



"The role of PES within the delivery of the Youth Guarantee" PES network contribution to the high-level youth employment conference in Milano, Italy, on 8 October 2014

Following the adoption of the Council's recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee¹ and the conclusions of the two extraordinary Heads of PES meetings in 2013 within the Berlin/Paris process of high-level youth conferences, the PES network has agreed to jointly work on the PES-specific mutual learning activities, the monitoring of the PES-relevant parts of the Youth Guarantee (YG) and individually in the context of the national YG implementation plans. The evidence for this PES network contribution has been gathered through the findings of the survey-based study on PES Business Models including a module on the PES role in delivering the Youth Guarantee and three PES network mutual learning events.² This PES network contribution summarizes the main results of the PES network activities related to youth in the first half of 2014³.

1. The implementation of the Youth Guarantee

A number of PES noted that **the Council Recommendation on establishing a YG had served to empower PES, accelerate and articulate structural reform, and created a space for collaboration and partnership.** The growing focus on stakeholder management and outreach strategies to engage young people is transforming the design of in-house organisational structures of PES and their institutionalised mechanisms of cooperation with partners.

1.1. The role of PES in implementing the Youth Guarantee

PES are a central player in the YG implementation in almost all EU countries. The delivery of coordinated services across multiple stakeholders requires that the PES either be a 'member' or 'lead partner' of national/regional/local steering committees responsible for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. The PES is the authority in charge of managing the YG and coordinating the relevant partnership in 12 EU countries.

Table 1: The role of PES in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee

PES in charge of managing the Youth Guarantee scheme and coordinating partnerships across all levels and sectors in Member States:	
PES in charge	AT, BE-Forem, BE-VDAB, DK, FI, HU, IE, IT, PL,PT, SE, CY and the UK
PES not in charge	BE-Actiris, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, LU, LV, LT, MT, NL, RO, SK, SI

¹ The Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee

<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:120:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

² The survey-based study on PES Business Models including a module on the PES role in delivering the Youth Guarantee has been carried out by European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO), 2014.

The PES network Youth Workshops "Multi-topic" seminar on the PES YG implementation and 'Stakeholder management schemes to address the labour market integration of NEETs', took place in May 2015 in Brussels. The conference 'Targeted services for employers' took place in Brussels on 11 – 12 March 2014.

³ In addition, the PES carry out numerous activities within EURES to support the mobility of young persons.



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However, PES are the main YG service provider in most countries even when they do not hold the overall management responsibility, or they are at least a key partner in the delivery of counselling, job-search support and ALMPs. The main youth specific interventions that the PES are using or planning to use within the YG context are:

- Typically, the YG process starts by ensuring effective outreach and activation measures, in most cases with a variety of partner organisations.
- The provision of personalised guidance by an employment or careers counsellor is preceded by an individual assessment. This includes the identification of interests, strengths, weaknesses, basic and transversal skills, qualifications and work experience and determines the intervention to which the client will be initially referred. An individual action planning will also assist the participant in establishing a baseline for skills development and/or job search.
- The involvement of the PES with employers to integrate young people into work, for example through shorter-term traineeships or longer-term apprenticeships.
- The role of PES in the educational second-chance programmes is more limited and typically involves a referral service to such opportunities and in some cases, proactive work in schools and training institutions.
- PES in all but one country have employer incentive schemes in place to offer either direct fixed-term wage subsidies to employers or reduced social security contributions or tax payments to companies who take on young unemployed people for a "first" job.
- Subsidies to young trainees and employees are less frequently available.
- Entrepreneurship measures are especially important for the PES in southern Europe.

1.2 The role of PES in reaching out to NEETs

In several countries most unemployed young people over the age of 18 are registered with the PES as their potential welfare and/or unemployment benefits may be linked to registration. This is however not the case in all countries and even when registration is required, not all young people decide to register with the PES. Indeed a core group of marginalised, unregistered young people in most countries do not access any available mainstream youth services.

Outreach work has traditionally been carried out by NGOs and youth workers, but there are now more examples of PES building partnerships with these actors to link their services with mainstream youth employment services. More than half of the surveyed PES state they are directly or indirectly involved in either proactive work with pupils and students and/or outreach work with NEETs who are not registered with PES.

