

Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

Estonia

The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) describes activities planned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and by the Ministry of Education and Research, describes roles of different organisations related to Youth Guarantee implementation, provides information about implementation timetable and assessment of the results.

The aim of the Youth Guarantee is to ensure that young people under the age of 25 receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

YGIP follows the thematic building blocks of the EU Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee and the form provided by the European Commission.

1. Context/Rationale

Young people have always been at a somewhat weaker position on the labour market than other age groups. The recent economic recession of 2008-2010 increased the problem of high youth unemployment, both in Estonia and elsewhere in the European Union. As a result of the recession, the first to lose their jobs were the young people and people with lower competitiveness on the labour market. The unemployment rate of young people (aged 15-24) rose from the 12% of 2008 to 33% by 2010. At the same time, the level of youth employment fell from the 36% of 2008 to 25% by 2010.

In addition to youth unemployment, the proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training, or are not serving time in the army (the so-called NEET youth)¹, increased in Europe during the recession. The NEET youth are young people who are not in employment or education, nor have participated at professional trainings during the past four weeks at the time of the Estonian Labour Force Survey. NEET youth also includes those inactive young people who, at the time of the Estonian Labour Force Survey, were excluded from the labour market due to illness or injury; were on maternity leave; took care of children or other family members; or had lost any hope to find a job. The share of NEET youth rose drastically in 2009, both in Estonia and in the EU. In 2012, the NEET youth percentage (age group 15-24) was 12.5% in Estonia and 13.2% across the EU. In comparison with other EU countries in regard to the NEET youth percentage in 2012, Estonia's position was amongst the average. The highest percentage of NEET youth was in Bulgaria and Italy, the lowest in the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

Even though the position of young people at the labour market has somewhat improved since 2011 (the employment rate of youth was 31.8%, and unemployment rate correspondingly 18.7% in 2013), youth employment is still lower and unemployment rates higher than before

¹ "Not in employment, education or training". The principles of defining the NEET youth are based on the international Labour Force Survey (LFS) methodology, guaranteeing that the data of different countries is comparable.

the recession. The high unemployment rate of youth continues to be a serious issue for concern, as young people with little or no **work experience** are more vulnerable when entering the labour market, and can, in the case of slow employment growth, stay excluded from the labour market for years. The success of young people on the labour market depends on the quality of their studies, acquired level of education and skills. One of the main reasons for high youth unemployment might be inadequate preparation for entering and staying at the labour market.

In 2012, 10.5% of all Estonian young people (aged 18-24) had acquired only the lowest level of education (basic education or lower) and did not continue their studies. Level of education is one of the main factors increasing the risk of unemployment. The unemployment rate of youth with basic education or lower was three times higher in 2012 than that of young people with the highest educational level (32.6% and 10.4%, correspondingly). In addition to the possibility that the insufficient education of young people might hinder their competitiveness on the labour market, an important issue of concern is insufficient work experience. In 2012, nearly half (49%) of unemployed young people lacked previous work experience. Thus, it is important that the young people are provided more support when entering the labour market and prepared more than so far for coping at the labour market.

1.1 Activities Preventing Youth Unemployment

Measures supporting the preparation of young people for working life and coping on the labour market have been targeted to: 1) improving the quality of education, supporting the successful study experience and bringing those who have dropped out back to education; 2) improving the skills and knowledge of young people through youth work; 3) systematic development of career services; 4) offering labour market services to unemployed young people.

1.1.1 Formal Education

The majority of Estonian young people aged 7-26 are studying. Data shows that after acquiring the compulsory basic education, 8,127 students continued studies in upper secondary education; 5,623 (after basic education) and 5,721 (following upper secondary school) in vocational schools in the academic year of 2012/2013. 303 young people started acquiring vocational education that does not presuppose primary education. The vocational education sphere has also started apprenticeship trainings, and 421 students participated in 2012/2013. In higher education, 6,995 young people began their studies in 2012/2013 in nationally subsidized university vacancies (2,807 of whom started acquiring vocational higher education).

In order to support education acquisition and to prevent dropping out, the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act guarantees educational support services to all students, enabling them to get psychological counselling, speech therapy and study counselling. Linking vocational education and vocational higher education to professional experience, concentrating on professional preparation and familiarizing oneself with the future working life is also of importance.

1.1.2 Youth work

Youth work contributes to the development of young people and helps to acquire knowledge and life skills. In preparation for working life, methods increasing young people's contact with working life and developing their social skills are of utmost importance.

Each year, more than 4,000 young people aged 13-26 have the possibility to participate at work camps for youth, thus acquiring practical work experience and get training related to labour legislation. In 2012/2013, over 53,000 young people aged 7-26 participated at the activities of hobby schools, offering development possibilities to match their different interests.

