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COVER NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Investing in Youth Employment: Implementation of the Youth Guarantee

Delegations will find attached the BE country fiche..

BELGIUM

1. Conclusions - 2017 multilateral surveillance review of the implementation of the YG

With youth unemployment above EU average, but a NEET rate below it, Belgium has taken a number of concrete initiatives, in some cases embedded in more general strategies, to support young people willing to enter the labour market. One relevant feature is the strengthening of partnerships at multiple levels. Concerns continue to focus on the need to streamline and improve coordination, synergies and reporting between the entities involved in the Youth Guarantee implementation. Better coordination between the Public Employment Service and the educational sector is important in this regard. Efforts should be sustained to improve access to information about Youth Guarantee offers for young people and relevant stakeholders. Recent initiatives on interconnecting data sources are welcomed. Although concrete actions have been undertaken to reach out to non-registered NEETs, the challenge remains to reach out to those furthest away from the labour market. The evaluations planned will help to further improve implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

2. YG monitoring 2016: key data

Highlights

- ❖ On average, three in five (59.3%) of those registered in the Belgian YG scheme at any point during the year had been registered for more than 4 months.
- ❖ Of those leaving the YG in 2016, 47.0% took up an offer within 4 months of registration.
- ❖ On average during 2016, the Belgian YG scheme covered more than seven in ten NEETs aged 15-24 (72.3%).
- ❖ Three in five of those leaving the YG in 2016 (60.2%) were known to be in employment, education or training 6 months later. Moreover, longer-term follow-up data for those leaving the YG in 2015 suggest that these outcomes are sustainable.

Introduction

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

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

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

More information is available in the national YG implementation plan.

1 Quality of data

1.1. Key changes compared to 2015

Following the collaboration initiated in 2016 between the different regional/community PES to ensure that data are provided according to a common methodology designed to comply with the specifications of the YG Indicator Framework, data for 2016 were again coordinated through a single point of contact in the PES of the Brussels region, Actiris. However, data from ADG for 2016 could not be provided.

Completion of follow-up data has been improved. This year, both 12- and 18-month follow-up data were completed for 2016 (T) and 2015 (T-1) whilst previously only 6-month follow-up data was provided.

Technical errors in previous data (derived from an erroneous filter by birthdate) were identified by one provider (Ie Forem) and duly corrected for both the current (2016) and previous (2015) reference years. In addition, a change in the recording of exits by destination has resulted in the proportion with unknown destination being reduced from around 25% to 14%.

Improved completion of data

- All variables for follow-up T provided.

Correction of technical issues:

- 2015 data revised for one provider (Ie Forem) for all variables (errors in the selection of birthdate were fixed).

Other changes:

- Data for one provider (ADG) not available for 2016.
- Change of approach of recording de-registrations that are not positive exits or re-entry to the unemployment register, now included under inactivity.

The missing data for ADG does not have a significant impact in the data, as the proportion of participants from this provider represents less than 1% of the total of YG participants in Belgium¹.

1.2. Data quality 2016

Belgium has provided the majority of data for reference year 2016 in accordance with the definitions of the YG Indicator Framework.

However, since the 2014 data did not cover all regions/communities and the methodology applied differed between providers (with some important divergences from the specifications of the Indicator Framework), comparisons with 2014 are not meaningful.

Note that the YG scheme in the Brussels region also targets young NEETs who have not registered as jobseekers, however the YG monitoring data cover only those who have registered with the PES (Actiris).

¹ 0.7% of entrants and 0.6% of stocks and exits in 2015.

Details of the data provided and any divergence from the definitions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Completion and comparability of direct monitoring data, 2016