Table 2: PES involved in outreach work with NEETs

PES involved in outreach work	
Yes	EE, DE, LT
Yes (indirect)	BE-VDAB, DK, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI
No	AT, BE-Actiris, BE-Forem, BG, CY, CZ, ES, LV, NL, RO, SK, UK



1.3. Assuring the quality of the offers to young people

A good quality offer will correspond to the individual young person’s needs and skills and identify the individual’s pathway to labour market integration⁴. This means that it can be necessary for a young person to receive support — such as training, rehabilitation, education, counselling or guidance — before they are ready to take up a YG offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship. This commitment to the personalised offer forms a crucial part of the tailor-made, individualised approach that is at the heart of the YG.

PES from 18 countries have carried out work to **specify or define ‘a good quality offer’**.

The **individualisation** of the offer and the **personalisation of the pathway to employment** is emphasised as being at the heart of a good quality offer in most countries, especially Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg and Slovenia.

In Austria and Belgium-Forem, specific requirements on the **quality of activation measures** are set out in contracts with the different youth employment service providers. This can refer to the content of training provided or the quality and training of teachers and trainers, for instance. In Denmark, Finland and Portugal a good quality offer is also linked to the activation deadlines in terms of the timing of the first interview and of an active offer.

Table 3: Formal definition for a good quality offer within the YG scheme

A good quality offer has been defined	
Yes	AT, BE-Actiris, BE-Forem, BE-VDAB, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, IE, LT, LU, PL, PT, SI, SE, UK
No	BG, CZ, HU, IT, FR, LV, MT, NL, SK

Not all countries have yet taken specific steps to explicitly define a ‘quality offer’. The main methods employed to ensure that good quality offers are being provided - and more generally a high standard of youth-specific PES services - include:

- Guidelines from the national administration to all PES offices and other organisations / individuals involved in the YG (DE, ES, FI, AT, PT)
- YG partner / provider inspections and potential penalties (e.g. AT, MT and the UK);
- Regular client satisfaction surveys (e.g. AT, BE-Forem, BE-VDAB, FR, LV, SE);
- External or internal evaluation of either the YG, youth specific services or ALMPs in general (e.g. BE-Forem, BE-VDAB, DE, DK, FI, FR, HR, IE); and
- Training of youth employment counsellors (e.g. FR, SI), follow-up of young jobseekers by a dedicated team (LU)

⁴ European Commission (2014) The Youth Guarantee, Making It Happen



2. PES have shaped their services to address the needs of young people

Internal organisation and the PES service offer to young people must be fit for purpose. PES have critically appraised their service offer to ensure that it is appropriately organised and its component parts efficiently and effectively support labour market transition for young people. The right interventions delivered in a timely manner are essential to engage with and gain the trust of young people which in turn motivates them to actively reengage with education, training and or employment.

2.1. PES Youth Guarantee staff

Most of PES report that implementation of the YG is still at an early stage and under development. Overall, the implementation of the **YG has led to concrete changes in most PES**, albeit not in all. Some have opted for a full reorganisation of their youth-specific PES services, while others have chosen to add new or to strengthen existing services for young people. Others have improved youth-specific communication channels and have employed and trained front-line staff to work exclusively with YG clients.

Specifically, the YG launch has led to / is leading to the **reorganisation of youth-specific PES services** in Belgium-Actiris, Croatia, Estonia, France and Italy. In Italy, the YG model will be one of the central pillars which the on-going re-organisation of the PES will build on. New youth-only PES offices have been launched in Croatia and Germany.

PES staff have been recruited, assigned and / or trained to work exclusively with the YG client base in 19 countries.

Table 4: Dedicated YG staff

Specialist YG staff	
Yes	BE (Actiris, Forem, VDAB), BG, DE, EE, EL, FR, FI, HR, HU, IT, LU, LT, LV, LT, PL, SI, SK, SE, UK
No	AT, CY, CZ, DK, ES, FR, IE, MT, NL, PT, RO,

In broad terms, the YG staff can be divided into two groups;

- Front-line PES staff delivering counselling and job search support or front-line staff delivering new or additional YG services or activities (e.g. proactive work with schools). Some countries have a quota for the number of youth counsellors in each PES office or region. The countries which have introduced or are introducing youth-specific counsellors have done so typically by re-training existing front-line PES staff or using ESF funds to create new positions.
- Staff working in the design or implementation of the YG or scaling up pilot activities. Such work is typically headed by a YG coordinator in charge of labour market services directed at young people. They may be supported either by regional or office based coordinators.



