



Local & Regional
Europe

Tackling Youth Unemployment

“Let’s revive partnership between
all Governance levels”



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About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest organisation of local and regional authorities in Europe. Its members are over 50 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together these associations represent some 150 000 local and regional authorities.

CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional authorities and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts.

Moreover, CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide organisation of local government.

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CEMR Recommendations

Youth Employment: Multi-level governance in action?

- *National Governments cannot only devolve the accountabilities ensuring ownership and responsibility to regional and local authorities but should also give them the possibility to participate in the design and programming stages of such measures;*
- *At the European Level, more consistent importance needs to be placed on the partnership approach and its importance in thematic policies, including youth employment;*
- *CEMR promotes the creation of stronger synergies between existing strategies at regional, national and European level, in particular as regards compliance and reporting mechanisms to reduce barriers to engaging and investing local resources effectively;*
- *Relevant monitoring or 'tracking' mechanisms, along with impact assessments need to be ensured and in place from the outset as they provide support to local communities with limited resources and budgets to make well-informed decisions;*
- *New thinking and cooperation across administrative branches in a new kind of cooperation and commitment from regional and local actors shows to be the best way to support young people's participation in society and must be further explored;*
- *Any future European / National funding mechanism need to consider the existing pressures and fiscal constraints on local resources as regards co-financing requirements and timescales.*

European Youth Guarantee and the Local Level

- *The European Youth Guarantee should address the request for better communication between the different local actors. The result could be a better use of scarce resources in order to support and help the development of young persons;*
- *The European and National level should remain cautious about singling out only the initiatives mirroring the exact specifications of the European Youth Guarantee; many other strategies are implemented and already working well at local community level, and therefore should also be highlighted.*
- *Capacity building programmes need to be reinforced and used for disseminating good practices and ideas of projects;*
- *Regarding the funding issues, European programmes need to be much less burdensome, with focus on the practical outcomes rather than administrative processes.*

Foreword

For the last months **the European level has been mobilising Member States (MS) to act on the worsening situation of youth unemployment.** Concretely, it has proposed a number of documents setting out a number of practical and 'achievable' measures e.g. the European Commission 'Youth Employment Package' of December 2012, and the 'Youth Employment Initiative' proposal in March 2013 which sets aside a budget of 6 billion euros for the most severely affected regions.

This report focuses on the recently published Commission Communication: **Working together for Europe's young people – a call to action**, its main proposals for such action and CEMR's recommendations to follow up on this. The relevance of the Commission Communication for local and regional authorities (LRA's) lies in implementation of those actions, and the co-operation with the national governments, instructed by the European Commission to draw up strategies/programmes to reduce youth unemployment.

In the wake of the crisis youth unemployment rose significantly. The lack of funding is a **main barrier for LRA's to operate and tackle youth unemployment in their territory:** reduction of budgets, concerns about the capacity to deliver, dramatic cuts to services are feared, and in many countries already a reality. Last but certainly not least, there are still countries where the national level does not involve enough the local and regional authorities in stages that matter for the implementation, countries where decisions on employment issues are taken at the centralised level leaving too little scope for local initiative and adaptation at the ground.

But is there really a need for partnership approach between local, regional and national level for tackling youth unemployment? Why is it necessary? With regard to the division of competences, collaboration seems inevitable, but what is the added value? What does work and what doesn't? **The first section of this report focuses on youth employment measures in general and multi-level governance.**

What is the added value of the European Youth Guarantee (YEG)? How does the European level impact on measures already implemented – or not – by the MS? Is it an improvement? Is it on the contrary too much administrative burden? **Section two looks further at these questions.**

Lastly, beyond the sub-national and national boundaries, how to provide any young, in any European place, with the same quality of employment and social services? With the same opportunities for education as well as for employment? **The last section of the report highlights the need for good practices exchanges and further support from the European level for a united and richer Europe.**

Division of competences

The countries participating in this report¹ have described the division of competences between local and regional authorities and national government in the field of youth employment and education.

For the majority², education and employment are mainly a state government responsibility i.e. design, coordination, reforms, international agreements, higher education, jobseeker's allowance, and so on; however, municipalities are responsible for delivering services including preschool, primary and secondary education, promotion of local economic development, provision of youth and adult social services, children and families, and employability services. In addition, local authorities perform an advocacy role, promoting the interests of its local communities.

Therefore there is a shared responsibility for many of the measures in enhancing youth employment and implementing the youth guarantee or youth employment measures. In **Denmark**, 46 municipalities established a partnership in 2004 under the name Youth Guidance (UU). In **Scotland**, there are Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs), jointly agreed between Local Government and Scottish Government. In this context, Scottish Local Authorities deliver services and local policies on an outcome-oriented basis monitored via local indicators.

