



PALGRAVE STUDIES IN
ADULT EDUCATION
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Europe's Lifelong Learning Markets, Governance and Policy

Using an Instruments Approach

Edited by
Marcella Milana
Gosia Klatt
Sandra Vatrella

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Palgrave Studies in Adult Education
and Lifelong Learning

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*In memory of Filomena D'Angelis,
born two months before the liberation from the yoke of fascist tyranny,
was pulled out of school to help with the housework,
a peace and local activist, earned her secondary school degree while raising
three children.*

*She tilted at windmills to follow her dreams,
struggled for economic independence, and
was often defeated by imaginary and real giants.*

Not a weakling, but a stubborn, tenacious and passionate woman we loved.

Foreword

To outsiders, and even to some of its citizens, the European Union is an enigma. It is one of the world's great powers, yet it aspires to few if any of the normal *accouterments* of great power status: no army, navy, or seat at the United Nations. It has a parliament and a president, but is not a nation state. It prides itself on having prevented more of the major wars that blighted Europe and the world over the half-century before its formation. It claims a heritage of European values and ideas, stretching back through Grundtvig, Erasmus and Comenius to Aristotle and Plato. It is managed by institutions, agencies and people who communicate largely – in practice if not in theory – in the language of a state which promises shortly to abandon its half-century of membership.

Not least of the EU's enigmatic features is its making and implementing of policies in areas where its authority to do so is a matter of debate. Education is a prime case. Formally, the great bulk of policy – and law – in education is a matter for its 28 member states to decide alone. In practice, over the last 30 years, since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the Union has become a very active player in this field. This is particularly true of post-school education: the area referred under such various terms as adult education and lifelong learning – though in the official terminology of the EU, the latter now refers to education at all ages.

All this makes the EU a prime target for academic inquiry by scholars of educational policy. Perhaps it was because lifelong learning seemed less

politically sensitive than the education of children that the EU first significant educational interventions began in this area. Certainly, it was more confident about moving into the area of post-initial learning because it could do so under the banner of economic policy, and it was under the banner of *Growth, competitiveness, employment* that its first substantial white paper appeared (Commission of the European Communities, 1993), shortly followed by one explicitly in the field of education policy (Commission of the European Communities, 1995). The year 1996 was declared the European Year of Lifelong Learning.

Since then, the European Union has made remarkable progress. Not all of it, of course, has been in education: it has grown 12 member states with a population of 350 millions to 28 and rather more than half a billion citizens; it has adopted a new currency. But what it has achieved in educational policy is also remarkable. The formation of a massive new inter-state organisation, governing – or contributing to governing – nearly 30 countries has, of course, what President José Manuel Barroso called ‘the dimension of “empire”’. Like earlier empires – though, as Borroso was keen to assert, by agreement rather than imposition – it has sought to establish some kind of order and regularity on its members.

Many of the EU mechanisms of policy co-ordination are, without doubt, “world-leading”. It has a well-known penchant for “soft governance”, and particularly since the inception of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 it has developed some very elaborate ways of doing so: the Open Method of Coordination; the European Qualifications Framework; targets, indicators and benchmarks; not to mention initiatives not strictly under EU aegis, though very much under its wing, such as the Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area. They have had considerable success in shepherding the member states – whose herd instincts resemble cats’ rather more than sheep’s – along a common path.

Yet, somehow, despite these achievements, European education hasn’t delivered as much as its advocates must have hoped. By and large, the Lisbon targets were not met. For a decade after 2008, European economies failed to deliver for its people. The values of tolerance and liberal

democracy, on which the European Union was founded, are now repudiated by many of its people, and even some of its governments. The once vaunted European social model now seems to many little more than a fading memory, valued more in the rhetoric of social inclusion than in policy or welfare practice.

What has gone awry? This fascinating book is the product of research by a consortium, the ENLIVEN project, drawn from across the European Union – and the world – that has investigated this central problem for three years. The focus of this book, the influence of European governance and policy coordination on Europe’s lifelong learning markets, is only one aspect of ENLIVEN’s work. In other areas it has thrown new light on issues such as young adults’ learning at work, on who takes part in adult learning and why, on different ways in which social inequality is expressed, constructed as a policy goal and legitimized and on what makes it harder or easier for ‘excluded’ or ‘marginalised’ people to benefit from our current provision of adult education. Working with computer scientists, we have developed an Intelligent Decision Support System, exploring how that can contribute to improving policy and practice.

But clearly, for any multi-state organisation, the questions of how policies are made, of how they play out in Europe’s highly complex political, social and economic arenas and of who exercises influence – and who does not – are critical. The contributions to this book offer important new evidence, and the collaboration between the members of the team has generated new theoretical insight. Although the authors look at the EU with an inquisitive and critical eye, it is worth reflecting that our work has been supported by – indeed, could only have taken place with the support of – the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research programme.

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Preface

The main aim of this edited collection is to clarify how European governance, specifically policy coordination, facilitates domestic adaptation of Europe's lifelong learning markets. This is done by examining the way governance mechanisms and policy instruments employed by the institutions of the European Union (EU) intervene in lifelong learning markets, at both European and national levels.

The backdrop for this book is that, in the wake of the 2009 global financial crisis and great recession, the EU has wiped former progress, as demonstrated by the worst growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since the 1930s, a drawback in industrial production and unemployment levels to those of the 1990s, and an unprecedented increase in both youth unemployment levels and the percentage of 15–34-year-old European citizens that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). For all these reasons, the European strategy for growth, *Europe 2020*, aimed at boosting a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, not least through high employment and social and territorial cohesion. However, three important features accompanied the implementation of *Europe 2020*: First, policy coordination within the Union has been strengthened thanks to various complex intergovernmental policies agreed among the EU institutions and member states. Second, traditionally distinct policy fields (i.e., youth education, adult education, labour market) now present less idiosyncratic boundaries. Third, lifelong learning has further

developed into a significant education space where “new European meanings in education are constructed” (Lawn, 2002, p. 5 cited in: Holford, 2008). In this space, the adult education component of lifelong learning markets, conventionally a second chance for adults to first enter education later in life, has increasingly assumed the function of either a school recovery or an upskilling opportunity for the younger generations, in as much as the older ones, to compensate for education failures (e.g., high drop-out rates, poor learning outcomes), labour market failures (e.g., lack of employment opportunities) or both (e.g., skills mismatches) (Milana, 2017). Along these developments, lifelong learning in the EU has turned primarily economic and focused on competitiveness (Holford, 2008), yet, from a market perspective, different logics may substantiate policy (and EU policy) interventions on lifelong learning markets.

Against this backdrop, the prospects and arrangements in Europe’s lifelong learning markets following the 2009 global financial crisis, and consequent strengthening of policy coordination at EU level, the blurring of boundaries between policy fields and the redefinition of the function of the adult education component of lifelong learning, have received rare in-depth attention.

This book aims to contribute knowledge to fill in this gap. It acknowledges that in recent decades, changes in the role, meanings and place of adult education in Europe’s lifelong learning markets have not been independent from at least three trends in global governance. The first is the evolution of transnational and supranational governance, capturing, respectively, what outspreads or operates across national boundaries and what has an influence or power that outdoes national boundaries or governments (cf. Kohler-Koch & Rittberger, 2006; Sabel & Zeitlin, 2010). The second trend refers to the growth of network governance (cf. Rhodes, 1997). Finally, the third trend deals with the expansion of data governance (cf. Lawn, 2013; Ozga, 2009, 2012).

For a long time, the study of the *domestic implementation* of the Union’s education policy has been considered the most appropriate way to explain country convergence (i.e., the consequence of integration within the Union), policy transfer (i.e., policy learning, see Lange & Alexiadou, 2010), policy harmonisation (i.e., the adjustment of differences in

support of the Union's integration) or their failures. Yet, to better capture “the formation of economic and/or political linkages among countries that are geographically near to each other” (Graziano & Vink, 2008, pp. 7–8) the concept of domestic implementation has been replaced in European studies by that of *domestic adaptation* to European regional integration.

Along this line of reasoning, the domestic adaptation of Europe's life-long learning markets uncovers the indirect and direct effects of European governance and policy-making that exert pressure on member states towards European regional integration. Among the indirect effects is increased cooperation through policy coordination, to improve the exchange of information and mutual-learning among, and well beyond, executive governments. Among the direct effects is the adaptation at domestic level of European regulatory frameworks, like the Upskilling Pathways targeting adults or the Youth Guarantee targeting youths and young adults. This book takes domestic adaptation processes seriously.

Following an introductory chapter (Chap. 1: *An Instruments Approach to European Governance in Education*) that outlines our approach, Part I (*European Governance and Policy Coordination*) covers the development of EU-wide policies in education, by concentrating attention on the governance mechanisms and policy instruments through which policy coordination occurs within the EU; then Part II (*Youth Guarantee and Its Domestic Adaptation*) trails the enactment of EU policy in a pool of member states, by restricting attention on Youth Guarantee.

Part I comprises six chapters (Chaps. 2–7). The first three provide the analysis of the evolution of transnational and supranational governance, through close-up examinations of three *policy mixes*, or complex intergovernmental, multi-sectoral policies established at European level, each involving multiple policy goals, and the “instrumentation” used to achieve EU policy coordination and domestic adaptation in the member states. Chapter 2 deals with the *Education and Training 2020* (ET 2020) strategic framework, Chap. 3 focuses on the *Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning*, finally Chap. 4 pays attention to the *European Youth Strategy*. Through an examination of the development and working mode of each policy mix, these chapters identify several governance mechanisms utilised within those policy mixes, and related policy instruments

used to coordinate EU policy-making in education. In so doing, they tease out some implications for the structuration and/or regulation of adult education markets.

Chapter 5 acknowledges that policy coordination within the Union has been strengthened through the codification of the *European Semester*, in the wake of the 2009 global financial crisis. This chapter illustrates the formation of the *European Semester* as a new governance architecture that aims at attaining the strategic objectives set in *Europe 2020* regarding employment, social inclusion, research and innovation, education, energy and climate change, but consistently with the macro-fiscal constraints set by the *Union's Stability and Growth Pact*. Accordingly, all member states' macroeconomic policies are put under yearly scrutiny and EU institutions issue Country-Specific Recommendations that increasingly relate to general education, skills and lifelong learning. Hence, focusing on the European Semester's push and pulling mechanisms, the chapter argues these have spillover effects also on Europe's lifelong learning markets.

Chapter 6 acknowledges also the growth in data governance, through the increasing use of indicators, benchmarking and taxonomies in education, and its impact on European governance. This chapter considers the evolution of the relationships between science, data and policy, and reviews how 'indicators' for lifelong learning policy have evolved within the Union under the *Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning*, the *Education and Training 2020*, the *European Youth Strategy* and, more recently, under the *European Semester* as well.

Part I ends with Chap. 7, which presents the *Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults*, adopted by the Council of the European Union in December 2016 as a response to the skills crisis across Europe, targeting adults over 25 who may be in employment, or unemployed or economically inactive. By acknowledging that domestic adaptation of the Upskilling Pathways can be funded through diverse funding streams, particularly the European Social Fund (ESF), this chapter reviews the approaches adopted by different member states. Such variety is exemplified through three case studies covering Northern Europe (the United Kingdom), Eastern Europe (Slovakia) and Southern Europe (Italy).

Part II of this book comprises 11 chapters (Chaps. 9–18). Chapter 9 presents the Youth Guarantee (YG), endorsed by the European Council

in 2013 to provide young people under 25 years of age, living in the member states, with the guarantee of a job or a learning or training solution within four months after they have become unemployed or have left formal education. YG is an active labour market policy that aims at tackling youth unemployment by including several aspects of adult education markets, while, at the same time, offering a platform for fighting against poverty. Hereby, it is acknowledged that education is important for labour market success and social inclusion. This chapter outlines how YG came about and the kind of EU financial support member states receive for its implementation within own territories.

Chapters 9–17 provide country-based studies of the domestic adaptation to YG in nine EU member states (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom). These studies enable our understanding of how the YG influence policies and approaches taken by national and sub-national public and regulatory agencies.

Chapter 18 applies a Welfare Regime framework to further examine the processes of domestic adaptation to the Youth Guarantee (YG) in Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom. It connects the evidences from Chaps. 9–17 to selected Welfare State Regimes' (WSRs) characteristics, covering also adult education. The results point at features in the domestic adaptation to the YG as not independent from WSRs, but also at the missed opportunity, across WSRs, of seeing this policy instrument as connected to adult education in facing the educational concerns of young adults.

Overall Part II brings to the fore the extent to which regulatory politics and wealth redistribution within the EU may or may not affect national developments of lifelong learning markets, and their adult education segments, in member states.

The concluding chapter (Chap. 19) brings together the significant findings from this book that point at the different ways in which European governance influences lifelong learning markets, and particularly their adult education segments, at both European and national level.

Finally, we acknowledge that this book reports on research undertaken under the project “Encouraging Lifelong Learning for an Inclusive and Vibrant Europe” (ENLIVEN), which has received funding from the

European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 693989. However, the views expressed here are, of course, the sole responsibility of the authors involved.

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Praise for *Europe's Lifelong Learning Markets, Governance and Policy*

“This timely book successfully tackles the challenge of analysing the complexities of the influence of European governance on national lifelong learning markets through strategic policy coordination. One of its strengths is the multi-disciplinary consortium of scholars that contributed their theoretical, empirically informed insights to make it a must read for academics and practitioners alike with an interest in the domestic adaptation of Europe’s lifelong learning markets.”

—Pascaline Winand, *Professor and Director of Studies, College of Europe, Poland*

“A highly important and timely edited collection on a topic of remarkable and growing significance. This is a book that brings together the work of a group of internationally known scholars, whose writing and influence in the field of adult education and lifelong learning research cannot be over-stated. Well-theorised and featuring empirical examples from a range of countries and contexts, this book is thoroughly recommended for students and scholars interested in the field of the European governance of lifelong learning.”

—Sotiria Grek, *University of Edinburgh, UK*

“Through a collection of important essays, this book combines a detailed analysis of a range of policy instruments and mechanisms with which the European Union has emerged as a major force in the areas of education, training and youth, with empirically rich national studies of the domestic responses to and adaptations of EU policies. A scholarly, yet accessible, addition to the field, that will be invaluable for those seeking to better understand the governance of the European education policy space.”

—Manuel Souto-Otero, *Cardiff University, UK*

“It is impossible to understand the governance mechanisms and the complex policy instruments adopted by the European Union without admitting the influence of public management ideologies and its promotion of the ‘entrepreneurial spirit’. Being aware of that impact on education and learning policies,

the authors make use of an ‘Instruments Approach’ to better understand the tensions between the Europeanization processes and the domestic adaptation undertaken by member states and national institutions. This is certainly a book worth reading.”

—Licínio C. Lima, *University of Minho, Portugal*

“European Union education policy’ can appear as a contradiction in terms. Education policy is a matter of national competence for Member States to determine, and yet co-ordinating cross-EU education policy is an area where an often times troubled institution has demonstrated some of its most significant impact. This volume, with its focus on adult and vocational education policy across Europe makes an enormous contribution to helping us understand this apparent contradiction. Theoretically robust and forensically sharp the authors help open up the EU governance structures that are not only shaping adult and vocational education, but are having a significant impact on European social policy coordination beyond education. The contributions are essential reading for all those interested in education policy at a European level, but will also be of interest to anyone seeking to rediscover and reinvent the potentialities of a more social Europe.”

—Howard Stevenson, *University of Nottingham, UK*

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Abbreviations

AEPs	Multiple Active Employment Policies (Spain)
AEYC	Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres
AGS	Annual Growth Survey
ALMP	Active labour market policies
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AMR	Alert Mechanism Report
BBO	Big Lottery Fund's Building Better Opportunities (the United Kingdom)
BCR	Brussels-Capital Region
BEPG	Broad Economic Policy Guidelines
BYGIP	Belgian Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEG	Commission Expert Groups
CFO	Co-financing Organisation
CoCoF	French Community Commission
COLSAF	Slovakian Central Office of Labour and Social Affairs
CR	Committee of the Regions
CSIC	High Centre for Scientific Research
CSR	Country-Specific Recommendations
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions (England)
EA	Employment Agency

EAEA	European Association for the Education of Adults
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EaSI	Europe Programme for Employment and Social Innovation
EC	European Commission
ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs Council
ED	Employment Department (Estonia)
EDP	Excessive Deficit Procedure
EEC	Estonian Employers' Confederation
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EG	Employment Guidelines
EIP	Excessive Imbalance Procedure
EMCO	European Employment Committee
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EOI	School of Industrial Organisation (Spain)
EP	European Parliament
EPSCO	Employment and Social Affairs Council
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESFA	Education Skills and Funding Agency
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESL	Early school leavers
ET 2010	Education and Training 2010
ET 2020	Education and Training 2020
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUIF	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund
EYF	European Youth Forum
EYWC	Estonian Youth Work Centre
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEAD	Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
FTEs	full-time equivalents
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IG	Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs
INNOVE	Estonian National Resource Centre for Guidance
ISFOL	Italian Institute for workers' training

JCP	Job Centre Plus
JSA	Job Seekers' Allowance (the United Kingdom)
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LIE	Labour Inspectorate of Estonia
MA	Managing Authority (the United Kingdom)
MER	Estonian Ministry of Education and Research
MES	Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science
MESRS	Slovakian Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport
MLSAF	Slovakian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
MLSP	Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
MSA	Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs
MTO	Medium Term Budgetary Objectives
MYS	Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sport
NAMRB	National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria
NCAAL	National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda on Adult Learning
NEAP	National Employment Action Plans (Bulgaria)
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIPEYG	National Implementation Plan for the European Youth Guarantee
NRP	National Reform Programmes
NYGS	National Youth Guarantee System (Spain)
OCMW	Public Centre for Social Services (Belgium)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
OP HR	Operational Programme Human Resources
OP HRD	Operational Programme Human Resources Development
OP	Operational Programme
OPYE	Youth Employment Operational Programme
OSE	Other Similar Entity
PES	Public Employment Services
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLF	Policy Learning Forum
SBWA	Sector-based Work Academy (the United Kingdom)
SCP	Stability or Convergence Programmes
SDS	Skills Development Scotland

SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SNP	Scottish National Party
SPC	Social Protection Committee
SQF	Slovak Qualification Framework
TCA	Transnational Cooperation Activities
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TIBB	Trajectories with intensive counselling and mediation (Belgium)
TWGFAL	Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult Learning
TWGQA	Thematic Working Group on Quality Assurance in Adult Learning
UIL	UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UP	Upskilling Pathways
VCF	Flemish co-financing fund
VDAB	Public employment service of Flanders
VERP	Early Retirement Pension (Denmark)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VGC	Flemish Community Commission
WGAL	ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning
WGPAL	Working Group on the implementation of the Action Plan on Adult Learning
WSR	Welfare State Regime
YAD	Youth Affairs Department (Estonia)
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative
YEP	Youth Employment Plan
YG	Youth Guarantee
YPP	Young People's Participation (the United Kingdom)

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1

An Instruments Approach to European Governance in Education

Marcella Milana and Gosia Klatt

1.1 Introduction

The search for effective solutions to the growing societal challenges in Europe has increasingly deepened the need for stronger political, social and economic cooperation in the European Union (EU). So, in the area of education (including adult education), multiple and complex policies have been designed and enacted at the EU and national levels. The governance of such complex education policies requires a strong policy coordination approach, as it increasingly depends on “formal and informal types of public interactions” (Pierre & Peters, 2000, p. 3), “where no single actor can claim absolute dominance” (Burns, Köster, & Fuster, 2016, p. 18). Such an understanding of governance as a process that

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builds on interactions lies at the heart of European governance in education. Accordingly, it requires effective coordination to ensure consistency in policy implementation and practice within the Union by a variety of actors, with own interests and histories. But effective coordination is increasingly challenging in the context of the EU (Jordan & Schout, 2006; Peters, 2012; among others), so researching European governance, including policy coordination in education, is a complex matter.

This difficulty derives first and foremost from the EU's specific *actor-ness*. First, its multi-level nature involves increased interdependence of governments representing different territorial levels, as well as interdependence between governments and non-governmental actors (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Zito, 2015). Moreover, EU governance tends by its very nature towards Europeanisation. An all-encompassing, vertical and horizontal, process (Börzel & Risse, 2000; Radaelli, 2004; Schimmelfennig, 2010), Europeanisation largely implies the transformative effect of the EU governance system on the political institutions, policies and political processes of the member states, and beyond European countries (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2010). Herefrom a growing interest can be observed from the literature in researching European politics and Europeanisation to scrutinise specific mechanisms or instruments such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) or to understand the changing nature of EU governance, and evaluate the struggle between its legitimacy and effectiveness (Chatzopoulou, 2015; Tholoniati, 2010; Walters & Haahr, 2005). In fact, Europeanisation points not only at the process of creating a European policy space (Lawn & Grek, 2012) but most importantly to an all-encompassing process of "domestic adaptation to European regional integration" (Graziano & Vink, 2008, p. 7), which occurs through regulatory politics and a "joint decision mode" (Kohler-Koch & Rittberger, 2006). Accordingly, soft governance, particularly the OMC, and policy "instrumentation" more broadly (Hood & Margetts, 2007; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007) have attracted a growing interest among scholars to analyse decision-making within the EU and its member states and its impact on Europeanisation. So a plethora of studies exist on European governance that have put under close scrutiny specific mechanisms or instruments (the OMC *in primis*) to comprehend the changing nature of EU governance, and its

effects on, for instance, national Higher Education systems across Europe (cf. Brøgger, 2019; Chatzopoulou, 2015; Ravinet, 2008; Tholoniati, 2010; Walters & Haahr, 2005).

All of this furthers our understanding of European governance and its effects on education practice, but often these studies concentrate on the analysis of single policy instruments. By contrast our main concern is in the policy instrumentation process that substantiates the governing of adult education through EU coordination. Our main focus is specifically on governance mechanisms and policy instruments as key for the act of coordinating action (Dill, 2000; Dill & Beerkens, 2010; Erkkilä, 2016; Jordan, Wurzel, & Zito, 2005; Kassim & Le Galès, 2010).

As a matter of fact, interest in the policy mechanisms and instruments or tools has been popular among academics from public policy, public administration and political science as means for understanding government's actions, policy processes and their effects.

In public administration, Salamon (2000, p. 1612) notes that the "massive proliferation" in "the tools of public action, in the instruments or means used to address public problems" has fundamentally transformed policy-making. The growth in the variety of actors involved (private, international, non-for-profit organisations) has changed the way of policy-making as well as its very outcomes. Private, international and non-for-profit organisations utilise policy instruments in different ways that result in the establishment of programmes, which are substantially different from those arising from direct government action (Salamon & Elliott, 2002).

Yet, depending on the research interests pursued, various approaches have developed over time to studying the contours of the massive proliferation addressed by Salamon (2000) and still co-exist. We identified different research strains in the specialised literature that adopt an instruments approach and restricted our attention on those aimed at (1) evaluating the effects of policy instruments, (2) appreciating the choice of policy instruments and (3) unpacking the process through which policy instrumentation occurs. Although not comprehensive or causal, in the following sections, we discuss each of these strains with the objective to pinpoint at the main definitions, standpoints, benefits and uses of the instruments approach as an analytical device across disciplines.

1.2 Evaluating the Effects of Policy Instruments

One of the strains identified in the literature on policy instruments focuses on evaluating their effects. Such an interest comes mainly from public administration researchers, whose contribution to the understanding of policy instruments has been substantial. Northern American scholars, for instance, have been interested in instruments as the “means used to address public policy problems” (Salamon & Elliott, 2002, p. 2). Accordingly, Peters and Van Nispen (1998) argue that the popularity of instruments in policy studies derives from their interest in solving practical problems, by linking policy intentions with operational activities of government departments. Indeed, public administration asks questions about how public policy problems may be addressed and what knowledge and skills are needed (Salamon, 2000), hence, its on-going attention on the conversion of policy intentions into administrative actions through various instruments or tools, for the most used as synonymous terms.

Traditionally policy instruments have been conceptualised as the “objects” that link activities and actions (de Bruijn & Heuvelhof, 1998) and have been classified in regulatory, financial or communicative tools, which effects were then analysed (Elmore, 1987; Van Nispen & Ringeling, 1998). Ontologically, this perspective combines the positivist standpoint that facts speak for themselves, with an empiricist epistemology building on a neutral language for observing objects and generalising from these observations (Whetsell & Shields, 2013).

Recently, however, Hellström and Jacob (2017) revisited such conception of a policy instrument, which is conceptualised as an “interface” rather than an object. On this ground, the authors distinguish between “technical and social, government–citizen interfaces which organize social relations and create structures of opportunity for action” (Hellström & Jacob, 2017, p. 609). Inspired by Lascoumes and Le Galès’ (2007) socio-political perspective, this conceptualisation moves away from positivist and empiricist standpoints to assume postmodernist ones, as it recognises that “the actual causal and symbolic significance of instruments is inseparable from the actor/target and their perceptions, culture and

inclinations on the one hand, and the context of intervention on the other hand” (Hellström & Jacob, 2017, p. 608).

Despite differences in ontological standpoints, the main research interest of public administration researchers remains on evaluating the effects of policy instruments.

A classical approach to evaluating such effects focuses on the characteristics an instrument possesses (de Bruijn & Heuvelhof, 1998). This perspective in public administration research focuses on practical problems and practical knowledge in government organisations, which may help improving the quality of policy processes (Ibid.). But such approach may be seen as deterministic, as it assumes that it is possible to identify a set of characteristics and factors, and predict their effects. Therefore, such a deterministic approach has increasingly been replaced by a contextual one that considers an array of variables affecting each stage of policy implementation, including the environment and the actors influencing the policy (Bressers & Klok, 1988; de Bruijn & Heuvelhof, 1998).

Particularly, Hellström and Jacob’s (2017, p. 608) contextual approach emphasises the importance of bringing together instrument, context and actor(s) to keep the “causal/analytical integrity of an instrument vis-à-vis its effects”. This is done through the concept of policy instrument’s “affordance”. Affordances are features of properties of objects; they are “an objective property of that instrument” that is “potential, dispositional, relational, depend on context” (Ibid., p. 609). Such approach illuminates specific aspects of the policy instruments, how they structure action and with what effects and is reflective of an institutional perspective that focuses on the structures for collective action.

As the main objective of the classical approach is based on evaluating the effects of policy instruments, the main benefits lay in the insights into how a policy is implemented and to what effects. In this way policy-makers can make sense of how the policy objectives are translated into concrete actions, for example, by looking at the relation between certain financial incentives and actions linked to these. However, contextual perspectives go a step further to explain how, and under what circumstances, instrument affordances help or constrain actions.

In extreme synthesis, notwithstanding different analytical perspectives, public administration research uses instruments to address the means

that help translating policy intentions into action. However, a policy intention can be pursued through different instruments. While more deterministic views may assume that a best fit between a policy intention and an instrument or tool depends on its objective characteristics, contextual views also consider the environment and the actors, which may support or hamper action. In either view, the selection of an instrument at policy formulation and implementation stages can influence the very outcomes of a policy process. From here derives the centrality of instrument choice to which we now turn.

1.3 Understanding Instrument Choice

A second strain identified in the literature is interested in policy instruments and the role they play at policy formulation and implementation stages. Political scientists, and public policy researchers, particularly, have an interest in what government does (Hood, 1986) and “how, why and to what effect different governments pursue particular courses of action?” (Bemelmans-Videc, 2007, p. 2). Hence, the instruments approach has enabled public policy researchers to focus on the mechanics of government’s action and specifically on the policy instruments or “concrete, specified operational forms of intervention” (Bemelmans-Videc, 2007, p. 4). From this perspective policy instruments have been conceptualised as “the set of techniques by which governmental authorities wield their power” (Bemelmans-Videc, 2007, p. 3), rather than the simple means of transposing policy intentions into action, like in the majority of public management literature.

Accordingly, policy instruments constitute the “myriad [of] techniques at the disposal of governments to implement their policy objectives” (Howlett, 1991, p. 2), which assist policy design, or the ideal configurations that, at formulation stage, link policy elements that, under certain conditions, are reasonably thought to bring about specific outcomes.

Therefore, the particular attention to the process of instrument choice has been paid by researchers interested in the process of decision-making by the governments on the best means for action (Howlett, 1991; Howlett, Mukherjee, & Jun Jie, 2015; Linder & Peters, 1989). These

studies are interested in the selection of the “best fit” tools that would most effectively help reaching policy objectives, yet reflecting “differences over basic assumptions and premises that normally remain in the background” (Linder & Peters, 1998, p. 36).

The typical approach utilised in instrument choice studies has been the *instrumentalist approach* concerned with typifying, classifying and describing the attributes of each instrument. An example that may fall in this category is Christopher Hood’s (1986) classic book *The Tools of Government*, which proposed a generic classification of policy instruments, or “a set of administrative tools” used by governments to influence society in a variety of ways and for different purposes. Although perceived as one of the important contributions, it was viewed as too descriptive and with a narrow focus on government’s centrality (Salamon, 2000). Years later, the author admitted that his work looked only at a specific moment of policy-making, when the government “came in touch with citizens at large” (Hood & Margetts, 2007, p. 130), and extended his work with Helen Margetts to address these limitations.

In a similar vein, Bemelmans-Videc, Rist and Vedung (2007) built on Hood’s work to further research policy instruments’ typologies, but with a focus on the process of instrument choice. Accordingly, policy instruments were categorised into regulatory, economic and informational instruments. The choice of each type of instruments would depend on the extent to which political power was exercised (e.g. regulation as “the stick”, and economic means as “the carrot”) (Vedung, 1998). In so doing, the authors have moved away from Hoods’ tool categorisation and are somewhat exemplary of what Linder and Peters (1998) call a *contingentist approach*.

Another approach that has received increased attention over time is the *constitutivist approach*, where the context, values and government’s ideology are at the centre of instrument choice (Howlett et al., 2015; Linder & Peters, 1998). Overall, the strength of this approach to instrument choice lays in knowledge of different instruments, their characteristics, their likely effectiveness and their link to the purposes of policy, yet differently interpreted and mediated through politics.

Linder and Peters (1998) explain that for political scientists such approach may reveal the government’s implicit objectives and the

likelihood of their achievement. However, even the *constitutivist* approach in instrument choice studies seems closely connected to more traditional forms of government by a nation state, while these have increasingly given way to new forms of governance, thus policy-making and instrument choice need to be considered through a lens of a highly complex, multi-tool, multi-actor policy design.

The growth in complexity of policy-making has led to significant changes in the study of instrument choice, which has shifted its focus from individual tools to “toolkits” used to address multiple policy objectives, and implemented by a variety of actors. Accompanying this shift in focus is also a move from positivist to constructivist standpoints in policy design studies, where the choice of instruments is seen as subjective and mediated by particular values and perceptions. Such ontological standpoint leads researchers to scrutinise, for example, the role and interests of experts and advisors involved in policy design (Craft & Howlett, 2012) and how the “tool mixes” transform and contradict the policy goals over time (Hacker, 2005). Addressed as “policy mixes” from a complex policy design perspective (Howlett & Rayner, 2007), as Del Rio and Howlett (2013) explain, they embed *horizontal* complexity – as each mix relates to different policy instruments and actors within a level of policy-making – as well as *vertical* complexity – as each mix addresses a number of policy goals, domains and/or governments. In other words, the *horizontal* dimension of a policy mix relates to a number of instruments and relationships existing between them within a single level of policy-making (e.g. European). At the same time, its *vertical* dimension refers to the involvement of multiple goals (like economic, educational, etc.), policy domains (such as economy, labour, education, etc.) and governments (e.g. within the EU, these comprise national, regional and local governments member states and at times also candidate and associate countries). Such complex policy design results in the implementation of a variety of instruments that may contradict each other.

In sum, public policy researchers and political scientists tend to use instruments to point at different concrete forms that operationalise the mechanisms of government’s action, particularly at formulation and/or implementation stages. But the past couple of decades have seen also a significant change in the practice and conceptualisation of policy

formulation and implementation, as increasingly dependent on plural and networked forms of governance. This has raised attention on the very process through which policy instrumentation occurs, on which we turn our attention.

1.4 Unpacking the Process Through Which Policy Instrumentation Occurs

A third strain found in the literature focuses on the process through which policy instrumentation occurs, especially when attention shifts from the “governing state” to “the enabling state” (Pierre & Peters, 2000, p. 12), where the state is seen as a coordinator and facilitator of policy-making. Accordingly, the study of governance through mechanisms, instruments or tools has become increasingly popular in empirical and theoretical political science and public policy research. Political scientists have developed different categories that are intended to explain governance and the possibilities, logics and instruments associated with it (Bohlinger, 2015; Howlett & Ramesh, 1993; Jones, 2013; Lowi, 1972; among others).

Jordan et al. (2005, p. 494), for instance, argue that policy instruments are one of the “relatively straightforward” analytical devices that can track the process of governance in a nation state through empirical examination “across time and space”. Unlike “command-and-control” regulatory policy utilised by governments, “governance” instruments allow more flexibility, freedom and less central government control – and are thus called “new” policy instruments (Ibid.).

For this reason, the analytical frameworks for researching governance (rather than governments) and instrumentation (rather than instrument choice) often concentrate attention on policy networks, institutions or the development and execution of public policy, where outcomes and actual policies can be assessed (Pierre & Peters, 2000). Along this line of thinking, a recent trend can be identified which expands our understanding of policy instruments drawing on Foucault’s concepts of “governmentality” and the “technologies of government” (Dean, 1996).

