



# **Study for the Evaluation of ESF Support to Youth Employment**

Annex 5: Case study – Slovakia

(Contract VC/2018/0715)

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Annex 5: Case study - Slovakia

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## Table of Contents

1	Background and Context.....	7
1.1	Labour market context .....	7
1.2	National ALMP targeting young people.....	8
2	The ESF/YEI in Slovakia.....	9
2.1	Role of the ESF / YEI.....	9
2.1.1	CSRs addressed by the ESF .....	9
2.2	Programme architecture .....	9
2.3	The monitoring system.....	11
2.4	The intervention logic.....	12
3	Scale of ESF / YEI investment .....	14
4	Effectiveness.....	16
4.1	Data based on AIR 2018.....	16
4.1.1	Outputs.....	16
4.1.2	Results.....	17
4.1.3	Target achievement.....	17
4.2	Answers to the evaluation questions .....	18
5	Efficiency.....	22
5.1	Answers to the evaluation questions .....	22
6	Relevance .....	27
7	Coherence .....	28
8	Sustainability .....	30
9	Added value.....	31
10	Gender sensitivity .....	32
11	Conclusions.....	33
12	Good Practice.....	34
13	Information sources .....	35
13.1	Bibliography.....	35
13.2	Interviews .....	35
14	Annex .....	37

## Tables and Figures

Table 1.	Key figures on the labour market situation of young people .....	7
Table 2.	Distribution of expenditure on young people (<25) participating in active labour market measures by source of funding and type of intervention, Slovakia, 2014-17.....	9
Table 3.	Prevalence of recommendations linked to Investment Priority 8.ii Sustainable integration into the labour market .....	9
Table 4.	Programme architecture .....	9
Table 5.	Main actors in YE activities in Slovakia – preliminary data .....	11
Table 6.	Allocations to Youth Employment ESF + YEI – including Operational Programme amendments until 2018.....	14
Table 7.	Changes to Youth Employment allocations in Operational Programme since start programming .....	14
Table 8.	Overview of the financial progress - ESF / YEI .....	14
Table 9.	Financial progress .....	15
Table 10.	Number of participations under Investment Priority 8.ii (ESF and YEI) .....	16
Table 11.	Overview results – IP8.ii - Annex II common indicators YEI.....	17
Table 12.	Overview results – measured by Annex II common indicators YEI (2).....	17
Table 13.	Overview of number of indicators with targets under Investment Priority 8.ii.....	17
Table 14.	Average achievement rate of targets under Investment Priority 8.ii – by Operational Programme.....	18
Table 15.	Effectiveness and the number of participants 3, 6, 9 and 12 months after the intervention .....	20
Table 16.	Cost efficiency related to the target group “unemployed who completed their participation in the intervention” .....	22
Table 17.	Cost efficiency related to the target group “long-term unemployed who completed participation in the intervention” .....	23
Table 18.	Eligible expenditures declared to EC per participation .....	23
Table 19.	Eligible expenditures declared to EC per immediate result achieved .....	23
Table 20.	Total common outputs for participations ESF/YEI under Investment Priority 8.ii, cumulative until 2018, by Operational Programme and indicator.....	37
Table 21.	Common Result Indicators, ESF / YEI, by Operational Programme .....	39
Table 22.	Common Result Indicators, ESF / YEI, by Operational Programme (2) .....	39
Figure 1.	Intervention logic.....	13
Figure 2.	Share of eligible costs by type of intervention, 2015-2018 .....	16

## List of abbreviations and acronyms

AIR	Annual Implementation Report
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
CSR	Country-specific recommendations
DG EMPL	Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
EC	European Commission
EQ	Evaluation question
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMP	Labour market policy
LO	Labour Office
MA	Managing Authority
NEET	Person not in employment, education or training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Priority Axis
pp	Percentage point
TO	Thematic Objective
ÚPSVAR	Public employment service
USVRK	Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma communities
YE	Youth Employment
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative

## 1 Background and Context

### 1.1 Labour market context

In 2018, one in ten (10.2%) of young people aged 15 to 24 in Slovakia were not in employment, education or training (NEET). This represents an improvement since the beginning of the programming period in 2014 (12.8%) and is similar to the rate observed at the EU level (10.5%, see Table 1). Nevertheless, the regional differences in the NEET rates in Slovakia persist; while in the Bratislava region the rate oscillated around 6.7%, the NEET rate in Eastern Slovak presented 14.8% (2018). The proportion of active young people of the same age that were unemployed stood at 14.9%, practically the same as that observed across the EU (15.2%), and half the rate seen in 2014 (29.7%). There were also positive developments for those aged 25 to 29 for whom the NEET rate dropped from 27.1% to 21.3% while the unemployment rate almost halved (from 16.8% to 8.7%) and moved below the EU level (9.2%). Results for women seem less favourable as for both age groups there is still a substantial difference with the NEET rates of men, with NEET rates for women aged 15 to 24 remaining the same as in 2014 (12.8%, Table 1). Unemployment rates are slightly higher for women aged 15 to 24 compared to men of this age group while the rates are similar for the older age group. Finally, between 2014 and 2018 there has been an increase in the rate of early school leavers<sup>1</sup> from 6.7% to 8.6% (similar increase for women and men), though the figure remains below that at EU level (10.6%).

Additionally, one can see an increasing trend in the rate of low-skilled NEETs (17.1% for ISCED 0-2 in 2018) as well as above-average levels for young people with tertiary education; in 2018, for Slovakia, the NEET rate for ISCED 5-8 oscillated around 14.7% while the EU28 average presented about 9.3%.

The Operational Programme covered by the case study (Operational Programme Human Resources) is implemented at both more (capital region) and less developed regions in the country. There are important variations by type of region, with the capital region having in 2018 about a fourth of the NEET rate and a sixth of the unemployment rate of less developed regions (i.e. the whole country outside of the capital region) (Table 1). In less developed regions, the rate of early school leavers increased by 2.1 pp while Eurostat did not publish data for the capital region due to small sample size. However, taking the share of less developed regions away from the national total implies a share of 3.1% for the capital region and therefore a significant improvement compared to 2014 (6.7%).

Table 1. Key figures on the labour market situation of young people

	NEET rate (% of total pop.)		Unemployment rate (% of labour force)		Early school leaving rate (18- 24)		
	2014	2018	2014	2018	2014	2018	
<b>EU28</b>							
<b>15-24</b>	12.5	10.5	22.2	15.2	11.2	10.6	
<b>25-29</b>	20.4	17.1	13.6	9.2			
<b>National level</b>							
<b>Total</b>	<b>15-24</b>	12.8	10.2	29.7	14.9	6.7	8.6
	<b>25-29</b>	27.1	21.3	16.1	8.7		
<b>Men</b>	<b>15-24</b>	12.8	8.4	29.5	14.3	6.9	8.3
	<b>25-29</b>	18.4	11.2	16.9	8.6		
<b>Women</b>	<b>15-24</b>	12.8	12.0	30.1	16.1	6.6	8.8
	<b>25-29</b>	36.1	31.7	14.9	8.8		

<sup>1</sup> The early school leaving rate refers to the proportion of people aged 18-24 who have attained at most lower secondary education and who are not currently (within the last 4 weeks) participating in any further education or training: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/edat1\\_esms.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/edat1_esms.htm)

	NEET rate (% of total pop.)		Unemployment rate (% of labour force)		Early school leaving rate (18- 24)	
	2014	2018	2014	2018	2014	2018
<b>Regional level (15-24)</b>						
<b>More developed</b>	6.7	2.9	14.8	2.6*	6.7	:
<b>Less developed</b>	13.4	10.9	31.1	16.0	7.0	9.1

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS, [yth empl 150](#), [edat lfse 22](#), [yth empl 110](#), [edat lfse 16](#)), data extracted on 06.09.19.

\*Based on data from the Slovakian Statistical Office, available at:

[http://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/en/VBD\\_SK\\_WIN/pr3117qr/Unemployed%20by%20age%20%5Bpr3117qr%5D](http://datacube.statistics.sk/#!/view/en/VBD_SK_WIN/pr3117qr/Unemployed%20by%20age%20%5Bpr3117qr%5D)

## 1.2 National ALMP targeting young people

In Slovakia the design and implementation of youth employment policies fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family which together with the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and the Public Employment Services (ÚPSVAR), is also responsible for the implementation of the national Youth Guarantee scheme.

During the programming period, almost all active labour market policy (ALMP) measures provided by the PES were co-funded by the ESF<sup>2</sup> and are thus covered by the analysis below.

