



# Youth Guarantee country by country

*Belgium*  
*October 2020*

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## Introduction and context

The [Youth Guarantee](#) has become a reality across the EU. It has facilitated structural reforms and innovation in policy design across EU Member States.

This document provides extracts from official Commission documents on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Belgium. It contains extracts from:

- The country report drawn by the Commission for Belgium in the context of the [European Semester](#);
- The conclusions of the thematic multilateral surveillance review of the [Employment Committee \(EMCO\)](#).
- Results from the data collection on Youth Guarantee schemes

A section at the end of the document is devoted to the assessments made by the Commission in the previous year.

Belgium presented a [Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan](#) in December 2013, updated in April 2014. It includes 4 distinct sub-plans, established at Regional/Community level.

Belgium is eligible for the [Youth Employment Initiative](#).

## Commission's assessment

### From the 2020 country report (EN – FR – NL)

**“Despite a slowdown in economic growth, the labour market continued to improve, although at a slower pace.** The activity rate increased by 0.8 percentage points to 74.5% (2019Q3) compared to 2017, driven in particular by increased labour market participation among older workers (Graph 3.3.1), but remained well below the EU average (78.7%). [...] A decline in the unemployment rate was also recorded for some of the vulnerable groups, including the young (down from 18.5% in 2017Q3 to 13% in 2019Q3) and the long-term unemployed (down from 3.1% in 2017Q3 to 2.2% in 2019Q3).”

**“Activity rates are particularly low for young people and older workers.** The low activity rate among young people (20-24) is explained by high enrolment in tertiary education, but also by the fact that the time students take to complete higher education is relatively long (OECD, 2019a).”

**“The Social Scoreboard supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights points to some employment and social challenges in Belgium.** In the last years, economic growth as well as reduced possibilities for early retirement have contributed to a record high level of employment. However, the employment rate remains significantly below the EU average. Moreover, there are large disparities between regions and population groups. In particular, low-skilled people, older workers, people with a migrant background and people with disabilities are under-represented on the labour market. Tackling low employment rates will require effective activation of jobseekers as well as part of the inactive population.”

**“The ESF provided specific and tailor-made support for young people not in education, employment or training.** Thanks to the European Social Fund (ESF) and Youth Employment Initiative more than 150,000 young people have benefitted to date from targeted support for their integration in the labour market. The ESF also reinforced improved access to and development of training support, including through dual learning. To make skills and qualifications more relevant to the job market, the ESF improved access to dual training for more than 222,000 people.”

**“For instance, in order to address the issue of youth unemployment, the Public Employment Service in Brussels implements a specific action, the Youth Guarantee Service, dedicated to assist young people at the end of their studies with a job, a traineeship or a training within four months after their registration.** Benefiting from a total support of € 3.4 million (of which 50 % ESF), this service has accompanied 17,500 young people between 2014-2018. Likewise, TechnoCampus is a training center for future jobs in Hainaut-Namur. With a total cost of € 2.7 million (ERDF € 1.1 million), it proposes a wide range of trainings covering the most important competences for the enterprises of the industrial sector.”

**“In 2018, in spite of recent reforms, Belgium recorded the highest level of macro-economic skills mismatches [...] across the EU (25 %).** This result is driven primarily by the combination of a low employment rate of low-educated people and a relatively high share of low-educated people in the population. This result holds across the entire working-age population, including for young individuals”

**“The level of basic and digital skills among young people is worrying.** About one out of five pupils at the age of 15 (more than one out of five in the French Community and less than one out of five in the Flemish Community) failed in 2018 to perform basic mathematics, reading or science tasks (PISA 2018). This strongly affects individuals’ chances of coping with fast-paced technological change, and developing as citizens (see Section 3.3). For pupils with a socio-economic disadvantage or migrant background, this share increases to 37.1% and 37.6% in reading. In parallel, results for digital skills across language communities also dropped over 2015-2017, in particular for young individuals.”