One of the prominent contributions has been inspired by Foucault and developed by political sociologists Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007). This approach links the tradition in public policy studies with “sociological analysis of forms of rationalization of power” (Le Galès, 2011, p. 7) to address the relationships between government and the governed (see also Le Galès, 2016). In so doing, it bears some similarities with the *constitutive* approach in instrument choice studies (cf. Linder & Peters, 1998) in that instruments and politics are seen as mutually constitutive. However, from their perspective, attention to “policy instrumentation” is crucial for understanding the dynamics of governance in contemporary societies. Policy instrumentation refers here to

the set of problems posed by the choice and use of instruments (techniques, methods of operation, devices) that allow government policy to be made material and operational. Another way of formulating the issue is to say that it involves not only understanding the reasons that drive towards retaining one instrument rather than another, but also envisaging the effects produced by these choices. (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, p. 4)

For Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007), the focus on policy instrumentation represents a way to understand social control, and how it is exercised, in contemporary nation states. This is because policy instruments are seen as “not neutral devices: they produce specific effects, independently of the objective pursued (the aims ascribed to them), which structure public policy according to their own logic” (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, p. 3). In other words, in this approach, the traditional interest of political scientists and public policy researchers in the power dimension is preserved, but the question about policy instruments goes beyond instrument choice (cf. Bemelmans-Videc et al., 2007) to examine how instruments are used and what effects they have on public policy (Le Galès, 2011).

Accordingly, Le Galès (2016, p. 518) suggests that “empirically, instrumentation involves associating reflection on the development and choice of instruments with their implementation in order to identify their uses and understand their outcomes”.

Still with a focus on the process through which policy instrumentation occurs, work inspired by the Foucauldian concept of governmentality has introduced also the concept of “policy technologies” (Ball, 2003; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). So, for instance, Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007) have utilised Hood’s tool typology but to clarify the place of instruments in the technologies of government, whereas Hodgson (2011) refers to policy technologies in his search for understanding “the thinking and practices that shape and condition the policy” (Ibid., p. 116) as the “fine-grain mechanics and micro-level power strategies of policy work” that make policy “operable” (Ibid., p. 124). In other words, governmentality and policy technology are used as a lens to establish the rationalities and constructions of meanings that underpin a policy (what), as well as policy practices (how).

In short, what emerges from the specialised literature on the three research strains on which we centred attention can be summarised as follows.

First, to understand the nature and the effects of policy instruments, some scholars propose to focus on the characteristics an instrument possesses (de Bruijn & Hufen, 1998), while others point at the importance of an array of variables affecting each stage of policy implementation (Bressers & Klok, 1988; de Bruijn & Heuvelhof, 1998). The latter contributions reject more deterministic views in favour of contextual ones and call for recognition of the environment and the actors that may support or hamper effectiveness of a specific instrument. Therefore, both the objective characteristics of policy instruments and their contextual characteristics need to be considered to evaluate the effects of policy instruments coordinated by EU institutions (e.g. on expert groups see: Milana, Tronca, & Klatt, 2019; Milana, Klatt, & Tronca, 2020).

Second, constitutivist views (Linder & Peters, 1998) call for attention to the subjective meanings (symbolic, ethical and so on) of policy instruments and how these are interpreted and mediated through different values and perceptions of the actors involved in policy process. This points at the mutual constituency between the selection of instruments and politics.

Third, functionalist views in policy design studies (Barton, Ring, & Rusch, 2017; Del Rio & Howlett, 2013) also point at existing conflicts or synergies between different policy instruments employed in the same

bundle of more complex policy mixes, which involve multiple governments as well as multiple domains or policy goals, and are at the heart of European governance.

1.5 Outlining Our Approach

On this ground, this book employs an instruments approach to investigate how European governance, specifically policy coordination, facilitates domestic adaptation of Europe's lifelong learning markets, which sees policy coordination as central for the enactment of European governance in adult education.

In consideration of the multi-level governance structure of the EU, we borrow from Del Rio and Howlett (2013) the concept of *policy mix* that we define as a complex intergovernmental, multi-sectoral policy that involves multiple policy goals, which is implemented through a variety of governance mechanisms and policy instruments. Hence, we distinguish between governance mechanisms and policy instruments as analytical devices to examine the coordinating function of the EU institutions: a *governance mechanism* is a policy process aimed at reaching specific policy objective(s) that naturalises these objectives, and the effects it produces, whereas a *policy instrument* represents the means used to reach specific policy outcome(s), in the sense of more or less stable frameworks that structure collective action. Hence, we also draw on Lascoumes and Le Galès' (2007) take on *policy instrumentation*, which requires "understanding the reasons that drive towards retaining one instrument rather than another, but also envisaging the effects produced by these choices" (Ibid., p. 4). Such approach calls for analysing the values, history and nature of policy instruments.

Specifically, first we identified three policy mixes: the Education and Training 2020 work programme (Chap. 2), the Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning (Chap. 3) and the European Youth Strategy (Chap. 4) and examined their development and working mode, focusing on the governance mechanisms and instruments they employ. For each policy mix, we build a set of data through desk research, which consists in total of 190 policy documents and reports, and other written

information publicly available through the official websites of the EU institutions, and information drawn from the European Commission's registry of committees and groups. Then, we used an inductive analytic strategy that relies on the researchers' knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under consideration to synthesise the data so to generate inferences (Polkinghorne, 1983) that were "grounded in data and not speculative or abstract" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 125).

Our analysis brought to the fore four governance mechanisms that are employed by the EU institutions (and the European Commission particularly) to govern these policy mixes and five policy instruments (see Table 1.1) that concur to the working of these mechanisms. Their characterisations were initially derived from Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm and Simola (2011), Lawn (2011), Martens and Jakobi (2010), Dale (1999) and Woodward (2009), but further refined in the course of data analysis.

Then, we undertook an in-depth analysis of one specific policy instrument (i.e. funding schemes) which is a part of a larger mechanism at play within the Union (i.e. financial redistribution) and meets policy objectives of several of the policy mixes examined. We traced national adaptations to the Youth Guarantee (YG) in nine EU member states (Austria, Belgium/Flanders, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom) to understand how it influenced policies and approaches taken by national and sub-national public and regulatory agencies (Chaps. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17).

In each national context, researchers gathered official and regulatory documents (e.g. rules, recommendations, laws, evaluation reports) through desk research. Researchers also considered secondary socio-economic and financial data available through the Eurostat Database (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>), and similar databases by national statistical institutes, and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Database (<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu>). Then, they carried out focused interviews (Cardano, 2011) and held email exchanges with policy-makers to gather additional information not accessible through desk research, but also to corroborate their preliminary findings and interpretations. To this scope researchers interviewed policy-makers, policy experts, programme coordinators and managers and other people

Table 1.1 European governance mechanisms and policy instruments used to facilitate domestic adaptation in education

<i>Governance mechanisms</i>	
Standard-setting	It involves normative actions and setting common goals that concur towards the establishment of a single, European model in a policy area (e.g. adult learning).
Capacity-building	It helps orienting the implementation of policy solution to common European problems (e.g. the high rates of adults with low levels of education and literacy).
Elite-learning	It instigates changes in the value system of national actors through peer-learning, peer counselling and so on.
Financial redistribution	It implies that EU financial resources are re-distributed to member states, as a deliberate effect of joint decisions that include conditionality, and are used in support of reforms and activities within a certain area (e.g. adult learning).
<i>Policy instruments</i>	
Coordinated working groups/networks	Groups established, coordinated and tasked by the European Commission, whose members, appointed by member state governments or the European Commission, represent different elite positions (i.e. governmental agencies, other stakeholders, experts) and are assembled, over a period of time, to work on important issues in a policy area (i.e. adult learning).
Mutual- and peer-learning arrangements	Occasions for representatives of member states and European Commission's staff that support this activity to identify and learn about initiatives and practices in place in different member states (and beyond) in a policy area (i.e. adult learning).
Data generation	The gathering of quantitative and/or qualitative data, the method used to generate data from different sources and the procedure through which data reaches a database or otherwise organised collection of data.
Benchmarks	Accepted standards at European level, at times negotiated and agreed among heads of states and governments, by which member states' performances can be measured and compared and thus their level of quality judged.
Funding schemes	Plans or arrangements designed by EU institutions to encourage governments, organisations or people to attain a particular objective or to put an idea into effect by providing money to finance an activity, a programme or a project entirely or in part.

with in-depth knowledge of system-level policy adaptation processes, as well as local programme participants. In total 49 participants were interviewed across the countries under consideration.

These analyses allowed taking seriously the context for domestic adaptation as well as the structural conditions that at country level might affect the spillover effects of the YG on wider adult education policies, thus reflecting on the effects of European governance for the structuration and/or regulation of Europe's lifelong learning markets.

Complementing our analyses thus far described, in this book we also acknowledge two aspects that affect European governance: (1) the strengthening of policy coordination within the EU through the codification of the *European Semester* (Chap. 5) and (2) the growth in data governance, through the increasing use of indicators, benchmarking and taxonomies in education, and its impact on European governance (Chap. 6). Further, we trail one policy initiative, the Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, adopted by the Council of the European Union in December 2016 as a response to the skills crisis across Europe (Chap. 7). By acknowledging that domestic adaptation of the Upskilling Pathways can be funded through diverse funding streams, particularly the European Social Fund (ESF), we reviewed the approaches adopted by different member states, exemplified through three case studies covering Northern Europe (United Kingdom), Eastern Europe (Slovakia) and Southern Europe (Italy), which draw on work reported in full elsewhere (Boeren, Whittaker, & Riddell, 2017).

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Part I

European Governance and Policy Coordination



2

Education and Training 2020

Gosia Klatt and Marcella Milana

2.1 Introduction

In 2009, the Council of the European Union agreed on the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training – Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) – through Council Conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2009), which outlined four specific objectives, five benchmarks and a list of working methods.

This is seen as an ‘integrated’ framework as it refers to all levels and contexts of education:

European cooperation in education and training for the period up to 2020 should be established in the context of a strategic framework spanning

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education and training systems as a whole in a lifelong learning perspective. Indeed, lifelong learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle underpinning the entire framework, which is designed to cover learning in all contexts – whether formal, non-formal or informal – and at all levels from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training and adult learning. (Ibid., p. 2)

This integrated framework may be seen as a complex policy mix, as it refers to a broad range of educational policies including early childhood, schooling, vocational education and training, higher education and lifelong learning. It serves as a policy umbrella for several parallel processes, including the Bologna and the Copenhagen processes, and the development of the European qualifications framework. It builds on the work done through the ‘Education and Training 2010’ work programme, which was the first framework to be established following the Lisbon Council to support national education and training systems. The programme’s role was to develop common European instruments promoting quality, transparency and mobility and create opportunities for mutual-learning and good practice exchange (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 1). It is a policy framework for cooperation with member states, focused on mutual-learning, but it does not have a financial allocation attached to it. In 2008, the European Ministers for vocational education and training, the European social partners and the European Commission took on the commitment to “assess and reflect on the future of the Strategy and of the Education and Training programme” with a goal of creating a new strategic vision for European education policies (Council of the European Union, 2008). The Communiqué proposed several objectives and priority areas for future actions, which informed the four specific, strategic objectives, defined by the Council in 2009:

1. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality
2. Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training
3. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship
4. Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

These objectives are underpinned by goals for common, comprehensive and coherent education and training qualification frameworks, strategies for achieving relevant learning outcomes, greater openness towards non-formal and informal learning and increased transparency and recognition of learning outcomes. The progress against these objectives at national level is measured by indicators and European benchmarks.

Although the Council Conclusions is not a legal document, it establishes a political commitment of the member states and, in this case, has a coordinating function – it sets out the objectives and the processes for assessing the progress. This is done through the explicit recommendation of the suggested ‘working methods’ within the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), which have been listed in the Conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2009). These include three-year work cycles with a specific priority area, mutual-learning (peer-learning activities, conferences, panels, groups) and dissemination of results, progress reporting and the monitoring of the process at both national and European level.

In short, ET 2020 is a policy mix, which consists of a variety of mechanisms and instruments set up to support specific objectives emerging from the Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020 strategy. Before analysing the mechanisms and instruments of ET 2020, it is important to illustrate the nature of education and training policy since the Lisbon Council of 2000, and its developments, which will help us understand the perceived problems that led to the adoption of the policy, and the specific components of ET 2020, and what they were designed to accomplish. This will be done by tracing the stages of the development of the education and training as a common policy in the EU.

2.2 Historical Antecedents

Although education has been seen as a national affair, the focus on convergence of policies, approaches and initiatives in the area of vocational skills have permeated the European Community since its inception (Bonnafoous, 2014; Pepin, 2006). In general, three stages of the development and consolidation of cooperation in education and training can be

distinguished in Europe. The first stage – from the 1970s to 1990s – was the time when the first initiatives at the community level had been established. The second stage – 1992 to 2000 – saw an acceleration of cooperation with the approval of the Maastricht Treaty, characterised by a “logic of programmes” (Nóvoa & deJong-Lambert, 2003), including mobility or exchange agreements. These two stages reinforced integration in several education policy areas and provided a groundwork for the Conclusions of the Lisbon Council in 2000. The third stage – since 2000 – initiated with the first framework established to support national education and training systems. In the next sections we concentrate attention on analysing the development of cooperation in education and training in this third stage, hence departing from the Lisbon Agenda.

2.2.1 Laying Down the Fundamentals for the ‘Fourth Pillar of the European Union’

The Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2000) are perceived as a turning point in the cooperation in education and training among the member states (Ertl, 2006; Nóvoa & deJong-Lambert, 2003). The Lisbon Council introduced a new Open Method of Coordination (OMC) at all levels as a way of implementing a new strategic goal of becoming the “most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” (Council of the European Union, 2000, §5). It is worth pointing out, following the overview by Pepin (2006), that several internal and external factors influenced the creation of the Lisbon Strategy. These included increasing globalisation, the looming Union’s enlargement, technological development as well as challenges like social cohesion and unemployment. These challenges required a long-term strategic vision, a large-scale collective action and a large budget. As a consequence, education and training were perceived as the “fourth pillar of the European Union” (Nóvoa & deJong-Lambert, 2003, p. 55).

In the following year, the Commission published a draft report on *The Concrete Future Objectives of Education Systems* (European Commission, 2000), adopted by the Education Council in February (Council of the

European Union, 2001). This is the first document which outlines a comprehensive and consistent approach on education in the context of the EU for national policies. The report sets a challenge for all member states to work together at European level over the next ten years to increase the quality and effectiveness of the national education and training systems, to facilitate better access for all and to open up education and training systems to the wider world. Through the OMC, the Commission had a stronger role to play in developing policy. Interestingly, the Commission's report had not been consulted with the European Parliament (EP) before its adoption, which was met with questions from the Members of the EP.

Six months later, the EP's Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, in its 2002 *Motion for a Resolution on the Draft Detailed Work Programme*, expressed several criticisms (European Parliament, 2002a). The first one, not surprisingly, related to improving the consultation process with the Parliament. The Parliament was also worried about the budget implications and asked for some estimates of the cost of the action from the Commission. The biggest concern, however, related to the distinction between 'education' and 'training':

The most unsatisfactory feature of the Report, however, is the tone in which it is written. (...) But education is not coterminous with training and is not simply a matter of preparing people for employment. So it is worrying when the language of the Communication suggests that this is the case. (Ibid., 2002a)

Following this opinion, the EP Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy suggested to incorporate several additional points in its motion for a resolution, including the emphasis on the importance of the industry partners' role in education and training (European Parliament, 2002b). Two weeks later, the EP adopted a resolution that incorporated suggestions by the two committees (European Parliament, 2002c). In reference to the concerns related to the framing of the role of education systems, it reiterated that "the content of education systems should not be determined solely with reference to the economy

and the employment market” (Ibid., p. 8). The Commission followed up on financial concerns in the Communication *Investing Efficiently in Education and Training: An Imperative for Europe*, which set out the investment priorities and the efficient management and allocation of resources (European Commission, 2003a). This process illustrates how the soft methods of coordination, which circumvents the Parliament’s rights of co-decision (Héritier, 2002), affected the role of the EP, which became more sceptical of the European Commission’s interpretation of the meaning of education.

2.2.2 Education and Training 2010 – Setting Targets and Capacity-Building

The Commission’s report *The Concrete Future Objectives of Education Systems* (European Commission, 2000) led to the creation of the work programme *Education and Training 2010* (ET 2010) that would make the achievements of the objectives for education and training possible. It reflected the commitment to “Education and Training as fundamental part of the European Knowledge Area” (Council of the European Union, 2004, p. 1). Drawing from the Commission’s report (2000), it sets out quality, access and openness as three strategic objectives of the policy. The Commission suggested the following instruments of cooperation for achieving these objectives:

- *Indicators and benchmarking* from set of clear and quantified targets used to measure progress
- *Exchange of best practices* through seminars, databases, internet sites and printed brochures
- *Peer review* where each member state submits one of its policies for review
- *Periodic monitoring* through relevant quantitative and/or qualitative tools
- *Evaluation* of the progress towards the objectives (by EU institutions, external experts, peers)

We can observe that these ‘instruments of cooperation’ put in motion several governance mechanisms such as *standard-setting*, *capacity-building*, *interdependence* and *elite-learning* (Héritier, 2002; Martens & Jakobi, 2010). *Standard-setting* included the list of benchmarks, publication of performance for each country and monitoring. It also defined procedural norms/codes of best practice by setting out the peer review processes and encouraged exchange of best practices. Peer review may lead to socialising and exchange of beliefs and value systems and therefore build *interdependence*. ET 2010 provided a detailed roadmap for member states in terms of objectives, methods and instruments to be used to achieve progress. It underlined the importance of measuring “progress, [through] comparative tools where Europe’s achievements can be compared both internally and with other world regions” (Council of the European Union, 2004, p. 1). It listed the key issues in each strategic area, their organisation and the instruments of action. For example, Objective 1.2 related to developing skills for the ‘knowledge society’ with listed key competences such as numeracy and literacy, foreign languages or Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills to be monitored and validated by member states. Among the proposed indicators for measuring progress for achieving these competences are, for instance, secondary education completions and literacy attainment levels. These would also be part of peer review and good practice exchange.

In 2003, the first report prepared by the Commission on the implementation of ET 2010 was presented (European Commission, 2003b). It reported on the early stages of the implementation focusing on work carried out by eight thematic working groups, which were considered ‘at the heart of the process’.

Several months later, in April 2004, a joint interim report was published from the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe (Council of the European Union, 2004). It was titled *Education and Training 2010: The Success of the Lisbon Strategy Hinges on Urgent Reforms*. At the eve of the enlargement, the report urged all member states to commit to ET 2010 by increasing investments and accelerating the pace of reforms of education and training through, for example, building stronger links with employers, and

increasing participation in lifelong learning. Two years later a follow-up joint interim report, for the first time, presented the progress made by member states, drawing from their national reports (Council of the European Union, 2006). It included references to specific countries as examples of good practices. It reported on national and European level progress, but more importantly, it emphasised the growing coordination arrangements that had taken place between ministries (especially education and employment) in member states with the objective to strengthen the implementation of ET 2010. In the context of European governance, an ET 2010 Coordination Group had been set up, and ‘clusters’ of countries replaced the working groups, focusing on specific issues according to their national priorities and interests (Council of the European Union, 2006, p. 7). These clusters were responsible for organising peer-learning activities.

The third report, released in April 2008, registered “significant progress” (Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 2) in several areas including lifelong learning strategies and national qualifications systems. Yet, the Commission’s working paper on indicators and benchmarks published the same year (European Commission, 2008a) considered that the achievement of five benchmarks by 2010 (on literacy, reduction of early school-leaving, upper secondary attainment, maths, science and technology graduates, and participation in adult learning) was unrealistic. The report listed ‘best performing countries’ per each benchmark as an example to follow, and included comparative data for each member state and third country, which enabled monitoring progress and drawing comparisons. The issue of ineffectiveness of ET 2010 was raised in the EP when the Commission was asked by the Member of the European Parliament, David Casa, to explain “the ineffectiveness of the previous programmes, and what different measures does it intend to take over the next 10 years in an effort to reach this goal?” (European Parliament, 2012). The answer given by Ms Vassiliou, on behalf of the Commission, emphasised the member states’ responsibility for the running of their education systems and pointed out several actions taken by the EU to support member states, including the ET 2020 work programme, a High-Level Group on literacy and peer-learning activities of the Thematic Working Group on Mathematics, Science and Technology (European Parliament, 2012).

The ten-year period of multi-dimensional policy development and implementation in the area of education and training resulted in a policy mix, which serves as an umbrella for a ‘knowledge triangle’ of education, research and innovation (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 1) with a variety of policy areas, objectives, policy actors and policy platforms. It can be argued that it consolidated two basic modes of governance: *standard-setting* and *capacity-building* (cf. Chap. 1). It included policy mechanisms with a number of policy instruments, tools and governance structures, which later become a cornerstone for the ET 2020 strategy development. Nevertheless, the period also illustrated the weaknesses in ‘voluntary’ measures of these instruments, where the member states are highly engaged in *standard-setting* and policy development, but the implementation at national level lagging behind. There was also a concern about the democratic process of decision-making with the EP sidelined by the OMC process.

2.2.3 Education and Training 2020 – Events Leading to Expanding Targets, Tightening Capacity-Building and Facilitating Elite-Learning

An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training was published in December 2008 in the Commission Communication (European Commission, 2008b). It established four main challenges that were in full endorsed and were included as the main objectives of the ET 2020 framework in the Council Conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2009), which outlined four specific objectives, five benchmarks and a list of working methods. The Council provided the Commission with a mandate to work with and support member states in cooperating within the framework, as well as to conduct work on developing possible new benchmarks in the areas of mobility, employability and language learning. Nevertheless, the impact of the global economic crisis on the state of European economy was so overwhelming that the EU had to alter its approach to shaping the future of economy and education very soon. Therefore, the Council and the Commission agreed to ‘modernise’ ET 2020 by “updating its

working priorities, tools and governance structure” (Council of the European Union, 2012, p. 5). It was done by increasing the emphasis on targets, benchmarks and data and at the same time by narrowing down the themes and objectives of working groups. The roles of ET 2020 in supporting the priorities set in *Europe 2020* were to “mobilise ET 2020 stakeholders, increase their ownership and harness their expertise” and to draw on “evidence and data from relevant European agencies and networks” (Ibid., p. 5). In this way governing mechanisms such as *standard-setting*, *capacity-building* and *elite-learning* have been strengthened. The Council suggested closer cooperation between the Education, Economic Policy, Employment and Social Protection Committees. Following these plans, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Ms Vassiliou, launched the *Rethinking Education* strategy in November 2012 (European Commission, 2012a), which was based on the data from the 2012 Education and Training Monitor, a new annual Commission survey that outlined skills supply in the member states (European Commission, 2012b). The Monitor has been seen as “a new analytical tool that provides empirical evidence to underpin our reform agenda” (European Commission, 2012c, p. 3). ET 2020, therefore, consolidated the existing governance mechanisms such as *standard-setting* (through benchmarks and indicators) and *capacity-building* (strengthening ‘good practice’ exchange instruments). It significantly strengthened another governance mechanism, namely, *elite-learning*. By expanding the peer review instrument through the addition of peer-learning and peer counselling, there will be stronger drivers for instigating change in the actors’ beliefs and value systems. Furthermore, the new generation of working groups, which set common goals and policy objectives, coordinate activities and create stronger administrative ties with member states, strengthens *standard-setting* between the member states and the EU. The governance mechanisms identified through the analysis of the development of ET 2020 and the policy instruments assisting in policy coordination will be scrutinised in the next section.

2.3 Governance Mechanisms and Policy Instruments

The historical overview of the development of ET 2020 enables us to identify its *modus operandi*, which points at *standard-setting*, *capacity-building* and *elite-learning*, as its core governance mechanisms operating under the principles of the OMC (for detailed description of each mechanism, see Chap. 1). As noted in Chap. 1, governance mechanisms are policy processes within the education and training area aimed at reaching specific policy objectives, such as increasing school retention and improving mobility and the quality of education, which naturalise these objectives and their effects.

Furthermore, several policy instruments contribute to the working of these mechanisms. Those surfacing in the analysis include coordinated working groups/networks, mutual- and peer-learning arrangements, data generation, benchmarks and indicators (see Table 2.1 and Chap. 1 for the description of each policy instrument).

In the next section, we analyse these instruments to further explore policy coordination, its nature and practices in education policy.

2.3.1 Coordinated Working Groups

Working groups have been seen as a significant coordination instrument since the inception of ET 2020. The objectives, shape and working modes of these groups have shifted three times with three ‘generations’ of working groups in existence. The first-generation working groups were set up between 2011 and 2013 and included 11 thematic working groups focused on school education, higher education, adult learning, VET and key competences. With the new ‘work cycle’, these thematic groups were reduced to six in the years 2014–2015. The issues identified with the coordination were the lack of synchronisation of activities, shortcomings in dissemination and low national awareness of the usefulness of results (Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 25). In 2015, the Council and the

Table 2.1 Policy instruments used in the implementation of ET 2020

Policy instruments	Exemplification
Coordinated working groups/networks	<p>Four 'sector-focused' groups and two 'issue-focused' groups were established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ET 2020 Working Group on Vocational Education and Training • ET 2020 Working Group on Digital Skills and Competences • ET 2020 Working Group on Modernisation of Higher Education • ET 2020 Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination Through Education • ET 2020 Working Group on Schools • ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning
Mutual- and peer-learning arrangements	<p><u>In-depth country workshops</u> – focus on policy development and practice in selected member states, with the aim of identifying key factors for policy success</p> <p><u>Peer-learning activities</u> – involve national experts learning together, based on evidence and experience, and sharing both positive and negative policy experiences</p> <p><u>Peer counselling</u> – a voluntary tool that brings together “professional peers from a small number of national administrations to provide external advice to a country in the process of a significant policy development” (European Commission, 2015b, p. 1)</p> <p><u>Others</u> – ad hoc peer-learning activities, thematic events, peer reviews, policy learning exchanges</p>

Data generation	<p>Education and Training Monitor – includes quantitative comparative analyses and country-specific recommendations based on Eurostat and OECD data</p> <p><u>Country Reports</u> – annual individual Country Reports identify where each country stands in relation to the ET 2020 benchmarks and other indicators.</p> <p>Studies and Reports – (e.g. <i>Promoting Adult Learning in the Workplace</i>. Final report of the ET 2020 Working Group 2016–2018 on Adult Learning; see WGAL, 2018)</p> <p><u>Guidelines</u> – (e.g. 20 guiding principles for high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning in the 2014–2015 period; see WGVET, 2017)</p> <p>Policy conclusions – (e.g. Higher Education Institutions as centres of regional development and innovation; see WGMHE, 2016)</p>
Benchmarks	<p><u>Others</u> – recommendations, background papers, flash reports and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 95% of children should participate in early childhood education • Fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science • The rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18–24 should be below 10% • At least 40% of people aged 30–34 should have completed some form of higher education • At least 15% of adults should participate in learning • At least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18–34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad • The share of employed graduates (aged 20–34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1–3 years ago) should be at least 82%

Commission jointly agreed to strengthen the ET 2020 ‘toolbox’ by introducing ‘new generation’ working groups launched in 2016 (Ibid.). These are Commission Expert Groups (CEG), with four temporary and two permanent groups (European Commission, 2018a). The new generation groups are tasked to work on ‘concrete issues’ identified in the 2015 Joint Report. Four ‘sector-focused’ groups on schools, VET, lifelong learning and higher education were established together with two ‘issue-focused’ groups on digital skills and on citizenship (European Commission, 2015a). CEGs are consultative bodies set up by the European Commission or its departments when external specialist advice is needed ‘for sound policy-making’. They advise the Commission but their inputs are not binding. Nevertheless, these are important networks, which fit into the principles of the OMC with its stress on mutual-learning, exchange of good practice and socialisation process. Appointed members may include (1) member states, candidate countries, members of the European Free Trade Association and relevant EU bodies or agencies (e.g. CEDEFOP, the Education and Training Foundation, EURYDICE) representatives; (2) education and training associations and European social partners (e.g. the European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC], BusinessEurope); and (3) independent experts. Unless there are overriding priorities or emergency conditions, all appointed members are selected through public calls for applications, with the exception of public authorities, who are appointed at their national level. Participation is on a voluntary basis. For the new generation of the ET 2020 working groups, member state representatives can take the lead on specific outputs and peer-learning events (in practice co-chair).

Selected features of the working groups/networks under consideration are presented in Table 2.2.

2.3.2 Mutual- and Peer-Learning Arrangements

The groups meet approximately four times a year to work on the assigned ‘concrete issues’. However, as per the mandate (European Commission, 2015a, p. 3), there are other ET 2020 tools used to ‘complement’

Table 2.2 Coordinated working groups in the ET 2020 policy domain

Acronym	Full title	Active Since	Main 'concrete issues' to be addressed	Members ^a by type			
				Tot	C	D	E
WGVET ^c	ET 2020 Working Group on Vocational Education and Training (VET) ^e	Since 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governance and partnerships arrangements 2. Quality, relevance and attractiveness 3. Supporting the implementation of VET reforms 	57	7	39	11
WGDSC ^d	ET 2020 Working Group on Digital Skills and Competences	Since 2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addressing the development of digital competences at all levels of learning, including non-formal and informal, in response to the digital revolution 2. Fostering transparency, quality assurance, validation and hereby recognition of skills and qualifications, including those acquired through digital, online and open learning resources, as well as non-formal and informal learning 3. Increasing synergies between education, research and innovation activities, with a sustainable growth perspective, building on developments in higher education, with a new focus on VET and schools 4. Promoting the use of ICT with a view to increasing the quality and relevance of education at all levels; boosting availability and quality of open and digital educational resources and pedagogies at all educational levels, in cooperation with European open source communities 	81	10	57	14

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Acronym	Full title	Active Since	Main 'concrete issues' to be addressed	Members ^a by type			
				Tot	C	D	E
WGMHE ^d	ET 2020 Working Group on Modernisation of Higher Education ^e	2016	<p>1. Relevance: strengthening societal and labour market relevance at all levels of higher education</p> <p>2. Innovation: within a broad concept of innovation, building partnerships through inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral approaches enhancing regional development and the knowledge triangle through closer links between higher education, research and innovation, optimising opportunities offered through open and digital education</p> <p>3. Inclusion: supporting the social engagement of higher education institutions, improving the transition from secondary to higher education, promoting intercultural and civic competences of students, promoting a diverse student body by tackling gender gaps, and integrating newly arrived migrants</p> <p>4. Teaching: promoting quality teaching and pedagogical training and ensuring that teaching is seen as comparable to research in academic careers</p> <p>5. Internationalisation: promoting internationalisation, recognition and mobility (including through joint programmes, cross-border higher education, internationalising curricula, etc.) to enhance quality and innovation potential</p> <p>6. Sustainable investment and governance: focusing on effectiveness by examining performance-based funding and system governance and leadership – ensuring higher education systems are structured, governed and funded in a sustainable, future-oriented way</p>	58	11 ^b	33 ^b	14 ^b

WGPC ^d	ET 2020 Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination through Education	Since 2016	1. Promoting civic, intercultural and social competences, mutual understanding and respect and ownership of democratic values and fundamental rights at all levels of education and training 2. Tackling discrimination, racism, segregation, bullying (including cyber-bullying), violence and stereotypes	65	8	40 ^b	17 ^b
WGS ^d	ET 2020 Working Group on Schools	Since 2014	1. Focusing on the governance of school education systems to promote higher quality through sustainable innovation and inclusion	44	5	35	4
WGAL ^c	ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning	Since 2014	1. Promoting and widening the availability of workplace learning of adults (adult learning taking place at the workplace or in relation to it, or preparing for a return to work or a change of work, also called continuing vocational education and training) 2. Increasing the supply and take-up of high-quality adult learning provision to respond to demands for up- and reskilling of the workforce, including provision for raising basic competences such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills	55	7	35	13

Source: Our processing from the Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities (European Commission, 2018a)
C Organisations, D Local, regional or national member states' authorities, E Other public entity

^aWhen an organisation is represented by two or more departments/units, this organisation was counted only once
^bData provided by the Working Group coordinator in June/July 2018

^cLed by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL)

^dLed by European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture (EAC)
^eHas a permanent status

national action and support member states: ad hoc peer-learning activities, thematic events, peer counselling, peer reviews or other policy learning exchanges (Council of the European Union, 2015). The review of all publicly reported activities undertaken by the groups shows that the in-depth country workshops have been the most utilised tool by the working groups. These workshops focus on policy development and practice in selected member states, with the aim of identifying key factors for policy success. Selected member states prepare case study reports, which are presented and discussed at the workshops. The Working Group on Schools has utilised this form of policy exchange in a proactive way with over seven workshops organised between 2014 and 2015. Another popular tool among the groups was peer-learning activities. Only in 2017, the Working Group on Higher Education organised three of these activities. Peer-learning involves national experts learning together, based on evidence and experience, and sharing both positive and negative policy experiences. A member state is made responsible for hosting peer-learning activities, and its role also includes developing a network of contacts within the country (in other ministries, agencies and relevant organisations) in order to gather information to feed into peer-learning and to disseminate the results of peer-learning within the country (WGAL, 2016).

In 2015, peer counselling was introduced as a voluntary tool that brings together “professional peers from a small number of national administrations to provide external advice to a country in the process of a significant policy development” (Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 1). These activities are “tailored to specific needs of a member state” (European Commission, 2015b, p. 6) who is hosting such event. The role of the Commission is to coordinate the preparation of the event, help with identifying relevant countries which would provide peer advice and together with the host country publish a final report. The Commission provides detailed guidelines and a step-by-step roadmap for implementing peer counselling (European Commission, 2015b), and although peer-learning activities have been a very popular tool within the ET 2020 groups, peer counselling has not yet been utilised (as per reporting by the ET 2020 groups).