Besides national projects implemented by the PES (listed in Table 2), the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family also administers individual demand-driven projects based on the grant system where civil society organisations, public and private sector organisations may apply for grant calls and implement activities on increasing youth employment. Nevertheless, investments in the demand-driven projects present only a very small portion of the overall investments (only 0.18% of all allocated EU funds in the first four years in the programming period 2014-2020).

<sup>2</sup> Based on information from the LMP database:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1143&intPageId=3227&langId=en>

## 2 The ESF/YEI in Slovakia

### 2.1 Role of the ESF / YEI

Table 2. Distribution of expenditure on young people (<25) participating in active labour market measures by source of funding and type of intervention, Slovakia, 2014-17

	Only national funds	ESF (co)funded
Institutional training	0.0%	3.4%
Traineeships	0.0%	0.7%
Apprenticeships	0.0%	0.0%
Employment incentives	0.0%	84.3%
Sheltered/supported employment	0.0%	2.5%
Direct job creation	0.0%	5.0%
Start-up incentives	0.0%	4.1%
Total	-	100%

Source: LMP database, data extracted on 06.09.19.

Note: Data cover interventions in LMP categories 2-7 only. Expenditure on young people is estimated for each intervention as total expenditure times the proportion of young people (<25) amongst total participants (using the observation of average annual stock where available and otherwise entrants by age). Interventions with missing data on either expenditure or participants are excluded from the analysis. The source of funding for each intervention is based on responses to item 12 of the LMP questionnaire.

#### 2.1.1 CSRs addressed by the ESF

Table 3. Prevalence of recommendations linked to Investment Priority 8.ii Sustainable integration into the labour market

Country (and number of CSR over 2014-2019)	Type of CSR
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively tackle youth unemployment by improving early intervention, in line with the objectives of a Youth Guarantee (2014).</li> </ul>

### 2.2 Programme architecture

Table 4. Programme architecture

Programme architecture			Main Actions/Interventions
OP	Action-level		
	PAx	ESF/YEI	
OP Human Resources	2	YEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessing employment through practical experience<sup>3</sup></li> <li>Graduate practice</li> <li>Successful integration into the labour market</li> <li>Employment opportunities for young people</li> <li>Training of young job applicants</li> <li>Re-start for young job seekers</li> <li>Selected active labour market policies for youth</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Slovak titles of the national projects in the PO2 YEI are: (1) Praxou k zamestnaniu; (2) Absolventská prax štartuje zamestnanie; (3) Úspešne na trhu práce; (4) Šanca pre mladých; (5) Vzdelávanie mladých uchádzačov o zamestnanie; (6) Reštart pre mladých uchádzačov o zamestnanie; (7) Vybrané aktívne opatrenia na trhu práce pre mladých UoZ; (8) Reštart pre mladých UoZ 2

- |  |  |  |                                    |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
|  |  |  | • Re-start for young job seekers 2 |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|

As can be seen in Table 4, in the programming period 2014-2020, ten national projects have been implemented as a part of the YEI in Slovakia. All of them are implemented by the PES and consist mainly of wage subsidies and work-based learning:

**Accessing employment through practical experience** (since 2015): Wage-subsidised work placement integrated with tutoring support. The recipient of the financial contribution is the employer who is obliged to create a full-time or part-time job for a young job applicant for min. 6 months (max. 9 months) and provide tutoring support (the young worker is matched with a senior employee who provides him/her with guidance). The target group is (1) job applicants (NEETs) under 25 years, registered at the Labour Office, and unemployed for at least 3 months; (2) job applicants (NEETs) under 29 and registered at the Labour Office at least for 6 months. The financial contribution covers labour costs and tutoring costs. (EUR 50 million). (No. of the project 312021A017)

**Graduate practice** (since 2015): a financial incentive (contribution) for a young graduate to the amount of 65% of the minimum subsistence (in 2019, the amount of the graduate practice contribution is EUR 136.63). The target group is young people below 26 who graduated no longer than two years before and have been registered as unemployed for at least one month. At the time of participation in the graduate practice programme, the young worker is still registered as unemployed at the Labour Office (financial allocation: EUR 19 million). (No. of the project 312021A051)

**Successful integration into the labour market** (since 2015): wage-subsidised work experience placement: a financial incentive to support self-employment or to create a job position in the first regularly paid employment. The target group is (1) job applicants (NEETs) younger than 25 and registered at the Labour Office at least for 3 months; (2) job applicants (NEETs) younger than 29 and registered at the Labour Office as unemployed at least for 6 months. The recipient of a financial contribution is an employer who is obliged to create a full-time or part-time job for a job applicant for at least six months (max. 12 months). After the end of this period, the employer is obliged to provide a young employee with employment for at least half the duration covered by the financial incentive (e.g. if the financial contribution was provided for 6 months, the employer is obliged to employ the young worker for at least 3 months). Eligible recipients are employers from all regions except for the Bratislava region. EUR 50 million). (No. of the project 312021A139)

**Employment opportunities for young people** (since 2017): wage-subsidised work experience placement: a financial incentive for creating a job position. The target group is job applicants (NEETs) younger than 29 and registered at the Labour Office at least for 12 months (thus, they are considered as disadvantaged job seekers). The financial contribution covers labour costs, tutoring and personal protective equipment. After the end of the operation, the employer is not obliged to provide the young worker with a job offer. (Financial allocation up to EUR 49.9 million). (No. of the project 312021J355)

**Training of young job applicants** (since 2017): training courses to foster key competences in the scheme KOMPAS+ (soft skills, IT skills, language skills) and re-qualification scheme RE-PAS (e.g. courses in accounting, nursing, crafts, language courses). The target group of this operation is NEETs younger than 29. (Financial allocation: EUR 30.98 million). (No. of the project 312021J580)

**Re-start for young job seekers** (since 2017): job counselling services (Activity 1) and a financial contribution provided to young workers for 1-12 months after finding a job (Activity 2). For the first six months, the financial contribution amounts to EUR 126.14, the last six months the financial contribution is EUR 63.07. The target group for Activity 1 is NEETs younger than 29 and registered at the Labour Office as

unemployed. For Activity 2, the target is NEETs younger than 29 and registered at the Labour Office for at least one month. (financial allocation EUR 9.9 million). (No. of the project 312021J587)

**Selected active labour market policies for young job applicants** (since 2017): this NP serves to co-finance the measures from the Priority Axis 3. The target group is NEETs younger than 29. The NP includes several measures, particularly providing financial contribution on supporting (1) self-employment; (2) employment of disadvantaged job applicants; (3) development of local and regional employment; (4) activation work programmes in the form of small municipal works; (5) activation work programmes in the form of voluntary service; (6) commuting to work; (7) labour mobility. (financial allocation EUR 12 million) (No. of the project 312021N146)

**Re-start for young job seekers 2** (since 2018): a financial contribution provided to the young workers for 1-12 months after finding a job. For the first six months the financial contribution amounts to EUR 126.14, the last six months the financial contribution is EUR 63.07. The target group is NEETs younger than 29 and registered at the Labour Office at least one month. (financial allocation EUR 29.9 million). (No. of the project 312021R111)

Table 5. Main actors in YE activities in Slovakia – preliminary data

YEI Managing Authorities		Youth Guarantee Impl. Authority		PES, Implementation Agency
Name	Type	Name	Type	
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	Ministry of Labour/Social Policy	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	Ministry of Labour/Social Policy	Central Labour Office (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny; ÚPSVAR) The Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Sources: Task 1/SFC2014, ESF website, other documents

### 2.3 The monitoring system

The data collection is centralised by the ESF Managing Authority (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family) and the Intermediate organisations, namely, the Central Labour Office and the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The local Labour Offices collect data from their internal databases about the implementation of the National projects and provide them to the Central Labour Office. The Implementation Agency collects data on the demand-driven projects and delivers them to the Managing Authority as well. These institutions collect financial information (allocation of funds), the number of participants in individual employment programmes, and the impact of individual employment programmes in terms of tracking the employment status of participants based on their registration at Labour Office (3, 6, 9 and 12 months after the intervention ended).

Importantly, the Central Labour Office does not collect data about the NEETs especially about ethnic groups such as the Roma, who face very high unemployment rates and specific obstacles in accessing the labour market such as discriminatory practices, very low educational attainment and high drop-out rates which are the result of school segregation and a lack of inclusive measures implemented in the Slovak educational system.

According to several interviewees, the Labour Offices are not equipped to collect data about this particular group and NEETs from these communities should be reached by the social workers involved in the national project on Social field work (Operational Programme Human resources). The respondent from the USVRK (implementing the

national project Social field work) claims that they plan to collect data about NEETs but currently there are no reliable data about the employment of Roma men and women.