**“Measures are being taken in all Communities to further reduce early school leaving, which is closely linked with grade repetition.** In 2018, early school leaving dropped to 8.6% nationally (EU average of 10.6%), with a significant decrease in the Brussels region to 10.7% (-2.2 pps). Higher rates are nonetheless recorded among people with a migrant background and from disadvantaged socio-economic groups.”

*For further youth-related matters please refer to the country report.*

## **EMCO's assessment**

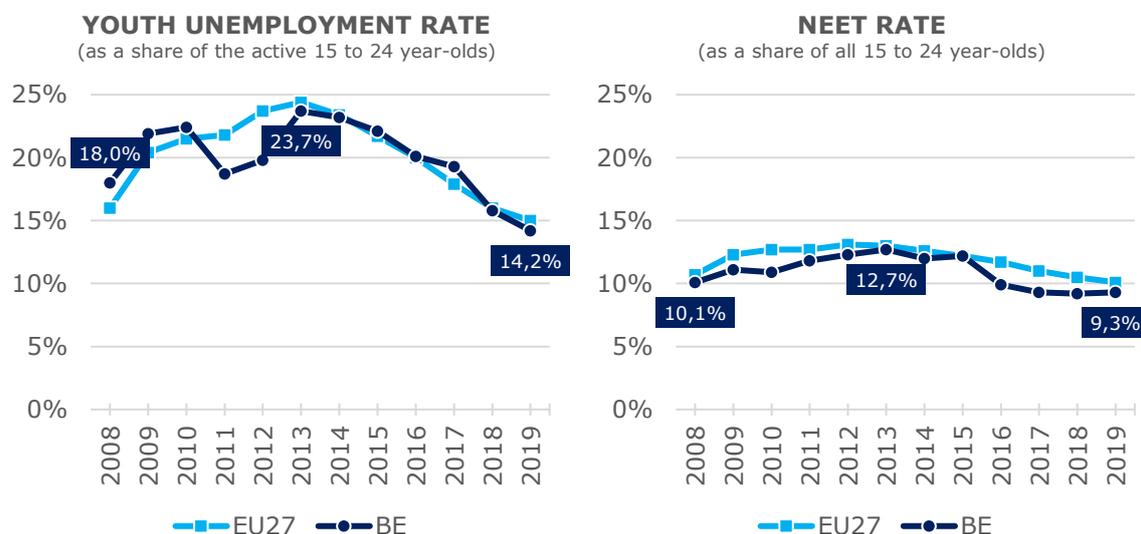
### **Conclusions of the Employment Committee’s multilateral surveillance review on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, October 2019:**

*Overall, Belgium is well advanced in implementing the Youth Guarantee but there are still areas where challenges remain. Belgium has a very good overall performance in attracting NEETs to its regional Youth Guarantee schemes. Outreach activities to vulnerable and inactive NEETS have improved, yet challenges remain. Belgium needs to continue efforts towards establishing a systematic NEET tracking system in cooperation with the education sector, and further develop provision of individualised guidance, including to the most vulnerable job seekers. Monitoring and evaluation policies are in place, while partnerships have been reinforced, tailored to vulnerable job seekers, and adapted to take on board regional needs. However, there is scope for drawing synergies from institutional and operational collaborations.*

*The traineeships that exist in the different regions and communities are good measures to provide young job seekers with hands-on work experience. However, it should be ensured that the most vulnerable young people can also participate in traineeships.*

## Youth Guarantee monitoring – Key data<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Main trends in young people's labour market performance



Source: Eurostat, LFS (une\_rt\_a, edat\_ifse\_20)

### 2. Youth Guarantee Delivery

Belgium presented a Youth Guarantee (YG) Implementation Plan in December 2013, which was updated in April 2014. The plan includes 4 distinct sub-plans, established at Regional/Community level. The Youth Guarantee scheme was formally launched on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 and subsequently implemented by the different regional authorities.

