



THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE



Support to Youth Employment: 2014-2018

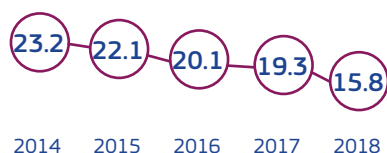
BELGIUM

SUMMARY

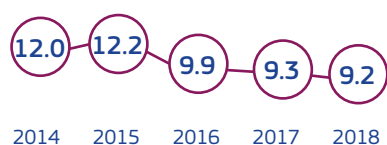
Youth Employment measures funded by the YEI and the ESF aim at improving access to employment for young people. During the period 2014-2018, the EU and Belgium spent a combined total of 73.6 million euro in ESF/YEI investments to achieve this objective. As a result, 252 073 participations in youth employment activities have taken place in Belgium. This factsheet summarises the main actions, outputs, results and lessons learned so far of the implementation of youth employment measures funded by the EU.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



NEET RATE (15-24 YEARS)



► In 2014, the rates of **young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)** and of unemployment were **high and at about the EU averages**. The ratio between the rate of young unemployed and the unemployment rate for people over 25 years was among the highest in the EU. This illustrates that in Belgium, **young people found it disproportionately difficult to access the labour market**.

► In 2018, the **NEET rate** is slightly below the rate observed at EU level (10.5%). There are persisting **important variations by region**, with the Flemish region having significantly lower NEET rates for young people than the capital and the Walloon region in both 2014 and 2018, **but the gap has narrowed**.

► The **youth unemployment rate** is practically the same as that observed across the EU (15.2%) in 2018. It ranges **from 11% in Flanders to 30% in Brussels Capital Region**, although the latter one showed a considerable decrease of 10 percentage points since 2014.

► The **labour market situation of young women** seems to be better than that of young men (lower NEET and unemployment rates). However, this is not the case for women aged 25-29 for whom NEET rates are considerably higher than that of men (20.2% vs. 13.8%).

EXPLANATORY NOTES

ESF European Social Fund

YEI Youth Employment Initiative

OP Operational Programme

NEET Young people not in employment, education or training

- This factsheet was prepared before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Figures present the situation for youth employment operations under Investment Priority 8.ii for the programming period 2014-2020 implemented up to 2018, as reported by 6th September 2019. In many instances, operations are not yet complete at this stage. They are provided only as an indication of progress.
- Target achievements are calculated dividing the outputs and the results by the targets set in the Operational Programmes. Targets set should be reached by 2023.
- Participants' data are collected on starting an operation. Data on results are collected at the end of an operation or even later. Because of this time lag, the two sets of data (participations and results) should not be directly compared.

ESF PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

ESF 133

Million Euro are budgeted
to the support of young people,
including national funding

YEI 189
Million Euro

ESF 62

Million Euro
The EU contributes a large share of this funding

YEI 126
Million Euro

ESF YEI Three out of four regional Operational Programmes (OPs) implement specific actions supporting young people's integration into the labour market. OP Wallonie-Bruxelles and OP Brussels Capital Region also receive YEI funding, while OP Flanders covers specific actions through ESF only.

► The investment in the three OPs focuses on the transition from school to work through coaching, awareness raising as well as information actions in schools. Another focus is the acquisition of skills and experience.

STATE OF PLAY

► Number of participations of young people reported in specific actions promoting the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market by the end of 2018.*

ESF 109 080

YEI 142 993

► The achievement of the expected number of participations differs across the OPs, as e.g. in the OP Flanders the rate is 40%, while in the OP Wallonie-Bruxelles targets are already largely exceeded. In the latter, the authorities were very careful with the target setting because the NEETs were a widely unknown target group at the beginning of the programming period.

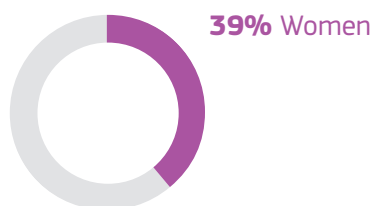
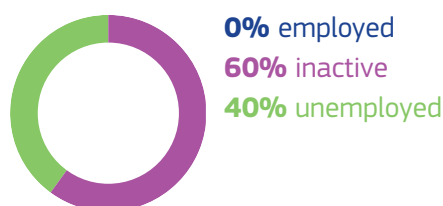
ESF 362%

Achievements of targets for participation

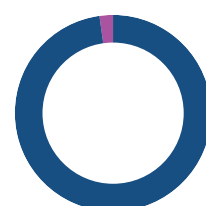
205% YEI

* As one person could participate more than once in ESF operations over time, the number of participations is reported, not the number of participants. These figures exclude Technical Assistance.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES WHEN RECEIVING SUPPORT