## 2.4 The intervention logic

The YEI Priority Axis within the National Operational Programme responds to two main problems, particularly (1) the high unemployment rate of young people aged 15 to 25 (later, the age cohort was changed to 15 to 29); (2) the high and increasing number of NEETs. As the Evaluation report from 2018 stated, the high unemployment of young people is a result of a skills mismatch which presents a growing problem for the labour market in Slovakia.

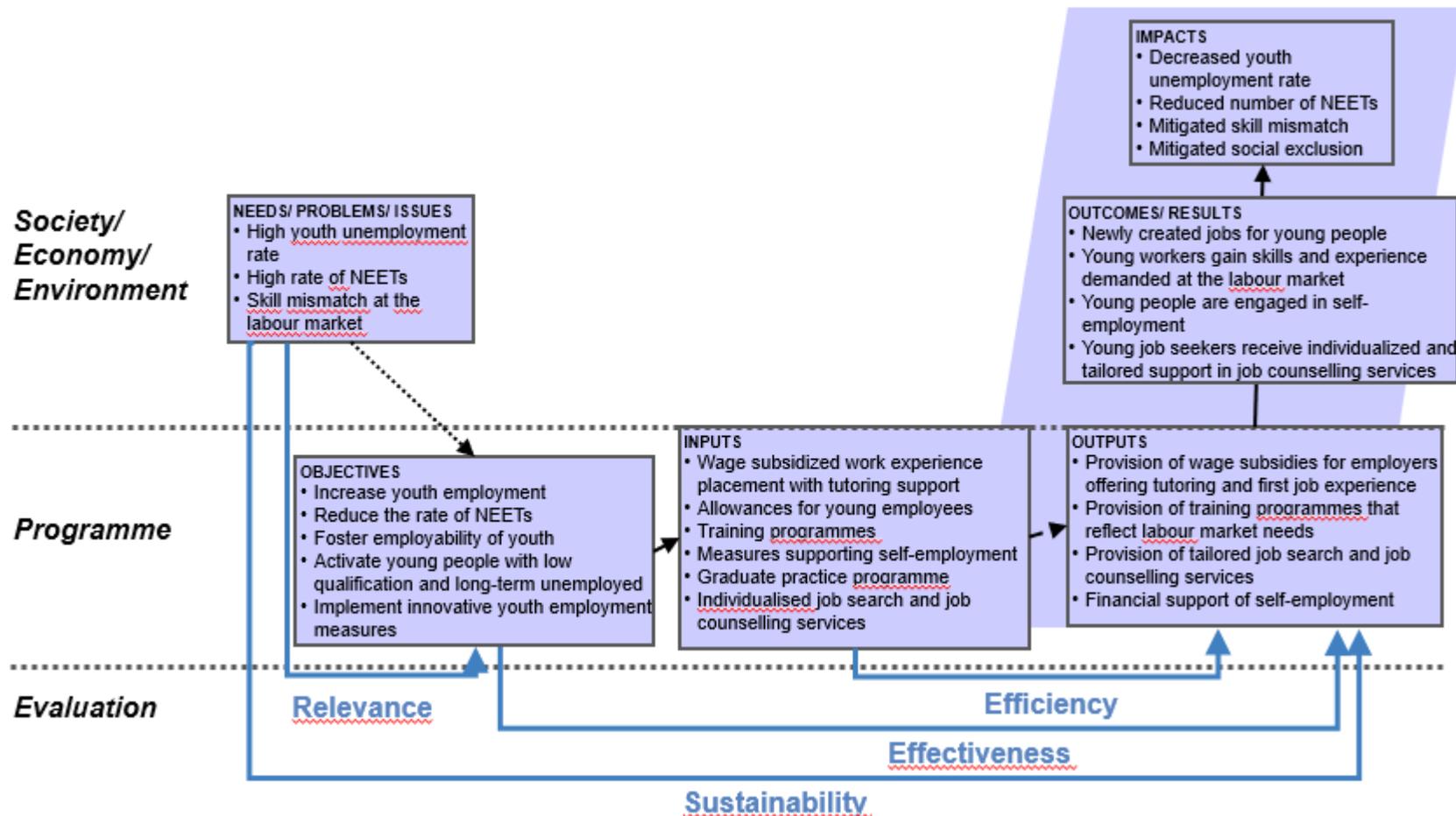
There are four main objectives of the YEI in Slovakia: (1) reducing the number of NEETs aged 15 to 29; (2) increasing the employment rate of youth; (3) fostering the employability of youth, especially of low-qualified and long-term unemployed people; (4) implementing new or innovative measures supporting youth employment (in terms of educational programmes, job-seeking services, internships, etc.).

In order to achieve these objectives, the Operational Programme aims at providing a set of measures in the form of (1) so-called **national projects** implemented by the PES (regional Labour Offices) and (2) individual **demand-driven** projects implemented by the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family via grant applicants (e.g., civil society and private sector organisations).

The national projects (implemented by PES) include employment measures supporting work-based learning, financial incentives provided to employers (wage subsidies) and young workers (allowances), training schemes, supporting self-employment, job search services, job guidance services as well as combined measures (combination of tutoring and financial incentives provided to employers to create job positions (see section 2.2.1).

It is expected that the interventions will lead to the higher employment rate of young people, creating stable job positions, an increased number of self-employed people and a reduced number of NEETs. In terms of long-term impacts, it is expected to foster the skill-match of young people in the Slovak labour market.

Figure 1. Intervention logic



### 3 Scale of ESF / YEI investment

YEI allocations in Slovakia amount to EUR 228.3 million, corresponding to 19% of ESF total funding support devoted to employment and labour mobility. Such allocation has been increased by almost 10% since the start of the programming period.

In terms of financial progress, the YEI budget has been entirely distributed, in fact the allocated funds are higher than those available (so-called "overbooking" of resources). Expenditure declared is progressing more slowly and it corresponds to 39% of the total budget (vs an EU average of 49%). Still, this is an encouraging figure given the increasing pace (at the end of 2017 the expenditure rate was just 12%).

Table 6. Allocations to Youth Employment ESF + YEI – including Operational Programme amendments until 2018

OP	ESF <sup>4</sup>		YEI <sup>5</sup>		Total		Share of total funding allocated to IP8.ii of the OP in %
	EU amount in Mio. EUR	Total in Mio. EUR	EU amount in Mio. EUR	Total in Mio. EUR	EU amount in Mio. EUR	Total in Mio. EUR	
Operational Programme Human Resources	-	-	206.7	228.3	206.7	228.3	19%
<b>Grand total</b>	-	-	<b>206.7</b>	<b>228.3</b>	<b>206.7</b>	<b>228.3</b>	<b>19%</b>

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Table 7. Changes to Youth Employment allocations in Operational Programme since start programming

OP	ESF <sup>6</sup>		YEI <sup>7</sup>		Total	
	EU amount in Mio. EUR	Total in Mio. EUR	EU amount in Mio. EUR	Total in Mio. EUR	EU amount in Mio. EUR	Total in Mio. EUR
Operational Programme Human Resources	-	-	12.4	12.4	12.4	12.4

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Table 8. Overview of the financial progress - ESF / YEI

OP / IP8.ii	Allocated budget to YE in Mio. EUR	Eligible costs reported in Mio. EUR	Project selection rate (%) 2018	Project selection rate TO8 (%) 2018	Expenditure declared in Mio. EUR	Expenditure declared (%) 2018	Expenditure declared TO8 (%) 2018
<b>YEI</b>							
Operational Programme Human Resources	228.3	260.0	114%	110%	90.1	39%	39%

<sup>4</sup> Excludes ESF allocations to YEI

<sup>5</sup> Includes ESF allocations to YEI

<sup>6</sup> Excludes ESF allocations to YEI

<sup>7</sup> Includes ESF allocations to YEI

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Table 9. Financial progress

OP / IP8.ii	Project selection rate (%)				% expenditure declared			
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>YEI- IP8.ii</b>								
Operational Programme Human Resources	44%	66%	93%	114%	0%	3%	12%	39%
<b>YEI EU28 IP8.ii</b>				98%				49%

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

## 4 Effectiveness

EQ 1 How effective are the YEI and other ESF-funded youth employment operations in achieving their objectives?

### 4.1 Data based on AIR 2018

This sub-section provides basic data from the AIR 2018 relevant to effectiveness.