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Several PES reported the creation of a unit or department specifically dedicated to youth. Through these specialised services, PES can better cater for the needs of young people, provide guidance, and develop personalised action plans. The support of specialist, dedicated personal counsellors is a useful single contact point for young people navigating between different services within the PES and the different partner organisations.

While the potential value of personalised, specialist advisers was recognised, there are constraints in internal capacity to work intensively with young people. Some PES have or are planning to increase capacity by recruiting additional advisers for the Youth Guarantee work. The specific organisation of internal resources for YG delivery needs to adapt to each PES' business model.

2.2. Personalised services

An individual, tailored approach is valuable in working with young people. Many PES have reported that young people prefer individual, personalised services and they want to receive 'unique' services tailored to their needs. Through individualised services, many PES seek to understand the young person's motivation and future career goals, which helps them to tailor their services accordingly and to keep young people motivated and reduce dropout rates. Many PES have specific youth counsellors with whom young people can discuss their options.

One example of a PES undertaking a tailored, individual approach to young people and their motivation is the job clubs and job search workshops delivered by the Estonian PES. The job clubs provide more specialised guidance to young people who are looking for a job.

Some PES have in place special teams, of dedicated staff, focusing on young people. This ensures that they have the appropriate skills, knowledge and competences to work with this target group. For example, in Latvia career counsellors offer a three-step support system to young people (information, cooperation and evaluation). The career counsellors work with the young people to understand their needs and develop individual action plans with them. In some PES the dedicated staff may focus on a specific delivery channel as they have a particular skills set that can be used to engage young people. For example, VDAB have a team of online coaches that deliver guidance to young people via email, chat and video chat.

A quality service offer is dependent on having trained staff with relevant competences and skills. The approaches taken to training staff by PES differ. In order to train their staff on how to deal with real-life experiences, some PES base their training on real situations.

2.3. Involving young people in the design and delivery of services

Some PES involve young people in the design and delivery of targeted and tailored services to ensure that their needs are met. PES approaches involve working independently, through their client base, and with NGOs and youth organisations to reach young people. One innovative practice by the Belgian VDAB has been to engage young people with IT expertise to design, as part of a competition for IT students, a smart phone application.



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Mutual trust is essential to break down negative perceptions of the PES and their services. Once established, mutual trust is important as successes can be used to penetrate hard-to-reach client groups: young people with positive experiences can act as ‘ambassadors’ on behalf of the PES.

An alternative approach in this area is hiring young people, a novel approach adopted by the Swedish PES. Some 2 500 young people were employed by the Swedish PES in 2011 and 2012 on four- to eight-week work placements. Young people completed various tasks including administration, customer service and caretaker duties for which they received a salary.

Young people are a heterogeneous group therefore multichannel approaches must reflect the differences within the broader target group, i.e. young people in general and the ‘NEET’ subgroup(s) and their preferred communication channels. First contact is key in building trust, engaging with and communicating with the client group, who may require different points of entry, depending on their communication preferences (online and face-to-face services).

2.4. Cooperation with employers: a key challenge for PES is to capitalise on and strengthen employer relationships in the future - Work trials work as an example

PES generally offer a universal range of recruitment (and other) services to employers. This entails being pro-active in contacting and promoting services to employers with recruitment potential’. Often PES have to convince employers to cooperate when firms do not have to rely on their services or there is a mismatch between job requirements and young jobseekers profiles.

One important way to react to these challenges is offering additional services for employers. These include financial incentives like wage subsidies for hard-to-place jobseekers, training schemes or special advisory services in order to establish partnerships at eye level. PES consider long-term relationships with firms as a supportive framework in order to achieve their main objectives with respect to matching supply and demand.

Many PES run work trials projects and whilst there are significant differences in their set up, they seem to produce positive outcomes. The Irish PES currently runs the ‘Advantage Programme’ in collaboration with training providers and employers. Young people are able to develop entry-level skills in transferable areas (such as work safety and team work) and complete work placements in retail and distribution.