2.3.3 Data Generation

Data generation is among the instruments identified by the literature as a significant governance tool which influences the way education policy is made (Hodgson, 2011; Lawn, 2013; Ozga, 2009, 2012; Ravinet, 2008). In ET 2020 the prominent data generation instrument is the Education and Training Monitor. It was introduced in the period of expanding targets and tightening procedural norms, where evidence and data from relevant European agencies and networks are recommended by the Council to strengthen education and training governance. The Monitor includes quantitative comparative analyses, and country-specific recommendations based on data from Eurostat and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as studies done by the EURYDICE network. Its objective is to “fuel the debate on priority themes for education and training and inform national education reform debates” (European Commission, 2018b). Since 2013, these annually published monitors are accompanied by individual Country Reports, which identify where each country stands in relation to the ET 2020 benchmarks and other indicators, as well as the challenges and strengths of each education system. The Monitor and the accompanying Country Reports are easily accessible online and have become a part of the European education policy space (Decuypere, 2016), where the use and distribution of data has been popularised. Decuypere (2016) argues that the Monitor through its webpage, which contains the visualisation tools, co-constructs a policy space. But, the Monitor is also an instrument of permanent monitoring of the progression of each member state against the education and training benchmarks.

Data generation in education and training also relates to the immense work being done within the working groups. Literature reviews, case studies, Country Reports are generated to assist in peer-learning and policy exchange activities. Country Reports, for example, are generated for the purpose of in-depth country workshops. These reports provide the context and describe the policy development, implementation and practices in selected member states. They also include analytical material including a range of factors affecting policy, the successful and less successful experiences.

Data generated by the work of the working groups includes recommendations, guidelines, background papers, flash reports and policy conclusions. For example, the Working Group on VET developed 20 guiding principles for high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning in the 2014–2015 period (WGVET, 2017). Policy conclusions were developed in another group activity on higher education institutions as centres of regional development and innovation in 2016 (WGMHE, 2016). The report generated at the end of the activity included the summary of policy challenges undermining the progress in higher education institutions. It also provided the responses to those challenges provided by governments and higher education institutions. Policy conclusions were developed for governments, higher education institutions and EU institutions with country-specific examples of policies in place.

2.3.4 Benchmarks

Benchmarks have been a cornerstone of European education and training policy since the Lisbon Council in 2000, as these measures are considered essential for the implementation of the OMC (European Commission, 2004). The objectives were set by the Education Ministers in 2001 and included increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems; facilitating the access of all to the education and training systems; and opening up education and training systems to the wider world, needed specific standards against which to measure the progress. To provide recommendations on how to measure the achievement of the concrete objectives, in this foundational stage of policy formulation, the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks was set up. With the support of the OECD, Eurostat, EURYDICE, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF), 29 indicators were selected in conjunction with the 13 objectives of the work programme. The Education Council adopted five levels of benchmarks, which the Commission recommended for comparing (benchmarking) at national, regional and school level as an effective practice (European Commission, 2003b).

The Commission report on indicators (European Commission, 2004) underlines an urgent need for collecting new data, and developing indicators, which were needed following the development of these benchmarks. The Commission emphasised that the indicators are to be used to measure progress and performance but also to stimulate the exchange of good experience and new ways of thinking about policy approaches. The Commission reported annually on the progress made towards the common objectives. Following the policy consolidation, and the new objectives set within ET 2020, the Council adopted a renewed set of benchmarks to be achieved by 2020 including at least 95% of children participating in early childhood education, and fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science. Progress on these benchmarks is reported annually in the Education and Training Monitor.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

Although education has been a sovereign responsibility of national governments, the European institutions have increasingly extended their influence over social policies in individual member states. We identified four specific governance mechanisms utilised within the ET 2020 strategy and several policy instruments that have been used to coordinate the EU policy-making. The focus on mechanisms and instruments as separate conceptual units of analysis helped unpacking the ways the EU through ET 2020 coordinates and governs the education and training space. The insight into the process of governing through a study of policy instruments may reveal how the objectives are instrumentalised and with what effects. Although these coordinating tools address specific policy objectives, the research tells us that policy instruments are not neutral devices as they assist in naturalising the objectives behind the governance mechanisms (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). The peer-learning activities, in-depth country workshops and other working group activities therefore not only address specific thematic objectives, they also produce specific effects, independently of the objectives pursued. They bring together a variety of actors representing different interests and different beliefs and

values and create a space for socialisation and exchange of these values. At the same time, they initiate the development of national administrative adjustments, which influence the growing interdependence and future coordination of EU policies. Coordinated working groups and mutual-or peer-learning policy instruments play significant coordinating functions within ET 2020 and are examples of what Peters (2015) calls a ‘collaboration approach’ to policy coordination. In this approach, the coordination is strengthened through the links between individuals and programmes, and networking, which is seen as resulting in enhanced creativity in policy solutions, development of new norms and new means for achieving policy goals.

Although the development and implementation of social policies at national levels have been “notoriously resistant to the influence of Europeanization” (Héritier, 2007, p. 10), in the case of ET 2020, the use of these policy instruments influences adaptation of policies in the member states as they penetrate the national structures, policies and practices leading to the permanent interdependence between the member states and the EU.

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3

The Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning

Marcella Milana and Gosia Klatt

3.1 Introduction

In 2011 the Council of the European Union (EU Council) approved a *Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning* (Council of the European Union, 2011).

Previously, the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission (EC) had put forward an *Agenda For Adult Learning* in one of its Communications (European Commission, 2006), and a corresponding Action Plan was proposed to the EU Council, the European Parliament (EP), the European Economic and Social

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Committee and the Committee of the Regions (CR) (European Commission, 2007), later adopted by the EP through its *Resolution on adult learning* (European Parliament, 2008). More on the historical development of the Renewed Agenda will be discussed in the next section. Here it shall suffice that the Renewed Agenda built on these previous normative steps, yet tailed the global financial crisis that had made its effects felt in Europe too, when member states from the Eurozone became unable to repay or refinance their government debt. It was to contrast this and related social consequences that in 2010 the EC reconsidered the Union's growth strategy in *Europe 2020* (European Commission, 2010).

Within this scenario the Renewed Agenda recognises that

to face both the short and long-term consequences of the economic crisis, there is a need for adults regularly to enhance their personal and professional skills and competences... [but] adult learning is currently the weakest link in developing national lifelong-learning systems... [and] Implementing the Action Plan [for adult learning] has also highlighted the difficulty of adequately monitoring the adult-learning sector, due to a lack of sufficient statistical data and evaluation of policy measures. (Council of the European Union, 2011, p. 2)

Accordingly, it set new priorities in this policy domain that were “to be seen in the context of a longer term vision for adult learning which – in the period up to 2020 – will endeavour to raise the sector's profile” (Ibid., p. 3).

Short-term priorities for 2012–2014 invited member states to better liaise ministries and other stakeholders; use lifelong-learning tools agreed at EU level, the Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci and the Structural Fund to co-finance activities and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) to promote mutual-learning; and designate a National Coordinator to facilitate cooperation with other member states and the EC in implementing the agenda.

Moreover, the EC was invited to ensure complementarity and coherence between policy initiatives; establish close liaison with the National Coordinators designated by the member states; enable the sharing of information through peer-learning activities and reviews, conferences,

workshop and so on; commission studies and reinforce the capacity of existing research structures; pursue and intensify collaboration with other international organisations, and particularly the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to exploit the results of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), but also the United Nations and its Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Council of Europe; harness available EU funds to support the Renewed Agenda and report on its implementation as part of the joint progress report of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

The Renewed Agenda has no legal effects on member states, as Council Resolutions are non-binding documents that express political positions on a specific topic, and set out future work within a particular policy domain that is not of exclusive competency of the European Union (EU). Nonetheless, the Renewed Agenda constitutes a policy mix (see Chap. 1) that performs three substantive authoritative functions (i.e. legal, epistemic and procedural), which ease European governance in the adult education policy domain.

Legally, although Resolutions are non-binding documents like Communications, according to EU Law, the latter set out the EC's own thinking on a particular matter, whereas the former are legal instruments that encourage all those addressed to act in particular ways, hence enabling EU institutions to establish non-binding rules for member states. So the Renewed Agenda elevated political authority on adult education from the EC (accountable to appointed impartial and independent commissioners) to the EU Council (accountable to national governments) (Klatt, 2014). A precedent had been established in 2008, when the previous Action Plan on adult learning had gained legitimacy through the EP's *Resolution on adult learning* (European Parliament, 2008).

Epistemically, the Renewed Agenda's short-term priorities and longer-term vision legitimate an 'instrumental epistemology' in the adult education policy domain that, as Bagnall and Hodge (2018) argue, has come to be favoured in contrast to alternative, competing ones (i.e. disciplinary, constructivist, emancipatory) in the contemporary cultural context.

Procedurally, the Renewed Agenda sets the objectives of member states' action (e.g. liaison ministries and other stakeholders, co-finance adult

learning activities, promote mutual-learning) and of EC's action (e.g. ensure complementarity and coherence between policy initiatives, establish close liaison with member states, enable knowledge-sharing, reinforce research capacity of existing structures, pursue and/or intensify collaboration with other international organisations). But it also prescribes the policy instruments through which these shall be achieved. Finally, it interlocks the short-term priorities in adult education, and related policy instruments, to ET 2020, a different policy mix (see Chap. 2).

Against this backdrop, the following sections first examine the historical antecedents of the Renewed Agenda to appreciate its formation as a policy mix on its own rights and then examine the governance mechanisms and policy instruments through which it governs adult education policy development in Europe.

3.2 Historical Antecedents

Two periods mark the pre-history of the Renewed Agenda. The first, spanning from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, is a *pre-foundation* stage in which the EU set the ground for adult education to emerge as a policy domain distinct from education and training. The second period, covering just a few years from the mid-2000s to 2011, is the *foundation* stage in which adult education became a clearly defined policy domain.

3.2.1 The Pre-foundation Stage (1996–2005)

A landmark for the pre-foundation stage is in the establishment of 1996 as the *European year of lifelong learning* (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 1995). Thanks to the activities organised across Europe to celebrate it, the Conclusions of the Presidency of the European Council held in March 2000 (European Council, 2000a) called upon the member states, the EU Council and the EC, within their areas of competence, to move towards a European Framework defining the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning. Thus, in June 2000 the

Presidency conclusions of the European Council (European Council, 2000b) declared lifelong learning an essential policy area and invited the member states, the EU Council and the EC to work towards “coherent strategies and practical measures” (art. 32) to foster lifelong learning for all. No reference to the ‘adult learning’s sector’, as framed in the Renewed Agenda, was present, with the only exclusion of making higher education more accessible to non-traditional students.

However, following up on both Councils’ mandate, in October 2000 the EC published its Staff Working Paper *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (European Commission, 2000) and launched a European-wide debate on a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning in Europe.

It is in the *Memorandum* that adult learning received its first mentioning and attention at European level, so did the need for developing indicators and benchmarks in this area. Particularly, the EC states that “[i]ntegrating learning more firmly into adult life is a very important part of putting lifelong learning into practice” (Ibid., p. 7) and recalls that improving adult literacy rates and equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults were among the goals agreed by worldwide country representatives at the 2000 World Education Forum held in Dakar. Further, the EC mentions that member states’ education and training systems (including ‘further/higher or adult/continuing’) are responsible for guaranteeing “that each and every individual acquires, updates and sustains an agreed skills threshold” (Ibid., p. 11). Accordingly, among the open questions put forward to debate, a few addressed issues of concern for the ‘adult learning’s sector’. Finally, the EC notes that data on participation of adults in education and learning were being collected at European level through the Labour Force Survey (LFS), and data on the direct assessment of adults’ literacy and numeracy skills were also available through the International Adult Literacy Survey (1994–1998) by Statistics Canada and the OECD. But it argues for the need to complement systems-based with learner-centred data and suggests that “[t]o cover most of the issues... for which gaps exist... the best solution seems to be a dedicated adult learning survey” (Ibid., p. 34). This led to the ad-hoc module on Lifelong Learning of the 2003 LFS that initiated the European process of classification and typologisation of adult learning

activities, obstacles/barriers and outcomes. Also, annexed to the *Memorandum* were 12 ‘good practices’ in lifelong learning (two per each of its six key messages), compiled in collaboration with other European agencies (i.e. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [CEDEFOP], EURYDICE, European Training Foundation [ETF]), and a study commissioned by the EC. Three of these made direct reference to adult education and learning.

At a one-year distance, two EP’s members, Hans Karlsson (Party of European Socialists group, PES) and Roy Perry (European People’s Party group, PPE or EPP), put forward to the EC a Parliamentary question on ‘lifelong learning for adults’ and on ‘benchmarking in employment and education’, respectively.

On 16 February, Hans Karlsson enquired on what measures would the EC take to enable employees with several years of work experience to appreciate lifelong learning at an advanced level (e.g. beyond on-going, in-service training, for instance, through university studies) (European Parliament, 2001a).

On 9 March, Roy Perry asked the EC what steps had been taken to address each of the objectives agreed at the 2000 European Council, and asked, where appropriate, what benchmarks had been established (European Parliament, 2001b).

On behalf of the EC, Mrs Diamantopoulou (the then European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) replied on 5 April to Hans Karlsson:

Lifelong learning is now seen as a horizontal objective of the Employment Strategy... The strategies should include the development of tertiary systems and further education and training for adults to improve their employability, adaptability and skills as well as their participation in the knowledge based society... Moreover... the Commission expects to come up with some proposals at European level in its Action Plan in the autumn of this year based on the conclusions of the consultation process for the memorandum on lifelong learning. (European Parliament, 2001a, pp. 204–205)

She further clarified, in her answer to Roy Perry on 6 June, that

The Employment Guidelines for 2001... have incorporated these objectives [i.e., the objectives agreed in Lisbon] in a detailed way, setting also specific European or national targets as appropriate.

The European Social Fund is the Community's main financial for supporting the European Employment Strategy and hence, also, these four objectives. (European Parliament, 2001b, p. 78)

A number of additional complementary initiatives undertaken at European level were also mentioned by Mrs Diamantopoulou, among which the request to the EU Council and the EC to prepare a detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems to be presented in the spring 2002 European Council, where “[i]ndicators and benchmarks will be key elements”, as well as the then on-going consultation of the *Memorandum*, the results of which were to “be used by the Commission for drafting an action plan in the second half of 2001 including the development of indicators and benchmarking” (European Parliament, 2001b, pp. 78–79).

In the meantime, the *Memorandum* had been forwarded to the EP and referred by the Parliament to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport as the one responsible and to the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for an opinion. At a one-year distance, the Parliament, in its 2001 Resolution on the *Memorandum*, adopted the motion to support it (European Parliament, 2001c).

In fact, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs in its opinion (adopted in July 2001) had highlighted the raising levels of investment in human resources as the most important message of the *Memorandum* and noted that “[e]xisting educational systems are dominated by basic State education for young people. An emphasis on lifelong learning would shift the centre of gravity towards adult education and further education” (European Parliament, 2001c, p. 19). Moreover, it pointed at three distinctive strategies embedded in the Lisbon Agenda: the elite strategy (i.e. develop new skills in knowledge intensive sectors), the compensation strategy (i.e. combat social exclusion with priority to basic education for marginal groups) and the comprehensive strategy (i.e. set full employment as a priority goal). Albeit the Committee recognised that member states may combine or opt for either/or, it thought important that their strategies could be assessed and compared.

By recalling the coordination of member states' employment policies through the European Employment Strategy, and the more recent coordination process under the Education and Training 2010 (ET 2010) work programme, the Committee affirmed that all this "should give the European Union a special role in overall educational planning and a specific responsibility for coordination on the basis of the open coordination procedure" (Ibid., p. 20). Hence, a number of general principles were presented to the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport, for incorporation in its motion for EP's resolution. All five principles listed under the motion's title *Adult Education Systems* are those proposed by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

It is following the backing of the EP that in November 2001 the EC issued its Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (European Commission, 2001), which then led to the *Resolution on lifelong learning* by the EU Council in June 2002 (Council of the European Union, 2002). In this Resolution the Council reaffirms the need for convergence between the 2001 Communication and the ET 2010 work programme "in order to achieve a comprehensive and coherent strategy for education and training" (Ibid., p. 2). Member states are thus invited "to develop and implement comprehensive and coherent strategies... involving... in particular the social partners, civil society, local and regional authorities" (Ibid.) and to mobilise resources in support of such strategy in conjunction with the European Employment Strategy.

In extreme synthesis, in the pre-foundation stage, the adult education dimension of lifelong learning was teased out in dialogue between EU institutions, which bolsters the ties between European education and training and employment policies. This created the ground for adult and further education to be seen as an intergovernmental and multi-sectorial policy domain with multiple goals. Therefrom, the concern of EU institutions for existing statistical data gaps at the micro-level (learner-centred), and stronger knowledge exchanges and collaboration across member states, and with other international organisations with an interest in adult and further education.

3.2.2 The Foundation Stage (2006–2010)

It is at foundation stage that, upon initiative of the EC, a policy mix governing adult education within the EU starts to take its current shape.

In its 2006 Communication *Adult Learning: it is never too late to learn* (European Commission, 2006), the EU provides the policy underpinning for implementing a dedicated action, under the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007–2013, to adult education (i.e. Grundtvig) and proposes five key messages (i.e. to remove barriers to participation, to increase the quality and efficiency of the sector, to speed up the process of validation and recognition, to ensure sufficient investment and to monitor the sector) to advance adult learning in Europe.

Upon informal consultation with ‘national sounding boards’ (i.e. policy-makers, social partners and non-governmental organisations [NGOs], from 27 member states, the 3 European Economic Area countries and Turkey), and with the support of individual experts, the social partners and international bodies (e.g. UNESCO), the EC proposes various actions to address the five key messages in its 2007 *Action Plan on Adult learning: It is never a good time to learn* (European Commission, 2007), addressed to the European Council, the EP, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the CR. In January 2008 the EP endorses the Action Plan (European Parliament, 2008) in one of its resolutions, yet noting the need for comparable statistical data to develop, review and evaluate policies in this domain and support the European Adult Education Survey. Moreover, it calls on the member states to make a more active use of the Structural Funds, the European Social Fund (ESF) particularly, in support of adult learning, and the EC to ensure that all member states take necessary legal and financial steps to offer and provide access to lifelong learning for all. All of this impinges on coordination, cooperation, efficiency and transparency between legislative measures and the institutional frameworks, networks and partnerships of bodies or associations involved in adult learning, using local, regional, national, European (public or private) financial resources.

In March also the EESC endorses the Action Plan “wholeheartedly” but subject to the comments set out in its opinion (European Economic and Social Committee, 2008), which warns against any inefficient

overlap with other EU objectives, projects and programmes, and calls for better attention to vulnerable groups (e.g. disabled people, migrants). Accordingly, also the EU Council, in its conclusions on adult learning of 22 May 2008 (Council of the European Union, 2008), endorses the Action Plan, sets common priorities in the 'adult learning sector' and invites all member states to implement the measures for 2008–2010 outlined in its annex.

Measures for the EC to implement span from analyses of national reforms in education and training, national qualification and credit transfer systems, and their impact, support professional development and the quality of providers in the adult learning sector and raise awareness among potential learners. Attention is also paid to establishing European comparable core data needed to facilitate monitoring.

Measures for member states to implement include exchange good practices and mutual-learning, develop multi-stakeholders' projects in adult learning, remove barriers and facilitate access to learning opportunities, reach out especially early school-leavers and low-skilled adults, motivate employers and employees towards adult learning, make effective and efficient use of EU funds in support of adult learning, cooperate more closely with CEDEFOP and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and "make full use of the research capacities of other international institutions" (Ibid., p. 13).

The EC is tasked by the EU Council to support member states in further promoting access to adult learning opportunities, stressing results-oriented learning outcomes. More importantly, however, is to ensure complementarity and coherence between measures relating to adults across three policy sub-domains: adult education (i.e. Action Plan), higher education (i.e. Bologna process) and vocational education and training (i.e. Copenhagen processes). To this aim, the EC is also tasked to pursue and/or intensify inter-institutional cooperation with other international organisations, and with NGOs, and establish links with international education initiatives and agendas (e.g. Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals).

In short, over a three-year period (2006–2008), the Renewed Agenda took full shape as a policy mix, with own mechanisms, instruments and tools (see next section). On these precedents, the outbreak of the global

financial crisis also impinged on the tuning of the Renewed Agenda. Specifically, two elements of *Europe 2020* (European Commission, 2010), though indirectly, bear higher significance for the adult education policy domain: a European benchmark on tertiary education for young adults (i.e. at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree) and a flagship initiative linking skills to better job prospects (i.e. An Agenda for new skills and jobs).

3.3 Governance Mechanisms and Policy Instruments

Since 2011 onwards, the Renewed Agenda has moved into a third stage of development that has seen the *consolidation* of adult education as a clearly defined policy domain, which bears strong links with other domains within the EU (e.g. covering education and training, employment and macro-economic policies), but with its own policy instrumentation. A close examination of its *modus operandi* points at *standard-setting*, *capacity-building*, and *financial redistribution*, as its core governance mechanisms, operating under the principles of the OMC (for detailed description of each mechanism, see Chap. 1). Furthermore, several policy instruments contribute to the working of these mechanisms. Those surfacing in the analysis include coordinated working groups/networks, mutual- and peer-learning arrangements, data generation, benchmarks and funding schemes (see Table 3.1 and Chap. 1 for the description of each policy instrument).

In the proceedings each instrument is explored in details, also to pinpoint at how it contributes to the working of the above-mentioned mechanisms.

3.3.1 Coordinated Working Groups/Networks

Since foundation stage to date (2019), five working groups/networks have been established, tasked and coordinated by the EC in the adult education policy domain: four temporary Commission Expert Groups

Table 3.1 Policy instruments used to implement the Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning

Policy instrument	Exemplification
Coordinated working groups/networks	<p>Four working groups and one network have been established, coordinated and tasked by the European Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group on the implementation of the Action Plan on Adult Learning (2008–2010) • Thematic Working Group on Quality Assurance in Adult Learning (2011–2013) • Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult Learning (2011–2013) • ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning (since 2014) <p>National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda on Adult Learning (since 2012).</p>
Mutual- and peer-learning arrangements	<p><u>Regional meetings</u> organised by the Working Group on the implementation of the Action Plan on Adult Learning (2008–2010).</p> <p><u>Workshops</u> with country experts to discuss in-depth topics (e.g. improving quality in adult learning, effective policies for increasing the participation of adults in basic skills provision).</p> <p><u>Conferences</u> sponsored by the European Commission (e.g. Adult Skills Conference: Empowering people, 6–7 December 2016) or in collaboration with other international organisations (e.g. Equipping adults for the 21st Century: Joining Forces for Action on Skills and Competences, 9–10 December 2013, with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning).</p>

Data generation	<p><u>Literature reviews</u> (e.g. <i>Improving basic skills in adulthood: Participation and Motivation</i>). <u>Studies and reports</u> (e.g. <i>An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe</i>).</p> <p>'Best' or 'good practices' compendia (e.g. <i>Erasmus+ Good practices in the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2012–2016</i>).</p> <p><u>State-of-the-art reports</u> (e.g. <i>State of the Art Report on the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning</i>, by the European Association for the Education of Adults).</p> <p>Design and management of multi-country surveys (e.g. the Labour Force Survey and the European Adult Education Survey managed by Eurostat, or the Education and Training Monitor).</p> <p>Final support to <u>multi-country household surveys</u> (e.g. the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies managed by the OECD).</p>
Benchmarks	<p>At least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.</p>
Funding schemes	<p><u>European Structural Funds (ESF)</u> (e.g. member states' participation to the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies was supported through these funds).</p> <p><u>Europe Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)</u> (e.g. 2017 Call for proposals dedicated to <i>Awareness-raising activities on "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults"</i>).</p> <p><u>Erasmus+</u> (e.g. Activities of the National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda on Adult Learning in their countries have been partially financed through the Erasmus+, under the Key 3 Action: Support for policy reforms).</p>

(CEGs) and one permanent Other Similar Entity (OSE) (European Commission, 2018). CEGs are consultative bodies set up by the EC or its departments when external specialist advice is needed ‘for sound policy-making’. OSEs have a similar function but, though administered and financed by the EC, are set up by the EU’s legislator. Both CEGs and OSEs advise the EC but their inputs are not binding. Appointed members may include individuals in their personal capacity (A); individuals representing a common interest/policy orientation (B); organisations (C); local, regional or national member states’ authorities (D); or other public entities (E).

Selected features of the working groups/networks under consideration here are presented in Table 3.2. These were tasked to assist the EC with the implementation of existing EU legislation, programmes and policies and to coordinate with member states, through views’ exchange. Only the Working Group on the implementation of the Action Plan on Adult Learning (WGPAL), active at foundation stage, was also tasked to assist in the preparation of legislative proposals and policy initiatives.

At consolidation stage, however, changes in EU education governance impinged on the adult education domain. An internal restructuring of the EC moved its responsibility from DG EAC to the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) since 2013, so the coordination of working groups/networks in this domain shifted accordingly.

Moreover, due to the ET 2020 agreement, and its tuning to *Europe 2020*, the work of these groups/networks slowly altered too, as to better fit the principles of the OMC (see Chap. 2). Made explicit in the mission statement of the ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning (WGAL), such adaptation process is also evidenced in its stress on mutual-learning and assistance to member states in coping with country-specific ‘recommendations’ by the EU institutions and ‘concrete and useable outputs’ as a result of the group’s activity.

Operating under a looser interpretation of the OMC’s principles, both the Thematic Working Group on Quality Assurance in Adult Learning (TWGQA) and the Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult

Table 3.2 Coordinated working groups/networks in the adult education policy domain

Acronym	Full title	Active	Mission	Members (alterative members), by type				
				Tot	A	C	D	E
WGPAL ^a	Working Group on the implementation of the Action Plan on Adult Learning	2008–2010	Provide the EC with 1. Policy advice and assistance in implementing, and following up, the actions set out in the Action Plan (2008–2010) 2. Examples of good practices for dissemination and discussion of proposed actions at EU level to impact and strengthen adult learning participation at national and regional levels	49	–	7	37	5
				(2)			(2)	
TWGQA ^a	Thematic Working Group on Quality Assurance in Adult Learning	2011–2013	1. Examine the research gaps on quality in the adult learning sector from member states' and experts' point of view 2. Explore different approaches in member states on quality in the adult learning sector to improve both systems and provision	32	4	4	20	4
TWGFAL ^a	Thematic Working Group on Financing Adult Learning	2011–2013	1. Examine the research gaps on financing adult learning from member states' and experts' point of view 2. Explore the effects of different financing approaches in member states to increase participation rates in adult learning 3. Consider the contribution of adult learning to social cohesion and economic development from the cost/benefit point of view	28	5	4	14	5

(continued)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Acronym	Full title	Active	Mission	Members (alternative members), by type				
				Tot	A	C	D	E
WGAL ^b	ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning	Since 2014	1. Benefit member states in their work of furthering policy development on adult learning through mutual-learning and the identification of good practices 2. Assist clusters of member states in responding to issues identified in country-specific recommendations, by having such member states benefit from the practical experience and good practices of other member states 3. Will concentrate on delivering concrete and useable outputs that respond to the strategic aims of both ET 2020 and Europe 2020	55	-	7	35	13
NCAAL ^b	National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda on Adult Learning ^c	Since 2012	Facilitate cooperation with other member states and the EC in implementing the European Agenda for Adult Learning, within the context of ET 2020	39	-	-	31	8

Source: Our processing from the Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities (European Commission, 2018)

A Individuals in their personal capacity, C Organisations, D Local, regional or national member states' authorities, E Other public entities

^aLed by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture

^bLed by European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

^cHas a permanent status

Learning (TWGFAL) had a thematic focus, higher interest in research gaps, and appointed also individuals in their personal capacity.

By contrast, WGAL, in line with its tighter governance function, did not appoint any individual in his/her personal capacity, and instead increased representation of other public entities, and particularly of candidate countries (now including Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). Further, among EU agencies, it replaced EURYDICE, a network of institutions that facilitate sharing of information on national education systems, with ETF, an agency that supports education, training and labour market reforms in transition and developing countries.¹

Yet, silenced members of all working groups/networks are consultancy firms that, having signed framework contracts with the EC, provide their services as facilitators and rapporteurs for the groups/networks' activities.

3.4 Mutual- and Peer-Learning Arrangements

Mutual- and peer-learning arrangements can take many forms and involve representatives of different elite groups. Participation may be restricted to the members of a group or open to non-members too.

At foundation stage a number of encounters, framed as 'peer-learning activities', involved members of a given group to share country-relevant knowledge on practices and experiences in a specific area, or to pursue a given policy objective, like those that focused on each of the priority areas of the Adult Learning Agenda, organised by WGPAL in Dublin (January 2008), Slovakia (March 2009), London (April 2009), Prague (June 2009) and Oslo (March 2010) (European Commission, *n.d.-a*).

In addition, several regional meetings were organised by WGPAL in Germany (October 2009), Norway (October 2009), Spain (October 2009) and Slovenia (November 2009) clustering, respectively, Western European countries, Nordic and Baltic countries, Southern European countries and Central and Eastern European countries. Such events were opened to a variety of stakeholders in adult learning "to engage in discussions, knowledge-transfer and other exchanges about topics and developments of importance to participating countries in the context of the Action Plan" (*Ibid.*, p. 21).

At both foundation and consolidation stages, WGPAL and WGAL also made use of workshops with country experts to discuss in-depth topics like improving quality in adult learning, financing adult learning, adult learning in higher education, basic skills (Brussels, June 2010), effective policies for increasing the participation of adults in basic skills provision (Stuttgart, October 2014) or national and regional policies aimed at increasing the use of Information and Communication Technologies and Open Educational Resources in adult learning (Oslo, March 2015) (European Commission, [n.d.-a](#), [2014](#), [2015a](#)).

Moreover, at consolation stage, thematic seminars hosted by national governments provided an opportunity for collective syntheses of what learned from in-depth country or regional discussions and case studies on agreed topics, as in the case of the policy coherence seminar organised by WGAL (Brussels, 2015) (European Commission, [2015b](#)).

Finally, mutual- and peer-learning also occurred at conferences sponsored by the EC either in isolation (e.g. Adult Skills Conference: Empowering people, 6–7 December 2016) or in collaboration with other international organisations (e.g. Equipping adults for the 21st Century: Joining Forces for Action on Skills and Competences, 9–10 December 2013, with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning). Through plenary sessions and workshops, these conferences provided several opportunities for policy implementers, professionals and, to a lower extent, academics to share information about national and regional policies and practices in the adult education domain and for EC's staff to inform about EU's policy development and monitor their implementation at national and regional levels.

3.4.1 Data Generation

A policy instrument that equally supports European governance in the adult education domain is data generation, which comprises the collection of qualitative and/or quantitative data, more or less systematic procedures from collecting it from various sources, and for organising and/or storing it.

An approach to data generation used at consolidation stage is ‘literature reviews’, which implies a systematic search of the literature available in a selected area, with the scope of describing, summarising and possibly evaluating the facts and data it makes available, and their analyses. Similar undertakings can be stand-alone activities, or part of wider studies and reports. When stand-alone activities tasked by the EC to individuals or organisations, their results set the ground for further policy debate, hence framing further work in such area. An example of this is the literature review: *Improving basic skills in adulthood: Participation and Motivation*, prepared for WGAL in 2015 (European Commission & Carpentieri, 2014).

But less systematic, more concise literature reviews are also done *a posteriori* to build the knowledge bases that underpin data generated through other methods, for instance, in a wider study or report. In this case, the literature is cherry-picked for the benefit of the overall study or report. An exemplification is found in *An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe* (European Commission & ICF Consulting Services Limited, 2015) (see later on).

The most common approach to data generation adopted by the EC, however, is ‘case study’, usually covering a country or region. Although the term is open to various definitions and interpretations, here it refers to an account that provides detailed information, and report on facts, about something (e.g. a government policy, a policy implementation strategy, an initiative in the adult education policy domain), and possibly how it developed over time. Such definition comprises written accounts that derive from somewhat in-depth investigations, hence combining quantitative and qualitative data, but may not necessarily involve a systematic mode of enquiry. Further, case studies can follow quite different production procedures, and, as a result of this, data hereby collected can be organised in different ways. Their production can be tasked by the EC to selected members of working groups/networks, for instance, in preparation of mutual- and peer-learning arrangements (European Commission, 2015a) or commissioned to others (individuals or organisations), through calls for tenders or proposals. Both types of case studies, however, often tend to be reduced to written account of ‘best’ or ‘good’ practices identified (aka judged as such) *a priori*. For instance, the above-mentioned

report, *An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies* (European Commission & ICF Consulting Services Limited, 2015), includes ten case studies of countries that had been performing well over time (or had recently improved) in making their adult learning policies effective.

Another way of generating data to govern the adult education domain are written accounts of ‘best’ or ‘good practices’. The former are initiatives that limit some kind of deficit (e.g. lack of basic skills) or improve the conditions of someone (e.g. adult learner) or something (e.g. education and learning systems). In other words, best practices model desirable goal(s) that people or organisations can work towards. Similarly, a good practice is often used interchangeably, but to point more broadly at positive actions or application of general principles from which other people or organisations may learn. Accordingly, collections or libraries of good practices in the adult education domain may be produced before, during or after mutual- and peer-learning arrangements (see above) or to generate data and capitalise from EU-funded activities and projects. Such was the case with the *Erasmus+: Good practices in the implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2012–2016* (European Commission, n.d.-b), a compilation developed by the National Coordinators for the implementation of the European Agenda on Adult Learning (NCAAL) while implementing the European Agenda for Adult Learning, whereby good practices refer to “a number of successful activities that had a substantial impact in their countries and that is of interest to share with anybody interested in the field of adult learning” (Ibid., p. 1). These ‘good practices’ cover meetings, conferences and bilateral exchanges, awareness-raising activities, preparatory work leading to reforms of adult learning policies and concrete measures to improve adults’ basic skills in just a small cluster of Western European countries (3), Nordic and Baltic countries (2), Southern European countries (2) and Central and Eastern European countries (2), yet with the United Kingdom and Slovenia overtly represented (with three good practices per country, in contrast to one per each of the other countries).