However, while local authorities have key responsibilities, they often hold no levers over the vast majority of provision to fulfil them.

A different example is given by the **Netherlands**. Municipalities are responsible for labour market policy, poverty reduction and large parts of the social security, including youth employment. They work together in 35 labour market regions. At this level, municipalities collaborate with schools (independent in the Netherlands), employers and unions in helping young people to find a suitable job, apprenticeship or training course.

So the majority of the local and regional authorities (LRA's) do have a range of institutions and programmes addressing youth unemployment. This is confirmed by a study done by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) which analysed four regions during one year in order to promote good practices exchanges in this field³. The study also demonstrates the importance for LRA's of possessing good labour market information systems and the need for partnership working. There are indeed multiple causes of youth unemployment and the policies need to address a range of educational, social, labour market, and enterprise and jobs expansion areas, in an integrated manner.

¹ Denmark, England, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Wales

² Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, England, Scotland, Norway

³ www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/MainIssues/Youth/PYE/PYE_Conclusions.pdf

I/ Youth employment: multi-level governance in action

Is there a need for partnership approach between local, regional and national level for tackling youth unemployment? Why is it necessary? With regard to the division of competences collaboration seems inevitable but what is the added value? What works and what doesn't? The first section of this report focuses on youth employment measures in general and how multi-level governance is put into action in this regard.

Multi-level governance is understood here with the following definition involving two components: partnership and active collaboration for designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes, actions, etc. between EU level, central government, regions, and all sub-national authorities (vertical governance) and partnership and active collaboration with relevant non-state stakeholders such as social and economic partners, NGOs, associations, and so on (horizontal governance)⁴.

Answering these questions require first to understand how multi-level governance is put into action nowadays in terms of involvement of regional and local authorities in the design of national strategies (1). Then, the barriers and main challenges of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are highlighted (2). Lastly, funding opportunities and good examples of collaboration are showcased (3).

Involvement of LRAs in national strategies

The involvement of local and regional authorities (LRA's) in the development of country strategies in terms of Youth Guarantee's programmes, framework, or youth employment measures in general is quite diverse.

Allying formal and informal meetings and collaborations seems a good method for putting into practice multi-level governance, in its horizontal as well as vertical strands. At the level of the **Welsh government**, only a consultation on national strategies is organised. **Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Iceland** illustrate the collaboration between the government and the local and regional authorities or their unions in the coordination and development of national employment strategies. Social partners and third sector actors are also included in these collaborations in order to enhance the workability of young people, develop and support the general preconditions for employment and the development of workshop activities and subsidised/supported jobs in the intermediate labour markets. In the **Netherlands**, commitment is sought and found on the level of the labour market regions who make their own strategies. In **Finland**, there is collaboration between municipalities and third sector stakeholders especially targeting young people with poor education. About 250 workshops have been established involving some 10 000 young persons in 2013.

⁴ For more information: <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Pages/white-pape-on-multilevel-governance.aspx>

In early 2013, the Scottish Government launched the **Youth Employment Scotland** (YES) strategy which provides a national framework and highlights the key role that local partnerships play in delivering training and employability projects for young people. In the YES strategy, the Scottish Government sets out to work closely with Local Authorities, Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs⁵), COSLA and SLAED (i.e. the network of local authority economic development officers) on an employability fund built on local skills outcome agreements. While building on education and training measures to prepare young people for employment, this strategy supports recruitment incentives for private sector employers, in particular small and medium sized businesses, and social enterprises.

More information : <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=67&langId=en&newsId=8145>

Multi-level governance is crucial for any projects aiming at improving the quality of life of citizens. The vertical strand is key, as well as the **horizontal one**. **Iceland** gives an example of an **action implemented at national level but which couldn't have the same results without horizontal multi-level governance**. Many youngsters leave college early in Iceland and experience shows that this is the weakest group to enter the labour market. Of those entering college in 2002 and 2003 only 58% had graduated six years later. The Focus on an education initiative carried out by the State in cooperation with social partners opened up secondary schools and universities, providing spaces for thousands of young unemployed people and job seekers – the goal was to secure 1000 places. Emphasis was placed on giving young people the opportunity to move from unemployment benefits to education. The project culminated in 2011 with good results and the dropout rate was lower than expected. Job seekers unemployed for more than 6 months qualified for the programme and could keep their unemployment benefits for the first term. Of those 960 entering education in 2011, 800 were still studying in January 2012 and thus no longer considered unemployed, or 83% of those starting the programme. Dropout levels varied between schools but were lowest in the preparatory university departments.

