



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**SEDEC-VII/007**

**142nd plenary session, 3-5 February 2021**

## **OPINION**

### **Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee**

#### THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- highlights the important role of regional and local authorities in the fields of employment, training, education and youth policies, and suggests that partnerships in all phases of the Youth Guarantee should include local and regional authorities. This is particularly the case regarding the mapping phase and the outreach phase, in which local and regional authorities could be a bridge between different stakeholders such as the social partners, educational institutions, youth organisations, public employment services and the local and regional business sector;
- considers it essential to define clear and precise binding criteria regarding the quality of the Youth Guarantee offers of employment, education, training, and apprenticeships. This could be achieved by assessing the level of match between what is being offered and the participant's profile, by ensuring the offer respects young people's employment and social rights, by guaranteeing the offer will enable sustainable integration into the labour market and by including the quality of offers in the monitoring and data collection processes of the Youth Guarantee;
- supports the idea of promoting skills that are relevant to the job market and agrees with the emphasis on digital skills, managerial skills, entrepreneurship and autonomy and skills relevant for the green transition; insists, however, on the need to promote language skills as a priority so as to increase young people's chances of integrating into the labour market, especially in those regions where language skills are particularly important, such as cross-border regions and regions with a tourism orientated economy, and finds it regrettable that this has not been included in the new proposal;
- recommends enhancing the evaluation of all measures taken under the Youth Guarantee schemes, so that more evidence-based policies and measures can be developed on the basis of what works, where and why, thus ensuring an effective and efficient use of resources.

Rapporteur

Romy Karier (LU/EPP), Member of Clervaux Municipal Council

Reference(s)

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation  
COM(2020) 276 final

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee  
COM(2020) 277 final

## Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee

### I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. welcomes the proposed Council Recommendation on reinforcing the Youth Guarantee which builds on the lessons learned since the adoption of the original Youth Guarantee on 22 April 2013, thus making important improvements to the instrument, such as a new and more coherent structure divided into four distinct phases, a strengthened focus on long-term NEETs and the enhancement of its inclusive elements. The proposal is particularly significant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which is having a disproportionate effect on young people;
2. welcomes the Commission's proposal to widen the age bracket of the Youth Guarantee beneficiaries to include young people aged 25-29, thus reaching out to an increased number of young people. This makes the proposal more consistent with the implementation rules applied in most Member States but also more inclusive, recognising that during the economic downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic unemployment among young people aged 15-29 will continue to rise drastically and they will require support services;<sup>1</sup> highlights that after an offer has been made, or after the four-month period to provide an offer has passed, support should continue to be provided to young people, ensuring that their motivation, skills and abilities can be continually strengthened, especially for more vulnerable young people who may need more long-term support for successful integration in the labour market;
3. highlights the important role of regional and local authorities in the fields of employment, training, education and youth policies, and suggest that partnerships in all phases of the Youth Guarantee should include local and regional authorities. This is particularly the case regarding the mapping phase and the outreach phase, in which local and regional authorities could be a bridge between different stakeholders such as the social partners, educational institutions, youth organisations, public employment services and the local and regional business sector;
4. welcomes the Commission's suggestion that local and regional authorities should be the driving force behind apprenticeships within the local business environment, thus recognising the crucial role they play in fostering economic development through partnerships and acknowledging the previous positions of the Committee of the Regions on this matter<sup>2</sup>. Apprenticeships should be encouraged as an important instrument in the fight against youth unemployment by combining intellectual and technical skills with professional experience. It is therefore important to boost the supply and quality of this type of training, with a particular focus on digital training;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52012XR2562>

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52012AR1186> and <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52013AR0789>

