

Thematic Event on

'Practical support for the design and implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes'

Synthesis of key messages

La Hulpe, 17-18 October 2013





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1. Keynote event to support the preparation of the Youth Guarantee schemes

To address the challenging situation faced by young people in today's EU labour market, the European Commission released a Youth Employment Package in December 2012, which paved the way for the Council's adoption of the Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee in April 2013. Following the Commission Communication "Working together for Europe's young people – A call to action on youth unemployment" and the related European Council conclusions in June 2013, Member States with regions experiencing a youth unemployment rate above 25% have been requested to submit a **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP)** by the end of 2013. The remaining Member States are expected to submit their plans during 2014. The European Commission has so far received six draft YGIPs.¹

The European Commission organised a keynote event under the umbrella of the Mutual Learning Programme (MLP), which took place on 17 – 18 October 2013 in La Hulpe, Belgium. The event was intended to be a 'working and learning seminar' aimed to support key stakeholders in the effective design and implementation of the Youth Guarantee schemes. This included Member State Youth Guarantee Coordinators (whose role is to lead the development of the YGIPs), Government Ministries, Public Employment Services (PES), education and training authorities and European Social Fund (ESF) Managing Authorities. Overall, the event was attended by 146 participants, representing all 28 Member States.

This paper provides a **synthesis of the key messages** from the event for consideration by the Heads of State and Government at their meeting in Paris on 12 November 2013.

2. Ten most crucial messages from the event

The event generated in-depth and wide-ranging discussions about the key conditions for developing Youth Guarantee schemes that can have a *real* impact in addressing acute levels of youth unemployment and inactivity and offering young people a better prospect in life. The ten most crucial messages from these discussions are summarised below:

- The Youth Guarantee scheme represents a **new approach** to policy design and implementation. It entails a **structural reform** of the way in which the public, private and voluntary sector engage and support young people to complete education and enter the labour market through a co-ordinated, holistic and individualised approach, which understands and meets the needs of each young person.
- 2. The Youth Guarantee scheme requires a **clear and integrated strategy first and foremost**. It should therefore be more than the sum of existing and often

¹ From Croatia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and Slovakia.



uncoordinated measures. Otherwise, the Youth Guarantee risks being incoherent and unsustainable and consequently will not deliver its full value. As a consequence, Member States should not under-estimate the work required to set objectives, understand efficiency calculations and generate commitments from across the whole Youth Guarantee partnership. In this way, the YGIP is not a static document, but should be updated on a regular basis to adjust measures and reforms to the changing socio-economic context and the labour market situation.

- 3. The full ambitions of the Youth Guarantee scheme cannot be realised without substantial backing, coordination and investment from within Member State governments. This necessitates the firm commitment of Heads of State/Government, Finance Ministries, as well as other Ministries concerned by the youth employment agenda, including inter alia, employment, education and training, and enterprise. Such high-level, inter-Ministerial collaboration can ensure better policy integration and coherence, as well as crucial efficiencies in the deployment of government resources.
- 4. As a fundamental structural reform, the Youth Guarantee scheme requires national budgetary commitments in order to ensure sustainability and return on investment in the medium to longer term. The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and ESF are available to support Youth Guarantee schemes, but they have specific rules and should be used on the clear basis of adding value to national budgetary commitments. The early identification, co-ordination and strategic deployment of other financial sources on the basis of evidence-based policy making should also be considered as part of the overall financial package.
- 5. An inclusive partnership approach, involving inter alia, youth and other non-governmental organisations, social partners and business, is fundamental to the successful design and implementation of the Youth Guarantee scheme. Today's young people face many complex issues and barriers that a single organisation is unable to tackle alone. This is particularly the case when reaching out to inactive young people who are not registered with the PES. A whole range of organisations therefore need to work together in order to share information, operate early warning and tracking systems, and combine different tools and methods (inter alia, one-stop-shops, mobile units, 'job ambassadors' for young people and collaboration with community and voluntary groups).
- 6. The Youth Guarantee is founded on the **principle of providing a good-quality offer** of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship. This means young people should be provided with a personalised offer that meets their individual needs and addresses the specific barriers they face in gaining a strong foothold in the labour market. In turn, young people need to be empowered to take individual responsibility for the opportunity that is offered. The principle of **mutual obligation** therefore goes hand-in-hand with that of a good-quality offer.
- 7. Young people's school-to-work transitions can be long and complex, including alternating phases of education, work and potentially periods of unemployment and inactivity. Ensuring a good-quality offer entails **organising the support around the journey of the individual young person**, rather than the interests of service providers. In many cases, this will require re-thinking the 'sequencing' of interventions such that the transitions for the young person are positive and as seamless as possible and their periods of unemployment and inactivity are kept to an absolute minimum to avoid long-term 'scarring' affects.



- 8. In the design of Youth Guarantee schemes, it is fundamental to work on the basis that 'prevention is better than cure'. The overwhelming feedback from Member State representatives is that the early identification of young people 'at risk' (of becoming unemployed or inactive) and the accompanying provision of orientation and support services render activation measures far more effective in the long run. Moreover, the underlying financial premise is that the help afforded to a young person when they are at risk of unemployment and inactivity can be less time-consuming and resource-intensive than facilitating the re-integration of the inactive youth who are already disengaged.
- 9. The value of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the Youth Guarantee scheme should not be under-estimated. The use of a robust evidence base can make a crucial difference in determining what works, where and why thereby enabling a better prioritisation of resources, continuous improvement of service delivery and collaborative working, and ultimately the maximisation of labour market outcomes despite acute fiscal pressures.
- 10. Given that the Youth Guarantee is foreseen as a high-quality, long-term strategy, covering a diversity of partners and complex issues, there is an urgency to **start planning now**. This applies even if certain Member States are not expected to submit their YGIP until 2014. The time and efforts invested at this stage will help to ensure the best possible impact, both for individual Member States and the EU as a whole.

3. The way forward for the development of Youth Guarantee schemes

The European Commission is available to **offer support and guidance to Member States**. This includes:

- Dedicated hotline (EMPL-Youth-Guarantee@ec.europa.eu);
- Publication of the Staff Working Document in 22 languages;
- Bilateral contacts with the Member States;
- Member State twinning;
- Coordination with ILO, OECD, EIB, and relevant agencies;
- Consultancy on apprenticeships and traineeships via http://ec.europa.eu/social/youthtraining; and
- Several other MLP events to support Member State exchange in key employment areas.²

² Learning Exchange on dual apprenticeship schemes, qualifications and labour market needs in Germany on 5 - 6 September 2013; Learning Exchange on apprenticeship systems in Austria on 7 November 2013; Peer Review on 'Youth unemployment: how to prevent and tackle it?' in the



The European Commission will shortly publish a **list of Frequently Asked Questions**, including links to resources with good practice relating to various components of the Youth Guarantee, and is planning a **follow-up meeting for Youth Guarantee Coordinators** in March/April 2014. Member States are encouraged to take up this support, wherever possible.

Further information on the event, including Commissioner Andor and Director Eckert's video messages, a suite of background papers and copies of all the presentations, are available on the MLP website. The European Commission will also be publishing online a full report of the event by early December.

Netherlands on 25 - 26 November 2013; and Peer Review on 'Jobs for the Future' in France on 10 - 11 February 2014.