#### 4.1.1 Outputs

Table 10. Number of participations under Investment Priority 8.ii (ESF and YEI)

OP / IP8.ii	ESF <sup>8</sup>			YEI <sup>9</sup>			Total number of participations	Share of total number of IP8.ii participation of TO8 in %
	Total number of participations	Share of women in %	Share of participations <25 years in %	Total number of participations	Share of women in %	Share of participations <25 years in %		
Operational Programme Human Resources	-	-	-	88 044	55%	65%	88 044	30%

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

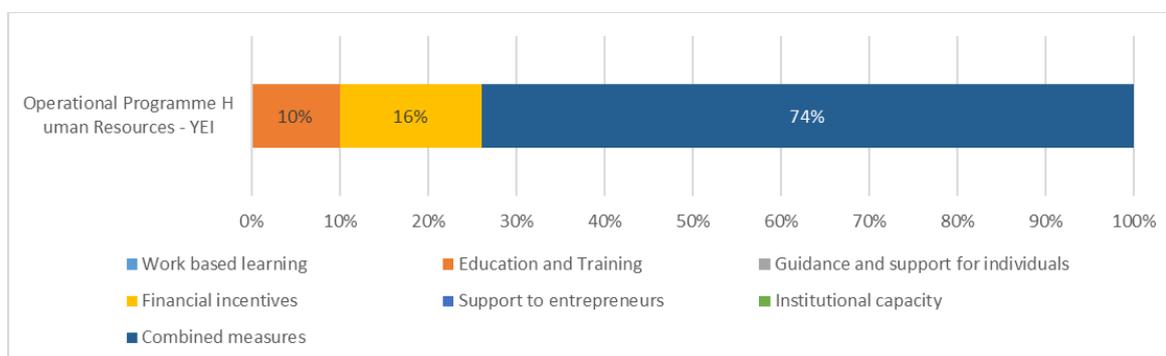
### Types of measures

As can be seen in Figure 2, the YEI in Slovakia is implemented through a mix of measures, with a preponderance of wage subsidies (to private or public sector organisations).

The strong focus on demand-side measures has also been the object of criticism from the Ministry of Finance (analytical institute "Value for Money"). The Ministry of Finance points out that in the context of a recent shortage of qualified workers in the labour market in Slovakia, the Government should mainly foster training and educational programmes since they may have a better impact on labour integration of the long-term unemployed (2017).

Regarding this, there have been some changes during the programming period. In 2017, the training schemes (both fostering competence and requalification) called RE-PAS+ and KOMPAS+ and job counselling services were introduced.

Figure 2. Share of eligible costs by type of intervention, 2015-2018



Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

<sup>8</sup> Excludes ESF allocations to YEI

<sup>9</sup> Includes ESF allocations to YEI

#### 4.1.2 Results

Table 11. Overview results – IP8.ii - Annex II common indicators YEI

	Unemployed participants			Long-term unemployed participants		
	who completed the YEI-supported intervention	who received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	who completed the YEI-supported intervention	who received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving
OP HR	65 870	39 055	41 137	14 310	7 322	10 446
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>65 870</b>	<b>39 055</b>	<b>41 137</b>	<b>14 310</b>	<b>7 322</b>	<b>10 446</b>

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Table 12. Overview results – measured by Annex II common indicators YEI (2)

	Inactive participants			All participants, six months after leaving		
	who completed the YEI-supported intervention	who received an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving	in education / training, gain a qualification, or are in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	in continued education, training leading to a qualification, apprenticeship or a traineeship	in employment	in self-employment
OP HRD	83	39	8	731	28 380	1 895
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>28 380</b>	<b>1 895</b>

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

#### 4.1.3 Target achievement

Table 13. Overview of number of indicators with targets under Investment Priority 8.ii

	Total number of indicators	Number of indicators with a target
Output indicators – ESF	-	-
Output indicators – YEI	17	1
<b>Total output</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>
Result indicators – ESF	-	-
Result indicators – YEI	21	12
<b>Total result</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Table 14. Average achievement rate of targets under Investment Priority 8.ii – by Operational Programme

	Average achievement rate under IP8.ii (%)				Benchmark in (%)	
	ESF		YEI		TO8 Achievement rate	EU28 IP8.ii
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Total
<b>Participations</b>						
Operational Programme Human Resources	-	-	107%	107%	44%	67%
<b>Results</b>						
Operational Programme Human Resources	-	-	110%	127%	71%	59%
Empty fields mean that no targets have been defined by Operational Programme in that Member State for youth employment						

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

In general, the achievement rate of targets for outputs and results is satisfactory, with most targets having been reached or over-achieved. At the end of 2018, YEI measures recorded 88 044 participations, against a target of 82 255 at the end of 2023. Hence the number of participations has been higher than expected.

Out of 65 870 unemployed participants who completed the intervention, 39 055 received an offer of employment, further education, training or apprenticeship upon leaving (59.3%). Long-term unemployed participants received such an offer in 50% of cases.

The target of the number of participants in employment or self-employment six months after leaving has been achieved and corresponds to 34.4% of all YEI participants.

## 4.2 Answers to the evaluation questions

The Evaluation report of the Ministry of Labour (published in December 2018) provides data on the following aspects of the YEI measures (national and demand-driven projects):

- Financial allocation on the individual employment measures;
- Analysis of the effectiveness of the implemented measures in terms of the employment status of the participants during the first 3, 6, 9 and 12 months after their participation in the intervention ended.

The Ministry of Labour has not yet carried out a counterfactual evaluation study on the impact of the YEI measures. At the time of writing up this study (January 2020), the successful competitor has been contracted to deliver a counterfactual study on the impact of the YEI measures (including cost-effectiveness)<sup>10</sup>. The study is also supposed to respond different to contextual questions such as the impact of individual measures on different age groups, education attainment levels, in which regions and the economic sectors the measures have been more effective and impactful, etc.

As can be seen from the tables below, wage subsidies are the most common form of support provided by the Labour Offices as a part of the National projects. The representatives of the Central Labour Office (hereinafter UPSVAR) claimed that

<sup>10</sup> For the Terms of Reference related to the contract see: [Rámcová dohoda o poskytovaní služieb č.2525/2019-M\\_OO\\_14436/2019](#)

according to the experience of the Labour Offices, interventions address the needs of the employers that are interested mainly in wage subsidies and are thus more likely to be incentivised by this kind of policy intervention. However, as underlined by the Managing Authority, wage subsidies are not provided as a “standalone” operation but complemented with other interventions such as tutoring and guidance of young workers. Concerning these measures, there are practically no analyses of deadweight loss, substitution or displacement effects. To minimise unwanted costs/effects, wage subsidies should be primarily targeting the harder-to-place unemployed youth.

In the following paragraphs and tables, we provide some evidence on the effectiveness of core YEI measures (implemented as the National projects). Here, effectiveness is measured in terms of tracking the employment status of young job seekers during the first 3, 6, 9 and 12 months after their participation in the programme ended.

As can be seen from table 14, the measures that show the highest effectiveness (in terms of employment outcomes) in the first 3 to 6 months are successful integration into the labour market (wage subsidies for supporting the first job experience and self-employment), Selected labour market policies and Graduate practice. According to the representatives of UPSVAR, the graduate practice mainly has an effect on creating jobs in the public sector (mainly in public administration) where job creation is not as dynamic as in the private sector. Therefore, the public sector benefits the most from this type of intervention. According to the respondents of the Labour Offices in all three regions, the Graduate practice was utilised by the public sector organisations experiencing a lack of administrative capacities and human resources. In the public sector, this operation also acts as an “eye-opener” for young people who would not have previously considered entering the public sector.

On the other hand, the least effective measures appear to be Training of young job applicants and the Re-start for young job seekers (financial incentives for those job applicants who get employed, and career guidance services). Employment opportunities for young people (wage subsidy with the tutoring aspect) also appears to be less effective, but this could be due to the fact that it mostly targets young people who are long-term unemployed (registered at the Labour Office for at least 12 months) and as such are encountering more difficulties in entering the labour market.

The interviewees from the Labour Offices in all three regions also pointed out that young job seekers appreciate the tutoring aspect of the YEI measures because they are provided with the guidance by senior colleagues so they can adapt to the working environment and learn new skills more effectively.

Regarding the characteristics of those job seekers who completed their participation in the YEI programme but returned to the Labour Office database of the unemployed (within 9 months after the intervention), most of them were job seekers with upper-secondary education (4 981 out of total 10 474), job seekers with lower-secondary education (2 938) and job seekers with a university degree (Managing Authority level) (1 108). More than half of them were women (5 709 out of total 10 474) (Ministry of Labour 2016).

The counterfactual study carried out by Štefánik et al. (2014) examining the impact of the graduate practice (implemented in 2011 under the previous Operational Programme) shows that the operation has a positive effect on the employability of participants **meaning that there is a moderate but significant impact on the employment chances of the participants**. Participants of the Graduate practice had a 24.7% probability of finding a job within one month (after the intervention ended) while that of the control group was 17.5%. Also, the better-educated participants (with the university degree) are more likely to be employed shortly after the

completion of the practice<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Štefánik (2016), such positive effects cannot be ascribed to a sophisticated implementation of the operation, but rather to the fact that the operation provides young people with a first job experience. The author further points out that improvement of the quality of Public Employment Services (in terms of providing an individualised approach and counselling services) would increase the effect of the work-based learning schemes (Štefánik, 2016).

