

## EU Cohesion policy and Youth (Un)employment



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## PREFACE

The research for this paper was undertaken by EPRC in preparation for the 35th IQ-Net meeting held in Stirlingshire, Scotland on 2-4 December 2013. The paper was written by Sara Davies and Stephen Miller.

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The partners in the IQ-Net network are as follows:

### **Austria**

- State Government of Niedersterreich (Lower Austria), Economic and Tourism Department
- State Government of Steiermark (Styria), Department for Economy, Tourism and Sport

### **Belgium**

- Enterprise Flanders Agency

### **Czech Republic**

- Ministry of Regional Development

### **Denmark**

- Danish Business Authority

### **Finland**

- Alliance of Lnsi-Suomi (Western Finland) and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy

### **France**

- Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale (DATAR, Interministerial Delegation of Territorial Development and Regional Attractiveness)

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- Sachsen-Anhalt (Saxony-Anhalt), Ministry of Finance

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### **Poland**

- Śląskie Voivodeship (Marshal's Office of Silesia)

### **Portugal**

- Financial Institute for Regional Development (IFDR)

### **Spain**

- País Vasco (Basque Country), Provincial Council of Bizkaia, Department of Economy and Finance

### **Slovenia**

- Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, EU Cohesion Policy Directorate

### **United Kingdom**

- Department of Communities and Local Government
- Scottish Government
- Welsh European Funding Office

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## **Disclaimer**

It should be noted that the content and conclusions of this paper do not necessarily represent the views of individual members of the IQ-Net Consortium.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The theme of youth employment has risen sharply up the EU's political agenda since 2011 in response to **substantial rises in youth unemployment rates in a number of Member States** due to the economic crisis and on-going recession. Youth unemployment rates are above total unemployment rates in all Member States, although rates vary significantly, ranging from 8.1 percent in Germany to 55.3 percent in Spain in 2012.

Cohesion policy is an important component of the EU response to youth unemployment, and relates directly to a number of new approaches introduced since 2011, notably the Youth Employment Initiative, the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Action Teams. **Cohesion policy programmes already allocated significant funding to youth employment at the beginning of 2007-13** (around €10 billion per year of ESF funding alone, according to European Commission estimates), including:

- capital spending related to education and training;
- current spending on all types of education and training;
- wage subsidies for firms to employ young people (including apprenticeships);
- aid to young people to start new firms;
- funding for the delivery of advice and guidance aimed at preventing school drop-outs and facilitating labour market entry;
- work placements; and
- education and employment-related support for vulnerable groups of young people.

Further funding has been reprogrammed to this theme in 2012-13, notably via the work of the **Youth Action Teams** in the eight Member States most affected by youth unemployment, but also in other Member States and regions.

**Preparations for 2014-20 indicate a strong focus on youth employment**, partly due to the theme's political and economic prominence but also because of the EU-level decision to allocate specific quotas of total funding to the ESF; the inclusion of three themes of particular relevance for youth employment among the Thematic Objectives; and the application of related thematic ex ante conditionalities.

In addition, the 2014-20 Multiannual Financial Framework has introduced a new financial instrument, the **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) for those EU regions with a 2012 youth unemployment rate of 25 percent or above**. Funding (€6 billion in 2014-20) will be integrated into the ESF programming framework. The YEI will support the implementation of the **Youth Guarantee**, which is a joint commitment by the EU and Member States to ensure that all young people receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Member States which are eligible for YEI must submit a **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan** by December 2013, with all other Member States being encouraged to do so in 2014.

**IQ-Net partners fund a range of types of support for youth employment in 2007-13**, including interventions that aim:

- directly to facilitate **access to employment** for young people (e.g. wage subsidies, apprenticeships and aid for self-employment);
- to support the **transition from education/training into work** (e.g. apprenticeships, work experience and career guidance);
- to fund **all types of education and training** for young people, including activities aimed at preventing early school leaving; and
- to support **vulnerable groups of young people** (e.g. mentoring and counselling).

The deterioration in youth unemployment rates in a number of Member States, as well as changes in domestic policy priorities, and the introduction of the EU Youth Employment Initiative, are leading to **an increased focus on youth employment in 2014-20** in a number of IQ-Net partner programmes.

IQ-Net partner programmes in 2007-13 have encountered various challenges to the design and implementation of youth employment interventions. They encompass:

- the need for **sound analysis and diagnosis of the causes of youth employment**, and the effects of policy interventions, in individual Member States, regions or places;
- **targeted solutions that take account of the needs of different groups of young people and** also, where appropriate, of the demands of **business** and other employers, for example via consultation with end-users of services, as well as more fine-grained tracking of young people through their education/training, in order to facilitate early intervention;
- **realistic ambitions of what EU co-funded programmes can achieve** in the setting of objectives and targets, especially where there are gaps in the wider educational and training infrastructure;
- policy frameworks that both **facilitate robust demand for young workers and also promote the supply of young people** with an appropriate mix of qualifications, broader skills and work experience;
- **complementarity between EU and domestic policy** approaches to maximise the added value of EU-funded interventions, included efforts to avoid duplication;
- **effective coordination** across levels of government and agencies/organisations involved in youth employment policies and initiatives (including between ERDF and ESF);
- regulatory frameworks and administrative procedures that are supportive of youth employment interventions, notably **simple and streamlined requirements for businesses** and other **final beneficiaries** and also, where necessary, **investment in administrative capacity** to enable effective delivery of interventions.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of the financial crisis and economic recession in 2008, unemployment and economic inactivity have risen steeply amongst younger people in Europe. Although tentative economic recovery can now be seen in many EU Member States, unemployment rates across all age groups have yet to show improvement. Youth unemployment rates are both higher than average rates and perceived as particularly problematical, due to the risk that of systemic effects across a generation of people, with consequent economic and social implications.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of youth employment has risen sharply up the EU's political agenda since 2011, leading to a range of measures, notably the Youth Employment Initiative, the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Action Teams. Cohesion policy is an important component of the EU response. Programmes already allocated significant funding to relevant measures at the beginning of 2007-13, including capital spending related to education and training; current spending on all types of education and training; wage subsidies for firms to employ young people (including apprenticeships); aid to young people to start new firms; funding for the delivery of advice and guidance aimed at preventing school drop-outs and facilitating labour market entry; work placements; and education and employment-related support for vulnerable groups of young people. Programmes in Member States particularly affected by youth unemployment have been further directed towards this theme in 2012-13, and preparations for the future indicate a strong focus on youth employment in the 2014-20 period.

The aim of this report is to examine how Structural Funds are being used to address youth unemployment in Europe. The report begins with an outline of the current youth unemployment situation in Europe (Section 2), before examining EU policies for youth employment, both in general and those channelled specifically through Cohesion policy (Section 3). It then briefly summarises the state of knowledge on the effects of youth employment policies (Section 4). Section 5 then considers how the IQ-Net partners have addressed youth employment in 2007-13 and describes the planned approaches on this theme for the 2014-20 period. The report then draws on a combination of fieldwork and a review of previous evaluations to explore the challenges experienced by IQ-Net partners in designing and implementing youth employment interventions in 2007-13, and to draw out lessons for future programming (Section 6). The final section outlines a number of issues for discussion.

The report is draws on a mix of desk research and interviews with government officials working on the implementation of Cohesion policy programmes in the 13 Member States where managing authorities and programme secretariats are partners in IQ-Net. The surveyed programmes collectively account for almost one-third of Cohesion policy spending and encompass a mix of Convergence, Regional Competitiveness & Employment, and Phasing-In/Out regions. The desk-based research has focused on EU-level and programme documents. Interviews were conducted with managing authorities, programme secretariats and national coordination bodies.

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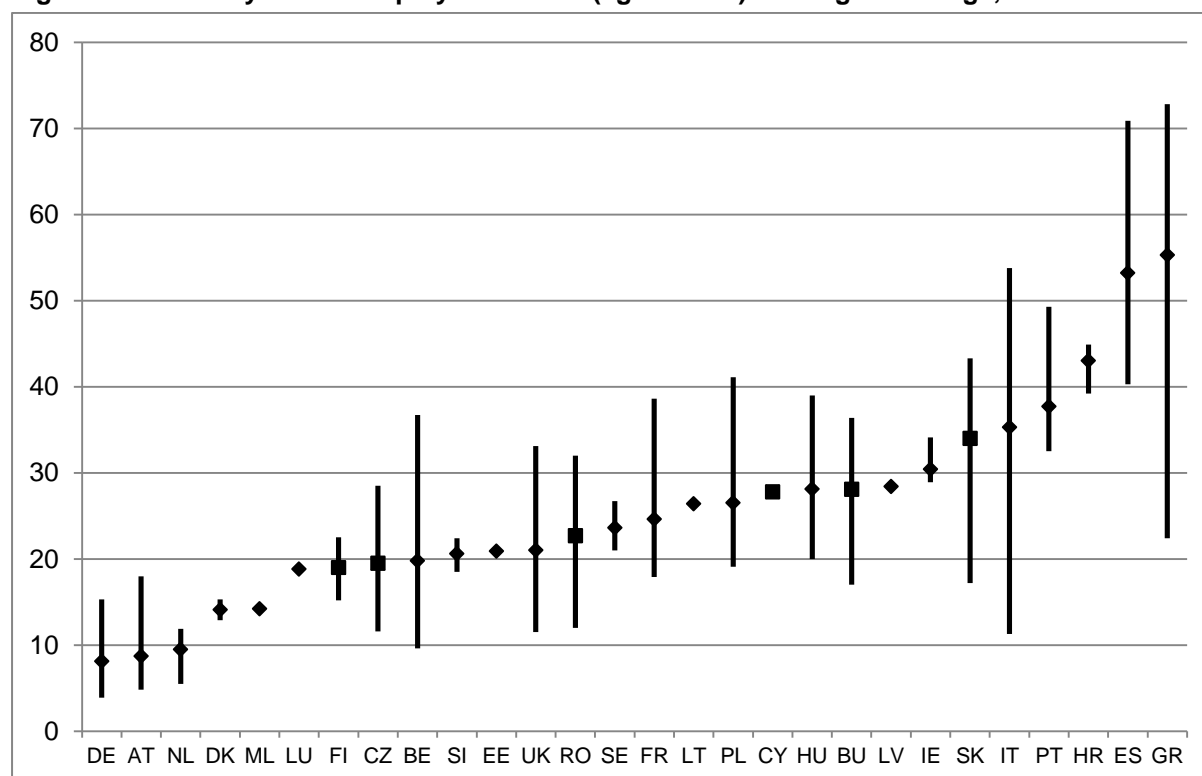
<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organisation (2013) *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013: A Generation at Risk*, Geneva: ILO

## 2. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE

Youth unemployment rates vary substantially across European countries, ranging from a low of 8.1 percent in Germany to a high of 55.3 percent in Spain in 2012 (Figure 1). Switzerland, Norway, Austria and the Netherlands also have rates of less than 10 percent, whereas Spain, Croatia, Portugal and Italy have rates above 35 percent.

Interregional youth unemployment rates also vary significantly between EU Member States. The largest regional range is in Greece, where youth unemployment rates in 2012 ranged from 22.7 percent in Ionia Nisia to 72.5 percent in Dytiki Makedonia. Regional variation is also high (with a range of 25 percent or greater) in Italy, Spain, Belgium and Slovakia. It is lowest in Denmark, Slovenia and Ireland (less than five percent). Although there is a broad correlation between lower national unemployment and lower regional range, there are some clear exceptions. Germany, for example, has very low national youth unemployment rates but still shows greater regional variation than Croatia, Ireland and Sweden, which have much higher national youth unemployment.