Coverage of data	
Providers	Public Employment Services (PES): Actiris, Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB), Le Forem, and for 2015 only Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (ADG).
Participants	Unoccupied registered jobseekers aged 15-24 – i.e. all young registered jobseekers excluding those that are employed or participating in an education/training measure.
Completion of data	
Missing data	Follow-up T-2 (all observation points) – since the methodology for the 2014 data varied between providers it is not currently feasible to provide T-1 follow-up.
Data recording	
Exits by destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Exits to unemployment (VDAB, ADG and FOREM) correspond to jobseekers who did not respect their obligations as jobseeker. They remain registered but are allocated a special status. For the remaining provider (Actiris), de-registration due to failure to comply with jobseeker obligations is recorded as unknown. However, sanctions do not necessarily lead to de-registration, and thus, participants may remain in the YG and not be counted as an exit. – Exits to subsidised employment and subsidised apprenticeships cannot be identified (from all exits to these destinations). – Exits to employment as part of the measure "Doelgroepenkorting/Target group deduction" in Flanders cannot be identified (reported as unknown). – Unknown exits for one provider (Le Forem) are recorded under inactivity. – Proportion of unknown destinations: 14.4%
Follow-up T	– Proportion of unknown situations (6m after exit): 26.3%
Comparability of data	
Definitions	– No known divergences from the specifications of the Indicator Framework.
Across time	– Data for 2014 do not cover all regions/communities (only Le Forem), the methodologies applied differed between regions and there were some important divergences from the specifications of the Indicator Framework.

Source: YG monitoring template (quantitative data).

2 Monitoring results

This section presents the results of YG monitoring on the basis of the [Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee](#). The indicators for direct and follow-up monitoring are based on national administrative data and differences in definitions, institutional practices and the capacity to collect all of the necessary data, particularly in relation to follow-up, may impact on the comparability of data between countries. Readers are recommended to refer to the [Notes about the data](#) in annex to this report.

2.1 Aggregate monitoring: Macroeconomic indicators

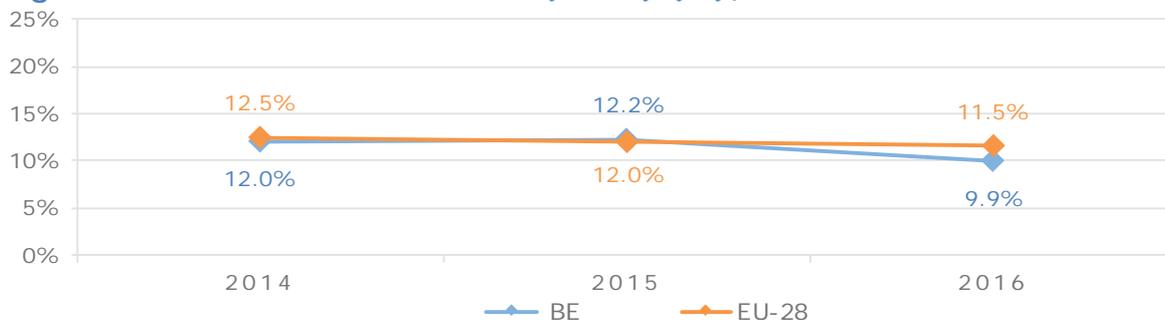
Indicators for aggregate level monitoring of the YG are based on data from the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS) and are intended to monitor the general situation of young people in the EU. The evolution of these indicators through time represents an indirect means of monitoring

the effects of implementing the YG and may also reflect the impact of preventive measures to help young people avoid falling into unemployment or inactivity. The aggregate level indicators are complemented by the direct and follow-up level indicators that monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of YG delivery and help to disentangle the impact of policy measures from general economic developments.

The main indicator for YG monitoring at the aggregate level is the NEET rate for young people aged 15-24 – i.e. the proportion of people aged 15-24 that are not in employment, education or training. In 2016, the NEET rate in Belgium was 9.9%, slightly lower than the EU-28 aggregate result of 11.5%.

Since 2014 - the year first year of implementation of the YG - the NEET rate of young people aged 15-24 in Belgium has overall improved (fallen) by 2.1 percentage points from 12.0% to 9.9% compared to an improvement of just 1.0 pp at EU level (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Main indicator: NEET rate (15-24) (%), 2014-2016



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, data extracted 19 October 2017.

2.2 Direct-monitoring: effectiveness of YG implementation

The main indicator for direct monitoring of the YG shows that, on average in 2016, three in five (59.3%) of those registered in the YG in Belgium at any point during the year had been registered for more than 4 months. This is virtually the same as in 2015 and substantially above the EU average of 49.1% (see Table 3).

The proportion of participants registered in the YG for more than 6 months (39.1%) and more than 12 months (21.5%) were also above the EU averages for 2016 (36.2% and 18.3% respectively, Figure 3), though to a lesser degree. The 2016 results show little change compared to the previous year.

