



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 25 November 2021
(OR. en)

14111/21
ADD 1

SOC 671
EMPL 502
EDUC 384
JEUN 138
ECOFIN 1114

NOTE

From: The Employment Committee
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject: EMCO Review of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee
- Country-specific conclusions

With a view to the Council (EPSCO) on 6 December 2021, delegations will find attached the country-specific conclusions on the Review of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee as transmitted by the Employment Committee (EMCO).

The key messages from EMCO on its Review of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee can be found in document 14111/21.

The data collection for monitoring of Youth Guarantee schemes in 2020 as transmitted by EMCO can be found in document 14111/21 ADD 2.



EMCO Review of the Reinforced Youth Guarantee 18-19 October, 2021

Country Specific Conclusions

BELGIUM

Belgium is well advanced in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee but challenges remain in certain areas, also due to the diversity of the different regions. Prevention is an element that needs to be further developed. The same holds for the mapping of NEETs, despite efforts made heretofore (e.g. the mapping measures in Flanders). A one-stop-shop approach for career guidance and orientation has been implemented. However more tailor-made services need to ameliorate. The network of EPNs is a positive outcome with regard to models of integrated service delivery. Equally, the continued investment in personalized support to the unemployed is welcome.

Regarding the offer, it is noted that many employment programs have been launched. However, better access to vulnerable groups remains a challenge. Efforts at the level of outreach have been taken and the development and assessment of relevant measures remain to be seen. New frameworks in terms of VET programs have been established. However, educational programs need to be better linked with labour market needs. In addition, digital skills are an element that could be strengthened in the delivery of offers. Lastly, the capacities of PES need to be reinforced, particularly in terms of outreach (including better links among services, all relevant actors and the regions). Lastly, in terms of outreach, efforts have been deployed to attract the NEETs to the different regional YG schemes and to establish various partnerships with local stakeholders. The actions of PES could be further reinforced by including better links among services, all relevant actors and the regions.

BULGARIA

Bulgaria has made progress in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Cooperation between different stakeholders has improved through the development of local agreements. Traineeship opportunities and individualised support through youth mediators have been strengthened. The development of an algorithm to be used in the crossing of data could help identify and reach out to inactive NEETs. This would be important because YG coverage remains a challenge in Bulgaria. Prevention is also expected to improve thanks to the renovation of the dedicated framework. Challenges still remain in important areas. Outreach and activation measures need to be strengthened regarding the insufficiency of the coverage of the YG. Skills needs forecasting should be improved, especially since labour and skills shortages are increasing in the labour market. An increased focus on training, including reskilling and upskilling is also needed.

Barriers to entering the labour force, (including socio-economic and ethnical background as well as educational attainment and location) need to be taken into account appropriately in YG policies. The quality of job placements offered through the Youth Guarantee, as well as the quality and labour market relevance of education and training opportunities provided require monitoring. Finally, it is recommended that Bulgaria takes the opportunity of ESF+ and RRF funds to improve YG measures and to carry out an impact assessment, (especially on the adequacy of measures proposed in terms of scope, long-term effectiveness and outreach to vulnerable groups).

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czechia has advanced in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Nonetheless, a number of structural challenges remain, in particular in terms of complying with the reinforced Youth Guarantee. Efforts are still needed to create a universal and sustainable system of delivery for the YG, notably for the most vulnerable youth groups. The measures developed so far are not youth specific, but would represent a good basis for more tailor-made actions.

Prior to the pandemic, significant improvements in youth unemployment levels were registered. However, concerns exist regarding increases in youth unemployment and inactivity among young women; together with an increase in early school leaving brought about by the crisis. In this context, more efforts should be dedicated to prevention, reaching out to and activating NEETs, notably women. While there is a wide range of ALMP measures and tools available for the target group of young job seekers delivered by the PES, the individualised approach needs to be better tailored, in particular when it comes to the provision of training and education offers (including digital skills). Integrated service delivery has not been developed yet.