**Figure 1: National youth unemployment rates (ages 15-24) and regional range, 2012**

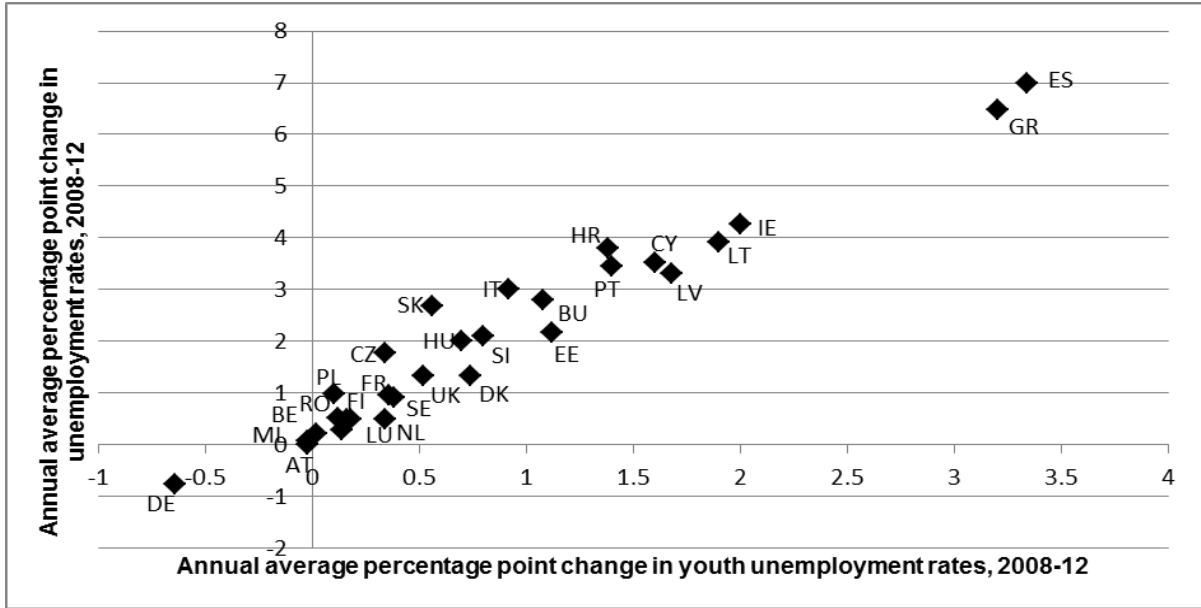


**Source:** EPRC calculations based on Eurostat data.

**Note:** The squares show national youth unemployment rates, while the vertical lines show the range of NUTS 2 unemployment rates (i.e. the rates in the region with the highest and lowest rates). Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Malta are each made up of a single NUTS 2 region, and so only a square is shown.

Youth unemployment rates have risen sharply in a number of Member States during the economic crisis and recession, and much more strongly than total unemployment rates (see Figure 2). Increases have been particularly dramatic in Greece and Spain, with annual average youth unemployment rate increases of +7.0 and +6.5 percent respectively. In contrast, Germany saw a fall in youth unemployment rates in 2008-12, and Austria showed no change in rate.

**Figure 2: Unemployment and youth unemployment rates, annual average change in 2008-12**

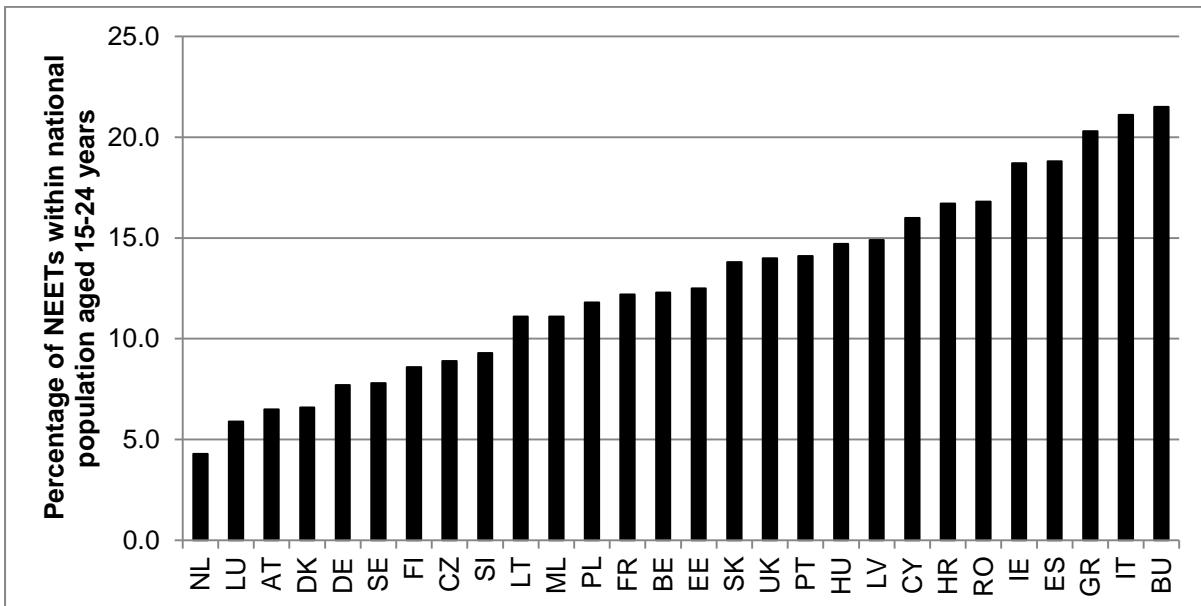


**Source:** EPRC calculations based on Ameco and Eurostat data.

**Note:** The coefficient of determination (R-squared) is 94.9 percent.

Although the unemployment rate is the main indicator used to measure the operation of national and regional labour markets, it has some limitations in assessing the status of young people, many of whom are in full-time education/training, rather than economically active. Policy-makers have therefore also started to consider the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Figure 3 shows the ranking of Member States in terms of the percentage of NEET; this ranking varies (e.g. for Bulgaria) compared to the ranking on youth unemployment rates in Figure 1. However, many Member States perform poorly (e.g. Greece and Italy) or well (e.g. Luxembourg and the Netherlands) on both indicators.

**Figure 3: Percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), 2012**



**Source:** EPRC calculations based on Eurostat data.

### 3. EU POLICY APPROACHES TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

#### 3.1 EU policies for youth employment

The theme of youth employment has long been politically important in many EU Member States due to concerns over demographic change, the availability and matching of skills and qualifications, and the social exclusion of certain groups of young people. However, this theme has risen up the policy agenda in the context of the financial crisis and economic downturn, which has led to sharp increases in youth unemployment rates in those Member States most severely affected by the crisis.

Various dimensions of the Europe Strategy 2020<sup>2</sup> relate to the theme of youth employment, notably the targets relating to education (reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10 percent, and ensuring that at least 40 percent of 30-34 year-olds complete third level education) and employment (reaching employment rates of 75 percent among 20-64 year olds), as well as two of the seven Flagship Initiatives 2010, namely Youth on the Move,<sup>3</sup> and An agenda for new skills and jobs.<sup>4</sup>

A range of new EU initiatives have been launched since 2011, including the Youth Opportunities Initiative of December 2011,<sup>5</sup> the Employment Package of April 2012,<sup>6</sup> the Youth Employment Package of December 2012,<sup>7</sup> the Youth Employment Initiative of March 2013,<sup>8</sup> the Youth Guarantee of April 2013,<sup>9</sup> and the Youth Unemployment Communication of June 2013.<sup>10</sup> Related initiatives include: the Rethinking Education package 2012,<sup>11</sup> the Quality Framework for Traineeships,<sup>12</sup> and the

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2010a) *Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 3.3.2010, COM(2010) 2020.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2010b) *Youth on the move: An initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, COM(2010) 477 final.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2010c) *An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 23.11.2010, COM(2010) 682.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2011a) *Youth opportunities initiative*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 20.12.2011, COM(2011) 933 final.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2012a) *Towards a job-rich recovery*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 18.4.2012, COM(2012) 173 final.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2012b) *Moving Youth into Employment*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 5.12.2012, COM(2012) 727 final.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2013a) *Youth Employment Initiative*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 12.3.2013, COM(2013) 144 final.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission (2012c) *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee*, Brussels, 5.12.2012, COM(2012) 729 final.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (2013b) *Working together for Europe's young people: A call to action on youth unemployment*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 19.6.2013, COM(2013) 447 final.

<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2012d) *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 20.11.2012, COM(2012) 669 final.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission (2012e) *Quality Framework for Traineeships*, Commission staff working document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 18.4.2012, SWD(2012) 99 final.

European Alliance for Apprenticeships.<sup>13</sup> There is also an emphasis on longer-term efforts to achieve structural reforms that are intended to improve youth employment, within the context of country-specific recommendations adopted under the European Semester.<sup>14</sup>

The **Youth Employment Initiative** (YEI) is of particular importance from a Cohesion policy perspective (see Table 1 and Section 4.2.2). It is an additional financial instrument within the 2014-20 Multiannual Financial Framework and will fund interventions for young people who are not in education, employment or training in those EU regions with a 2012 youth unemployment rate of 25 percent or above. YEI funding (€6 billion in 2014-20) will be integrated into the ESF programming framework.

The core focus of the YEI will be the **Youth Guarantee**, which is a joint commitment by the EU and Member States to 'ensure that all young people receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education'.<sup>15</sup> This approach was agreed in April 2013 but has been discussed at EU level since 2005, and has a longer history in Member States such as Finland. The Youth Guarantee focuses on ensuring that public employment services help young people either to find appropriate work, or to gain the educations, skills and experience required by employers.

Member States are encouraged to make use of Cohesion policy funding in 2014-20 (and, where possible, 2007-13) to support the Youth Guarantee, as well as to ensure that it is addressed appropriately in their Partnership Agreements and OPs. Member States which are eligible for Youth Employment Initiative funding must submit a **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan** (YGIP) by December 2013, with all other Member States being encouraged to do so in 2014. The current state of play on YGIP drafting and submission to the Commission is as follows:

- First draft submitted October 2013 (and final draft underway): Czech Republic, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia;
- To be submitted by December 2013: Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Spain, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal, Sweden;
- In preparation for submission by March 2014: Germany, Denmark;
- In preparation: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia;
- Will not submit: United Kingdom.

The International Labour Organisation has estimated the cost of introducing a Youth Guarantee at 0.45 percent of GDP (€21 billion) annually in the euro zone. This is considerably less than a 2008 estimate of the cost of long-term unemployment or inactivity among 16-29 year olds in 21 Member States, which amounted to around 1.1 percent of GDP (in terms of foregone earnings and transfers).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/apprenticeship/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/apprenticeship/index_en.htm)

<sup>14</sup> European Commission (2013c) *2013 European Semester: Country-specific recommendations: Moving Europe beyond the crisis*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 29.5.2013, COM(2013) 350 final.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission (2012c) *Op. Cit.*

<sup>16</sup> European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (Eurofound) (2011) *The Social Impact of the Crisis*, Dublin.

**Table 1: The Youth Employment Initiative**

	Youth unempt rate (%) (Sept 2013)	NEET rate (%) (2012)	YEI – provisional allocation (€million)	Eligible regions
AT	8.7	6.5	Not eligible	n/a
BE	24	12.3	39.64	Hainaut Province, Liège Province, Bruxelles-Capitale
BU	28.3	21.5	51.56	Severen tsentralen, Severoiztochen, Severozapaden, Yugoiztochen, Yuzhen tsentralen
HR	52.8	16.7	61.82	All regions
CY	43.9	16	10.81	All regions
CZ	18.8	8.9	12.71	Severozápad
DK	13.5	6.6	Not eligible	n/a
EE	14.9	12.5	Not eligible	n/a
FI	20.2	8.6	Not eligible	n/a
FR	26.1	12.2	289.76	Aquitaine, Auvergne, Centre, Champagne-Ardenne, Haute-Normandie, Languedoc-Roussillon, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardie, Mayotte, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Martinique, Réunion
DE	7.7	7.7	Not eligible	n/a
GR	57.3	20.3	160.24	Anatoliki Makedonia - Thraki, Attiki, Dytiki Ellada, Dytiki Makedonia, Ipeiros, Kentriki Makedonia, Kriti, Notio Aigaio, Peloponnisos, Sterea Ellada, Thessalia, Voreio Aigaio
HU	26.9	14.7	46.49	Dél-Alföld, Dél-Dunántúl, Észak-Alföld, Észak-Magyarország
IE	28	18.7	63.66	All regions
IT	40.4	21.1	530.18	Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardia, Marche, Molise, Piemonte, Puglia, Sardegna, Sicilia, Toscana, Umbria, Valle d Aosta
LV	20.1	14.9	27.1	All regions
LT	21	11.1	29.69	All regions
LU	18.8	5.9	Not eligible	n/a
ML	13.2	11.1	Not eligible	n/a
NL	11.7	4.3	Not eligible	n/a
PL	26.3	11.8	235.83	Dolnoslaskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Łódzkie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie, Malopolskie, Podkarpackie, Swietokrzyskie, Warminsko-Mazurskie, Zachodniopomorskie
PT	36.9	14.1	150.2	All regions
RO	23.2	16.8	99.02	Centru, Sud-Muntenia, Sud-Est
SK	31.1	13.8	67.43	Stredné Slovensko, Východné Slovensko, Západné Slovensko
SI	23.7	9.3	8.61	Vzhodna Slovenija
ES	56.5	18.8	881.44	All regions
SE	22.8	7.8	41.26	Mellersta Norrland, Norra Mellansverige, Sydsverige
UK	20.9	14	192.54	Inner London, Merseyside, South Western Scotland, Tees Valley and Durham, West Midlands

**Source:** European Commission (2013d) *Employment: Commission urges Member States to urgently implement Youth Guarantee to help young jobless*, Memo, Brussels, 12.11.2013.