The impact assessment of the REPAS training programme (implemented in 2015-2017) shows that participation in the programme increased the likelihood of labour market integration by 3-5% when comparing the intervention and the control group. **The programme has a particularly positive effect mainly on the long-term unemployed**; the security guard training courses appear to be the most impactful (Institute of Social Policy, 2018). Nevertheless, this counterfactual study does not assess the net effects of the programme on younger cohorts specifically.

Table 15. Effectiveness and the number of participants 3, 6, 9 and 12 months after the intervention

Project name	N participants	N participants finished their intervention	Share out of LO registry up to 3 months	Share out of LO registry up to 6 months	Share out of LO registry up to 9 months	Share out of LO registry up to 12 months
Successful integration into the labour market	5 465	4 955	79.82%	65.87%	55.82%	30.76%
Selected active labour market policies for youth	7 371	7 370	74.40%	80.73%	82.99%	77.12%
Training of young job applicants	1 5401	15 401	44.71%	47.77%	38.00%	21.99%
Re-start for young job seekers	28 175	28 175	63.86%	50.70%	36.18%	22.14%
Employment opportunities for young people	1 962	1 962	45.82%	42.30%	6.37%	1.99%
Accessing employment through practical experience	9 582	7 415	68.97%	73.64%	62.12%	43.16%
Graduate practice	16 225	14 172	70.90%	76.64%	74.84%	66.45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>84 181</b>	<b>79 433</b>	<b>63.42%</b>	<b>60.48%</b>	<b>50.60%</b>	<b>37.12%</b>

Source: Ministry of Labour of the Slovak Republic, 2018

Finally, concerning the coverage of the different target groups and particularly of the most disadvantaged, it should be mentioned that a specific target group needing particular attention in Slovakia is that of young Roma. In this respect, social fieldwork is considered as a policy operation which should serve to reach NEETs, specifically from the Roma marginalised communities (thus socially excluded communities).

As the representative of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma communities (USVRK) stated, the employment services are provided to Roma youth as a part of the National project Social Field Work (Priority Axis 5: Integration of

<sup>11</sup> For job seekers with a university degree, a probability of being withdrawn from the Labour Office database as a result of getting employed (within one month after the participation in the Graduate practice programme ended) was 40.21% for the intervention group and 24.54% for the control group. In case of job seekers with secondary education, the probability of being employed (within one month after the intervention ended) was 22.5% for the intervention group and 16.4% for the control group. The number of observations in the cohort of the people without education was too small, thus, it was not feasible to measure the effects of the intervention on this group. Regarding the job seekers with primary education, the difference between the intervention and the control group in the probability of being employed within one month after the intervention was only 1% (Štefánik et.al, 2014).

marginalised Roma communities) where social field workers provide clients with the assistance with writing up CVs, approaching potential employers and getting them registered at the LOs (in terms of filling in forms, etc.). The National project Social Field Work under Priority Axis 5 covers 150 municipalities with the highest risk of segregation. However, Roma (although not explicitly) are also reached by a parallel national project called Social Field Work, run by the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour under Priority Axis 4: Social Inclusion. Similarly, employment-related services are not provided in a systemic way.

They also assist with addressing indebtedness of the Roma unemployed as it represents a substantial barrier in the access to the labour market. Nevertheless, according to the respondent of Plenipotentiary, these services are provided on an *ad hoc* basis and not pro-actively, as needs are addressed on a case-by-case basis by the social field workers (e.g., help with housing, access to health care or in accessing the labour market). Employment support services delivered by the Plenipotentiary for Roma communities are therefore not provided in a systemic way.

Regarding the unregistered unemployed, the Labour Offices do not actively approach this group, because social field workers employed by the Labour Offices lack capacities to conduct this task. The representatives of UPSVAR stated that the inactive unemployed (mainly referring to marginalised Roma communities facing high unemployment rate) should be actively approached by the social field workers and non-governmental organisations having access to this group as well as know-how on how to work with socially excluded persons.

Additionally, social workers are not specialised and trained in delivering employment services. They cooperate with the local Los; however, the quality of cooperation differs from municipality to municipality. In some municipalities, the cooperation is effective: social field workers provide Labour Office officers with useful insights into the needs of this target group, sharing information based on which the tailored support is then provided. There have been several instances when the Labour Offices asked social field workers to carry out the tasks of the Labour Offices such as, for instance, monitoring and making basic records about the unemployed (even though the Labour Offices employ their own social field workers). Since Labour Offices are understaffed, they lack capacities to deliver tasks in the field and approach the unemployed individually. In some municipalities, the collaboration between Labour Offices and social field workers is absent.

Importantly, a lack of ethnic data makes it difficult to evaluate the effect of the YEI programmes on the Roma youth specifically. Even though the data on the ethnic background (based on self-identification) might be collected, the participants of the programmes may refuse to provide this piece of information. The representatives of the UPSVAR claimed that the Roma are not specifically targeted by the national projects implemented by the Labour Offices. They, along with the Head of the Managing Authority, stated that Roma unemployment is primarily addressed by the Plenipotentiary through the national project Social Field Work (Operational Programme Human resources). For future evaluations and impact assessment, the Managing Authority could consider utilising data from the Atlas of Roma communities containing a list of municipalities with marginalised Roma communities and a set of useful indicators (for instance, about socio-economic conditions in the municipality, infrastructure). This database could enable to assess these municipalities in comparison with municipalities not included in the Atlas considering different controlling variables.

## 5 Efficiency

EQ 2 How efficient have the YEI and other youth-employment operations funded by the ESF been in the achievement of their objectives?

### 5.1 Answers to the evaluation questions

Table 16 provides information about the financial allocation (target and actual values) per individual operations and unit costs per participant who completed the participation in the intervention. As can be seen from the table below, the highest unit costs can be found in the wage-subsidised work experience placement schemes (combined with tutoring support) namely Employment opportunities for young people and Successful integration into the labour market. The lowest unit costs are typical for the training programme, Restart for young job seekers and the Graduate practice.

Table 16. Cost efficiency related to the target group "unemployed who completed their participation in the intervention"

YEI Operation (NPs)	Target value			Actual value		
	Financial allocation	Indicator	Cost efficiency	Financial allocation	Indicator	Cost efficiency
Successful integration into the labour market	50 000 000	3 870	12 919.90	19 056 460.04	2 387	7 983.44
Selected active labour market policies for youth	11 999 988	6 700	1 791.04	8 541 469.02	6 017	1 419.56
Training of young job applicants	30 983 991.45	20 635	1 501.53	8 319 385.49	10 242	812.28
Re-start for young job seekers	9 994 542.77	14 700	679.90	5 999 787.46	10 458	573.70
Employment opportunities for young people	49 981 644.8	3 500	14 280.47	6 369 489.06	400	15 991.22
Accessing employment through practical experience	50 000 000	4 100	12 195.12	25 482 785.31	6 013	4 237.95
Graduate practice	19 125 000.01	17 000	1 125	7 220 118.22	10 675	676.36
Re-start for young job seekers 2	29 942 400	17 500	1 710.99	0	0	N/A

Source: Ministry of Labour (2018)

Similarly, regarding the target group "long-term unemployed" (see Table 17), the highest unit costs can be found in the wage-subsidised work experience placement schemes (Successful integration into the labour market and accessing employment through practical experience) and the Graduate Practice. The unit costs for the long-term unemployed are significantly higher in comparison with the general group of the unemployed (as shown in Table 16), especially in case of subsidised employment schemes.