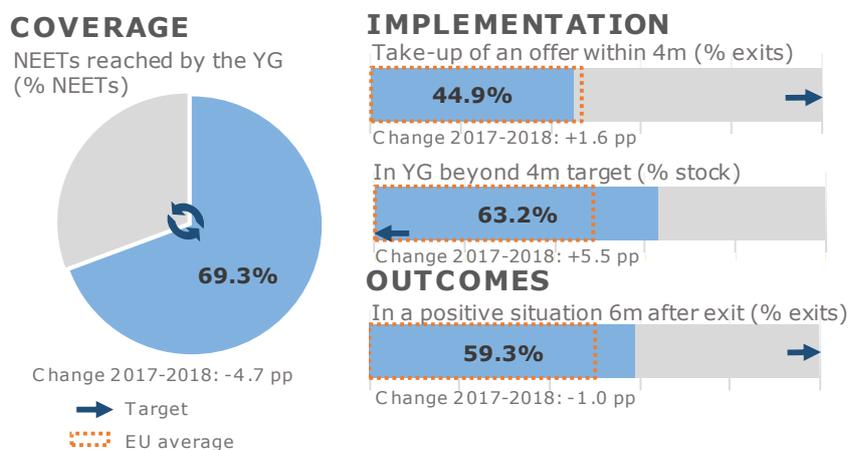
The three Belgian PES and an ad hoc committee in Brussels are responsible for establishing and managing the Youth Guarantee scheme and coordinating partnerships across all levels and sectors in their respective region/community:

- Brussels region: the Monitoring Committee of the YG (composed of ministers of labour, training, education, economy and social inclusion), with the President of the Region as maximum responsible (data are provided by the PES Actiris)
- Flanders: Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB)
- Wallonia: Le Forem
- German-speaking Community: Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (ADG)

More information is available in the national [YG implementation plan](#).

<sup>1</sup> The information below is taken from the country fiche related to the Youth Guarantee Data collection (full results can be found on <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1143&langId=en#YGIF>).

## YG monitoring data 2017-18



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database, data extracted 09 December 2019.  
NEETs data were extracted from Eurostat, Labour Force Survey on 21 June 2019.

On average, more than three in five (63.2%) of those registered in the Belgian YG scheme at any point during the year had been registered for more than 4 months, a continued slight decrease compared to 2017 (57.7%) and 2016 (59.3%), but still some way above the EU average of 48.6%.

Of those leaving the YG in 2018, more than two in five (44.9%) took up an offer within 4 months of registration, a slightly improved result compared to that in 2017 (43.3%) and not far short of the EU average (46.7%).

On average during 2018, the Belgian YG scheme covered more than two thirds (69.3%) of NEETs aged 15-24, noticeably fewer than in 2017 (74.0%) but still well above the EU average of 38.9%.

Three in five of those leaving the YG in 2018 (59.2%) were known to be in employment, education or training 6 months later. Moreover, longer-term follow-up data for those leaving the YG in 2017, 2016 and 2015 suggest that these outcomes are sustainable.

## Previous year

### From the 2019 country report (EN – FR – NL)

**"The labour market continued to improve, in a context of sustained economic growth.** In 2017, employment grew the fastest since 2009 (1.4 %). More than 4.7 million people were employed, which is the highest level in the past ten years."

**"Despite an overall improvement in performance, the labour market remains highly segmented.** More than 25 % of the working age population is not in the labour market. In 2017, the activity rate reached 73.7 %, which is well below the level in neighbouring countries and the EU average (78 %). Labour market participation remains particularly low for specific groups, in particular older (55+) and low skilled workers and those with a non-EU immigrant background (see Graph 1.8). Youth unemployment has declined markedly but remained above the EU average in 2018 (16.6 % vs. 15.6 %)."