In the latest ESF call, there was greater focus on ALMP measures for the most vulnerable youth groups. However, a closer coordination of employment and social policies would help tackle their needs, especially those of young women. The implementation of a Reinforced Youth Guarantee – not yet prepared - would also benefit from a closer cooperation between the public employment services, municipalities in charge of social services, civil society organisations and education and training providers.

DENMARK

Denmark continues to display a strong political commitment towards an effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee and has an advanced and well-established system in place. The decentralised and individualised approach remains one of the cornerstones of the program. It ensures the quality and relevance of offers for the individual participants and better alignment with local labour market needs, contributing to timely delivery of offers and low rate of participants re-entering the scheme. However, despite having several well-developed measures in place, the NEET rate remains relatively stable. Concerns remain over the outreach to inactive unregistered NEETS who do not receive any benefits. Furthermore, there is scope to further increase the provision of skills (including digital) for people on the margins of the labour market. The integration of digital skill assessment tools and digital skill provision measures in the Youth Guarantee could be considered.

GERMANY

The implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee in Germany is well advanced and efforts have been made to reinforce the scheme. There was progress in all key elements of the YG implementation. However, challenges remain in rural areas. Further steps would need to be taken to this end.

Regarding outreach, steps have been taken to improve targeting youth. In relation to the models of integrated delivery, it should be noted that Germany effectively operates one-stop-shops. Steps towards the support and improvement of apprenticeships are noted. The Federal Programme Secure Apprenticeships and the “Alliance for initial and further training” are welcome. The planned initiative “National Platform NOW” also has merit. However, it is noted that digital skills need to further develop in terms of service delivery. With regard to the offer, positive developments are the expansion of the Youth Employment Agencies, YouConnect, which support cooperation among social service authorities, including in rural areas. Lastly, the inclusion of migrants and refugees to VET and the German labour market would need to be better addressed.

ESTONIA

Estonia is performing well in terms of the timely delivering of offers to young people. An assessment study of the YG carried out by experts in the spring of 2021, concluded that the Estonian system is effective. It also noted that support measures significantly helped young people enter the labour market and/or remain in the education system. Recent policy developments are expected to further improve the implementation of the YG. Support to young people is being reinforced, while greater attention is put on older NEETs and cross- sectoral cooperation is being improved. The reinforced Youth Guarantee Action Plan is expected to be presented to the Government early 2022. At the same time, the following challenges remain. There is room for improvement in the cooperation between stakeholders, especially in sharing information between institutions. For instance, the scheme “My First Job” needs to provide information to employers and better link with other services. The need to improve skills assessment and validation is underlined. More generally, young people need more intensive support due to the persistence of various barriers, including education underachievement, regional gaps and language.

IRELAND

Ireland is well advanced in implementing the Youth Guarantee with progress made since the last assessment. PES services provide more personalised support and more digital and tailor-made services. The reform of the Further Education and Training sector (FET) systems has made it more labour market relevant. Planned or ongoing reforms are expected to improve further the YG implementation. For instance the new strategy for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy; the new work placement experience programme launched in July 2021 under the RRP; or the extension of the YG intensive engagement up to the age of 29 included. This last measure in particular, planned for the first quarter of 2021, is in line with the new recommendation.

However, challenges remain. There is a need to further reduce the time span for offers to young people, in order to respect the 4 months target. On that point it is to be noted that IE utilises a specific tool, PEX, based on a questionnaire coupled to an algorithm that calculates a probability of exit score. This PEX statistical tool allows scarce resources to be spent more effectively by targeting newly registered jobseekers most in need of early intervention, as they have the highest probability of becoming long-term unemployed. Ireland also plans the reinforcement of PES capacities. Regarding challenges, Ireland still has a relatively high proportion of inactive NEETs who are not covered by the Youth Guarantee and outreach to unregistered NEETs should therefore be improved. Finally, it is recommended that Ireland better integrates youth employment measures in its 2021-2027 ESF+ programme.