Table 17. Cost efficiency related to the target group "long-term unemployed who completed participation in the intervention"

YEI Operation (NPs)	Target value			Actual value		
	Target financial allocation	Indicator	Cost efficiency	Real allocation (contracted)	Indicator	Cost efficiency
Successful integration into the labour market	50 000 000	8 400	59 523.80	19 056 460.04	953	19 996.28
Selected active labour market policies for youth	11 999 988	1 800	6 666.66	8 541 469.02	2 694	3 170.55
Training of young job applicants	30 983 991.45	2 947	10 513.73	8 319 385.49	2 244	3 707.39
Re-start for young job seekers	9 994 542.77	3 900	2 562.7	5 999 787.46	1 742	3 444.19
Employment opportunities for young people	49 981 644.8	3 500	14 280	6 369 489.06	400	15 991
Accessing employment through practical experience	50 000 000	1 450	34 482.75	25 482 785.31	2 159	11 803.05
Graduate practice	19 125 000.01	110	173 863.63	7 220 118.22	268	26 940.73
Re-start for young job seekers 2	29 942 400	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A

Source: Ministry of Labour (2018), extracted on October 14, 2019

Table 18. Eligible expenditures declared to EC per participation

OP	ESF			YEI		
	Total participation 8.ii	Expenditure declared 8.ii in EUR	Overall unit cost 8.ii in EUR	Total participation	Expenditure declared in EUR	Overall unit cost in EUR
Operational Programme Human Resources	-	-	-	88 044	90 056 939	1 023
EU28 – IP8.ii average						3 096

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Table 19. Eligible expenditures declared to EC per immediate result achieved

OP	ESF			YEI		
	Total results 8.ii	Expenditure declared 8.ii in EUR	Overall unit cost 8.ii in EUR	Total results	Expenditure declared in EUR	Overall unit cost in EUR
Operational Programme Human Resources	-	-	-	31 573	90 056 939	2 852
<b>EU28 – IP8.ii</b>						<b>2 753</b>

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Different types of administrative burden and obstacles in the implementation of both National projects and demand-driven projects can be identified that affect the smooth implementation of the Operational Programme and thus the efficiency of such interventions. These are briefly described below.

### **Implementation problems of the national projects**

The UPSVAR representatives pointed out several problems regarding the implementation of national projects, namely:

- Weak informatisation resulting in high administrative costs: Databases of the relevant institutions (Labour Offices, Social Insurance Company, health insurance companies) are not mutually integrated and, as a result, the institutions need to ask for administrative documents and data in individual cases, which makes the implementation of the YEI measures administratively demanding. It also burdens the unemployed themselves since they need to ask for different documents at particular institutions. Also, some institutions, e.g. auditors, do not accept electronic documents, only paper ones.
- Very long approval process: The process of approval of the National projects is considered as very long and complex which e.g. resulted in the situation that some YEI measures were supposed to start in 2014 but started in 2015. Since the demands of the labour market are constantly changing, this might raise an issue on how (under such conditions) measures are able to respond effectively to new labour market needs.
- Problems with identifying inactive young unemployed people: There are no data on inactive unemployed people out of the registry of the Labour Offices. The social field workers and NGOs were (according to the UPSVAR and Labour Office representatives) supposed to reach out and provide this target group with services and to motivate and assist them to get registered at the Labour Offices. Nevertheless, there is no evidence on how successful they are in this effort, thus, how many inactive NEETs have registered as a result of the social field assistance. This is especially relevant for the labour integration of the unemployed from the marginalised Roma communities.
- Inconsistent way of enrolling job seekers into programmes: according to the representatives of Labour Offices, the job seekers may choose themselves in which programme they wish to participate. The Labour Office officers consult their options (considering their eligibility as well as education attainment level, etc.), however, less informed and less educated job seekers (particularly from the marginalised communities) might be disadvantaged in this respect.

### **Implementation problems of demand-driven projects**

According to the representatives of the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, different obstacles in the application process of demand-driven projects can be identified, namely:

- A shortage of qualified evaluators: not only is the number of expert evaluators too low but evaluators are not well-trained to conduct their tasks, mainly in terms of their knowledge of the existing labour law which is necessary for evaluating the goals of the submitted proposals. The shortage of qualified evaluators is not only a problem with YEI demand-driven projects.
- Ambiguous and changing conditions of the calls: The conditions of the call were not clear and even changed after the calls were announced (shortly before the submission deadline). This was related mainly to one condition – if the grant call qualifies for the state aid or the scheme de minimis – which presented a significant change and even might have possibly affected the willingness of applicants to apply for the grant.
- The low quality of project proposals: The quality of the proposals was considered by the Implementation Agency representatives as very low, arguing that the proposals included very interesting activities, nevertheless, they did not reflect objectives of the call. It resulted in the overall low number of successful proposals. This problem might be related to the changing conditions of the calls which might have discouraged potential applicants.

- Problems with the e-communication between the Implementation Agency and the grant recipients/applicants: The grant applicants are required to communicate with the Implementation Agency via e-government (eSlovensko which provides with the electronic account enabling to communicate with the state authorities). Nevertheless, applicants usually did not respond to the messages the Implementation Agency officers send via e-government requiring the further (missing) documentation needed for the application process. Even if the applicants were notified by the Implementation Agency via a regular email that they had been sent the messages via eSlovensko and are required to communicate via this tool, the obstacles remained.

In the implementation phase, the respondents of the Implementation Agency reported the following problems:

- Project reporting is administratively demanding: According to the respondents of the Implementation Agency, the reporting procedures present a huge burden for the grant recipients. The reporting procedures present a substantial burden and may also discourage the potential applicants to submit proposals. According to the representatives of the Implementation Agency, they are aware of these high demands, however, the Audit Department of the Ministry of Labour requires to follow the procedural rules.
- Target groups of the national projects and demand-driven projects may overlap: since both national projects and demand-driven projects were introduced during the same time period, they might address the same target group which means that the unemployed persons might have been participating in the measures of both types. It also means that the unemployed that are registered at the Labour Offices are required to take part in the national projects (if they do not want to be withdrawn from the registry and thus lose the health insurance contribution) while being engaged in the demand-driven project. The fact that some job seekers might be withdrawn from the Labour Office register may cause the low trust in public institutions which may further result in difficulties in reaching out to the deregistered unemployed (especially from marginalised and socially excluded communities).
- A lack of skills of the personnel in the recipient organisations related to the low hourly rate of project managers: The representatives of the Implementation Agency stated that grant recipient organisations do not hire staff which would be skilled in the project management of the EU-funded schemes. That causes further problems in the implementation phase and reporting procedure. The root of this problem might be the very low hourly remuneration rate for the project manager (approximately EUR 5 net).
- The low capacities of the Implementation Agency to impose control on the spot: As a result of the above-listed problems, with administrative burden associated with the reporting procedures and poor managerial skills of the grant recipients, the officers of the Implementation Agency are overburdened and, consequently, they have no further capacities to conduct control on the spot.

As a result of these implementation obstacles, according to the Evaluation report of the Ministry of Labour, in the call Supporting entry of the selected groups of young people in the labour market<sup>12</sup> only one project was contracted and eventually was terminated since it did not fulfil the aims of the Operational Programme Human Resources. In the call New and innovative programmes on enhancing the self-employment of young people<sup>13</sup>, nine projects were contracted. Nevertheless, five out of these nine projects were terminated. In the call Activation and support of young

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<sup>12</sup> In Slovak: Podpora vstupu vybraných skupín mladých ľudí na trh práce.

<sup>13</sup> in Slovak: Nové a inovatívne programy na zlepšenie samozamestnania mladých ľudí

NEETs<sup>14</sup>, fourteen projects were contracted, six out of them were terminated. Also, according to the Evaluation report of the Ministry of Labour (2018), in most of the national and demand-driven projects the end date (according to the contract) was not met. It is not further specified which factors were behind it.

The Head of the Managing Authority considers the mentioned problems. Regarding the high administration costs of the reporting procedure, the Section of the EU fund plans to involve the Audit Department (Ministry of Labour) in the formulation of the future grant calls, to make demands and conditions clearer for the Implementation Agency and, eventually, for grant recipients.

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<sup>14</sup> in Slovak "Aktivizácia a podpora mladých NEET

## 6 Relevance

EQ 3 – How relevant are the YEI and the other ESF-funded youth employment operations?

There have been several changes in the design of the YEI programmes implemented by the Labour Offices (PES). First, the age limit (of being eligible to participate in the programme) was raised to 29 years (instead of the previous age limit 25 years) to address the changing situation in the labour market and the needs of young job seekers. As the Managing Authority further explained, the Government also found out that young people older than 25 face different obstacles in the access to the labour market and need to be provided with support to prevent long-term unemployment.

Second, the unemployed aged 15 to 24 (to be eligible to participate in the programme) are now required to be registered at the Labour Office for at least one month instead of three months as previously. This change has been made to support young job seekers right after they complete education or leave the job market. Similarly, the unemployed aged 25 to 29 are now required to be registered at the Labour Office for at least three months (instead of six months as previously) to meet the eligibility requirements. As the respondents from UPSVAR and regional Labour Offices claim this change was made to prevent the long-term unemployment of young cohorts.

Third, the aspect of tutoring has been integrated into the YEI measures, particularly in the intervention Accessing labour market through practical experience and Employment opportunities for young people to assist young workers to adapt to the working environment under the systemic supervision provided by senior colleagues. According to the head of the Managing Authority, this tutoring aspect should foster learning new skills and integrating young workers in the workplace.

