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Ex-post evaluation of the preparatory action "Your first EURES job"

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1. INTRODUCTION

The "Your first EURES job" (YFEJ) preparatory action was implemented for three consecutive budget years (2011-2013) with an overall budget of around EUR 12 million. The target was to support the placement of around **5000 young people**.

In line with the Financial Regulation applicable to the EU budget (Article 54 2.b),¹ a preparatory action is an initiative designed, in the field of application of the TFEU and the Euratom Treaty, to prepare proposals with a view to the implementation of future actions. YFEJ was one of the actions of the EU 2020 strategy² (under the flagship initiative 'Youth on the Move'³), part of the Youth Opportunities Initiative⁴ and included in the 2013 Communication on 'Working together for Europe's young people'.⁵

YFEJ was implemented and tested as a small-scale, innovative scheme aiming to help young EU citizens aged 18-30 to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in another EU country, and employers (SMEs⁶ in particular) to find the right people for their hard-to-fill vacancies. It combined tailor-made recruitment, matching and placement services with financial support for target groups.⁷ In doing so, YFEJ has promoted the exercise of the EU freedom of movement for workers under Article 45 of the TFEU.⁸

Taking into account the preliminary results of the preparatory action, the Commission proposed to continue supporting 'targeted mobility schemes' under its proposal for the 2014-2020 multi-annual financial framework. This was approved by the European Parliament and the Council. Consequently, during 2014-2020 YFEJ is being financed under the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)⁹ as a 'targeted mobility scheme', open to EU-28/EEA citizens aged 18-35.

¹ https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/budgweb/EN/leg/finreg/Pages/leg-020_finreg2012.aspx

² COM(2010)2020.

³ COM(2010)477 final.

⁴ COM(2011)933 final.

⁵ COM(2013)447 final.

⁶ SMEs — small and medium-sized enterprises, with up to 250 employees.

⁷ The main features that distinguish YFEJ from the regular EURES support services include: its focus on a specific target population (young workers); the possibility of providing young people with direct financial support measures such as travel and subsistence expenses (e.g. for job interviews or country relocation); a financial contribution to an integration programme in case of recruitment by an SME. Average EURES activities at national level include information, guidance on recruitment opportunities and living and working conditions in other countries, and assistance with placement in another EU country (preparation for job interviews, review of CVs etc.). The main organisations in the EURES network, public employment services, can provide counselling and job search assistance in general, and can often offer access to (language) training.

⁸ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1081>

1.1. Purpose of the evaluation

According to Article 18 of the Rules of Application on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union,¹⁰ all programmes or activities, including pilot projects and preparatory actions, where the resources mobilised exceed EUR 5 000 000 must be the subject of an interim and/or ex post evaluation.

This staff working document presents the results of the ex-post evaluation of the YFEJ preparatory action implemented in budget years 2011-2013. It assesses achievements and shortcomings in implementing the action and draws some conclusions.

The staff working document draws on an independent study carried out by an external consultant.¹¹ The objective of the study was not only to follow up on the findings of the 2014 YFEJ interim evaluation¹² (retrospective dimension) but also to examine possible scenarios for implementing the action in the future (prospective dimension). The study provides evidence that will feed into the Commission's future policy interventions aiming to increase the intra-EU labour mobility of young people under Article 45 of the TFEU.¹³ This includes calls for proposals on targeted mobility schemes Your First EURES Job and Reactivate, planned for 2018.

1.2. Scope of the evaluation

This staff working document focuses on the results of the ex-post evaluation of the YFEJ job mobility scheme (retrospective dimension). It provides the final overview on the implementation of the whole preparatory action, completing the interim evaluation conducted in 2014-2015.

The interim evaluation covered the nine projects run under the first and second calls for proposals launched by the Commission in 2011 and 2012 (four and five projects, respectively). The ex-post YFEJ evaluation focused mainly on the projects funded under the second and third calls for proposals of the preparatory action (budget years 2012 and 2013), which comprised a total of 11 projects¹⁴ and integrated the findings of the interim evaluation on the partial implementation of the five projects under the 2012 call.

The ex-post evaluation aimed to demonstrate the extent to which the YFEJ scheme had benefits for the target groups and Member States and if it increased intra-EU labour mobility. It covered the EU-28 and the countries of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein).

¹⁰ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012.

¹¹ 'Study on the Your first EURES job mobility scheme and options for future EU measures on youth intra-EU labour mobility' by Ecorys UK, December 2016.

¹² <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1160&newsId=2136&furtherNews=yes>

¹³ TFEU — Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

¹⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=632&langId=en> VP/2011/006, VP/2012/006 and VP/2013/014.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE YFEJ PREPARATORY ACTION

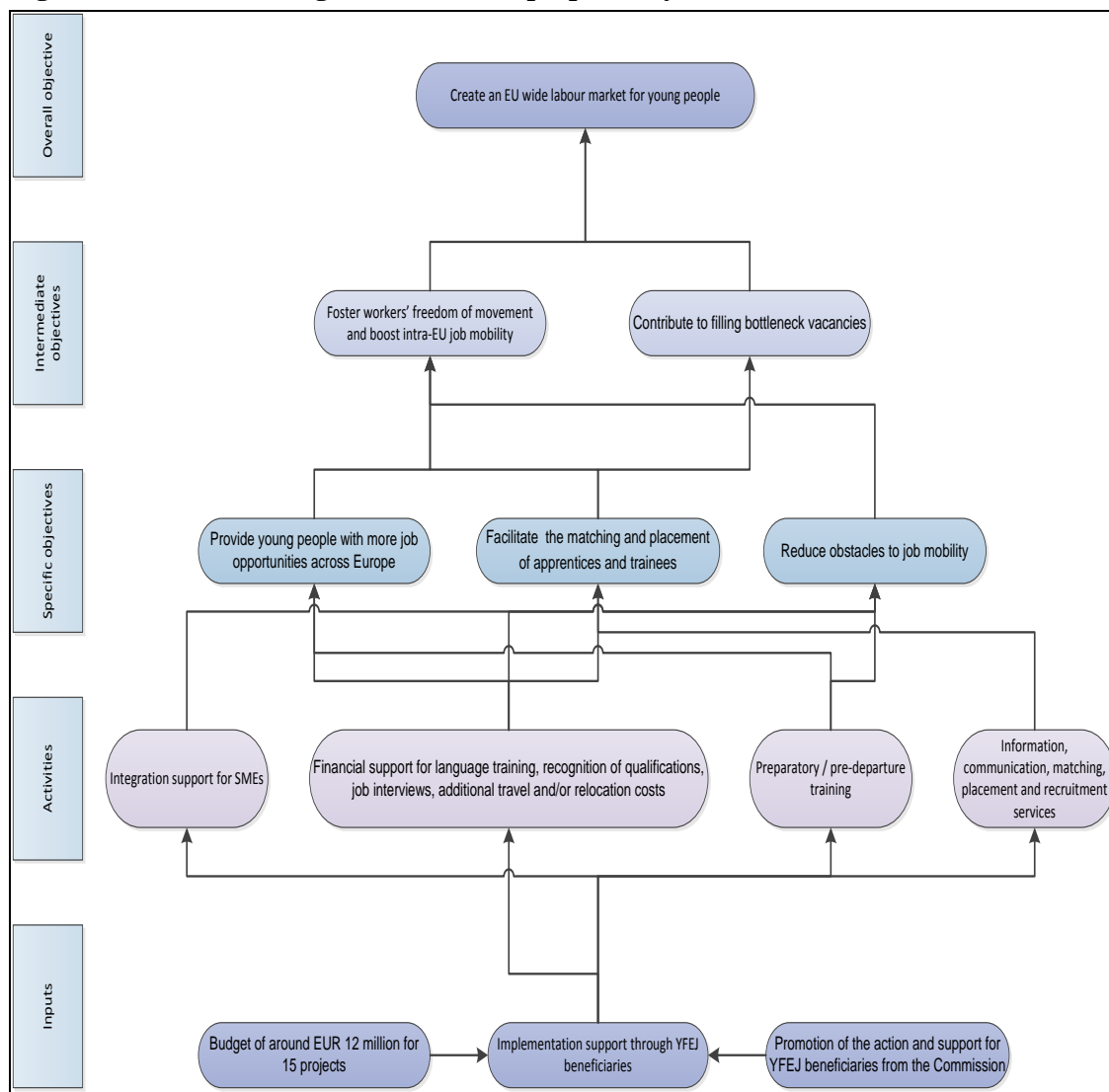
2.1. Description of the action and its objectives

The YFEJ preparatory action was a small-scale initiative that aimed to support the free movement of workers. It featured a pilot EU *active labour market measure* to help reduce mismatches between the labour markets of various Member States. Figure 1 below show the intervention logic behind this.

The scheme combined the provision of information, recruitment, and matching and placement services. It financed preparatory, integration and pre-vocational training, including inter-cultural and language courses and travel expenses for young candidates (for job interviews and job settlement in other EU countries). It also provided a contribution to an integration programme in the case of recruitment by a small or medium-sized company (SME). Placements were remunerated and lasted for at least six months.