5. local authorities play an important role in raising awareness of the Youth Guarantee among young people, and in engaging in outreach, for example by ensuring visibility of the scheme in Public Employment Services and implementing a partnership approach with all relevant stakeholders that work with young people;
6. underlines the important role that the social, health, employment and youth services of local and regional authorities play in early warning systems, and highlights their ability to track and identify young people at risk of becoming NEETs, while at the same time helping to prevent them from leaving education and training prematurely, especially in those regions that have the highest numbers of early school leavers in the EU;
7. welcomes the Commission's emphasis on outreach measures, especially regarding long-term NEETs, but stresses the importance of recommending the use of technologies that are used by young people themselves as well as measurable objectives, thus incentivising Youth Guarantee providers to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their outreach strategies. Furthermore, believes that the young people that benefit from this scheme should be made aware that it is a European initiative – something that many of the current beneficiaries are not aware of;
8. supports the idea of promoting skills that are relevant to the job market and agrees with the emphasis on digital skills, managerial skills, entrepreneurship and autonomy and skills relevant for the green transition; insists, however, on the need to promote language skills as a priority so as to increase young people's chances of integrating into the labour market, especially in those regions where language skills are particularly important, such as cross-border regions and regions with a tourism orientated economy, and finds it regrettable that this has not been included in the new proposal;
9. considers it essential to define clear and precise binding criteria regarding the quality of the Youth Guarantee offers of employment, education, training, and apprenticeships. This could be achieved by assessing the level of match between what is being offered and the participant's profile, by ensuring the offer respects young people's employment and social rights, by guaranteeing the offer will enable sustainable integration into the labour market and by including the quality of offers in the monitoring and data collection processes of the Youth Guarantee<sup>3</sup>;
10. stresses the importance of promoting labour mobility through the reinforced Youth Guarantee, between Member States and between regions, given the important role that migration plays in shaping labour market opportunities; therefore finds it regrettable that this provision, which existed in the original Youth Guarantee, has not been retained in the new proposal, even though many countries have complemented their Youth Guarantees with regional or international mobility programmes, also advocates linking the Youth Guarantee with quality traineeships and the European Solidarity Corps;

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR17\\_5/SR\\_YOUTH\\_GUARANTEE\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR17_5/SR_YOUTH_GUARANTEE_EN.pdf)

11. agrees with the idea that particular attention should be paid to regional labour market specificities and the barriers faced by young people living in rural, remote, outermost or disadvantaged urban areas and less developed regions, linguistic minority communities during the mapping phase. However, this approach should also entail specific support measures under the reinforced Youth Guarantee in order to ensure that young people living in those regions have access to the same opportunities and services as in any other region;
12. recommends the promotion of social dialogue at regional and local level to create better outcomes for unemployed young people, thus fostering more inclusive economic growth, especially in remote and isolated areas, and to create effective strategies for just transition plans at the local and regional level;
13. finds it regrettable that in the 2021-2027 programming period of the ESF+, the share that will be allocated to support the Youth Guarantee has not been substantially increased despite the critical context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which youth unemployment has already risen sharply across the European Union; therefore insists on the need to significantly increase the financial support for those Member States and regions, especially those experiencing high levels of unemployment and poverty – such as less developed regions, deindustrialised regions, peripheral regions and outermost regions – which, in addition to having high rates of youth unemployment, are currently under severe budgetary constraints, in order to address the unequal effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee across the European Union; regrets that EU funding for youth employment can no longer be targeted on a regional basis through the Youth Employment Initiative and insists that national governments allocate funding for youth employment to regions where it is most needed whilst ensuring that EU funds do not replace national funding for youth employment measures;
14. believes that local and regional authorities play a key role in the outreach and mapping phase of the reinforced Youth Guarantee, and therefore need the appropriate financial resources from both national and EU budgets to be invested in achieving real integration of vulnerable young people in a fast-changing labour market. Also, a strong commitment is needed from the National Governments to involve the local and regional level in the implementation of the policy measures. The European Social Fund + should play a key role in supporting the creation of new quality jobs and in promoting social inclusion and social innovation. However, earmarking sufficient national resources for the implementation of the policy measures under the reinforced Youth Guarantee and synergies with Cohesion Policy in the next MFF are also crucial in order to achieve maximum effectiveness;
15. welcomes the connection between the reinforced Youth Guarantee and the European Pillar of Social Rights. The reinforced Youth Guarantee must ensure universal access to social protection for young participants, to avoid increasing the risk of poverty and precarious work;
16. believes that many LRAs are not fully aware of all the channels EU support for combatting youth unemployment can reach them. Calls therefore on the European Commission, in partnership with the CoR to organise an information session to remedy this situation. The outcome of the exercise could be published on the website of the CoR, for all interested stakeholders to access;