## 7 Coherence

EQ 4 – How coherent are YEI and the other ESF-funded youth employment operations among themselves, and with other actions in the same field?

Different issues related to the coherence of the YEI measures can be identified:

### **Social fieldwork is not effectively interconnected with the YEI programmes.**

As we have already seen, social fieldwork plays an important role in reaching out to the most disadvantaged NEETs. In this respect, one should mention that Priority Axis 4 and 5 of the Human Resources Operational Programme (social fieldwork interventions) also aim at providing assistance to people who are not registered with the Labour Offices. This means that the interventions are in this respect complementary. Nevertheless, there are no data on how many young people get employed or get registered at the Labour Offices as a result of the social fieldwork assistance<sup>15</sup>. The cooperation between the Implementation Agency (Social Field Work under Priority Axis 4) and Labour Offices is similarly underdeveloped and practically non-existent.

Because of the obstacles associated with the cooperation between the Plenipotentiary and Labour Offices in labour integration of the Roma, USVRK intends to formalise the collaboration with the Central Labour Office (thus also the local Labour Offices) in terms of coordinating their activities, clarifying roles of social field workers and others. There is the danger that interventions provided by UPSVAR and USVRK are not compatible and they are not mutually informed of what kind of activities both organisations conduct in the context of the labour integration of Roma youth.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, according to the USVRK respondent, the Labour Offices are not pro-active in terms of providing the Roma unemployed with the profiling services that would identify specific needs and then tailor the support that would address the multiple disadvantages Roma groups encounter. According to the representatives of Labour Offices, the Labour Office themselves do not have tools to integrate the very low-qualified job seekers<sup>17</sup>. It is not possible to place them in the training schemes because they are often illiterate and lack social skills. Consequently, they are included in the Activation Work programmes which are highly inefficient in terms of increasing employability because they lack a learning element (Kureková, Farenzenová, Salner, 2013).

### **YEI programmes are not complementary with educational policies aiming especially at early school dropouts.**

As a result of a very low formal educational attainment, the long-term unemployed and low-qualified job seekers are not provided by the effective employment measures.

<sup>15</sup> The representatives of UPSVAR claimed that young people are motivated to get registered since the health care contribution is covered for the unemployed that are registered at the Labour Office (in 2019, the mandatory health care contribution presents EUR 66.78 monthly).

<sup>16</sup> According to the USVRK representative, the involvement of the municipalities in the national project *Social Field Work* is not administratively demanding and the municipalities/mayors are interested in implementing it as they perceive tensions between the “majority” population and the Roma at the local level. Nevertheless, since there is a lack of social field workers, especially in the remote areas in Eastern Slovakia, the USVRK intends to lower qualification requirements which means that they intend to employ people with the secondary school degree (e.g. university students of social work programmes). However, the Managing Authority for the Operational Programme Human Resources at the Ministry of Labour opposes this decision due to the concerns that it would lower the quality of services. The USVRK argued that in some municipalities they are unable to hire anyone for this position (given that the qualification requirements are too high and the remuneration rates are too low).

<sup>17</sup> Effectiveness of the regional Labour Offices regarding the integration of the long-term unemployed were also subjected to criticism from the Institute of Financial Policy, Ministry of Finance (2016). The Institute pointed out that the LOs are not able to provide individualised services to hard-to-employ groups because they are understaffed.

Importantly, there is no interconnectedness between employment policies and educational policies especially second-chance education or dropout prevention programmes that would target the most vulnerable groups. According to the respondents from all three regional Labour Offices, the low-qualified Roma are either destined to the Activation Work programmes or in some cases to the training schemes (mainly to master skills in auxiliary work e.g. in the construction business). However, they are not referred to any second-chance educational programmes (which do not function properly and are provided only by a handful of primary or secondary schools).

Recently, a national project has been implemented on enhancing competences of the Labour Office officers supporting individual counselling for the long-term unemployed 2018-2021<sup>18</sup>. The objective of the national project is to improve counselling services to hard-to-employ groups by providing them with an individualised approach and screening the needs and problems the unemployed face. According to the head of the Managing Authority, this national project also serves to support the most disadvantaged groups. Nevertheless, according to the implementation practice of the Labour Office 3, even if the needs of these cohorts are screened properly, the employment measures are not designed in a way that they would reflect the problems of the Roma socially excluded communities (very low educational attainment, etc.).

The Managing Authority is launching a project Step by step<sup>19</sup> aimed at the inactive NEETs. It will be a demand-driven project because it is difficult to reach inactive NEETs, so it would be more relevant for municipalities or NGOs.

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<sup>18</sup> Priority Axis 3: Employment. In Slovak: Národný projekt Podpora individualizovaného poradenstva pre dlhodobo nezamestnaných UoZ 2018-2021.E

<sup>19</sup> In Slovak: Krok za krokom

## **8 Sustainability**

EQ 5 – How sustainable are YEI and the other ESF-funded youth employment operations?

In several strategic documents, such as in the Action Plan on Supporting Employment of the Long-term Unemployed or Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for years 2014 – 2020, the Head of the Managing Authority stated that the Government committed to assist hard-to-employ groups in the integration at the labour market (including young people, long-term unemployed, unemployed with the low educational attainment, etc.). In this respect, he further stated that after the end of the programming period, the ESF funds will be used accordingly for this purpose, but the aims and the character of the YEI measures will depend on the demands of the labour market.

According to the interviewees from the UPSVAR, the effect of the YEI programmes may be considered sustainable mostly in terms of the permanent placement of young job seekers at the labour market. Nevertheless, the respondents did not mention any structural changes that would remain beyond the implementation period of the YEI programmes. The YEI programmes are rather viewed as effective tools to tackle the current labour integration problems, not as a way to impose some systemic changes.

## **9 Added value**

EQ 6 – What is the EU added value of the YEI and other ESF-funded youth employment operations?

The respondents did not specifically respond to the question on the EU added value of the YEI and other ESF-funded youth employment measures. As mentioned above, the Head of the Managing Authority considers the ESF funds (combined with state funds) as a proper way to handle the unemployment of the most vulnerable groups.

## **10 Gender sensitivity**

In terms of gender sensitivity, the representative of UPSVAR claimed that there are no specific YEI programmes targeting the barriers that women encounter in access to the labour market. Partially, in job counselling, the Labour Offices servants consider gender aspects as they identify the specific problems that women face in access to the labour market. Nevertheless, the measures implemented by UPSVAR do not address any specific barriers women face (not particularly the Roma women or women facing multiple disadvantages).

The representatives of UPSVAR stated that the Ministry of Labour is preparing two ESF-funded national projects to enhance employment of women, namely (1) a national project on enhancing life-work balance aimed at the women entering the labour market after the maternity/parental leave; (2) a national project on enhancing flexible forms of employment particularly for women (e.g., home office, job sharing). The latter national project is supposed to follow up the demand-driven project on creating firm nurseries which was, according to the UPSVAR representatives, not successful, since it was administratively demanding for the employers. That was the reason why the interventions will be implemented in the form of national projects since there are less administratively demanding. The gestor of the national projects is the Section of Social and Family Policy at the Ministry of Labour.

## 11 Conclusions

In general, the achievement rate of targets for outputs and results of the YEI in Slovakia is satisfactory, with most targets having been reached or overachieved. In particular, the target of the number of participants in employment or self-employment six months after leaving has been achieved and corresponds to 34.4% of all YEI participants. Furthermore, almost 60% of unemployed participants received an offer of employment, further education, training or apprenticeship upon leaving, for the long-term unemployed this figure goes down to 50%.

The analysis of the YEI measures indicates that the Slovak Government is mainly supporting the demand side of the labour market, i.e. wage subsidies in order to foster the youth employment and reduce the number of NEETs. Provided that there is a shortage of qualified workers in the Slovak labour market, active labour market policies should rather contain skill-upgrading aspects which would be beneficial especially for the long-term unemployed and low-educated job seekers. Recently, during the programming period, some amendments have been introduced such as the training schemes. Furthermore, there is a lack of data on how the individual YEI measures perform (in respect to the different age cohorts, level of educational attainment, regions as well as localities with the high concentration of socially excluded Roma communities).

Importantly, the YEI measures do not sufficiently address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, particularly low-qualified and socially excluded communities. It appears that the social fieldwork and educational programmes (second-chance education programmes) are poorly interconnected with employment policies and cooperation of the relevant stakeholders (on both national and local level) should be in this respect improved. The current YEI measures do not seem to be designed to serve the low-qualified and socially excluded groups. As a result of these deficiencies, job seekers with very low educational attainments (mainly from Roma excluded communities) are still predominantly included in the Activation Work programmes which have been criticised for several years due to their low effectiveness.