The scheme was innovative because of its direct support to job seekers and small and medium sized enterprises (SME). As with other mobility actions co-financed by the European Commission, the financial support to both young candidates and SMEs was based on a mix of simplified cost options (e.g. flat rates and lump sums) and reimbursement of actual declared costs (up to a pre-defined cap) for a limited category of expenses. The former cover in particular young people's travel and daily allowance costs and the costs of an induction training for mobile workers recruited by SMEs; the latter cover specific costs such as those related to language courses or recognition of qualifications.

Figure 1: Intervention logic for the YFEJ preparatory action



Source: YFEJ study, December 2016

Funded over three successive budget years from 2011 to 2013 following an open annual call for proposals,¹⁵ the action supported 15 projects with lead organisations from the following EU countries: Italy (4 projects), the Netherlands, Germany (3 projects), Spain and Denmark (2 projects each), Sweden (2 projects), Greece, Slovenia. An overview is provided in Annex IV, Figure A.

The overall committed EU budget amounted to EUR 12 239 207.00 and the actual total expenditure amounted to EUR 7 747 781.18. The calls were open to labour market actors from the public and private sectors (profit and non-profit organisations, including the third sector). Six projects were implemented by the EU public employment services (PES), members of the EURES network.

¹⁵ The first call was launched in 2011 (VP/2011/006, EUR 4 million), the second in 2012 (VP/2012/006, EUR 3.25 million) and the third in 2013 (VP/2013/014, EUR 5 million).

EURES is the network that links the public employment services (PES) of the EU-28 countries, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein (Switzerland also participates) and the Commission, which aims to ensure the transparency of labour markets. Launched in 1993, EURES exchanges job vacancies and applications for employment and provides information concerning living and working conditions across the EU. It shares this information on the job mobility portal¹⁶ and has a network of more than 1000 EURES Advisers. It facilitates intra-EU mobility for all categories of workers and age brackets, though it does not cover some of the customised services provided by YFEJ. In 2016, the EURES Regulation¹⁷ entered into force with a view to foster workers' access to mobility services and to facilitate the further integration of labour markets in accordance with Article 46 TFEU. Article 6 of the Regulation sets out the objectives of the EURES network.

In general, within the context of this preparatory action, the projects run by private, non-EURES member organisations were less effective in terms of meeting targets and objectives than those run by public authorities representing PES/EURES at national level. The reasons were contextual in part (for example, in the case of the three German projects, the introduction of the German MobiPro-EU programme¹⁸ impacted mobility projects and interaction with PES/ EURES). The lack of a tradition of public/private partnerships was also cited as an explanatory factor.

Although there were more issues with private sector actors, the importance of ensuring a formal partnership approach that effectively engages EURES member organisations in delivering results was also evident in projects run by public, national actors. For example, in the case of the Employment Service Slovenia (ESS) project, lack of direct, formal, engagement of EURES partners in other Member States was cited as a key challenge. This, taken together with evidence of challenges faced by private sector actors running projects, indicates that the involvement of EURES services is a key factor in promoting the effectiveness of initiatives such as YFEJ in the current institutional context.¹⁹

¹⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/homepage>

¹⁷ Regulation (EU) 2016/589 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2016 on a European network of employment services (EURES), workers' access to mobility services and the further integration of labour markets, and amending Regulations (EU) No 492/2011 and (EU) No 1296/2013. OJ L107 of 22/04/2016 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2016:107:TOC>

¹⁸ Mobi-Pro EU, which was promoted under the name 'The Job of My Life' is an inbound mobility programme which is run by the ZAV (International Placement Service) of the Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA — Public Employment Service) in Germany in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). It started in 2013 and the last funding call was in 2016. As apprenticeships generally take 3 to 3.5 years in Germany, the project's implementation is expected to continue until about 2019. The total budget for MobiPro-EU over the full programming period is estimated at € 580 million, with each programming cohort costing about € 110 million. MobiPro-EU (2016), The Job of my Life — Fördergrundsätze, available online: <http://projektraegerunternehmen.thejobofmylife.de/de/ueber-das-programm/foerdergrundsaeetze.html>, accessed: 31.01.2018.

¹⁹ It is important to keep this diversity in mind, along with YFEJ's experimental and relatively small scale, when interpreting the ex-post evaluation findings.

Despite differences in how YFEJ projects approached delivery, in line with the nature of a preparatory action, their main innovation was the direct financial support provided to individual job seekers and SMEs. Factors that played a role here include: YFEJ being the only dedicated pan-European approach to supporting intra-EU job mobility at the time of its operation;²⁰ the nature and quality of the intensive, dedicated one-to-one support made possible due to the initiative; the possibility of using direct financial support to encourage and enable mobility. Most project beneficiaries reported that their project would not have run without the action. In particular, the scheme's targeted and dedicated focus on employment was stressed as evidence of added value. As a EURES coordinator noted: 'there are many mobility schemes when you are a student, such as Erasmus etc. However, once you enter the labour market, all this support stops, there is nothing out there'. The intensive support included was also seen as a key and important factor. As one of the YFEJ project stakeholders pointed out, such a level of support is not commonly available at the national level.

The possibility of giving direct financial support through the scheme was also frequently highlighted, particularly the fact that this did not involve any intermediaries and that it made a significant contribution to mobility. It is also worth noting that respondents to the public consultation on YFEJ and intra-EU mobility, run in the context of the ex-post evaluation, generally felt that the added value at EU level was clear. The number of respondents who agreed with the statement that YFEJ has specific features not found in other EU or national schemes was significantly greater than the number who disagreed (47 % vs 11 %).

As from 2013, support measures were extended to trainees and apprentices with an improved mobility package (e.g. including further language training support, costs of recognition of qualifications, supplementary allowance for young people with special needs, mentoring for candidates).

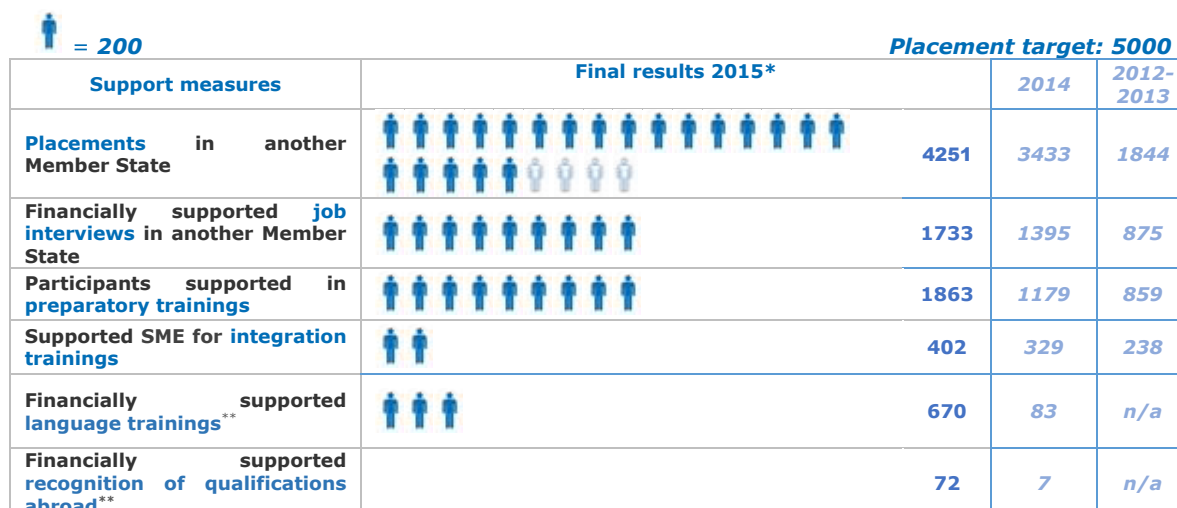
For the purpose of the preparatory action, work placements were meant '*to be occupied by any person who, for a certain time, performs services for and under the direction of another person in return for which s/he receives remuneration*', in line with ECJ case-law.²¹ Apprenticeships and traineeships were considered work-based training opportunities consisting of limited periods of practical preparation spent at a work place and subject to the same rules, hierarchy and remuneration as for jobs.

By the time the preparatory action finished at the end of the third quarter of 2015, the projects together had made **4251 work placements** corresponding to 85 % of the target (see Figure 2).

²⁰ While one of the predecessor programmes to Erasmus+ (Leonardo da Vinci) included an action on labour mobility ('People in the Labour Market'), the current Erasmus+ programme does not support labour mobility. Erasmus+ does include funding for the short-term mobility of VET students and teachers including work placements (traineeships), but is focused on learning mobility rather than labour mobility. Some countries (e.g. Poland, Italy) have used funding from the European Social Fund to support young students' further mobility after their Erasmus+ exchange. Note that Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is not part of the Erasmus+ programme, it is funded via the COSME programme 2014-2020 (Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs).

²¹ EU Court of Justice, Case 66/85, Case C-3/90 and Case C-456/02.

Figure 2. YFEJ preparatory action — overview of final results



*Final results from start of YFEJ activities in 2012 until the end of all projects in 2015Q3.