Also, ‘state-of-the-art reports’ can at times generate data, like the *State of the Art Report on the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning*, published in 2014 by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) on behalf of the RENEWAL consortium

with a preliminary analysis of the main challenges, developments and issues regarding the implementation of the Agenda in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe. Like other instruments for data generation mentioned thus far, the depth, breadth and soundness of data gathered through state-of-the-art reports varies, and so does the degree to which they apply a systematic method for data gathering. However, with a few exceptions, they organise and store fact and information in fiches, catalogues, libraries that are often available to a larger public through the EC's websites, including EPALE, the European Platform on Adult Learning in Europe.

Last but not least, data generation also includes the design and management of, and the financial support to, quantitative studies like the LFS and the European Adult Education Survey on adults' participation in education and training, managed by Eurostat (carried out in 2007, 2011 and 2016), and PIAAC, managed by the OECD (carried out in three rounds 2008–2013, 2012–2016 and 2016–2019).

3.4.2 Benchmarks

Benchmarks are accepted standards for evaluating (by comparison) countries' performance in a policy domain, which results from benchmarking, or the process of finding 'good practices' (based on both quantitative and qualitative data) on which basis standards can be identified and agreed upon at EU levels. Benchmarking can be deliberate and systematic (i.e. explicit) or a by-product of data generation (i.e. implicit) and it can focus on inputs, processes and/or outcomes with the scope of improving performances within or across organisations (Jackson, 2001). Along this line of thinking, it is possible to distinguish between explicit and implicit benchmarks (as the result of benchmarking).

Since foundation stage, even if various explicit benchmarks, agreed under ET 2020 (2009), and reaffirmed in *Europe 2020* (2010), may relate to the adult education policy domain, only one is purposely targeting the adult population: by 2020, an average of at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning. Hence, it is such percentage to explicitly set the average European standard in this policy domain, and

used to assess member states' performance, as they advance with the implementation of the Renewed Agenda. But, among implicit benchmarks supported by the EU is also an average increase at European level of the percentage of adults with (literacy and numeracy) skills proficiency Level 3 or higher. Construed by Statistics Canada and the OECD (2005, p. 31) as "the level considered by experts as a suitable minimum level for coping with the increasing demands of the emerging knowledge society and information economy", Level 3 has endured in PIAAC, and made an implicit horizontal benchmark for evaluating OECD's member and non-member states' performances (Hamilton, Maddox, & Addey, 2015), as well as EU member states, in terms of their policy outputs.

Improved networking, collaboration and mutual- and peer-learning among member states, the EU and other international organisations can be seen as the products of benchmarking activity (cf. Jackson, 2001). But by flipping the picture upside-down, they are as well the fertilisers for benchmarks to be negotiated and agreed among Heads of states and governments, so that member states' performances in the adult education policy domain can be measured, compared and judged.

3.4.3 Funding Schemes

One more policy instrument assists all the others reviewed thus far, by providing the financial resources needed for the implementation of the Renewed Agenda: funding schemes. These are plans or arrangements designed by the EU institutions to encourage governments, organisations and people to attain particular objectives as they provide the money to finance an activity, a programme or a project entirely or in part. Three such schemes support the Renewed Agenda in various ways: the ESF, the Europe Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and Erasmus+.

Specifically, set up in 1957 the ESF is the main funding scheme to support achievement of the *Europe 2020's* priorities, including in the fields of education and lifelong learning. Each member state agrees with the EC 'Operational Programmes' covering an entire member state and/or one of its regions, which set the priorities for ESF's spending over a seven-year

period (currently covering 2014–2020). ESF funding is always co-financed by public or private funding, which vary between 50% and 85% of the total project costs, depending on the relative wealth of a member state or region. Member states' participation to PIAAC, for instance, was supported through the ESF.

EaSI is a funding scheme that supports employment and social protection for combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions. Over the period 2014–2020, it has earmarked a total of 1,000,000 Euro of EU budget in support of *Europe 2020*'s priorities that, managed by the EC, co-finance projects led by public entities that in member states, candidate countries, Iceland and Norway, are responsible for national or regional upskilling policies and actions. In 2017, for instance, a Call for proposals was dedicated to *Awareness-raising activities on "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults"*.

Finally, Erasmus+ is an additional funding scheme that also supports the *Europe 2020*'s priorities, but only in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. It is open to both organisations and people, depending on the country in which they are based (including also selected non-EU countries). A co-financing by public or private organisations is foreseen, but its amount varies depending on the line of financing. Activities by NCAAL's members to implement the Renewed Agenda in their countries have been partially financed through the Erasmus+, under the Key 3 Action: Support for policy reforms.

Summing up, the connections between the policy instruments reviewed thus far and the governance mechanisms through which the Renewed Agenda governs adult education policy in Europe can be described as follows:

One of the mechanisms through which the Renewed Agenda is enacted is standard-setting, or the establishment of common rules for states. This implies normative action (i.e. the entitling of some actions as good, desirable or permissible versus those that are bad, undesirable or impermissible), that is never value-free, and the agreement on common goals to be pursued through such action. Implicit and explicit European benchmarks (or accepted standards) concur to standard-setting and result from complex negotiations and consensus-building among Heads of states and governments. Negotiations and consensus-building are facilitated by data

generation activities, and mutual- and peer-learning arrangements, as well as by working groups/networks dedicated to adult education and learning, and the availability of EU financial resources that are redistributed (via funding schemes) to public entities, organisations and people within and outside member states.

But, standard-setting through negotiation and consensus-building requires parallel mechanisms to (1) promote 'good' or 'best' practices that can help orienting the practical implementation of policy solution in the area of adult education and learning (capacity-building) and (2) instigate changes in the value system of national actors (elite-learning). These are processes that involve the EU institutions, national governments and other stakeholders in mutual- and peer-learning thanks to (though not exclusively) the management of, and participation in, coordinated working groups/networks, and the generation of new data. However, portions of the EU budget support capacity-building by making funding available through plans and arrangements to attain particular policy reforms and their local implementation.

The fact that EU's wealth can be shared out between member states (via funding schemes), as a deliberate effect of joint decisions that include conditionality, constitutes a strategic opportunity for the Renewed Agenda's to perform its legal, epistemic and procedural functions and for a plurality of stakeholders from within and outside EU member states to support European reforms and activities in the area of adult education and learning. By the same token, there are also serious constrains in Europe for supporting reforms and activities in adult education and learning that move always from, or even contrast conformity to, expected member states' performances which cannot be measured, compared and judged towards agreed (explicit as well as implicit) standards.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

Acknowledging that adult education policy developments in Europe are strongly entangled with European governance in this policy domain, this chapter presented a critical appraisal of the Renewed Agenda. By featuring its main characteristics, and in light of its historical stages of

development, it elucidated how, as a policy mix, the Renewed Agenda performs three substantive authoritative functions (i.e. legal, epistemic and procedural), which ease European governance in the adult education policy domain. Moreover, through a closer examination of the Renewed Agenda's mode of working, this chapter identified the governance mechanisms (i.e. standard-setting, capacity-building, elite-learning and financial redistribution) and policy instruments (i.e. coordinated working groups/networks, mutual- and peer-learning arrangements, data generation, benchmarks and funding schemes) that concur to its enactment. In doing so, however, it also highlighted two distinctive qualities that differentiate European from global governance in the adult education domain: its regulatory politics and its wealth redistributive capacity.

Note

1. For a Social Network Analysis that explores in depth the form of network governance these coordinated working groups/networks create, see Milana, M., Tronca, L. and Klatt, G. (2019). European Governance in Adult Education: On the comparative advantage of joining working groups and networks. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* (pre-published online).

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4

The European Youth Strategy

Gosia Klatt

4.1 Introduction

More than 4.2 million people under 25 in the European Union (EU) were unemployed at the end of 2016 (European Court of Auditors, 2017, p. 7). Although the proportion has decreased from 23% in 2013 to 19% in 2016, the long-term youth unemployment will affect the future of young generation of Europeans.

A variety of initiatives by the EU have been implemented to mitigate the problem in relation to youth unemployment, including the Youth Guarantee (focusing on improving educational pathways) (see Chap. 8 and Part II), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) (with a 6.4 billion Euro budget) (see Chap. 8) and the European Solidarity Corps (focusing on volunteering projects). But youth-related policy solutions are intersectoral as they involve education, training, welfare and labour, which are

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implemented at various levels: supranational, national, regional and local. This requires a strong vision, consistent implementation strategies, resources and effective policy coordination.

In May 2018, the European Commission (EC) proposed a renewed EU Youth Strategy for the years 2019–2027, which builds on the previous frameworks for European cooperation in the youth field (Council of the European Union, 2002, 2009). Since 2002, the EU has been committed to developing stronger European-level policy coordination in support of European youth.

The renewed EU Youth Strategy is titled *Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people*, which illustrates the main priorities of this policy that include increased youth participation in democratic life; bringing young people together and supporting quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. It responds to the cross-sectoral challenges of high rates of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and high levels of risk of social exclusion. It also mentions the future of young people in relation to the result of fake news and unknown effects of populism on our democracies. It proposed six main actions to continue improving situation of young people. The EC proposed to track all EU spending in relation to youth, reinforce the link between the Strategy and other programmes (like Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps) and further improve the Youth Dialogue to involve more underrepresented people.

In terms of governance, it proposed to create an EU Youth Coordinator that would focus on improving cross-sector cooperation across policies. It also proposed that the European Youth Portal be consolidated to act as a single digital entry point. These moves were welcomed by the European Youth Forum (EYF) (2018) as in their view the coordinator would have a way of influencing how policies affecting young people are decided in the EU. Each member state would be encouraged to select one priority area with a set target to be achieved in a cross-sectoral approach.

In the proposed renewed EU Youth Strategy, several policy instruments support the multi-level and participatory governance including coordinated working groups/networks, mutual- and peer-learning arrangements, data generation, benchmarks and funding schemes. The instrumentation process within this policy mix is assisted by several policy functions it performs which include legal, symbolic and epistemological. The policy

function modes have been discussed and used as valuable analytical frameworks to understand the influence over governance processes (Lingard & Sellar, 2016; Woodward, 2009).

4.2 Historical Antecedents

Before analysing the mechanisms and instruments of the EU Youth Strategy, it is important to illustrate how the policy has developed and changed since the first framework in 2002, which will help us understand the perceived problems that led to the adoption of the policy, the specific components of the Strategy and what they were designed to accomplish. This will be done by tracing the stages of the development of the youth policy in the EU.

4.2.1 The First Cooperation Framework in the Youth Field – Bringing the Young People Closer to the European Union

It seems that the European Youth Strategy frameworks (Council of the European Union, 2002, 2009) were formulated at the significant crossroads in the EU history. The first framework was proposed by the EC in the White Paper in the context of a looming 2004 enlargement. Its title, *A new impetus for European youth*, signified a responsibility to manage the needs of a population of 75 million of young people who would live in Europe following the enlargement (European Commission, 2001). Although a White Paper has no legal bearing, this document was significant in drawing attention to the needs of a growing youth population and a requirement of developing policy actions in this field and to starting the debate on youth issues that would gain a political consensus in Europe. Such consensus was reached by the European Council in June 2002, which set out four priorities in youth policy: (a) participation, (b) information, (c) voluntary activities among young people and (d) greater understanding and knowledge of youth (Council of the European Union, 2002). These four themes established a basis for the Youth Cooperation Framework that was driven by a challenge

recognised by the EU on how to bring the young people closer to the EU (European Commission, 2009). It needs to be emphasised that the political context of the EU enlargement shaped the main objectives for this cooperation of encouraging young people to make a contribution to European integration, by developing intercultural understanding and strengthening fundamental values. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was seen as the most appropriate method of approaching the practical actioning of these themes – the common objectives developed at the EU level and implemented by the member states. The consultations with member states followed, which resulted in an agreement for 14 common objectives to be implemented by the member states. The instruments of action enabling reaching these objectives were still left for the member states decide while the Commission's role was to gather national questionnaires, evaluate and report on the progress.

The Youth Cooperation Framework was reinforced in 2005 by the inclusion of the European Youth Pact (Council of the European Union, 2005a) focusing on strengthening youth employability by improving education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion. It is interesting to note that the idea for the Pact was initiated by the Heads of states of France, Germany, Sweden and Spain and then included in the Annex of the Conclusions of the European Council as an instrument for achieving the Lisbon objectives (Council of the European Union, 2005b). The EYF, one of the largest youth platforms formed by the national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations in Europe, was included as one of the key players. The EYF called the inclusion of the OMC within the youth policy space a “landmark event” in youth policy as it signified the willingness of all member states to commit to integration in this policy space (European Youth Forum, 2006).

To gain the insight into the impact of the EU Youth Policy, the European Parliament (EP) held the public hearing on ‘Youth Participation in the European Union’ on 17 February 2009 (European Parliament, 2009). One of the weaknesses identified by the authors was a lack of precise objectives such as quantified targets, which “makes evaluating its progress and comparing individual country outcomes extremely difficult” (Ibid., p. 11), and the lack of transparency in terms of national reporting.

In 2008 a series of consultations took place with the member states, young people, youth organisations and within the EU internal agencies

to evaluate the current cooperation framework and identify areas for improvement. The Youth Strategy Assessment document (European Commission, 2009) identified several issues for concern, including problems with coherence, exclusivity, objectives, linkages between EU and national policy levels.

Four main objectives were identified to increase operational effectiveness:

- To develop coordination mechanisms between policies
- To reinforce the Structured Dialogue with young people
- To improve implementation of cooperation (particularly via simplified reporting and peer-learning processes)
- To develop knowledge-based policy-making

All of the above considerations were taken into account in the Communication from the Commission released in April 2009.

4.2.2 The EU Strategy for Youth (2010–2018) – Creating More Opportunities for All Young People in Education and in the Labour Market

The EU Strategy for Youth, a framework that followed, in 2009, was framed by a very different circumstance created by the global financial crisis where the economic and social situation of young Europeans deteriorated. The advantage gained since 2005 in the common youth policy such as an increased status of youth policy, and a number of newly introduced national legislations influenced by the Youth Cooperation Framework, was dwarfed by the effects of the global financial crisis and a continuously slow and inconsistent implementation of the common objectives.

The Communication from the Commission released in April 2009 titled *An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering* drew from the previous framework's experience but considered the new economic circumstances. The Commission's proposal included a broader understanding of youth, which included younger as well as more mature young people from 13 to 30 years old (previously youth was regarded as the

period from 15 to 25 years of age). Such an approach was more consistent with a variety of definitions existing in the member states, which refer to youth from the age of 14 (Germany) to 29 years (Spain).

In 2009, the EU Council agreed on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018) through a Council Resolution (Council of the European Union, 2009) to “enhance the efficiency and effectiveness” of cooperation, which outlined a dual approach that involved specific initiatives in the youth field and mainstreaming other (cross-sectoral integration).

Eight fields of action were outlined in the EU Youth Strategy with specific objectives to be prioritised. The fields of action included education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, participation, health and well-being, voluntary activities, social inclusion, culture and creativity and youth and the world.

The implementation of Youth Strategy has been supported by several coordination instruments: (1) evidence-based policy drawing from research reports supported by EURYDICE, European youth surveys and the European Network of Youth Knowledge; (2) mutual-learning among member states and international organisations through peer-learning activities, conferences and seminars, high level forums or expert groups; (3) progress reporting; (4) dissemination of results of cooperation; (5) process monitoring through indicators in fields such as education, employment, health and social inclusion; (6) Structured Dialogue with young people and youth organisations; and (7) funding support.

Despite some calls for clear benchmarks and indicators to be set in youth policy, the EU Youth Strategy for 2010–2018 did not provide such precise targets. Therefore, the Council invited the Commission to set up a working group to draw together the existing indicators that may be linked to the different fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy.

To support the delivery of the results that responded to the priorities of the EU Youth Strategy, the Commission set up the new working groups within The Expert Group in the Youth Policy Fields (European Commission, 2017a). The thematic sub-groups were established depending on the specific topic for enquiry. These groups have informal and temporary status, are managed by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) and include national representatives from each member state.

In 2012, the Council and the Commission adopted the first Joint Report on the implementation of the renewed framework that summarised the results of the first work cycle of the Strategy (European Commission, 2012a). The emphasis was put on the successful development of 40 indicators as evidence-base for youth policy in Europe, the peer-learning through working groups, publicly available National Youth Reports and a well-functioning Structured Dialogue through National Working Groups for Structured Dialogue as well as EU-led conferences. All member states (as well as Croatia, Montenegro, Norway and Switzerland) submitted national reports that showed that the EU Youth Strategy has reinforced existing priorities at national level, with several member states (Lithuania, Austria) emphasising its direct impact. There were several sources of funding available supporting youth initiatives including Youth in Action Programme (2007–2011), the European Social Fund, the European Development Fund or PROGRESS (European Commission, 2012a). The Commission recommended for the next work cycle to reflect on the overall priorities and activities under Europe 2020 as addressing youth unemployment was identified as remaining high on the EU agenda.

An EP's resolution (2013) followed with its assessment of the effectiveness of the Strategy and recommendations on the priorities for the next work cycle. In the adopted text, the EP considered that “the budget allocated for the fight against youth unemployment in the future MFF [Multiannual Financial Framework, N/A], namely Euro 6 billion, is insufficient and should be significantly increased in the negotiations” (European Parliament, 2013a). It particularly stressed the importance of the Structured Dialogue and national reporting and implementation of national action plans.

As 13.7 million of young people in Europe were NEETs (European Commission, 2015), therefore youth employment and employability remained top priorities throughout 2013–2015. In such critical circumstances, the EU Council decided in 2014 to establish an 18-month EU Work Plan for Youth to be implemented by 31 December 2015 and followed by a 36-month EU Work Plan (Council of the European Union, 2015). The Plan focused, in particular, on young people who were at risk of marginalisation, with migrant backgrounds and NEETs, and addressed

youth work and cross-sectoral cooperation to support social inclusion, participation, transitions into labour market, well-being, among others.

In May 2018 the EP was working on a new resolution on youth. It acknowledged the achievements of cooperation but also asked for a better funding support and called for “a significant increase in the YEI allocation under the next MFF and for the Member States to make provisions for youth employment schemes” (European Parliament, 2018, p. 14). While the EP was preparing the Resolution, on 22 May 2018 the Commission published the Communication on new EU Youth Strategy (European Commission, 2018a). The EYF (2018) called the proposal “an exciting turning point for the future of youth policy in Europe”. The Strategy was accompanied by a Commission’s staff working document titled *Results of the open method of coordination in the youth field 2010–2018* (European Commission, 2018b). The paper provided a context and summary of achievements of the previous Strategies and provided an in-depth exploration of the new proposals, including a list of policy indicators and a draft Work Plan (2019–2021).

4.3 Governance Mechanisms and Policy Instruments

The historical overview of the development of the EU Youth Strategy illustrates the way the purposes and instruments of implementation of the Strategy evolved since 2002. We can identify the *modus operandi* of the current Strategy, which includes *standard-setting*, *capacity-building* and *elite-learning* as its core governance mechanisms operating under the principles of the OMC (for detailed description of each mechanism, see Chap. 1). These governance mechanisms, aimed at reaching specific policy outcomes, are enabled by specific policy instruments, in the sense of more or less stable frameworks that structure collective action.

Coordinated working groups/networks, mutual- and peer-learning arrangements, data generation and benchmarks have become the basis of instrumentation of the policy mechanisms at play under the EU Youth Strategy (see Table 4.1 and Chap. 1 for the description of each policy instrument), and hence it is worth explaining them in further detail.

Table 4.1 Policy instruments used to implement the EU Youth Strategy

Policy instruments	Exemplification
Coordinated working groups/networks	<p>Since 2016 three expert groups have been in operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert group on young people at risk of marginalisation • Expert group on young people neither in employment nor education or training • Expert group on young people with a migrant background, including newly arrived immigrants and young refugees
Mutual- and peer-learning arrangements	<p>Peer-learning activities – involve national experts learning together, based on evidence and experience, and sharing both positive and negative policy experiences (e.g. the National Youth Strategy of the Czech Republic was developed and drafted within peer-learning activity framework; see European Commission, 2018b). Seminars, workshops and conferences (e.g. the Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership Countries seminar; see European Commission, 2018b)</p> <p>Structured Dialogue – organised as an 18-month thematic cycle series of seminars, meetings and discussions concluding with a Conference and to “make young people’s voice heard in the European policy-shaping process” (European Commission, 2018c).</p> <p>Others – bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects, transnational cooperation activities</p>
Data generation	<p>Reports on good practice from expert groups (e.g. good practice examples to highlight the role that youth work can play in facilitating the integration process of young people with a migrant background; see European Commission, 2017b)</p> <p>Guidelines and toolboxes (e.g. compilation of a toolbox for youth workers and youth organisations, by expert group on youth work for young migrants and refugees; see European Commission, 2017b)</p> <p>Policy recommendations (e.g. recommendations on the development of innovative methods in youth work, including use of digital tools; see European Commission, 2016b)</p> <p>Quantitative data portals – European Youth Portal, EU Youth website, EU Dashboard.</p> <p>The EU Youth report – publishes the results of the latest three-year cycle, providing an overview of the situation of young people, and summarises all actions taken by the EU and member states to implement the EU Youth Strategy.</p>
Benchmarks	<p>Dashboard of youth indicators released in 2011 and included a total of 40 indicators.</p>
Funding schemes	<p>There are several funding sources that are referred to in support of the Strategy including Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps; European Structural and Investment Funds; Horizon 2020, including the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions; Creative Europe and their successors.</p>

4.3.1 Coordinated Working Groups/Networks

Groups established, coordinated and tasked by the European Commission, whose members are appointed by member states' governments or the European Commission, have also been utilised in the youth policy field through a number of expert groups. First, the Expert Group in the Youth Policy Fields, a temporary and informal group, was set up in 2009 by the Commission to deliver concrete and usable results that responded to the priorities set out in the EU Youth Strategies (European Commission, 2017a). Several thematic sub-groups have existed since to deliver concrete outcomes such as best practice examples, policy recommendations, or specific toolboxes or manuals, as illustrated in Table 4.2. These groups gather experts from member states and the Commission's representatives. The role of the Commission is to coordinate the work of these experts. The participation of member states in the work of the expert group is voluntary and they can join in at any time. External experts have been often invited to contribute or consult.

One of the first groups set up was the Expert Group on Indicators created following the Commission's recommendation "to discuss possible 'descriptors' (light indicators) for the priorities of participation, volunteering, creativity and youth in the world, as well as for NEETs" (European Commission, 2009 p. 13) but also to design a dashboard of existing indicators. Drawing from that, the next Council Resolution invited the Commission to set up a working group "to discuss, in consultation with relevant policy areas, existing data on the situation of young people and the possible need for the development of indicators in fields where they do not exist, or where no youth perspective is apparent" (Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 4). It has been comprised of 60 experts (European Commission, 2011). The outcome of the early group work was a publication of a set of indicators on a dashboard in 2011.

The Expert Group on Mobility of Young Volunteers, also set up in 2009, was active for four years and was dedicated to the creation of cross-border youth volunteering opportunities. The group met nine times to exchange best practice examples and peer-learning activities. It developed a "3-volume mapping of good practices" and developed a pilot project for cross-border volunteering for young people (European Commission, 2013, p. 2).

Table 4.2 Expert groups in the Youth Strategy domain

Title	Active	Main 'Concrete Issues' to be addressed	Tasks/outputs
Expert group on 'EU indicators in the youth field'	Since 2009	To discuss, in consultation with relevant policy areas, existing data on the situation of young people and the possible need for the development of indicators in fields where they do not exist, or where no youth perspective is apparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop indicators directly linked to the different fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy, where indicators have not yet been developed
Expert Group on Mobility of Young Volunteers	2009–2013	Create opportunities for cross-border youth volunteering; assure quality through the development of self-assessment tools; recognise learning outcomes of voluntary activities through instruments such as Europass and Youthpass; raise awareness and promote youth cross-border volunteering; promote cross-border mobility of youth workers and young people in youth organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping of good practices of cross-border volunteering Development of a multilateral pilot project for developing new opportunities for cross-border volunteering for young people
Expert group on peer-learning	2012–2013	To share best practice on how to promote the creativity and innovative capacity of young people by identifying competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning relevant for employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share best practice on promoting the creativity and innovative capacity of young people Share best practice on identifying competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning relevant for employability
Expert group on youth work quality systems	2013–2015	To examine youth work quality systems in EU member states	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a set of indicators or frameworks describing quality in youth work systems

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Title	Active	Main 'Concrete Issues' to be addressed	Tasks/outputs
Expert group on young people's challenges	2014–2015	To define the specific contribution of youth work and non-formal and informal learning to address the challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify good practices in support of the employability of young people • Prepare ready-to-use messages targeted to Public Employment Services (PES) and other Youth Guarantee providers, employers, policy-makers in different fields and young people
Expert group on youth work for active citizenship, preventing marginalisation and violent radicalisation	2016–2017	To define “specific contribution of youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning to fostering active citizenship and participation of young people in diverse and tolerant societies and preventing marginalisation, radicalisation potentially resulting in violent behaviour” (Council of the European Union, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify good practice • Compilation of a practical toolbox for youth workers and youth organisations, offering useful tips and guidance on how to prevent young people from marginalisation and violent radicalisation • Policy recommendations

- Expert group on digitalisation and youth 2016–2017 To address ‘the risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy’
- Identify good practice
 - Creation of training modules aimed at upskilling youth workers to cope with the challenges of digitalisation
 - Recommendations addressed to policy-makers as input to possible Council conclusions on the development of innovative methods in youth work, including digital tools
- Expert group on youth work for young migrants and refugees 2017–2018 To define the specific contribution of youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning to responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of young migrants and refugees in the European Union
- Identify good practice to highlight the role that youth work can play in facilitating the integration process of young people with a migrant background
 - Compilation of a practical toolbox for youth workers and youth organisations, offering useful tips and guidance

Source: Our elaboration from European Commission (2012b, 2013, 2016a, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b)

Other active groups included the Expert Group on Peer-Learning created in June 2010 to “fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people” (European Commission, 2012b, p. 1) as well as the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems, set up in 2013.

In the period 2016–2018, three Commission expert groups were established in the youth field following the Council Resolution (2015) on a new Work Plan for Youth (2016–2018). The three groups responded to the Commission’s action towards three specific groups (Council of the European Union, 2015 p. 2):

- Young people at risk of marginalisation
- Young people neither in employment nor education or training
- Young people with a migrant background, including newly arrived immigrants and young refugees

It seems that the character of the expert groups in the youth field has changed with the first two groups which were created in 2009 having a longer timeframe for the delivery of rather big tasks such as developing indicators or the development of a multilateral pilot project. Since 2012, the expert groups were tasked with a set of concrete and narrower goals following a formula: (1) establishing good practices, (2) designing a toolbox (framework) and (3) providing policy recommendations. Nevertheless, for member states’ representatives the shorter timeframes also meant more frequent meetings and more intense meeting preparation.

4.3.2 Mutual- and Peer-Learning Arrangements

Mutual- and peer-learning activities are the cornerstone of the OMC and have been utilised in a variety of ways within the EU Youth Strategy. The Commission’s staff working paper listed a number of activities being part of the mutual-learning by member states including expert groups, peer-learning activities, bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects and transnational cooperation activities (TCA) (European Commission, 2018b, p. 26).

Peer-learning has been conducted through seminars, workshops and conferences, which created not only access to the latest knowledge but enabled networking and access to expert knowledge. According to member states, such mutual-learning assists in developing national, regional and local youth policies (European Commission, 2018b). For example, the National Youth Strategy of the Czech Republic was developed and drafted within the framework of a peer-learning programme designed by the German federal youth ministry (Ibid.). Both Council's Work Plans for 2014–2015 and for 2016–2018 included requirement of undertaking specific peer-learning activities by member states and the EC.

4.3.2.1 The Structured Dialogue

The Structured Dialogue is a mutual-learning tool used specifically in the European youth policy field and therefore needs a special mention. On its website, the European Commission defined the Structured Dialogue as “a means of mutual communication between young people and decision-makers in order to implement the priorities of European youth policy cooperation and to make young people's voice heard in the European policy-shaping process” (European Commission, 2018c). National Working Groups are responsible for organising a representing youth of each country for the Structured Dialogue meetings and discussions. The working groups include the representatives of ministries; youth councils at national, regional and local levels; youth organisations; youth workers; young people and youth researchers. At the EU level, there is a Steering Committee, which includes youth council and ministry representatives from the three EU Presidency countries, the Erasmus+ agency, the EC and the EYF.

The Structured Dialogue is currently organised as an 18-month thematic cycle with a theme set by the Council of Ministers and organised by the three EU Presidencies with three EU Youth Conferences held during the cycle. The Conferences conclude with a set of recommendations, which are then passed on directly to the EU Council.

More recently, the work cycle from 2016 to 2017, under the trio of Presidencies from Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta, focused on the topic

Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe. Three EU Youth Conferences facilitated the consultations, discussions and development of Joint Recommendations to the President of the European Council (Council of the European Union, 2017). The six cycle for 2017–2018 period focused on recommendations for the next framework post-2018 and was titled *Youth in Europe: What's Next?*. This was undertaken under the leadership of a trio of Presidencies from Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria.

The detailed assessment of the impact of the EU Youth Strategy undertaken by the Commission and published in 2016 showed that the Structured Dialogue inspired creating of new processes or strengthening the existing structures (especially in Central and Eastern European member states). In terms of EU policy impact, it influenced Council Resolutions mainly in the employment and education agendas (European Commission, 2016a, p. 68) and policy initiatives at EU level (such as the Youth Guarantee; see Part II of this report). In terms of weaknesses, it was seen as missing the voice of the ‘disadvantaged’ and of the ‘very young’.

Under the 2010–2018 Youth Strategy, the Structured Dialogue has been a consultative process for youth, which the Commission perceived as an influential tool and proposed to enlarge its reach beyond youth organisations (European Commission, 2018a). This builds on the Council’s invitation to “evaluate, review and renew the Structured Dialogue and its objectives with a view to facilitating innovative, meaningful and targeted constructive dialogue not only with young people from youth organisations but also those young people from diverse backgrounds, with fewer opportunities and non-organised youth” (Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 36). The new Strategy 2018–2027 proposed to include new tools of the EU Youth Dialogue, beyond the EU Youth Conference and seminars, by adding “new and alternative forms of participation, including online campaigns, consultations via digital platforms connected to the European Youth Portal” (Ibid., p. 4).

4.3.3 Data Generation

Data generation is increasingly identified as a highly influential policy instrument in relation to the way education policy is made (Hodgson, 2011; Ozga, 2009, 2012; Ravinet, 2008). In the EU youth field, joint EU youth reports, a European youth portal, studies and surveys, as well as outputs from working groups and the Structured Dialogue generate data (European Commission, 2016a). These activities aim at providing evidence to inform policy-making as well as monitor the process and report on the progress in member states. There are also a number of online tools directed at young people for the purpose of providing the information and access to the latest opportunities in Europe. One of the recent tools, introduced in 2017, is Youth Wiki (<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>), which collects and disseminates evidence on national policies. The information on this portal is annually sourced from the member states and provides data related to young people, including information about governance, volunteering, employment market situation, education, health and culture, among others.

Another platform available to young people is the European Youth Portal (<https://europa.eu/youth>), which offers European and national information and opportunities for young people who are living, learning and working in Europe. It provides information around the eight fields of action, covers 35 countries and is available in 28 languages. A volunteering platform was added in 2014 and provides information on different types of volunteering opportunities and publishes the available volunteering options. The EU Youth website (<https://ec.europa.eu/youth>) is another 'dissemination tool' which mainly targets policy-makers, youth representatives, researchers, youth workers and other youth policy stakeholders.

The most detailed statistical information related to youth and gathered for the purpose of the EU Youth Strategy is published in the EU Dashboard on the Eurostat website. It is based on EU Youth indicators, developed by the expert group on indicators in 2011, and provides a cross-sectoral view of the economic and social situation of young people in the EU (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth/data/eu-dashboard>).

The data is sourced from several databases such as Eurostat's Labour Force Survey and the information communication technology survey.

The EU Youth report is generated at the end of each three-year work cycle of the EU Youth Strategy and consists of a Commission communication presenting the main results of the latest three-year cycle, a Commission staff working document providing an overview of the situation of young people and another staff working document that summarises all actions taken by the EU and member states to implement the EU Youth Strategy. The data for the working documents is collected on the basis of the questionnaires from member states and consultations with young people and takes into account the national reporting. It evaluates the progress, points out the weaknesses and suggests improvements for the next cycle. Key statistics for each country are also published in a simplified form as infographics (https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/report-infographics_en).

4.3.4 Funding Schemes

The EU Youth Strategy receives financial support from currently operating funding programmes and frameworks. The new EU Youth Strategy will be aligned with the next Multiannual Financial Framework to support its objectives more effectively with EU funding. There are several funding sources that are referred to in support of the Strategy including Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020, including the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Creative Europe and their successors.

For example, some objectives of the EU Youth Strategy are pursued by member states as part of the Youth Guarantee schemes with EU funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the YEI (see Part II). Nevertheless, the EP repeatedly expressed its concern over the budget cuts at national level, inefficiency of implementation of EU Structural Funds and insufficient levels of funding from the EU (European Parliament, 2013b, 2013c). In its 2013 Resolution, the EP considered that “the budget allocated for the fight against youth unemployment in the future MFF, namely Euro 6 billion, is insufficient” and although

welcomed the new Erasmus+ programme it underscored the need for a “robust funding” and for “a separate chapter and a separate budget allocation for the youth part” (European Parliament, 2013c, p. 4).

