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# The Youth Guarantee

Best Practices in Supporting Young NEETs from  
Vulnerable Groups among EU Countries

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## Introduction

Youth Guarantee is the most comprehensive mechanism at European level which was launched in 2013 with the aim of supporting young people not in education, employment, nor training (NEETs). Member States applied their own mechanisms to implement the program, taking into account the specific target groups and their needs at national level.

There is scarce knowledge with respect to measures and practices that proved efficient in implementing Youth Guarantee programs in the European Union six years after the launch of the program.

This study<sup>1</sup> maps best practice cases under the umbrella of Youth Guarantee program that proved efficient in implementing specific measures that target vulnerable groups, including the Roma community. We refer to programs concerning education and vocational education, training, apprenticeship, job opportunities, but also fostering social inclusion or psycho-pedagogical support.

Outreach to young Roma and the most disadvantaged groups has proved to be difficult and, above all, the field interactions in all the countries part of this study revealed a limited capacity to facilitate and support the integration on the labor market of these young NEETs. The successful stories require both inter-institutional efforts and well set up individual case management programs.

A number of examples of best practices and recommendations part of this report result from the extensive field research we have concluded in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. In this regards, some of our findings at the level of the three countries have been validated by successful measures adopted by other European countries aimed at: developing case management approach and personalized intervention, provide mobility packages and set up bonuses, but also foster the involvement of NGOs and Roma associations in the program.

There are however few projects and best practice cases for vulnerable youth groups, part of the Roma minority or other disadvantaged group at EU level. Taking this into consideration, it would be recommended that in the next programming period post-2020, Youth Guarantee should focus more on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in order to provide an improved access into the program for these young NEETs that are facing increasing cultural, societal and institutional barriers.

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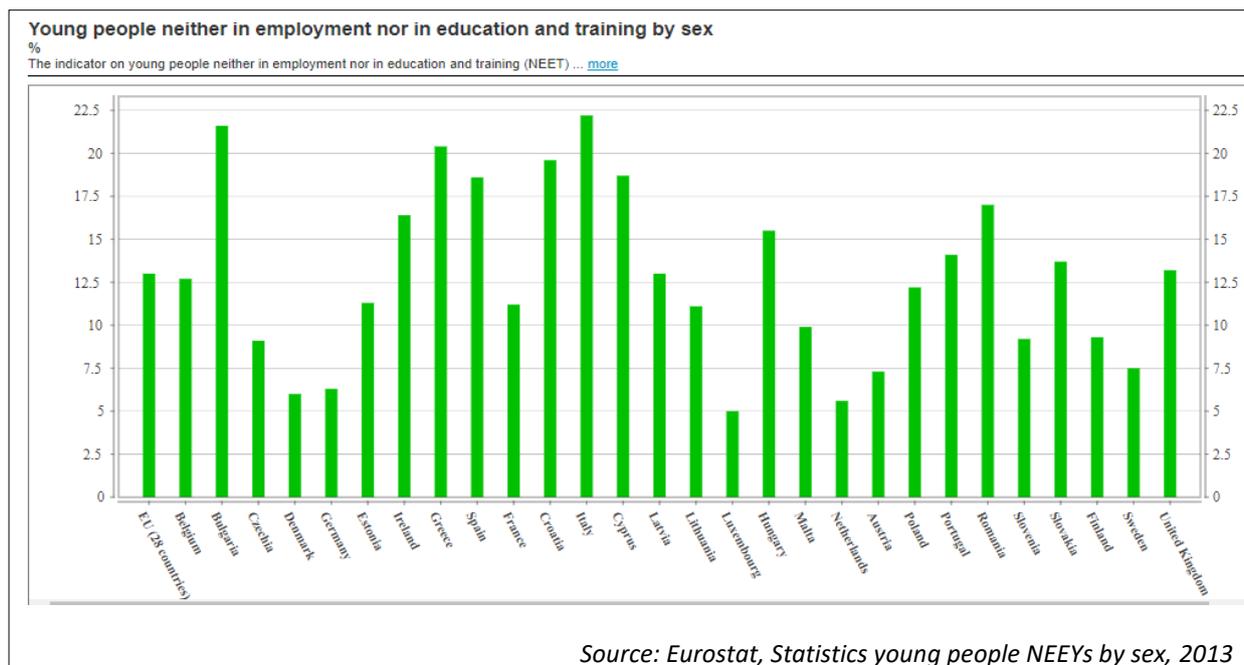
<sup>1</sup> This study is part of the project "Mind the gap! – Facilitating access to and take up of Youth Guarantee measures by Roma youth in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania" that sets out to address the issue of young Roma's integration on the labor market by means of the national and EU funded Youth Guarantee schemes.

## I. The Youth Guarantee program at EU level – an overview

Across the EU, policy-makers and stakeholders have been paying increasing attention to the social inclusion and (re)integration on the labor market of young people, especially the ‘invisible youths’, those neither in employment, nor in education and training (NEETs).

In 2013, up to 13% young people under the age of 25 were NEETs. However, among EU-28, there were countries that exceeded the 15% threshold: Hungary (15.5%), Romania (17%), Spain (18.6%), Cyprus (18.7%) and Croatia (19.6%). There were also countries where the situation was even more difficult, such as the cases of Greece (20.4%), Bulgaria (21.6%) and Italy (22%)<sup>2</sup>.

**Graph 1: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by country in 2013**



In this framework, the Youth Guarantee (YG) was launched at the level of the European Union, the largest EU program aimed at supporting young people under the age of 25, in order for them to receive a good quality offer of continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or employment, within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

The main funding mechanism which supports the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes is the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), launched in 2013 as well. The program aims to provide specific support to young people living in disadvantaged regions, where youth unemployment is higher than 25%. It has a total budget of 8.8 billion euros, 50% coming from a dedicated budgetary Youth Employment line, complemented by 4.4 billion euros from the European Social Fund (ESF). In 2019, this budget was further increased to around 9 billion euros, in order to continue supporting more young people in need throughout the EU<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat 2013, *Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex*: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/graph.do?tab=graph&plugin=1&pcode=tesem150&language=en&toolbox=data>

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, Factsheet: Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative, April 2019.