The Icelandic project shows the important link between education and employment, something that was highlighted in a French Study l'INSEE⁶ that demonstrated in times of crisis, the unemployment of young people without a diploma is five times higher than for young graduates.

In **Lithuania**, the national level develops a strategy and implements a number of measures to promote youth employment and a better integration of young people in the labour market. The central government is also the one running EU funded projects to help young people gain necessary professional skills, provide assistance for the first job and subsidise employment. Local authorities

⁵ Scottish Local Authorities work closely with their communities in delivering integrated services through Community Planning Partnerships (CCPs). Lead by the Local Authority, these are statutory bodies bringing together local communities, public bodies, social actors, health boards and other partners. In Local Employability Partnerships, Scottish Local Authorities work together with colleges, businesses, national and regional agencies, other public employers (NHS Scotland) and voluntary organisations to understand and respond to challenges specific to their areas. Local Employability Partnerships are well places to tailor their service provision to the needs of local labour markets and to reduce duplication between the support services on offer to young people (e.g. by national agencies such as Jobcentre Plus).

⁶ www.challenges.fr/emploi/20131203.CHA7839/oui-le-diplome-est-une-arme-anti-chomage-pour-les-jeunes-en-temps-de-crise.html

are mainly working together with Local Public Employment Services providing recommendations, organising public works and participating in various projects financed by the European structural funds, under the supervision of the Labour Exchange Office or by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. This is mainly the case in the Czech Republic as well, although tackling youth unemployment requires very diverse solutions in the country. It is worthwhile to note that a mere consultation or just a participation in the implementation under supervision and without true flexibility leads to **lack of ownership and appropriateness of measures to the ground and territorial realities**.

Recommendations

- *The expertise and rationale for local authorities to be in charge of such employment measures has been proven in many examples and in many countries. We therefore recommend that central governments acknowledge this, not only in devolving the accountabilities ensuring ownership and responsibility to regional and local authorities but as well giving them the possibility to participate in the design and programming stages of such measures;*
- *At the European Level, more consistent importance needs to be placed on the partnership approach and its importance in thematic policies, including youth employment; the European institutions should make reference to such approach in their proposals and conclusions linked, in this case, to youth employment.*

The Danish government regularly sets up both formal and informal meetings during the year with the representatives of the labour markets and of local and regional authorities to discuss and inform on the development of country strategies.

Local Government Denmark

Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation: barriers and challenges

a. Different kind of barriers and challenges can be observed but the main one is economic

The financial crisis of 2008 is identified as the main barrier for many countries, an accelerator of youth unemployment, and even the origin of youth unemployment. In **Iceland** indeed the rate of unemployment among young people was traditionally low before the financial crisis and as a result, special measures to integrate young people into the job market were not a priority. In the wake of the crisis youth unemployment rose significantly; in 2010 16.4% of all 16 to 24 year olds were unemployed. Therefore, targeted labour market measures such as the Action For Youth were introduced. The Action, launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with local authorities, educational institutions, voluntary organisations, businesses and medical institutions (in cases where illness had been a contributing factor to unemployment) focused on job seekers younger than 25 years of age. The aim was to offer jobs or other employment measures no later than three months after job loss. The action also targeted long-term unemployed of other ages.

So the **general economic situation** is the main barrier to improvement of the employment for young people. Old jobs disappear due to economic reasons but also due to technological changes in the labour market and new jobs are not created to the same degree. To get a “foot between the door” is a crucial question for many young people, underline our **Finnish** members. Young graduates mostly find temporary jobs in projects or atypical jobs as substitutes. There seems to be fewer low level “entry jobs” in the labour market, where normally and as a standard high formal training, deep skills and work experience are highly appreciated.

In addition, the **lack of funding** has been stipulated as among the main barriers, as well as **short timescales and staff resources** for simultaneously implementing several activities and other elements of employability strategies. At local and regional level in **Wales** for instance, reduction of budgets raise concerns about the capacity to continue to deliver at current levels. Whilst education funding is ring-fenced, youth support services are not and dramatic cuts to services are feared, and in many countries already a reality.

Question for debate:

Should the main focus be on the needs of the labour market - adaptation of young newcomers to the skills needed on the labour market - or should employment also be seen from the individual's viewpoint, as a free choice?

The group of young people in education about to transfer to the labour market is not a homogenous group. Many young people have special needs and strong individual preferences, which should be addressed by both the education system and the employers. The main focus of the social partners and policy-makers are often on the successful and coping part of each young generation. In municipalities we also need to consider the broader aspect of all young citizens living in the municipality.