**New support measures introduced with the 3rd wave of projects initiated in June 2014.

Source: YFEJ Final Monitoring Review, European Commission, November 2015

2.2. The situation before YFEJ (baseline)

The free movement of workers is a fundamental principle of the European Union. Intra-EU labour mobility helps tackle unemployment disparities between Member States and contributes to a more efficient allocation of human resources. Apart from some European Social Fund (ESF) funded and national-driven activities, before 2011 there was no EU-wide action that consistently supported intra-EU youth labour mobility. YFEJ was tested as a potential way of filling this gap.

The EU economy is now in its fourth year of recovery since the double dip recession (in 2009 and 2012). There has been a steady but slow reduction in employment since 2013. Nevertheless, in the third quarter of 2016, about 20.1 million people in the EU were still without work, including almost 4.2 million young people. EU youth unemployment remains markedly higher than its low in 2008: in autumn 2016 it declined by 1.5 percentage point and stood at 18.6 % by the end of 2016.

In 2016, unemployment continued to affect over 40 % of young active people aged 15 to 24, with unemployment rates varying widely between Member States from less than 12 % of the active population (e.g. in Germany, Malta, the Czech Republic, Austria and the Netherlands) to over 40 % (e.g. in Greece and Spain).

Labour market data show that, even in these times of economic downturn, Europe still has shortages and surpluses of skilled labour, i.e. there are many job vacancies that remain unfilled due to the lack of suitable and skilled workers.²² The main problem, which a potential future policy option on intra-EU youth labour mobility would need to address, is the *low matching levels of young jobseekers and placements across the EU*; this contributes to high youth unemployment and many job vacancies across the EU.

²² Study ‘Mapping and Analysing Bottleneck Vacancies on the EU Labour Market’, September 2014 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=993&newsId=2131&furtherNews=yes>

The analysis carried out by key stakeholders (jobseekers, employers and intermediaries) for this study underlines that the low matching level is due to a number of factors. Broadly, there are five types of underlying factors: 1) individual barriers (e.g. insufficient language skills, cultural barriers, social ties); 2) limited awareness and transparency of placement opportunities; 3) costs related to international placements (e.g. recruitment, relocation); 4) limited (perceived) benefits; and, 5) other structural barriers related to the labour market (e.g. social security risks).²³

Knowledge of languages was the most common challenge to mobility selected by individual respondents; the costs of moving abroad, legal obstacles such as qualification recognition, and access to job vacancies in other Member States were also seen as important. Organisational respondents perceived the main challenges for individuals to be the knowledge of languages, followed by the breakup of family or social ties and the costs of moving abroad.

In terms of challenges for employers, there were notable differences in the importance given to different factors by different organisational respondents. For example, employers' organisations cited matching and recruiting workers from other Member States as the main challenge. Government bodies/ministries, other public authorities and PES saw the main challenge for employers as relating to candidates' qualifications and skills such as educational level and language knowledge. Workers' organisations / trade unions and organisations in the 'other' category, such as NGOs, stated that legal obstacles such as qualification recognition and the transfer of social security rights were key challenge for employers, while workers' organisations named access to information on rights and obligations for EU/EEA workers as the main challenge overall.

In general, both individual and organisational respondents had a positive opinion on the relevance of intra-EU labour mobility support for improving the labour situation in the EU/EEA. Between 75 and 85 % of all respondents fully agreed or tended to agree that support for intra-EU labour mobility would: address labour market imbalances and skills mismatches; improve workers' skills and competencies; be part of jobseekers' or job changers' career transitions; offer businesses more recruitment opportunities; and strengthen business competitiveness and innovation.

The underlying factors discussed above lead to three specific issues that contribute to the overall problem: the low mobility of young jobseekers within the EU; the limited recruitment of young workers from abroad, and challenges in the matching process. The YFEJ preparatory action aimed to test and map the support measures that could best address many of the obstacles mentioned across the EU.

3. METHOD

An independent evaluation was carried out by an external consultant. The work was carried out between September 2015 and November 2016 and included a wide-ranging consultation process. The overall aim was to complete the interim evaluation of the YFEJ preparatory action, covering all three rounds of projects.

²³ 'Study on the Your first EURES job mobility scheme and options for future EU measures on youth intra-EU labour mobility' by Ecorys UK, December 2016.

The study consisted of a **retrospective dimension** based on an ex-post evaluation that included a series of questions as outlined in Annex II, and the definition of a **prospective dimension** identifying future policy options and making an initial comparative assessment of their costs, benefits and administrative burden.

The evaluation process was supported by a **Steering Group** composed of representatives of selected Directorates-General, notably Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), Education and Culture (DG EAC), Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), as well as the Secretariat General. The data sources used for both the retrospective and prospective dimensions are summarised below.

3.1. Data sources

The ex-post evaluation (retrospective dimension of the consultant's study) addressed different stakeholder categories — public authorities, employment services (public and private), social partners, young jobseekers, employers and civil society in general — and represented a good balance of countries across the EU. Its data sources can be summarised as follows:

- a. desk research;
- b. key stakeholder consultations with stakeholders who play a role in YFEJ (projects) or related schemes at the EU level (employment services);
- c. expert workshops;
- d. telephone consultations with YFEJ project stakeholders;
- e. visits to projects happening in round 3, which resulted in a range of stakeholder interviews and follow-up meetings to gather additional data and evidence;
- f. seven country case study visits to the PES of countries directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of YFEJ (Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden) and countries that were not involved (Poland and the United Kingdom);
- g. mapping of existing mobility initiatives (at EU and Member State level);
- h. an online survey of 1672 YFEJ participants (open for four weeks), which received 136 responses, equating to a response rate of 8 %;
- i. an open online public consultation (using the Commission's survey tool), open for 12 weeks (from 22 January to 22 April 2016), which received 630 replies.

3.2. Limitations — robustness of findings

The consultant encountered a number of research challenges and limitations during the evaluation. These can be summarised as follows:

Surveys — challenges with contacting and motivating young people and employers participating in YFEJ to take part in the survey. Limited participation was possibly due to lack of interest given that potential respondents had typically finished their involvement with YFEJ projects 1-3 years before the survey launch.

Comparative analysis or benchmarking — given the relatively unique nature of YFEJ in terms of being the only cross-EU mobility support scheme specifically designed to

support labour mobility, the extent to which any comparative analysis or benchmarking could be carried out is limited. This leads to limitations in assessing the relative success of YFEJ in terms of numbers of placements achieved against the target, or of efficiency in terms of unit cost comparisons. Although there are national schemes with which YFEJ could be compared for these purposes, the differences in funding, operational activity, scope, and geographical focus limit the degree to which this would be meaningful. Where such comparisons have been used in the report, the caveats concerning these limitations have, therefore, been clearly stated.

Counterfactual-based impact evaluation — assessing the impact of the preparatory action was also more challenging because it was impossible to conduct a counterfactual-based impact evaluation due to the lack of a sufficiently broad comparison group.²⁴ As a result, it was necessary to adopt an alternative approach to evaluating impact, involving the use of a theory-driven evaluation design based on the YFEJ intervention logic detailed in Figure 1. This process aimed to test the theory of change behind YFEJ in terms of how, and the extent to which, the rationale for the intervention held in practice (i.e. it highlights the inputs and activities involved in the preparatory action and how they intended to meet the defined objectives). However, it was inherently less effective in terms of providing a sense of the preparatory action’s impacts.

Cost-benefit analysis: the retrospective nature of the evaluation presented some specific challenges for the cost-benefit analysis as it has been necessary to use existing monitoring data rather than being able to specify the information to be collected at the outset (particularly in relation to the costs of delivery). In order to mitigate the limitations of existing monitoring data, the approach followed involved the inclusion of relevant questions in consultations with project stakeholders. This yielded some useful information, although it should be noted that there are also limitations linked to the quality and completeness of this additional data. The survey of YFEJ participants also provided some relevant information for the cost-benefit analysis, but caution was required in using this data given its self-reported nature (i.e. its inability to be verified), and the relatively small number of survey respondents out of the total number of people likely to have received support from YFEJ.

4. IMPLEMENTATION: STATE OF PLAY

4.1. The evaluation findings

The YFEJ preparatory action aimed to contribute to achieving a series of specific objectives as described in Figure 1 above.

The action had some notable positive impacts at the level of individuals and met its immediate, specific objectives to a good degree (with the exception of one area, namely attempts to facilitate apprenticeship/trainee placements, which had limited success). For many of the individuals supported, YFEJ projects helped reduce obstacles to mobility

²⁴ The Terms of Reference for the study requested that ‘the contractor should also assess the feasibility of estimating the net effects of YFEJ on the final beneficiaries through a CIE’.

and provided more access to job opportunities. Moreover, several of the activities involved were clearly significant in meeting these objectives, particularly those relating to pre-placement/job-search and financial support. Therefore, these specific objectives around reducing obstacles and improving access to job opportunities can be judged to have been largely met, with the intervention logic confirmed.

The degree to which YFEJ intermediate objectives and the overall objective (filling bottleneck vacancies; boosting intra-EU job mobility; creating an EU wide labour market) were met is more difficult to demonstrate. The size of the preparatory action meant that achievement of these higher level and more ambitious objectives was inevitably only possible to a small extent. In addition, there was only limited and indicative evidence of YFEJ placements filling bottleneck vacancies and some evidence that the focus of projects was more on boosting overall numbers of placements rather than specifically filling such vacancies.