**Graph 2: Youth Employment Initiative – funding allowance and eligible regions by country**

Country	Eligible regions	YEI allocation (€)
Belgium (BE)	Hainaut, Liège and Brussels-Capital.	€42 435 070
Bulgaria (BG)	Severen tsentralen, Severoiztochen, Severozapaden, Yugoiztochen and Yuzhen tsentralen.	€55 188 745
Czech Republic (CZ)	Severozapad.	€13 599 984
Ireland (IE)	All regions.	€68 145 419
Greece (EL)	All regions.	€171 517 029
Spain (ES)	All regions.	€943 496 315
France (FR)	Aquitaine, Auvergne, Centre, Champagne-Ardenne, Haute-Normandie, Languedoc-Roussillon, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardie, Mayotte, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique, Réunion.	€310 161 401
Croatia (HR)	All regions.	€66 177 144
Italy (IT)	Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardia, Marche, Molise, Piemonte, Puglia, Sardegna, Sicilia, Toscana, Umbria, Valle d'Aosta.	€567 511 248
Cyprus (CY)	All the country.	€11 572 101
Latvia (LV)	All the country.	€29 010 639
Lithuania (LT)	All the country.	€31 782 633
Hungary (HU)	Dél-Alföld, Dél-Dunántúl, Észak-Alföld, Észak-Magyarország	€49 765 356
Poland (PL)	Dolnoslaskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Łódzkie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie, Malopolskie, Podkarpackie, Swietokrzyskie, Warminsko-Mazurskie, and Zachodniopomorskie	€252 437 822
Portugal (PT)	All regions.	€160 772 169
Romania (RO)	Centru, Sud-Muntenia and Sud-Est.	€105 994 315
Slovenia (SI)	Vzhodna Slovenija	€9 211 536
Slovakia (SK)	Stredné Slovensko, Východné Slovensko and Západné Slovensko.	€72 175 259
Sweden (SE)	Mellersta Norrland, Norra Mellansverige and Sydsverige.	€44 163 096
United Kingdom (UK)	Inner London, Merseyside, South Western Scotland, Tees Valley and Durham, and West Midlands.	€206 098 124

Source: European Parliament, Youth Employment Initiative, How the EU budget is spent, September 2017<sup>4</sup>

The program is meant to support young people, especially those coming from vulnerable groups (such as Roma, those coming from rural areas, disadvantaged communities, those with disabilities, those having childcare responsibilities etc.), through specific financing mechanisms and through implementation plans corresponding to each EU country.

Since the launch of the program, the situation of young NEETs has improved at EU level (from 13% in 2013 to 10.5% in 2018 and, more recently, to 10.2% in April 2019), mainly in countries such as the Netherlands (4.2%), Czech Republic (5.6%) or Germany (5.9%), but continues to be still critical in many other countries, mainly in Romania (14.5%), Bulgaria (15%) and Italy (19%)<sup>5</sup>. As the European

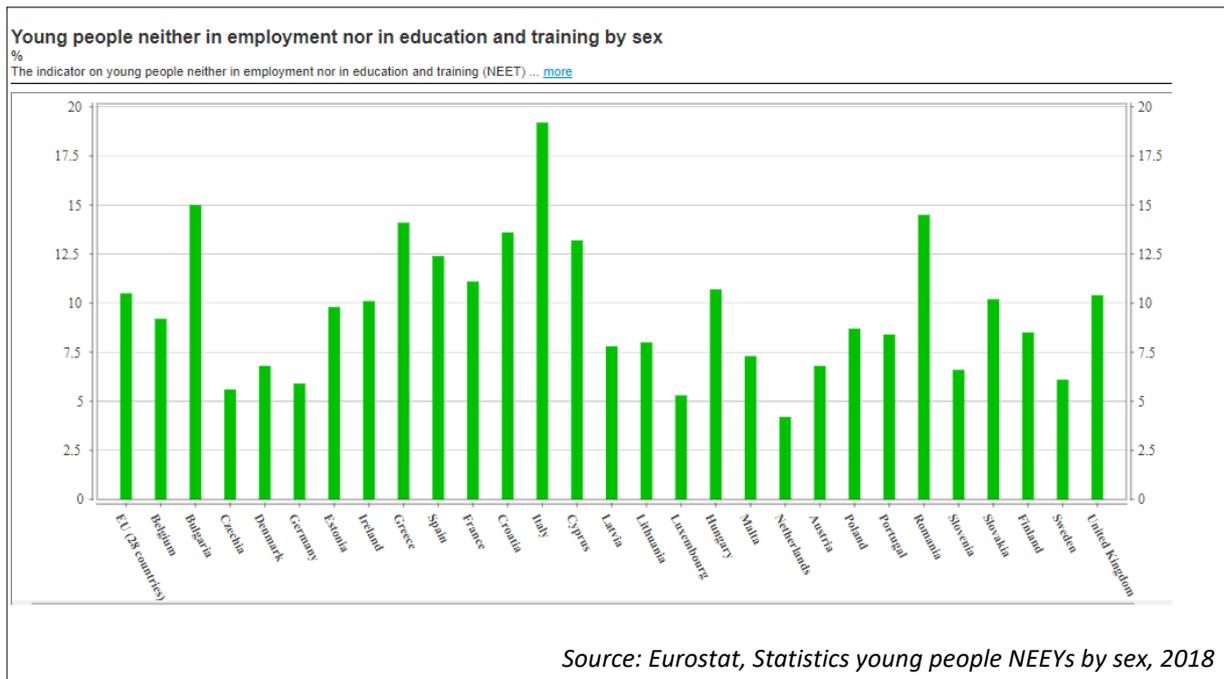
<sup>4</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/608688/EPRS\\_BRI%282017%29608688\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/608688/EPRS_BRI%282017%29608688_EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat 2018, *Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex*:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/graph.do?tab=graph&plugin=1&pcode=tesem150&language=en&toolbox=data>

Commission emphasized, the latest data show that even the youth unemployment and rate of NEETs have reached record lows since the YG program started, more work is still needed<sup>6</sup>.

**Graph 3: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by country in 2018**



The situation is even more critical with regard to vulnerable groups, especially the Roma minority. At the time when the YG was launched at EU level, discussions around the program emphasized the need to target young NEETs from disadvantaged communities, in particular<sup>7</sup>.

Roma youth are the most vulnerable category of NEETs. At EU level, only one in four Roma aged 16 years or older reports 'employed' or 'self-employed' as their main activity, as FRA EU-MIDIS II 2016 shows. In this framework, the main priorities within the Youth Guarantee and its funding mechanisms in the Member States focus mainly on the reduction of the persisting barriers to employment, education, housing and health services.

This report aims to make an overview of the EU countries that have successfully implemented programs related to young NEETs, especially those related to young people in vulnerable situations, as well as to the interinstitutional collaboration at local, regional and national level, that led to the success of such measures.