GREECE

Greece is advancing with regard to the implementation of YG scheme and efforts have been taken with respect to the provision of quality programs. However, despite efforts, mapping and preventive activities remain a challenge. Partnerships with NGOs are a quite positive development which could help the mapping of and outreach to NEETs. Integrated service delivery still remains to be developed.

The new legal framework with regard to VET presented, is welcome. However further efforts need to be taken with a view to better linking the programs with the labour market. Outreach activities were presented but further progress remains to be seen, especially in targeting various vulnerable groups. The digitization of PES services, including digital campaigns and mobile apps, are positive developments. In terms of the offer, an array of activation programs exists for young unemployed. Focus on women in the design of employment and entrepreneurship programs are further encouraged as means to address the employment gender gap.

SPAIN

The overall design of the new YG+ Strategy for 2021-2027 addresses key policy challenges for Spain. While efforts are being carried out to ensure a full engagement of the Spanish regions in the delivery of the planned measures, its implementation will only be operational once the ESF+ resources are allocated. Providing more information on the allocation of resources per measure would benefit the assessment of its implementation or effectiveness. The renewed ambition to enhance coordination among both public employment services and employers for an improved mapping of target groups and identification of skills in demand are welcome. To that end, the use of big data or vacancies' databases as complementary tools could be useful. The planned increased collaboration with education institutions is essential as a prevention measure to reduce early school leavers.

Spain is advancing in the objective of increasing the penetration of Youth Guarantee among vulnerable groups. The roll out of one-stop-shops, and the reinforcement of counselling and individualised support, may contribute to addressing this challenge. Additional efforts should be made to ensure an even delivery of these measures across the territory. However, experience shows that a high reliance on tools such as hiring incentives or temporary direct job creation in municipalities could hamper effective delivery. Especially, when there is no balanced combination with other instruments. Engaging further with employers would help improve the design of offers and increase their delivery (especially apprenticeships). For the ESF+ programming, it is fundamental that the selection of the implementing bodies and the budget allocation per type of measure is based on their strategic contribution to the objectives of the Plan.

FRANCE

The implementation of YG in France is progressing, at a slower pace however since the last review due to the impact of COVID-19 crisis. An improvement regarding the identification of “invisible” NEETs is noted, nevertheless further steps to enhance identification methods and processes need to continue. Mapping is an element where efforts have been made and measures in this regard could be further enhanced. Preventive activities appear to be comprehensive and are a positive development. Several initiatives are in progress in the field of outreach such as “Accompagnement intensif jeunes” and “1 jeune, 1 solution”. Moreover, efforts have been made in the improvement of digital skills and France intends to develop the quality of educational programs in this regard. In terms of ameliorating the YG scheme, the further integration of the key national YG actors (Pôle Emploi and Missions locales) and the reinforcement of the mapping system and the youth-oriented measures are positive developments. In this regard, synergies and partnerships among all relevant with the YG actors are a positive outcome but could further improve. The delay faced by YG beneficiaries in their access to an offer appears to have worsened during the crisis and should be addressed, notably by strengthening the PES capacity.

CROATIA

Croatia has advanced in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. The mapping of NEETs is gradually developing, while partnerships between PES, education and training institutions, career guidance and youth centres are improving. Several ongoing reforms, especially concerning ALMP and VET system are expected to help overcome some of the challenges faced by Croatia as regards the YG. Measures to improve the mapping and forecasting of skills needs are also planned. Despite these efforts, challenges still remain. Firstly, prevention and outreach measures for inactive NEETs must be improved. Further efforts are required as regards integrated support, identification of skills needs and labour market relevance of education and training. Another important element is that ALMP measures delivered to youth are not specific. Thus, there is a clear need for ALMP measures targeted on youth, especially in regions with above average unemployment rates. Finally, it is recommended that Croatia carries out an assessment of youth guarantee policies in order to take into account lessons learned.

ITALY

Italy's efforts towards implementing the Youth Guarantee are welcome. However, despite positive results in terms of registration and the provision of offers, the overall impact on youth employment is negligible. Youth unemployment remains high and more than 760000 young people in the age cohort 15-29 were unemployed in 2020. In addition, a pronounced divide persists between the south and the north of the country.