4.3.5 Benchmarking

On basis of the findings of the expert group on indicators, the Commission proposed a dashboard of youth indicators in eight ‘fields of action’ included in the Strategy (European Commission, 2011). The purpose of the dashboard was to “enable an examination as to whether the overall objectives are being met” and “to enable non-experts in the youth field to get a quick yet comprehensive overview of the situation of young people in the EU” (Ibid., p. 3). The document first identified a number of already existing indicators in education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being and social inclusion. For the fields where no EU indicators existed such as culture and creativity, youth participation, voluntary activities and youth and the world, it defined the indicators and directed attention to the already existing databases that collect related information. The dashboard was released in 2011 and included a total of 40 indicators. Nevertheless, the EP pointed out that “no mechanism measuring all countries against benchmarks is set” and urged member states to agree on such benchmarks (European Parliament, 2018, p. 22).

4.4 Concluding Remarks

The new EU Youth Strategy (European Commission, 2018a) includes a variety of governance mechanisms and policy instruments to support specific objectives emerging from the previous frameworks for European cooperation in the youth field agreed by the EU Council in 2002 and 2009 (Council of the European Union, 2002, 2009). In the proposed renewed EU Youth Strategy, several policy instruments support the multi-level and participatory governance including coordinated working

groups/networks, mutual- and peer-learning arrangements, data generation, benchmarks and funding schemes.

Policy instruments are one of the analytical devices that can track the process of governance through empirical examination “across time and space” (Jordan, Wurzel, & Zito, 2005, p. 494). The historical review of the developments of the EU Youth Strategies and its policy instruments point to the instrumentation process with several policy functions which include legal, symbolic and epistemological functions (Lingard & Sellar, 2016; Woodward, 2009).

In terms of playing a *legal function*, the EU Youth Strategy has been pursued on the basis of Council Resolutions, Commission’s Communications and Recommendations as well as EP’s Resolutions, which all do not have legally binding effects on national policies, however, create “convergence pressure on national systems” (Souto-Otero, Fleckenstein, & Dacombe, 2008, p. 232) as they re-orient their policy objectives towards the EU. Furthermore, specific policy instruments such as expert groups, peer-learning (including the Structured Dialogue) and benchmarking support the *standard-setting*, *elite-learning* and *capacity-building* mechanisms which help in adaptation of national policies. The European-level youth strategy and its implementation influenced the profile of youth policy, which has shifted beyond the margins of national social policies (Wallace & Bendit, 2009) in policy and institutional terms. In case of the frameworks for European cooperation in the youth field, the legal consequences are evident and recognised by the European Commission (2016a, 2018b). In its evaluations on the impact of the EU Youth Strategy on member states, the Commission reported the variety of legal acts being implemented in member states, including dedicated national youth strategies (e.g. Cyprus, Serbia), policy devolution to the local level (Netherlands), revised youth law (Luxembourg) and the introduction of new laws (e.g. Romania adopted a new law on volunteering in 2014). However, it is important to mention that the OMC through which the EU Youth Strategy is implemented does not have hard instruments forcing any solutions on member states and while some countries take a variety of recommendations on board others reverse their policy. For example, Poland, France and Italy terminated their national Youth Strategy policy, following the change of government.

But governance mechanisms such as *standard-setting* and *financial redistribution* may have also contributed to the *symbolic function* of policies. The *symbolic function* (Hy, 1978; Loncle, Leahy, Muniglia, & Walther, 2012; Souto-Otero et al., 2008) may be seen at the European policy level when the EU Youth Strategy ‘set the stage’ for big policy reforms but at the same time these policies are underfunded. For example, the Council has been criticised by the EP for not making adequate financial commitments for its “ambitious announcements” and not providing a targeted financial support for young people as well as “delaying negotiations on payments in connection with the amending budget for 2013” (European Parliament, 2013a, p. 5). In other words, the policy narrative is ambitious, but it does not have realistic policy implementation strategies attached. Such an approach aligns with the hypothesis put forward by Edelman (1964, p. 26) that “the most intensive dissemination of symbols commonly attends the enactment of legislation which is most meaningless in its effects upon resource allocation”. This is important as without a significant financial commitment from EU and member states in supporting youth policy initiatives the meeting of the complex policy objectives set out for achieving will remain only a rhetoric.

Another point to make with regard to the *symbolic function* of the Strategy is its strong emphasis on the ongoing Structured Dialogue with youth. It has been seen as a backbone of the EU Youth Strategy and indeed praised by youth organisations as it reached, according to the European Commission (2018a), over 200,000 young people since 2010. The Structured Dialogue can be seen as a tool of the *mutual- and peer-learning arrangements* policy instrument, which supports the *standard-setting* and *elite-learning* mechanisms. However, the role of the Structured Dialogue as a tool connecting youth and the EU sends mixed messages. First, the issues and topics for discussion with youth organisations are decided at the EU level rather than deriving from the young people themselves. These topics are aligned with the policy priorities of the EU and are agreed at the highest levels of policy-making. Second, the stated objective for the Structured Dialogue seems to be expressed “to obtain results which are useful for policy-making” and “to acquire a greater understanding and knowledge of young people” (European Commission, 2009, p. 5), which confirms Banjac’s (2017, p. 472) point that the

Dialogue is rather a “practical feature of government (...) to achieve the objectives the authorities regard as desirable”. Loncle et al. (2012) explain that the involvement of youth has a strong legitimising role in policy-making; therefore, it is possible to assume that a strong emphasis that has been put on the involvement of young people through the Structured Dialogue was used for that purpose.

The role of the Structured Dialogue has an additional *epistemological* function. By adopting a Foucauldian perspective, Banjac (2017, 2018) concludes that the Structured Dialogue is one of the instruments that contributed to specific epistemological understanding about youth. The EU Youth Strategy is a proponent of a dual perspective of youth: the first considers a young person as ‘at risk’, hence seen in deficit terms, and the second relates to a “particular ‘appropriate’ form of young personhood that supports the formation of the individual and youth at large as a self-responsible enterprise” (Ibid., p. 473). The epistemological perceptions of young people as being a burden to the society with a sole responsibility for their life pathways are important elements of a neoliberal portrayal of a ‘risk society’, young person and its role and decision-making (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Such a vision focuses on the individual and either does not acknowledge or significantly underplays structural barriers often created by specific social and economic policies. The attention to such epistemological function of the EU Youth Strategy provides an insight into how agency is understood and how the policy goals are developed in response. It also underscores policy-making as a political process associated with normative beliefs and therefore specific interests and policy preferences (Haas, 2001).

There is another interesting aspect worth pointing out characterising the development of instruments in the EU Youth Strategy, which is related to the relationship between the selection of instruments and policy goals. As can be seen in the overview of the EU Youth Strategies, these strategies were characterised by an overwhelming number of policy goals (from engaging youth in democracy in 2002, providing opportunities for education and employment since 2010, to a focus on radicalisation and marginalisation, since 2016), which, although similar across the decades, have been driven by different circumstances while the instruments remained the same. Although it is difficult to trace the relationship

between the shifts in specific policy goals, it is possible to deduce that most of the instruments utilised within the OMC were not selected strictly on the basis of the technical fit for purpose, or as the ‘best tool for the job’, but can be seen as a type of social institution. It confirms the political sociology view on the selection of instruments (Kassim & Le Galès, 2010), where it does not assume that adoption of policy goals precedes instrument choice. The political sociology approach to understanding public policy argues that policy instruments (not policy goals) structure public policy and remain a form of power. On that basis, the instruments used within the OMC should not be assumed as more democratic or transparent. They produce intended and unintended policy effects, independently of the objectives pursued (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). That is why focusing on the in-depth analysis of the inner workings of these instruments and their functions is important to our understanding of the changing governance landscape in Europe.

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5

The European Semester: How Does It Work? Why Does It Matter?

Marcella Milana

5.1 Introduction

In recent years the European Union (EU) and its member states, especially those that adopted the Euro as a common currency (Euro countries from now on), have faced unprecedented financial and economic crises. The responses to these crises by the EU institutions and member states have been “outside the EU legal order and with a significant impact on the constitutional frameworks and on the institutional balance of the Union itself” (Cisotta, 2013, p. 1). This has resulted in the promotion of “*constitutional changes*” (Ibid., p. 2, emphasis in original), particularly under the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), a framework for economic, fiscal and common monetary policy coordination within the Union since 1992. These responses include new rules on fiscal and macroeconomic discipline endorsed by EU institutions and member states under the European

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Semester, a cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination, proposed by the European Commission in May 2010, approved by the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) and launched in January 2011.

Addressed at times as a “new coordination mechanism” (Costamagna, 2013), the European Semester represents *de facto* “a new framework for policy-coordination” (Verdun & Zeitlin, 2018, p. 137) at both horizontal and vertical level, as it “provide[s] a new socioeconomic governance architecture to co-ordinate national policies without transferring full sovereignty to the EU level” (Verdun & Zeitlin, 2018, p. 137), which “raise[s] many legal concerns and may alter long-standing balances between institutions” (Cisotta, 2013, p. 1). Hence, an extensive literature about the European Semester, across disciplines, enquires issues concerned with its capacity and effectiveness in influencing national governments (see Cisotta, 2013, among others), and its capacity to (re)balance economic and social policy objectives within the Union (see Costamagna, 2013, among others). In short, many concur that, as a new governance architecture, the European Semester “provides a general framework for pushing and pulling mechanisms [...], while bringing together fiscal and macroeconomic coordination instruments with social and employment ones within the same cycle” (Louvaris Fasois, 2017, p. 2).

This chapter presents how the European Semester works (2018) and the way it changed over time. In so doing, it highlights how its pushing and pulling mechanisms, set up to support different previously established cooperation frameworks (i.e., the European Monetary Union, the *Stability and Growth Pact*) and new ones (i.e., *Europe 2020*), have spill-over effects also on Europe’s lifelong learning markets.

5.2 How the European Semester Works: The Yearly Cycle

The new governance architecture set up by the European Semester as by 2018 is presented in an infographic (i.e., “Who does what in the European Semester”) by the European Union (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/european-semester/>). Structured in a yearly cycle, its

framework for policy coordination is organised in four phases: a preparatory phase (November–January), a phase of policy guidance at EU level (January–April), a country-specific phase (April–July) and an implementation phase (July–October).

The *preparatory phase* is dedicated to an analysis of the current situation of member states' budgetary and structural policies, thus starting with the adoption of the Annual Growth Survey (AGS) by the European Commission. The AGS is a document registering EU's and member states' priorities and objectives for their policies to support both the *Stability and Growth Pact* and the *Europe 2020* strategy (see below).

In conjunction with the AGS, the European Commission prepares an Alert Mechanism Report (AMR) to identify potential economic imbalances by Euro countries, drawing on economic and financial indicators and a scoreboard of 14 additional indicators with indicative thresholds,¹ including on changes in unemployment, long-term unemployment and youth unemployment rates. Countries at showcasing or at risk of excessive imbalance are made the object of in-depth reviews and could potentially incur into sanctions (see Sect. 5.3).

In the next phase (*policy guidance at EU level*), all EU institutions are differently involved in (1) studying the AGS and the recommendations for the Euro countries proposed by the European Commission (i.e., Council of the European Union – EU Council), (2) expressing own opinions on the employment guidelines (i.e., European Parliament) and, on this ground, (3) reaching an agreement on what should be the policy orientations for the year ahead (i.e., European Council). In the meantime, those Euro countries for which an Alert Mechanism (see below) has been triggered are subject to in-depth reviews on the part of the European Commission.

The following phase (*country-specific phase*) is dedicated to the setting of national objectives, policies and plans by member states, on which ground the European Commission drafts Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs), which are then subject to agreement, endorsement and final adoption by the EU institutions.

Specifically, considering the content of the AGS endorsed by the European Council (cf. previous phase), member states prepare both National Reform Programmes (NRPs) and Stability Programmes (or Convergence Programmes for non-Euro states) (SCPs) for submission to

the European Commission by 30 April, “in a moment where national budgetary processes are still at an early phase or are yet to begin” (Costamagna, 2013, p. 11).

NRPs are documents that, adopted under the *Europe 2020* strategy, set out the national strategies for economic growth, employment and inclusion that should be implemented by member states over the following 12 months. These should be drafted in compliance with the *Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines* adopted in 2010 by the Council. In drafting their NRPs, member states should make also reference to the measures agreed under the Euro Plus Pact of 2011 (see Sect. 5.4), if they are among the signatories of such political commitment for enhanced policy coordination.

SCPs shall provide the type of information envisaged to comply with Articles 3 and 7 of Regulation No. 1466/97 for the purpose of multilateral surveillance (under Article 121 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). Such information includes Medium-Term Budgetary Objectives (MTO) and consistency between the plan of national reforms and the NRPs.

In May, the European Commission evaluates both NRPs and SCPs and issues CSRs that stipulate the kind of actions member states should undertake. Such CSRs are then discussed by the configurations of the EU Council for (1) Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, (2) Economic and Financial Affairs and (3) Competitiveness.

Upon agreement among these configurations, CSRs are endorsed by the European Council and then adopted by the EU Council in its July meeting, in accordance with the “comply or explain” principle (i.e., the EU Council shall provide a written explanation of its reasons for modifying the Commission’s recommendations).

Finally, in the concluding phase (*implementation*) member states are expected to acknowledge and take account of CSRs in their national decision-making processes on own national budgets for the year to follow. During this phase, the 19 Euro countries are required to submit (by 15 October) to the European Commission a draft budgetary plan for the next year, as part of the Two-Pack, two legislative measures, adopted in 2013 by the European Parliament and the EU Council to strengthen the SGP (see Sect. 5.4). National draft budgetary plans should include

information on foreseen general government expenditure by function, also in those areas of exclusive competence of member states, like education, employment and health care, and the description and quantification of both expenditure and revenues measures, when “these measures, and their modes of implementation, are still to be discussed by national parliaments” (Costamagna, 2013, p. 12). By the end of November, on the ground of the national draft budgetary plans received, the Commission issues an opinion.

Along this composite process of policy coordination, both horizontal relations between the EU institutions and vertical EU-member states relations turn self-evident. Yet, what remains less visible, perhaps, is the position assumed by the European Commission as the “core political driver” of the Union, with stronger powers *vis-à-vis* member states (Cisotta, 2013, pp. 2–4, emphasis in original).

In the next sections, we review the development of the European Semester and how its governance procedures changed over time. In so doing, we build on Zeitlin and Vanhercke’s (2018) work to pinpoint at changes in the positioning not only of the European Commission but also of EU social and employment policy actors.

5.3 Before the European Semester (1992–2009)

Since the 1990s, under the principle of “shared responsibility”, the Union has introduced and further amended forms of cooperation in its economic and fiscal policy between the EU and its member states.

In 1992, with the establishment of the EMU, a framework for economic, fiscal and common monetary policy coordination was first put in place. Under the EMU framework, no single institution is responsible for coordination of economic and fiscal policy, or a common monetary policy, within the Union, but responsibility is shared between EU institutions and member states. Accordingly, member states should set their national budgets within agreed limits for deficit and debt, while their Heads of states and governments, reunited as the European Council, set

the main policy orientations of the Union. Other EU institutions are responsible for coordinating economic policy-making at EU level (i.e., EU Council), formulating legislation and subjecting economic governance to democratic scrutiny (i.e., European Parliament, EU Council), particularly through Economic Dialogues,² and for monitoring member states' performance and compliance (i.e., European Commission). While the EMU framework applies to all EU member states, since introduction of a common currency, the Euro, policy coordination of economic and fiscal policy has been strengthened for Euro countries. So, the Eurogroup (an informal body made up of the ministers of Euro countries) coordinates policies of common interest, which financial institutions are under the supervision of the European Central Bank.

At a few years distance, the *Stability and Growth Pact* came into force (1998), following a Resolution (of 17 June 1997) by the European Council, and related Regulation (No. 1466 of 7 July 1997) on the strengthening of the surveillance of budgetary positions, and the surveillance and coordination of economic policies of the then EU-15 (Council of the European Union, 1997a, 1997b). Also known as “the preventive arm”, Regulation No. 1466/97 foresaw that member states should submit to the EU Council and the European Commission a Stability Programme, including Medium-Term Budgetary Objectives and expected economic variables, so to prevent excessive deficit. At a close distance, a second Regulation (No. 1467 of 30 August 1997) on speeding up and clarifying the implementation of the excessive deficit procedure added what known as “the dissuasive arm”: in the case a member state breaks the excessive deficit limit (i.e., 3% of Gross Domestic Product [GDP] reference value), it can be sanctioned (see Sect. 5.4) (Council of the European Union, 1997c).

Reflecting the principle of “shared responsibility”, overall, the SGP was supposed to benefit (1) domestic governments, by preventing they are hampered by unsustainable fiscal policies; (2) other governments, as governments running higher deficit in the EMU would face lower interest rates than those outside the Union; and (3) the EMU as a collective, as it supposedly avoids asymmetric economic shocks by eliminating differences in fiscal policies across countries (Beetsma, 2001).

In 2005, following the European Council Summit of 22–23 March, new Council Regulations were issued to amend the SGP in an attempt “to improve the credibility of the Pact” (Warin, 2008, p. 2). So, a few innovations entered the institutional design of the SGP.

First, while “[p]eer support and peer pressure are an integral part of the Stability and Growth Pact... [since 2005] structural reforms are encouraged by the possibility of taking them into account on the path towards adjustment” (Warin, 2008, p. 5).

Moreover, while in 1997 the preventive arm foresaw the same MTO for all countries, since 2005 a code of conduct established a country-specific MTO. This way “Member States have to define a specific MTO in cyclically adjusted terms. Thus, cycles are now taken into consideration” (Ibid., p. 5).

Finally, after 2005 “relevant factors” can justify a country’s deviation from the excessive deficit limit. Although subject to the EU Council’s final judgement (Ibid.), the possibility of taking account of exceptional circumstances to justify the economic downturn of one or more member states has relaxed the SGP’s dissuasive arm.

Yet, triggered by the European debt crisis, which followed shortly the renewal of José Manuel Barroso as President of the European Commission, such architecture has taken a new form that, with the first codification of the European Semester (2010), replaced “shared responsibility” with the principle of “integrated surveillance”.

5.4 The First Codification of the European Semester (2010–2013)

In spring 2010, following the European sovereign debt crisis, “the European Commission [under the Presidency of José Manuel Barroso, in office since 22 November 2004 to 31 October 2014] was empowered to sign an international agreement with the Greek government and to coordinate the pool of loans” and, in liaison with the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, agreed on a “rescue package” in response to Greece’s default, including amounts and conditionality (Cisotta, 2013, p. 3).

As one of the measures to stabilise the Euro area, on 25 March 2011, at the height of the economic and financial crisis, the EU member states adopted the *Euro Plus Pact*, a political commitment to fostering competitiveness and employment; contributing to sustainable public finances; reinforcing financial stability; and strengthening tax policy coordination, through the strengthening of budgetary surveillance and economic policy coordination.³

Alongside the above-mentioned events, a number of financial mechanisms and procedures of different legal nature have been put in place (e.g., European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism, European Financial Stability Facility, European Stability Mechanism), empowering the Commission to engage in negotiations on conditionality as part of financial assistance to member states. In the meantime, pre-existing rules in European economic governance were also amended through the introduction of the European Semester and the strengthening of the SGP.

The European Semester, as mentioned, was proposed by the European Commission on 12 May 2010, then approved by the ECOFIN Council in 2010, with the scope of coordinating under a new governance architecture the procedures for monitoring member states' compliance to (1) the SGP; (2) the *Broad Economic Policy Guidelines* (BEPGs), following Article 121 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) in its consolidated version of 2010; and (3) the *Employment Guidelines* (EGs), following TFEU's Article 148.

Under TFEU's Article 121, "Member States shall regard their economic policies as a matter of common concern and shall coordinate them within the Council [...] The Council formulates a non-binding recommendation on broad guidelines for the economic policies of EU countries". Hence, the BEPGs concern macroeconomic and structural policies for both individual EU countries and the EU, which are subject to multilateral surveillance. If a country's economic policy is not compliant with these Guidelines, the EU Council is entitled to issue public recommendations.

Under TFEU's Article 148, "the European Council shall each year consider the employment situation in the Union and adopt conclusions thereon, on the basis of a joint annual report by the Council and the Commission". Accordingly, the EGs are concerned with common

priorities and targets for employment policies, including those in support of lifelong learning and of Education and Training 2010 and 2020, which are proposed by the European Commission, agreed by member states and adopted by the EU Council. On this ground, member states shall produce “an annual report on the principal measures taken to implement its employment policy in the light of the guidelines for employment” (Ibid.).

The BEPGs and the EGs were part of the Lisbon *Strategy for Growth and Jobs* of 2000, but following its mid-term review by the European Council on 22 and 23 March 2005, they had been revised and brought together under the single heading of the *Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs* (IGs) by the ECOFIN Council on 12 July 2005 and further revised with the adoption of the *Europe 2020* strategy in 2010.

The IGs brought “a significant reduction in the overall number of guidelines, from 28 BEPGs and 10 EGs to 24 IGs” (European Central Bank, 2005, p. 51), and ever since serve as the basis for member states to submit NRPs (see Sect. 5.2) that specify the measures they have taken or intend to take to support growth and employment within own sovereign territories.

The IGs are non-binding in principle but they can trigger the *Excessive Deficit Procedure* (EDP) or the *Excessive Imbalance Procedure* (EIP), if member states fail to meet the limits set by the Council Regulation No. 1466/1997 (as amended by Regulation No. 1175/2011).

The EDP is a procedure against any member state exceeding the budgetary deficit ceiling of the SGP (for Euro countries the budget deficit must not exceed 3% of GDP, and public debt must not exceed 60% of GDP). The procedure foresees several steps that could possibly culminate in sanctions, if the country puts at risks the functioning of the EMU.

The EIP is a procedure against any member state with excessive imbalances. Under this procedure the European Commission may recommend the EU Council to request a member state to submit a corrective Action Plan, which implementation is then monitored by the Commission and the Council. Failures in submitting corrective plans or in their implementation by Euro countries could possibly culminate in sanctions, including fines.

For the above reasons, during the preparatory phase of the European Semester, the European Commission prepares an AMR alongside the AGS (see Sect. 5.2).

Through 2011–2013, and thanks to the first codification of the European Semester, the SGP has been further revised via the so-called Six-Pack and Two-Pack reforms and the *Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance* (known as the Fiscal Compact), an international treaty outside the EU legal framework that became law in January 2013 in its signatories⁴ to reinforce budget discipline under the SGP, governance within the EMU and the coordination of its signatories' economic policies.

The *Six-Pack reform* is made of a set of five regulations and one directive that came into force on December 2011. It brought about a broader economic policy monitoring system (i.e., the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure) that, under the European Semester (cf. Sect. 5.2), covers the AMR, and the in-depth reviews of member states at risk of imbalances or excessive imbalances, which analysis feeds into the CSRs proposed by the European Commission. Moreover, it introduced the EIP (see above), which could end with applying fines to Euro countries, though as a last resort, under the “reverse qualified majority vote” – this entails that a proposal by the European Commission is considered adopted if not adverted by a vote of the qualified majority of the EU Council.

The Two-Pack reform is made of two legislative measures proposed by the European Commission, adopted by the European Parliament and the EU Council, and enforced in all Euro countries on 30 May 2013. It introduced a new deadline, under the European Semester, for the “integrated surveillance” of Euro countries (i.e., draft budgetary plans, cf. Sect. 5.2). Further, for member states that had received new recommendations under the EDP (see above), it foresees the submission of *Economic Partnership Programmes*, detailing fiscal and structural reforms foreseen to correct their deficits. In addition, member states experiencing financial difficulties are now subject to “enhanced surveillance”, involving regular review visits by the European Commission. Finally, under the Two-Pack, on a proposal from the Commission, the EU Council can request full macroeconomic adjustment programmes to member states with difficulties that could have “significant adverse effects” on the rest of Euro

countries, which are then subject to review and can receive financial assistance in exchange of strict conditions.

Observers note that the “enhanced surveillance”, under the principle of the “reverse qualified majority vote”, represents “a Copernican revolution in EU decision-making” (Cisotta, 2013, p. 6). In fact, new competences have been assigned to the European Commission: “These new tasks appear to entail a political transformation of the institutional standing of the Commission, whose role as watchdog is enhanced” (Ibid., 2013, p. 4). While this is still legal, provided that the new tasks and competences of the European Commission do not alter the essential character of the powers conferred to EU institutions by the EU Treaties, it does raise some legal concerns. In fact, as Cisotta (2013) notes, according to current EU Treaties the European Commission represents the Union as a whole, but under the “enhanced surveillance” it tends at times to represent the interests of Euro countries only (for instance, when negotiating fiscal assistance).

Yet, following the 2014 shift in the Presidency of the European Commission, under Jean-Claude Juncker the European Semester has been revamped, thus reinforcing the “shift of EU competences from the *soft* coordination of economic policies to a more binding and intrusive agenda-setting procedure” (Cisotta, 2013, p. 6, emphasis in original) well beyond macroeconomic and fiscal policy.

5.5 The Revamping of the European Semester (2014–2019)

On 1 November 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker took office as the new President of the European Commission. Already in its Opening Statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session of 15 July 2014, Juncker (2015, p. 2) had stressed that “The stability of our single currency and the solidity of public finances are as important to me as social fairness in implementing necessary structural reforms”. On this ground, under his presidency, the Commission has brought forward a number of innovations in the European Semester, partly building on plans from his

predecessor, partly in response to member states' request (Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2018).

As early as June 2015, in its capacity as President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, in cooperation with the Presidents of the Euro Summit (Donald Tusk), the Eurogroup (Jeroen Dijsselbloem), the European Central Bank (Mario Draghi) and the European Parliament (Martin Schulz), issued a report on *Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union* (European Commission, 2015a). The report presents a programmatic roadmap to reinforce “convergence between Member States towards the highest levels of prosperity; and convergence within European societies, to nurture our unique European model [...] within a revamped European Semester” (Ibid., p. 7). It stresses the need to concomitantly advance on four parallel fronts: the Economic Union, the Financial Union, the Fiscal Union and the Political Union. Accordingly, in its Communication *On steps towards Completing Economic and Monetary Union* (European Commission, 2015b), the European Union notes that “translating the Five Presidents' report into action requires a shared sense of purpose among all euro area Member States and EU institutions”, and it sets out actions towards better integration between Euro countries, with a stronger emphasis on employment and social performance, a stronger focus on benchmarking and best practices and a more attentive support to national reforms through EU funds and technical assistance.

In short, alongside improvements in the surveillance of macroeconomic imbalances and public finances within the Union, particularly within Euro countries, surveillance on *Europe 2020* targets through the European Semester has also been strengthened in recent years by reducing the number of CSRs, increasing their focus on what to be achieved, rather than prescribing how to reach certain targets, thus making implementation of CSR at country level more flexible (Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2018). At the same time, in-depth reviews foreseen under the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (see Sect. 5.4) have been integrated with the Commission's Staff Working Documents in support of CRSs into Country Reports that, prepared by the Commission, and followed by a Policy Dialogue with member states, now serve as the basis for the CSRs issued by the European Commission and the inputs for the assessment of SCPs and NRPs.

Moreover, the stronger focus on benchmarking and best practices has led in April 2017 to the Commission's *Communication on Establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights*, which reiterates that benchmarking and exchange of best practices will be conducted for a number of areas, including people's skills, and clarify that to monitor progress in member states, a new social scoreboard will be incorporated in the framework of the European Semester (European Commission, 2017).

Under these circumstances, with the aim to strengthening cross-country monitoring, a framework for benchmarking adult skills and learning policies has been developed by the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) of the European Commission, in consultation with the Directorate General for Education and Culture, in cooperation with member states. The proposed framework follows a three-step approach endorsed by the Employment Committee (EMCO) – the main advisory committee for Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in the Employment and Social Affairs Council (EPSCO) – and the Social Protection Committee (SPC), also an advisory policy committee for EPSCO:

In a first step, broad key challenges in the area of adult skills and learning are presented and a set of high-level outcome indicators is identified. A second step considers key policy performance indicators in the area of adult skills and learning that can allow for benchmarking policy performance. The third step of the benchmarking framework involves the identification of general principles, relevant policy parameters (levers) and related policy lever indicators in one of the areas under discussion, namely adult learning. (European Commission, *n.d.*, p. 1)

DG EMPL clarifies that in the area of education and training quantitative benchmarks used and monitored within *Education and Training 2020* (see Chap. 2) refer to “outcome indicators and relate to numerical objectives or targets, whereas the present approach specifically focuses on benchmarking policy levers”, namely, “specific policy parameters that can lead to better outcomes” (Ibid., p. 3).

The indicators that compose the framework for benchmarking adult skills and learning policies, reported in Table 5.1, are the resultant of a review process that involved member states through their various

Table 5.1 Framework for benchmarking adult skills and learning policies

Step	Focus	Agreed indicators
First	Outcome indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The employment rate (age group 20–64) broken down by education level b. Macroeconomic skills mismatch (age group 20–64) c. Labour productivity (real output per employee measured in Euro)
Second	Policy performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The share of adults with at least upper secondary education attainment (age group 25–64) b. The share of adults participating in learning (age group 25–64) c. The share of the population with basic or above basic overall digital skills (age group 16–74) d. The share of jobs requiring at least upper secondary education attainment (share of employment in occupations classified under ISCO categories 1–8; age group 15–64)
Third	Policy levers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The share of adults who have received free-of-charge information or advice/help on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations during the last 12 months (age group 25–64) b. The share of unemployed adults who participated in any training activity during the last four weeks before the survey as part of all unemployed adults (age group 25–64) c. The share of low-qualified adults who participated in any training activity during the last four weeks before the survey as part of all low-qualified adults (age group 25–64) d. The share of companies that report to have received any type of public co-financing for training activities in a reference year

Source: Our processing from European Commission ([n.d.](#))

representations in the EMCO Indicators Groups, the EMCO Policy Analysis Group, EMCO, the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks and the Education Committee of the EU Council. In extreme synthesis, building on the three-step benchmarking process, the framework identifies three policy levers as the most effective to stimulate individual demand for learning: (1) the provision of guidance about learning opportunities, (2) the provision of financial incentives to individuals and (3) the provision of flexible learning opportunities.

5.6 Concluding Remarks: Why Does the European Semester Matter?

As illustrated thus far, the European Semester was initiated in the wake of the financial and sovereign debt crises of 2010, but it “has the capacity to reach across the entire spectrum of Member States’ economic and social policies. This enables EU institutions to exercise policy formulation, supervision and guidance on issues [...] that fall within Member States’ competency” (Costamagna, 2013, p. 12, emphasis added), including education and lifelong learning (Stevenson, Milner, Winchip, & Hagger-Vaughan, 2019). Specifically, the European Semester has given EU institutions “a more prominent role than ever before in scrutinizing and guiding national economic, fiscal and social policies, especially within the euro area” (Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2018, p. 150).

Accordingly, the inherently supranational or intergovernmental character of the European Semester has been put under close scrutiny through various examinations of the political power and pivotal roles gained (or lost), by each EU institution (i.e., the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission) *vis-à-vis* member states, either in isolation or jointly, as their Heads of states and governments compose the European Council (see Crum, 2018; Hallerberg, Marzinotto, & Wolff, 2018; Maricut & Puetter, 2018; Savage & Verdun, 2015; van der Veer & Haverland, 2018; among others). Available literature also questions issues of democratic legitimacy, and particularly, whether the European Semester has “shifted governance responsibilities away from democratic institutions” like the European Parliament (Verdun & Zeitlin, 2018, p. 141).

But the European Semester has spillover effects also on Europe’s lifelong learning markets. These are the resultant of the intersection of multiple policy domains (i.e., education, labour, health, social protection) under national jurisdiction, hence subject to the subsidiarity principle.

As Milana (2014, p. 94) notes, such principle concedes

the nation-state as the social institution *par excellence* – coupled with religious groups and the family – to form citizens [...] with the additional responsibility of creating opportunities to leverage disparity in the

socio-economic conditions experienced by individuals and groups at micro and meso levels. However, also contained within the subsidiarity principle is the inherent concern (present in the early 1990s when the Community was expanding and the EU was created) that an increasing number of countries pooling sovereignty means that more attention would be paid to social implications beyond national levels.

Suitably, a strand of the research literature questions whether and to what extent the European Semester has affected pre-existing relations between economic and social policies within the Union (cf. Stevenson, 2019a, 2019b). Empirical claims are not univocal. Some reinforce the impression of a subordination of social policy objectives to economic ones (see, for instance, Crespy & Menz, 2015a, 2015b). Others point at the predominance of the EU economic policy actors (e.g., ECOFIN Council, among others) over their social counterparts in decision-making procedures under the European Semester (see de la Porte & Heins, 2014, 2015; Degryse, Jepsen, & Pochet, 2014; among others). Moreover, a number of studies have pointed at coercive and prescriptive structural reforms foreseen by CSRs (Dawson, 2015), which subordinate education, lifelong learning and other social reforms to economic imperatives (Stevenson et al., 2019).