4.2. The current situation

YFEJ projects were monitored from the start. Since 2012, quarterly monitoring reviews have given an overview of implementation results. A Final Monitoring Review was published in November 2015. Besides the data outlined in section 2.1, it emphasised the main success factors and challenges of the scheme, which corroborate the conclusions of the evaluation.²⁵

As of 2014, YFEJ falls under the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) (2014-2020), within the EURES axis, as a ‘targeted mobility scheme’.

According to recital 18 of the EaSI programme ‘*The scope of EURES should be broadened to include developing and supporting targeted mobility schemes, after calls for proposals, at Union level with a view to filling vacancies where labour market shortcomings have been identified (...) such as those based on the preparatory action ‘Your first EURES job’.* Article 20(b) within the EURES Axis specifies that ‘*(...) the provision of EURES services (...) may include targeted mobility schemes to fill job vacancies in a certain sector, occupation, country or a group of countries or for particular groups of workers, such as young people, with a propensity to be mobile, where a clear economic need has been identified’.*

Consequently, the connection with the EURES network was strengthened. In contrast to the aspects of EURES that were the focus of the EaSI Regulation, the calls for proposals in the budget years 2014-2016 have focused on modernising EURES. Projects have a duration of 24 months and must be led by EURES member organisations, though they can possibly involve other labour market stakeholders as well. Each project must cover at least seven countries and seven EURES member organisations.

The practice so far has been to support between two and three projects each year with a budget between EUR 7 and 9 million and a total placement target of around 2000 to 3000 young people.

²⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1160&langId=en>

Between 2014 and 2016, a total of 7 projects received grants — led by EURES Italy (2 projects), EURES Sweden (2 projects), EURES France (2 projects) and EURES Germany (1 project). More information is available in Annex IV, Figure C. Activities that focus on hard-to-fill vacancies identified using evidence-based sources target young people aged 18-35 and employers from the European Economic Area (EEA, i.e. EU-28 plus Norway and Iceland). Eligible work placements include jobs, traineeships and apprenticeships, provided that they are organised under an employment relationship.

Between February 2015 and June 2016, a total of **1 467** placements were made in the EU-28, Norway and Iceland (data from projects launched in 2014, corresponding to **61.9 %** of the combined target of 2 370 placements). No data is yet available for projects launched later on in 2016 and in early 2017 (see Annex IV, Figure D).

At the end of 2016, the Commission published a call for proposals under the occupational strand of the European Solidarity Corps initiative, which to a large extent draws on the concept and successful features of the current TMS-YFEJ model.²⁶

5. ANALYSIS AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

5.1. Relevance and coherence

The **specific objectives** of the preparatory action were to reduce obstacles to labour mobility and provide young people with more job, apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities across Europe. The logic behind this was that it would foster workers' freedom of movement, improve intra-EU job mobility, and fill bottleneck vacancies, all of which would help meet the action's **intermediate objectives**. This in turn would contribute to achieving the **overall objective** of creating an EU-wide labour market for young people. To assess the **relevance of the preparatory action** it is necessary to examine whether the logic of this move from specific through intermediate objectives to the overall objective was sound and internally coherent. Secondly, it is necessary to examine whether the types of activities promoted through the action were likely to contribute to these objectives; that is, whether they were likely to address the key barriers preventing more labour mobility. The key question regarding **coherence** was whether the individual YFEJ projects supported reflected the action's overall aims. The degree to which the preparatory action was coherent with other EU mobility programmes, and with initiatives at Member State level, is also relevant.

Based on evidence from existing research on obstacles to mobility, **the internal logic of the preparatory action appears to be sound**. Creating an EU-wide labour market for young people is one way of addressing the widely recognised challenge of youth unemployment. Similarly, the evidence base for the presence of skills mismatches and bottleneck vacancies is well established, as highlighted for example by the work of CEDEFOP, which indicates that by 2020 the European labour market will be subject to significant skills mismatches.²⁷ It is also apparent that current mobility rates are relatively low. For example, the results of a recent OECD study suggest that the annual rate of

²⁶ Since May 2017, two projects have been implemented by consortia led by Italian and French PES: <https://eusolidaritycorps.anpal.gov.it/> and <https://escorps.eu/en/>

²⁷ CEDEFOP (2013) Future skills supply and demand in Europe.

cross-border mobility stands at under 0.5 % across the EU, compared to rates of 1.0 % or more in related contexts in Australia and the US.²⁸

To address bottleneck vacancies, foster free movement, and promote an EU-wide labour market, **reducing any obstacles** that exist must be a key aim. This specific objective of the preparatory action was thus relevant to, and coherent with, the intermediate and longer term objectives set. The same is true for **providing access to more job opportunities**, given that this is an inherent part of making mobility possible, along with having the potential to address bottleneck vacancies (depending on the opportunities available). The relevance of **matching and placement support** is closely linked with removing obstacles and providing access to opportunities given that, as discussed below, limited mobility involves clear issues around transparency of opportunities and people's ability to access them.

The **activities promoted** were also found to be very relevant for the objectives set. The available literature on this topic clearly presents information deficits, financial barriers, language and cultural factors, reluctance of employers to hire from abroad, and lack of qualification recognition as obstacles to mobility.²⁹ The **support measures promoted** as part of the action **all appeared relevant** therefore, including: incentives for employers to address reluctance to hire from abroad, offered through integration support; financial support to address money-related barriers to movement for individuals; support for language training and cultural orientation to both facilitate and encourage mobility; support for qualification recognition to address the barrier of non-recognition; and information, communication and matching to address issues around transparency of opportunities and to facilitate people's ability and confidence to access them.

The public consultation on YFEJ and options for future measures that support mobility provided further evidence of the high degree of relevance of YFEJ's support measures for its objectives. A series of statements broadly covering the list of measures noted above had high levels of agreement among consultation respondents in terms of their relevance for meeting the scheme's objectives. In all cases, between 70 % and 90 % of respondents felt that YFEJ's measures were relevant to its aims, specifically those related to financial support, services that address obstacles to mobility, guidance and training to reduce skills mismatches, support for transitions from education to employment, and enabling businesses to choose from a wider pool of candidates.

5.2. Effectiveness

Assessing the effectiveness of the preparatory action involved gathering evidence on the degree to which it and the projects it supported met targets and objectives, and on the factors that acted as obstacles. The assessment also sought to identify which particular aspects, methods or actors either helped or hindered effectiveness and what lessons can be drawn from this.

The preparatory action's key target was to reach 5000 placements. Although specific targets were not set for other support measures, their level of achievement was monitored

²⁸ OECD (2016), OECD Economic Surveys: European Union 2016, OECD Publishing, Paris.

²⁹ For more detail on this evidence base, see section 4.1 in 'Study on the Your first EURES job mobility scheme and options for future EU measures on youth intra-EU labour mobility', Ecorys, 2016.

nonetheless. The preparatory action made **4251 placements against the 5000 target**, equating to **an achievement rate of 85 %**. Financial support for job interviews was also a common aspect of the assistance offered (1733 cases), as was preparatory support for relocation (1863 cases).

Also, 402 instances of support for integration trainings carried out by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were recorded. The relatively low number of financially supported recognition of qualifications (72) is partly explained by this measure only being introduced through the round 3 of call for proposals, and also by several projects' experience of achieving and evidencing recognition being difficult. Conversely, 670 financially supported language trainings were recorded, even though this measure was also only introduced in round 3. This is indicative of the importance of such support and provides further evidence of the significance of language as a barrier to mobility. Assessing the relative success or otherwise of the 85 % placement achievement rate is difficult, due to the lack of sufficiently similar and reliable comparative data to benchmark performance.

In terms of the key placement metric, when looking at the individual performance of the YFEJ projects, **there was significant variation in the degree to which they met their placement target**. Some projects struggled against their target, most obviously the Manpower Group project (Greece) which made only 10 placements against a target of 200, the German BFW-NRW and ViJ projects (53 and 76 placements against targets of 180 and 200, respectively), and the Werkcenter project (Netherlands) which made 45 placements against a target of 126. Conversely, some projects overshot their target, most significantly the round 2 City of Aarhus project (478 placements against a target of 300), Arbetsformedlingen project (432 placements against a target of 300), and round 3 Provincia di Roma project (373 placements against a target of 320).

The results of primary research on round 2 and round 3 YFEJ projects, along with the findings of the interim YFEJ evaluation, provided some clear information on the factors influencing the effectiveness of the preparatory action. Several of these are inter-linked and collectively they help explain some of the variations in project performance discussed above. They also highlight some important lessons that can be drawn from the experience of implementing the preparatory action, as well as some of the key challenges faced by actors involved in YFEJ implementation. Key factors of effectiveness include:

1) The type of project and its institutional setting. In general, **projects run by private, non-EURES actors were less effective in terms of meeting targets and objectives than those run by public, national level PES/EURES actors**. In particular, these projects found it difficult to secure cooperation with EURES services. The reasons for this were partly contextual (for example, in the case of the round 3 German projects, the introduction of MobiPro-EU meant that EURES and PES support was focused on this initiative). A lack of a tradition of EURES working in partnership with private organisations was also cited as an explanatory factor in several instances.