- Contribution from **Finland**

Furthermore, there are barriers identified in terms of **lack of involvement** in stages that matter for the implementation. In **England**, there is expertise and experience of local authorities with local public service reform models that are proving to better help young people towards work – such as Community Budgets, City Deals, Troubled Families and the Hidden Talents programme run by the Local Government Association (LGA). But local authorities have *marginalised influence over mainstream provision*⁷. In **Lithuania**, there is no space for independent employment policy design by municipalities. They can provide advice to established advisory structures (boards, committees), and they can be partners of projects financed by EU structural funds. National plans are sometimes elaborated in consultation with municipalities, but decisions on employment issues are taken at the centralised level leaving too little scope for local initiative and adaptation at the ground. This is a main barrier for an efficient implementation, ownership, and follow-up. Similarly in Poland, youth employment discussions seem to be divided, with focus at the National level on unemployment rates, and at Local level the discussion is being held on the effects of young unemployed on the current benefits system.

The main obstacles are financial and multi-level cooperation ones. The economic crisis, the restricted state budget, and the lack of ownership and flexibility for the local level to design the measures significantly shrunken the implementation of initiatives envisaged in the area of youth policy, regardless the efforts made in terms of drafting a long-term strategy for Youth Policy for 2010 – 2018, elaborated in 2010.

Association of Local Authorities, Lithuania

⁷ LGA supplementary submission to the 16 – 24 Review

b. Evaluation of the effectiveness of programmes: what are the sustainable solutions?

Evaluation of effectiveness is not easy. Nevertheless, **evidence of what works has demonstrated that coherent, locally-led approaches are best** able to⁸:

- Establish clear and coherent progression routes for young people not going to university, linking skills and experience development to employment opportunities in the local labour market, and ensuring young people are well advised of options available and best suited to them.
- Join-up services around young people with more complex barriers to work and learning, identifying individuals early and targeting early interventions that give them the long-term personalised support they may need to stay engaged in education, training or employment.
- Develop quality relationships with all employers, particularly SMEs, and to offer them a platform to genuinely influence the entirety of the education, skills and employment provision across local labour markets, and which, in return, can create real experience and learning opportunities that benefit all young people.

For example, in **England**, the nationally commissioned Youth Contract has only helped 27 per cent of 16 and 17 year olds into work or learning, it achieved much better outcomes in the few places where it was **devolved to councils**. Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield helped 57 per cent into positive outcomes, and Newcastle and Gateshead have 47 per cent succeeding⁹. In **Iceland**, under the *Liðstyrkur* programme the municipalities fulfilled their obligations, creating 660 jobs that promoted the reintegration of long-term unemployed into the labour market. Additionally, in Hungary, unemployment programmes belong to the National Level, which results in quite centralised programmes with little active involvement and opportunities for design implementation by LRA's. At the same time this has allowed LRAs to work together to produce a report based on the Council of Europe programme, highlighting best practices on youth policy at local level – such reports are important in demonstrating the effectiveness and ability of LRA's.

On the other hand, **national level actions can also have good results on the basis of relatively wide approach**. Thus in **Lithuania**, the projects implemented by the Labour Exchange Office focusing on training the youngster under 29 years old have proved efficient as the young acquire an employment status within 6 months after, varying from 75 to 85 percent depending on projects (e.g. “be active in the labour market”, “Increase of youth employment”, “Promotion of integration into labour market”). It is worthwhile to note that each project covered 2,900-5,900 young people in all regions of the country. In **Iceland**, even though no age aggregated data on youth exist, overall, thousands of people have made agreements with the National Employment Agency under the education programmes and thus moved from unemployment to education and almost 6000 contracts were concluded with the Agency for subsidised job training. The National Employment Agency has found that 60% of those participating in such training remain employed.

Whether it is at national or local and regional level, there is a need to improve the evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures. An important step in this direction is to track the young people and to statistically know where they are, if they have dropped out of school or not, what kind of support they need, monitor their training or education, and so on. The best level to do this is the closest one, so

⁸ For more information, see Hidden Talents II: Re-engaging young people, the local offer, Local Government Association, February 2013

⁹ Data comparing devolved 16/17 Youth Contract with nationally commissioned Youth Contract, Local Government Association, June 2013 http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/4033970/NEWS

the sub-national level and in England, there is a study and even a guide on tracking systems¹⁰. These systems matter as they are linked to the LRA's ability to deliver and improve outcomes for young people and critical to fulfilling the participation of young people in the measures and programmes.

