



Brussels  
EMPL.C.3/B.1/IZ

## STRATEGIC DIALOGUE MEETING ON REINFORCING THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

2 MARCH 2020

### MEETING REPORT

**Max Uebe, Head of Unit of EMPL B1 Employment Strategy**, started the meeting by explaining that the Commission plans to put forward a proposal for a Council Recommendation on reinforced Youth Guarantee in Q2 2020. He informed the participants that this Strategic Dialogue forms a part of a series of targeted consultations with the different stakeholders taking place in February and March. The aim is to collect views on how the current Youth Guarantee policy framework could be best improved. Mr Uebe then gave an overview of the Youth Guarantee achievements so far, presented the remaining challenges and possible ideas for the reinforcement of the policy framework.

Smaller discussions took place in four groups based on the background paper and the five questions sent in advance. The main suggestions were then reported back during the plenary session. The Commission informed the participants that the minutes would be circulated for comments and that the best practices/examples, which could support the suggestions for reinforcement, should be sent to:

[EMPL-CIVIL-DIALOGUE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EMPL-CIVIL-DIALOGUE@ec.europa.eu) by 31 March 2020.

#### Group 1

**ERGO (European Roma Grassroots organisations Network)** highlighted that the issue of discrimination against vulnerable groups and the impact of antigypsyism attitudes in the case of Roma is not being addressed enough. This view was also supported by **EU Public Health Alliance, EDF and the EU Volunteer Centre**.

**EUFAMI (supporting families affected by mental ill health)** proposed to map the mechanisms that lead young people to get a job as well as the sequences and patterns in this process.

**EDF (European Disability Forum)** mentioned that discrimination against vulnerable groups, in particular disabled ones, is not sufficiently addressed in the analysis. EDF supports the idea of a one-stop-shop with the purpose of informing young people (without having negative connotations linked to the social welfare centres) on different support and opportunities available (e.g. transport subsidies for vulnerable young people). EDF stressed there is a lack of reasonable accommodation to improve

employability and that in some countries choosing between the YG and the disability allowance discourages many people to apply, since people receiving disability allowance are not eligible to participate in the YG. The YG and the Disability allowance should not be linked to each other as costs linked to living with a disability remain extremely high and the YG fund is not sufficient to cover such costs. EDF also recalled that CSO's could contribute with awareness raising about the YG via their usual channels. Raising the age limit is also important for EDF because often young people with disabilities at the age of 25 they have barely finished their studies, due to the barriers they face in accessing inclusive education. EDF would support increasing this age limit to 30 for persons with disabilities. It is also essential, in general, that no funds are geared towards supporting work placements in settings that further isolate persons with disabilities, such as in residential institutions for persons with disabilities. **European Volunteer Center (CEV)** highlighted the importance of education and the need to support the teachers. They also mentioned the validation issue and the need to improve the way informal learning is validated and skills are documented (through certification for instance).

**Caritas** recalled that CSO's and networks can make connections with businesses and social enterprises and with young people – constant consultation and monitoring whether the experience that young people get through YG is worth-while. The dignity of young workers was underlined. They should not be treated as a cheap work-force but should feel valued and have opportunities for self-development. Social services that coordinate YG in Member States should provide the support that is adequate, accessible, available and affordable. YG should be better promoted because many people in the EU are not aware that it exists. YG should focus not only on finding young people a job but also on cooperation with the employers to provide decent jobs and promote decent employment on the labour market.

To improve the quality of the YG, **Eurocities** suggested to have involve advisory boards at local level and to use social impact bonds. They also support the exchange of good practices between Member States with peer learning.

**RREUSE (social enterprises)** highlighted the importance of the social economy and of matching skills (shortages/circular/green skills). Real needs of employers in the circular economy should be consulted. Opportunities could be sought in the action plan for Social Economy in Europe.

**European Public Health Alliance** stressed that measures to improve healthcare and to reduce health inequality would be welcome.

**EuroHealthNet** highlighted the importance of addressing physical and mental health as part of cross sectoral collaboration between social services when tackling youth unemployment, in particular related to NEETs or long-term unemployed.

**Several organisations** mentioned that there is a need to offer tailored trainings to those involved already (e.g. career-guidance counsellors, PES with specific training related to discrimination) and to further sensitised employers on the needs and capabilities of the more vulnerable. Several participants pointed out the need to work in partnerships with the employers to allow for better skills matching. Better synergies with the EU Solidarity

Corps could be sought. The transparency of data used was also questioned - how to get the data from those who are not reached. Currently, the focus seems to be on the quantity of jobs rather than the quality. It was also stressed that decent jobs should come with decent wages and be based on some standards.