## 3.2 Youth employment and EU Cohesion policy

### 3.2.1 Cohesion policy support in the 2007-13 period

Both the ESF and ERDF have long funded interventions that aim to help young people to find employment and to develop appropriate skills. The European Commission estimates that, at the beginning of 2007-13, over €10 billion per year of ESF funding was allocated to youth employment.<sup>17</sup> In 2007-11, ESF programmes supported around 15 million people aged under 24 years; in France, Germany and Hungary, young people accounted for at least 40 percent of all participants.<sup>18</sup>

ESF support for young people in all regions includes: firms' recruitment and training of young people (e.g. wage subsidies and apprenticeships); public employment services and mentoring for young unemployed people; targeted support for disadvantaged groups (e.g. early school leavers, young people in care, and disabled young people); and reforms of education and training systems.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the ESF funds further action in Convergence regions, notably broader forms of support for education and training (including primary, secondary and tertiary education). Further, the ERDF funds support for youth entrepreneurship in all regions, and in Convergence regions also funds education/training infrastructure and equipment.

In response to the deteriorating youth employment situation in some Member States in the context of the crisis and recession, in January 2012 the European Council approved the creation of **Youth Action Teams** in the eight Member States most affected by youth unemployment (Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Slovakia). Since then, the Youth Action Teams, made up of European Commission and Member State officials, have re-programmed unused Cohesion policy funding towards youth employment and SME support (see Table 2).<sup>20</sup> Since June 2013, the Action Team approach has also been open to other Member States with regions which are eligible for financial support under the Youth Employment Initiative. Due to the Action team work, the Commission estimates that an additional 780,000 young people are likely to benefit from the ESF reallocations for youth employment and training programmes.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, in July 2013 the European Council agreed to allocate an additional €150 million in total to the ESF in Spain, France and Italy for youth employment measures in 2013,<sup>22</sup> through a budget flexibility instrument in the 2007-13 Multiannual Financial Framework. This decision stems from a dispute on the outcome of the 2014-20 MFF agreement which was seen to penalise these three Member States with respect to their contributions to the United Kingdom rebate.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission (2013e) *EU measures to tackle youth unemployment*, Memo, Brussels, 8.11.2013.

<sup>18</sup> European Commission (2013f) *Cohesion policy: Strategic report 2013 on programme implementation 2007-2013*, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 18.04.2013, SEC(2013) 129.

<sup>19</sup> European Parliament and the Council (2006) Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 of 5 July 2006 on the ESF, *Official Journal of the European Union* L210, 31.7.2006, Article 4.

<sup>20</sup> European Commission (2013g) *EU Cohesion policy contributing to employment and growth in Europe*, Directorates-General for Regional & Urban Policy and Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, Brussels.

<sup>21</sup> European Commission (2013f) *Op. Cit.*

<sup>22</sup> See: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/137634.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/137634.pdf)

**Table 2: Re-programming of ERDF and ESF funding by the Youth Action Teams**

	Total funds reprogrammed €mn	Funds reprogrammed towards young people €mn	No. of young people likely to benefit	Reprogrammed ERDF and ESF funding by theme				
				Employability, NEET & apprenticeships	Entrepreneurship & self-employment	Education & employment infrastructure	Early school leaving	Childcare
GR	1,150	517	350,000	466	51			
ES	1,260	501	150,000	286		215		
IE	63	25	5,200	25				
IT	12,100	2,641	128,300	676	88	1,400	77	400
LT	31	29	18,000	15	14			
LV	91	73	25,000	11	62			
PT	643	251	90,000	143	10	98		
SK	295	295	13,000	70	225			
Total	16,000	4,332	780,000	1,692	450	1,713	77	400

**Source:** EPRC calculations based on: European Commission (2013) Youth Employment Action Teams: Update for the Spring European Council, 14-15 March 2013, Brussels.

**Notes:** (1) Data are non-final estimates. (2) Data for Italy refer to the entire Cohesion Action Plan which covers more themes than young people and SMEs.



### 3.2.2 Cohesion policy support for youth unemployment in the 2014-20 period

The increased political prominence of the theme of youth employment at EU level, and the existing redirection of ESF funding towards this theme in some Member States and regions in 2012-13, is likely to mean that there will be a stronger emphasis on supporting young people into employment in the Cohesion policy programmes in 2014-20. This focus is also likely to be reinforced by:

- the decision to **allocate specific quotas of total funding to the ESF**: at least 25 percent in less developed regions, at least 40 percent in transition regions, and at least 52 percent in more developed regions<sup>23</sup> (with at least 20 percent of ESF funding being focused on social exclusion and poverty),<sup>24</sup>
- the **identification of a limited number of Thematic Objectives**, including three of particular relevance for youth employment, namely: (8) promoting employment and supporting labour mobility; (9) promoting social inclusion and combating poverty; and (10) investing in education, skills and lifelong learning; and
- the **inclusion of thematic ex ante conditionalities** which Member States must satisfy in order to draw down ESI (European Structural and Investment) Funds,<sup>25</sup> some of which relate to youth employment, namely: access to employment (conditionality 8.1, ESF); labour market institutions (8.1, ESF and ERDF); early school leaving (9.1, ERDF and ESF); higher education (9.2, ESF and ERDF); and active inclusion (10.1, ESF and ERDF).

In 2014-20, the ERDF will include funding for: entrepreneurship; promoting employment and labour mobility (including support for self-employment, local development initiatives, and infrastructure for public employment services), and investment in education and training infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> The ESF will promote employment and labour mobility (including support for the integration of NEET into the labour market); investment in education, skills and life-long learning (including interventions aimed at reducing early school leaving and access to education; and improving the quality and openness of tertiary-level education); and will also aim to support social inclusion and combat poverty.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the 2014-20 Multiannual Financial Framework includes an additional financial instrument, the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), which focuses on young NEET in EU regions with a youth unemployment rate of 25 percent or above in 2012.<sup>28</sup> YEI funding (€6 billion in 2014-20) will include €3 billion from a dedicated Youth Employment reserve plus at least €3 billion from the ESF. Only the ESF contribution will require national co-financing. YEI funding will be integrated into ESF

<sup>23</sup> European Commission (2013h) *Amended proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the ERDF, the ESF, the Cohesion Fund, the EAFRD and the covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006*, Brussels, 22.4.2013, 246 final, Article 84.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission (2011b) *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the ESF*, Brussels, 14.3.2012, COM(2011) 607 final /2, Article 4.

<sup>25</sup> European Commission (2013h) *Op. Cit.*, Article 17.

<sup>26</sup> European Commission (2011c) *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions concerning the ERDF and the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006*, Brussels, 6.10.2011, COM(2011) 614 final *Op. Cit.*, Article 5.

<sup>27</sup> European Commission (2011b) *Op. Cit.*, Article 3.

<sup>28</sup> European Commission (2013i) *Employment: Commission proposes rules to make Youth Employment Initiative a reality*, Press release IP-13-217-EN, Brussels, 12.3.2013.

programming under the investment priority on support for the sustainable integration of young NEET into the labour market, and will focus on the Youth Guarantee i.e. on assisting NEET via job provision, start-up support, traineeships and apprenticeships.

The Commission has proposed that all YEI funding be committed in 2014-15 and that Member States could start implementing related measures from 1 September 2013, to be reimbursed retroactively when the 2014-20 programmes are approved.<sup>29</sup> YEI funding can be used for NEET up to 25 years; Member States may also support NEET up to 30 years but will have to allocate additional ESF resources in order to do so.

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<sup>29</sup> European Commission (2013j) *Employment: Commission urges Member States to urgently implement Youth Guarantee to help young jobless*, Memo, Brussels, 12 November 2013.

## 4. THE EFFECTS OF NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

### 4.1 Defining the focus

A wide range of policy instruments contributes to strategies focused on youth employment, and can be divided into three groups, namely: (1) policies for young people in education or training; (2) policies for young people not in employment, education or training; and (3) policies for young people in employment. This section considers evidence of the impact of various policy mechanisms which aim to reduce youth unemployment and NEET rates.

Youth employment is a complex area with people in the target group being situated in a number of stages of transition between full-time education and full-time employment, as well as unemployment. One challenge for policy is that the transition between stages is often not linear, as young people may not move smoothly and directly from full-time education into full-time employment. In addition, successful intervention is likely to require tailored support to specific individual circumstances at various phases of the policy cycle, including within-schooling, school-leaving, the end of training or university studies, and the end of internships or fixed-term employment contracts.

### 4.2 Young people in education or training

Low educational achievement is seen as a key contributing factor to youth unemployment at the individual level; people with lower secondary education (or primary education) have the highest risk of economic inactivity. Effective policy intervention in this area generally aims to reduce the number of early leavers from education or training, or to increase the relevance of education and training to employers. For example, **education programmes which incorporate work-based learning**, such as the dual apprenticeship schemes provided in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, have generally high completion and low dropout rates (completion is estimated at 85 percent in Austria). **Professional traineeships** targeted at young people, which combine employment experience and study, have also proven effective in Portugal, France and the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> **Alternative policy approaches** may combine 'traditional' classroom-based learning (i.e. without work experience) with enhanced personal support for individuals. In Luxembourg, for example, individuals identified as being at risk of early education dropout (e.g. through absenteeism) are removed to 'mosaic classes' in which they receive personalised support. The scheme is judged to be effective, with 73 percent of those selected successfully reintegrated back into regular classes.<sup>31</sup>

**Area-based instruments** are also used to positive effect, including Education Priority Zones in Cyprus, France and Greece, as well as Portugal's TEIP territories. An evaluation of the Cypriot experience demonstrates that schools within designated areas have markedly reduced early leaving rates.<sup>32</sup> Because young people in disadvantaged areas are at higher risk of early school leaving, area-based youth employment policy is particularly effective when it overlaps with social inclusion objectives.

<sup>30</sup> IES, IRS and BIBB (2012) *Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States*, Report for the European Commission, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>31</sup> Eurofound (2012a) *Recent policy developments related to those not in employment, education and training (NEETs)*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>32</sup> Giannaka, C, Spinthouraki, J, Karatzia-Stavlioti, E, Lempesi, G and Papadimitriou, I (2007) *Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality; Cyprus case study report 1: Education Priority Zones (ZEP)*, Report to the European Commission for the EPASI programme, University of Patras, Greece.

### 4.3 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Young people not in employment, education or training are a high-profile target group due to concerns over the long-term social and economic consequences of their exclusion from the labour market. Across EU Member States, youth employment policies have incorporated more personalised approaches in recent years, which tend to have greater impacts than horizontal efforts.<sup>33</sup>

**Low-skilled youth populations are one reason for high NEET rates**, although strong rises in NEET rates in some EU Member States have also been driven by low levels of aggregate demand and economic activity. Youth-oriented policy responses may adopt either a ‘work first’ or a ‘train first’ emphasis. A 2013 review by the European Commission found that, although the ‘work first’ approach is most suitable for those who are job-ready, the ‘train first’ approach is usually more effective for young people.<sup>34</sup> Effective policy-based initiatives tend to combine training and reintegration support for young people. For example, an evaluation of Ireland’s Youthreach programme, which targets unemployed early school leavers aged 15-20, indicates that over 75 percent of participants who complete the programme successfully find work or move into further education or training. Similar ‘second chance’ initiatives have proven effective in France, Poland and Slovenia.<sup>35</sup>

**The effectiveness of active labour market policies varies across Europe**, depending in part on the broader economic situation.<sup>36</sup> In particular, employment services and careers guidance which aim to increase job search efficiency, are more likely to be effective when aggregate economic demand is relatively robust. In such situations, policies aimed at stimulating the creation of jobs for young people through funding for business in the form of wage subsidies and start-up grants may be more effective. There are, however, concerns over the potential deadweight of wage subsidies, for example when aggregate demand is strong and financial markets operate effectively.