2) Length of projects and presence of pre-existing networks or partnerships. There was a clear difference in the performance and effectiveness of YFEJ projects between those that effectively 'started from scratch' and those that built on pre-existing projects, networks or partnerships. For projects with little or no experience or pre-existing

networks or partnerships to build on, the 12-18 month timeframe allocated was too short for results to be steady and consistent.

3) Selecting an appropriate geographical focus and ensuring that orientation towards the labour market is effective and feasible. In some instances, projects underestimated the specific requirements related to certain Member States and/or occupational sectors which made securing placements difficult. In addition, those projects with a narrow geographical or sectoral focus faced more challenges in ensuring that their objectives could be successfully achieved.

4) Contextual factors and the potential to be ‘crowded out’. Competition from larger-scale and better-funded programmes resulted in more difficulties with engaging both employers and job candidates. This highlights the **importance of mapping existing and anticipated initiatives, in particular target contexts**, as well as of **being able to respond flexibly and quickly when initial delivery designs are negatively impacted by external factors**.

5) Effective design and resourcing, including risk and contingency planning. In some cases, those involved with the YFEJ projects acknowledged that there had been design flaws in their intended approach and/or that adequate contingency planning had not been undertaken. In one instance, for example, a project coordinator suffering illness led to significant implementation delays; in another it was acknowledged that the resourcing allocated had been significantly below what was required to run an effective project given the complexity and resource-intensive nature of the delivery approach used.

6) Difficulties in securing apprenticeships and traineeships. Those round 3 projects that sought to secure apprenticeship and traineeship placements found this element particularly challenging for several reasons, including:

- a. demand for such opportunities being high relative to supply; hence securing such placements was challenging even for nationals of the country in question;
- b. employers were risk averse when considering apprentices, with this being even greater in relation to foreign apprentices;
- c. other schemes were more specifically designed to place apprentices and trainees while, for YFEJ, this aspect operated alongside a main focus on job mobility;
- d. the YFEJ six month placement rule was too long for most traineeships; and
- e. the relocation financial support provided was more appropriate to those taking paid employment rather than for apprentices.

7) Difficulties securing employer engagement. Activities related to this were frequently time- and labour intensive, necessitating significant resources. In addition, it was noted that the offer of integration support was not particularly attractive to employers, either because they felt the funding involved was not worth it or that other competing schemes available locally had a better ‘offer’.

8) Recognition of qualifications was commonly cited as being a complex and challenging area requiring a more effective wider policy approach outside of schemes focused on job mobility. At present, the view is that this remains a significant barrier likely to negatively impact on the effectiveness of any job mobility scheme, but that the level and nature of this effect is likely to vary between different economic sectors and Member States.

5.3. Efficiency

The cost of the preparatory action was outweighed by the economic/financial benefits for participating individuals and businesses (and ultimately the economy), even when taking into account some additional costs for projects, not covered under the EU budget. Not all costs and benefits can be identified or precisely quantified but estimates can be made based on the available evidence: **costs for the action were estimated at € 8.5 million, against potential additional benefits estimated at around € 38 million.**³⁰

Using the cost-benefit analysis framework, the average cost per placement was estimated at EUR 1 822 (EU funding)³¹. This amount is significantly lower than in other schemes mainly because support measures were tailored to the participants' needs from recruitment to placement and had a limited duration.

Here again, the benchmarking of costs must be treated cautiously because evidence from other programmes, for example Erasmus+ student or apprenticeship intra-EU mobility experiences or the Mobi-Pro-EU scheme,³² shows that the average cost per placement can range from EUR 5.330 to EUR 10.000/33.000 per learner/year (long duration support). On balance, the funding mechanisms used for the action appear to have been beneficial in terms of efficiency, while contractual factors had more mixed effects.³³

Administrative costs and burden can also be part of the costs of any intervention. The country level research was used as an opportunity to get a more detailed picture of the administrative costs and burden linked to running YFEJ projects for individuals, employers and intermediaries.

Individuals participating in YFEJ are required to complete relevant application documents and other paperwork. It has not been possible to estimate the time it takes to fulfil these requirements, although consultees in one country (Slovenia) noted that the administrative requirements for securing financial support were particularly burdensome

³⁰ This figure is an estimate, based on YFEJ monitoring data, of the number of placements achieved, coupled with evidence from survey participants on their earnings and length of placement (Source: YFEJ study, December 2016).

³¹ Projects had to guarantee co-financing of at least 5% of the costs.

³² German 'The Job of My Life' programme (2014-2017, EUR 560 million), inspired by YFEJ, which aimed to place system students from other EU countries in the German dual learning (from Spain, Hungary, Bulgaria, Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Romania, Poland, Greece), with costs per person going up to 33.000 EUR (support for three years, including housing).

³³ The funding mechanisms used were based on contracted-out labour market programmes using 'payment by results' models. In respect of the above comparison, however, it should be noted that under Erasmus+ the cost per placement typically covers the full duration of the trainee or student placement overseas (e.g. 3 months, 6 months etc.), including return expenditure. In contrast, under the YFEJ scheme allowances were provided over a short period of time, covering costs incurred in relation to the pre-placement, placement, and post-placement of the YFEJ participant, with no return costs being covered. As opposed to YFEJ, therefore, Erasmus+ allowances are paid systematically over the entire duration of a placement and therefore costs are likely to be higher than those for YFEJ. Therefore, this comparison needs to be treated with caution.

and also disproportionate to the amount of money which could be claimed (although it is understood that, in the case of Slovenia, this administrative burden stemmed largely from national requirements rather than the YFEJ). It is not clear, however, whether these administrative requirements are more or less burdensome than the process of using other job matching services or of applying directly to selected employers.

Employers are also required to undertake certain administrative activities in order to take part in YFEJ. Financial support is available to SMEs for the delivery of integration activities for employees from other Member States. Consultees in one country (Slovenia) reported that the administrative requirements connected with this funding opportunity can be off-putting for employers (although it is understood that, in the case of Slovenia, this administrative burden stemmed largely from national requirements rather than the YFEJ). The ex-post evaluation showed that there was lower than expected demand for this element of YFEJ (demonstrated by the underspending of the resources allocated to employer support). However, it is important to note that applying for such funding is not mandatory for employers that wish to participate in the programme.

Furthermore, employers face administrative costs related to recruitment (including when filling vacancies through YFEJ). In addition to the costs of participating in such a scheme (providing details of available vacancies, interviewing applicants, etc.), employers may find that their decision to employ a person from another Member State entails administrative or other requirements that are additional to those related to employing a person from the country in which they are located. The limited evidence that it has been possible to collect shows that employers incur additional costs related to both legislative and non-legislative requirements, with the additional non-legislative costs reflecting the additional work on induction and orientation for employees hired from overseas (for example, in Slovenia it was reported that additional time is required for induction to the workplace if Slovenian and English are not spoken).

The organisations involved in implementing YFEJ projects are required to undertake a range of administrative activities. If the YFEJ was to be increased in scale, it is assumed that administrative requirements, and therefore burden, would also increase, as there would be a need to increase activity related to recruitment, processing of applications and reimbursement claims, and liaising with partners. However, a comparison of monitoring data for the YFEJ in 2015 with the YFEJ preparatory action suggests that some economies of scale would be possible if the scale of the current scheme was increased, mostly likely due to a reduction in the share of the budget devoted to management and administrative costs.

To calculate the benefits of the YFEJ preparatory action, both direct benefits: (a) economic and (b) social benefits for individuals; (c) productivity benefits for businesses, and indirect benefits: (d) cost savings to public services (primarily the reduced need for welfare payments or support with job searching for individuals who move into work; (e)

spill-over effects on third parties; (f) economic benefits of labour mobility and improved functioning of the labour market (employment and productivity/GDP); (g) social benefits of inward migration (community cohesion and integration); and (h) environmental impacts of labour mobility, were analysed.

As with effectiveness, **efficiency varied at the level of individual projects due to factors such as links with existing services, use of effective tools and processes, and management, resourcing and design issues.** Achievement of the initial quantitative targets varied between projects, ranging from 5 % to 159 % of the target set. While there is potential to deliver support similar to that offered through YFEJ more efficiently, this would likely depend on increased scale and longevity, given that efficiency appeared to increase once projects reached a steady state and increased their volume of support.

5.4. Impact

The overall impact of the preparatory action was relatively small in absolute terms given its size and scope.

YFEJ had a generally positive impact on participating *individuals*, helping in many cases to reduce obstacles to their mobility and match them with appropriate job opportunities. Many of those supported will also have benefitted in terms of personal growth, broadened their horizons and improved their career prospects and earnings. **The action was successful in supporting individuals get good quality employment,** rather than temporary, part time or precarious roles; many of the placements made were either permanent or long-term. The YFEJ support (financial and other) was influential in encouraging individuals to exercise their right to free movement and appears to have been a key component in generating positive impacts. However, there was some deadweight in this context, in that a notable minority of individuals would have become mobile and found jobs without YFEJ. This was also evident from the online survey, as it indicated that a significant proportion of those supported may already have had experience of working abroad prior to the support.