## **Group 2**

The **Youth Forum (YF)** welcomed the renewed emphasis on sub-groups of the NEET population, the integrated approach, on the importance of partnerships (also for service delivery in rural/remote areas), on more preventative actions and the role of non-formal education. The YF also welcomed the extension of the age range. On funding, the YF stated that the current ESF+ proposal would provide less than the current programming period. While it is useful to focus on digital or green skills, we should not lose focus on existing challenges such as the vulnerable NEET. The YF reminded that in recent years cuts in benefits have sometimes hampered the implementation of the YG. On the quality, the YF warned against low-paid jobs offered in many Member States and the absence of provisions on pay in the Quality Framework for Traineeships, the lack of labour market relevance of some trainings and problems in access to social protection. The quality and availability of apprenticeships need to improve across Europe. Thus, the YF continues to advocate for a quality framework for YG offers.

The **European Social Network (ESN)** pointed out that young people in care are at a particular risk of becoming NEETs. When they turn 18 years, in many countries, those leaving care receive little or no support but there are some good practices. Thus, it is important to provide career counselling, and guidance and training on self-skills, CV writing, coaching etc. *before* these young people leave care. In rural/remote areas, mobile teams can be a good solution for delivering services to all young people. Quality is closely linked to the adequate provision of social services, particularly in the case of young people in care and those who live in segregated poor communities such as Roma.

**Save the Children** stressed the need to consider the specificities of young people with a migrant background and young migrants lacking legal status.

For the **European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP)** young people with health conditions are at a particular risk of exclusion. To tackle the issues in rural and remote areas, EMSP highlighted the potential of distance learning and public-private partnerships.

The **European Blind Union (EBU)** mentioned the importance of integrated service delivery and partnerships with all stakeholders, including organisations of people with disabilities. EBU stressed that young people often lack information on the measures available and, in the case of young people with disabilities, it is particularly important to make this information easily available to them (e.g. accessible websites). People with disabilities can benefit from pre-employment training (e.g. confidence building), identification of employers willing to hire people with disabilities and compensation measures (e.g. hiring subsidies), workplace adaptation subsidies and specialised on-the-job mentoring. Help for transportation may be crucial for employability in rural/remote

areas. EBU could potentially help in providing training for employers on how to integrate people with disabilities in the workplace.

**Eurocarers** indicated that young people with caring responsibilities are sometimes not easy to identify and thus to help. They need flexibility to be able to benefit from the different measures but, once given the relevant support, young carers develop better coping skills and self-esteem which in turn makes them more resilient, empathetic, mature than other young adults. They would definitely benefit from a more integrated approach which sees co-operation with other services and sectors, and the implementation of all 20 principles of the European Pillar for Social Rights. Eurocarers could provide examples on training to be offered to the employers, as tools and support that have been found to work for young carers may also work for other at-risk groups.

The **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** stated that the 2013 Council Recommendation is still quite valid but that there is still room to improve funding, the quality of the offers (with more stakeholder involvement) and, in particular, to increase the start-up support and the number of entrepreneurship offers. This could be particularly important for rural/remote areas.

**Eurodiaconia** recalled the role of Christian-based organisations and the importance of the intercultural approach in addressing youth unemployment and inactivity. Eurodiaconia warned that reduced funding for social issues makes it more difficult to implement the YG.

### **Group 3**

**ENSA/ELISAN** highlighted that the current Youth Guarantee is not suitable for the more vulnerable youth such as those coming out of care given that these individuals need additional support. It is important to change the mindsets of the different stakeholders (e.g. employers) and to raise awareness that people with disabilities are able to acquire many of the transversal skills.

**Autism-Europe** stressed the importance of a truly individualised approach when dealing with the people with disabilities given that the barriers to labour market integration differ significantly and the need for offering more flexible curricula.

**European Union of the Deaf** raised the issue of coordination of support for the people with disabilities (e.g. who is responsible for ensuring accessibility and who should cover the different adaptation costs). This was echoed by **International Federation for Spina Bifida** with regards to provision of reasonable accommodation and personal assistants.

**ENSIE** highlighted the importance of social enterprises in terms of providing upskilling opportunities for the most vulnerable in local contexts as well as their capacity to raise awareness on available tools/support. However, to ensure successful labour market integration, informal learning needs to be validated.

**Dynamo International** emphasized that when working with young migrants and the more vulnerable, it is essential to build trust and to have an individualised and flexible approach.

In order to support the implementation, the group proposed that civil society organisations help raise awareness on particular issues and collect best practices. Civil society organisations should be consulted when designing policies and offers and could be part of advisory Boards. They could also help with capacity building.

#### **Group 4**

**Don Bosco International** highlighted the diversity of the different NEET categories and the need to set priorities while adopting differentiated approaches. Long-term unemployment among young people should be addressed. Member States who focus on the disengaged could be rewarded (e.g. through earmarked funding). Partnerships with VET centres and companies in rural areas could be strengthened. Civil society organisations could help with the outreach and delivery of integrated services.

**COFACE Families Europe** stressed the specific needs of young people with disabilities and that the focus should be on new jobs and sectors with shortages. In rural areas, the YG could be better linked to the European Green Deal and build on opportunities arising from the transition to carbon-neutral and energy efficient economies. Overall, the EU should offer the framework (a long-term vision, trends in skill needs, etc.) and the Member States should define the way to address national and local issues. The Social Scoreboard and the European Semester give the Commission tools to address national issues. National and local level partnerships, which should include the social partners, are in a better position to identify barriers as well as to design measures that are suitable for specific target groups. The communication on results needs to be improved.