Hence, our study aims to provide an overview of the countries that have successfully implemented measures of inclusion in education, training and labor market for young NEETs, especially through Youth Guarantee measures or the YEI funding mechanism, so as to serve as a set of best practices to

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, *Youth Employment – Youth Guarantee*, 30 April 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1079&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9358>

<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Toderiță, Alexandru Damian, Cătălina Meiroșu, *Access of young vulnerable NEETs to Youth Guarantee measures in Romania. Current status and way forward*, CRPE Policy Memo no. 76, August 2019.

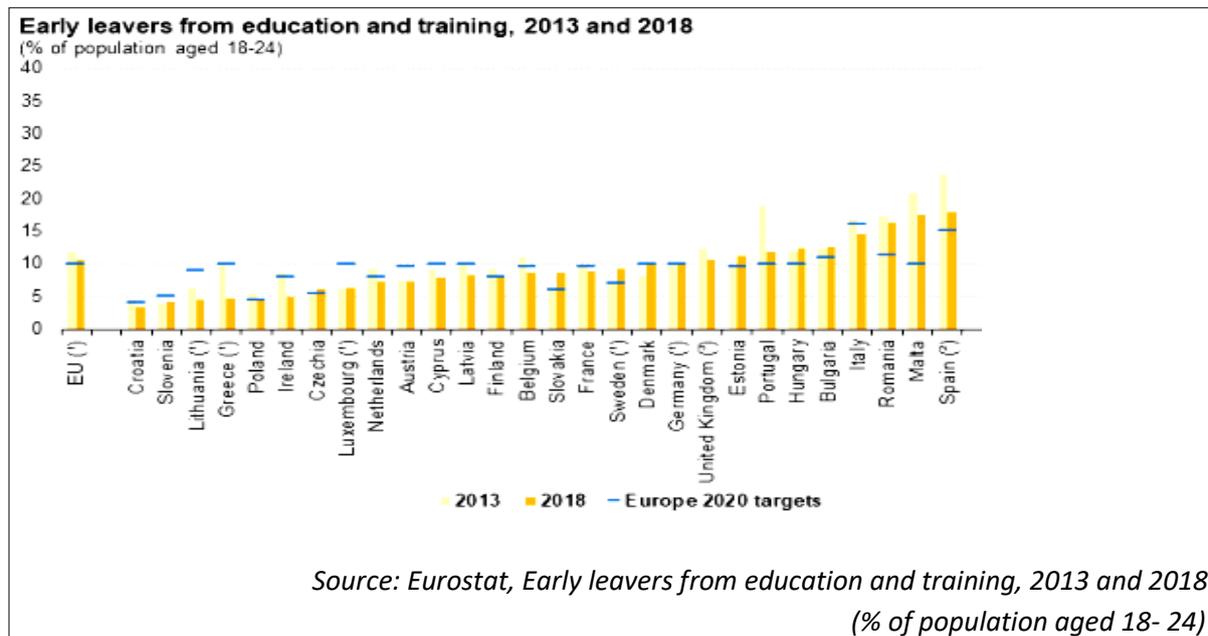
be followed by countries still facing higher rates among young NEETs, as it is the case of Romania (14.5%), Bulgaria (15%) and Italy (19%)<sup>8</sup>.

## II. Education, training and job opportunities for young NEETs from vulnerable groups

### 1. Education, apprenticeship and training opportunities

One of the main issues and goals at European level is the provision of an inclusive education system for young people. According to the Europe 2020 strategy, almost all EU countries have adopted national targets to tackle early school leavers. As a consequence, by 2018, the proportion of early leavers was already below the national target in 13 of the Member States<sup>9</sup>.

**Graph 4: Early leavers from education and training, 2013 and 2018**



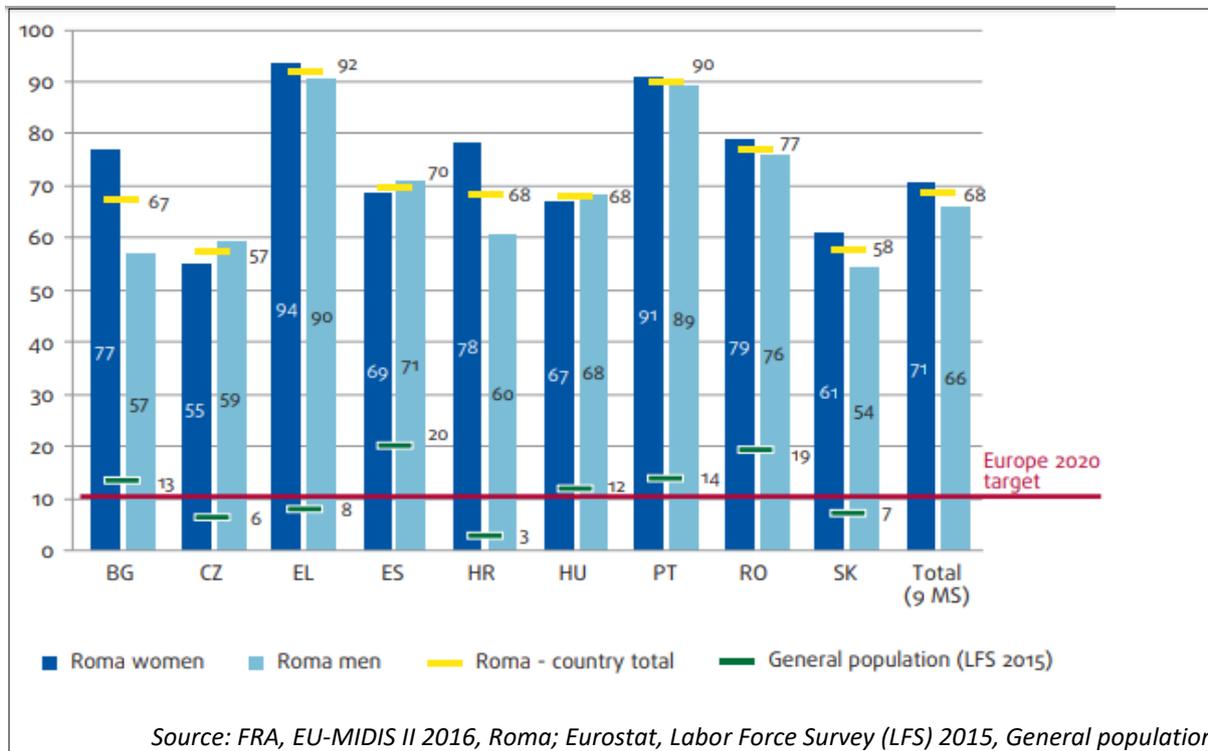
As a result, the rate of early school leavers at European level reached the lowest percentage (10.6% in 2018) for the first time in the last years, compared to 11.9% in 2013, when the YG was launched. However, there are countries that still face an increased rate of early school leavers, which exceeds 15% in 2018, of which: Romania (16.4%), Malta (17.4%) and Spain (17.9%). Moreover, in 2018, one out of ten young people in the EU have completed at most a lower secondary education and are not enrolled in education and training.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, Eurostat Statistics 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/graph.do?tab=graph&plugin=1&pcode=tesem150&language=en&toolbox=data>

