021 and specifically to 15.1% for youth under 25 – a development that leads to the conclusion that a big part of young people now has a job. On one hand, such an outcome within a year is a positive indicator for the revival of the country’s economy; but on the other hand, the question *“What are the terms under which the youth is working”* emerges.

Ms Anna Michael, Key Account Manager of the cyriot branch of the YOUTHShare Transnational Employment Centre, comments: “What I have noticed, as a career counsellor through the sessions, was that many of our beneficiaries were willing to accept irrelevant to their career-focus jobs and lower salaries in order to create a sense of stability in their life. The situation during the last two years has created a lot of insecurity, leading to lower standards for their career. Parallel to this, while most of the business owners were unable to cover a decent salary for local youth but at the same time, they were stating that they needed more help in their business”.

So, although the figures show a positive shift towards increased employment for young people since last year, the terms under which they manage to do so were more unfavour than before: Lowering their expectations and demands was a key point in their job seeking, in order to be successful. And there’s the other point of view, as well; businesses that can only offer low salaries but are in need of more personnel.



The solution to this conundrum is the helping hand not only of the various European and governmental youth support programs, but also of the regional stakeholders and other authorities: “Considering the above, there is a great need of supporting both the youth and businesses in a more sustainable way. Even if the government and the EU are already launching different programs to support youth employment and business recovery, local stakeholders and other authorities also bear a responsibility. Each community can cultivate an environment and establish programs that create the integration of youth to the labour market as well as their engagement to the community. The discussion is not only about finding a job but also about better conditions for youth mental and physical health”.

And here comes the YOUTHShare project.

As Ms Michael notes, “One of the most interesting examples of collective support towards youth is the YOUTHShare project that supports the integration of youth and engages the local businesses as well as the stakeholders of the community. Through the direct feedback we receive from youth participating in the project, we can create workshops adjusted to their needs or introduce them to different stakeholders who are interested in participating in the project [...]”.

Ms Markella Papanicolaou, Local Manager of the YOUTHShare project on behalf of the Centre for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET), states that, what makes YOUTHShare to stand out “[...] *is the combination of different experts, such as career counsellors, mentors and trainers, with a common vision for the future*”.

The cyprriot YOUTHShare partners’ effort is combined with the experience and expertise of the consortium based on the other Med EEA countries, creating a dynamic network for supporting the youth. As Mrs Michael concludes, “The last two years this project has been a pillar for many people coming from vulnerable groups that were seeking to create a more sustainable career. Through the transnational support, we saw people developing their expertise and network but also finding jobs, developing their skills and even creating a change for their peers”.

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YOUTHShare Project

YOUTHShare Delivers the Join2Share Social Entrepreneurship Sharing Platform



On November 30th 2021, the online presentation of the [Join2Share transnational platform](#) took place. More than 50 participants attended and shared their thoughts and questions about the newly developed sharing economy platform especially designed for the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and tailor-made for the regions of the Mediterranean EEA. Social enterprises, expert professionals and public stakeholders are the target audience and prospective registered users of the platform.

The Join2Share is the final steppingstone for the [YOUTHShare](#) beneficiaries before their entrepreneurial plans become a reality and at the same time a unique reference point for their necessary networking. In that respect the YOUTHShare project pilots a holistic approach to NEETs starting from the research informed operation of the Transnational Employment Centre and its personalised help, moving to the e-learning program on niche sectors of the Mediterranean economy, then to internships that provide hands on experience and concluding at the Join2Share platform that facilitates, through mentoring and networking the entrepreneurial endeavours of former NEETs.

The Join2Share platform is also open to a variety of players in social

economy. Other SSE entities, experts and public stakeholders can register, build their profile, contribute in the forum section, provide news and job openings or write articles in the management, marketing, funding, legislation or accounting section of the platform. Join2Share is essentially a welcoming online space for creating and connecting with fellow SSE members, as well as building networking relations within its infrastructure.