The need for expanded efforts on data collection, monitoring of implementation and research on impact using multiple criteria is also pointed out by a publication from the International Labour Office (ILO)¹¹. This study focuses on youth guarantee measures in particular. The conclusions in terms of challenges and barriers corroborate the ones stressed in the present report, in particular the need for partnership and capacity. As we concluded, ILO draws attention to the fact that evidence on the impact and effectiveness of youth guarantees is rather limited, yet it is required for a better design and implementation of cost-effective measures in the context of budgetary constraints as mentioned above.

Recommendations

- *CEMR promotes the creation of stronger synergies between existing strategies at regional, national and European level, in particular as regards compliance and reporting mechanisms to reduce barriers to engaging and investing local resources effectively;*
- *Relevant monitoring or 'tracking' mechanisms, along with impact assessments need to be ensured and in place from the outset. Although this may be difficult, they are important aspects which can maximise well-working strategies, and provide support to local communities with limited resources and budgets to make wise decisions.*

Evidence of what works has demonstrated that coherent, locally-led approaches are best able to join-up services around young people with more complex barriers to work and learning

Local Government Association, UK

¹⁰ http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/hidden-talents/-/journal_content/56/10180/5558868/ARTICLE

¹¹ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_209468.pdf

Funding opportunities and good examples of collaboration

In terms of funding, **the national government is generally in charge** of EU funding programmes or frameworks. Especially during this time of reduced budgets and increased pressure on local public services, LRA's must use EU Funding possibilities more strategically than ever before; this includes the new funding period 2014-2020, where youth employment measures are prominent, especially within Cohesion Policy Framework thematic objectives 8,9,10 and 11; and the Youth Employment Initiative linked to the European Social Fund directly. Additionally, an effective and cost-saving solution is a **Whole-system reform at national level**. In **England**, a rewiring of work and skills budgets in line with the Whole Place Community Budget pilots would generate estimated annual savings of up to £1.7 billion, through linking skills and apprenticeships provision to local labour market need and reducing fragmentation¹².

Iceland illustrates **good multi-level governance not only in the development and implementation but funding as well**. Indeed, local authorities cooperate with the State in several projects. The *Liðstyrkur* project, launched in 2013, is one example. The aim of the programme is to assist people to become active and participate fully in the labour market, young and old. The focus was on long term unemployed persons. Social partners, local authorities and the State adopted an agreement stipulating that the National Unemployment Fund would provide 2.7 billion ISK (€16 mill.) to fund more than 3000 employment measures meant for those exhausting their right to unemployment benefits between 1 September 2012 and end of year 2013. The parties to the agreement are obliged to provide 2200 employment measures. The general employers will provide 1320 measures (60%), municipalities 660 (30%) and the State 220 (10%).

The **funding scheme has a great impact on possibilities of collaboration** and for the young people. In **England** for instance, the government invests every year around £15 billion spent by eight different national agencies through 35 centrally managed services and schemes, which scatter services across local areas¹³. This fragmented model struggles to coherently target services efficiently. Evidence suggests separate Departmental payment, eligibility and accountability structures actually discourage collaboration on the ground. This impacts first on young people, whose journey through services is increasingly fragmented and disjointed, with poor advice to inform their choices. Then employers, and particularly SMEs, which have no genuine leverage over the entirety of education, skills and employment provision to ensure it addresses their skills needs.

The keys for sustainability and effectiveness seem to be devolution and integrated funding and approaches. For instance, **Essex County Council** has supported over 2,100 young people into an apprenticeship with target growth sectors since 2009. 70 per cent have found sustained employment, compared with 64 per cent nationally. Manchester's City Apprenticeship and Skills Hub will increase the number of apprenticeships for 16-24 year olds by 10 per cent to 6,000 by channelling funding direct to employers, in particular small and medium sized businesses¹⁴.

¹² Whole Place Community Budgets: a review of the potential for aggregation, Ernst and Young / Local Government Association, January 2013

¹³ Hidden Talents I: supporting the most disengaged young people into employment, education and training, Local Government Association, March 2012

¹⁴ Unlocking growth in cities: city deals – wave 1, HMG, July 2012

For some countries, the development of the European Youth Guarantee initiatives will be associated with the EU Financial Framework 2014–2020, like in **Lithuania**. The full implementation of the European Youth Guarantee initiative in 2013 can be difficult given the need to develop additional measures and plan necessary resources. In the **Netherlands**, during this MFF 2007-2014 there has been ESF funding twice. In 2009/2010 there was the so-called action “J” that provided 58 mln funding specifically targeted at youth unemployment. The end of this year municipalities can apply for an additional 25 mln ESF for youth unemployment. The subsidies were allocated via the labour market regions.