The impacts for *employers* and *providers* working under YFEJ are likely to have been more mixed, though were still positive on balance. Positive effects for employers around filling vacancies and receiving support to help integrate employees were probably undermined by the resource costs involved in taking part in the scheme. For *delivery organisations* where implementation went well, a range of positive impacts were evident, including organisational learning and improved networks and partnerships. However, those that struggled to implement the initiative effectively experienced more negative effects, including financial and other resource-related impacts.

5.5. Sustainability

Based on the evaluation evidence, **there was a strong indication that in many cases the positive impacts stemming from the support provided by YFEJ were sustained.** This is also true for the reported positive benefits for individuals, including the nature of their employment. While evidence relating to the effects on employers was weaker, the

indications that are available paint a positive picture, not least due to the inherent incentive to ensure that the investment made led to sustainable outcomes.³⁴

For the YFEJ projects themselves, evidence shows sustained positive effects in terms of organisational learning and partnership development, though not across the board. Some projects continued thanks to other funding sources,³⁵ while for others there was little evidence of sustainability.

Due to the absence of longer-term tracking data for the action, evidence of the sustainability of placements and their effects on the individuals concerned is limited. However, a range of positive anecdotal and indicative evidence on this did emerge from the primary research. The jobs filled by survey respondents were typically full-time, and were often permanent or of a long duration (the average duration for non-permanent placements was just over 14 months). In addition, many of the benefits reported by survey respondents are likely to have longer-term effects due to their very nature; these include improved career prospects and more personal development. Lastly, employers and individuals alike indicated satisfaction with the outcome, expressing an interest in sustaining the contract.

5.6. Organisation and governance

The impact of the YFEJ preparatory action in terms of organisation and governance considerations was broadly positive, in spite of some notable differences between the degree of effectiveness in the internal organisation and project implementation. There was a split between projects where partnership set up and operation worked well, and those where these elements worked less well. This broadly followed the division between EURES and other public service-led projects and those led by private providers. While the Commission's approach to the action's governance and management was generally received positively, in some cases issues were raised around administrative requirements and their negative effects on delivery. These issues and concerns were more evident amongst projects that were less effective in terms of implementation and performance.

³⁴ Where evidence was available on the sustained effects for employers, this was almost universally positive, though it was drawn from a relatively small sample. Employer representatives often had a positive perspective based on the high quality of the employees recruited, and expected their employment to last. In turn, this was seen as having a beneficial and, in the short term at least, sustained impact on their companies.

³⁵ For example, in November 2014 the Italian Ministry signed a protocol with the Province of Rome to continue their collaboration and a new project, 'Your first EURES job — Targeted Mobility Scheme', was launched in 2015. In this case, it was noted that the partnerships developed through the preparatory action had been strengthened and sustained, with this being very positive for the organisations involved and for continued efforts to support mobility. In other instances projects continued to deliver services through other funding sources or interventions, building on the experience and learning gained. In this way, positive sustained effects on the organisations involved were evident. For example, the two round 3 German projects have subsequently linked up and BFW-NRW is using some resources from ViJ for a follow-up project under the MobiPro-EU programme (including their offices in Greece and Spain as well as language schools). It is also apparent that several partners involved across projects are examining the potential for related schemes being funded under the European Social Fund (ESF).

5.7. Complementarity and EU added value

The YFEJ preparatory action clearly added value in respect of other EU programmes or schemes on mobility in place at the time of its operation. This conclusion is based on: YFEJ being the only dedicated pan-European approach to supporting intra-EU job mobility; the nature of the intensive, dedicated one-to-one support made possible through the action; the possibility of using direct financial support to encourage and enable mobility; and the fact that most project stakeholders cited that their project would not have run without YFEJ.

The degree of complementarity achieved by the action was more difficult to judge and varied according to the different aspects of complementarity considered. While there was a good degree of complementarity with existing EURES services in the case of most projects, and in respect of the action as a whole, complementarity with national support for mobility was less evident. In particular, some schemes operating at Member State and regional levels compromised YFEJ's effectiveness in some contexts and, to a degree, 'crowded out' the intervention.³⁶ However, the scheme can be considered to have fitted well with EU-level policies and initiatives to support mobility.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Building on the above, it is reasonable to conclude that the YFEJ preparatory action had positive impacts at the level of individuals and met its specific objectives, as outlined in Figure 1, to a good degree.

The exception is apprentice/trainee placements: only three projects under the third call carried out activities in this area and they were not successful in meeting their targets. The reasons given by the projects were the lack of offers in the open labour market for applicants from other Member States (often subject to national /regional incentives) and the variety of regulatory frameworks across Member States.

A number of obstacles remain to be overcome in this area. So far, cross-border traineeship or apprenticeship offers are essentially being promoted in the form of learner mobility within other European networks and programmes (e.g. Erasmus+, Eurodyssée³⁷). EU citizens are much less aware of the possibilities for degree mobility and there may be less information available. A first attempt is under way to share

³⁶ The round 3 BFW-NRW project in Germany provides a good case study around the inter-related effects of contextual and external factors. In this example, the initial focus on construction proved problematic given that, at a key point in implementation, the industry suffered from notable public sector spending reductions. Thus, a number of organisations pulled out. Competition from larger-scale and better-funded programmes also meant that engaging both employers and job candidates became a major challenge (in this case MobiPro-EU, through the Youth Employment Initiative was also cited in other contexts). Other examples of this effect included local and regional internship programmes offering the possibility of taking on interns without payment (especially in Portugal), which made placements more difficult. These factors highlight the importance of mapping existing and anticipated initiatives in particular target contexts, as well as being able to respond flexibly and quickly when initial delivery designs are negatively impacted by external factors.

³⁷ <http://www.eurodysee.eu/the-eurodysee-programme-traineeship-exchange-programme.html>

information on access to apprenticeships and traineeships for degree mobility in other Member States more systematically on the EURES portal.

Consequently, the planned effects or impacts on the action's intermediate objectives and the overall objective can only have been minor.

The evaluation identified a series of lessons learnt by both the Commission and potential project implementers for possible future job mobility schemes focusing on intra-EU youth mobility, or labour mobility in general, to overcome some of the shortfalls identified through the evaluation.

— *Possible measures to improve in particular the action's **effectiveness and efficiency***

- a. Where possible, ensure the active involvement and engagement of EURES, the EU network specialised in supporting intra-EU labour mobility, in delivering or helping to support the implementation of future programmes.
- b. Explore opportunities to extend contracted delivery periods to ensure that project implementers build up experience and that delivery can reach an effective 'steady state'.
- c. Encourage project implementers to be realistic in terms of their sectoral focus and to avoid, in particular, an overly narrow focus vulnerable to labour market changes.
- d. Ensure that project implementers are fully aware of the difficulties and requirements related to securing employer engagement and in maintaining these relationships.

— *Possible measures to improve in particular the action's **organisation and governance***

- e. Ensure that project implementers allocate adequate resources to management and administration functions to avoid situations where delivery is compromised due to inadequate planning or implementation approaches.
- f. Ensure adequate resources and guidance for supporting any future project implementers that may have little experience of working on similar programmes with the Commission and/or in using public funding in such a context.
- g. Consider creating a 'good practice delivery guide' based on learning from YFEJ projects to date to support future project implementers.
- h. Consider the need to make future programmes comprising multiple projects more consistent in their delivery models and approaches so as to make overall programmes more streamlined and easier to manage.

— *Possible measures to improve in particular the action's **impact***

- i. Seek to ensure that future interventions to promote intra-EU labour mobility define their ambitions and objectives realistically, and that resources are provided, and activities designed, with the scope and scale of these objectives in mind.
 - j. Ensure that future programmes examine how disadvantaged groups or individuals could best be supported to take advantage of free movement, particularly in a context where employer demand may be for those with higher level skills.
- *Possible measures to improve in particular **complementarity** with other national mobility schemes*
- k. Ensure adequate mapping of national initiatives in the context of EU-wide programmes and focus as far as possible on ensuring complementarity.

The evaluation concludes that, at the level of wider impacts around labour market functioning and skills matching, a *much larger intervention* would be required to have any significant effect. Moreover, it is clear that impacts directly related to skills shortages and bottleneck vacancies are difficult to achieve irrespective of the size of an intervention, particularly given the dynamic and continuous fluctuating nature of labour markets.

Future interventions to promote intra-EU mobility will need to define their ambitions and objectives realistically, and ensure that resources are provided, and activities designed, commensurate to the scope and scale of these objectives.

In light of these findings, the favourable results from the public consultation as well as experience with continuing YFEJ under the ongoing Employment and Social Innovation Programme (2014-2020), and bearing in mind the forthcoming reflections on the next MFF, the European Commission is examining a number of options for the future of YFEJ.

ANNEX I — PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

- Lead DG: Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL)
- Agenda planning number: 2016/EMPL/012
- Organisation and timing:

The ex-post evaluation was launched immediately after the preparatory action finished, in compliance with Article 18, §3 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the EU budget (Rules of Application). The external consultant started their work in September 2015 and covered the questions outlined in Annex II. This had four phases: the kick-off meeting, the inception phase, the research phase (interim report) and the synthesis phase (final report). In parallel, an inter-service group was set up and included representatives of the Secretariat General, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), Directorate-General for Education and Culture (EAC) and Directorate General for Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW).