There is room for improvement in all the phases of the Reinforced Youth Guarantee. The low coverage rate indicates that the mapping could be further developed. Preventive measures could benefit from an improved cooperation between education institutions and PES, including in terms of information flows. A more structured and coherent approach is needed to make outreach and models of integrated service delivery more effective. There is still a need to reinforce the cooperation and coordination of all levels of governance, as well as between local institutions and stakeholders. At the same time, one-stop-shops would be essential to help NEETs living in rural and remote areas in both Northern and Southern Italy. As far as the offer is concerned, Italy relies on a robust provision of traineeship programs, whose quality is nonetheless a concern. The plan to move away from traineeships and expand the use of apprenticeships is thus welcome.

In the framework of the ESF+, Italy has to invest at least 12.5% of the allocation for youth employment support measures over the 2021-2027 programming period. An effective use of these funds, in combination with other opportunities from different funds, such as the RRF, can support Italy in tackling youth unemployment.

CYPRUS

Cyprus has been facing challenges in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee which are reflected in its relatively high NEET rate (also influenced by the existence of skills mismatches). Prevention activities within the Youth Guarantee delivery are being implemented or planned under the RRP and ESF+ with several outreach activities aiming to raise awareness and participation in the scheme. However, reforms such as setting Youth Guarantee participation as a pre-condition for receiving unemployment benefits and mobile outreach units in rural areas are not yet in place. Progress in mapping young NEETs is expected to have a positive impact on the implementation of the scheme. However, actions to strengthen the Public Employment Service are needed in order to provide a more individualised support and better-targeted and more attractive offers and training opportunities. Overall, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee would benefit from further efforts on prevention and outreach, digital skills training and the development of integrated services. Reforms and investments on these areas are already planned with the help of EU funding and their swift implementation with good results is therefore essential.

LATVIA

In Latvia, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee strongly relies on a couple of comprehensive programs addressing early school leaving and improving outreach to NEETs, which have produced positive outcomes. The extension of these two initiatives until 2023 is therefore a positive development.

However, the signs of deterioration in the condition of young people in the labour market point to a possible increased demand for Youth Guarantee services in the future. Despite having stepped up outreach measures and increased the variety of offers for NEETs, Latvia should still improve the mapping and data exchanges on NEETs especially in rural areas. Equally, it should improve the links between employment and social services, and advance on the one-stop-shop approach.

Although comprehensive emergency support was provided by the government to mitigate the social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, further policy and funding measures targeting youth could help address the gaps in Youth Guarantee delivery; and thus tackle the growing youth unemployment and NEET rates. Latvia has announced plans to expand training programs, intensify support to young people with disabilities and introduce a centralized digital skill assessment tool for the PES clients, including young NEETs. A quick implementation of these plans could overall improve the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

LITHUANIA

LT performs well in terms of YG coverage. It has made progress since the last review two years ago, since the percentage of NEETs who took up an offer within 4 months of registration has considerably increased. Improvements are expected by the adoption of new tools, including a social assistance mapping tool, and the new forms of youth work. VET measures have been scaled up. Prevention measures have also been implemented, notably career counselling and guidance in secondary and tertiary education. Lithuania plans to reinforce the stages of preparation and the delivery of an offer, with various measures to be financed by the RRF, which is very positive. Nevertheless, there are some remaining challenges. Stable numbers of registered inactive NEETs could indicate that outreach measures lack effectiveness. This could be improved with additional efforts to harmonize mapping criteria for vulnerable NEETs. A more efficient skills forecasting and tracking system could help improve the mapping of skills needed and contribute to better preparation phase.

LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg is well advanced in implementing the Youth Guarantee scheme. Since the last review, Luxembourg has made further progress in reinforcing prevention and providing good quality offers, in particular in the apprenticeship and traineeship area. These were achieved despite the issues created by the pandemic and the consequent restriction measures. Luxembourg has also made significant progress in ensuring swift activation. “La Maison de l’Orientation” is an interesting project that can be presented as a model of integrated service delivery. “YouthYourFuture” is also a promising project in the area of digital skills improvement and offer. In the area of outreach, projects have been conducted by ESF+. However, some areas still present challenges such as outreach measures tailored to vulnerable jobseekers, and registration and monitoring, in particular for those aged 25-29.

HUNGARY

The Hungarian Youth Guarantee has been consistently providing offers of adequate quality in a timely manner to those entering the system. However, the NEET rate has been increasing since 2018, with significant differences between regions and genders. Plans to meet the requirements of the reinforced Youth Guarantee are underway, but no details or definite timeline are foreseen. Involving the inactive, who make up to 70% of the NEETs, remains a challenge. The process of providing PES access to administrative data regarding school dropouts could be accelerated. If implemented and followed up regularly the planned introduction of county level outreach plans could contribute to a more effective, coordinated and targeted approach.

Overcoming the Hungarian system's shortcomings in terms of fragmentation should be a priority. Given the high centralisation, more cooperation at a central level could be beneficial. The plan to develop single points of contact for youth with and without disabilities has some potential in terms of integrated service delivery. Strengthening cooperation with social partners would also benefit the system given that it is overly reliant on employment offers. Plans to ensure that the capacity of PES is not a bottleneck in the delivery of the Youth Guarantee, in particular by involving more stakeholders, are steps in the right direction. The development of the Labour Market Forecasting and the Career Tracking Systems seem promising in terms of better identifying skills demands and as a tool for quality assurance. Ensuring and encouraging the choice of trainings that increase long-term employability for those who need it seems to be a challenge. Plans for digital skills assessment and development need to be followed through. Planned reforms related to the website seem promising; however, other communication tools targeted at more disadvantaged groups should be enhanced as well. Hungary will have to invest an appropriate ESF+ share in youth employment, education and training over 2021-27. In synergy with the RRP, Hungary can seize the opportunity to support the reinforcement of the Youth Guarantee and ensure maximum impact of all EU funds.

MALTA

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee scheme in Malta is improving in terms of delivery and the monitoring of offers. Significant steps have been taken in reaching out to and reducing the number of NEETs. As regards outreach, various measures have been undertaken, including individual communications (digital or one-to-one) and awareness campaigns. Actions have also been undertaken in the education system to prevent early school leaving. Important progress has also been made in developing digital skills. The extension of the target group to 25-29 years-olds is also welcome.

Nevertheless, some important challenges still need to be addressed. These primarily concern the multiple barriers to entering the labour market; especially low educational attainment and migrant background. Further actions should be undertaken to address the specific challenges met by the 25-29 years old NEETs, beyond the extension of the target group, as well as the evaluation of existing measures and the long-term impact of training opportunities.

NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is very advanced in the implementation of the Reinforced Youth Guarantee. However, young people have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis leaving many jobless or further away from the labour market. In addition, young people in an already less favourable labour market position and/or vulnerable social situation were hit the hardest; in particular the lower skilled, those with a migrant background and/or with disabilities. These groups faced a higher risk of unemployment during the crisis and may have had less access to skills development opportunities. Therefore, specific attention was paid to these groups during the crisis. Despite the wide variety of support measures available to young people, ensuring effective delivery of the necessary services remains vital, in particular with respect to disadvantaged groups. While the decentralization of the social domain has great potential in reaching vulnerable youth and in offering tailor-made services, it is essential to carefully monitor the developments at local level in order to ensure that good services are provided to young people across the different regions/municipalities; while avoiding differences in the quality of services provided to them. Especially, in a context whereby decentralisation was accompanied by budget cuts leading to more tasks for municipalities. This creates some constraints in terms of managing caseloads and coordinating with other services and could hamper the role of municipal services in providing adequate, sufficiently targeted and individualized support.