Scottish Local Authorities are the lead partners in Local Employability Partnerships; they support young people through the Strategic Skills Pipeline which offers continuous support to beneficiaries across five stages from being at risk of social exclusion to job brokerage and job retention. Local Authorities implement an employers recruitment incentive scheme as part of Youth Employment Scotland funded jointly by the Scottish Government, Local Authorities, COSLA and the European Social Fund (ESF). Six Scottish Councils are using an additional £9m to tackle those local areas with the highest level of youth unemployment.

Recommendations

- *New thinking and cooperation across administrative branches in a new kind of cooperation and commitment from regional and local actors shows to be the best way to support young people’s participation in society, the development of their skills and their employment and education. Multi-sectoral cooperation, as carried out in Finland under the Youth Act and already initiated in areas such as cooperation networks, must continue and be further developed;*
- *Any future European / National funding mechanism needs to consider the existing pressures and fiscal constraints on local resources as regards co-financing requirements and timescales.*

Whatever the source of help to which a young person turns, he or she must be guided towards the service that best fits his or her personal situation, regardless of the administrative branch or the initial contact. For this reason, amongst others, employment and economic development offices, student counsellors, education providers, municipal social and health care services, youth services and business life must work in a close cooperation.

Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities

II/ European Youth Guarantee and the Local Level

The European Youth Guarantee sets out clear guidelines and recommendations for Member States to address, in a comprehensive way, the ongoing youth unemployment crisis. Although the role of local and regional authorities is not specifically laid out in the guarantee, we know that the involvement and implementation by these authorities is crucial in any success of such schemes. It must however be mentioned that in most responses to our questionnaire, it was clear that **existing national and local strategies put in place to fight youth unemployment were deployed rather than merely following the European Youth Guarantee specifications**. This meant that answers related to the implementation and follow up of the European Youth Guarantee remained quite vague.

In a high number of cases, respondents had argued that in their view national and local government was already adhering to the criteria and guidelines of the European Youth Guarantee, and **therefore did not foresee any additional actions** aside from their national, regional or local strategies.

For example, **Denmark** has worked actively in this field for many years – since 2009 the national government had put forward three youth packages to prevent youth unemployment and to keep young people in school for longer. The European Youth Guarantee has therefore not given rise to any change in Danish law and thereby municipal work. The Danish Government continues to implement concrete objectives and recommendations that the Commission brings forward, continuing to apply the country specific recommendations on youth related to the EU2020 Strategy.

In **Lithuania** on the other hand, the European Youth Guarantee has been a catalyst for activating close cooperation between various stakeholders, including partnerships between local institutions, employers, education institutions and NGOS. In particular such partnerships could ensure that training programmes meet the needs of the labour market- something of importance for Lithuania.

A fundamental issue arising from examining this section is that **local and regional authorities have a clear role to play in identifying the skills gap** and linking this to education programmes and training; something the National and European Governments could take up as a priority.

The Youth Guarantee in Norway; ‘Jobs for everyone’

The Youth Guarantee is enforced by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare institution; and at the local level, they are organised as partnerships between the state / regional level and the municipalities. Overall, the Norwegian labour market policy is universal and therefore special target groups are prioritized in accordance with the economic trends and labour market needs.

The Youth guarantee was already introduced in 2009, already publishing great results, with over 89 % of young unemployed people having benefited from the scheme; based on a survey carried out by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare institution.

More information:

<http://nososco-eng.nom-nos.dk/filer/publikationer/Youth%20Unemployment.pdf>

The Youth Guarantee in **Finland**, like in a number of other EU countries, was introduced in the beginning of 2013, and since then LRA's have started their own-initiated measures and action in collaboration with other actors. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities carried out an inquiry in February-March 2013 about the Youth Guarantee. This inquiry showed that in fact municipalities have been working on the issue of youth employment and integration for a number of years, and that certain cases have shown great advancement in the increasing of opportunities for young people. In particular the municipalities provided education for youth, social and health care, youth leisure time services and sport services, and at the same time also supported local third sector organisations in providing youth services. The most important factor seems to be to **create a better co-ordination between different providers and services in order to reach a better and individualized service network for young persons**. Municipalities expressed the fear that the services of public employment service (PES) have not been able to reach all groups of young persons and therefore the supply and choice of educational services has only had a minor effect on youth.

In **Lithuania**, the implementation of this European initiative requires the integration of education, training and social policies ensuring the transition of young people from the education system to the labour market and thus reducing the period of being neither in employment nor in training. **The European Youth Guarantee can therefore be a good catalyst** in this respect.