At the same time, the supplementary indicator on positive and timely exits shows that not far short of half (47.0%) of those leaving the YG in 2016 took up an offer within the target period of 4 months (Figure 3), which is slightly better than the EU average (44.5%). The apparent contradiction – i.e. above average (worse) retention implied by the main indicator but (slightly) above average throughput (supplementary indicator) - could be linked to the relatively high coverage of the NEET population in Belgium. Higher coverage is liable to mean that the YG scheme has to deal with more of those further from the labour market, who may need longer periods of support before they are ready to take up an offer. At the same time, the scheme can be reasonably effective at supporting those that are work-ready within the target period.

Table 3: Main indicator: Proportion of young people in the YG preparatory phase beyond the 4-month target, 2016

Still in the YG preparatory phase after 4 months:	2016	2015-2016 change (pp)	EU average Total (15-24)
Total (15-24)	59.3%	-0.7	49.1%
Breakdown by age			
15-19	58.1%	-0.5	46.2%
20-24	59.5%	-0.8	49.3%
Breakdown by gender			
Men	60.0%	-1.1	48.0%
Women	58.3%	-0.5	49.9%

Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database, data extracted 14 November 2017.

Figure 3: YG implementation, direct monitoring indicators, 2016

Main indicator: Proportion of young people in the YG preparatory phase beyond the 4-month target (durations 4,6 and 12 months) (% YG stock)



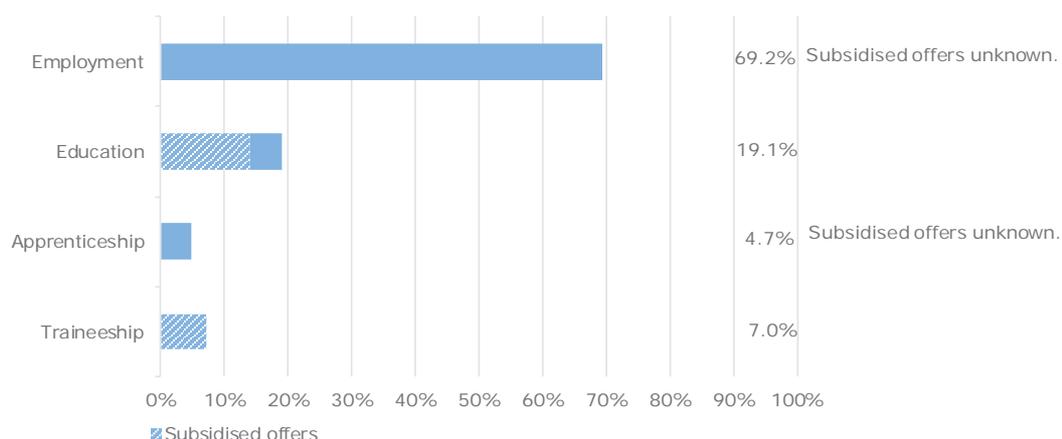
Supplementary indicator: Positive and timely exits from the YG preparatory phase (% exits)



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database, data extracted 14 November 2017.

The large majority of participants (79.1%) that left the YG within the 4-month target period went to positive destinations. Just under 70% of these (69.2%) took up an offer of employment and 19.1% an offer of education. The remainder took up apprenticeship and traineeship offers (4.7% and 7.0% respectively) (see Figure 4). All traineeship offers and close to three quarters of education offers (73.3%) were subsidised. Exits to subsidised employment and apprenticeships cannot be distinguished from unsubsidised exits to these destinations.

Figure 4: Distribution of positive and timely exits by destination (% timely & positive exits), 2016



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database, data extracted 14 November 2017.

2.3 Direct monitoring: coverage of the YG target population

The Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee² aims to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Reaching the entire population, and in particular those that do not come forwards on their own initiative, is one of the key challenges confronting YG providers in all countries.