AUSTRIA

Austria is very advanced in implementing the reinforced Youth Guarantee. Progress has been made in terms of mapping, outreach, prevention, models of integrated services and offers to young people. Preventative activities in respect to communication actions are noted. Moreover, strategies to prevent drop-outs have been designed and implemented, and the improvement of the VET system is a positive development. One-stop-shops are well functioning and several measures have been taken to provide further improved services to young unemployed. Digital skills for youth are an element that needs to be addressed, despite the measures taken heretofore. With regard to the offer delivery, the “Corona job initiative” and other relevant projects are welcome. The interest in the offer could be improved if the job offers were better linked with the provision of benefits”.

POLAND

Poland continues implementing the Youth Guarantee but limited progress has been made since the last review in 2019. Still, as in 2020, about half of those registered took up an offer within 4 months and more should be done in this respect. In detail, mapping and outreach could be enhanced by the use of modern channels of communication and the involvement of stakeholders. Greater focus should be placed on the harder to reach NEETs and women outside the labour market. Concerning personalized guidance and activation, the individual action plans need to improve further. A greater focus on quality upskilling and reskilling would also be needed. A positive development is the new edition of the YG scheme, the one-stop-shop pilot ESF+ project and the new tool for digital skills assessment. Training delivery based on PES referrals has had an adverse effect on the participation of NEETs in some cases and to this end PES capacities could be enhanced. Finally, it should be noted that some progress has been made in prevention following the 2019 education reform, which aimed to strengthen vocational education. The new monitoring tool launched in 2021 on careers of post-primary school graduates is equally welcome.

PORTUGAL

Portugal continues to perform well in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. The Reinforced National Plan for the Implementation of the YG is a further step forward in addressing the most severe challenges faced by youth, notably labour market integration, skills and qualifications, (especially for the green and digital transitions) and the situation of vulnerable groups.

In parallel, the plan includes strategies and measures to ensure more effective mapping, prevention and outreach. However, there is scope for improvements. In particular, via an update of the National Strategy for Identifying Young NEETs and the National Catalogue of Qualifications. As well as a further enlargement of the Youth Guarantee network to further motivate young people and expand service delivery.

It would also be important that Portugal addresses the limitations for reporting, sharing and linking information from different data sources concerning disadvantaged youth, which prevents an even more effective policy implementation.

The ESF+ thematic concentration requirements will oblige Portugal to invest an appropriate share in youth employment support measures (and at least 12.5% of the ESF+ allocation for the autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira) over the period 2021-27. In synergy with the RRP, Portugal should seize the opportunity to support the reinforcement of the National Plan for the implementation of a Youth Guarantee in order to ensure maximum impact.

Overall, the Reinforcement of the National Plan for the Implementation of a Youth Guarantee is sufficiently ambitious.

ROMANIA

Romania has taken some positive steps forward in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Nevertheless, major challenges remain. In order to effectively deliver adequate services to young people, the role of the PES and its capacity require significant strengthening. A more targeted and integrated approach is essential for the mapping of and interventions for vulnerable young people living in rural, remote or disadvantaged areas. Despite some positive results achieved with the INTESPO project, more emphasis is needed on outreach and developing stronger partnerships among relevant institutions, social partners and civil society. The quality and timeliness of offers, as well as the overall implementation rate of the programme remain a concern. A stronger focus on assessing and enhancing the skills of NEETs, including digital, green, and skills in demand is to be encouraged. Considering the existing challenges and bottlenecks of the programme implementation, Romania should focus on the need to develop comprehensive and targeted measures taking into account the sustainability of all projects under Youth Guarantee both during the next EU Funds programming period and beyond.

SLOVENIA

Slovenia is very advanced in the implementation of the reinforced Youth Guarantee and has introduced measures to address persisting challenges. While activities to raise awareness about the YG schemes have been established, outreach in particular to vulnerable and inactive NEETs remains a challenge. The OECD study, which inter alia encompasses a mapping of NEETs in Slovenia, will provide a good basis for exploring possibilities to extend and diversify outreach to NEETs who are not registered at the PES. Information sharing among different public institutions and civil society organisations on youth at risk or in need of further support should be improved. However, prevention measures have been developed and include inter alia, a clear mechanism for schools to communicate “at-risk cases” to the relevant employment services. Finally, access by YG providers to information about young people’s attendance in secondary school and their educational outcomes should be improved.