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, Statistics explained, *Early leavers from education and training*, April 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/1150.pdf>

According to EC evaluations, ‘some young people – especially those with the most vulnerable, at-risk profiles – need more complex interventions and take longer before being ready and able to take up a continued education offer’<sup>10</sup>. In the case of Roma, only 18 % of Roma aged between 6-24 years old attended an educational level lower than that corresponding to their age. In addition, the situation of early school leavers among Roma youth is disproportionately high compared to the general population<sup>11</sup>.

**Graph 5: Early leavers from education and training, aged 18-24 years, by EU Member State (%)**



In this framework, several Member States implemented measures, programs and projects aimed at supporting young people at risk of dropping out of school.

We have made an overview of these successful initiatives that include measures of reducing school dropout, the inclusion of vulnerable youth and measures that support the education system and, also, training and apprenticeship opportunities suitable for them.

## 2. Job opportunities

The access to the labor market of young people represents another important challenge at EU level. The situation of young people in the labor market, dramatically affected by the consequences of the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008, represents a major challenge for the EU and its Member States. Although, after the record level registered in 2013 (23.7%), youth unemployment

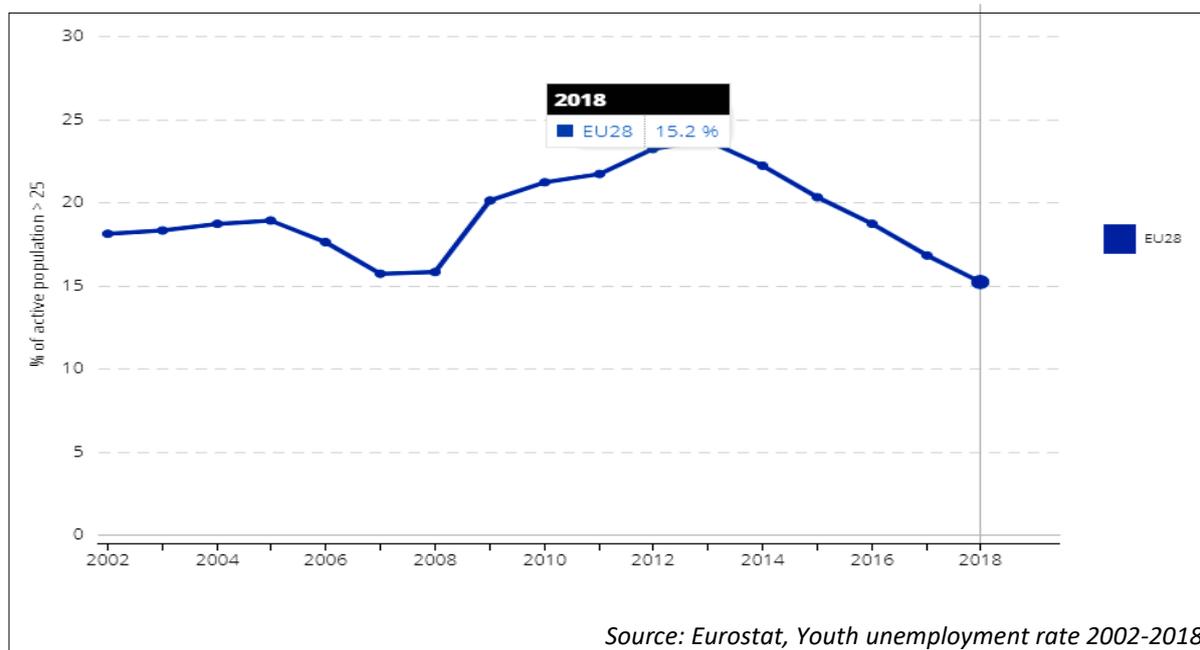
<sup>10</sup> European Commission, 2016: Commission Staff Working Document: *The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on*.

<sup>11</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected findings*, November 2016, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

has decreased in most Member States, this remains a serious cause for concern. Thus, in 2018, the rate of young Europeans who did not find a job was 15.2%.

There are countries where the youth unemployment rate is much lower than at European level, as it is the case of Germany (6.2%), Czech Republic (6.7%) and the Netherlands (7.2%) in 2018. However, there are many countries which still face higher rates of unemployment among youth under 25 years as in the case of Romania (16.2%), Croatia (23.8%), Portugal (20.3%), France (20.7%), Italy (32.2%), Spain (34.3%) and Greece (39.9%)<sup>12</sup>.

**Graph 6: Youth unemployment rate 2002-2018 (as % of the active population aged less than 25)**



In the case of Roma youth NEETs, the situation is even more difficult. In 2016, 63% of Roma aged 16-24 were NEETs. Only one in four Roma aged 16 years or older reports 'employed' or 'self-employed' as their main activity<sup>13</sup>.

Hence, it is relevant to make an overview of the best practice cases among the EU Member States that implemented successful measures, initiatives and programs related to vulnerable groups, with focus on NEETs, in the framework of the Youth Guarantee and its funding mechanisms. These best practice models could be a starting point for countries that face significant gaps in the next programming period.

<sup>12</sup> Eurostat, *Unemployment statistics and beyond*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics\\_and\\_beyond#Unemployment\\_-\\_total.2C\\_by\\_sex\\_and\\_by\\_age](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics_and_beyond#Unemployment_-_total.2C_by_sex_and_by_age)

<sup>13</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected findings*, November 2016, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

### III. Best practice cases with regard to education, training and jobs for young NEETs from vulnerable groups among the EU

#### 1. The case management approach in France, Estonia, Germany, Croatia and Finland

The ‘case management’ approach has been established in several EU countries. It is also known as ‘one-stop-shops’ and refers to the young people who are in contact with one professional only (counsellor, coach or mentor) or with a small multidisciplinary team in the same setting. These ‘case managers’ act as intermediaries and liaise with other services. They are responsible for coordinating the young people involved, so as to deliver tailor-made, multifaceted support<sup>14</sup>.