#### 4.3.1 Young people in employment

Although young people in employment are perceived as a lower priority target than are NEET, **policy intervention may be desirable where either supply-side or demand-side problems exist**. For example, young people may be persistently employed in low-quality jobs which do not fully utilise their skills or qualifications, or may be in part-time work when they would prefer to be in full-time employment. Effective policy instruments may, for example, seek to provide skills development for economically active young people, either individually or through firm-based interventions. Evaluations of workplace training policy interventions are limited in number, but approaches in Finland, France and Germany, in which social partners (including trade unions) play a role in designing and delivering training, are considered particularly effective.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Eurofound (2012a) *Op. Cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Leigh-Doyle, S (2013) *PES approaches to low-skilled adults and young people: work first or train first?* Peer Review Comparative Paper, Report to the European Commission, Brussels.

<sup>35</sup> Eurofound (2012b) *NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>36</sup> Kluve, J, Card, D, Fertig, M, Góra, M, Jacobi, L, Jensen, P, Leetmaa, R, Nima, L, Patacchini, E, Schaffner, S, Schmidt, C, van der Klaauw, B and Weber, A (2005) *Study on the effectiveness of ALMPs*, Report prepared for the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Essen.

<sup>37</sup> Bassanini, A, Booth, A, Brunello, G, De Paola, M and Leuven, E (2005) *Workplace Training in Europe*, IZA Institute for the Study of Labour), Discussion Paper No. 1640, Bonn.

## 5. EU CO-FUNDED YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INTERVENTIONS IN IQ-NET PARTNER PROGRAMMES

### 5.1 Structural Funds support for youth employment in 2007-13

#### 5.1.1 *Varied approaches to supporting youth employment in 2007-13*

IQ-Net partners fund a range of types of support for youth employment in 2007-13 (see Table 3 and also Annex 1 with good practice case studies), including interventions that aim:

- directly to facilitate **access to employment** for young people (e.g. wage subsidies, apprenticeships and aid for self-employment);
- to support the **transition from education/training into work** (e.g. apprenticeships, work experience and career guidance);
- to fund **all types of education and training** for young people, including activities aimed at preventing early school leaving; and
- to support **vulnerable groups of young people** (e.g. mentoring and counselling).

The relative importance of the theme, and the specific focus of national/regional strategies, varies significantly between programmes in 2007-13. A first determining factor is the **scale of Cohesion policy funding**, with smaller RCE programmes in richer countries/regions (e.g. Denmark and Vlaanderen) often having a narrow thematic focus (e.g. on innovation and workforce skills), with domestic resources instead being used to support youth employment. In contrast, major recipients (e.g. Greece, Portugal) co-finance a broad range of interventions relating to education, training and employment creation.

A second factor is the **influence of EU rules**. Within the ERDF, there is typically a stronger focus on relevant interventions in Convergence regions than in RCE regions because the former may fund capital spending on education and training. Similarly, EU eligibility rules mean that ESF programmes have a stronger focus on youth employment than do ERDF programmes (e.g. Bizkaia, England, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Scotland, Śląskie and Wales). Further, some regional (ERDF or ESF) partner programmes do not focus on youth employment because this theme is instead strongly targeted by national ESF programmes (e.g. Finland, Germany and Poland).

Third, the **socio-economic situation of individual countries/regions** at the time of the 2007-13 programming is also an important influence. In France, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, England (ESF), Sachsen-Anhalt and Wales (ESF), issues relating to youth employment were already perceived as problematic at this time, prompting the allocation of significant funding to relevant interventions. Elsewhere, however, the focus was less on young people than on facilitating the employment of older workers in a context of population ageing (Austria ESF) and also structural economic change and out-migration (Poland ESF). Moreover, the crisis/recession since 2008 has led to strong increases in youth unemployment in some countries, which in turn has enhanced the political importance of this theme.

**Table 3:** The thematic focus of the intervention for young people in IQ-Net partner programmes in 2007-13

IQ-Net Partner	Austria - Niederösterreich	Austria - Steiermark	Austria - National ESF	Belgium - Vlaanderen	Czech Republic	Denmark	Finland - Länsi-Suomi	France	Germany - Nordrhein- Westfalen	Germany - Sachsen-Anhalt	Germany	Greece	Poland - Śląskie	Portugal	Slovenia	Spain - Pais Vasco	UK - England	UK - Scotland	UK - Wales
Capital spending on education buildings					✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Aid to firms to employ young people		✓			✓							✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Start-up aid for young people	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Kindergartens & primary education										✓		✓	✓	✓					✓
Secondary education					✓					✓			✓	✓					✓
Vocational education and training				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Higher education					✓		✓			✓		✓	✓				✓		
Specialist education					✓		✓					✓	✓				✓		
Support to reduce early school leaving			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Support for school-to-work transition & job-matching			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Temporary work placements			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Employment/ training support for vulnerable groups			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

Source: EPRC based on fieldwork and programme documents.

Last, Member States and regions differ in terms of **the priority given to varying types of intervention for youth employment**. In Wales, for example, there is a strong focus on school-age interventions that encompass education/training and mentoring/guidance, while Portugal emphasises on efforts to prevent early school leaving. In Finland, strategies target support on young people who have problems settling into jobs in open labour markets, not least through youth outreach work. In Vlaanderen, a major goal is to improve the alignment of education/training systems with labour market demand, thereby minimising skills mismatch (Vlaanderen).

### **5.1.2 Methods for channelling funding to youth employment in 2007-13**

Among the IQ-Net partners, **priorities dedicated exclusively to youth unemployment are rare**. The ESF Convergence OP for East Wales and the Valleys is the only programme with a priority exclusively focused on young people, with a specific focus on 11-19 year olds at risk of under-achieving in education or training (see Annex 1). However, many ESF programmes have a specific priority for human capital (education/training) where a large share of funding targets young people (e.g. Greece's OPs HRDOP, Greece's Education & LLL OP, Germany's NOP, Sachsen-Anhalt's ROP). Moreover, reprogramming in response to the crisis/ recession has led to the creation of new priorities on this theme in 2012-13 (e.g. Greece, Scotland).

**More common is measure-level support for youth employment**. Many programmes fund particular measures/actions (Portugal, Sachsen-Anhalt, Śląskie ERDF, Greece's Competitiveness-Entrepreneurship OP, Vlaanderen ESF) that are targeted on youth employment and related issues or sub-measures/sub-actions (England ESF, Finland ESF, France ESF, Scotland ESF, Wales ESF). In the case of programmes without specific (sub-)actions for young people, funding has been channelled either through specific calls (Czech Republic) or to individual projects (Austria, Denmark). In Spain, the national authorities decided to allocate a percentage of national funding in order to continue the URBAN Community Initiative for integrated urban regeneration projects, which in País Vasco (Vitoria) includes support for training and employment for young people.

Similarly, **many programmes include young people as one of a number of target groups of particular priority axes or measures**. For example, Poland's Human Capital NOP channels funding for youth employment through open competitive calls within broader measures; the targeting of younger people is mainly achieved through project selection criteria at the level of the individual calls. The key advantage of this approach is that it provides flexibility for programme managers to adapt the focus of funding in response to changing needs during the programme period, although it may mean that support for specific groups, such as young people may be less visible. However, these measures often include a specific indicator on the number of young participants to facilitate monitoring.

### **5.1.3 Changes to programmes in 2007-13**

The economic crisis has led to **the reallocation of funding to support youth employment** interventions in a number of IQ-Net partner countries/regions since 2012, in the context of the EU Youth Employment Initiative (see Section 3.1). In Greece, Portugal and Spain, Action Teams composed of Member State and European Commission staff have worked to reallocate funding towards youth employment and to accelerate the absorption of EU funds in 2012-13:

- In Greece, the Action Plan for Targeted Interventions to Enhance Employment and Youth Entrepreneurship within the NSRF directs additional funding towards job creation for young people; vocational education and training, as well as apprenticeships and work experience; school-to-work programmes; improved vocational guidance for young unemployed people, school students and students; and support for youth entrepreneurship in innovative fields.
- In Portugal, the domestic Youth Impulse (*Impulso Jovem*) Plan reorients funding towards traineeships, aid for youth employment and entrepreneurship, and investment support. The Plan channelled resources in the ROPs of the North, Centre and Alentejo regions, as well as the Competitiveness NOP and the Human Potential NOP.
- In Spain, the 2012 domestic Youth Employment Plan saw the redirection of funds towards active and preventive labour market policies, as well as support for local initiatives for employment and social inclusion (both within the NOP Adaptability and Employment). In March 2013, a national Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2013-16 was adopted, with an overall budget of €3.5 billion (including ESF €1.1 billion), including funding for wage subsidies and fiscal rebates for hiring young people, new contractual arrangements for young workers, and new measures to foster entrepreneurship, increase youth employability and improve public employment services.

Other IQ-Net partners have also seen a redirection of funding towards youth employment in 2012-13, often in the context of new domestic initiatives with additional resources for youth employment.

- Scotland's Lowlands & Uplands ESF OP has channelled remaining funds into a new priority axis for employability, especially among young people.
- In Slovenia, new instruments have been established, focused on coaching/mentoring for young people seeking work, wage subsidies for firms to employ young unemployed people, and training and work experience for young would-be entrepreneurs.
- In the Czech Republic, Finland and Vlaanderen, new calls related to the theme of youth employment have been launched.

## 5.2 IQ-Net partners plans for youth employment support in 2014-20

### 5.2.1 *Mainstream Cohesion policy funding for youth employment*

The deterioration in youth unemployment rates in a number of Member States, as well as changes in domestic policy priorities, and the introduction of the EU Youth Employment Initiative, are leading to **an increased focus on youth employment in 2014-20** in a number of IQ-Net partner programmes in compared to 2007-13 (Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Portugal, Scotland, Slovenia, Vlaanderen and Wales). There are, however, concerns over the need to ensure that Cohesion policy interventions are additional to domestic measures for youth employment (Denmark). Other IQ-Net partners do not plan to prioritise the theme of youth employment (Austria, Nordrhein-Westfalen), while in Sachsen-Anhalt the amount allocated to youth employment will be reduced because of falling rates of youth unemployment.



Many IQ-Net partners will broadly continue with the types of intervention implemented for youth employment in 2007-13 (Czech Republic, Finland, Vlaanderen, Wales), or with the new approaches introduced via reprogramming in 2012-13 (Greece, Portugal, Scotland). Shifts in emphasis include the following.

- In Śląskie's ESF ROP, there will be a stronger focus on training provided in the work environment; the quality of education (rather than education infrastructure); and supporting talented people in schools, universities and technical colleges.
- In Slovenia, a key goal for the new period is to increase labour market activity and reduce the unemployment rate among young people who already have tertiary education.
- In Greece, aid will be provided to research institutes and firms to employ new university graduates, due to concerns over the out-migration of highly skilled graduates.

The EU Youth Employment Initiative and Youth Guarantee are leading to a strong focus on NEET (e.g. in Finland, France, Greece, Portugal), notably via support for education/training, work experience, career counselling, aid for self-employment, and wage subsidies or fiscal relief for employers. Portugal is planning distinct interventions for NEET with lower qualifications and those who have education and skills but who still cannot find work. ESF funding in Finland will support the implementation of the domestic Youth Guarantee by funding the development of employment and business-oriented services, as well as other individual services for young people, such as youth work and youth workshops (see Annex 1).

### **5.2.2 Youth Employment Initiative**

The implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative (see Section 3.1) will vary across IQ-Net partners in terms of the number of regions benefiting from support.

- **Nationwide support.** YEI funding will be implemented in all regions in Portugal and Spain (including País Vasco).
- **Selected regions.** YEI will apply only to selected regions in the Czech Republic (Severozápad region), France (eight mainland regions and five overseas regions), Greece (all regions except Ionia Nisia) and the United Kingdom (four English regions and one Scottish region).
- **Single regions.** Slovenia has negotiated YEI funding for the Vzhodna Slovenija region, even though its unemployment rate is 23.7 percent (September 2013) because the country is recording the largest growth in youth unemployment in the EU.
- **No funding,** YEI funding will not be allocated in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Śląskie or Vlaanderen because in these Member States and regions, the youth unemployment rate is below 25 percent.

There are some outstanding issues over regional eligibility in France and the United Kingdom. Member States may choose to allocate 10 percent of their YEI allocation to regions whose youth

unemployment rate is below 25 percent. In France, some non-eligible regions (e.g. Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur) have youth unemployment rates of over 20 percent, and significantly higher rates of 35 percent or more in some sub-regions, especially urban areas.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Wales does not qualify automatically for the YEI, but the Welsh Authorities are negotiating with the UK government over the possibility of receiving part of the UK funding allocation.