At the same time, empirical claims also highlight not only that CSRs are discretionally applied by members states (Scharpf, 2013), but also that they have changed emphasis so as to include better attention to social issues over time (Bekker, 2015). Consequently, some claims that, since its first codification (2010), there has been “a partial but progressive ‘socialization’ of the Semester” (Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2018, p. 152). Drawing, among other sources, on 76 elite interviews with members of several Directorate Generals of the European Commission and advisory committees of the Council of the European Union, as well as with European social partners and networks of non-governmental organisations, Zeitlin and Vanhercke (2018) have examined the ways EU social and employment policy actors have adjusted their working methods alongside the developments of the European Semester, and specifically from its first codification, under the Barroso Commission, through its revamping, under the Juncker Commission. In so doing, the authors highlight how EU social and employment policy actors have gain ground in

“socialising” the European Semester along this path (Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2018). Such a socialisation process has a double connotation. On the one hand, it points at a steady but progressive policy re-orientation of the European Semester to better balance economic and social objectives (including in adult and lifelong learning policy). On the other hand, it points at a more interactive and less hierarchical decision-making process through which EU social and employment policy actors have adjusted their working methods so as “to gain traction in ‘evidence-based’ deliberation with their economic policy counterparts” (Ibid., p. 154).

Specifically, Zeitlin and Vanhercke (2018) argue that, since the revamping of the European Semester, social and employment objectives feature more prominently in AGS and CSRs. Perhaps most importantly, however, the authors also point at the fact that the drafting of CSRs has become even more collaborative (1) across Directorate Generals of the European Commission, with the DG EMPL now having higher responsibility for drafting the chapters on social and employment policy of the Country Reports, and (2) across EU Council’s configurations, and specifically between ECOFIN and the Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO).

As noted, it is under these conditions that lifelong learning, and specifically adults’ skills, has entered the socialisation process prompted by the European Semester, through a new benchmarking process aimed at identifying policy levers for stimulating the individual demand for learning within and across member states, and as such will be monitored within the European Semester.

Notes

1. These indicators cover international investment, export market shares, private sector debt and credit, house prices, general government sector debt, financial sector liabilities and changes in unemployment, long-term unemployment and youth unemployment rates.
2. As explained on the European Parliament’s website: “Economic Dialogues (ED) are held in order to enhance the dialogue between the EU institutions on the application of economic governance rules and with Member States,

if appropriate, to ensure greater transparency and accountability. The competent committee of the European Parliament may invite representatives of Member States, the European Commission, the President of the Council, the President of the European Council and the President of the Eurogroup, to discuss economic and policy issues” (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/econ/economic-governance.html?tab=Economic%20Dialogues>).

3. The Euro Plus Pact now commits all 19 Euro countries (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain) plus six additional member states: Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania.
4. The signatories comprise all EU member states with the exception of Croatia, Czech Republic and the United Kingdom.

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6

Benchmarking, Taxonomies and Indicators for Evaluating Europe's Lifelong Learning Systems

Gosia Klatt

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses benchmarking, taxonomies and indicators, and their role on the international and national governance of lifelong learning, specifically in relation to European governance. In fact, as highlighted in the preceding chapters, benchmarks represent a core policy instrument at play across Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) (see Chap. 2), the Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning (see Chap. 3), the EU Youth Strategy (see Chap. 4) and the European Semester (see Chap. 5), but the process of benchmarking is not independent from the construction of taxonomies and indicators. Thus, the following sections review the evolution of education indicators and then consider the variety of definitional and conceptual aspects and existing tensions. In so doing, they shed some light on the relationships between science, data

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and policy, and how these have evolved over time and may affect governance of lifelong learning systems. Finally, the chapter recalls the various benchmarks and indicators that, developed in the fields of European education, adult education and youth policy, have become accepted standards for evaluating (by comparison) Europe's lifelong learning systems.

6.2 Historical Development of Education Indicators

Cobb and Rixford (1998) provide a comprehensive overview of the history of social indicators since the 1830s social reforms in Europe and the United States of America (US) to draw attention to the conflicts that have existed about the nature and purpose of indicators. Across decades, several conflicts were identified, which related to the use of indicators, the means of developing indicators, the process of collecting data and applicability of indicators. The measurement for the purpose of social reform has been traced to the early nineteenth century. Then, statistical data was collected to firstly gather information related to criminal conduct (e.g. number of prisoners, the crimes committed, race), but these statistics were not linked to any policy interpretation. Indicators related to education and well-being in the early twentieth century were based on community surveys related to conditions of education, public health and so on. As Cobb and Rixford (1998) note, the data did not have much of an impact on the community as it was mostly focused on the symptoms rather than offering any explanations on the causes. In the US, the development of indicators was strengthened in the 1920–1930s through the growth of the inductive approach to solving social problems, including the growth in reporting of social trends. The times of the Great Depression, and then the war, for obvious reasons, led to the focus on economic indicators and on data supporting the wartime production. But the analytic power of statistical data was only utilised since the 1960s with social science approaches applied to government policy. Such a turn happened in response to the limitations of economic indicators as measures of social aspects such as equity or happiness (Land, 1983).

In 1966, the publication of *Social Indicators* by the American team led by Raymond Bauer was influential in supporting the idea of guiding policy decisions with a system of indicators. Nevertheless, the general agreement was on using indicators as descriptors rather than models for action. Although the interest in social indicators grew politically, these were overwhelmingly used as statistical information and lacking political action based on the interpretation of these indicators.

In the 1970s and 1980s with the growth of the influence of the international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations (UN) in shaping social trends, indicators were utilised in the development of annual reports on living conditions and world development. Interestingly, these trends were also visible in the Soviet Union where the idea of social indicators became perceived as important to the economic planning (Dobrianov, 1984). The focus in the literature was much more on the interpretation of social indicators, and the variety of models that help measure or analyse social change (Ferriss, 1974; Land, 1983).

Education indicators grew rapidly and, according to Ferriss (1974), already in the 1970s the education systems had the second largest wealth of indicators. For example, in 1973 the OECD published 46 indicators to measure the effects of education (Bottani & Tuijnman, 1994). Nevertheless, there was a lack of interest and belief in the power of indicators from the policy-makers and the OECD discontinued this work. Although the analyses of educational data were conducted and supported by comprehensive sets of indicators (Lippman, 2007), there were still weaknesses as to their utilisation and impact, including a lack of a measure of quality, equity or learning progression (Ferriss, 1974). Furthermore, the definitions of educational indicators were still “eclectic” or “contradictory” (Jaeger, 1978, p. 277).

With the growth of the market economies, social indicators were seen as part of ‘rational techniques’ in policy analysis used to complement economic data (Carley, 1980). Fasano (1994) argues that the growth in the interest in education indicators was linked to economic stringency and demand for affordability. Furthermore, the political focus in education policy turned to measuring quality of education systems through student achievement outcomes. Therefore, the focus turned from inputs

and processes (e.g. resources or curriculum) to outputs (e.g. improving student outcomes) (Rowe & Lievesley, 2002). Although a variety of categorisations of indicators existed (e.g. subjective-objective; individual-aggregated), the problems with their effective use continued. A novel approach was proposed in 1989 by linking education indicators with accountability (Bottani & Tuijnman, 1994). However, social indicators were seen as value-laden, often not based on scientific data or too generalised to reach a common denominator. Nevertheless, the interest in indicators has not wined down but accelerated in the 1990s when the OECD decided to focus on the development of international education indicators (Bottani, 1998; OECD, 1994). The OECD's goal was to develop new procedures and standards for data collection and management and to organise the indicators into a framework that would enable interpreting interrelationships between different aspects of the education systems. Bottani (1998) explains how the OECD attempted to improve the analytical power of education indicators by developing a conceptual framework based on several guiding principles, which included relevance for policy-making, easiness to communicate and comparability, among others. The comparability principle itself incentivises competition and convergence of policies, and in such a way the OECD contributed to the new global processes of regulations and evaluations (Normand, 2010).

6.3 Indicators – Definitions, Functions and Limitations

An overwhelming number of social indicators exists and have been utilised and referred to in education policies. Interestingly, policy documents, especially those from the EU, rarely define 'indicators' as a concept and assume the concept's general understanding within the policy community (see European Commission, 2004, 2011, among others). Indicators have often been connected to other 'measurement' concepts such as benchmarks, targets and taxonomies as they are used for assessing the progress of reaching targets, or benchmarks, or form a set of indicator systems or taxonomies. It is important to clarify the definitions and the

meanings behind these concepts to understand the complexities of these data-driven concepts and the possible effects of their use, overuse or misuse.

From a quick look at the literature, one might gather that indicators are simply ‘data’, ‘statistics’, ‘measures’ or ‘variables’ (Dao, Plagnat Cantoreggi, & Rousseaux, 2017; Land, 1983; Martínez & Dopheide, 2014; Shavelson, McDonnell, & Oakes, 1991). Martínez and Dopheide (2014, p. 2) define indicators with a sense of objectivity as “qualitative or quantitative data that describe features of a certain phenomenon and communicate an assessment of the phenomenon involved”. This definition focuses on the function of indicators as a communication tool that sheds a light on the problems for policy-makers to tackle, but it is not seen as evidence leading to a specific decision. Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the definitions related to education indicators provides a more complex and not a clear-cut understanding. The definition proposed by Cobb and Rixford (1998, p. 1) is a good starting point: “an indicator refers to a set of statistics that can serve as a proxy or metaphor for phenomena that are not directly measurable”. This definition suggests that indicators represent a complicated social idea in a statistical form. It assumes that indicators have the “capacity to convert complicated contextually variable phenomena into unambiguous, clear, and impersonal measures” (Merry, 2011, p. 84). For example, indicators can represent a ‘subjective reality’ where experiences and feelings of individuals (measures of happiness or satisfaction) are used as an important component of measuring social change (Land, 1983). But this is problematic, as these indicators are perceived as ‘objective truth’ and scientific, while they do not accurately reflect the diversity of experiences and contexts within societies (Merry, 2011).

This leads to another interesting aspect of indicators, which is their use as was pointed out by Shavelson et al. (1991, p. 1) when explaining that “Education indicators are statistics that reflect important aspects of the education system, but not all statistics about education are indicators. Statistics qualify as indicators only if they serve as yardsticks”.

So, what is the function of indicators? Academics agree that in general they have a simple function of alerting, or informing about a state of a specific aspect of a social issue, as simply explained by Nuttall (1994, p. 79):

It is generally agreed that indicators are designed to provide information about the state of an education or social system. They act as an early warning device that something may be going wrong, much as the instruments on the dashboard of a car alert drivers to a problem or reassure them that everything is functioning smoothly.

Indicators inform policy-makers about the state, performance or behaviour of education system. But, further they may act as the triggers for creating new visions, new goals and new policies. They can also be used to monitor the progress towards a specific social goal. In this respect, indicators are also political, as they legitimise specific reforms. For Cobb and Rixford (1998), the main idea behind creating indicators is to focus policy energy on solving problems in a systematic manner.

Martínez and Dopheide (2014) provide several benefits of indicators' use such as good for planning, potential to communicate complex issues in a simple and understandable manner, help in the formulation of explicit goals and in the development of a shared vision, are verifiable and help in monitoring and assessing progress. Despite these potential benefits, the authors emphasise the existing limitations of indicator design and use.

First is the *links between evidence-based policy goals and indicators*. Often, the relationship between evidence and policy is assumed as 'unproblematic, linear and direct' and then indicators are selected to suit these policy goals (instrumental view). In this case research for policy is driven by the idea of finding evidence for policy solutions, while the opposite approach (enlightenment view) assumes that emphasis should be placed on 'evidence-informed' policy, where research would be "less one of problem solving than of clarifying the context and informing the wider public debate" (Davoudi cited in: Martínez & Dopheide, 2014, p. 4). This is an important point as it clearly shows that the complexity of the relationship between policy and indicators starts as early as the policy development stage with how policy goals are defined, and not necessarily within indicators themselves.

Second is *the practice in indicator construction*. Martínez and Dopheide (2014) observe two existing and opposing practices. One is 'mechanistic' and focused on indicators understood predominantly as 'data, counting

and number crunching' (Ibid., p. 4). In this case, indicators are perceived as value-free, technocratic, exclusive, remote, rational and distant. The limitation of this approach is that measurement becomes more important than the social problem and often indicators are selected on the basis of data availability rather than the validity of the data. The 'objectivity' of indicators also excludes the local voices and local differences with the needs of the interests of the higher administrative levels becoming a priority. The opposite view of indicators (a 'critical inclusive view') is to see them as "knowledge, understanding, and communication" (Ibid., p. 4). In this case indicators are not value-free data. However, in this view the main limitation is the belief that the reality is too complex to be captured by a set of indicators and only quantifiable areas of reality should be measured.

Third is the *reliability and impact of indicators*. For Merry (2011) indicators are a new form of knowledge production, and the way they are used re-defines the power relations between nations, governments and society. There are two main concerns in relation to the societal effects of indicator use for Merry (Ibid.), which include the impact on knowledge and on governance. The argument is that indicators produce a world knowledge without providing any explanation of the context and history of a particular issue, while governance is affected by the overwhelming reliance on experts and technology in place of value judgements, political ideas or local needs. Similarly, for Rametsteiner, Puelzl, Alkan Olsson and Frederiksen (2011), indicator building is not only 'knowledge production' but also political 'norm creation'. Similarly to Merry (2011), the authors argue that experts who are engaged in indicator development also take 'normative' decisions related to philosophical and political perceptions and intentions (value judgements). For example, these experts have to consider operationalising such concept terms as quality, effectiveness, well-being into measurable indicators. It is argued that this normative side of indicator creation is not properly acknowledged.

Summarising, the nexus between indicators and policy needs to consider the complexity of policy goals' development, indicator construction processes (who decides, how concepts are operationalised) and the use of indicators for achieving policy goals.

Taxonomies and *benchmarks* are two other concepts closely linked to indicators and used extensively in education policy:

A taxonomy (or classification or taxonomic system) is a system of two or more descriptive concepts. They may describe, from any span of time and space, some aspect of the experienced world, such as actual learning events, or some conceptualized ideal, such as educational goals. (Bagnall, 1990, p. 229)

Taxonomy therefore is a broad concept and involves qualitative set of descriptors; however, it organises information in a systematic way and in a standardised format. For example, one of the most common taxonomy of education systems is the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), which forms “a comprehensive framework for organising education programmes and qualification by applying uniform and internationally agreed definitions to facilitate comparisons of education systems across countries” (UNESCO, 2019). Taxonomies are also frequently used to identify different stages of learning for learning assessment (O’Neill & Murphy, 2010). Just like with the use of indicators, taxonomies have been seen as highly normative in nature. In adult education, for example, Bagnall (1990, p. 231) argues that taxonomies embody “the beliefs and values of their creators, and the socio-historical contexts in which they are working”, and thus are inevitably normative. Therefore, the future effects of the use of the classifications will be influenced by norms and beliefs underlying the context and understandings of the past.

Finally, benchmarks are accepted standards for evaluating (by comparison) “what, where and how improvement can occur” (Garlick & Pryor, 2004, cited in: UNESCO, 2005, p. 3). In the context of education systems, benchmarks are used to compare the countries’ performance in a policy domain, which results from benchmarking, or the process of finding ‘good practices’ (based on both quantitative and qualitative data) on which basis standards can be identified and agreed upon. But benchmarking, as already noted in Chaps. 2 and 3, can be explicit, when deliberate and systematic or implicit, when a by-product of data generation (Jackson, 2001). Therefore, as the result of the benchmarking process,

one can also distinguish explicit from implicit benchmarks. Moreover, benchmarking can focus on inputs, processes or outcomes (or any of their combinations) with the scope of improving either the performance of an organisation (e.g. a school) at all levels (vertical benchmarking) or different manifestations of the same inputs, processes or outcomes (or any of their combinations) across organisations (e.g. schools) (horizontal benchmarking) (Ibid.).

6.4 Development and Use of Education Indicators, Benchmarking and Taxonomies in the EU

The growth of evidence-based policy-making and the competitive goals of the Lisbon Strategy, including the introduction of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as the main governance tool, gave a strong impetus for the development of the indicator-driven policy-making in the EU. These changes, as argued by Gornitzka (2006), contributed to creating a new political space in European education policy with indicators becoming “one of the main components of European cooperation” (Ibid., p. 1).

Benchmarks have been a cornerstone of European education and training policy since the Lisbon Council in 2000, as these measures are considered essential for the implementation of the OMC (European Commission, 2004). As noted in Chap. 2, the objectives set by the Education Ministers in 2001 such as increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems, facilitating the access of all to the education and training systems and opening up education and training systems to the wider world needed specific standards against which to measure the progress. To provide recommendations on how to measure the achievement of the concrete objectives, the Standing Group on Indicators and Benchmarks was set up. With the support of the OECD, Eurostat, EURYDICE, CEDEFOP and the European Training Foundation (ETF), 29 indicators were selected in conjunction with the 13 objectives of the Education and Training 2010 (ET 2010) work

programme. The Education Council adopted five levels of benchmarks, which the Commission recommended for comparing (benchmarking) at national, regional and school level as an effective practice (European Commission, 2003). These five European benchmarks were:

- By 2010, a EU average rate of no more than 10% early school leavers should be achieved.
- The total number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology in the European Union should increase by at least 15% by 2010 while at the same time the level of gender imbalance should decrease.
- By 2010, at least 85% of 22-year-olds in the European Union should have completed upper secondary education.
- By 2010, the percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy in the European Union should have decreased by at least 20% compared to the year 2000.
- By 2010, the European Union average level of participation in lifelong learning should be at least 12.5% of the adult working age population (25–64 age group).

The Commission's report on indicators (European Commission, 2004) underlined an urgent need for collecting new data, and developing indicators that were needed following the development of these benchmarks. The Commission emphasised that the indicators were to be used to measure progress and performance but also to stimulate the exchange of good experiences and new ways of thinking about policy approaches. The Commission reported annually on the progress made towards the common objectives. Following the policy consolidation, and the new objectives set within Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) (see Chap. 2), the Council adopted a renewed set of benchmarks to be achieved by 2020:

- At least 95% of children (from 4 to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education.
- Fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science.
- The rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18–24 should be below 10%.

- At least 40% of people aged 30–34 should have completed some form of higher education.
- At least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.
- At least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18–34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad.
- The share of employed graduates (aged 20–34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1–3 years ago) should be at least 82%.

Progress on these benchmarks is reported annually in the Education and Training Monitor.

Although a variety of benchmarks have been developed under ET 2020, and reaffirmed in *Europe 2020*, as noted in Chap. 3, only one was purposely targeting the adult population:

- By 2020, an average of at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.

But among implicit benchmarks supported by the EU is also an average increase at European level of the percentage of adults with (literacy and numeracy) skills proficiency Level 3 or higher. It is worth recalling here that Level 3 has been construed by Statistics Canada and the OECD (2000, p. xi) as “the level considered by experts as a suitable minimum level for coping with the increasing demands of the emerging knowledge society and information economy”. Level 3 has endured in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and has been made an implicit horizontal benchmark for evaluating OECD’s member and non-member states’ performances (Hamilton, Maddox, & Addey, 2015), as well as EU member states, in terms of their policy outputs.

In relation to the EU Youth Strategy, as noted in Chap. 4, the most detailed statistical information related to youth is published on EU Dashboard on the Eurostat website. The dashboard of youth indicators is based on eight ‘fields of action’ included in the EU Strategy for Youth (European Commission, 2011), and data is sourced from several EU

databases. It is based on EU Youth indicators, developed by the expert group on indicators in 2011, and provides a cross-sectoral view of the economic and social situation of young people in the EU (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth/data/eu-dashboard>). The group first identified a number of already existing indicators in education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being and social inclusion, the defined new indicators for those field where no EU indicators existed (i.e. culture and creativity, youth participation, voluntary activities, and youth and the world) and directed attention to existing databases that collect related information. The dashboard was released in 2011 and included a total of 40 indicators to date.

As recent as 2018, further strengthening of the benchmarking of adult skills and learning policies across the EU has been proposed by the European Commission (2018) within the European Semester through a new framework for benchmarking as discussed in Chap. 5. The aim of such framework is to strengthen cross-country monitoring within the European Semester. The framework focuses primarily on the labour market domain and consists of three types of indicators: outcome indicators, policy performance indicators and policy lever indicators. The outcome indicators include employment rate, skills mismatch and labour productivity. Policy performance indicators include, *inter alia*, education attainment levels, adult participation rates in education and share of population with certain digital skills. Policy lever indicators are a new element in comparison with other benchmarking frameworks. Policy levers are “specific policy parameters that have been identified as relevant for policy convergence with a view to better socio-economic outcomes” (Ibid. p. 1). They include:

- The share of adults who have received free-of-charge information or advice/help on learning opportunities from institutions/organisations during the last 12 months (age group 25–64)
- The share of unemployed adults who participated in any training activity during the last four weeks before the survey as part of all unemployed adult (age group 25–64)

- The share of low-qualified adults who participated in any training activity during the last four weeks before the survey as part of all low-qualified adults (age group 25–64)
- The share of companies that report to have received any type of public co-financing for training activities in a reference year

The European Commission (2018) emphasises that the proposed benchmarking framework for supporting the European Semester differs from the one implemented for ET 2020, which is based on numerical indicators, in a more qualitative approach based on policy levers. But the main idea behind this approach is to identify the key levers for a positive impact of adult education on labour market outcomes.

6.5 Concluding Remarks: Education Indicators and EU Governance

The presented overview of the definitions and functions of indicators, as well as how they have been used in the EU policy context, illustrates the ways through which EU governance in education is operationalised. Benchmarking, indicators and policy levers are used as policy coordination instruments in a way that they ‘institutionalise’ common European model of educational and economic achievement. The focus on specific policy instruments in education governance, as seen in Chap. 1, has been linked, among others, to the concept of ‘policy technologies’ (Ball, 2003; Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). Hodgson (2011), for instance, refers to the policy technologies approach in his search for understanding “the thinking and practices that shape and condition the policy” (Ibid., p. 116). The focus on policy technologies includes attention to mechanisms, instruments and tools and is increasingly used to analyse ‘data governance’ in education (Lawn, 2013; Ozga, 2009, 2012). It is important to question what role data, indicators and benchmarks play in European governance. Increasingly the digital database technologies are considered as “new kids of policy instruments” and central to education governance (Williamson, 2016, p. 123). Williamson argues that

emerging public policy instruments have enabled new practices in data use and data analysis. Drawing on Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007), he considers the data (e.g. international assessments, quality criteria and comparative benchmarks) as inseparable from “their social, cultural, political and economic processes of production” (Ibid., p. 124). In other words, these instruments “carry values, worldviews, interpretations and political aspirations to coordinate and control education” (Ibid., p. 125), which affect the social aspects of the relations shaped by these instruments.

The above overview of existing (and ever-growing number of) indicators and benchmarks in the field of European education, adult education and youth illustrates the changes in contemporary benchmarking practices, where specific governance tools are naturalised and non-education experts also contribute to the development and functioning of ‘good’ education systems, with spillovers on the development of adult education and lifelong learning systems.

In this way, databases, platforms and websites, which provide and generate comparative benchmarks and indicators, play a major role in shaping and framing policy in the EU and in support of European governance in the fields of adult education and youth.

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7

The Upskilling Pathway

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7.1 Introduction

Upskilling Pathways (UP) is a new and developing response to the skills crisis across Europe at a time when 73 million adults have low levels of education and literacy and early disengagement from education and training is an acute issue in many member states. Such disengagement frequently leads to unemployment and inactivity. UP is targeted at people over 25 who may be in employment, or unemployed or economically inactive, but who are not eligible for Youth Guarantee support as they

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require an uplift in basic skills. The programme is committed to providing all adults with a low level of skills with an opportunity to acquire upper secondary qualifications in a flexible way. This responds to Eurofound's (2017) findings that young people across Europe with a lower educational level are three times more at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in comparison with those with a tertiary education. The rate of young people defined as NEET is particularly high among those with low qualifications. UP is also a response to a growing recognition that:

Low qualifications, disengagement from education and training, and long-term unemployment are interconnected phenomena and tend to cumulate throughout a person's life. Missed chances in early childhood, school age and young adulthood may draw disadvantaged people into a cycle of social marginalisation with ever more scarring effects. (CEDEFOP, 2018, p. 1)

Member states may define priority target groups for this initiative depending on national circumstances and there is significant variation in their responses, as this chapter aims to demonstrate. According to the European Commission, the objective of UP is to “help adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and/or acquire a broader set of skills by progressing towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent (level 3 or 4 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) depending on national circumstances)” (European Commission, n.d., *Upskilling Pathways...*, 5th para.; cf. also Council of the European Union, 2016). The programme of support is funded from a number of streams, and particularly the 27 billion Euro European Social Fund (ESF) funding, which is to be invested in education, training, skills and lifelong or adult learning. However, UP does not have dedicated funding, in contradistinction to Youth Guarantee (see Chap. 8), which has a line in two EU funding schemes (ESF and Youth Employment Initiative), and requires matching co-financing by countries. UP must therefore be examined from a different perspective.

7.2 Europeanisation and Upskilling Pathways

As Milana, Klatt and Vatrella argue in the Preface, over the last two decades, academics and political institutions have increasingly comprehended that Europeanisation calls for an all-encompassing process of *domestic adaptation* – rather than implementation. In other words, the phenomenon of Europeanisation means that European regulatory frameworks have been adopted at domestic level and that such frameworks play a much greater role than ever before in both the structuring and regulation of adult learning and training at a domestic level, leading to contextual challenges.

As well as bringing with it an increasing bureaucratisation and a diminution of domestic self-regulation, however, this shift also allows for a collective European response to common challenges such as globalisation and arguably stimulates a co-ordinated response between domestic partners – from public, social, state and private sectors. One example of a potential advantage in the context of UP is that the initiative is perceived as a fundamental building block in the *European Pillar of Social Rights*, which promotes equal rights to quality and inclusive education and training and lifelong learning in order to support “fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems” (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, & European Commission, 2017, p. 8). Another is that a Europe-wide approach to qualifications has created a means of enabling individuals and employers to better understand how qualifications compare by ensuring that all qualifications issued in Europe carry a reference to an appropriate EQF level. UP intends that provision should be linked to qualifications at levels 3 and 4 on the EQF.

In their Policy Learning Forum (PLF) on “Upskilling pathways: a vision for the future”, held in Brussels on 7–8 February 2018, CEDEFOP acknowledged that whilst member states are generally well-equipped to identify skills and offer tailored training to meet individual needs, considerable work needs to be done to ensure that policies and services connected with UP are much better co-ordinated and are part of a coherent strategy whilst recognising the heterogeneity of the people comprising the low-skilled population, and their diversity of needs and characteristics, as

well as different country contexts. Member states have a range of specific national priorities and challenges and differing visions and approaches to upskilling adults.

7.3 Upskilling Pathways in Action

For the purpose of clarity, the definition of adult learning adopted by UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) emphasises that learning and skills acquisition runs throughout the 'life course' and also emphasises the variety of ways in which learning might be acquired, through formal, non-formal and informal learning, as well the importance of a focus on disadvantaged groups of people: "It covers learning and education across the life-course and has a special focus on adults and young people who are marginalized and disadvantaged" (UIL, 2016, p. 28).

UP works through the concept of auditing current skills and examining areas where 'upskilling' may be required. It is recognised that many countries already offer elements of UP and they are encouraged to build on existing work as they implement the initiative and to engage in multi-agency cooperation with bodies such as social partners, education and training providers and local and regional authorities. The emphasis of the initiative is intended to be based upon effective outreach, guidance and support measures.

It is understood that recruiting people onto UP-derived initiatives can be problematic and complex, requiring considerable inter-agency sensitivity, collaboration and integration of resources and expertise across a wide range of partners – public, private, social – some of whom may not have worked together previously. Not only may people have negative memories of formal education but they may also feel considerable stigma connected with acknowledging low literacy levels. This is a form of scarring which cannot be underestimated (cf. CEDEFOP, 2018).

If formal education has negative associations, then learning may need to take place in settings not associated with schooling – such as community venues, libraries and cafés. This is part of a process of building trust

between the individual and the agency offering support. In order to help respond to social stigma issues, the adult learner may require a learning approach which recognises the need for short-term gains in a longer game plan, focusing on “practical, short-term objectives”, with a view to building long-term confidence, skill and mastery (Mezirow, 1997). Within literacy education this might include literacy skills being embedded in learning with ostensibly different goals. For example, learning could be constructed on the surface around vocational skills but contain a large literacy element.

Research across a range of countries in Europe suggests that people with essential skills are more likely to vote and to be active citizens (Learning and Work Institute, 2017) and that those without tend to be more socially isolated or excluded. Learning can confer a sense of belonging – to a learning group, a community, a meeting space or an area.

7.4 Differences of Approach to Upskilling Pathways Across Europe

Different countries have responded with diverse approaches to the introduction of UP. In the 2017 Compendium of Erasmus+ Support to European Policy Tools (European Commission, 2018), the National Coordinators for the Implementation of the European Agenda for Adult Learning (cf. Chap. 3) have identified four clusters or themes, which are being adopted in a range of European countries. This includes awareness-raising and guidance, in Albania, Spain, Hungary, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia; skills assessment and validation, in Austria, Belgium France, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Iceland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Portugal and Romania; stakeholder-coordination around basic skills provision, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Croatia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom; and developing flexible programmes, including staff competence development, in Greece, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Turkey (European Commission, 2018).

Alongside considerable variation at national/member state level, it is also significant that there is regional and sub-regional variation within countries, in response to a more localised skills profile. The United Kingdom, for instance, is a case in point where skills levels vary dramatically in different parts of the country. According to a recent report by Nottingham Civic Exchange, RSA and Nottingham Business School (2017) looking at economic growth and skills gaps, it was identified that 31% of 16-year-olds and 24% of 17–18-year-olds in the sub-region are poorly prepared for work, as reported by employers. In the case study below, Talent Match D2N2 (D2N2 refers to the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire sub-region in the North East Midlands), fewer of the working-age population are qualified to level 3 or higher compared to the national average (Ibid.).

Again, in Italy the level of disparity between regions is considerable in terms of rates of participation in adult learning, relating to peoples' region of residence, type of work performed and the companies in which the people are employed. In 2014 the participation rate gap between the more advantaged areas of the country (north-east 9.2%) and those less advantaged (south 6.3%) was 46%.

In order to illustrate national/domestic expression of European UP, the following section will offer three case studies reported in full elsewhere (Boeren, Whittaker, & Riddell, 2017).

7.4.1 Case Study 1 – The United Kingdom: Talent Match D2N2

In terms of skills and adult learning in the United Kingdom, the Learning and Work Institute's (2017) report on adult learning cites a figure of 9 million people who lack essential skills like literacy or numeracy and a further 13.5 million people who lack basic digital skills. The report states that this has a particular impact on work as one out of two people with poor literacy or numeracy is unemployed.

Generally, the United Kingdom has chosen to focus on basic and functional skills and on the creation of a detailed initial assessment for each young person. The United Kingdom government does not have a specific

programme in relation to UP, but rather a set of wider initiatives that UP will be part of, relying on existing measures such as targets relating to apprenticeship take-up. Unemployed and employed people are the main targets, and there are very few programmes which focus on the economically inactive. Responses to UP have focused on taking heed of the United Kingdom national context of devolved skills policy, attempting to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of all policies affecting adult learning, across a wide range of partners within the United Kingdom and building in evidence-based approaches in all work packages aimed to complement and not duplicate existing programmes.

The decline in adult participation in learning in the United Kingdom is becoming an increasing point of concern:

The number of adult learners participating in below Level 2 courses (excluding English and Maths) declined sharply in 2014/15 to 597,300 (a decrease of 21.4% from 2013/14), while the number participating in English and Maths fell by 4.9% between 2013/14 and 2014/15 to 905,600. The total number of adult learners achieving a government-funded further education qualification was 1,983,200 in 2014/15, a decrease of 12.4% on 2013/14. (Skills Funding Agency & Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016, p. 6)

There are multi-faceted reasons for this decline – not least changes in the funding regime for adult education. However, the government response is to focus on designing an ‘Inclusive Learning Pathways’ approach to ensure provision of second chance learning opportunities and to support the acquisition of basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills) for low-skilled adults, and particularly the most socially excluded groups. The objective is to share approaches across the United Kingdom, working with devolved administrations, city-regions, employer-led bodies, to develop evidence-based models for promoting upskilling and in-work progression pathways for selected sectors and to undertake research which reviews the evidence base and investigates successful approaches to sector-based skills and progression initiatives. Ultimately, the research will be shared via a final conference at EU level, bringing together practitioners and policy-makers, in 2019.

Talent Match D2N2 is a national five-year programme (2014–2019) funded by the Big Lottery, which is a grant-making body, which awards community-orientated grants from the National Lottery of the United Kingdom. Talent Match focuses on employment and access to the labour market as well as focusing on skills and the concept of ‘upskilling’. It works with young people who are furthest away from the labour market according to a range of indicators, and with the most complex and entrenched barriers to employment, such as low skills and educational attainment, and in geographical areas with pockets of significant deprivation. Involvement in the programme is entirely voluntary for the young people and it aims to create non-standardised personalised solutions, which match the needs of young people with their broader ambitions. Much of the funding for the programme comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), 98 million pounds, and the ESF, 93 million pound, with a total allocation to D2N2 of 196.5 million pounds for the period 2014–2020.

Talent Match D2N2 covers Derby City, Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire. Talent Match D2N2 is managed by a social organisation, Groundwork Greater Nottingham, who chose to work through a series of micro hubs due to the wide geographical area of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and to take full advantage of local knowledge. This approach was based on an understanding that outreach is vital in a scheme of this kind, in the building of trust and engagement at a local level, where communities are often mistrustful of incoming unknown agencies ‘parachuting’ in and then leaving.

