



Mutual Learning Programme

Peer Review on 'The French Guarantee for Youth' (a particular measure within the broader context of the Youth Guarantee)

7-8 April 2016, Paris (France)

Executive Summary

The Peer Review focused on the experimental 'Guarantee for Youth' (Garantie Jeunes) measure implemented in France to integrate NEETs aged 18-25 years into the labour market. The event was hosted by the French Government's General Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training (DGEFP). It brought together Ministry officials and independent experts from Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Slovakia, as well as representatives from the European Commission.

With a rate of youth unemployment above 23% and a share of NEETs of 12.5%, the situation of young people in France has called for specific measures in order to help the most vulnerable of them to gain autonomy and integrate into the labour market. To address this issue, the French authorities have presented a series of measures as part of their Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. Among these is the experimental 'Guarantee for Youth' measure which combines a first professional experience with financial support for vulnerable young people.

This measure is implemented by the Missions Locales (MLs), i.e. local-level public structures providing a range of support activities (one stop shops) to facilitate the social and professional integration of all young people aged 16-25 not in education. This measure is specifically targeted at young vulnerable NEETs aged 18-25 (with possible exceptions for 16-18 year-olds) and involves a one-year contract between the participant and the ML, describing their mutual agreement, renewable once. Participation in the measure is however voluntary.

The distinctive feature of the measure is that it explicitly targets young people identified as being in vulnerable and precarious socio-economic conditions with the aim of making them autonomous, i.e. being able to provide for themselves in society. Young people are identified by the MLs through specific partnerships with municipalities, schools, social workers and outreach workers.

For the first six weeks, the participants attend group activities carried out by the ML centred on motivation and confidence-building. This period is considered beneficial for the young person but there is also certain flexibility to reduce this period if the young person is keen on starting the 'work experience' and there is an opportunity available. After this initial period, individual support and follow-up is provided. Each young participant goes through a recruitment process involving the ML and local companies to acquire a first work experience. While the measure emphasises the "work first" principle and "immersions" in a business environment, it does not preclude the provision of (on-the-job) training opportunities for the participants.

An innovative aspect of this measure is that participants receive a means-tested monthly allowance which is close to the minimum income for one single person and which decreases with remuneration above a certain threshold.

The key policy messages from the Peer Review can be summarised as follows:

Supporting NEETs effectively should involve

- A combination of counselling, mentoring, advocacy and guidance delivered by dedicated and specifically trained professionals. The role of the counsellor is essential in building trust and enabling the process.
- The promotion of group activities and “peer-to-peer” support to build self-esteem and new social ties as well as to give participants the opportunity to identify their “hidden” skills.
- Building on youth work approaches which helps not only to reach more young people, but also to ensure that more young people are better motivated to engage successfully with public authorities. Principles such as voluntary participation, a non-judgemental approach, and mutual respect are preferred by young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. These principles empower young people to make informed choices about their future.
- Effective approaches to improve employability of young NEETs are those combining guidance, training and work experience components in a real work environment.
- Developing an understanding of how the young person learns in order to choose the right pathway and maintain their engagement.
- Creating opportunities to discover the world of work but also to develop their social skills and understand their role as citizens.
- The tailoring and updating of training and activation programmes to the fast-changing demands of the labour market.
- Financial support acting as a safety net for vulnerable young NEETs taking part in a measure, based on conditionality and mutual obligation. A monthly allowance or other forms of financial support (social benefits, coverage of costs related to the measure – e.g. commuting costs) increases the retention rate of NEETs in ALMPs.

Effectively identifying and engaging employers should involve

- Proactively reaching out to small companies and local employers to better understand their needs and to explain how they might benefit from measures targeting NEETs.
- Tailored engagement strategies in relation to the different needs and characteristics of companies (size/sector/type of work), to find out what they can offer and how they can benefit.
- Alternative means of support such as regular mediation, as opposed to financial incentives only. Indeed, incentives such as wage subsidies or grants sometimes

entail a level of bureaucracy and may be connected to formalities and regulations that companies perceive as restrictive

- Testimonials from business ambassadors or champions might help change employers' common perceptions about becoming involved in this type of measures.
- Short-term placements offer an opportunity for the employer to get to know the young person and encourage more inclusive hiring practices as a result.
- Creating links with chambers of commerce and sector organisations to facilitate engagement in the provision of offers and improve the relevance of youth training programmes to the labour market.
- It is important to 'mentor' the companies to understand what they need and how they can support certain groups. This could for instance include:
 - ✓ Providing support and advice for employers to work with young NEETs
 - ✓ Support to in-company teachers and trainers, and close collaboration between guidance professionals and in-company teachers and trainers
 - ✓ Providing support, advice and preselection services for employers to gain better access to the labour pool and to improve their recruitment practices.

Good practice in monitoring and evaluation should entail

- Measuring the 'distance travelled' by the individual as well as reviewing the process and institutional aspects rather than purely focusing on the integration into the labour market.
- The design of innovative performance indicators such as "level of autonomy" to guard against the likelihood of NEETs re-entering support programmes and to allow for the adjustment of programmes to improve their cost-effectiveness.

Further information

Full report, presentations and background papers will be available at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1070&newsId=2476&furtherNews=yes>