IQ-Net partners are planning to take varying approaches to YEI implementation:

- Slovenia is intending to include **a specific priority axis on youth employment** (as part of the national OP) and this axis will include YEI regional funding;
- the Czech Republic, Poland and Wales (if eligible) are likely to **channel funding to measures within one or more priority axes** focusing on broader interventions targeting employment, education/training or young people;
- in Scotland it is not yet clear whether the YEI will be implemented as a separate priority axis or through an integrated territorial investment (ITI) based approach.

In the Czech Republic and Poland, mainstream ESF funding will be channelled to other measures in the same priorities that fund the YEI, so that the same types of support are available in all the other regions which are not eligible for YEI funding.

**The expected effectiveness of the YEI is contested.** While some managing authorities perceive the YEI as an important instrument for helping to reduce youth unemployment, others are sceptical as to its likely effectiveness and impact. One view is that the YEI will simply redistribute a relatively small amount of resources (compared to the scale of youth unemployment the EU) and that the funding is in any case not new but is simply reallocated from other funding components. There are also concerns over the implementation of the YEI in some regions, and the possibility that the YEI could complicate and disrupt the systemic logic of programme interventions (especially where it applies to only a small number of regions in a country which has National Operational Programmes).

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<sup>38</sup> Tendil M (2013) Formation des chômeurs: les régions prêtes à se retrousser les manches, *Localtis*, 19.06.2013.

## 6. CHALLENGES FACED AND LESSONS LEARNT

IQ-Net partners have encountered various challenges when designing and implementing support for youth employment in 2007-13 and have also generated diverse lessons for future programmes. This section draws both on fieldwork in the partner countries/regions and on evaluation studies of partner programmes. A list of relevant evaluations is provided in Annex 3.

### 6.1 Better information and tracking of young people

Difficulties in effectively targeting young people are highlighted in Finland, France, Greece, Poland, Vlaanderen and Wales. Authorities in Finland and Vlaanderen have experienced **problems in identifying young people who are early school-leavers** and in differentiating between young people who are unemployed and actively looking for work on the one hand, and **those who are effectively excluded from the labour market** on the other. In France and Greece, these information issues are seen to be related to the particularly changeable economic climate which has characterised most of the 2007-13 period, and which has led to greater uncertainty over labour market conditions, and the emergence of new problems, notably in relation to facing more educated young job-seekers.

In addition, programmes vary in **the capability of monitoring indicators and systems** to collect and process data on young people. Where young people were identified as key target groups during preparations for the 2007-13 period, programmes sometimes include specific output indicators. For example, the País Vasco ERDF ROP includes the output indicator 'number of project that promote equal opportunities and social inclusion of minorities and young people' and the Spanish ESF NOP Adaptability and Employment includes the result indicator 'number of firms created by young people' in Convergence regions. In other programmes, however, results have not been categorised by age group. In France, the monitoring system has faced difficulties in extracting data on beneficiaries with more than one attribute e.g. young and with low level qualifications, whereas in Finland, data reliability issues have emerged (e.g. with respect to participation in work placements).<sup>39</sup>

**Key recommendations from experience of youth employment interventions** include:

- the possible need for additional studies or monitoring of the labour market situation facing (specific groups of) young people;
- more thematic evaluations and impact evaluations relating to youth employment support (Greece);
- better tracking of young people who are assisted (Greece, Wales). A new approach for tracking the progress of young people through school and beyond is being adopted in Wales, where difficulties emerged in 2007-13 around processes for measuring and recording outcomes when young people stay on at school or further education. The new approach is part of a broader plan for addressing NEET, which provides a core set of three measurable indicators that local authorities can use to monitor young people who are seen to be at

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<sup>39</sup> Tempo Economics & Ramboll and University of Oulu and Kajaani University Consortium (2011) *Vuosina 2007-2013 toteutettavan Manner-Suomen ESR-ohjelman arviointiraportit*, Evaluation Reports, Spring 2011.

varying degrees of 'risk of NEET'.<sup>40</sup> This approach should make outcomes more measurable, provide clearer evidence for auditors, and reduce uncertainty over the eligibility of activities.

## 6.2 Targeting instruments on national/regional needs

The experience of IQ-Net partners suggests **the importance of targeting youth employment interventions closely to national, regional and local needs**, not only in terms of rates of youth un/employment, but also the types of groups of young people who are unemployed (e.g. with good/poor education), the extent of issues relating to early school leaving, and the specific factors underpinning low youth employment. Key approaches are likely to include the following.,

- **Stimulating demand for youth employment.** In Member States (e.g. Greece and Portugal) where a wide range of groups of young people (including those with high education levels) are unable to find work due to low levels of aggregate demand, support should include business aid (including wage subsidies) and support for self-employment (both funding and mentoring/counselling) as well as other measures to stimulate demand.
- **Addressing deficits in education and training,** Where funding for different types of education/training is relatively low and there are weaknesses in domestic education/training systems (including apprenticeships and other dual forms of vocational training), Cohesion policy funding may be able to add value (especially in Convergence regions).
- **Supporting work experience.** Countries/regions experiencing difficulties with the transition from school/university/training into employment can benefit from work experience programmes (such as those already used in Poland, Scotland, Slovenia, Poland, Sachsen-Anhalt, Spain and Vlaanderen), as well as counselling/mentoring interventions that assist young people to decide on a profession and to search effectively for work.
- **Targeted support.** There is also a need for more innovative solutions and targeted support in countries/regions with relatively high levels of early school leavers (e.g. Portugal) or to reach more difficult or vulnerable groups (see Section 6.3 and Annex 1).

There are, however, important constraints or challenges in implementing such measures. First, there is **the difficulty of accurately identifying needs**. Targeted solutions may require extensive consultation with groups of potential beneficiaries, including businesses and other potential employers (planned in the Czech Republic for the preparation of calls in 2014-20) but also young people (Scotland, Wales). In Scotland, the effective implementation of training-based interventions is perceived to depend strongly on sequencing, namely the logic of identifying a need (often through consultation with the potential target group), designing a specific intervention, and generating a relevant project.

Second, **the effectiveness of measures is dependent on the overall health of the economy**. Moreover, some types of intervention (e.g. work experience, apprenticeships, wage subsidies) depend on robust business demand for new employees. The difficult economic climate of the 2007-13 period has, however, negatively affected business demand in many Member States (e.g. in Finland).

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/youthengagement/?lang=en>

In Greece, the ongoing evaluation of support for youth entrepreneurship (within the Competitiveness – Entrepreneurship NOP) has found that 47 percent of projects were abandoned by entrepreneurs after they had been selected, partly due to difficulties in providing private co-financing, either from own resources or also via bank loans. Similarly, an evaluation of wage subsidies found that, because firms' expectations of future demand were low, there was a risk that they made existing staff redundant before obtaining wage subsidies to employ new workers, also because of the condition that the firm had to maintain employment levels for a certain period of time.<sup>41</sup>

### 6.3 New methods and instruments for reaching excluded young people

A fundamental difficulty in reaching some under-educated and unemployed young people is noted in Finland, Poland, Portugal, Vlaanderen and Wales, particularly those with family or social problems, those lacking confidence and motivation, or those with negative experiences of schooling and other formal institutions. In Finland, despite the use of novel measures, some young people are seen as so difficult to reach that there is no clear evidence that disruptions to education are diminishing.<sup>42</sup> In Vlaanderen, education/training interventions are seen as often ineffective in reaching early school leavers, who are likely to not to have had positive experiences of compulsory education. This situation is often shaped by structural factors outside the control of programme managers (e.g. changes in labour market demand for less skilled workers). However, solutions in Cohesion policy programmes include (see also Annex 1):

- opportunities for young people to try out different jobs via work experience (Vlaanderen);
- youth outreach work and workshops (Finland);
- support for entire school/college classes rather than individuals, in order to avoid individuals facing the stigma of being singled out for support (Wales);<sup>43</sup>
- mentoring plus non-formal learning that allows young people to learn from their own experiences, to try different activities without sanction and to gain wider social skills (Wales);
- project selection criteria that ensure that funding is targeted on the most vulnerable groups e.g. eliminating non-relevant criteria (such as 'green jobs' and 'innovation') and taking care not to over-emphasise numbers of jobs created and efficiency criteria (which may bias project selection towards groups that are easier to reach) (Poland);<sup>44</sup>
- early school leaving is best addressed by teams of teachers and social workers working in an integrated way both in school and out of school with families and communities (Portugal); and
- steps to ensure the quality of service provision, especially when providers are selected on the basis of value for money criteria (Poland).

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<sup>41</sup> Special Coordination Service & Monitoring of ESF actions (EYSEKT) (no date) *Comparative evaluation of OAKED ALMP programmes addressed to young unemployed people*, Athens.

<sup>42</sup> Tempo Economics & Ramboll and University of Oulu and Kajaani University (2011) *Op. Cit.*

<sup>43</sup>

<http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/educationlearning/employmentandskillsinitiativesforyoungpeople/employmentandskillinitiativesforyoungpeople.aspx>

<sup>44</sup>

[http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Wyniki/Documents/skuteczność\\_i\\_efektywność\\_wsparcia\\_udzielanego\\_osobom\\_po\\_zostającym\\_bez\\_zatrudnienia\\_611\\_POKL\\_7062013.pdf](http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Wyniki/Documents/skuteczność_i_efektywność_wsparcia_udzielanego_osobom_po_zostającym_bez_zatrudnienia_611_POKL_7062013.pdf)

## 6.4 Cohesion policy instruments can add value to domestic policies

**The potential for Cohesion policy to support youth employment depends on its complementarity with existing domestic policy efforts.** In Convergence regions (e.g. the Czech Republic, Spain, Wales and Slovenia), EU funding is central to efforts to address youth employment and funds the expansion of service provision. Elsewhere, especially where funding levels are relatively low (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Finland and Pais Vasco), Cohesion policy resources are used to support additional development activities but mainstream activities for youth employment are financed fully from domestic sources.

In Wales, there is evidence that ESF support has encouraged projects to develop innovative approaches, and is influencing the way in which domestic policy supports certain groups, such as young people who have been in prison, or those with mental health issues. In contrast, Greece and Sachsen-Anhalt have seen sub-optimal take-up of specific instruments because of similar domestic interventions in the field of apprenticeships or wage subsidies. In Sachsen-Anhalt, for example, the 2012 evaluation of an instrument that provided wage subsidies to firms for recruiting unemployed young people found that one reason for lower than expected business demand was the existence of a similar domestic aid scheme, which was already well-known among firms and had lighter administrative rules.<sup>45</sup>

Legal restrictions have shaped approaches to the division of tasks and cooperation in Finland and Wales. In Finland, interventions which target young unemployed people must be led by the Employment and Economic Development Offices (TE-Offices), which are legally responsible for support for unemployed people, whereas other entities (e.g. municipalities and associations) can only be involved in a secondary role. Similarly, cooperation between the TE-Offices and other Cohesion policy delivery organisations has sometimes made more difficult by confidentiality and data protection laws. Similar issues have emerged in Wales, where local authorities are legally responsible for providing specific forms of support to young people. Care has therefore been needed to ensure that the ESF support builds on and complements the work of the local authorities, rather than duplicating existing activities.

A related issue concerns domestic institutional and administrative capacity in some Member States and regions. In Greece, for example, Cohesion policy evaluations have identified structural weaknesses in careers counselling, in private employment services, and in the staff needed to implement traineeship programmes. In addition, the education system is shown to be insufficiently responsive to changing skill needs and to provide relatively limited opportunities for vocational education and, particularly, for apprenticeships and other dual vocational training programmes. Administrative capacity issues have also arisen in the Czech Republic, where the labour offices responsible for public employment services have lacked the staff resources needed to provide the required forms of youth employment support.

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<sup>45</sup> [http://www.sachsen-anhalt.de/fileadmin/Elementbibliothek/Bibliothek\\_Politik\\_und\\_Verwaltung/Bibliothek\\_Europa/Aktuelles/EU-Fond-Blog/Begleitung\\_Bewertung\\_EFRE\\_ESF\\_ST\\_-\\_2012\\_-\\_Eval\\_GAJL\\_EH\\_Endbericht\\_20130308.pdf](http://www.sachsen-anhalt.de/fileadmin/Elementbibliothek/Bibliothek_Politik_und_Verwaltung/Bibliothek_Europa/Aktuelles/EU-Fond-Blog/Begleitung_Bewertung_EFRE_ESF_ST_-_2012_-_Eval_GAJL_EH_Endbericht_20130308.pdf)

**Key lessons on the links between Cohesion policy and domestic policies** are twofold:

- the importance of continuing to reinforce domestic institutional and administrative capacity in certain Member States and regions; and
- the need for detailed ex-ante assessments and planning of Cohesion policy interventions in order to avoid overlaps with existing domestic instruments, and to ensure real added value.