In many other cases, strategies are already in place at national and local/regional level, which may be in line (or partially) with the European Youth Guarantee. In other words, education and training of the young and their employment is primarily promoted by national measures complemented by EU-level action. It is important to note that this signifies a lot of action being taken at ground level to address youth unemployment, however may not be linked to the European Youth Guarantee ; **this should not be a barrier to accessing European support and funding for initiatives which clearly address the challenges associated with youth unemployment**.

In **Scotland** the Scottish Government's 'Opportunities for All' policy includes a commitment to offer a place in education or training to all 16 to 19 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEETs). While this is only partially in line with the EU Youth Guarantee, the various policies and activities already undertaken jointly by Scottish Government and Local Authorities in partnership with national agencies, social actors, and the private sector aim towards improving the overall employability of young people.

As expressed earlier, the European Youth Guarantee is a relatively new process, with monitoring tools and mechanisms not fully in place. Due to this, respondents remained rather vague and in general detailed information was not available. In a number of cases, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is done through official statistics, and/or through the Ministry of Employment / Labour (depending on the National Ministry set up).

Monitoring youth employment in Lithuania

The Social Map of Lithuania was developed by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The website, developed under the provisions of the Agreement on a Strategic Cooperation between the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and municipalities, is designed to provide and make conclusions about the information on social assistance provided by municipalities; to disseminate good practices in social work; to organise and maintain statistical information on municipalities; to enhance cooperation between state authorities and municipalities in reducing poverty, social exclusion and regional disparities.

More information : <http://www.socialiniszemelapis.lt>

The European Commission proposed a **non-exhaustive list of possible actions to build up partnership**, early intervention and activation, measures for labour market integration, improvement and assessment of the schemes; all to be possibly funded by ESF. This list has proven valuable to a number of local and regional authorities, charged with the task of prioritising youth employment actions in their community.

The European Commission, in its latest Communication 'Working together for Europe's young people- a call for action', also outlined seven areas of priority to be taken up by the Member States. In this respect, local and regional authorities participating in the CEMR work on youth employment were asked to highlight the most pressing issues. All the points published are important elements of a coherent approach to youth employment; and **for local and regional authorities the most pressing issue is to generate training opportunities and create jobs in the local community**. The issues related to vocational education, moving from education to work and increasing training opportunities were particularly highlighted in most cases, as this provides a foundation for future entry and access into the labour market.

Related to this is the support of local businesses and SMEs, to increase employment and training opportunities. Indeed, the most pressing points for the **Netherlands** is moving from education to work and **supporting SMEs** and increasing employment. Those points are related because currently SMEs provide most jobs in the Netherlands.

Traditionally the Netherlands have a system whereby schools and employers/social partners coordinate their curricula; as a result the Social partners have recently received 600 mln for 2013-2015 to fund sectoral plans for labour market reform, in the short term to create employment, but also for sustainable jobs where employees are trained with life-long learning approach. Social partners have to work together with schools but also with municipalities in the labour market regions.

Scottish Local Authorities see the transition from education to work as the key issue in tackling youth unemployment and preventing that young school leavers are at risk of immediately falling into unemployment. Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) play a crucial role in enhancing this transition through supporting work-based learning (Modern Apprenticeships), targeted counselling (Activity Agreements with NEETs) and preventative initiatives (16+ Learning Choices). Many of these actions overlap with the Commission's proposed measures for implementing a Youth Guarantee.

Some Local Authorities have been inspired by the EU's proposal for a youth guarantee and have even considered including a guarantee into their local employability plans in order to strengthen collaboration with local partners.

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Another issue, in some Local Authorities across Europe, is that young people lack employment opportunities in their local communities and move to other parts of the country, and even to other countries, leaving behind a low youth unemployment rate in the local area but increasing the demographic dependency of the remaining local population. This leads us to believe that employment, training and education opportunities for young people in a wider context, where mobility has become a factor in the local demographic patterns.

Recommendations

- *The European Youth Guarantee should address the request for better communication between the different local actors. The result could be a better use of scarce resources in order to support and help the development of young persons;*
- *The European and National level should remain cautious about singling out only the initiatives mirroring the exact specifications of the European Youth Guarantee; many other strategies are implemented and already working well at local community level, and therefore should also be highlighted.*

The EU-Starter: enabling youth engagement into local public services

Aimed at the regions with youth unemployment higher than 10%, the EU-starter initiative gives an inspiration to local and regional authorities who are in need of staff in local public services. The initiatives' main objective is to employ a young person in a local public service for one year, partly funded by the ESF and partly by the employer. The engagement of young people would not replace existing workforce, but rather offer additional services, and offering a higher quality of service to the local population.