17. considers that traineeships and apprenticeships should primarily provide a learning experience for young people, which can help them to decide on their future career and to develop their skills in order to access permanent employment. Highlights that traineeships and apprenticeships undertaken as part of educational curricula or VET should contain clear learning objectives, quality learning content and professional mentoring. Emphasises that, in addition to these learning criteria, further regulations are required to ensure good working conditions for traineeships and apprenticeships on the open labour market and as part of active labour market policies (ALMPs); highlights that the practice of unpaid ALMP and open labour market traineeships and apprenticeships can lead to the replacement of standard jobs, constitutes a form of exploitation which violates young people's rights and reduces opportunities for young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds; therefore supports the European Parliament in its efforts to enforce fair remuneration and access to social protection for traineeships and apprenticeships on the open labour market and in ALMPs to ensure young people can access quality opportunities;
18. local Youth Guarantee providers could include in their schemes young people who are undertaking short training courses or are working part-time whilst seeking full-time work, in recognition that these young people lack a strong connection to the labour market and would benefit from support and a formal offer under the Youth Guarantee;
19. welcomes the European Commission's emphasis on the need to consider entrepreneurial education, upskilling, reskilling and training, as well the enhancement of business knowledge and skills, as a means of increasing employment opportunities for young people; however, considers that the positive role of social entrepreneurship, and of the social economy more generally, in reducing youth unemployment could also rightfully be acknowledged in the reinforced Youth Guarantee;
20. agrees with the need to distinguish between long-term and short-term NEETs in the new proposal, considering the very disappointing outcome that the Youth Guarantee has delivered for the first group. However, the distinction could be further strengthened in the recommended measures for the four phases of the reinforced Youth Guarantee, with a view to better highlighting the support measures that are specifically aimed at long-term unemployed NEETs;
21. welcomes the European Commission's emphasis on inclusivity. The new proposal is more inclusive than in the current system on issues such as disability, social background and ethnicity, and puts an especial focus on the gender dimension, thus recognising that the gender gap among NEETs has widened in recent years. However, the proposal could be even stronger in its denunciation of other kinds of job market discrimination, such as discrimination based on ethnicity, race, sexual orientation or discrimination against migrants;
22. welcomes the importance given to early intervention in changing the prospects of young people most at risk and suggests that the new proposals could include more precise recommendations and priorities for employment and education services in order to better identify non-registered NEETs, and motivate and encourage them to return to education, employment or training, reskilling and upskilling; underlines the importance of mapping the young population at

regional and local level to identify the characteristics of local young people and the support they require;