## 6.5 Coordinating public sector responses to youth employment

A range of problems relating to the involvement of partners in programme-level or project implementation have arisen in the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Sachsen-Anhalt, Poland and Wales). **Many of the challenges of effective youth employment support relate to the need for better coordination.**

In France, a key issue has been the wide range of diverse intermediate bodies involved in the delivery of ESF support, although steps have recently been taken to reduce their numbers. The segmentation of ESF measures by institution and instrument is seen to have further reduced transparency. There are wider issues around the proper targeting of beneficiaries with different funding authorities using their own criteria (such as duration of unemployment, the nature of benefits received, age, place of residence, or level of qualification), leading to compartmentalisation as well as overlaps.

In Finland and Wales, ESF support is seen to have facilitated more effective partnerships and joint working among a range of organisations, including local authorities. In Finland, for example, new types of intervention (such as outreach youth work and workshop-type approaches) have been found to promote cooperation between delivery bodies. In Sachsen-Anhalt, however, there is seen to be a need for scope to optimise ESF measures in support of the school to training transition by enhancing links between schools and businesses, as well as by improving coordination among the many different actors involved.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, in Greece, greater efforts are perceived to be needed to consult actors on the design of active labour market measures in 2007-13, or in taking the views of actors sufficiently into account.<sup>47</sup>

In Austria and Scotland, existing relationships and structures, namely the Territorial Employment Pacts in Austria,<sup>48</sup> and the Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland, have facilitated the coordinated involvement of partners.<sup>49</sup> In East Wales and the Valleys ESF OP, projects built around pre-existing partnerships and ground rules for collaboration are also seen to have operated more smoothly than those involving new and inexperienced partners. Nevertheless, the involvement of new partners, including local authorities, in Wales is seen to have been beneficial in broadening partnerships and in ensuring that projects are locally appropriate.

The degree of coordination between the ERDF and ESF on youth employment issues has varied in 2007-13, with some programmes sharing strategies and managing authorities (e.g. Sachsen-Anhalt). Elsewhere, there has been only limited coordination between the ESF and ERDF (e.g. England,

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<sup>46</sup> Rambøll (2010) *Themenspezifische Evaluierung: Zusammenspiel der ESF-geförderten Massnahmen am Übergang Schule-Ausbildung*, Report to the Ministerium der Finanzen des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, Magdeburg.

<sup>47</sup> Special Coordination Service & Monitoring of ESF actions (EYSEKT) (no date) *Op. Cit.*

<sup>48</sup> See <http://www.pakte.at/>

<sup>49</sup> See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/resource/0039/00394611.pdf>

Nordrhein-Westfalen, Vlaanderen), although the boundaries between the different Fund programmes were demarcated at the beginning of the 2007-13 period. The lack of integration is less problematical in those RCE regions where ERDF and ESF programmes have quite distinct and thematically narrow strategic orientations and where ERDF funding for youth employment is confined to start-up support or integrated urban interventions. The need for ERDF/ESF coordination may be greater in countries/regions with broader programmes that contribute more extensively to public expenditure. This may, however, be challenging in practice; in 2007-2013 in the Czech Republic, it proved difficult to ensure the effective co-ordination of specific calls for related types of ESF and ERDF projects.

A final coordination issue concerns the provision of domestic co-financing, which in Greece, Poland and Wales has come under pressure during the recession due to broad constraints on public sector finances. In Greece, the Manpower Employment Organisation (*Οργανισμός Απασχόλησης Εργατικού Δυναμικού*, OAED), which is responsible for public employment services, has faced significant funding cuts and has had to redefine its operating model and make greater use of partnerships for service delivery.<sup>50</sup> An extensive plan has been agreed for revising and upgrading services provided by OAED, including under the Youth Guarantee, with key responsibilities outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding between OAED and the European Commission and Task Force. In Poland and Wales, fiscal constraints have led to limits on the capacity of local authorities and other local partners to provide domestic co-financing for local education and training projects for young unemployed people.

**The lessons of experience with respect to coordination** include the following:

- the need to assess ex-ante whether steps should be taken to enhance consultation or coordination with specific partners, to involve new partners, or to build on existing domestic forms of cooperation;
- The potential to improve coordination of ERDF and ESF interventions relating to youth employment; in the Czech Republic, for example, there are coordinated preparations for the 2014-20 period between the ESF National Employment OP (which supports training activities) and the Integrated Regional OP (which funds capital spending on training centres); and
- possible forms of action to address difficulties faced by specific partners in providing domestic public financing; in Wales, for example, the managing authority is considering whether to respond in 2013-15 by increasing intervention rates, or allowing projects to proceed at a reduced scale.

## 6.6 Scope to simplify EU and domestic rules

The combination of EU and Member States' domestic rules on the administration of public funding often generates challenges for programme and project implementation, including in the field of youth employment. A heavy administrative burden (particularly in comparison to other potential funders) is seen to have reduced demand for certain types of funding in France, Greece, Sachsen-Anhalt, Scotland and Wales. **Although some regulatory problems are attributable to the EU framework, other problems with rules are national in origin.** Key issues have concerned the following:

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<sup>50</sup> Special Coordination Service & Monitoring of ESF actions (EYSEKT) (no date) *Op. Cit.*



- in Greece, larger manufacturing firms have been reluctant to take up wage subsidies because of restrictions on redundancies and the *de minimis* rules;<sup>51</sup>
- strict requirements (beyond legal restrictions) have reduced demand for wage subsidies from firms (e.g. restaurants and bakeries) employing workers at night (Greece);
- the take-up of wage subsidies in Sachsen-Anhalt has been reduced by the eligibility criterion that employees must be given permanent jobs within 14 days of project closure;<sup>52</sup>
- a key issue in France is the need to certify hours worked by employees benefiting from integration measures;<sup>53</sup>
- in Scotland, the need for proof of payment in the form of bank statements from employers and employees who receive ESF-funded support may have limited firms' involvement;
- the complexity of different procurement procedures has reduced take-up (Wales); and
- weak monitoring and accounting systems in some implementing bodies, leading to irregularities, as well as difficulties due to the late and retroactive application of EU rules on flat rate costs (France).

Other problems are seen to relate specifically to innovative and non-standard projects, which are perceived as particularly important for reaching more vulnerable young people and those not motivated to enter education/training or employment (Czech Republic, Poland, Scotland, Vlaanderen). Particular issues relating to innovative projects are:

- greater difficulties with the ex-ante calculation of simplified costs (Vlaanderen); and
- the strict forms of financial control and monitoring associated with Cohesion policy can act as a disincentive to orient projects towards more difficult-to-reach groups because they reduce scope for projects to fail to spend money effectively and deliver clear outputs (Poland).<sup>54</sup>

In France, a 2010 evaluation of the ESF and integration measures includes five scenarios of approaches to simplifying and improving ESF governance in 2014-20.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in the Czech Republic, steps are underway to create a simpler implementation structure in 2014-20, including efforts to streamline communication with applicants and beneficiaries, and reduce the number of entities involved in management and implementation.

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<sup>51</sup> Special Coordination Service & Monitoring of ESF actions (EYSEKT) (no date) *Op. Cit.*

<sup>52</sup> Rambøll (2012) *Evaluation der Eingliederungshilfen bei Projekten „Gegen Abwanderung junger Landeskinder“ (GAJL) im Rahmen der EU-Strukturfonds Sachsen-Anhalt 2007–2013*, Report to the Ministerium der Finanzen des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, Magdeburg.

<sup>53</sup> Inspection Générale des Finances and Inspection Générale des Affaires Sociales (2013) *Le financement de l'insertion par l'activité économique*, Rapport, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup>

[http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Wyniki/Documents/skuteznosc\\_i\\_efektywnosc\\_wsparcia\\_udzielanego\\_osobom\\_po\\_zostajacym\\_bez\\_zatrudnienia\\_611\\_POKL\\_7062013.pdf](http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Wyniki/Documents/skuteznosc_i_efektywnosc_wsparcia_udzielanego_osobom_po_zostajacym_bez_zatrudnienia_611_POKL_7062013.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> Amnyos and Edater (2010) *Le FSE et l'offre d'insertion dans les territoires*, Evaluation commissioned by DGEFP.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION ISSUES

Youth unemployment is a major challenge facing policymakers at EU level and in many Member States and regions. Prolonged weak economic growth and austerity policies have created a bleak outlook for many young people in finding employment with potentially major long-term social and political consequences. Some aspects of the problem are not new: even before the crisis, policymakers in many countries were concerned about the category of young people termed 'not in employment, education or training (NEET)' who were effectively excluded from the labour market often due to a complex mix of economic and social factors. Gaps in education and training systems, from pre-school to post-school, may also play a part in some countries. The problem of NEETs has been exacerbated by the economic conditions in many Member States since 2008, where even well-qualified young people have struggled to find jobs, have taken lower skilled or unskilled jobs or have migrated abroad.

Part of the policy response has been to give youth employment a higher priority within EU policies, including Cohesion policy. Recent years have seen a range of EU policy initiatives and a special budget line within the Multiannual Financial Framework termed the Youth Employment Initiative. The survey of IQ-Net partner authorities, covering a range of Convergence and Regional Competitiveness & Employment programmes across the EU indicates that many authorities will continue to use Cohesion policy to support youth employment interventions in the 2014-20 period.

However, the experience of managing authorities and implementing bodies indicates the challenges associated with the management and delivery of Cohesion policy interventions for youth employment. They encompass:

- the need for **sound analysis and diagnosis of the causes of youth employment**, and the effects of policy interventions, in individual Member States, regions or places;
- **targeted solutions that take account of the needs of different groups of young people and also, where appropriate, of the demands of business** and other employers, for example via consultation with end-users of services, as well as more fine-grained tracking of young people through their education/training, in order to facilitate early intervention;
- **realistic ambitions of what EU co-funded programmes can achieve** in the setting of objectives and targets, especially where there are gaps in the wider educational and training infrastructure;
- **policy frameworks that both facilitate robust demand for young workers and also promote the supply of young people** with an appropriate mix of qualifications, broader skills and work experience;
- **complementarity between EU and domestic policy** approaches to maximise the added value of EU-funded interventions, included efforts to avoid duplication;
- **effective coordination** across levels of government and agencies/organisations involved in youth employment policies and initiatives (including between ERDF and ESF);
- regulatory frameworks and administrative procedures that are supportive of youth employment interventions, notably **simple and streamlined requirements for businesses and other final beneficiaries** and also, where necessary, **investment in administrative capacity** to enable effective delivery of interventions.

Possible **issues for discussion** include:

- Should the 2014-20 programmes include specific priorities or measures (with identified funding) to ensure that youth employment is clearly targeted, or instead broader interventions which cover a range of possible target groups and thus offer more flexibility during the programme period?
- How can ERDF and ESF activities complement and reinforce each other with regard to youth unemployment? The correlation between high youth unemployment, poor social inclusion, and deprived areas (or disadvantaged regions) means that area-based (ERDF) projects have significant overlap with direct (ESF) intervention targeting this theme.
- What methods can be used to reach more vulnerable groups of young people, such as those with negative experiences of schooling or with limited career ambitions?
- In relation to which types of youth employment intervention can Cohesion policy best add value to domestic policy?
- What are partners' experiences with the Youth Action Teams in 2007-13?
- What are partners' views of preparations to implement the Youth Employment Initiative and the Youth Guarantee in 2014-20?

## ANNEX 1: SELECTED EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

### Finland

Finland launched its Youth Guarantee in early 2013, although some elements of this approach date back to 2005, and concepts such as the youth social guarantee were already current in the mid-1980s. Under the 2013 Youth Guarantee, each person under the age of 25 and each recent graduate under the age of 30 will be offered a job, internship, education or training within three months of becoming unemployed.