The methodology was further developed during the inception phase; relevant literature was reviewed and a number of stakeholder consultations were launched. The main activities of the research phase included interviews and visits to YFEJ project grant holders, participation in stakeholder meetings, preparation of a survey of young people benefiting from YFEJ, analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and cost-benefit analysis of the action. The research phase also included publication of the open public consultation on the Commission's 'Your Voice in Europe' website, along with related follow up and data collection. An overview of the results of this consultation is provided in Annex III. The draft report was prepared in the synthesis phase.

The ex-post evaluation included the following steps, and involved the inter-service group at all stages:

- Kick-off meeting: 24 September 2015
- Inception Report meeting: 29 October 2015. Final inception report registered on 16 November 2015
- Interim Report meeting: 21 March 2016. Final interim report registered on 16 June 2016
- Final report meeting: 13 October 2016. Final report and annexes registered on 12 December 2016.

ANNEX II: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

(1) For relevance and coherence

To what degree has the action been relevant with the aims and objectives of the intervention?

What has been the level of coherence of a) the YFEJ projects and activities action and the set objectives and, b) of the intervention with other EU or national mobility schemes or programmes?

(2) For effectiveness

To what extent have the selected projects achieved their objectives and contributed to achieving the overall objective of the preparatory action? If not, what factors may have hampered the achievement of the objective(s)?

Are there any aspects/ methods /actors that render certain aspects of the projects / the preparatory action more or less effective than others, and — if there are — what lessons can be drawn from this?

(3) For efficiency

Have desired outputs and results been achieved at a reasonable cost? What is the CBA of the preparatory action?

What aspects of the contractual arrangements and funding mechanisms (e.g. flat rate and lump sums) were efficient or inefficient, in terms of the resources required by the beneficiaries?

Could the same results have been achieved with less funding? Could the use of other policy instruments, mechanisms or tools have provided better cost-effectiveness?

(4) For complementarity and added value

What specific features/aspects are there in the preparatory action that cannot be found in other EU programmes or schemes on mobility, such as Leonardo da Vinci, as now subsumed under Erasmus+, the schemes for student placements under Erasmus+, Erasmus for Entrepreneurs or other EU funding instruments e.g. European Social Fund,³⁸ Youth Employment Initiative?³⁹

What are the advantages, if any, of the tested intervention logic against the current (regular) (EURES) service provision at national level?

What is the added value of financial incentives at EU level to support mobility for (young) job seekers from one Member State to another Member State?

To what extent could this action be carried out by at least some Member States without EU funding support?

(5) For sustainability

³⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp>

³⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1176>

How sustainable were the results of the preparatory action on the targeted groups: young people and employers?

To what extent the results of the preparatory action are likely to last after the intervention has terminated?

Have the implementing organisations of the preparatory action expressed the intention to continue the activities with other sources of funding than the EU budget?

(6) For impact

To what extent did the placements of workers under the scheme contribute to their ability to become active on the labour market in the mid to long term, i.e. had a more lasting effect on their career perspective and participation on the labour market?

What wider effects (such as enhanced competences and skills, self-esteem, personal autonomy, enhanced productivity, innovation for individuals and changes in performance and profiling of organisations) has the YFEJ preparatory action generated on both individuals and organisations?

To what extent can this preparatory action enhance intra-EU labour mobility, from a qualitative and quantitative perspective?

How far can the preparatory action influence people's decisions (jobseekers and employers) to effectively exercise the right of workers to free movement?

(7) For organisation and governance

What was the impact of the action on implementing organisations or other actors directly or indirectly involved in the preparatory action?

ANNEX III: SUMMARY OF THE OPEN PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Introduction

The public consultation was launched on 21 January 2016 and remained open for 12 weeks, until 22 April 2016. The questions and full report on the public consultation results can be found in Annex 2 to the main report on the study. The online consultation had 680 responses from a series of ‘priority stakeholders’ and ‘other stakeholders’ invited to participate. The stakeholder groups targeted were:

- Priority stakeholders:
 - EU/EEA-level stakeholders: social partners, youth organisations (e.g. European Youth Forum), researchers/academics and think tanks.
 - National-level stakeholders: Ministries/regional authorities responsible for youth employment, employers (SMEs in particular), public and private employment services (including EURES and YFEJ implementers), national-level social partners, researchers/academics and think tanks, ESF Managing Authorities or Intermediary Bodies, national youth organisations and NGOs (i.e. members of the European Youth Forum), other labour market intermediaries (i.e. temporary work agencies).
 - Individuals: young people under 35.
- Other stakeholders:
 - Training organisations, non-governmental organisations, municipalities, chambers of commerce, intermediary organisations managing national or EU-funded mobility programmes or schemes (e.g. Erasmus+ National Agencies) and other individual citizens.

The online questionnaire mainly focused on two areas: 1) questions directly related to the evaluation criteria; and 2) views and perceptions on the future of YFEJ. Most target groups invited to participate were broadly represented. However, the level of representation varied significantly, with a large proportion of PES and public authorities represented as opposed to, for example, employers, employer representative organisations, and think tanks. In terms of individual respondents, as with organisations there was a large weighting towards a small number of countries (notably Poland, Italy and Spain), although the profile of individual respondents as a whole showed a good spread in terms of employment status.

Main results

- Motivation for mobility and the current mobility situation

In terms of **motivation for mobility** and the likelihood of moving to a different country, both individual and organisational respondents selected two main types of motivation as underpinning intra-EU labour mobility: economic reasons such as the potential to achieve

better working and salary conditions, along with a lack of job opportunities in a particular country of residence. Equally, both individual and organisational respondents felt that young people were either 'very' or 'fairly' interested in taking up work in other Member States (91 % of individual respondents and 92 % of organisational respondents stated this). Few respondents in either category felt that young people were not interested in mobility. Given the opportunity to select up to three reasons encouraging employers to recruit from another Member State, organisational respondents were notably more likely than individuals to cite shortages in the domestic labour force and limited attractiveness of vacancies for national candidates as the main reasons. In contrast, the most common main reason cited by individual respondents was a 'need for workers with specific language or technical skills'.

In terms of **challenges to mobility** for individuals, the most commonly selected by individual respondents was knowledge of languages. The costs of moving abroad, legal obstacles such as qualification recognition, and access to job vacancies in other Member States were also seen as important. Organisational respondents perceived the main challenges for individuals as knowledge of languages, followed by the break-up of family or social ties and the costs of moving abroad.

In terms of challenges for employers, there were notable differences in the importance given to different factors between different organisational respondents. For example, employers' organisations cited matching and recruiting workers from other Member States as the main challenge. For government bodies/ministries, other public authorities, and PES, the main challenge for employers was seen as relating to candidates' qualifications and skills such as educational level or language knowledge. Among workers' organisations / trade unions and organisations in the 'other' category such as NGOs, legal obstacles such as qualification recognition and the transfer of social security rights were seen as a key challenge for employers, while for workers' organisations access to information on rights and obligations for EU/EEA workers was seen as the main challenge overall.

- Perspectives on YFEJ

In general, both individual and organisational respondents had a positive opinion on the **relevance of intra-EU labour mobility support** for improving the EU/EEA labour situation. A small majority of individual respondents (58 %) were familiar with or had heard of YFEJ, while the majority of organisational respondents (86 %) had heard of or were familiar with the scheme. In terms of perspectives on **YFEJ's relevance**, a majority of both individual and organisational respondents agreed that the scheme was relevant to objectives across a series of areas: providing a package of services and financial support to individuals and employers; helping address obstacles to intra-EU labour mobility; providing guidance and training to jobseekers which helps reduce skills mismatches; supporting young people's transition from education to employment; and enabling businesses to benefit from a wider pool of candidates.

In terms of the **extent to which YFEJ meets its objectives**, most organisational and individual respondents agreed that the scheme can improve the transparency of EU labour markets, facilitate young people's access to more job opportunities, improve

preparation and training of candidates, and improve the quality of intra-EU labour mobility services. Views were most positive on the scheme's success in facilitating access to more job opportunities, while there were slightly more mixed views on YFEJ's role in improving labour market transparency (though still positive on balance).

Concerning **YFEJ's effectiveness**, the most positive responses related to the scheme's ability to 'provide high quality support to both jobseekers and employers' (with 76 % of individuals and 80 % of organisational respondents agreeing that the scheme was effective in this). This was closely followed by the positive responses to the statement that YFEJ 'can be more effective if implemented through stable partnerships' (73 % of individuals and 77 % of organisations agreed with this). A clear majority of individual and organisational respondents also agreed that YFEJ 'can perform better with service providers in all Member States' (74 % of individual respondents and 68 % of organisational respondents, respectively). A high proportion of respondents had no opinion on the statement that YFEJ 'can deliver better if the turnover of service providers is less frequent' (42 % of individuals and 36 % of organisational respondents), so agreement on this was less clear. However, the individuals and organisations that did have an opinion had a far greater tendency to agree with the statement than to disagree.