We documented below some other countries that implement the ‘case management’ approach, including those that set up specialized youth centers that could act as facilitators in reaching and helping young NEETs.

**Since 2013, ‘Garantie de Jeune’ in France provides a financial allowance for NEETs and links it to activation measures.** It offers a ‘guarantee’ for several labor market options, which means offering young people a pathway that includes work experience and training opportunities. This is based on the principle of a contractual relationship between the ‘Missions Locales’ and the young person. The support and follow-up is based on the ‘work first’ principle, that is, offering a plurality of professional experiences, which can be completed with training opportunities<sup>15</sup>.

The approach is innovative, as it places young jobseekers or NEETs in a micro-network (consisting of other young people with similar difficulties, contacts with employers, etc.). The individual action plans should then be dealt with in a flexible manner, in order to allow employment periods to be followed by training ones. A further innovation is that every young person is followed up by two or several counsellors, meaning that there are different views on the same case. Therefore, this approach is staff-intensive<sup>16</sup>.

In addition, **in France**, “Missions Locales” are associations created by municipalities (or groups of municipalities) that contact and offer support to a large number of young people. The role of the ‘Missions Locales’ is complementary to the actions of PES offices and includes the provision of information services, guidance, support for the access to education and training opportunities, coaching and mediation with employers. This approach is co-financed by the YEI and targets young vulnerable NEETs aged 18-25 years old. In this case, vulnerable young people are identified through specific partnerships with municipalities, schools, social workers and outreach workers. This

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<sup>14</sup> Anette Curth, European Commission, DG Employment, *Continued Education Offers under the Youth Guarantee. Experience from the ground*, 2018, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Nicola Duell, European Commission, DG Employment, *Employment and entrepreneurship under the Youth Guarantee. Experience from the ground*, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Farvaque, Nicolas, *The French Youth Guarantee: experiencing a new approach to help young vulnerable people to gain autonomy*, Host country discussion paper, Mutual Learning Programme, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 2018.

measure takes into account the degree of vulnerability of the participants, by assessing their financial situation and family relations and connections.

Participants receive a so-called ‘means-tested monthly allowance’, which is close to the minimum income for one single person and decreases with remuneration above a certain threshold (a maximum of 480 euros per month, to which they can associate without loss any additional earnings that total 300 euros<sup>17</sup>). The monthly allowance acts as a safety net for participating young people who are likely to have limited rights to social protection schemes.<sup>18</sup>

The Youth Prop-Up program in Estonia has been implemented since 2015 and co-funded by the European Social Fund. The aim is to identify young NEETs aged 15-25 years old (e.g. through mobile youth work, networking, etc.), motivate and provide individualized support, in order to assist them in returning to school or work. The activities of the program are centered around four phases: (1) identifying young people through mobile youth work and networking; (2) establishing a trusting contact with individuals, in order to help them sort out their aspirations and ambitions; (3) through the youth work motivating the participants, developing their practical knowledge and skills, or facilitating their entry into the labor market; (4) keeping regular contact with the participants for at least six months after their exit from the program. By the end of 2017, 4,361 young people have been offered support in the program<sup>19</sup>.

**In the case of Germany, Youth Employment Agencies address the challenge of facilitating young people’s transition from school to the labor market, by combining the services of several actors: youth workers, youth welfare services and career guidance counselling (PES).** This approach pays an increased attention to the preventive measures and career guidance, those that address young people while they are still in school, in order to prepare them for their first step into the labor market<sup>20</sup>.

**A similar approach is implemented in Croatia, where there are youth guidance centers (CISOKs), run by Croatian PES offices.** Croatian CISOKs have been implemented since 2013 and offer integrated career guidance and Public Employment Services to young jobseekers, focusing on inactive young people (NEETs not registered with the Croatian PES), in order to integrate them more effectively into the labor market. The program foresees to open 22 Centers until 2020, so as to increase accessibility and quality of career guidance services in the whole country, of which 13 CISOKs were opened by September 2017 in 12 cities. In order to meet a wide range of needs, CISOKs provide multiple support services: counselling, e-guidance, one-off assistance or recurring assistance (longer intervention), self-help services and staff training.

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<sup>17</sup> European Commission, Guarantee for youth, Country fiche France, October 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *Activation measures for young people in vulnerable situation. Experience from the ground*, European Commission, DG Employment, 2018,

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1327&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9226>

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, *EE-The Youth Prop-Up Programme*, Country fiche Estonia, June 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Anette Curth, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

As a result of implementing CISOKs, 190,867 young people (including school pupils, unemployed, employed people, students, employers, parents, career counsellors, etc.) benefited from the services provided until 2017.<sup>21</sup>

**Since 2012, in Luxemburg, it has been established an approach called ‘Maison of Guidance’** (‘Maison de l’Orientation’), which brings together employment, education and guidance agencies, in order to provide training information and career guidance to young people aged 12-19 years old<sup>22</sup>.

**In Finland, the “Ohjaamo” centers for young people working across administrations provide tailored and personal advice and guidance with regard to various dimensions, including life management, career planning, social skills and education and employment support for them<sup>23</sup>.** The centers are located in municipalities that vary significantly in size, as their service portfolios and staff resources, and there were approximately 40 One-Stop Guidance Centers in 2017. In 2018, their number increased to 50<sup>24</sup>.

## 2. The socio-pedagogical support in Spain

**In Spain, the project ‘PULSA Employment’ has been implemented since 2016 by the Spanish Red Cross and is co-financed by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the European Social Fund (ESF).** The project aims to motivate young people and identify their skills, in order to inform and match them with an appropriate offer through non-standard methods (e.g. theatre workshops, group games, robotics), including individual and group activities and educational and professional guidance. The target group consists of young people aged 18-29 registered in the YG database, with a special emphasis on those at risk of social exclusion, including those with low qualifications, disabilities and facing poverty<sup>25</sup>.