The ESF is seen as an additional resource which allows new activities to be developed, notably for organisations who are working with young people. Two approaches are seen as particularly successful, namely (i) Outreach youth work, and (ii) Youth workshops. The ESF co-funded projects have focused on developing new (networked) ways of operation in the context of youth workshops. The networking of workshops and peer learning are found to have contributed to the professional knowledge of the staff involved, promoted multi-professional cooperation and allowed social media and new digital technology to be used.<sup>56</sup>

Outreach youth work is a specific type of youth work, which aims to enable youth workers to reach those young people who are in need of assistance in accessing services and support, with a view to promoting their personal development and independence, as well as their access to education and employment. This approach was adapted from the Danish experience of 'youth guidance activity' and aims to enable youth workers to offer young people an opportunity for safe and confidential adult contact. The primary task is to help young people under the age of 29, who are outside education or employment, or who need support to reach the services they need.<sup>57</sup> In 2009, outreach youth work reached 3,363 young people, and 70 percent of these were directed to services they required. Of the young people reached, 18 percent classified themselves as unemployed although they were not registered as job seekers. In the case of 27 percent of these young people, contact with outreach youth work was made either by the young persons themselves, or by friends or parents. In the case of the remaining 73 percent of young people, however, outreach youth work was requested by second level educational institutions and social services. Income-related issues were one of the key problems resolved by the outreach youth workers.

The Youth workshops aim to help young people to develop their life skills, to provide social support, to help them engage with their communities, and to participate in learning by doing. The workshops provide opportunities to work while being guided and supported, and also receiving assistance to developing a personal path for completing or continuing in education. Youth workshops are organised in 246 municipalities across the country. According to the Youth Law, the target group is made up of young people under the age of 29. The workshops have been a specific measure in response to the rising rate of youth unemployment. Amongst the young people who have taken part in the workshops, 67 percent did not have vocational education. Following the workshops, 75 percent of the young people moved into education, work or into another activity.

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[http://www.rakennerahastot.fi/rakennerahastot/tiedostot/uutiskirjeet/Vipuvoimaa\\_newsletter\\_lokakuu\\_2010\\_lores.pdf](http://www.rakennerahastot.fi/rakennerahastot/tiedostot/uutiskirjeet/Vipuvoimaa_newsletter_lokakuu_2010_lores.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> [http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisotyoen\\_kohteet\\_ja\\_rahoitus/etsiva\\_nuorisoty/](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisotyoen_kohteet_ja_rahoitus/etsiva_nuorisoty/)

## Portugal: NSRF Study on Early School Leaving (ESL)<sup>58</sup>

Portugal has made major investments in 2007-13 to address the high level of early-school leaving. The NSRF has funded (i) education and training courses (ii) the Educational Territories Priority Intervention (TEIP), which supports targeted measures for the territories / communities with significant drop-out and attainment problems; and (iii) modernisation of pre-schools/secondary schools and teacher training. The vocational and TEIP measures were allocated ESF €2,097 million, while the total interventions amount to €4.3 billion (ESF and ERDF) corresponding to 24 percent of the NSRF.

The evaluation suggests a very significant impact of the NSRF on ESL, which has fallen from 39.1 percent in 2006 to 20.8 percent in 2012. The study included a counterfactual impact analysis which showed a positive effect on students across all indicators – dropout rate, transition rate and, especially, retention rate and completion rate. Among former secondary school students responding to a survey, the proportion of those in work after course completion is higher (53.3 percent) than for students attending regular school (28.5 percent), with more favourable contractual terms and a higher proportion working full-time. However, major challenges remain, notably the need i) to continue to increase the number of young people entering secondary vocational education (ii) to adjust measures in primary education (iii) to support adults aged 18-24 who are out of school (about 150-200,000).

The main recommendations of the study are in three areas. First, to improve the system, in particular with respect to the promotion, organisation, relevance and diffusion of interventions: by boosting targeted support for early school leaving at the level of secondary education; and via a better balance in the allocation of resources and an increase in funding.

Second, the system needs to be expanded and made more specialised, through: improvements in organisational and pedagogical performance plans; refocusing vocational qualifications within compulsory education up to 18 years of age; addressing targeted problems of educational attainment/drop-out; developing labour market pathways responding to industry needs; improving choices for people with a normal school record; increasing the professionalization and regulation of mentoring; and strengthening the training of teachers and trainers.

Third, education and training should be better aligned with the needs of the economy. This requires the development of educational and vocational guidance and wider dissemination and application. The Network of Centres of Vocational Training and Education provide an important coordination tool between schools, families and employers in this respect. Additionally, regionally-based smart specialisation of training provision must be promoted involving the mobilisation of the Sectoral Skills Councils to align the specialization and integrated development of intermediate skills. The excessive concentration of education and training in the area of services needs to be addressed, which is influenced by the preferences of the young and existing allocation of resources in schools. Another priority is to reduce obstacles to the pursuit of studies, with appropriate provision of courses in the same area of education and training in the school or in the vicinity. Further, it is necessary to improve the appropriateness of courses, reconciling the specificity and the expectations of students with the quality of learning and requirements of knowledge and skills required by employers. Lastly, more coordination is needed of all qualifying courses in the National Catalogue of Qualifications.

<sup>58</sup> IESE & Quatenaire Portugal (2013) *Estudo de Avaliação do Contributo do QREN para a Redução do Abandono Escolar Precoce*, Relatório Final, Lisboa.

## **Slovenia: Entrepreneurially into the world of business**

The project 'Entrepreneurially into the world of business' (*Podjetno v svet podjetništva*) consists of 12 regional incubators for young people to start businesses. It is funded by the Slovenian OP for Human Resources Development 2007-13, under the Priorities 'Promoting entrepreneurship and adaptability' and 'Training and education for competitiveness and employability'. The project promotes entrepreneurship among young unemployed individuals with higher levels of education by providing participants with the technical assistance and training needed to transform their ideas into working businesses. The project participants carry out work in groups of ten and are employed in one of the participating Regional Development Agency (RDAs) for five months. Under the guidance of mentors, they develop their business ideas, prepare a business plan and are trained for an entrepreneurial career or enhanced employability. The goal is that every participant sets up their own business, becomes self-employed or is employed by another employer within one year after the end of the training. The target group includes individuals under the age of 35 who have a college, higher education, masters or doctoral degree, regardless of school, study programme or type of study.

The project value is €3.888 million, 85 percent of which is funded by the ESF and 15 percent by the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The project is being carried out throughout the whole of Slovenia, but the lead partner is the RDA Zasavje, which signed an agreement with 11 other Slovenian RDAs: Posavje, Maribor, Novo Mesto, Koroška, Koper, Kranj, Ljubljana Urban region, Notranjsko Kraška, Mura, Northern Primorska and Savinjska.

The project was originally developed by the RDA Zasavje in collaboration with the Zagorje municipality. Implementation started at the end of 2010 with 40 participants, 20 of whom were self-employed by the end of the project. Because of these good results, the project evolved quickly into a national project. In 2013, there were 24 participant groups in all Slovenian regions. After the end of the first phase of the project in Zasavje, over 50 percent of the participants found a high-quality job. For the second phase, the aim is that at least 35 percent of all involved young individuals will either set up a business or find a job after the training.

Expected good results at the national level in 2013 will enable the further development of the operation. The regions will have an opportunity to accelerate the creation of new enterprises and to retain young individuals and ideas in the regions. In 2014, the project will include 720 participants or almost eight percent of all unemployed young individuals with higher education in Slovenia. The aim of employing 35 percent of participants via the project should mean that at least 252 young job-seekers will find a job. Although not all business ideas are successful, the participants still manage to acquire knowledge and increase their employability. A very important difference of the project compared to similar initiatives is the systematic monitoring of participants for at least one year after leaving the programme. This ensures data about the outputs and about the success of the project, but even more important is the provision of help and advice to young entrepreneurs in case they require support.

## Vlaanderen: Every week another job

The project 'Every week another job' (*Elke Week Ander Werk* or 'Roadies') targets young people in Vlaanderen who are either still in school, have just left school or are looking for employment. It does this through an innovative communication project about skills and competences which are linked to young people's abilities to make career choices. From August 2013, two young people who recently graduated from secondary education are introduced to a new job every week for a total of 40 weeks. They communicate their experiences with regard to different aspects of the job through their own communication channels (e.g. blog posts, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram).<sup>59</sup> They report on different aspects of their experience, including:

- required skills;
- career opportunities;
- working conditions;
- atmosphere in the workplace; and
- further education needed.

In addition to this, regional television programmes also follow the experiences of the young people in order to generate a broad interest.

The main aim of the project is to build up information useful for newcomers to the job market. The 'peer approach' through which the labour market information is communicated, i.e. based on experiences made and questions asked in the language of young people, is a new and unique approach. By the end of the yearlong project, the two young participants will have experienced between 40 and 52 jobs (depending on implementation) and will have presented these jobs in an attractive way through film and textual material. Through the means of new media, e.g. Facebook and Twitter, it is possible to get feedback from young people in relation to their own work experiences, which in turn allows the further development of targeted support. Furthermore, because of the open access nature of social media, important secondary groups such as parents are also informed and encouraged to participate.

The project was approved in 2012 under the theme 'Transition school to work' (*Transities school-werk*) of the Vlaanderen ESF OP 2007-13. The total budget for the project is €351,077, with 49.5 percent (€173,783) of funding provided by the ESF.<sup>60</sup> The project is managed by the Ministry of Education and Training (*Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming*) in cooperation with the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service (*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding*) and the Flemish Vocational Service (*Dienst Beroepsopleiding*).

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<sup>59</sup> Blog: <http://www.roadies.be>; Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/RoadiesElkeWeekAnderWerk?fref=ts>; Twitter: <https://twitter.com/roadiesbe>; Youtube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/roadiesbe>; Instagram: [www.instagram.com/roadiesbe](http://www.instagram.com/roadiesbe)

<sup>60</sup> Project information: <http://www.esf-agentschap.be/nl/projectenkaart/ewaw>

## Early intervention under the West Wales and the Valleys ESF programme

Priority 1 of the West Wales and the Valleys (Convergence) ESF programme aims to enhance mainstream provision for young people aged 11-19 years who are at risk of underachieving in education and training, with a particular focus on those designated as or at risk of becoming NEET. The Priority accounts for about £111 million of ESF funding (c. 20 percent of the overall ESF allocation). Although 70 percent of the funding targets young people aged 14-19 years, the remaining 30 percent is directed at activities and interventions for the 11-13 age group, with the aim of taking early preventative action to stop young people drifting into disaffection and disengagement and becoming NEET when they are older. Activity aims to address the barriers faced by the 11-13 age group to ensure they can make a successful transition through secondary school and into further and higher education. Projects supported under this Priority have included the following themes:

- Support to school-age children at risk of under-achievement;
- Support to academically able children facing disadvantage;
- Activities for skills for independent living, e.g. focused on young people with disabilities or aimed at promoting inclusion by countering negative perceptions of young people;
- Specialist support for particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. activities concerning young people with autism or disabilities, young offenders, care leavers, Gypsy Traveller projects).

The 2014-20 ESF programmes in Wales will continue to prioritise youth unemployment, including via a specific theme for the West Wales and the Valleys Convergence area, which aims to increase the skills of the early years and childcare workforce. In addition, there will be two Wales-wide themes. The first is Youth Unemployment, focusing on 16-24 year olds, and the second is Youth Attainment and Engagement, focusing on 11-16 year olds, which aims to address the underlying issues which affect young people's attainment and employability, including low aspiration, attainment fall-off at transition points and low uptake of STEM subjects, particularly among girls. Actions will focus on, but are not limited to, young people from specific groups including young offenders, young people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, teenage mothers and young people with disabilities or with special educational needs, or young people who are living in care.

Planned action for 11-16 year olds includes: early targeted action to combat disaffection and provide access to a broader range of learning options; actions to equip young people with skills that allow them to be more adaptable; supporting the development of practitioners in order to better engage with disadvantaged young people; and removing barriers to learning, helping create independence, and providing mentoring for young people.