23. agrees that the starting point for providing the Youth Guarantee to a young person should be their registration with an employment service, but for those NEETs who are not easily reached and are not likely to register with an employment service, the proposal should consider the possibility of defining other entry points to deliver the Youth Guarantee within the same four-month timeframe. It is equally important to reduce the administrative burden on young job-seekers and to keep the number of contact points to the absolute minimum. For this purpose, the proposal should recommend that online registration through specific Youth Guarantee e-platforms be the standard procedure. Meanwhile, the authorities have to ensure that those groups which are not accessible through digital channels get the appropriate support and efforts should be made to pro-actively register eligible young people for the Youth Guarantee. Awareness of the scheme should also be promoted among young people already in education or training. In the same vein, in order to make it easier for young people to take advantage of what the Youth Guarantee has to offer, education and training personnel should be able to signal to public employment services vulnerable young people who may require additional support to access employment after leaving education, in addition to more automatic information sharing between education services and public employment services to pro-actively refer and register young people leaving education or training to the Youth Guarantee;
24. agrees with the European Commission's recommendations regarding early school-leavers and low-skilled young people, and more specifically with the need to create flexible pathways to re-enter education and training or second chance education programmes which provide learning environments that respond to their specific needs and enable them to obtain the qualifications they do not have; however, insists on the need to put more emphasis on the merits of vocational guidance as a useful means in this regard;
25. considers that the measures taken under the Youth Guarantee scheme should be aimed at boosting skills and competences that address existing skill mismatches in the labour market, particularly in the fields linked to EU digitalisation and the Green Deal. Also recognises the added benefit of improving social skills, such as techniques to improve communication and self-confidence;
26. agrees with the European Commission's recommendations regarding the reduction of non-wage labour costs, such as targeted and well-designed wage and recruitment subsidies, tax credits and disability benefits to encourage employers to create new opportunities for young people or to retain those who are already employed. Start-up incentives, especially in digital technologies sector, are also highly important in the given context, where digitalisation is accelerating, and could therefore be further emphasised in the proposal;
27. recommends making full use of the possibilities of the new programme on social change and innovation in order to gather examples of good practice on Youth Guarantee schemes at national, regional, and local level;

28. recommends enhancing the evaluation of all measures taken under the Youth Guarantee schemes, so that more evidence-based policies and measures can be developed on the basis of what works, where and why, thus ensuring an effective and efficient use of resources;
29. considers that once phase four is reached and an offer has been accepted, the Youth Guarantee should provide guidance and information aimed at facilitating the upskilling and re-skilling of those young people who are most at risk of returning to unemployment. This will also ensure that young people have the possibility to climb the professional ladder, even if they start their career working in low skilled and subordinate positions;
30. considers that the effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee should lead to stable and sustainable jobs. This can also be achieved through strong partnerships, solidarity and coordination between public employment services, which are the main providers of the Youth Guarantee, and all other stakeholders, including local and regional authorities;
31. underlines that, in order to effectively address youth employment in light of the pandemic, the Reinforced Youth Guarantee should be complemented by the prolongation and extension of the temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), by the inclusion of youth employment measures in National Recovery and Resilience Plans, particularly the creation of quality employment opportunities for young people, and by an explicit mention of better social protection coverage for youth and the combatting of precarious youth employment in the upcoming Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights; and warns against policies that seek to promote youth employment by undermining young people's rights to fair remuneration and access to social protection as part of the recovery.

Brussels, 5 February 2021

The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

The Secretary-General  
of the European Committee of the Regions

Petr Bližkovský



## II. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee
<b>Reference document(s)</b>	COM(2020) 276 final COM(2020) 277 final
<b>Legal basis</b>	Article 292 TFEU
<b>Procedural basis</b>	Rule 41(b)(i)
<b>Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter</b>	
<b>Date of Bureau/President's decision</b>	12 October 2020
<b>Commission responsible</b>	SEDEC
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Romy KARIER (LU/EPP)
<b>Analysis</b>	August 2020
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	25 November 2020
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	25 November 2020
<b>Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)</b>	Majority
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	3-5 February 2021
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Erasmus programme for education, training, youth and sport<sup>4</sup></li> <li>– European Solidarity Corps and the New EU Youth Strategy<sup>5</sup></li> <li>– Building a Stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies<sup>6</sup></li> <li>– European cooperation in the youth field<sup>7</sup></li> <li>– Youth employment package<sup>8</sup></li> <li>– Youth on the move<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation</b>	

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<sup>4</sup> COR 3950/2018

<sup>5</sup> COR 3892/2018

<sup>6</sup> COR 3952/2018

<sup>7</sup> COR 4872/2015

<sup>8</sup> COR 789/2013

<sup>9</sup> COR 292/2010