During 2007-2013, support from EU funds helped to increase the efficiency of local youth work institutions at solving young people problems and the possibilities of young people to acquaint themselves with working life. The website Stardiplats ("Startline" www.stardiplats.ee) has been set up, helping young people to describe the acquired knowledge and skills to employers.

To develop social skills, young people can volunteer in the activities of youth organizations. In addition to youth work in Estonia, each year several dozens of young people have the possibility to work at youth work organizations outside Estonia via European Voluntary Service.

1.1.3 Career Services

Career services (career information, individual and group counselling) enable young people to make informed career choices and increase their readiness for active long-term participation at the labour market. Across all Estonian counties, 17 information and counselling centres offer free youth-targeted career services. The goal of these services is to guarantee that young people have access to timely and appropriate information regarding education and labour market, and to support young people at self-exploration and decision-making to develop their skills. The primary target group of career services are senior students of basic schools, upper secondary schools and vocational schools. In 2012, young people from this target group received individual counselling on 8,696 times, and 28,195 young people participated at group counselling. In 2012, the information and counselling centres had 8,936 direct contacts with young people, and 37,570 contacts via career information lectures, career days and fairs. Career info is also accessible online in the Rajaleidja portal ("Pathfinder", www.rajaleidja.ee). Students can get career-related advice and employment exchange services also from the information portal Tudengiveeb ("Student web", www.tudengiveeb.ee) that connects Estonian higher education institutions and employers.

1.1.4 Labour Market Services

Young people from the age of 16 can register as unemployed in the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (Eesti Töötukassa). The unemployed youth are eligible active labour market services to unemployment insurance premium or unemployment benefits. The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund offers twenty labour market services. Unemployed young

people get labour market services based on individual action plans. The individual job search plan describes the knowledge, skills and experience of the job seeker, and specifies the necessary activities and timeline for finding a job. The unemployed young people are offered personalized labour market services to support their job search.

In 2012, 40.7% of all unemployed aged 15-24 registered in The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund in order to find a job. The young people entered active labour market services 12,043 times. Most frequently used service was work-related training (3,880 entries), followed by career counselling (3,785 entries), job search workshop (1,973 entries), job practice (811 entries) and work clubs (344 entries). 538 employers of young people received wage subsidies. Young people can also benefit from labour market services like work trial, work practice, business start-up subsidy, mentoring for start-ups, psychological and dept counselling, voluntary work, communication support at interviews, care allowance, public work, working with support person and other individual solutions.

2. Implementing the Youth Guarantee at national level

In addition to the existing measures preventing youth unemployment, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs have outlined measures for the following ESF period (2014-2020) to prevent and reduce youth unemployment. The additional measures are planned to strengthen the concurrence of different exiting measures and to focus on helping weaker target groups.

The Youth Guarantee is supported by national strategies and development plans. The Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 and Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 contain several goals and activities supporting the Youth Guarantee. The Youth Field Development Plan aims to: 1) increase opportunities for the development of creativity, initiative and joint activity of young people; 2) increase the involvement of young people and improve their employability; 3) support for the active involvement of young people in the community and decision-making; 4) ensuring the development of high-quality youth policy and youth work. The Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 contains several principles and objectives that help youth to transfer from school to employment (guaranteeing the accessibility of high-quality education corresponding to the needs of the labour market; enhancing training provision; offering career information and counselling services).

2.1 Formulation of the Estonian Youth Guarantee

Following the Council Recommendation of April 2013, the Youth Guarantee guarantees services, which help young people up to the age of 25 acquire a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

2.2 Partnership approaches

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research are responsible for implementing the Youth Guarantee. The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for coordinating partnerships on different levels (incl. cross-sectorial), and communication with the European Commission about questions related to the Youth Guarantee implementation. To guarantee successful partnerships, the Ministry of Social Affairs forms a working group which involves relevant parties, coordinates Youth Guarantee-related partnerships and monitors implementation of the plan. The working group enhances cooperation between specialists and representatives of different interest groups related to the Youth Guarantee implementation. External partners and experts (who do not participate constantly in working group) shall also be invited to the working group as the needed.