Particular attention will be given to tracking the progress of young people at risk of NEET, using the Welsh Government's new Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. The Framework should also help project sponsors to be clearer about whom they are targeting and how the ESF can add value. The implementation plan for the Framework shows how tracking systems can help local areas evaluate whether their support is working for young people. A national implementation plan, bringing together critical elements of NEET reduction together with a two year timetable for implementation and clearly setting out requirements of all stakeholders, was published in September 2013.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/131007-ye-framework-implementation-plan-en.pdf>



## ANNEX 2: COHESION POLICY AND YEI ALLOCATIONS

Table A2: EU Cohesion policy and Youth Employment Initiative allocations, 2014-20

	CF	LDR	TR	OSPR	MDR	TC	Total	YEI
BE			958		865	230	<b>2,053</b>	<b>40</b>
BG	2,376	4,607				145	<b>7,128</b>	<b>52</b>
CZ	6,539	13,599			78	297	<b>20,513</b>	<b>13</b>
DK			64		229	198	<b>492</b>	
DE			8,719		7,583	845	<b>17,146</b>	
EE	1,119	2,190				48	<b>3,358</b>	
IE					866	148	<b>1,013</b>	<b>64</b>
EL	3,396	6,398	2,097		2,299	203	<b>14,393</b>	<b>160</b>
ES		1,851	11,735	430	10,471	540	<b>25,028</b>	<b>881</b>
FR		3,136	3,914	394	5,841	953	<b>14,238</b>	<b>290</b>
IT		20,262	1,000		6,982	994	<b>29,238</b>	<b>530</b>
CY	285				201	29	<b>514</b>	<b>11</b>
LV	1,407	2,732				82	<b>4,221</b>	<b>27</b>
LT	2,137	4,175				99	<b>6,411</b>	<b>30</b>
LU					39	18	<b>56</b>	
HU	6,291	13,405			414	316	<b>20,427</b>	<b>46</b>
MT	227		439			15	<b>681</b>	
NL					905	341	<b>1,246</b>	
AT			65		820	225	<b>1,110</b>	
PL	24,189	45,756			2,010	613	<b>72,568</b>	<b>236</b>
PT	2,990	14,956	231	103	1,144	107	<b>19,531</b>	<b>150</b>
RO	7,226	13,724			403	396	<b>21,749</b>	<b>99</b>
SI	935	1,130			760	55	<b>2,881</b>	<b>9</b>
SK	4,346	8,459			40	195	<b>13,040</b>	<b>67</b>
FI				271	908	141	<b>1,320</b>	
SE				184	1,351	299	<b>1,834</b>	<b>41</b>
UK		2,118	2,326		5,126	757	<b>10,328</b>	<b>193</b>
HR	2,667	5,206				128	<b>8,001</b>	<b>62</b>
IRC						500	<b>500</b>	

**Source:** EPRC calculations based on European Commission data.

**Note:** CF = Cohesion Fund, LDR = Less Developed Regions, TR = Transition Regions, OSPR = Special allocation for outermost and sparsely-populated regions, MDR = More Developed Regions, TC = Territorial Cooperation. IRC = Interregional cooperation.

## ANNEX 3: EVALUATIONS ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

### Evaluations by IQ-Net partners on themes relating to youth (un)employment\*

IQ-Net country / managing authority	Topic	Status
<b>Austria</b>		
	<a href="#">Mid-term evaluation of Territorial Employment Pacts</a>	2010
	Coordination, cooperation and synergies between ERDF, ESF and EAFRD	2011
<b>Czech Republic</b>		
Czech Republic IOP	Identification of bottlenecks in spending under the Measures 3.1 (social integration) and 3.3 (social services in employment)	2012 (internal)
<b>Denmark</b>		
	<a href="#">Focus on the growth driver Development of human resources</a>	Completed 2012
	Development of competences (ESF)	Planned 2012
<b>Finland</b>		
	ESF evaluation	2011
<b>France</b>		
	<a href="#">ESF and regional integration measures</a>	2011
	R&D and education	Planned
	Employment	Planned
Languedoc-Roussillon	Impact on employment	2011
Rhône-Alpes	Employment effects	End 2010 - 2012
<b>Germany</b>		
Nordrhein-Westfalen	<a href="#">Evaluation of ESF Priority B (Improvement of human capital / youth employment)</a>	2012
Nordrhein-Westfalen	<a href="#">Evaluation of ESF Priority C (Improvement of employment opportunities and integration of disadvantaged people, including long-term unemployed young people)</a>	2013
Sachsen-Anhalt	<a href="#">Evaluation of 'ESF school-training transition'</a>	2010
Sachsen-Anhalt	<a href="#">Evaluation on 'Reducing the out-migration of young people'</a>	2012
Sachsen-Anhalt	<a href="#">Labour market inclusion of people with disabilities</a>	2012
Sachsen-Anhalt	<a href="#">Demographic change impact assessment</a>	Completed
Sachsen-Anhalt	<a href="#">ESF professional training</a>	2012
<b>Greece</b>		
	Comparative evaluation of labour market programmes targeted at young unemployed	
Education and Lifelong Learning OP	Study on options for improving the effectiveness of traineeships in education	2011
Competitiveness-Entrepreneurship OP	Survey on the effectiveness of the 'Youth entrepreneurship' programme	
Education and Life-Long Learning OP	Ongoing evaluation of 'Education & Life-Long Learning' OP	Ongoing
Development of Human Resources OP	Ongoing evaluation of Development of Human Resources OP	Ongoing
<b>Latvia</b>		
	<a href="#">Ex post evaluation of 2004-06 SFs investments in education and science - results and impacts</a>	Completed
	<a href="#">Ex post evaluation of 2004-06 SFs investments in employment - results and impacts</a>	Completed
<b>Poland</b>		
	Evaluation of effectiveness of support for the unemployed under P6 'Labour market open for all'	Completed
Śląskie	<a href="#">Efficiency and effectiveness of support to unemployed people</a>	2012/13
Śląskie	<a href="#">Mobilisation of people facing difficulties in the regional labour market</a>	2012
<b>Portugal</b>		
	<a href="#">Peer review on early school leaving</a>	2013

	<a href="#">Contribution of the NSRF to counter early school leaving</a>	2013
	<a href="#">Supporting young people into self-employment in Spain and Portugal</a>	2011
	Evaluation of Investments in social proximity facilities	Ongoing
	Social and professional integration of immigrants	2010/2011
	<a href="#">Basic and secondary education reforms</a>	2009-10
	Qualification and employability	2010-11
	Connecting vocational training for SMEs	Completed 2012
<b>Slovenia</b>		
	Training, education systems and lifelong learning	Completed
	Employment policy	Completed
	Equal opportunities and social inclusion	Planned 2013
	<a href="#">Social inclusion of the Roma community</a>	Completed 2009
<b>Spain</b>		
	<a href="#">Supporting young people into self-employment in Spain and Portugal</a>	2011
	Immigration	Planned 2011
<b>Sweden</b>		
	<a href="#">Learning and the participation of businesses</a>	Completed (2008-10)
	<a href="#">Horizontal criteria of integration and diversity</a>	Completed 2008
	<a href="#">Integration</a>	Completed 2010
<b>United Kingdom</b>		
Scotland	Survey of ESF participants	Completed
Wales	Evaluation of ESF Priority 1 (Young people)	Completed
Wales	Thematic evaluation: ESF (support for young people, increasing skills, modernising public services)	Ongoing
Wales	<a href="#">ESF leavers survey 2011 and extended analysis for 2009-10</a>	Completed
Wales	Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity	Ongoing

**Source:** EPRC, based on IQ-Net fieldwork interviews.

**Note:** This list is not exhaustive.



## Improving the Quality of Structural Funds Programme Management through Exchange of Experience

IQ-Net is a network of Convergence and Regional Competitiveness programmes actively exchanging experience on practical programming issues. It involves a programme of research and debate on topical themes relating to Structural Funds programme design, management and delivery, culminating in twice-yearly meetings of members. IQ-Net was established in 1996 and has successfully completed four periods of operation: 1996-99, 1999-2002, 2002-07 and 2007-10. The fifth phase was launched on 1 January 2011 (Phase V, 2011-13).

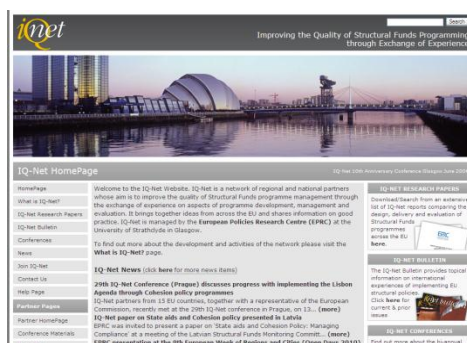
### IQ-Net Meetings

34 partners' meetings and a special 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference have been held in 13 European countries during 17 years of operation of the network. Meetings are held at approximately six-month intervals and are open to IQ-Net partners and to observers interested in joining the network. The meetings are designed to facilitate direct exchange of experience on selected issues, through the presentation of briefing papers, plenary discussions, workshop sessions and study visits in the hosting regions.



### IQ-Net Website

The IQ-Net Website is the network's main vehicle of communication for partners and the public. The launch of Phase V has been accompanied by an extensive redesign of the site which comprises two sections:



*Partner Intranet Pages* available exclusively to IQ-Net members.

*Public Pages* which provide information on the Network's activities and meetings, allow the download of IQ-Net Reports and Bulletins, and provide a news section on issues relevant to the Network.

The Partners' section of the website provides exclusive services to members of the network, including access to all materials prepared for the IQ-Net meetings, a list of EU28 links (programmes, institutions etc.), partners' contact details, a partners' blog and other items of interest.

### IQ-Net Reports

The IQ-Net Reports form the basis for the discussions at each IQ-Net meeting. They present applied and practical information in a style accessible to policy-makers, programme executives and

administrators. The reports can be downloaded, at no charge, from the IQ-Net website. To date, 33 thematic papers have been produced on both 'functional issues' (e.g. management arrangements, partnership, information and communication, monitoring systems) and 'thematic issues' (e.g. innovation, enterprise development, tourism). A similar number of papers have also been produced to review developments in the implementation of the Network's partner programmes.

### **IQ-Net Thematic Papers**

- Preparing for 2014-20: Programming, Concentration and Performance
- The Promise and Perils of the Performance Turn in Cohesion Policy
- 'Smart specialisation' and Cohesion policy – A strategy for all regions?
- New financial instruments in Cohesion policy
- Taking stock of programme progress: implementation of the Lisbon Agenda and lessons for Europe 2020
- The Reform of Cohesion Policy after 2013: More Concentration, Greater Performance and Better Governance?
- New Partnership Dynamics in a Changing Cohesion Policy Context
- Pandora's Box and the Delphic Oracle: EU Cohesion Policy and State Aid Compliance
- The Financial Management, Control and Audit of EU Cohesion Policy: Contrasting Views on Challenges, Idiosyncrasies and the Way Ahead
- From Environmental Sustainability to Sustainable Development? Making Concepts Tangible in Structural Funds Programmes
- Making sense of European Cohesion Policy: 2007-13 on-going evaluation and monitoring
- Turning ideas into action: the implementation of 2007-13 programmes
- The New Generation of Operational Programmes, 2007-13
- National Strategic Reference Frameworks and OPs, 2007-13
- Preparations for the Programme Period 2007-13
- Territorial Cohesion and Structural Funds
- Cohesion Policy Funding for Innovation and the Knowledge Economy
- The Added Value of Structural Funds
- Information, Publicity and Communication
- Mid-term Evaluation of the 2000-06 Programmes
- Mainstreaming Horizontal Themes into Structural Fund Programming
- The Structural Funds: Facilitating the Information Society
- Information into Intelligence: Monitoring for Effective Structural Fund Programming
- At the Starting Block: Review of the New Programmes
- Tourism and Structural Funds
- Preparations for the New Programmes
- The New Regulations and Programming
- Strategic Approaches to Regional Innovation
- Effective Responses to Job Creation
- The Evolution of Programmes and Future Prospects
- Equal Opportunities in Structural Fund Programmes
- The Contribution of Meso-Partnerships to Structural Fund Implementation
- Regional Environmental Integration: Changing Perceptions and Practice

- Structural Fund Synergies: ERDF and ESF
- The Interim Evaluation of Programmes
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Principles and Practice
- Generating Good Projects
- RTD and Innovation in Programmes
- Managing the Structural Funds – Institutionalising Good Practice
- Synthesis of Strategies 1994-96

### **IQ-Net Bulletin**

The IQ-Net Bulletin promotes the dissemination of the Network's activities and results. 17 issues have been published to date, over the period from 1996 to 2013. Bulletins are published using a standard format, with each providing summaries of the research undertaken and reports on the discussions which take place at IQ-Net meetings. The Bulletins can be downloaded from the IQ-Net website.



Admission to the IQ-Net Network is open to national and regional Structural Funds managing authorities and programme secretariats. For further information or to express an interest, contact Professor John Bachtler ([john.bachtler@strath.ac.uk](mailto:john.bachtler@strath.ac.uk)).