Pre-selection for work trials is considered as being very important by PES. Choosing the right candidate who is interested and motivated to take part can contribute to a successful placement and increase the chances of employers wanting to participate in such schemes in the future. There is also a need to construct partnerships to ensure the quality of workplace-based training and any type of dual training schemes.

3. Delivery of effective, holistic services through partnership working

Closer and more meaningful collaboration is sought by **PES in particular with youth organisations and other NGOs, employers, social partners, schools, social services and**



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other statutory services **and training providers**. This can help PES and other actors to share contacts, clients and knowledge and ensure that PES and other actors deliver a more effective, holistic service.

Importantly, as outlined in the PES EU 2020 Strategy⁵, PES have a ‘conductor’ role between education institutions (e.g. schools), employers, and other labour market actors. The role of PES is critical to facilitate and ease the transition between education and work.

3.1. The role of PES within the broader Youth Guarantee partnership

The key strategic and implementation YG partners – in addition to PES – include public, semi-public, private and third-sector organisations. **Closer ties with education and training providers and guidance providers are sought in order to improve school-to-work transitions** and therefore ultimately prevent young people from needing YG services. The PES in France, Luxembourg and Poland are for instance already cooperating with different categories of providers of vocational guidance.

A majority of PES **have plans to strengthen existing partnerships**. Ultimately, the intent is to ensure that there is an effective partnership approach to service provision across all organisations which will **release synergies, enhance efficiency and avoid duplication of activity**.

In general terms, **recent work around partnerships has focussed in many countries on macro-level structures. Mirroring the same approach at local level is going to take time.**

3.2. Tailoring the conducting role of PES to the national, regional and local context

PES recognise that there is no single solution **in ensuring effective outreach and activation of NEETs** and tailoring the PES conducting function to national and local contexts is fundamental. There are a number of models and approaches to partnering; and the PES role as conductor is still being explored and tested.

The range of partners and stakeholders the PES work with is extensive and is growing. The selection of partners can be based on relationships and contacts or can be through more structured means, such as a memorandum of understanding or procurement. A challenge is ensuring that the different service providers know of the potential range of resources they can draw from and are skilled in working across institutional boundaries in the interests of young people.

In meeting the needs of NEETs, there are ‘traditional’ PES partners such as training providers but new relationships are being formed with organisations that can provide greater access to and communicate effectively with young people. For example, local radio stations and communications experts are key new partners in ensuring effective outreach to NEETs.

⁵ Public Employment Services’ contribution to EU 2020. PES 2020 strategy output paper.
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9690&langId=en>



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Making PES-school partnerships a priority is critical in easing the school-to-work transition. Effective school liaison and communication management remains a challenge for many PES. Schools remain key actors in improving the employability of young people and closing the skills gap, yet they tend to prioritise the intrinsic value of education and place less emphasis on labour market linkages.

In Estonia the PES has been charged with delivering workshops in schools for pupils in ‘transition’ classes (i.e. classes in which pupils are required to make choices about their educational future). Similarly, in Austria, a “Youth Coaching” programme has been set in place, where PES Youth Coaching Advisors visit schools and engage with more ‘at risk’ young people to develop an individual action plan.

The third sector can provide a valuable (and cost-effective) option in working with hard-to-reach groups and in offering dedicated adviser services. In Lithuania, a pilot project called ‘Trust Yourself’ launched the first ever partnership between PES and some 30 NGOs in 15 municipalities. The project aims to rehabilitate and (re)integrate inactive and vulnerable NEETs into the labour market or the educational systems.

3.3. Manage knowledge and promote the exchange of information among partners

In the role of conductor and facilitator of partnerships, some PES act as a hub for managing knowledge and information exchange. **Providing partners with client and labour market information is central for joint planning and effective delivery of a coordinated service offer to young people.** In Austria, the PES has a clear strategy for using information to support the effective transition of young people from school to work. There are three tasks or strands to their work: the collection, analysis and up-dating of information on inclusion measures; information management including enhancing contact across different funding bodies; enhancing communication and co-operation between agencies including conferences, working groups and information exchanges. Practical examples are a regional knowledge base including youth monitoring and surveys; and the development and support of an on-line platform to inform professionals (counsellors, youth workers, teachers) of services available. Belgium- Actiris is developing a tool for the real-time monitoring of an individual and their journey – including meetings, sessions, action plans, training and workshops attended, and outcomes.