Despite some improvements, ensuring swift activation within the 4-month target remains a challenge. In line with the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, support for young jobseekers has improved over the past years. However, Slovenia still devotes relatively few resources to the labour market programmes compared to other OECD countries. The young long-term unemployed people require more attention, in particular young mothers, those with a migrant background and Roma. Further efforts are needed to expand post-placement support for young people in order to prevent dropouts from the YG scheme. There is room to improve the assessment of individual digital skills, though actions have been already planned in this respect. Notably, Slovenia is planning to make use of REACT-EU to upgrade cooperation between employment services and Centres for Social Work and to introduce multi-disciplinary support teams.

SLOVAKIA

With the adoption of a new National Reinforced Youth Guarantee Plan, Slovakia is moving towards a more strategic and systematic approach in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. The progress of the implementation (and possible results of the new plan) should however be carefully monitored.

In light of the challenges Slovakia is facing in terms of unemployment of low-skilled young people, early school leaving and an above EU average NEET rate are taken into consideration, progress in the implementation of the abovementioned Plan is in fact highly needed. Pronounced regional differences persist, with eastern regions lagging behind. Furthermore, particular attention should be paid to women, and the YG should be better tailored to their needs.

While measures such as the integrated delivery of services through one-stop shops are promising, their actual implementation and results presently remain unclear. The approach is currently only a pilot in one of eight regions. The involvement and active role of local authorities, non-governmental organisations and youth associations would be essential for reaching out to the YG target group of youth furthest away from the labour market. In addition, since PES currently remain the sole provider of the YG in Slovakia, their staff should be adequately trained. The high level of recycling in the program also suggests that there is room for improvement in terms of the quality and design of employment offers.

A return to education should be encouraged. Slovakia currently lacks a systematic approach towards second chance education. The Recovery and Resilience Fund and the Lifelong Learning and Counselling Strategy for 2021-2030 should bring tangible improvements in this regard. Close collaboration of employment services with schools and a systematic support to re-entry to education should be developed. The activation of young low skilled people must include an upskilling component and directing them to public work schemes shall be avoided.

FINLAND

Finland performs very well in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. The main actors, (especially the municipal one-stop-shops, the public employment services, the outreach youth workers and the education sector) collaborate well and ensure appropriate mapping, prevention, and integrated service delivery. Moreover, Finland is experimenting with new tools to address COVID-19 challenges, including mapping tools. There are also plans to further improve prevention, outreach and integrated service delivery. The extension of compulsory education from 16 to 18 years old (2021) has the potential to strengthen prevention. Reforms in the area of continuous learning, PES and one-stop-shops, and a greater focus on vulnerable groups, should all act to improve the YG implementation.

Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement in some specific areas. The quality of employment offers could be improved via quality standards. Whereas in general outreach is efficient, a better focus on vulnerable groups (including young people with a migrant background) is needed. Finally, follow-up data are insufficient; partly due to data protection legislation, which hampers possibilities of crossing different sources of data.

SWEDEN

Sweden is very advanced in implementing the Council Recommendation and has a well-established Youth Guarantee scheme. Several of the services of the youth guarantee are offered as part of the regular education system, such as career and study guidance, and digital skills in general. However, it is highly recommended to offer short digital training courses, adapted to the needs of young people with lower digital skills. Sweden also uses a wide variety of sources and measures to reach out to a wider group of young people. However, as there are multiple actors in charge of the target group, there is a risk of uneven support, and a difficulty to get an overview of the situation at the national level. This requires improving efforts to monitor the quality and effectiveness of services' delivery. As Sweden increasingly offers more digital services it is important that vulnerable groups still get the support needed since such services might not be suitable for everyone.