Regarding this, the Labour Offices (PES) implementing the core YEI measures have encountered several capacity problems, they are understaffed and not able to provide with individualised services. Additionally, different obstacles can be identified in the implementation of national projects and demand-driven projects such as administratively demanding reporting procedures and overall high administration costs related to poor informatisation in the public sector (such as demanding reporting procedures or poorly integrated databases of public institutions). Besides that, the demand-driven projects that had been supposed to be innovative and reach the NEETs failed to serve this purpose due to the above-mentioned administrative problems.

There are also limits in regular impact assessment and data collection. Yet, there are no recent and regular counterfactual impact studies on the effectiveness of the YEI measures, the data about particularly vulnerable groups are missing as well and, therefore, it is difficult to measure the impact of YEI measures on the Roma, people facing multiple discrimination, and other disadvantaged and socially excluded cohorts.

Regarding this, it would be particularly beneficial to assess if there is an creaming effect of YEI measures, thus, if the support is provided to those who are in a less vulnerable position and would be able to get employed even without a YE-funded (or any) intervention (which might be detrimental to the availability of support to the hard-to-employ groups, who need more intensive and systemic assistance).

## 12 Good Practice

The respondents could not identify any distinct good practice example. Regarding the National projects, the representatives of the Labour Offices in all three regions pointed out that job applicants involved in the operation Accessing employment through practical experience appreciated, mainly the tutoring aspect when a senior employee is assigned to the young worker so he/she is provided with the individualised support and guidance.

Additionally, the Labour Office respondents claimed that the Graduate Practice mainly helps the applicants without any work experience to get find out in what field/sector they want to work and clarify their career ambitions. However, the fact that the contribution to the Graduate Practice was lowered may be discouraging for young graduates, especially for those commuting from villages to the regional centres since they encounter substantial travelling costs.

Interestingly, regarding good practice examples, the Labour Office front desk officers and the respondents from the Central Labour Office view the YEI measures from the lenses of the employers since they pointed out that employers, in general, appreciate the wage subsidy and that is why the YEI measures in this programming period comprise the element of financial incentive.

Regarding the demand-driven project, the respondents of the Implementing Agency pointed out that the project proposals (submitted mainly by the NGOs) were not innovative and cannot identify any good practices and lessons learned. This may be associated with the above-mentioned implementation obstacles (ambiguous and unclear conditions, administrative burden, etc.) that might have discouraged potential grant applicants that would bring innovative approaches in labour integration of hard-to-employ groups.

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### 13.2 Interviews

Organisation	Date of the interview
Four representatives of the Department of the Active Labour Market Policies, Central Labour Office, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (UPSVAR)	23.07.2019
Two representatives of the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and Family (Implementation Agency)	25.07.2019
Representative of the Managing Authority for Operational Programme Human Resources, EU Section, Ministry of Labour (MB)	9.08.2019

Organisation	Date of the interview
Representative of the Office of Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for the Roma communities (Implementation Unit of the National Project Social Field Work (USVRK))	12.08.2019

In September 2019, three group interviews were carried out with the representatives of the Labour Offices located in three regions with different socio-economic conditions<sup>20</sup>. One group interview was carried out face-to-face and two interviews were conducted via phone. The respondents were desk officers dealing with the YEI measures and providing counselling services to the unemployed. The aim of these interviews was to explore the implementation practice with a special focus on how the Labour Office reach NEETs, how they tailor their approach and services to disadvantaged youth, what measures they consider as good practice examples and other aspects relevant to the study.

Organisation	Date of the interview
Labour Office 1: Five officers in the Labour Office in Western Slovakia	September 2019
Labour Office 2: Four officers in the Labour Office in Southern Slovakia	26.09.2019
Labour Office 3: Three officers in the Labour Office in Eastern Slovakia	2.10.2019

<sup>20</sup> In terms of the economic conditions, the unemployment rate of the region Labour Office located in Western Slovakia was (according to the UPSVAR data from August 2019) 2.7%, in Southern Slovakia 6.59 % and in Eastern Slovakia 8.4%. Regarding the concentration of marginalised Roma communities (which is relevant since they present a large portion of NEETs and encounter multiple disadvantages at the labour market), the portion of the Roma in the regions of Southern and Eastern Slovakia is more than 30% (Atlas of Roma communities 2019).

## 14 Annex

Table 20. Total common outputs for participations ESF/YEI under Investment Priority 8.ii, cumulative until 2018, by Operational Programme and indicator

Description Common Output indicator	Operational Programme Human Resources						Total		
	ESF			YEI			Total	%	% of women
	Total	%	% of women	Total	%	% of women			
<b>Employment status</b>									
<b>CO01</b> Unemployed	-	-	-	87 934	100%	55%	87 934	100%	55%
<b>CO02</b> of which Long-term unemployed	-	-	-	14 628	17%	53%	14 628	17%	53%
<b>CO03</b> Inactive	-	-	-	110	0%	44%	110	0%	44%
<b>CO04</b> of which not in education or training	-	-	-	91	0%	44%	91	0%	44%
<b>CO05</b> Employed, including self-employed	-	-	-		0%			0%	
<b>Total CO1+CO3+CO5</b>	-	-	-	88 044	100%	55%	88 044	100%	55%
<b>Age</b>									
<b>CO06</b> Below 25 years of age				57 155	65%	54%	57 155	65%	54%
<b>CO06a</b> Between 25-54 years of age				30 889	35%	56%	30 889	35%	56%
<b>CO07</b> Above 54 years of age					0%			0%	
<b>CO08</b> Above 54 years of age who are unemployed, or inactive				-	0%	-	-	0%	-
<b>Education level</b>									
<b>CO09</b> With primary or lower secondary education (ISCED 1/2)				15 525	18%	46%	15 525	18%	46%
<b>CO10</b> With upper secondary or post-secondary Education (ISCED 3/4)				47 865	54%	50%	47 865	54%	50%
<b>CO11</b> With tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)				24 551	28%	70%	24 551	28%	70%
<b>CO11a</b> Other / unknown ISCED				103	0%	49%	103	0%	49%
<b>Other background characteristics</b>									
<b>CO12</b> Participants who live					0%			0%	

Description Common Output indicator	Operational Programme Human Resources						Total		
	ESF			YEI			Total	%	% of women
	Total	%	% of women	Total	%	% of women			
in jobless households									
<b>CO13</b> Participants who live in jobless households with dependent children					0%			0%	
<b>CO14</b> Participants who live in a single adult household with dependent children					0%			0%	
<b>CO14a</b> Other households				88 044	100%	55%	88 044	100%	55%
<b>CO15</b> Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities				5 001	6%	53%	5 001	6%	53%
<b>CO16</b> Participants with disabilities				660	1%	50%	660	1%	50%
<b>CO17</b> Other disadvantaged				2 024	2%	52%	2 024	2%	52%
<b>CO18</b> Homeless or affected by housing exclusion				122	0%	44%	122	0%	44%
<b>CO19</b> From rural areas				47 429	54%	55%	47 429	54%	55%

Table 21. Common Result Indicators, ESF / YEI, by Operational Programme

OP / Fund / Indicator	Operational Programme Human Resources			Total ESF	Total YEI	Total
	ESF	YEI	Total			
<b>CR01</b> inactive participants engaged in job searching upon leaving	-	10	10	-	10	10
<b>CR02</b> participants in education/training upon leaving	-	123	123	-	123	123
<b>CR03</b> participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	-	6	6	-	6	6
<b>CR04</b> participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	-	31 434	31 434	-	31 434	31 434
<b>CR05</b> disadvantaged participants engaged in job searching, education/ training, gaining a qualification, or in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving	-	19 630	19 630	-	19 630	19 630
Share of total in %	-	62%	62%	-	62%	62%
<b>Total number of immediate results</b>	-	<b>31 573</b>	<b>31 573</b>	-	<b>31 573</b>	<b>31 573</b>

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

Table 22. Common Result Indicators, ESF / YEI, by Operational Programme (2)

OP / Fund / Indicator	Operational Programme Human Resources			Total ESF	Total YEI	Total
	ESF	YEI	Total			
<b>CR06</b> participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving	-	28 380	28 380	-	28 380	28 380
<b>CR07</b> participants with an improved labour market situation 6 months after leaving	-	0	0	-	0	0
<b>CR08</b> participants above 54 years of age in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving	-	0	0	-	0	0
<b>CR09</b> disadvantaged participants in employment, including self-employment, 6 months after leaving	-	35 295	35 295	-	35 295	35 295
<b>Total number of long-term results</b>	-	<b>63 675</b>	<b>63 675</b>	-	<b>63 675</b>	<b>63 675</b>

Source: SFC2014, based on AIR 2018, data extracted on 06.09.19

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