The programme works with young people aged 18–24 years who have not been in education, employment or training for at least a year. It offers support in the form of one-to-one mentoring relationships between a mentor and a young person in this category, specifically focusing on taking time to establish trust and rapport to help the young person address barriers and make progress towards the labour market. The duration and specific focus of the mentoring relationship is deliberately not standardised and is developed to complement the person-centred ethos of the programme. The support programme takes the form of the mentor meeting with the young person on a regular basis, usually weekly, for an hour (sometimes two hours or longer), in a neutral venue such as a café. A

detailed initial assessment is undertaken in order to understand the needs of the young person, any specific barriers and problems they may be facing and to establish what kinds of contact they have had, or continue to have, with other professional services. This culminates in a Young People's Participation (YPP) plan which focuses on an 'asset-based approach' – finding out what skills and abilities a young person has and what work he/she may aspire to do. Mentors may spend a whole day working with a young person if dealing with complex issues which impact on the young person's capacity to focus on work, such as a breakdown in housing, and will also signpost on to other appropriate agencies where appropriate. The mentors may also need to spend considerable amounts of time 'behind the scenes' researching issues and liaising with other professional agencies, such as probation services. There is strong emphasis on helping young people to develop 'soft skills' connected with confidence and dealing with initial barriers through the personalised Action Plan. This might include encouraging young people to understand the importance of time keeping and establishing healthy routines, and turning up for appointments with the mentor establishes patterns of behaviour, which will be helpful in a work situation.

The personal budget component of Talent Match D2N2 is also perceived as crucial. This enables the mentors to address some of the barriers that the young people face both quickly and efficiently, usually in a matter of days. Support of this kind, such as paying for a young person's Heavy Goods Vehicle licence or helping them buy appropriate interview clothes, can be the difference between success and ongoing rejection.

7.4.2 Case Study 2 – Slovakia: REPAS+

In Slovakia, the UP initiative was negotiated during the Slovak EU Presidency (Slovakia held the six months' rotating Presidency of the European Union from 1 July to 31 December 2016). Despite this local connection to the origins of the initiative and involvement in setting up the policy framework for UP, there is a view that the implementation framework is lagging behind in Slovakia.

Unemployment rates for low-skilled adults in Slovakia remain among the highest in the EU; in 2018 despite an overall decrease in unemployment rates in Slovakia in recent years, the unemployment rate of low-skilled people was 27.6% compared to the 12.5% EU average. The gap in unemployment rates between high- and low-skilled adults has been more pronounced (24.8 points) in 2018 in Slovakia when compared to any other EU country. Despite long-term structural problems within the labour market and low average participation in lifelong learning activities at national level, policy tools addressing the education and skills gaps of low-skilled people continue to be underdeveloped. In terms of the target groups that need to be addressed within the UP initiative, low-skilled people – both within the general population and young people – remain the most critical category in terms of their position within the Slovak labour market, as well as in comparison with other EU countries. Despite this, the share of resources allocated to active measures supporting employment in Slovakia is one of the lowest in the EU.

At national policy level, and in relation to the effective implementation of the UP initiative, Slovakia has been active in developing the Slovak Qualification Framework (SQF). The SQF was accepted in 2017 by the European Commission, and the implementation framework is under preparation by the Ministry of Education in cross-sectional cooperation with other national bodies. The SQF is anticipated to function as one of the key elements for implementation of UP initiative and implementation continues to progress throughout 2019.

Slovakia has not launched implementation of the UP as of 2019. However, within the labour market policies, there has been a strong preference for the view that there should be an increased focus on a vocational/low-skill approach. The national programme called REPAS has been developed in this context within the Active Labour Market Policy framework. One of the versions of the programme REPAS+ has specifically targeted NEETs. REPAS+ has been included as part of the UP initiative, but the implementation is not fully attributable to the UP initiative as earlier versions of the REPAS project were in place prior to UP. In 2019, new programmes are being designed in connection with UP. These programmes are specifically following the UP objectives. In the case of Slovakia, this means to reach out also to more vulnerable

low-skilled adults including those who are not registered as job seekers. The programme REPAS+ has, however, provided access to learning opportunities to lowly skilled young adults to some extent.

REPAS+ is a national programme, delivered across Slovakia except the Bratislava (capital) region (the Bratislava region has its own version of the programme). The programme is implemented via regional labour offices.

The aim of the programme is to support the re-qualification of young registered job seekers who face problems in finding a job placement. It specifically targets young people defined as NEET up to 29 years old. There are no formal requirements on prior education level. Participation in the project is entirely optional. REPAS+ aims to provide the opportunity for young adults to re-qualify in order to meet new labour market requirements.

The length of the training is defined by the participants and the main activities of the programme are vocational training provided by external providers. In general, training supported under the programme must be accredited. The accreditation process is managed by the Ministry of Education, and the web-based information system for further education listing all accredited trainings online is also managed by the Ministry (<http://isdv.iedu.sk>).

Accreditation serves as a basic tool defining standards of trainings in terms of their length (hours) and methods and these are subject to control by the Ministry of Education.

The choice of vocational training is fully left to the participants. It is hoped that access to a study programme of choice will encourage the young job seeker to adopt rational choices for long-term career development.

The national REPAS+ project is administered by the Central Office of Labour and Social Affairs (COLSAF). The financial contribution was provided to the COLSAF. The provision of financial support via the national programme administered and managed by COLSAF is perceived as being more efficient than allocating the funds through demand-based projects.

Employment facilitators at the Labour Offices assess how the course improves chances to gain access to vacant jobs in local areas. Some applicants obtain approval for two courses in a row, while others do not gain approval for a second course. The effectiveness of the course with respect

to employability is likely to be evaluated to some extent subjectively by the employment facilitator and with respect to local labour demand, which may reinforce regional differences/barriers in access to learning opportunities for NEETs from different areas.

After successfully completing the training provided within REPAS+, the participants often follow up with further career development activities, seeking to follow up with other training or actively looking for employment or to set up in a self-employment activity.

7.4.3 Case Study 3 – Italy: ‘The Floor Is Yours!’

Participation rates in education and training amongst Italian people aged 25–64 remain below the European average at 7.9%, ranking 14th in the EU (Fondazione Brodolini, 2018). Also educational attainment levels within the Italian population are low compared to the EU-28 average. In fact, Italy ranks 4th in relation to the percentage of the population with ISCED levels 0–2 (40%) and 18th in relation to those with ISCED levels 3–4 (42%) (OECD, 2016). In addition, Italian adults scoring at (or below) level 1 exceed the wider European population by eight percentage points both in literacy (27.7% and 19.9%, respectively) and numeracy (31.7% and 23.6%), and the percentage of digital illiterates is still 57% (Ibid.).

According to the Labour Force Survey (2017), 25% of low-skilled adults in Europe are Italians, and out of six low-skilled unemployed Europeans, at least one is Italian. Low participation in adult education and training converges with the poor quality of skills provision and the weakness of the labour market and the historical North-South income divide. Data from the Bank of Italy (2017) indicate a general growth of per capita GDP. However, the South still lags behind the rest of the country. Consistent with the income divide, the geographical distribution of adult skills presents a similar deviation. The percentage distribution of the Italian population aged 16–65 in the various levels of competence (both in literacy and numeracy) for Italian macro-regions shows a gap of about 17 percentage points between North and South, where only 22% reached level 3 or higher, while about 35% were at level 1 or lower

(ISFOL, 2013). This complex mix of difficult to disentangle factors – low participation in adult education and skills provision, unemployment rates and their composition, North-South income divide and skills – has contributed to reproducing social stratification (Bowles & Gintis, 2003), and educational inequalities (Parziale & Vatrella, 2018). This has demanded a broad policy debate on education across a range of sectors and agencies, culminating in the Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on *Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults* (2016/C 484/01).

Criticisms have been levelled at the public education system in terms of its response to supporting an improvement in the percentage of the adult population with low skills. In fact, due to the lack of dedicated funding for UP, the approach thus far within Italy appears to be on a mapping approach: “it is necessary mapping existing actions and resources already invested or planned” (Curzi, 2018) and the utilisation of existing funding through Structural Funds and EU Programmes. There is a specific alignment between the ESF and the Italian government’s New Skill Agenda in terms of strategies and practices.

The focus on migrants and second language education in *The Floor is Yours!*, the UP-supporting programme offered as a case study here, emerges from a growing need for policies which support inclusion. This is particularly the case for the Campania Region in Southern Italy, which is characterised by:

- High unemployment rates
- Educational poverty and illiteracy (Campania ranks within the top five places in educational poverty in eight out of ten indicators considered by Save the Children (2018))
- A growing number of migrants that the region (and Naples) attracted in the last decade

The Floor is Yours! programme was co-funded under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). This is a financial instrument established by EU Regulation No. 516/2014 with the aim of promoting integrated management of migration flows by the EU and the Interior Ministry. It aimed to strengthen the Campania Regional Plan for the

civic-linguistic training of citizens from Third Countries. In particular, the programme targeted legally resident Third Country Nationals in Italy and pursued the following aims:

1. Providing a tailored and flexible teaching offer for learning Italian as a second language
2. Encouraging the participation of migrants with particular reference to specific target groups (women, illiterate people, vulnerable people, refugees and applicants for international and humanitarian protection)
3. Improving teaching methods on Italian language and civic education

The length of the programme was 22 months. The activities started on 18 November 2016 and ended on 18 March 2018 (with an extension until 30 April 2018). The programme enacted 25 different kinds of activities aimed at counteracting the typical forms of disadvantage experienced by the target participants, in particular to the linguistic, relational, economic and social disadvantages related to the condition of being a migrant.

The activities included:

1. A wide range of literacy pathways
2. Linguistic and cultural mediation services to guide and support the students culturally – a collaboration with state offices and agencies that deal with Asylum Fund, Migration and Integration 2014–2020, immigration, and provide services to immigrant users
3. Language courses – including micro-language courses, each lasting 40 hours, aimed at 240 non-EU citizens and aimed at improving their linguistic skills relating to the micro-language of their work or school
4. Play and education workshops for children aged 5–15 years aimed at promoting and supporting access and participation of adult migrants (with children) in language training
5. Theatre workshops and artisanal training workshops for craft and cooking – targeting women and holders of international and humanitarian protection as activities to promote the realisation of individual, creative and participatory skills

6. Citizenship meetings addressed to 400 non-EU citizens exploring territorial services, provisions, rights and duties and also offering information desks on job opportunities

7.5 Concluding Remarks

The three case studies examining responses to UP in the United Kingdom, Slovakia and Italy demonstrate an increased focus on multi-national level policy implementation and delivery within lifelong learning as a means of addressing enduring economic and social issues in terms of employment, skills levels and income inequality. They also show, however, the deep differences between national and regional contexts and demonstrate that often the people in predominantly low-skilled, disadvantaged regions are the least able to take advantage of skills development opportunities unless such programmes are targeted at their particular needs in terms of access, support and outreach and understand their local context.

This contextual understanding relates closely to the concept of bounded agency, which can be seen as an application of the long sociological debate about structure and agency: individual, group or organisational agency is exercised within particular institutional, societal frameworks, policy, national and international contexts. Bounded agency recognises the complex interplay between personal/individual motivation and the social and territorial structures in which individuals are located upon their decision to engage in lifelong learning/adult education and training: “structural factors are centrally involved in individual motivation, since a person’s sense of their ability to actively construct their life is shaped by the economic, social and cultural resources they are able to mobilize” (Riddell, 2012, p. 88).

There is a danger at European policy-maker level that focusing attention on improving policy implementation distracts from a broader need to examine the underlying aims of lifelong learning as it is currently conceived. Its current emphasis is almost universally placed on skills, vocational learning and employability. UP does have a broader objective to emphasise skills which extend beyond workplace preparedness and

employability and to provide routes into skills evaluation which emphasise individual drives and aspirations and softer skills relating to confidence and personal presentation, work preparedness and cultural understanding. As we saw from the 2017 Compendium of Erasmus+ Support to European Policy Tools (European Commission, 2018), recognition has been given within UP, as a result, to offering awareness-raising of training and learning opportunities and guidance, to developing flexible, contextually responsive programmes, and to ensuring greater stakeholder-coordination around basic skills provision.

This nuanced approach to context and individual needs is evidenced, for example, by Talent Match D2N2's emphasis on an 'asset-based approach' which involves trust building over a period of time and careful planning to find out what skills and abilities a young person has and what work he/she may aspire to do. The focus on a person-centred approach combines with local knowledge on the part of the mentors and is enabled by working from community-based micro hubs from within agencies known to the local community. This is especially important in a sub-region, which is marked by significant economic and social variation. The D2N2 area covers pockets of considerable wealth and of real deprivation and is marked by an imbalance in the low skills/low pay equilibrium. There is a concentration of employment in and around the area's two largest centres – Nottingham and Derby – with the two cities combined accounting for 36% of total employment compared to 26% of the total population (Ekosgen, 2014). Some of the most rural areas in both counties have poor local transport infrastructure and precarity of employment; inter-generational worklessness is a key feature of such areas.

Within REPAS+ in Slovakia, contributions to training opportunities for NEETS are meaningful but if the training options remain tightly linked to local labour demand, then regional differences/barriers in access to learning can be reinforced. The Trebišov region is an example of a local area with low job creation potential, and most of the new jobs available are in low-profile positions in manufacturing (e.g. textile workers and dispatch workers). Small entrepreneurship companies or individual entrepreneurs are willing to create job opportunities but within the constrained context of local conditions they are often capable of doing so only with support, so financial contributions for job creation (employment services providing

support to employers such as a financial allowance for the support of employment of a disadvantaged job seeker) make a significant difference.

We see in *The Floor is Yours!*, with its emphasis on migrants, the impact of the supranational and the global on the domestic, not just at policy level but also on people. *The Floor is Yours!* pays particular attention to the linguistic, relational, economic and social disadvantages related to the condition of being a migrant and to creative and imaginative methods for engaging migrant people through theatre and artisanal training workshops and through language courses and linguistic and cultural mediation. The programme is designed to help support integration into support services and structures and into the mores and civic and cultural expectations of the host country. *The Floor is Yours!* also demonstrates the importance of communication – between government, policy-makers, providers and institutions – in tackling disadvantage, inequality and social exclusion.

In conclusion, UP begins to challenge and to tackle the many ways in which social inequality is expressed, constructed as a policy goal and legitimised by discourses at the European level and nationally. It allows for a complex understanding of the role of multiple agencies – social economy organisations, voluntary organisations, associations of all types and operating in different sectors (culture, recreation, environment), public and private providers and how they can work together through a sharing of existing actions and resources already invested or planned. As it is still in its early days as a policy programme, it has yet to be seen how the lack of dedicated funding associated with UP will have a bearing on its wider impact at domestic, European and international levels.

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Part II

Youth Guarantee and Its Domestic Adaptation



8

Introduction to the European Youth Guarantee

Sandra Vatrella and Marcella Milana

8.1 Introduction

Complementing Part I of this book, Part II further contributes to examining the ways governance mechanisms coordinated by, or under the supervision of, the shared institutions of the European Union (EU) influence national and sub-national agencies intervening in adult education (cf. Chap. 1). It does so by centring attention on the Youth Guarantee (YG), which exemplifies (1) the strengthening of EU policy coordination, (2) the blurring of boundaries between conventionally separate policy fields (i.e., youth education, adult education, labour market) and (3) the new functions ascribed to adult education as a school recovery for young adults to compensate for education failures (e.g., high drop-out rates), labour market failures (e.g., lack of employment opportunities) or both (e.g., skills mismatches).

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Established by the Council of the European Union on 22 April 2013 as the EU response to a major challenge to the European social values, the YG is meant to reaping “the full benefits of an active, innovative and skilled workforce while avoiding the very high costs of having young people neither in employment, education or training (‘NEETs’)” (Council of the European Union, 2013, p. 1).

Formally launched on 1 January 2014, the YG aims to provide young adults under 25 years of age, living in the Union’s member states, with the guarantee of a job or a learning or training solution within four months after they have become unemployed or have left formal education. Education or training might include a part- or full-time place in a school or college, an apprenticeship opportunity, a training programme during employment or a volunteering opportunity. Yet, for most EU countries, the YG is particularly focused on any young person making the first-time transition from compulsory education at the age of 16.

Perceived as an active labour market policy, the YG aims at tackling youth unemployment by including several aspects of adult education and offering a platform for fighting against poverty at the same time. Yet, it represents a specific type of policy instrument (i.e., funding scheme; cf. Chap. 1), designed to encourage governments, organisations or people to attain particular objectives by providing money to finance certain activities and programmes, as foreseen by the *Youth Strategy* (cf. Chap. 4), but meeting also the policy objectives of *Education and Training 2020* (cf. Chap. 2). As such the YG is part of a larger mechanism at play within the Union (i.e., financial redistribution; cf. Chap. 1) that builds on the sharing of EU’s wealth between member states upon a joint deliberation.

This chapter outlines how the YG come about and the kind of EU financial support member states receive for the implementation of YG schemes within their territories. In so doing, it justifies our selection of countries and sets the scene for the next nine chapters (cf. Chaps. 9 to 17), which examine how single member states responded to the European launch of the YG.

8.1.1 A Preliminary Note on the NEET Acronym

Given the political emphasis of the YG on the young adults that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), some preliminary clarifications on how this group is conceived, and to which scope, are necessary.

At conceptual level the NEET acronym evokes a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. The concept first emerged in the 1990s to identify unemployed young people, who do not invest in their human capital. They are the so-called working dead (Rosina, 2015) (i.e., people wandering aimlessly, disenchanted, disillusioned). Briefly, they are vulnerable persons because of “the transitional life periods they are going through, their lack of professional experience, their sometimes inadequate education or training, their often limited social protection coverage, restricted access to financial resources, and precarious work conditions” (Council of the European Union, 2013, p. 2).

Although evocative of the vulnerability condition in which the target identified by the YG may find itself, such a definition seems irrespective of the deep differences featuring the NEET population across Europe, by revealing its un-effectiveness. It shall suffice to consider how different the characteristics and needs of young women are, primarily if they are young mothers, compared to disadvantaged young people or people at risk of discrimination because they have no more than a lower secondary education, or have a migrant background.

During the 2009 European financial crisis, while youth unemployment rates were reaching their all-time highest levels within the Union, the dichotomy employed vs. unemployed, traditionally used to depict labour market crises, revealed to be inappropriate to capture the different nuances youth unemployment was acquiring. So, at political level, it emerged the need of better understanding the vulnerability of young people, by overcoming the dichotomy employment vs. unemployment. That is how the NEET acronym entered the European policy arena as a first political response to the need of knowing the many facets of a phenomenon that was taking on alarming dimensions, and soon became “the key element in discussion on youth policies” (Eurofound, 2016, p. 27). This affected

policy-makers' and researchers' concerns about the effects that the economic crisis was producing on both training opportunities and employability of young people under the age of 25, which resulted in a common measurement strategy for both the EU policy-makers and scholars.

Accordingly, the NEET indicator was introduced at the European level in 2010, when the European Commission's Employment Committee (EMCO) and its Indicators Group agreed to measure the size of the NEET population across member states.

Such indicator is operationalised by Eurostat as the ratio of the number of young people not in employment, education or training out of the total population of young people. Simple to be computed, such measurement is carried out every year by resorting to the EU Labour Force Survey. It is worth noting that the NEET indicator does not overlap with the measurement of youth unemployment rates. In fact, the latter accounts for the share of young people who are unemployed among the population of economically active young people. This means that youth unemployment rates are higher than the NEET indicator in relative terms, but lower in absolute terms. This clarified, as Eurofound notes:

While individuals in the NEET category often display multiple disadvantages, including a low level of education, poverty and difficult family backgrounds, on the other hand the population of NEETs is made up of both vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people who have in common only the fact that they are not accumulating human capital through formal channels. (Eurofound, 2016, p. 29)

In the light of this, Eurofound (2016) disentangled the heterogeneity entrenched in the NEET indicator through seven subcategories (see Table 8.1). It shall be noted, however, that such subcategories of the population *de facto* captured by the NEET indicator are differently represented across Europe, depending on the countries of reference.

But what are the dimensions that the NEET phenomenon acquires in Europe?

In 2016 almost 1.3 million young people in the EU were out of work and actively seeking employment for at least 12 months, with concomitant effects on the long-term scarring and disengagement known to result

Table 8.1 The heterogeneity of the population captured by the NEET indicator

Re-entrants	“This category captures those young people who will soon re-enter employment, education or training and will soon begin or resume accumulation of human capital through formal channels. They are people who have already been hired or enrolled in education or training.”
Short-term unemployed	“This category is composed of all young people who are unemployed, seeking work and available to start within two weeks, and have been unemployed for less than a year. A short period of unemployment during the transition from school to work can be considered normal, and the level of vulnerability among people in this category can be expected to be moderate.”
Long-term unemployed	“This category is composed of all young people who are unemployed, seeking work and available to start within two weeks, and have been unemployed for more than a year. People in this category are at high risk of disengagement and social exclusion. Long-term disengagement damages young people’s employability, their human capital and their future employment outcomes; in some cases, the damage will last the rest of their lives.”
Unavailable due to illness or disability	“This category includes all young people who are not seeking employment or are not available to start a job within two weeks due to illness or disability. This group includes those who need more social support because illness or disability means they cannot do paid work.”
Unavailable due to family responsibilities	“This group includes those who are not seeking work or are not available to start a new job because they are caring for children or incapacitated adults, or have other less specific family responsibilities. Young people in this group are a mix of the vulnerable and non-vulnerable; some are not able to participate in the labour market because they cannot afford to pay for care for their child or adult family member, while others voluntarily withdraw from the labour market or education to take up family responsibilities.”
Discouraged workers	“This group captures all young people who have stopped looking for work because they believe that there are no job opportunities for them. They are mostly vulnerable young people at high risk of social exclusion who are very likely to experience poor employment outcomes over the course of their working lives and are at high risk of lifelong disengagement.”

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

Other inactive	<p>“This group contains all NEETs whose reasons for being NEET do not fall into any of the previous six categories. This group is a statistical residual category, and it is made up of those who did not specify any reason for their NEET status. It is likely to be an extremely heterogeneous mix that includes people at all extremes of the spectrum of vulnerability: the most vulnerable, the hard-to-reach, those at risk of being deeply alienated, the most privileged, and those who are holding out for a specific opportunity or who are following alternative paths, such as careers in the arts, that have little formal presence in the labour market or education.”</p>
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Source: Eurofound (2017), pp. 31–32

from unemployment (Eurofound, 2017). In the same year, around 6 million young people belonged to the NEET group. In relative terms this means that in 2016, with its 11.5%, the NEET group records a decreasing of two percentage points with respect to 2013, when it was 13% of young people aged 15–24 years in Europe. This said, it should be pointed out that such percentage varies among member states. For instance, the lowest NEET rate is recorded in Denmark (below 7%); conversely the highest ones are recorded, among other countries, in Bulgaria and Italy, where the NEET population reaches the quota of about 1 million young people.

These are the dimensions that the phenomenon acquired to date. That is, a complex entanglement of quantitative and qualitative factors, which combine each other to give shape to one of the main concerns raised at the EU level in the last 15 years. It is a phenomenon that occupies the European policy arena since 2005, as we shall see, and that initiated the regulatory route that would then result in a systematic framework only with the launching of the YG in 2013.

8.2 How Did the Youth Guarantee Come About?

The regulatory route that would lead to the launching of the YG showcases how the texts produced at the European level changed in nature and scope over time. In fact, in the years 2005 to 2013, these documents gradually shifted from statements of both principles and intents towards a lexicon more closely linked to the dimension of practice. Such shifting, as we shall see in further detail, is characterised by three distinct yet strictly connected features:

- The modelling of active measures became more specific in terms of contents and activities to be provided at country level.
- The introduction and strengthening of the relationship between educational and employment topics.
- The reference to the financial sources to be resorted to in order to support the YG schemes in member states.

As mentioned, the regulatory route on which we focus attention started in 2005, when the European Council agreed that “every unemployed person should be offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment in the case of young people” (Council of the European Union, 2013). A few years later, in 2010, the European Parliament called on the Commission and the Council to come forward with a European YG aiming at securing the right of young Europeans to have a job, an apprenticeship or a training after a maximum of four months’ unemployment (Ibid.).

On this ground, in its Communication of 15 September 2010 *Youth on the Move*, the European Commission encouraged the member states to introduce YG schemes, ensuring its support for their design, implementation and assessment.

Consistently with such statement of intents, from 2011 onwards, the texts produced at the European level gradually shifted towards more detailed references regarding the way in which the aims set out under the YG had to be enacted. So, the EU documents started to stress the need of

active, swift and effective measures by intertwining youth unemployment issues with educational matters. It is the case, for instance, of the Conclusions of the European Council (European Union, 2012) through which member states are explicitly solicited to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion by offering education, training or employment for NEETs. In this sense, further developments have been made with the Council's Recommendation of 28 June 2011, which shifts towards a stronger emphasis on the operational dimension. In fact, the Recommendation underlies the need to connect and strengthen the link between education and training systems and the employment sector. Such conceptual and practical links between education and employment have been further pushed forward starting from 2012. This is the year that, as Escudero and Mourelo (2015) notice, represents the turning point for the process leading to the establishment of the YG. In fact, 2012 developed by following a descending line from general to more specific declarations: it started from the production of a legal framework, continued with reference to the funding sources to be resorted to and ended with some suggestions about the measures to be provided.

In particular, in April 2012, with the Communication *Towards a job-rich recovery*, the European Commission launched an employment package where member states are asked to counteract youth unemployment, underlining the need for an EU-wide Youth Guarantee. Then, in May 2012, the European Parliament specified the need to make the programme legally enforceable in order to effectively counteract youth unemployment. One month later, in June 2012, the European Council stated the relevance of measures addressed to young people and highlighted that the European Social Funds (ESF) would finance these measures. Consistently with such trend towards a more practical dimension for the programme, the Commission, with the Communication of 10 October 2012, suggested both the type of measures to be enacted (e.g., self-employment) and the way in which they had to be realised (e.g., start-up support services). In this sense, interestingly enough is what emerges from the Commission Communication of 20 November 2012 on *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*, where youth employment concerns are finally addressed from an educational perspective. In fact, the Communication calls for reforms of

education and training systems also to better align the delivery of skills with the needs of the labour market. Then, in December 2012, with its proposal for a Council Recommendation (European Commission, 2012), the European Commission identified the main tenets and pillars for the establishment of the YG, specifying also the governance mechanisms and instruments member states should resort to (e.g., financial support through the ESF, monitoring and evaluation of measures).

The financial dimension becomes increasingly relevant in terms of the weight it occupies in the following documents, further disclosing this tension towards a more operational/practical dimension. So, throughout 2013, “the movements there were to provide financing for the Youth Guarantee programme” (Escudero & Mourelo, 2015, p. 3) resulted in the decision to create the *Youth Employment Initiative* (YEI), established by the European Council to implement Youth Guarantee schemes at country level, with specific regard to those regions where levels of unemployment had been higher than 25% in 2012.

In summary, the regulatory route gradually shifted from statements of both principles and intents towards the modelling of active measures where education and employment are even more strictly connected. Such overlapping is not only of a conceptual nature. In fact, it is made operational and translates into active measures by virtue of the EU financial support to member states, which finally contributes to the processes of domestic adaptation at country level.

8.3 The EU Financial Support to National Youth Guarantee Schemes

The EU provides financial support to YG schemes in member states through two funding sources: the ESF and the YEI.

In particular, as mentioned, in February 2013, the European Council decided to create the YEI by addressing 6000 million Euro to regions with high rate of unemployment (more than 25% in 2012). However, such requirement is not the only one. In fact, countries have to meet an additional requirement: they have to match the funds granted by the YEI

with a similar contribution from own allocations of the ESF. Moreover, as Escudero and Mourelo (2015) point out:

Governments advance projects costs with national budget and the expenditure incurred is then reimbursed from EU funds. However, in order to help countries with the initial implementation, a percentage of EU funds (i.e. the pre-financing rate) is frontloaded. This rate was set at 1 per cent of the total allocation initially (or 1.5 per cent for countries under financial assistance). (Ibid., p. 10)

So, two months after creating the YEI, in its recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing the YG, the Council of the European Union specifies how Union funds have to be used. In particular, the Council recommends that member states:

Make full and optimal use of the Cohesion Policy funding instruments [...];

Ensure that the necessary priority is given and corresponding resources are allocated for supporting the conception and the implementation of the measures related to the establishment of Youth Guarantee schemes, including the possibilities for financing targeted recruitment subsidies from the European Social Fund [...];

Encourage Member States to make best use of the European Social Fund, in accordance with the relevant investment priorities of the European Social Fund for the 2014–20 programming period, and the Youth Employment Initiative, where applicable, to support the set-up and implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes as a policy instrument for combatting and preventing youth unemployment and social exclusion;

Support programming work under the Union's Common Strategic Framework Funds (European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund), including through peer learning, networking activities and technical assistance. (Council of the European Union, 2013)

However, in 2015 “the Commission decided to speed up the implementation of the YEI by increasing the prefinancing to Member States” (European Commission, 2016b, p. 3). In particular, the Commission

decided “to prolong the funding of the YEI by adding 1 billion Euro from the EU budget, to be matched by the same amount from the European Social Funds allocation of the eligible Member States” (Ibid.).

In summary, during the 2014–2020 programming period, both the ESF and the YEI sources invested more than 15.1 billion Euro in youth employment and labour market integration measures.

Specifically, with regard to the ESF:

In 2014–2020, the actual ESF allocations amount to 24.8% of the Structural Funds (ESF & ERDF [European Regional Development Fund]) budget. The introduction of a minimum share (23.1%) is effectively putting an end to the gradual decrease of the ESF share in the past 25 years. 18 Member States have decided to allocate additional funds to the ESF beyond the minimum share. (European Commission, 2016a, *ESF Budget by Country*)

In the light of this, given our interest in the domestic adaptation triggered by the YG, the selection of countries under consideration in Part II of this book represents a significant and exemplary group, when we consider both the regional development eligibility criteria for ESF funding and the minimum guaranteed share of allocations (24.8% of total) by individual countries that the ESF has introduced since 2014.

Specifically, with reference to the first criteria (i.e., ESF regions, for the period 2014–2020), there are only three regional development eligibility categories:

1. Less developed regions (GDP/head less than 75% of EU-27)
2. Transition regions (GDP/head between 75% and 90% of EU-27)
3. More developed regions (GDP/head equal or more than 90% of EU-27)

The selected countries represent different combination of the above regional development eligibility categories as:

- Belgium and Estonia comprise only ESF regions under category (1).
- Slovakia comprises ESF regions under categories (1) and (2).

- Austria, Denmark and Belgium comprise, each, ESF regions under categories (2) and (3).
- The United Kingdom, Spain and Italy comprise, each, ESF regions under all three categories.

As far as the second criterion is concerned (i.e., minimum guaranteed share of allocations equal to 24.8%):

- With an allocated share of 18% (Estonia) and 20.9% (Slovakia), two countries did not meet the minimum guaranteed share.
- With an allocated share of 28.7% (Belgium), 26.5% (Italy) and 27.7% (Spain), three countries allocated slightly more than the minimum guaranteed share.
- With an allocated share of 43.5% (Austria) and 45.9 (United Kingdom), two countries allocated more (but less than double) than the minimum guaranteed share.
- With an allocated share of 52% (Belgium) and 50% (Denmark), two more countries allocated double or more of funds than the minimum guaranteed share.

This said, for the planning period 2014–2020, the ESF is allocated through a needs-based criterion: the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head compared to the EU average. Therefore, with regard to the nine countries under consideration, the highest quotas are allocated to Italy and Spain (see Table 8.2).

However, to understand how the implementation of YG schemes at country level is actually supported by the ESF, we need to discern how these funds connect to those available through the YEI, and specifically how much and for the benefit of whom.

As briefly mentioned, the YEI supports young unemployed people with specific regards to those regions where youth unemployment rate recorded a share higher than 25% both in 2012 and 2016. It mainly aims to provide apprenticeships, traineeships, job placements and further education leading to a qualification, hence interconnecting the YG with adult education markets to tackle youth unemployment. Moreover, the YEI is able to reach out directly to NEETs and support them on a

Table 8.2 ESF: Planned financing by country and YEI: Planned financing by country, 2014–2020 (Euro)

ESF: Planned financing		YEI: Planned financing					
Country	Total financing	EU financing	National co-financing	Country	Total financing	EU financing	National co-financing
Austria	875,739,295	442,087,353	433,651,942	Austria	–	–	–
Belgium	2,174,389,125	973,364,655	1,201,024,470	Belgium	188,681,886	125,787,924	62,893,962
Bulgaria	1,721,132,821	1,464,939,031	256,193,790	Bulgaria	120,116,681	110,377,490	9,739,191
Denmark	410,953,277	213,024,265	197,929,012	Denmark	–	–	–
Estonia	683,653,229	581,105,244	102,547,985	Estonia	–	–	–
Italy	17,709,795,639	10,192,857,615	7,516,938,024	Italy	2,288,069,201	1,821,064,560	467,004,641
Slovakia	2,461,341,865	2,045,419,821	415,922,044	Slovakia	228,275,422	206,715,082	21,560,340
Spain	10,223,681,509	7,088,053,346	3,135,628,163	Spain	2,963,614,592	2,723,321,500	240,293,092
United Kingdom	8,757,640,758	4,763,553,589	3,994,087,169	United Kingdom	600,028,486	412,196,248	187,832,238

Source: Our processing from <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds>, 2018

personal level since the “offers” it funds, and provided to young people through the YG national schemes, range from apprenticeships and training courses to subsidies for employers and start-up support, depending on the specific needs of each young person. The funding provided by the YEI is used in the implementation of the *Youth Employment Package*, and particularly the implementation of YG schemes in those member states that benefit from the YEI. Moreover, the total of YEI funds (simply named YEI) is broken down into two components: YEI specific allocation and YEI-ESF matching component, that is a matching amount to that of the YEI specific allocation but under the ESF line of budget. So, the YEI complements the support from other EU financial resources such as ESF, which reaches beyond individuals and helps to bringing about educational and employment reforms.