More information: <http://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/2719>

III/ Transfer of knowledge and support from European level

Beyond the sub-national and national boundaries, how to provide any young, in any European place, with the same quality of employment and social services? With the same opportunities for education as well as for employment? **The last section of the report highlights the need for good practices exchanges and further support from the European level for a united and richer Europe.**

Transfer of knowledge

Good practices and sharing of good management systems is essential for the development and cohesion between regions and territories. However, during these challenging times, trends show that at national and local level, exchange of good practice is a compromised priority– and that many reach out to the European Level for such support. There are no structured measures to work with European neighbours or further in order to improve or help improve youth employment everywhere. CEMR promotes a united and peaceful development of European territories; to give the same chances for young people, wherever they are, contributes to this objectives.

Great potential lies in spreading good practices and examples of projects. For instance, our **Lithuanian** member stressed their need not only for debate at national level but as well for good practices exchange and debate at EU level.

On the other side, the **Netherlands**, even though no involvement with other countries or regions have been reported, are envisaging EU support to focus on exchanges of best practices. The **Scottish** local authorities are the exception with structured and well-defined actions of networking and sharing best practices mainly within Scotland. At EU level, the Angus Council's Employability Academy¹⁵ has been used during a conference and exhibition in December 2012 for good practices exchanges between local authorities in Europe.

In **England** there has been work done in order to transfer good practice among local authorities of the same country. The LGA and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) has launched a programme of sector-led support to councils to help them improve the way they track and record young people's participation in education or training. This 'How to' guide captures learning of 24 local authorities participating in the project, and includes a 'Planning tool' to support councils seeking to improve their tracking activity¹⁶.

At EU level, a project has been financed in order to facilitate youth employment through the exchange of best practice at the regional level, where 4 regions have been analysed by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) during one year¹⁷.

¹⁵ http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/events/Documents/yotm_exhibition.pdf

¹⁶ See more at: http://www.local.gov.uk/hidden-talents/-/journal_content/56/10180/5558868/ARTICLE#sthash.4hxJQqnn.dpuf

¹⁷ http://www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/MainIssues/Youth/PYE/PYE_Conclusions.pdf

Recommendations

- *Local and regional authorities to be more involved in systematic and regular exchange of good practices with EU partners. The CEMR, as the European umbrella organisation of local and regional authorities, will work together with its members to foster better such exchanges;*
- *Develop guides and good practices tool boxes at European level for inspiration and use at local level;*
- *With the 'European Level' highlighted as an important added value of the EU in the field of youth employment; institutions and decision-makers should work to improve existing platforms of exchange and raise awareness of the importance of sharing good working practices;*

There is urgent need (...) to promote Europe-wide debate on best practices in order to achieve sufficient synergy, assuring suitable, safe and comfortable living in all European regions.

Council of European Municipalities and Regions

Further support envisaged from the European level

Surprisingly, there isn't much support expected from the European level. In general terms, **multi-level governance needs to be reinforced** in order to tackle complex and evolving situations with meaningful collaboration between different levels of governments and with the relevant stakeholders as well.

Prudence is required though as the labour market is already decentralised in some countries and EU wide instruments and programmes should not renew a centralised approach. The necessity to respect the **subsidiarity and proportionality** principles needs to be underlined.

It is crucial to provide local authorities with a certain degree of **flexibility** to take forward their work in tackling youth unemployment and inactivity, while refraining from imposing a certain guarantee with a pre-determined set of targets and measures that is not tailored towards the needs and means of local areas. Indeed, the European level would function best as platform for information exchange and best practice sharing between regions and local areas facing similar challenges.

Programmes also need to be less burdensome. For instance, **Scottish Local Authorities** are currently implementing employers recruitment incentives. They find that ESF compliance and audit requirements place a significant reporting burden on participating businesses and discourage in particular SME's to take part in such programmes. COSLA and Scottish Councils are currently working with Scottish Government to improve the uptake of this scheme.

In addition, support is needed to promote Europe-wide debate on best practices in the EU regarding municipal activities in designing and implementing employment strategies, particularly in the development of local partnerships for employment. There is also a need for support for the methodology and preparation of the Local Employment Strategies and Local Employment Plans.

Recommendations

- *Capacity building programmes need to be reinforced and used for disseminating good practices and ideas of projects;*
- *Regarding the funding issues, European programmes need to be much less burdensome, with focus on the practical outcomes rather than administrative processes.*

Any European and national strategy needs to involve Local Authorities, where appropriate and taking into consideration their competences and capacities, as strategic partners in the development on youth employment strategies in order to ensure the successful implementation of measures and initiatives.

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities



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