**"Youth unemployment remains above the EU average.** In the last quarter of 2018, it further decreased to 15.4 % %. However, there are substantial regional disparities, ranging between 33.2 % in Brussels and 12.8 % in Flanders in 2017. In addition, there are large regional disparities in the rate of young people (15-24) not in employment nor in education or training (NEET). The NEET rate was 13.3 % in Brussels in 2017, lower in Wallonia (11.6 %) and substantially lower in Flanders (7.2 %). The federal government aims to address this issue by lowering the statutory minimum wage for young workers. However, based on an evaluation of the repeal of the youth minimum wage in 2015, the impact on youth employment is likely to be limited (European Commission, 2017)."

**"Belgium performs well on a number of indicators of the Social Scoreboard supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights.** The labour market improved driven by sustained economic growth. It is becoming increasingly tight in spite of a relatively low employment rate. The vacancy rate is amongst the highest in the EU (3.5 % vs. an EU average of 2.1 %). The high vacancy rate and the increasing skills shortages contrast with high inactivity and unemployment for some groups, notably the low skilled and the young."

**"There are also regional disparities in terms of labour market opportunities.** ... The rate of young people neither in employment nor in education and training also differs widely, from 7.2 % in Flanders to 11.6 % in Wallonia and 13.3 % in Brussels."

**"There is no systematic application of the policy to promote diversity of origins in the public sector.** In Flanders, the 'Equal Opportunities and Diversity Plan', consisting of workforce diversity targets for municipalities, was discontinued and replaced by the approach "Focus on Talent". The Brussels-Capital Region introduced in 2018 a "tutor premium" and a "youth bonus" to support dual training, replacing earlier federal measures."

**"Reforms to reverse the decline in educational outcomes and to tackle disparities are progressing slowly.** The decline in the educational performance and the existence of significant disparities in the education systems remain a concern. The percentage of young people not mastering basic skills can be improved in all Communities, and in particular in the French Community. The early school-leaving rate has decreased, but remains high in Brussels and among non-EU born young people and young men in cities. Educational inequalities are also observed in tertiary education. There is room to improve the cost-effectiveness of the education system."

***“The percentage of young people not mastering basic skills can be improved in all Communities (and in particular in the French Community). In the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities, the percentage of low-achieving 15-years old students in the three domains science, reading and maths represent, respectively, 10.9 %, 14.9 % and 8.8 %. By failing to meet the minimum standards required in three essential subjects, these students are most likely to face serious problems in their future education, on the labour market and later in life.”***

***Belgium has reduced the early school leaving (ESL) rate, but it remains high in Brussels and among non-EU born young people and young men in cities. The ESL rate in 2017 was 8.9 %, below the 10.6 % EU average and the national Europe 2020 target of 9.5 %. However, disparities remain high between regions (Flanders 7.2 %, Wallonia 10.5 %, Brussels Capital Region 12.9 %) and population groups. ESL is particularly high for non-EU born young people (16.7 %), and for young men in cities (14.4 %). ESL is correlated to early tracking, grade repetition and track/school/course changes, particularly in urban vocational schools and in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Belgium has a high share of repeaters in primary and secondary education. In the French Community’s worst-performing schools, 80 % of pupils have delayed education, mostly due to grade repetition, against 20 % in the best-performing schools (OECD, 2018), (Lafontaine, 2017).***

*For further youth-related matters please refer to the country report.*

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## Links to further information

### **Youth Guarantee Knowledge Centre – Including promising examples from Belgium**

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1327&langId=en>

### **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan**

[https://www.vdab.be/synerjob/docs/Belgian Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan.pdf](https://www.vdab.be/synerjob/docs/Belgian_Youth_Guarantee_Implementation_Plan.pdf)

### **Where to register for the Youth Guarantee?**

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1218&langId=en>

### **Youth Wiki Belgium**

(Flemish Community)

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/overview-Belgium-Flemish-Community>

(French Community)

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/overview-Belgium-French-Community>

(German Speaking Community)

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/overview-Belgium-German-Speaking-Community>