As a result of the implementation of the program, between January and December 2016, 3,790 young people took part in the project as direct beneficiaries, of which 1,570 found a probationary, temporary or fixed-term job (labor market insertion rate: 41 %). In addition, 932 partnerships with companies across 44 provinces were established and 4,159 agreements were signed with the 932 companies regarding: hiring commitments for certain job positions, collaboration in the various project activities (e.g. provision of individual guidance, organization of company visits, job interview simulations etc.).<sup>26</sup>

## 3. The Vocational Education and Training (VET) approach in Germany, Austria and Denmark

**In Germany, ‘pre-apprenticeship training’ programs have been established.** The young people involved have to conclude the entry-level vocational qualifying measure within PES offices, oriented

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, *HR-Lifelong Career Guidance Centres – CISOK*, Country fiche Croatia, October 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Mirja Määttä (ed.), *One-Stop Guidance Center (Ohjaamo) – Ready to offer multi-agency services for the young*, Kohtaamo (ESF), ELY-Centre Central Finland, <https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162148/OneStopGuidance.pdf?sequence=5>

<sup>25</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> European Commission, *PULSA Employment*, Country fiche Spain, October 2017.

to the requirements of recognized training occupations. The measure is designed for young people who have still not found an apprenticeship training place, for those looking for a training place and not yet ready for training, for socially disadvantaged youth and young people with learning difficulties. As a result, participants are given a company report on the knowledge and skills that were gained and a certificate from the competent agency (chamber). Companies that carry out an in-company, entry-level, vocational qualifying measure can receive support through grants towards payment for the work experience and a lump-sum share of the average total social insurance contribution<sup>27</sup>.

The initiative ‘Educational chains until the completion of training’ in **Germany** is meant to help young people prepare for their school leaving qualification and their entry into the labor market in a targeted manner. The aim is to place every young person interested in training into a VET program. For this reason, the vocational orientation process begins at an early stage and is conducted in a systematic manner. In this case, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, the Federal Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs and the Federal PES have joined forces with the federal states (Laender) to interlink successful instruments<sup>28</sup>.

**In Denmark, the program ‘Building Bridges to Education’ targets young people who receive education benefits and who have registered with the PES, aiming to prepare them for vocational education.** Individually designed programs are designed at the standard vocational education institution and consist of a fixed schedule with various short internships at vocational schools and enterprises. Each young person is provided with a mentor to support them through their time and provide them with follow-up support<sup>29</sup>. Since the implementation of the program, 2,837 young people benefited in 2015, 34 municipalities supported the program in 2016, up to 3,000 unemployed young people took part by the end of 2017 and more than 40 vocational schools across Denmark participated. As a result, over 50% of the participants started subsequently an education or found employment<sup>30</sup>.

**In the case of Austria, ‘training guarantee’ has been established since 2008 for school leavers up to the age of 18.** The program is designed to provide a temporary training place to young people before they find a company-based apprenticeship, thus helping to prevent them from dropping out of the apprenticeship<sup>31</sup>.

#### 4. Roma Fellowship program in Hungary

**In Hungary, the Roma Police Fellowship program was implemented since 1996. The aim is to help the social advancement and integration of young Roma.** As a result, the program achieved the best results, by concluding several scholarship contracts every year and about 60 scholarship agreements to date in the last 20 years. The requirements to apply to the program are: Hungarian citizenship and residence, at least medium level of learning performance, a clean judicial record, settled family circumstances, a good physical and health status and the provision of a written declaration stating

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<sup>27</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Anette Curth, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>29</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, *DK-Building Bridge to Education*, Country fiche Denmark, November 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

their Roma origin. In addition, the applicants should declare their intention to complete their secondary education and take the entrance exam to a Police Vocational Training School, with the intention of completing it and afterwards engage in permanent employment at the Police (for at least two years)<sup>32</sup>.

## 5. Provision of cross-cutting training for today's labor market in Latvia, Ireland and Luxemburg

These three countries focus on the preparation for future employment, by providing courses on skills related to IT, entrepreneurship and linguistics. In these cases, young people expect training to lead to a tangible outcome, which provides real currency on the labor market<sup>33</sup>.

In **Latvia**, the second chance vocational education programs for young NEETs (IVEP) have been implemented since 2014. The aim is to help young NEETs aged 17-29 complete vocational training through education programs, guidance services and financial support. In the case of Latvia, the educational and training process is accompanied by vocational guidance services (including exposure to a real work environment and study visits to companies), which contributes to a better access to the occupations which are of interest to the young people involved<sup>34</sup>.

In the case of **Ireland**, second-chance education is provided by Youth Reach Centers. Unemployed early school leavers aged 15-20 who are educationally disadvantaged and, in some cases, socially marginalized are provided with knowledge, skills and confidence required to participate fully in society and progress to further education, training, and employment for about 18 months. During their involvement in the program, young people benefit from guidance and counseling as well<sup>35</sup>.

In **Luxemburg**, a specific pedagogical approach is provided since 2011: 'the Second Chance School in Luxembourg (E2C)', which aims to reengage early leavers back into education. The education or personal well-being and development of the learner is at the heart of the E2C pedagogy. The beneficiaries are early school leavers, aged 16 to 30, who dropped out of school or failed to find an apprenticeship. The E2C has been an integral part of the public school system since September 2012, offering 3 strands of education and training: general secondary education, technical secondary education and training for adults (courses for qualification of educators)<sup>36</sup>.

## 6. Tackling the long-term unemployment in Latvia and Sweden

**Latvia implemented a set of measures aimed at helping youth to understand the requirements of the labor market and settle in permanent jobs.** The target group consists of young people which are long-term unemployed and also young people with disabilities or caring responsibilities. Employers provide a qualified work supervisor for each participant who assists them in acquiring the basic skills

<sup>32</sup> ERGO Network, *Investing in our future: What work(s) for young Roma? Top 10 Best Practices of Roma Youth employment*, 2017, <http://ergonetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Best-practices.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU-27: Key Success Factors, A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners*, December 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/sv/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/resources/second-chance-school-lecole-de-la-deuxieme>

and abilities required. The participants are provided with financial support for a period of 12 to 24 months, which consists of up to 50% of the total wage costs in the form of a monthly wage subsidy that cannot exceed the minimum wage<sup>37</sup>.

**Sweden** implemented the UngKOMP program between 2015 and 2018 that aimed to support 5,000 young people who are long-term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment, focusing on those with complex needs and it is co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). This approach is based on individualized counseling and support for young people with complex needs and who display low motivation to engage with public authorities.

The PES and municipalities created multi-skilled teams, which included an employment advisor, a psychologist, an education advisor and a social worker<sup>38</sup>. The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund, Swedish PES and also by municipalities. The target group consisted of young people aged 16 to 24, who are long-term unemployed or at risk of becoming long-term unemployed and are in need of integrated support. The project aims to scale up the former successful experience to 20 cities and, by the end of 2018, the service was introduced in 19 cities, where the municipal services and the PES have agreed to establish multicompetent teams<sup>39</sup>.