98% <25 years
2% ≥25 years

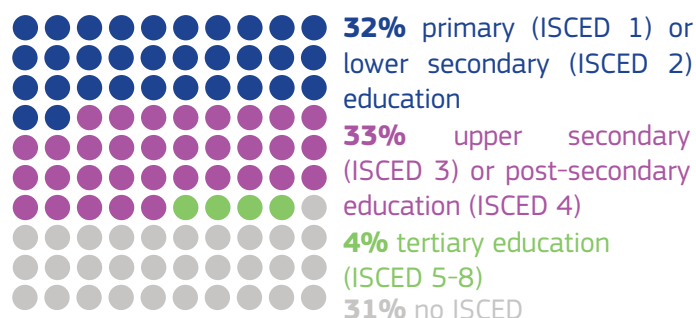


Migrants | 24 572

Other disadvantaged | 21 947*

Participants with disabilities | 3 079

Homeless | 16



- Variations in labour market status: Share of unemployed participants in the OP Brussels Capital Region: 91% ⇔ Share of inactive participants in the OP Wallonie-Bruxelles 63% and in the OP Flanders 100%.
- Extended age group of eligible persons up to 29 years in the OP Brussels Capital Region ⇔ Share of participants above 25 years: 24%.
- Differences in terms of educational level of participants: Participants in OP Flanders with primary or lower secondary education: 95% ⇔ Participants in Wallonie-Bruxelles with secondary or post-secondary education: ~50% Participants in OP Brussels Capital Region with upper secondary or post secondary education: 50%.

Overall, **62 847 young people achieved a positive result upon leaving**, 30 781 under the ESF and 32 066 under the YEI.

ESF 6 242 Participants in employment **6 841 YEI**

13 006 Participants gaining a qualification **7 178**

3 861 Participants in education **16 392**

7 672 Inactive participants engaged in job searching **1 655**

- The targeted number of positive results has already been exceeded in OP Flanders, as 46% of participants were in employment, education or training at the end of the action against a target of 15% in 2023.
- For OP Brussels Capital Region, by end-2017, 33% of those aged 25-29 were in employment, training or education against a target of 28%. 'EU traineeships' and 'First Employment Agreement' (which subsidises jobs in public institutions for up to two years) perform best with transition rates of respectively 83% and 67%.
- In OP Wallonie-Bruxelles, while the target should be reached for YEI (9 961 unemployed in education/training, gaining a qualification, or in employment upon leaving in end-2018 against a 2023 target of 12 300), for the ESF strand it may not be the case (2 582 inactive in employment upon leaving against a 2023 target of 13 520).

ESF 80% Achievement of targets for results **204% YEI**

* Participants may refuse to give this information. Consequently, disadvantages are likely to be underreported.

LESSONS LEARNED SO FAR

ESF

Focus on NEETs

The ESF/YEI urged the authorities to focus on the NEETs, a group which was previously not well known, and to put in place new (less formal) strategies to reach these people. NEETs are now likely to become a transversal issue in public policy in the country.

Sustainable results

According to the first available results, in the OP Wallonie-Bruxelles, 47% of participants were in employment immediately upon exit and about six out of ten after six months (59% in more developed regions and 65% in transition regions), but most of the jobs obtained were precarious. In OP Flanders, 39% of participants found a job upon exit.

Role effect

In the OP Brussels-Capital Region, the experience of the Public Employment Service in managing measures similar to those funded by ESF helped to implement these.

YEI

No 'one size fits all' approach

The informal nature of the outreach activities, the personalised approach, the flexibility of the support (including the 'trial and error approach'), as well as the close partnership with various (local) stakeholders (and in particular schools) were reported as key factors for the implementation of the ESF/YEI support to youth employment as NEETs represent a very heterogeneous target group with different needs.

Reaching NEETs

Traditional communication tools do not work with the NEETs. Visibility of youth employment operations is more successful if the communication activities involve participants directly, and if partnership is ensured for instance with youth associations and street educators.

More flexibility

In OP Wallonie-Bruxelles, more flexibility in the application of the NEETs definition is required. There are requests to extend access to the programmes to people younger than 16 and to those who are 25 and over.

Pathway to employment

YEI is not only about employment, the aim is above all to ensure a pathway to work, and to increase the employability of the participants who face many barriers.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The ESF in Belgium <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=371>

Website of the ESF Belgium <http://www.europeinbelgium.be/en/>

- European Commission, Study for the Evaluation of ESF Support to Youth Employment
- Evaluation of the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative and Youth Guarantee actions in the OP Brussels Capital Region