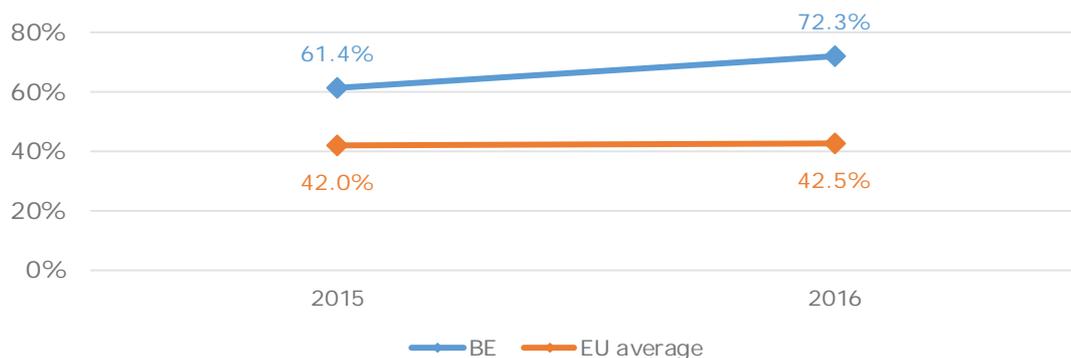
The second supplementary indicator for direct monitoring uses NEET rates and population data published by Eurostat together with the annual average stock of participants in the YG preparatory phase in order to estimate the proportion of the NEET population that is covered by the YG scheme (see Figure 5). Note that the criteria used to delimit the NEET population used in the denominator, which is derived from the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS), may differ from the specific conditions applied in each country to register in the YG, so that the two populations may not fully overlap. In other words, the LFS NEET population is a proxy for, rather than an exact measure of, the YG target population. Consequently, results for this indicator should be considered as the best available estimate of the coverage of YG schemes.

Results show that, on average in 2016, seven out of ten (72.3%) of the NEET population in Belgium was covered by the YG scheme, well above the EU average of 42.5%. The high coverage is at least in part explained by the fact that the Belgian social security system provides incentives for young school-leavers to automatically register with the PES (VDAB, Actiris, Le Forem or ADG) and these same organisations proactively inform school-leavers about the transition between education and work prior to finishing their studies³. The overall result is that relatively few young NEETs are unaccounted for in PES registers. It is worth noting also, that more young people are helped by YG initiatives than reported in the monitoring data (e.g. work with unregistered NEETs in the Brussels region).

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:120:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

³ See "Mobility in Europe", 2013, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13385&langId=en>.

Figure 5: YG participants as a proportion of the NEET population (%), 2016



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database, data extracted 14 November 2017.

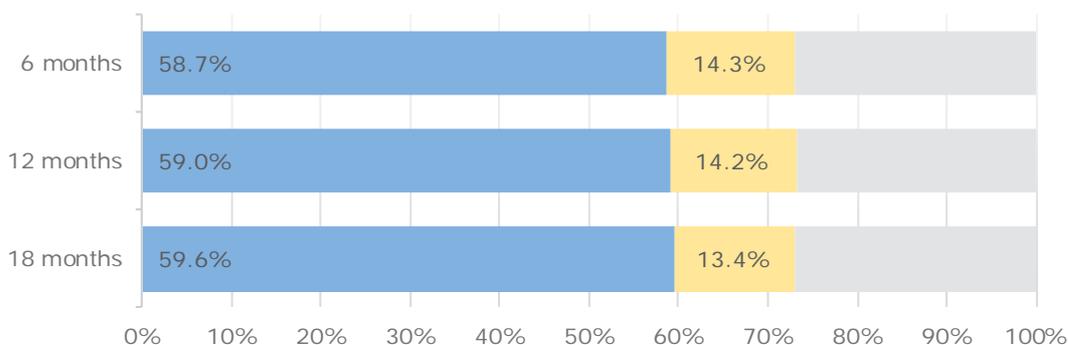
2.4 Follow-up: sustainability of YG outcomes

The main follow-up indicator on the situation of participants after exiting the YG preparatory phase shows that in Belgium, three in five (60.2%) were known to be in a positive situation (i.e. in employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship) 6 months after exiting the YG in 2016 (Figure 6), well above the EU average (48.5%).