## 7. Tax exemptions for employers in the case of Portugal

Since 2013, **Portugal** provides the reimbursement of all or parts of the employers' social security contributions for fixed-term and permanent employment, full-time or part-time, but with a minimum length of contract of six months. The target group consists of mainly young people aged between 18 and 30, but also of unemployed aged between 31 and 44 in a vulnerable situation<sup>40</sup>.

## 8. PES cooperation with NGOs in the case of Malta and Lithuania

**The interinstitutional cooperation is significant in addressing the multiple needs and ensure sustainable job integration for young NEETs.** In this framework, the collaboration among actors involved (including employment, education and social services, community groups, school mediators, local and national NGOs etc.) is an important asset in offering customized services according to the needs, knowledge and skills of young NEETs.

As documented above in the case of Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, the Youth Guarantee programs should focus more on fostering the collaboration of NGOs and associations specialized in the work with vulnerable groups (including Roma youth) with the Public Employment Services and the local and national authorities involved. In addition, there are countries that successfully implemented programs for the inclusion of young NEETs, by means of cooperation between PES offices and NGOs, as shown below:

The Public Employment Services (PES) in **Malta** called 'JobsPlus' have developed a partnership with a foundation specialized in the labor market integration of jobseekers with disabilities (Lino Spiteri

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<sup>37</sup> Nicola Duell, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, *Multi-competent teams*, Country fiche Sweden, October 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

Foundation). The foundation sets up a corporate relations unit that identifies existing occupations within the enterprise, which are potentially suitable for jobseekers with disabilities. In this way, valid and person-centered vacancies within a given organization whilst promoting inclusion are created. This is coupled with pre-employment efforts such as training and work exposure schemes offered by the PES, to improve the employability and preparedness of the registered disabled jobseeker. By April 2018, it was possible to create 278 jobs suitable for jobseekers with disabilities by making use of the job-carving approach<sup>41</sup>.

The project ‘Trust Yourself’ was implemented between 2013 and 2015 in **Lithuania** by the Lithuanian Labor Exchange (PES) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor. The aim was to help young people (re)integrate into education and the labor market through intensive personalized support provided in cooperation with NGOs. This includes developing their skills through individual and group activities. The target group consists of socially vulnerable young NEETs aged 16-25, both registered and not registered with the PES. ‘Trust Yourself’ was implemented in 15 of Lithuania’s 60 regions, selected on the basis of a high rate of youth unemployment, higher propensity for undeclared work and presence of strong non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The regional project coordinators established partnerships with organizations willing to provide activities and opportunities to the participants. The target group was then recruited through a range of channels, including regional media, social media, informal meetings in youth centers and PES offices. After the initial recruitment, the project counsellors introduced the young people to the program and carried out assessments to place the participants in groups with similar peers. Groups contained 10 to 12 young people under the supervision of one coordinator. Participants stayed in their groups for the duration of their time at Trust Yourself – typically three months and up to 4,000 young people participated in the project<sup>42</sup>.

The project ‘My first Job’ in **Estonia** is implemented since 2015 by the Ministry of Social Affairs in collaboration with the Estonian PES and the Youth Centers (NGO) and is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The purpose is to provide a wage subsidy to incentivize employers to recruit more young people who lack experience and qualifications, thus reducing youth unemployment. The project targets young people aged 16-29 years old who are registered with the Estonian PES as unemployed and have not been engaged in employment during the past three months or have been temporarily employed for less than 30 days; and have worked less than one year in the last three years, or have worked less than two years in total. A monitoring system was created under the project that follows the progress of the young people after one year and also a series of ‘meeting events’ at the PES were established between young people and employers. In the first two years of implementation, 572 young people who undertook employment whilst their employer was in receipt of the ‘My First Job’ subsidy<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ruth Santos-Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> European Commission, LT-Trust Yourself, Country fiche Lithuania, June 2018.

<sup>43</sup> European Commission, EE-My First Job, Country fiche Estonia, October 2018.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Youth Guarantee is, above all, the most complex mechanism at European level that aims at helping young NEETs, especially those in difficult situations and from the vulnerable groups.

Throughout this study, we aimed to analyze the extent to which successfully implemented measures, programs and projects, under the Youth Guarantee umbrella, are known at EU level and can be further replicated in other Member States. We have focused our research on measures targeting Roma communities, but we extended our research in order to disseminate successful measures targeting young NEETs.

We started with the documentation of a set of best practice cases and recommendations from Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, countries where we have undergone and extensive research, both quantitative and qualitative. In this case, we focused mainly on approaches for vulnerable groups, especially Roma, and measures and programs that are successfully implemented in these three countries and could be replicated at the level of other European countries.

In addition, we documented other EU countries that successfully implemented measures and programs under the Youth Guarantee umbrella. In this framework, we looked into the case of countries such as France or Germany in terms of education and apprenticeship offers, the case of Spain in using non-formal methods to help identify the skills of young people to be further integrated into the labor market, the case of Sweden in supporting measures for long term unemployment, the cases of Luxemburg and Austria in dealing with the issue of early school leavers and other relevant best practice cases that were documented in this study.

Although, at European level, there are several countries that have made remarkable progress in (re)integrating young people into the education, training, apprenticeship and labor market, there are still countries that are facing significant gaps (as it is the case of Romania, Bulgaria or Italy). Moreover, there are less frequent and/or less known the measures, programs and projects under the Youth Guarantee umbrella that focus on the young vulnerable groups or disadvantaged communities such as the Roma minority, depending on the specificities of each country and too many that target young NEETs in general.

As such, the main conclusion and recommendations resulted from our study, in addition to the specific measures in the case of Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, refer to:

1. **Case management and personalized intervention.** The individual approach to each young person registered with a Public Employment Service is an effective measure. The measure, adopted in an important number of EU countries, is experiencing a good feedback and better engagement from the young NEETs and consists in providing a tailor-made case management for each individual, starting from his registration with the Public Employment Service and counseling and support for integration on the labor market.

In Romania, as an example, the whole process of identifying, registering, profiling and supporting the young NEET has only been implemented starting 2018. It is based on a customized intervention design, from the perspective of ‘case management’, calibrated according to employability (from easily employable to very difficult to employ). There is, however, a need in all countries to work on a follow-up mechanism (including support after exiting the Youth Guarantee), as most young NEETs are at their first employment experience and it usually proves difficult for them to adapt to the working environment.

The case management approach is successful in many other EU countries. In this regard, the example of France where ‘Missions Locales’ provide information services, guidance and support to young vulnerable NEETs is a good practice model that can be replicated by other countries.