As concerns the **efficiency of YFEJ**, individual and organisational respondents were sceptical that the scheme could achieve its goals with less or no funding, with individuals being more likely than organisations to doubt this. Most individual respondents (81 %) felt that YFEJ's efficiency could be improved if the scheme were to be up-scaled, whilst organisational respondents were less certain but still mainly agreed with this (57 %). There was overwhelming agreement that tailor-made financial support through YFEJ helps young people and employers to address specific labour market needs (84 % of individuals and 82 % of organisational respondents). A majority also supported the view that the diversification of YFEJ service providers could boost innovation and efficiency (72 % and 57 % of individual and organisational respondents, respectively). The same was true of the idea that YFEJ providers with a long-term mandate tend to perform better and be more cost-efficient (66 % and 63 % of individuals and organisations agreed, respectively).

A large majority of both individual and organisational respondents expressed positive views on the degree of **coherence and complementarity between YFEJ and other similar interventions**. Most agreed that YFEJ is a useful tool in this context in terms of facilitating the free movement of workers across the EU (92 % of individual respondents and 89 % of organisational respondents). Large majorities of both categories also agreed with the statement that YFEJ complements the EURES network with tailor made services for young people and employers (84 % of individual and 94 % of organisational respondents). A slightly lower but still high percentage agreed that YFEJ complements action by other national and EU mobility programmes: 74 % of individuals and 80 % of organisational respondents.

In terms of **EU added value**, on the question of whether YFEJ's objectives could be better achieved through EU-level action as opposed to varied actions by Member States, 62 % of individuals agreed that they could, while the figure for organisational

respondents was 51 %. There was a similar pattern for the statement that YFEJ's operational framework ensures coordination based on common rules and that the scheme has the potential to become the brand for intra-EU job mobility. More respondents also agreed than disagreed with the statement that YFEJ has specific features that cannot be found in other EU or national programmes.

In relation to the **sustainability and impact of YFEJ**, respondents generally felt that the scheme would not be sustainable without further EU funding. Equally, both organisational and individual respondents strongly agreed that YFEJ could have positive and long lasting impacts on individuals' participation in the labour market (86 % of individual respondents agreed with this, as did 79 % of organisational respondents). In terms of impacts for organisations implementing YFEJ, most respondents fully agreed that the scheme could improve implementing organisations' business models. A similar pattern emerged for views on the statement that YFEJ fosters the creation of partnerships amongst different EU labour market organisations. Similarly, most respondents felt that service providers could perform or deliver better because the YFEJ had a common set of rules.

- Future of YFEJ

Most individual and organisational respondents felt there was a **need for further action to boost intra-EU mobility and provide work opportunities for young people**. However, there was some variation in views on the form this action should take. Around a third of individuals (34 %) felt there should be more national schemes to boost intra-EU mobility, slightly more (38 %) that there should be a mix of national and EU intervention, and just under a quarter (25 %) that the EU should create an EU labour mobility programme. Few (only 3 %) felt that there is no need for further action. Similarly, the option of a mix of national efforts alongside EU intervention was most popular among organisational respondents (42 %). More organisational respondents than individuals favoured an EU mobility programme (30 % compared to 24 %), while a lower percentage favoured more national measures or schemes (22 % compared to 34 % of individual respondents). As with individuals, very few organisational respondents felt that there was 'no need for further action at national or EU level' (4 %).

In terms of **key features of any future intra-EU mobility scheme**, when asked to select up to three options from a list of possible elements, individual respondents gave a similar relative importance to all options provided. In addition to the most favoured options of financial support and recruitment / job matching, a series of other factors were also seen as similarly desirable: that a scheme should cover the EU/EEA territory, should have EU-wide visibility, should deal with different types of work placements, and should include a variety of economic sectors. There was a similarly even spread of opinions among organisational respondents, though the provision of specialised recruitment and job matching seemed to be less valued than the other options.

In response to a similar question on selecting up to three **possible measures within a future scheme**, information on placement opportunities and access to language and/or pre-vocational training were proportionally the most common measures selected by individuals (each 20 % of the measures selected overall). The provision of pre-placement

support was close behind at 17 % of the total responses allocated by individuals. The top three measures selected by organisational respondents were the same: access to language and/or preparatory vocational training (27 % of total organisational responses), followed by information on placement opportunities and the provision of pre-placement support (each 15 % of total organisational responses).

In terms of the **type of placements a scheme should support**, respondents generally favoured permanent employment contracts, followed by medium-term contracts. While there was also support for short-term contracts, traineeships, and apprenticeships, this was to a lesser degree. Given the option to select all the above placement types, a notable proportion of respondents did so suggesting some support for a scheme covering multiple placement types concurrently.

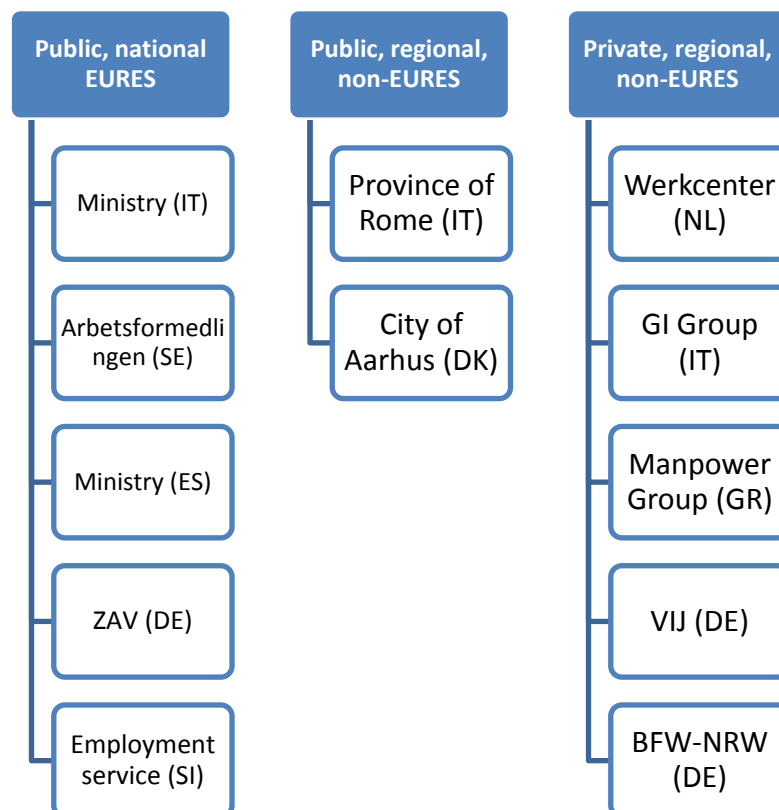
Finally, respondents were asked whether support should be given only to specific categories of young people and, if so, which categories of young people should be supported from a list provided. **The vast majority of respondents, both individual and those from organisations, felt that support should not be restricted at all.** A total of 91 % of individual respondents and 93 % of organisational respondents felt that all young people should be able to access support within any future intra-EU mobility scheme.

YFEJ Preparatory Action

Figure A: Overview of projects financed under YFEJ preparatory action (three calls)

1st call (2011)	2nd call (2012)	3rd call (2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The department of Employment, the city of Aarhus (DK) •Provincia di Roma – Dipartimento III Servizio 2 (IT) •Servicio publico de empleo estatal – Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración (ES) •Bundesagentur für Arbeit /Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung (ZAV) (DE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The department of Employment, the city of Aarhus (DK) •GI Group (IT) •Werkcenter Nederland (NL) •Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali (IT) •Arbetsformedlingen (SE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Arbetsformedlingen (SE) •Provincia di Roma – Dipartimento III Servizio 2 (IT) •Manpower Group (GR) •Berufsförderungswerk der Bauindustrie NRW gGmbH (DE) •Verein für Internationale Jugendarbeit (DE) •Employment Service Slovenia (SI)

Figure B: Types of implementing organisations



Source: YFEJ Final Monitoring Review, European Commission, November 2015

TMS-YFEJ activities under the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)

Figure C: Overview of 2014-2016 TMS-YFEJ projects (three calls)

1st call (2014)	2nd call (2015)	3rd call (2016)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arbetsförmedlingen • Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (IT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bundesagentur für Arbeit /Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung (ZAV) (DE) • Pôle emploi (FR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arbetsförmedlingen (SE) • Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (IT)

Figure D: Overview of 2014-2016 TMS-YFEJ results

Since the monitoring began in February 2015, three projects financed under the 2014 and 2015 budgets* (in Sweden, Italy and France):

- filled *1 469 job vacancies* with young jobseekers from another Member State;
- provided *1 396 relocation allowances* to help young job-finders settle in another Member State and *5 supplementary relocation allowances* to jobseekers;
- supported *742 job interviews* in another Member State;
- supported *116 language trainings*;
- supported *83 recognitions of qualifications* for YFEJ job-finders;
- supported 66 SMEs with integration training for YFEJ job-finders

* The project led by Bundesagentur für Arbeit (DE) was only launched in September 2016. No data are available.

Source: YFEJ, Progress Monitoring Report, November 2016