In **FEANTSA's** opinion, there is a risk that specific vulnerable groups and NEETs with complex needs are not reached if the Youth Guarantee continues to target all NEETs. Furthermore, given the current funding, it is essential to focus on those most in need. In the case of young homeless (a fast growing group), many other social issues need to be addressed before they are ready for the labour market. Prevention and focus on early school leaving are important as these are indicators of potential homelessness. Furthermore, there is a need to focus on basic skills. To create opportunities in the rural areas, FEANTSA proposed to learn from repopulation programmes (e.g. in Galicia) and to promote teleworking possibilities. FEANTSA proposed to mobilise the social economy to better implement the YG. Civil society organisations could contribute to outreach and be involved in peer reviews (e.g. on vulnerable groups).

**Eurochild** is in favour of better monitoring and benchmarking, as well as of a life-cycle approach starting from early intervention (linking to Child Guarantee, prevention of early school leaving, etc.). To create opportunities in the rural areas, cohesion policy funds are crucial and certain areas or target groups should be prioritised.

**PICUM** (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants) raised the issue of young people not having access to (vocational, non-mandatory) education and

training, services or benefits in several countries because of their residence status; either because of the country's legal framework, or because they are excluded for funding reasons. It would therefore be highly relevant if future funding implementing the YG would support apprenticeships, traineeships and further education for young people, regardless of their residence status. The importance of skills recognition and diplomas obtained in third countries was highlighted. Also, it will be necessary to ensure support to single parents if the age bracket is extended to 29. It is important to ensure that the YG is aligned with other EU policies, including the upcoming Integration and Inclusion Action Plan and the comprehensive child rights strategy (re. under-age youth), and connect with the Child Guarantee (and the thinking behind it).

**ATD Fourth World** proposed to let Member States choose which vulnerable groups they focus on and to monitor results on this basis. The situation of young people is quite worrying in many urban neighbourhoods (there is not necessarily a rural-urban issue only) with the quality of education and training being so poor that diplomas have no value. Therefore, youth services and infrastructures should be reinforced in these areas. There needs to be a guarantee of employment at the end of the YG programmes. ATD Fourth World gave an example of "production schools" i.e. bridging schools which provide holistic and tailored help for vulnerable groups. People working with the young disadvantaged should be trained to better understand their behaviour and needs. Some administrative practices in Member States can create obstacles for young people's participation (e.g. requirement of a bank account or birth certificate) in programmes. Civil society organisations could help creating collective spaces for young people. The EU should communicate better on the YG (through media, social media, campaigns etc.).

### **Proposals to the Plenary:**

The more vulnerable need additional support to what is currently offered as a part of the Youth Guarantee. People with disabilities require a truly individualised approach as each type of disability is characterised by different barriers towards labour market integration. To better support employability of young people in vulnerable situation, it is important to raise awareness about discrimination issues (e.g. via young ambassadors) and the issues linked to disability (e.g. reasonable accommodation provision, coordination of support). Also, it is essential to change the mind-sets and to demonstrate that people with disabilities can learn transversal and soft skills.

For the most vulnerable, clear access points in the form of one-stop shops, outreach and partnerships between different stakeholders are essential. With regard to urban-rural divide, access to services and their quality is not only an issue in rural areas but also in some poor urban areas. New opportunities might be created with the digital and green transitions, especially in rural areas. While it is positive that the proposal focuses on green and digital transitions, it should not come at the cost of quality and coverage. Quality of offers could be improved by ensuring an individual approach, integrated service delivery and decent levels of remuneration.

Social enterprises provide valuable upskilling opportunities in local contexts and can help raise awareness on available tools/support. To provide true value added in terms of

labour market integration, it is important that informal learning is subsequently validated. Entrepreneurship/self-employment and apprenticeships need to play a bigger role in the YG.

Civil society organisations could contribute to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee by being consulted when it comes to designing measures on and by being part of local advisory boards, but also by providing trainings to counsellors, reaching out to the most vulnerable or providing social service themselves. They also play a role in raising awareness, monitoring and providing feedback on the implementation on the ground. The Commission needs to continue applying political pressure, in addition to soft laws, continue pushing for more visibility and inclusion (e.g. invest in testimonials with vulnerable people as ambassadors), and ensure that the proposal is in line with other relevant policies (i.e. Green Skills agenda, the Circular Economy Action Plan<sup>1</sup> and the European Pillar of Social Rights, Post 2020 EU Roma Framework). It is important that enough funds are earmarked under the ESF+ and that data collection is improved, including for vulnerable groups. The Commission could also set standards (indicators) to ensure these jobs are decent opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, New Circular Economy Action Plan, 5) Making circularity work for people, regions and cities, available [here](#)