- 2. The importance of Roma mediators – either youth or labor mediator.** The network of Roma labor mediators is an example of best practice in Bulgaria, as it reaches vulnerable communities and provides customized support for the young NEETs. The Roma mediators are usually employed by local Public Employment Services with larger Roma communities and facilitate the relation between the Public Employment Services and young NEETs.

Expanding the network of Roma mediators and building its expertise in the field of NEETs labor market mediation and involving them directly in the implementation of Youth Guarantee measures would increase the capacity of the PES offices to register, profile and provide consistent support for young NEETs from vulnerable communities.

- 3. Mobility packages and set up bonuses.** The practice of granting subsidies for employers to employ young NEETs and set up bonuses for employees to retain their job is working only partially in Romania due to the high level of bureaucratization, but most importantly because of the inconsistent manner the financing actually reaches local PES offices, so as to be disbursed to employers.

However, coupled with a flexible process of granting the bonuses, it could have an important positive effect. First of all, reducing the reluctance of employers to hire NEETs with low labor skills or at their first employment would facilitate the possibility for the employees to remain for a longer period of time in the same employment due to higher wages.

Mobility packages are also a must, being partially implemented in Romania. Due to the low number of employment possibilities within the range of most vulnerable communities which are usually in rural areas and inadequate local infrastructure, there is a need to fully subsidize the transport cost from home to workplace either individually, either providing support for the employers in case of a higher number of employees from the same community.

In addition, there is relevant the case of Portugal related to tax exemptions for employers that are documented in this study. As we showed, Portugal provide, the reimbursement of

the social security contributions of the employers that work with young NEETs and young vulnerable groups for a minimum length of six months.

4. **Mobile caravans for reaching young Roma NEETs.** Reaching vulnerable communities, especially from rural areas, have had positive results when the so-called ‘mobile caravans’ were organized, encompassing representatives of the Public Employment Services, mediators, members of the community. They discussed with the young NEETs about the Youth Guarantee measures. This way, the first contact between the Public Employment Service and youths would take place in their communities, thus building trust.
5. **Fostering involvement of NGOs and Roma associations in the Youth Guarantee Programs.** Practice in all three Member States shows that when the organizations active in the vulnerable communities have an active role increases the chances of better addressing the needs and challenges faced by the Roma communities. They have not only profound knowledge of the communities, which is essential with respect to the socio-cultural specificities of the Roma, for example, but also a direct relation with the community that can easily trigger better cooperation between the community the Public Employment Services.

The interinstitutional collaboration is a good example in many other EU countries. For instance, Malta, Lithuania and Estonia implement projects targeting young NEETs based on the strong collaboration among Public Employment Services and NGOs. In this way, the young NEETs can benefit from customized services and guidance according to their needs, knowledge and skills.

6. **Capacity Building at the level of Public Employment Services.** Strengthening the Public Employment Services in implementing the complex and non-standardized measures of accompanying young NEETs on the labor market, through a deep understanding of the individual and local context, is foreseen in the Action Plans of most EU countries.

One of the measures proposed and being discussed in Hungary is allowing the Public Employment Services with high Roma community to hire Roma interpreters in case language barriers occur. Public Employment Services must also provide basic competences for the young NEETs – ranging from assisting them in writing a CV, simulating interviews with an employer and providing basic skills in searching for jobs.

7. **Ensuring clear coordination of the Youth Guarantee program.** Due to the high number of institutional and non-institutional actors part of the Youth Guarantee measures, coordination is not always optimal at level of the Member States.

Bulgaria established a clear focused coordination body for the Youth Guarantee program, thus providing clear benchmarks of the program and on time adaptation – the Coordination Council for the Implementation and Monitoring of the National Plan for the Implementation of Youth Guarantee 2014-2020.

- 8. External evaluation of Youth Guarantee national schemes and advocating for midterm evaluations.** There are few external evaluations of the Youth Guarantee national schemes in the European Union and, although the program states the need to perform midterm evaluations, few countries managed to do so.

One of the measures proposed and discussed in Hungary is to advocate for recurrent benchmarks of the program – both from the national organizations, but also external actors such as NGOs.

- 9. Publish breakdown of data on Youth Guarantee measures.** One of the recurrent bottlenecks occurring when analyzing Youth Guarantee national schemes is the unreliability of data provided by the Public Employment Services. In addition, there is no regular publication on specific data on Youth Guarantee measures and most often data includes all measures at national level, not specifically YG ones.

There is a need to invest in data collection and data aggregation (including exchange of data with other actors), both in Romania, as well as in Bulgaria and Hungary, in order for third peers to be able to overview the progresses made by the Public Employment Services in implementing Youth Guarantee programs.

- 10. Institutional partnership approach** - particularly between the Public Employment Service offices and municipalities which work together in bringing youth to the PES office (e.g. youth mediators in municipalities bring youth they work with to the PES office) is an example of good practice in the case Bulgaria. In other cases, the local PES offices partner with other agencies such as the Agency for Social Support and education institutions.
- 11. Youth reach centers should be set up/consolidated at regional level.** The youth centers should be functional at regional level in countries that implement YG measures for young NEETs. The centers should facilitate activities designed to support young NEETs and provide them necessary information in their field of interest related to access to education, apprenticeship, training and jobs. By having access to the services of the youth centers, the targeted young people should have access the measures, programs and projects that fit better their knowledge and skills. As documented in this study, there are many European countries that successfully put in practice regional youth centers (France, Germany, Croatia, and Luxemburg) that reached young NEETs, including vulnerable groups in the last years.
- 12. Vocational Education and Training (VET) and work-based learning as alternatives for young people (especially those from vulnerable groups) who struggle in general education.** This approach could be beneficial for the young people given that they will acquire the necessary skills through practical learning.

The successful programs implemented by Germany, Denmark and Austria that are documented in this report show that VET represents a good alternative for young people who do not succeed in general education and also a more efficient way of progressing towards a qualification. In addition, the case of pre-apprenticeship scheme in Germany that combines work and vocational training could be a representative model for many other

European countries as such to prepare young people who are not ready to complete a formal apprenticeship program and prevent them in this way to become NEETs.

13. **Socio-pedagogical approach could be an important asset for disadvantaged/at-risk youth** (such as early school leavers, low-skilled youth, those from vulnerable groups or rural areas etc.), **in order to reach the required level of knowledge and skills to undertake an apprenticeship or training opportunity**, as in the case of the project implemented in Spain (PULSA project) that focuses on alternative methods to motivate young people and identify their skills in order to inform and match them with an appropriate training/job offer.

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