As the communication manager of the YOUTHShare project noted, while addressing the presentation event, there is a distinct difference between the definitions of network and networking: “Network, according to Chisholm, is a sum of independent organisations to achieve targets impossible to reach, if they did not cooperate, however, networking in systems theory is slightly different; it’s much more than a simple cooperation on the basis of common interests and goals; it requests social synergy, a community of ideas and perspectives that build common trust among partners [...] It’s self-understandable that both network and networking have a wide range of implementation. Every company is a basic network of its shareholders, so from basic entrepreneurial units up to complex Local Development Networks or even the social media, networks are a fundamental feature of social life. The point is to create networking”.

In that respect, Join2Share’s goal is to accommodate SSE entities in order for them to exchange knowledge, experience, ideas and much more, forming networks between them, and going one step further, through the process of familiarising with each other, to construct a more in-depth connection that leads to trust.

The Join2Share platform is open to anybody in social economy and for free, including the services and information that are provided there.

YOUTHShare Project

Space to play a catalytic role in search of the reasons for youth unemployment



Youth has been in the epicenter of several studies during the last decades, particularly during periods of socio-economic turmoil. In the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis, skyrocketing youth unemployment and inactivity attracted growing academic and political concern. A broadly used statistical indicator of youth vulnerability is the 'NEET' rate, reflecting the share of young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training over the total young population. It comprises young people who jointly face the two following conditions: First, they are unemployed or inactive according to standard definitions of Eurostat, and second, they are not receiving any formal or non-formal education or training.

The term was first introduced in the United Kingdom in the late-1980s, after the operational changes in social services that deprived jobless young people under the age of 25 the right to public support and the possibility of being identified as unemployed. Social trends extending the transition period from adolescence to early adulthood led to a broader

definition of the term including those between 15 and 29 years. In the discourse regarding the professional and social development of youth and the ways young people should be faring, the most common assessing criteria have been biographical milestones (work and family formation) in respect of biological age. However, besides time, space is a crucial aspect that should not be ignored when analyzing youth. Young people unfold within the labor markets, education systems, social networks and relations of consumption, all of which are affected by local and global - physical and digital - spatial dynamics. In terms of employment, interlinkages between local socio-economic contexts and the globalized market shape the conditions for the entrance of young people into the labor markets across different territories.

The spaces of youth, or else 'youthspaces' constitute an effective conceptual tool in understanding the social and spatial drivers in the development of young people's lives and therefore, capable to approach the contemporary phenomenon of NEETs. The vulnerability of particular regions to youth unemployment and inactivity - regions where NEET rates are higher and more persistent - pertains to several spatially dependent and geographically differentiated socio-economic factors. For instance, the socio-spatial relations of production, i.e. what and where is produced and what types of jobs are created and where, are crucial components of contemporary local markets. Additionally, the extent and form of work flexibility varies across territories, as does young people's practices to cope with precarity, including various educational programs, internships, and atypical or flexible employment.

Most youth studies draw upon the metropolitan vantage points of global North, ignoring spatial socio-economic differentiations worldwide. However, the highest and more persistent NEET rates have been recorded in the less urbanized and less developed regions, where globalization may have had less beneficial implications.

The least resilient areas EU-wise in terms of youth inactivity seem to be (geographically) located in the EU South. Indeed, several peripheral - including insular - regions of the Mediterranean EU have been experiencing high levels of youth inactivity long before 2008 and even during the recovery period, when most EU regions had the chance to bounce back.

Economies across the EU South have historically been vulnerable to crises. Labor precarity, informal practices and flexibility without security have been historically widespread among the younger cohorts of the population in these societies. In most cases, the 2008 global economic crisis only reinforced this disadvantageous condition, and had a severe impact on youth, reflected in a significant increase in youth NEET rates. The crisis brought to the forefront the limited number of job vacancies, with many young people, even the highly educated ones, experiencing difficulties in the transition from education to work. The persisting high NEET rates during the last decade highlighted not only structural deficiencies of local labor markets, but also institutional insufficiencies to cope with growing youth inactivity. Gender divisions and class-related obstacles, that have been amplified during the socio-economic crisis, set further restraints for the entrance of several groups of young people into the labor market across different areas.

Overall, space must not be ignored when studying youth, and particularly when scrutinizing the uneven expansion of youth inactivity and searching for the socio-spatial mechanisms that reproduce precarity, demotivation and social exclusion.

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