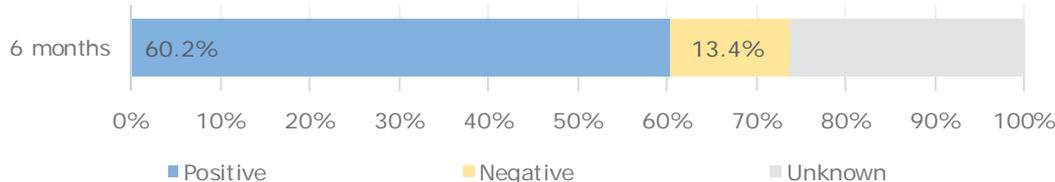
Longer-term follow-up data for 2015 suggest that these positive outcomes are sustainable, as the proportion of participants known to be in a positive situation 12 and 18 months after exit remains around the same level (around 60%), with results again well above the EU averages (48.6% and 50.5% respectively for participants leaving the YG in 2015), though it should be noted that figures in Belgium and elsewhere are understated due to substantial numbers in an unknown situation.

Figure 6: Follow-up main indicator: Situation of young people 6, 12 and 18 months after exiting the YG preparatory phase, 2015-2016

2015 (% exits)



2016 (% exits)



Source: DG EMPL, YG monitoring database, data extracted 14 November 2017.

2.5 Additional results for the 25-29 age-group

The Belgian YG covers only young people aged under 25. Accordingly, Belgium did not provide optional data for the 25-29 age-group.

Annex

Notes about the data

Comparability. Data are compiled on the basis of a common methodology - the [Indicator Framework for Monitoring the Youth Guarantee](#), endorsed by the Employment Committee (EMCO) in May 2015, and the accompanying methodological manual – and are therefore considered broadly comparable between countries. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the data for direct and follow-up monitoring are derived from national administrative registers that are designed to support and monitor specific national systems, which vary in terms of the processes followed and definitions applied and may, therefore, result in some inherent differences between countries. These differences are, however, expected to be relatively minor and more important differences are those that derive from the way in which YG schemes have been implemented and the capacity of countries to provide complete data.

In relation to implementation, the size and composition of the population registered in the YG will initially be different for countries that implemented the YG as a completely new approach and monitored inflows starting from zero, compared to countries that implemented the YG as a reinforcement of existing processes and monitored inflows accumulating with the existing stock. Countries in the former group will tend to have a smaller stock with lower average duration. Differences that result from this artefact of the data are guaranteed to reduce through time, evidence of convergence was apparent already in the 2015 data, and differences continued to decrease in the 2016 data.

The capacity of countries to monitor what happens to young people on leaving the YG impacts on the quality of data on both exits and follow-up but particularly for the latter. Almost half of Member States (15) either provide no follow-up data (8) or do not know the subsequent situation of the majority (at least 2/3) of young people passing through the YG (7 countries).⁴ The problem derives from a lack of capacity to routinely link administrative registers or legal restrictions to do so. The investment needed to link PES registers and other administrative registers (e.g. social security) would have benefits not only for YG monitoring but also for other EU level data collections (e.g. LTU and LMP) as well as providing a base for policy evaluation at national level.

Coverage indicator. The second supplementary indicator for direct monitoring measures the proportion of the NEET population (average across the year) that is registered in the YG preparatory phase (annual average stock). Whilst data for the numerator are derived from administrative data in each country, the only available comparable data on the size of the NEET population that can be used as a denominator derive from the EU Labour Force Survey. This uses a definition of NEETs that is common across countries⁵ but which may vary from the definitions applied in the context of national YG schemes and in the administrative data used to monitor these. Results should thus be interpreted as an estimation, rather than a definitive measurement, of the extent to which YG schemes achieve the objective of reaching all young people that become, or are already, NEET.

EU level data. Figures labelled “**EU-28**” used in aggregate level monitoring are based on aggregates of all NEETs in all Member States and therefore represent weighted averages, which can be significantly influenced by the situation in a small number of large countries. Figures labelled “**EU average**” are unweighted averages of all available country figures. In relation to the destination of exits and follow-up data, the EU averages are liable to be understated due to significant numbers of unknown destinations or subsequent situations in some countries.

⁴ Based on 2016 data for Follow-up T-1 (i.e. data on the situation of participants who left the YG preparatory phase in 2015).

⁵ See [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_and_training_\(NEET\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_and_training_(NEET)).