3.4. Success factors for the management of partnerships

Partnerships are essential for delivering the Youth Guarantee to all young people. There are a number of critical success factors for the management of partnerships facilitating in particular the activation of NEETs; they include:

- A national strategic vision and a framework for action. National level partnerships and agreements, both across government and with a wider array of national actors, provide a solid basis for building up partnerships.
- Identify the right partners and clarify their role and responsibilities from the outset.



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- Selection criteria for partnering should be driven by the needs of young people and NEETs. Include innovative partnerships that can provide new access channels to NEETs and who can offer new types of services.
- Strengthen the relationship with schools in order to engage with young people earlier in their school career.
- Underpin the role of partners with formal partnership agreements in order to ensure transparency and clarity of type and level of service, expected outcomes and quality.
- Putting in place systematic processes to plan and organise a flexible portfolio of suitable measures
- Ensure that funding schemes are in alignment and support all partners working to the same aims. Financial incentives and penalties linked to performance can serve to encourage good practice and compel partners to deliver service in a cost-efficient manner. Adequate financial resources are needed to deliver appropriate measures to NEETs and to engage with young people over time.
- Ensure the links between partners reaches the professionals and counsellors working directly with young people to ensure consistency and quality of the offer, the exchange of good practice, and assistance for young people to navigate their way through the options available.
- Ensure information collection, analysis and dissemination is available. Dedicated units or resources are needed to support the production of the range of data needed for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.
- On-line platforms for communication, information sharing and monitoring between partners offer significant potential for the partnership and delivery of services.
- Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are key to performance management, accountability, and the continuous improvement of services and the partnership itself.

4. Conclusions and next steps

- In the PES EU 2020 Strategy⁶ elaborated by the network in 2012, PES have suggested to become a ‘conductor’ to facilitate transitions into the labour market. This ‘conductor’ role implies coordinating between education institutions (e.g. schools), employers, and other labour market actors to ease the transitions from education to work. The PES network will continue to exchange information on how to ‘conduct’, share good practices and report on findings.
- The practical implementation of the ‘conductor’ role coordinating education, employers and labour market actors would benefit from stepped up national and European level cooperation. Employers are called upon to cooperate with PES and the education providers to identify more workplace learning opportunities including apprenticeships and to better align them to labour market needs.

⁶ Public Employment Services’ contribution to EU 2020. PES 2020 strategy output paper.
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9690&langId=en>



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- A major challenge for the delivery of the Youth Guarantee in partnership working is to ensure that relevant information is shared (also among the public). On-line platforms for communication, information sharing and monitoring between partners are potentially successful tools provided that information is exchanged between partners such as PES, employers, education institutions, schools, social workers, NGOs, etc. The PES network will further work in this area and report on findings.
- The Council Recommendation on establishing a YG and the roles and responsibilities assigned to PES in their respective national context, has prompted some PES to engage in internal reforms and reorganisations. In several PES units of dedicated youth staff, capacities for stakeholder management and institutionalised mechanisms of cooperation with partners were built up. This transformation process is likely to continue. The PES network will systematically exchange information on these practices.
- In line with the Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee and the Decision No 573/2014/EU on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services the PES network will monitor the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. It will in the second half of 2014 update its assessment of PES capacities to implement the Youth Guarantee, it will monitor the Youth Guarantee measures and identify evidence-based good practices and will in particular identify good practices for the identification of NEETS, which is compulsory PES network task (see Decision No 573/2014/EU).
- Furthermore the PES network will start soon - as per Decision No 573/2014/EU - implementing the Benchlearning concept. The concept allows helping each PES improve its own performance through a structured and systematic reflection on its own performance based on indicators and how it has been achieved based on a deeper analysis of performance enablers that are potentially causing differences in performance, thus identifying organizational factors, drivers and practices that correlate with better outcomes. In the context of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee that concept will be used to initiate mutual learning activities and identification of Best Practices in areas outlined in the Council Recommendations.