Table 2.2: Key organisations that will support and deliver Youth Guarantee scheme

Name of Organization	Type of Organization	Scope	Role at Implementing the Youth Guarantee
Ministry of Social Affairs	state authority	national	Formulates labour market politics. Coordinates and takes responsibility for the planning and implementation of Youth Guarantee activities.
Ministry of Education and Research	state authority	national	Formulates educational and youth policies. Is responsible for developing and implementing the Youth Guarantee activities that are in the Ministry's sphere of activity.
Estonian National Youth Council	NGO	national	Represents youth and forwards their opinions/attitudes.
Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund	legal person in public law	national	Offers labour market services and benefits.
Estonian Youth Work Centre	institution governed by the Ministry of Education and Research	national	Directs and organizes youth work in the framework of national youth policy.
Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres	NGO	national	Offer youth work services on the local government level.
The Labour Inspectorate of Estonia	institution governed by the Ministry of Social Affairs	national	Enhances the quality of labour sphere via supervision and public awareness raising.
Estonian Employers' Confederation	NGO	national	Represents entrepreneurship and employers.
National forum for career and study counselling services	Foundation Innove working group	national	Systematically develops career services and regional cooperation.

2.3 Early intervention and activation

In addition to existing measures preventing youth unemployment (incl. formal education, youth work and career services), complementary measures have been planned from the European Social Fund 2014-2020 resources. The preventive activities mostly aim to raise young people's awareness about working life, and to launch and develop supportive measures targeted to NEET youth. To guarantee the effectiveness of preventive measures, resources are also be allocated to increase knowledge and understand the situation of NEET youth.

Table 2.3: Key initiatives to ensure early intervention and activation

Name of Activity	Objectives	Target Group	Responsible Organization and Partners	Implementation Time Scale	Cost ²
1) PES workshops introducing labour market and working life	Raising the awareness of young people about labour market, preparation for planning a career or looking for a job, and what are the possibilities to get labour market related help, if such a need arises.	Students from grades 8-12	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund	2015-2010	1.18 million euros
2) Supporting young people at entering the labour market, and coping there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preventing exclusion of young people - Increasing young people's awareness about working life and supporting entrepreneurship of young people via youth work; - Cooperation with employers to take the skills and experience of young people acquired in youth work into better consideration. 	Young people aged 7-26	Ministry of Education and Research	2015-2020	8,71 million euros
3) Supportive measures for NEET youth that help to bring them back to education and/or the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing knowledge to understand the situation of NEET youth better; - Supporting NEET youth return to education or entry into the labour market; - Offering individual support programmes for NEET youth in the difficult situation. 	NEET youth aged 15-26	Ministry of Education and Research	2015-2020	7.79 million euros

² For the period 2015-2020

2.4 Supportive measures for labour market integration

In addition to existing labour market measures, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund will start to offer the **first job measure**. The first job measure is targeted at young people with little or no work experience, and to help young people without specialized training to find a job. Following the recession, it is important to help young people enter the labour market by offering them their first jobs. The service includes wage subsidy paid to the employer (up to 50% of the salary during the first 12 months of employment) and reimbursing employer's training costs which are made during the first two years of employment.

In cooperation with the open youth centres, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund also continues to offer mobile counselling to young people and communicates “*work shadow*” day possibilities to young people registered as unemployed, and organizes youth-targeted fairs for introducing seasonal positions and apprenticeship positions.

Table 2.4: Labour Market Measure „*My First Job*“

Name of Activity	Objectives	Target Group	Scope	Responsible Organization and Partners	Implementation Scale	Time	Cost ³
Service “My First Job“	Decreasing youth unemployment by helping young people with little or no work experience and no specialised training into the labour market.	Young people aged 17-29 and registered as unemployed, who have little or no work experience and no specialised training (i.e. have basic, secondary, or upper secondary education), and who have been registered as unemployed at the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund for at least 4 months.	national	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund	2015-2020		18.9 million euros

³ For the period 2015-2020

3. Assessment and continuous improvement of schemes

Youth Guarantee activities shall begin in 2015. The more specific objectives and indicators shall be set within ESF programmes.

Table 3.1: Assessments of the Activities

Name of Activity	Expected Change / Result	What Means are Used to Measure Results	Information Source / Planned Evaluations
1) Workshops introducing the labour market for young people	1,676 workshops held.	Workshops' registration data in the Unemployment Insurance Fund database.	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund monitoring data.
2) Supporting the entry of young people to the labour market, and coping there	70% of participants (aged 15-26) in services have acquired knowledge and skills raising their employment-readiness.	Sampling survey is conducted among the participants of services.	Sampling survey of participants.
3) Beginning supportive measures for the NEET youth, supporting the return of these young people to education and/or successful entry to the labour market	55% of NEET youth (aged 15-26) who participated at the supportive measures are, in 6 months following the activities, no longer in the NEET youth status.	Analysing data in the Estonian Education Information System and registers of the Estonian Tax and Customs Board. Survey of participants at the supportive measures targeted to the NEET youth, twice during the period.	Data in the registers of the Estonian Education Information System and the Estonian Tax and Customs Board. Survey of participants.
4) Service "My First Job"	70% of participants are in employment 6 months after the service.	Data from the Estonian Tax and Customs Board about receiving a salary.	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund monitoring data.