In sum, of the total YEI budget of 6.4 billion Euro, a specific EU budget line provides half and the other half comes from the ESF. Moreover, by April 2017 the total YEI has been regarded as “the most important policy framework for actions to prevent the long-term disengagement of young people” (Eurofound, 2017, p. 1). So, the YEI budget went up to 8.8 billion Euro (European Commission, 2017).

As mentioned, not all EU member states are eligible to the YEI. Of the nine countries under consideration, only six were eligible to YEI funding for the programming period 2014–2020, as reported in Table 8.2 (see above).

8.4 National Responses and Rejoinders to the European Youth Guarantee

Against this backdrop, by looking at the national responses and rejoinders to the YG, this book provides an opportunity to better understand how policy instrumentation works and, specifically, how the choice at the EU level of certain policy instruments may affect national realities across Europe and particularly national policy choice, governance and institutions (Kassim & Le Galès, 2010). In other words, by paying attention to the YG, we can examine the process of European governance and how it

affects adult education policies and approaches in specific national realities, including those that did not implement national YG schemes (like Austria, Denmark and most of the United Kingdom), as they were not eligible or were already meeting YG objectives in other ways, still with the support of EU's financial redistribution via the ESF. So, in the chapters that follow, those countries that implemented national YG schemes (Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Spain and Italy) are presented first before those that did not (Austria, Flanders, Denmark and the United Kingdom). But among the countries that implemented national YG schemes, those with centralised implementation mechanisms (Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria) are presented first before those where autonomous communities (Spain) or regional governments (Italy) are equally important players for the implementation of YG schemes on the whole of a country's territory.

Despite the above-mentioned differences across countries, the core question framing all country-based analyses was: In what ways the launch of the YG affects continuity and change in adult education policy in [country name], its governance and institutions, through financial redistribution?

All country-based analyses are the result of a double *heuristic move* (Abbott, 2004). First, the researchers concentrated attention on the context for a national response or rejoinder to the YG. Then, they analysed the national response or rejoinder to the YG. This double heuristic move allowed to tease out the processes of domestic adaptation triggered by the EU regulatory politics and related wealth redistribution and to consider its implications for adult education policy developments.

Accordingly, Chaps. 9 to 17 follow a similar structure and are organised in three sections, for easier cross-country comparisons, as explained below.

The first section describes the national context by providing information on the state form and administration, and the socio-economic conditions in the post-economic crisis period, but also educational attainments and participation rates in lifelong as well as unemployment conditions, specifically among youth and NEETs.

The second section engages with how the country responded to the European launch of the YG in terms of governance structure, funding

flows and management. Hence, it presents the actors and institutions involved with the domestic adaptation of the YG in that country (or YG-like objectives, for those countries that did not implement national YG schemes), the role they play (e.g., coordinator, provider, beneficiary) and the responsibilities they hold. Then, it examines the flow of financial redistribution from national to sub-national levels, and across the policy actors involved in the governance structure of the YG, or of alternative initiatives that, financed through the ESF, aim at reaching YG-like objectives. Then, it considers the management strategies and practices in place, and how national/regional/local institutions responded to them, and reports on the measures deployed to oversee national YG schemes, as relevant. This section concludes with some consideration on the intended and unintended consequences of the YG and the capability of the actors involved to (re)interpret its objectives.

Finally, each chapter concludes by pointing at some of the implications of the launch of the YG for adult education policy at national level. Specifically, it addresses issues of continuity and change in adult education policy developments, visibility/invisibility of social groups, forms of learning, and of policy actors and providers.

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9

The Estonian Rejoinder to Youth Guarantee

Marti Taru

9.1 Introduction

In Estonia, the idea that young peoples' transition to work and their well-being needs be supported by public sector had been around already before the Youth Guarantee Recommendation was adopted. A range of policy measures were put in place that were addressing youth integration into labour market and supporting school attendance. However, the measures were implemented mostly separately in different sectors of public policy: youth work, education and active labour market policies, and also social work and social welfare. Policy-makers perceived the Youth Guarantee Recommendation as an opportunity to advance the already running measures as well as to increase integration of the measures that were carried out in different policy areas and in the areas of responsibility of different ministries but still addressing young people with an aim to support

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their integration into society. The Recommendation was addressing narrowly speaking young people and it was perceived as such. That the Recommendation has a history and background beyond addressing the situation of young people only and that also the conceptual framework is not youth-specific, except for the concept of NEETs, was not given attention.

While the Recommendation mentions three aspects how to support the integration of young people in society – through education, training and employment – in Estonia, policy-makers perceived the opportunity to provide employment opportunities to young people more important than to provide opportunities in two other areas. Indeed, during the Great Recession, youth unemployment rate in Estonia increased rapidly and was amongst the highest in the European Union (EU). School dropout rate, on the other hand, had been already low and stayed below target levels.

9.1.1 State Form and Administration

Estonia is a parliamentary republic with a single-chamber parliament called Riigikogu. The supreme power of the state is vested in the people. The people exercise their supreme power of the state on the elections of the Riigikogu through citizens who have the right to vote. Members of Riigikogu are elected in proportional elections for four years. The supreme judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court or Riigikohus. The official Head of State is the President of Estonia, who gives assent to the laws passed by Riigikogu, also having the right of sending them back and proposing new laws. Executive power is a prerogative of the Government of the Republic of Estonia. As of October 2019, the Government consisted of 14 ministers, plus prime minister.

Under the Constitution, the Administrative Territorial Division of the Republic of Estonia stipulates that the territory of Estonia is divided into municipalities. Municipalities are administrative-territorial units in which local self-government is carried out. In January 2019, there were 79 municipalities in Estonia: 15 cities/towns and 64 rural municipalities.

There is a division of functions between the central administration and local municipalities. As per Local Government Act, local governments

have to carry out a range of tasks: the provision of social welfare services for different groups, cultural, sports, hobby and youth work services, housing-related services, spatial planning, public transportation and construction and maintenance of local roads or streets, the organisation of the maintenance of formal education institutions up to general secondary level, also healthcare institutions and other local agencies if such agencies are in the ownership of the local authority. Municipalities' actual budgets and respectively the remit of their services are notably smaller than budgets and services offered by central government. Also, it has been decreasing over time: while in 2008, local governments' expenditures accounted for 24.1% of public sector expenditures, in 2018 the percentage was 21.7%.¹ The central government has been increasing its significance steadily. Local governments are supervised by the state to ensure the lawfulness and feasibility of municipal administrative procedures. Regarding financial management, the main form of cooperation between local authorities and central government is the annual budget negotiation workgroups of the government committee established by the government and the delegation of the Local Government Associations Cooperation Assembly. The support allocated to local authorities and matters concerning tax policy are discussed in the financial and tax policy workgroup formed by the Ministry of Finance.²

Ministries have set up different organisational forms to assure that services in their area of responsibility are carried out. This may include providing services via local offices, partnering with organisations in the not-for-profit sector as well as with business organisations, partnering with municipal organisations and subcontracting other organisations.

Estonia joined the European Union on 01 May 2004. Since 01 January 2011, the currency in use is Euro. The official language of the country is Estonian.

9.1.2 Socio-economic Condition

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Estonia grew from 12,200 in 2007 to 19,700 in 2018. Estonia's GDP per capita in current prices has been significantly below the EU average. However, the gap has been constantly narrowing down: while in 2007 Estonia's GDP per

capita was 47% of the EU average, then in 2018 it was 64%. The GDP per capita difference has been decreasing in all years except the years of Great Recession (2009 and 2010) and 2015.

The level of expenditure on social protection has varied from 12% of GDP in 2006, 2007 to 19% in 2009. It has been rather stable over the period 2005 to 2016 although there was a notable increase in 2009. Social protection expenditure, which increased during the economic downturn of 2009 and 2010, decreased by 2012 but has not returned to as low level as before the recession. Compared to the EU28, the level of social protection expenditures has varied between 51% of the EU average in 2013 and 66% in 2009.

The population of Estonia decreased from 1,567,749 in 1991 to 1,315,944 in 2016, that is, a drop of 16%. Different age groups contributed to the overall drop differently. Age group 75 years old or older increased from 78,974 to 122,268 people (+55%) and the number of 50–74 years old did not change. To balance this, the size of all younger age groups decreased, especially 0–14-year-olds (–39%) and 15–24-year-olds (–38%). The number of 25–49-year-olds decreased by 15%.

The educational level of the population aged 15–64 has been increasing. This change happens through the decreasing share of people with primary or secondary education and increasing share of people with tertiary education. The percentage of people with primary education only declined from 20.4% in 2008 to 16.8% in 2017 (it was 15.8% in 2013) and with secondary education from 51.3% in 2008 to 48.4% in 2017 (although it was 51.9% in 2013). The percentage of those with tertiary education grew from 28.3% in 2008 to 34.7% in 2017. At the level of the EU, similar changes are taking place, although the percentage of people with secondary education has not changed much.

Participation rate in education and training (in last four weeks preceding the survey) differs across educational groups: it is the highest in the group of people with highest educational attainment (from 15% to 26%) and the lowest in the group of people with the lowest attainment (2% to 7%). Differences are rather notable. Data show a notable upward trend: in 2011 to 2013, participation rate was around 12%, but participation rates starting from 2016 and lasting through 2017 and 2018 was 19.7% in 2018, compared to earlier years. Participation in adult education has

increased in all educational groups. There were no major differences between Estonia and EU average until 2015. Starting from 2016, participation in adult education in Estonia has increased in all educational attainment groups, while in the EU on the average, there has been no increase.

Over the period from 2009 to 2018, the unemployment rate among 15–24-year-olds in Estonia varied between 11.8% in 2018 and 32.9% in 2010. It was significantly influenced by the economic downturn of 2009–2010. Compared to the EU average, the youth unemployment rate in Estonia has been significantly lower in years of economic growth (being approximately 75% of the EU average), but significantly higher in years of economic depression and downturn (reaching to approximately 140% of the EU average).

In all years from 2006 to 2017, the rate of 15–24-year-old young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Estonia varied between 8.7% in 2008 and 14.5% in 2009. There was a significant increase in years 2009 and 2010 when the rate nearly doubled from 8.7% in 2008 to 14.5% in 2009. After that, the rate of young people classified as NEETs has not returned to the low level before 2009. Compared to the EU average, the rate of NEETs in Estonia has been lower in general. There are two exceptions (years 2009 and 2010) when the rate of NEETs in Estonia increased above EU average. The changing pattern is similar to that of the youth unemployment rate.

Although research literature on NEET youth is scant, there are some insights into the topic. These are generated mainly in the framework of developing public policy measures, following the Council Recommendation on establishing Youth Guarantee, to address the problem of NEETs. Based mainly on Labour Force Survey data from 2011, the number of NEET youth in Estonia was estimated to exceed 40,000 (Kasearu & Trumm, 2013a; Kasearu & Trumm, 2013b). The authors identified youth in NEET situation as a complex social problem. For relieving the situation, a range of policy measures would be necessary (Pihor, 2013). Based on Labour Force Survey carried out in 2015, a Statistics Estonia senior analyst estimated that the number of NEET youth was 29,900 in the age group 15–29-year-olds. At the beginning of the 2000s, the number of NEET youths was estimated to have been

around 56,000, meaning that by 2015 it had decreased substantially. The author considered the phenomenon of NEET youth to be a global and complex problem, which also needs a complex policy response (Roosimägi, 2016). In February 2017, a Bank of Estonia analyst conducted a secondary analysis of the Labour Force Survey 2015. He agreed that although the number of young people in NEET status formally could be 29,900, only a small fraction needed support from the state. These were approximately 1000 young people who were classified as long-term and discouraged unemployed (Oja, 2017). The same opinion was shared by the Estonian business daily (Riik soodustab õpituid abitust, 2017). The Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) disagreed with this viewpoint, holding to opinion that the number of young people in NEET status was approximately 10,000 and 55.8% of them (approximately 5600) needed state support (Küisler, 2017). The same opinion was expressed by a youth policy adviser in the Estonian Youth Council (an umbrella organisation of youth organisations in Estonia) (Lõhmus, 2017). Elsewhere, the MSA estimated the number of 16–26-year-old people in NEET status in 2015 to be 19,000. Out of them, 10,600 might need state support. The group was seen consisting of young people from different backgrounds (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2018).

9.1.3 Concluding Remarks

The GDP per capita in current prices in Estonia has been significantly below the EU average, but the gap has been narrowing and reached 60% in 2017. Expenditure on social protection has been low too – it has been slightly more than 50% of similar expenditures in the EU on the average. Social protection expenditure increased during economic downturn and decreased after that but did not return to its previous low level.

The rates of youth unemployment and NEET status of 15–24-year-olds have been below the EU average, except in the years of the Great Recession. Relatively low level of social protection offers one explanation here, but there are probably also factors and circumstances to take into account (poor transition from education to labour market (poor apprenticeship system), mismatch of skills provided in education system and

skills needed in labour market). These factors could act separately as well in interaction with each other.

The educational level of the population aged 15–64 is increasing as the percentage of people with the primary or secondary education has been decreasing and higher education has been increasing. Also, participation in lifelong learning has been increasing in all groups of earlier educational attainment.

Before the YG, Estonia had put in place a range of measures to address youth unemployment: formal education system, youth work, career services and labour market services. The Youth Guarantee came in addition to the existing measures for the period 2014–2020 to prevent and decrease youth unemployment. It specifically focused on increasing the co-efficiency of different measures and supporting weaker target groups (Ministry of Social Affairs, n.d.). The largest service in terms of budget (My First Job, MFJ) contains two components: subsidised jobs and reimbursement of job training. Both services had been running since at least the beginning of 2003 and have been markedly larger than what is offered in the framework of the YG. In 2015, there were 16,881 entrances to job trainings, in 2016 the number was 17,411, in 2017 it was 17,887 and in 2018 it was 22,715 outside the YG. As a part of the YG, the respective numbers were 32, 77, 68 and 95 – hence, the YG constitutes far less than 1% of all entrances to the service. In the case of wage subsidies, the number of entrances has been 1720, 2263, 2574 and 2888 in general and 212, 360, 539 and 1019 into the YG supported service. Hence, the YG added between 12% and 35% to the number of entrants to the service. Also, Labour Market Services and Benefits Act adopted in 2005 stipulates that the registered unemployed in age group of 16–24-year-olds belong to the risk group and are subject of special attention (State Gazette, 2005). Knowing this background, establishing the service MFJ consisting of two components that have been running already many years becomes understandable. Likewise, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) had been offering labour market consulting services since at least 2003, and establishing workshops directed to young people was a natural thing to do. Modern youth work services have been developed since the late 1990s, and the idea of integrated services and integration of social policy interventions that target young people (known

also as integrated or cross-sectoral youth policy) was also spelt out already a decade earlier in Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013. Social welfare provision system in general adopted case management methodology in service provision in the mid-2000s. Existence of functioning and tested services that focus on individuals can be seen as a cause of providing similar services also under the umbrella of the YG. Significant role of youth work in the YG looks only natural when we know that modern youth work services in Estonia have been developed since the late 1990s. There has been some development of nearly all services though, which in the case of some services has been quite noticeable.

Regarding public debates on young people and public policy, there have been no significant conceptual developments. Changes in public policy interventions addressing young people, including youth work as a youth-specific public policy measure, are described in the body of this report.

9.2 The National Response to Youth Guarantee

Public policy debate that is relevant in the context of the YG has been largely concentrated around the concept of NEETs. The problem of young people in NEET situation was brought to the public attention by the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC). The EYWC is the executive arm of the Youth Affairs Department in the Ministry of Education and Research, which is charged with the task to draw and coordinate public policies addressing young people in age 7–26 years.

The EYWC publishes annual Youth Monitoring Yearbook on the situation of young people in Estonia. In 2013, it was devoted to the topic of social inclusion, and majority of the chapters in the yearbook focused on NEET youth in Estonia. The Yearbook was launched in a conference devoted to youth social exclusion on 16 May 2013, right after the Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee, which was adopted on 22 April 2013. For estimates of the number of NEETs, please refer to Sect. 9.1.2.

From the policy problem definition perspective, five key points can be identified that paved the way for designing policy response and implementing the YG in Estonia. Firstly, the whole problem area was framed in terms of social exclusion and young people already being in NEET status or being in the risk of slipping into this status. Secondly, the NEET problem to be addressed by implementing the YG was seen as a complex phenomenon, with different causes and effects, being heterogeneous in terms of the internal structure and constituent groups. NEET status was not equated with being (long-term and possibly discouraged) unemployed. Thirdly, recognising the situation as a complex one leads to understanding that effective and appropriate policy response needs to be a complex one. Fourthly, the key policy actors estimated the number of young people in need of state support to be at least 5600, but possibly well above 10,000. There was a considerable variation in this number. And finally, the key actors in the debate were the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA), the Youth Affairs Department (YAD) of the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC).

As a response to the Council Recommendation, Estonia developed a package of interventions. The situation and the main policy activities were described in the Youth Guarantee implementation plan that labour in 2014.³ MSA, MER, EYWC and Estonian Youth Council were involved in developing the document; the process started earlier. The implementation plan was amended in 2017, after mid-term evaluation of the MFJ service (Tatar, Käger, Vollmer, Kivistik, & Pertsjonok, 2017) and discussion of the evaluation results in Youth Guarantee coordination working group. The amendments concerned only the MFJ service, while other services were not changed. Currently Estonia implements eight activities under the umbrella of YG (see Sect. 9.2.3).

9.2.1 Governance Structure

The governance structure of the YG in Estonia is based on the partnership approach recommended in the YG Recommendation. The YG implementation plan, which serves as the framing document for

planning and carrying out YG activities in Estonia, was developed through negotiations between the MSA and the YAD in MER, EYWC and EUIF. Also, the Estonian Youth Council was involved in the development process.

The Employment Department (ED) of MSA and MER (YAD) implement the YG jointly. The leading role is with the MSA though. This ministry communicates with the European Commission (EC) about questions related to the YG implementation as well as communicates with other parties from abroad. The ministry formed a working group coordinating the YG-related partnerships, monitoring plan implementation and incorporating relevant parties. The working group enhances cooperation between specialists and representatives of different interest groups related to the YG implementation. External partners and experts (who do not participate constantly in working group) are also invited to the working group activities as the need arises. Table 9.1 presents permanent members of working group coordinating the YG.

The MSA operates in the field of social security, where its activities are divided into broad areas of health, labour market, social security, children and families and gender equality.

The ED in the ministry is responsible for employment-related topics. The national labour market policy supports participation in labour market with a wide range of services and allowances. The ED was involved in the development of the YG implementation plan from the very beginning and now is responsible for implementation of the YG in Estonia.

The MER is responsible for the planning of education, research, youth and language-related national policies.

The YAD in the ministry is responsible for youth affairs, planning youth policy, organising youth work. The department was involved in the planning of the YG activities and now is involved in the YG coordination group.

The EYWC is a national centre for youth work under the administrative authority of the MER, and its main objective is to develop and organise youth work in the framework of the national youth policy. The EYWC was one of the actors in the planning of the YG activities in Estonia.

Table 9.1 Governance structure. Key actors that support and implement YG in Estonia

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competencies
Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA), Employment Department (ED)	Public administration	National	Coordination body	The National Administration plays the role of Managing Authority and ensures the overall implementation of the YG in Estonia The National Administration plays the role of Managing Authority and ensures the system activities, monitoring and evaluation, institutional communication in the area of implementing MFJ and YG support programme
Ministry of Education and Research (MER), Youth Affairs Department (YAD)	Public administration	National	Coordination body	The National Administration plays the role of Managing Authority and ensures the system activities, monitoring and evaluation, institutional communication in the area of implementing YG in the youth field
Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF)	Public sector	National	Service provider	Implements the service “MFJ” and workshops directed to youth, introducing labour market and working life
Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC)	Public administration	National	Implementer and coordinating organisation	Institution governed by the MER Implements the following projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Prop-Up Programme • Youth Summer Work Programme • Community Practice Programme • Mobile workshops • Youth Initiatives

(continued)

Table 9.1 (continued)

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competencies
Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEYC)	NGO, umbrella organisation	National	Coordinating organisation	Coordinating service provision in the project “Youth Prop-Up Programme” and “Youth Initiatives”
Labour Inspectorate of Estonia (LIE)		National		Institution governed by the MSA
Estonian Employers’ Confederation (EEC)		National		NGO
National Resource Centre for Guidance INNOVE		National		Innove Foundation’s working group

Sources: Our processing on official documents and regulatory framework

The EUIF is a quasi-governmental organisation and a legal entity in public law. The mission of the EUIF is to administer the social insurance provisions related to unemployment and to organise labour market services that help unemployed persons find new employment. The EUIF was involved in designing the YG services in Estonia and carries out the largest activity of the YG in Estonia – service MFJ – and workshops directed to young people.

The Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEYC) is a nationwide umbrella organisation, which connects youth centres. It commands expertise on communicating, mobilising and arranging activities with and for young people, mainly in age range from 10 to 16 years. The AEYC carries out the Prop-Up Programme.

The Labour Inspectorate of Estonia (LIE) is a government agency in the area of governance of the MSA. The main tasks of the Labour Inspectorate are implementation and supervision of work environment policies.

The Estonian Employers' Confederation (EEC) is an umbrella organisation of sectoral associations and business organisations in Estonia.

The National Resource Centre for Guidance INNOVE is an education competence centre that coordinates and promotes general and vocational education in Estonia, offers educational counselling services through the nationwide Rajaleidjal/*Pathfinder* network and mediates European Union grants in fields of education and working life.

Cooperation in implementing the YG depends on the level management and the phase of the programme. In the phase of design of the measures to be implemented, meetings between ministerial departments and organisations now involved in implementing the YG activities took place. Also, young people (Estonian Youth Council) were involved in the process of development of the services offered in the framework of the YG. In the implementation phase, the working group coordinating YG meets twice a year (in spring and in fall) to discuss implementation of the programme, its successes and challenges. It also identifies the need for change and devises changes to the services when needed. This is obviously the most important site of cooperation in terms of influence on the YG goals, methods, evaluation, adjustments and more substantive changes to the YG.

The bilateral cooperation and exchange of information between organisations implementing concrete activities (e.g. between Prop-Up Programme and Unemployment Insurance Fund, between youth centres and counselling centres) has been ongoing. Interviewed people from organisations carrying out activities told that there is a rather active exchange of information and cooperation at the level of specialists.

9.2.2 Financial Flow

The total planned contribution from the EU structural funds to Estonia for the period 2014–2020 is 4,213,220,921 Euro (Table 9.2).

Estonia does not receive Youth Employment Initiative funds.

Estonia has only one Operational Programme for Cohesion Policy Funds 2014–2020. All details, which bear relevance to the Youth Guarantee, are spelt out in this one document (Ministry of Finance, 2014a).

The YG is funded from two financial sources: (a) European Social Fund (ESF) (85%) and (b) the national budget (15%) (Ministry of Finance, 2014b). Operational Programme objectives that bear relevance for the YG and respective financial figures are given in Table 9.3.

According to the YG implementation plan, the overall budget of the YG for the period 2014–2020⁴ is 31.12 million Euro, which is distributed between four activities:

1. Workshops directed to youth, introducing labour market and working life (1.18 million Euro; target group: students from grades 8 to 12)
2. Supporting youth at entering the labour market, and coping there (3.15 million Euro; target group: youth aged 7–26)

Table 9.2 EU planned and spent funds: Estonia, 2018 (Euro)

Fund	Planned	Spent
CF	997,842,596	534,490,109
EAFRD	823,000,000	445,864,559
EMFF	100,970,418	17,642,087
ERDF	1,749,418,978	514,072,342
ESF	541,988,929	168,554,853
Total	4,213,220,921	1,680,623,950

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018

Table 9.3 Planned budget and actual costs of YG relevant priority axes and specific objectives (millions of Euro): Estonia

	Budget for 2014–2020				Actual spending by 31 October 2018		
	Foreseen but not planned EU contribution	Actually planned EU contribution	Actually planned national co-financing	Total	EU	National co-financing	Total
Priority axis 1. Qualifications and skills meeting the needs of society and the labour market	383.6	241.5	43.5	284.9 ^a	92.1	16.3	108.4 ^a
Specific objective 2 of priority axis 1. Improving the teaching competence of teaching staff, principals and youth workers	20.7	12.3	2.2	14.5 ^a	7.7	1.4	9.1 ^a
Priority axis 2. Increasing social inclusion	312.3	265.3	105.6	373.9 ^a	61.2	17.8	79.3 ^a
Specific objective 7 of priority axis 2. Inclusion and improvement of the employability of young people, including those at risk of exclusion	17.2	17.2	3.0	20.2	4.9	0.9	5.8
Priority axis 3. Improvement of access to, and prevention of dropping out of, the labour market	212.3	195.1	33.6	229.5 ^a	46.6	7.7	54.8 ^a
Specific objective 2 of priority axis 3. Increased employment of the target groups of lower employability who have participated in active labour market measures	44.9	27.1	3.9	31.8 ^a	7.5	0.8	8.8 ^a

Source: Our processing on Ministry of Financial Affairs (MFA)

^aIncludes also private sector spending

3. Launching supporting measures for NEET youth that help to bring them back to education and/or successful entry into the labour market (7.79 million Euro; target group: NEETs, aged 15–26)
4. Service MFJ (18.9 million Euro; target group: youth aged 16–29, who lack or have little work experience, and who have not been occupied for the last three months, or temporarily occupied) (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2017)

Also, the Youth Guarantee Support System development and testing programme, implemented by the MSA in collaboration with municipalities, has been allocated 0.66 million Euro for the period 01 March 2017 to 31 May 2020. This programme is financed from two sources: 85% from the ESF 85% and 15% from the national budget (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2018).

Altogether the planned budget of the YG is 31.78 million Euro for the period 2014–2020. In fact, 85% of this – 27,013 million Euro – is funded from the ESF and 4767 million Euro from the national budget. The MSA is responsible for implementing activities which cost 20.74 million Euro (17,629 million Euro from the ESF and 3111 million Euro from the national budget). The MER is responsible for implementing activities which cost 11.04 million Euro (9.38 Euro from the ESF and 1.66 million Euro from the national budget).

Unfortunately, it is not possible to spell out sums that have been allocated to individual activities in a more detailed manner.⁵

9.2.3 Management

Two management levels can be distinguished: the level of the YG as an integrated policy programme and the level of individual services and activities.

At the programme level, overall management of the YG is the responsibility of the MSA, the Employment Department, where management of the YG is the responsibility of one employee. The YG country manager communicates with the EC unit, which is responsible for implementing the YG in member states. She also communicates with other organisations outside Estonia. She has established the working group coordinating

the YG in Estonia and carries out management activities that ensure effective functioning of the working group. In the working group, different aspects of implementation of activities are discussed, successes and problems identified, changes planned when this is deemed necessary.

The main administrative tool for assuring that implementation of the YG is effective at the programme level, that there are no duplications, redundancies or gaps in activities, is the working group coordinating the YG. None of the interviewed officials expressed discontent with the work of the working group coordinating the YG or with the programme in general.

At the level of activities, two different approaches have been used to guarantee that final beneficiaries, the young people, get access to services and that the services are of high quality. Administratively, there is a relationship of subordination between service providers and the ministry. This is the case with the MSA and EUIF – the Fund carries out activities that are deemed necessary by the ministry and are directly financed by the ministry. The EUIF carries out two activities: service MFJ and workshops directed to youth, introducing labour market and working life. The service *MFJ* consists of two components: subsidised job and job training, and it is open to 16–29-year-old registered unemployed.⁶ Out of the two components, subsidy paid to employer is the main service and job training may come in addition to this when this is necessary for performing a job. This service has the largest budget out of the eight activities. *Workshops directed to youth, introducing labour market and working life* targets pupils in grades 8 to 12 that are 15–19-year-olds. Unlike MFJ, which is a reactive measure, this is a preventive measure targeted to young people who are in education (and thus not in NEET status).

The *YG support system* is carried out directly by the MSA, the ED, in collaboration with *municipalities*. This measure seeks to support 16–29-year-old NEET youth at municipal level, using the expertise and personnel of municipal social welfare departments.

The case of the MER and the EYWC is to an extent similar. However, the EYWC is not a service provider itself, but it arranges all practical matters in connection with contracting organisations that provide services to young people. In the case of activities that are outsourced to external service providers – the five activities in the area of responsibility of the

MER – service providers are selected using competitive public procurement procedure.

Youth Prop-Up Programme targets 15–26-year-olds in NEET status or in risk of slipping into NEET status (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). In 2015–2018, the *Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres* carried it out, but starting from 2019, it is carried out by the *Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres* together with *Tallinn City Government, Sports and Youth Department*.

Community Practice Programme is a mentored participation of pupils in the activities of an NGO for 10–15 hours. It targets pupils in grades 10–12, who are 7–19 years old and is carried out by *Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations*.

Youth Summer Work Programme offers young people an opportunity to do simple jobs at registered employers during summer vacation, for one to several weeks. Its target group is approximately 12–19-year-olds.

Mobile workshops introduce several professions using IT equipment and mobile workshops. The target group of the activity is young people.

Youth Initiatives Programme offers young people, who have submitted a youth project idea, financial support to make the project happen. Its target group is young people (7–26-year-olds).

Importantly, the majority of the activities or parts of the activities had been running before the YG was launched so that the YG was built of already functioning services. However, although the services had been running already, some of them needed adjustment and development to meet the needs of target groups better as well as to increase cooperation between organisations.

Carrying out measures under the umbrella of the YG started mostly in January 2015. There was one exception – the YG support system was launched in 2017.

9.2.3.1 Outcomes

Implementing the YG in Estonia has several *outcomes*. Firstly, *more young people now have access to a range of support measures* as the overall volume of resources increased by the amount of resources allocated through YG scheme. Implementation of the YG activities has also increased

individualised approach to young people as Youth Prop-Up Programme, YGSS and MFJ use case management methodology.

Over the period 01 January 2015 to 31 December 2018, there were 2130 entrances into the subsidised job component of the service *My First Job* and, out of them, 272 entrances to the job training reimbursement component of the service.⁷ From 01 January 2015 to 31 May 2018, 5380 *workshops* have been carried out where altogether 79,686 young people have participated.⁸

In the *Youth Guarantee Support System*, altogether 38 municipalities participated in October 2019.⁹

Over the period from the beginning of service provision in 2015 until mid-January 2019, thousands of participants have participated in services provided by organisations subcontracted by the EYWC.¹⁰ Altogether 3248 young people have participated in *Mobile Workshops*, 975 young persons have participated in *Summer Work Programme* and 614 young people have participated in *Youth Initiatives Programme*. To *Youth Prop-Up Programme*, altogether 7893 young people have enrolled. Out of them, 1294 have continued the service after having been involved for longer than initial six months to achieve tangible outcomes.

Another significant change is the *increased cooperation between policy actors*. Enactment of the YG launched the YG coordination group, consisting of representatives of different organisations, and through this, it increased cross-sectoral, cross-ministerial and also cross-level awareness and cooperation. Similar processes took place between specialists, leading to development of *experts' networks*.

Service design in the public sector is notable: workshops provided by the EUIF became more youth-friendly and youth work obtained a labour market-oriented edge.

Increased role and visibility of the youth field in society and in public policy is another change worth noting.

9.2.4 Concluding Remarks

Implementation of the YG has increased collaboration between different ministries and organisations outside the public sector. YG coordination working group is the main site for cooperation of policy actors and

umbrella organisations. Launch of the programme has increased also collaboration at the level of service providers. This has both practical and symbolic value. In practical terms, actors and specialists learn to know each other plus develop networks through collaboration. Symbolic value of the practical cooperation is that this shows other actors and society that effective collaboration across sectoral, ministerial and administrative level borders is possible and runs smoothly. This serves as a good example that may have potential to encourage other actors engage in a similar enterprise.

Policy-makers have been actively interpreting the Recommendation as the services and activities running under the umbrella of the YG in Estonia partly follow and somewhat divert from the Recommendation. The EU YG recommends focusing on all young people under the age of 25 years. Services and activities implemented in Estonia target young people mainly in the age group starting from approximately 15 years (some participants in some services might be also younger) and going up to 29 years. As per the Recommendation, a good quality offer should be made to young people who are “unemployed or leaving formal education”. In Estonia, a good quality offer is made to registered unemployed young people or to young people in NEET status, or in the risk of slipping there. For young people leaving formal education, only participation in information events is available. The policy response should, according to the Recommendation, *contain offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months*. The offers in Estonia contain an offer of employment, and also job training if this is deemed necessary, but not continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship. The Recommendation emphasises the need for early intervention and activation. Majority of interventions in Estonia have put this principle in their core and attempt to intervene at a possibly early stage and some attempt to prevent problems. The Recommendation suggests “building up partnership-based approaches”. In Estonia, partnership-based approaches are alive both at the management level and at the grass-roots level. Changes made to the service MFJ, resulting from the results of mid-term evaluation, are an instance of evidence-based approach. Also changes made to the Youth Prop-Up Programme, starting from its second period of implementation, show the same. Making use of

the youth work expertise and resources to address youth social exclusion and labour market situation is a relatively innovative approach in public sector.

9.3 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

At the *programme level*, implementation of the YG involves institutions, which have promoted or made extensive use of non-formal learning methods and environments and youth work (EYWC, AEYC, YAD) and job training or adult education (EUIF). Through this, the YG has the potential to influence how adult education policy activities are carried out in Estonia. This is reviewed below.

The service *MFJ* consists of two components: subsidised job and reimbursement of training costs. In the framework of lifelong learning and adult education, it is the reimbursement of training costs that is of interest. Implementing the YG has increased the amount of the service offered but not the nature of the service that was running already before the YG. Hence, the nature of the change has been quantitative, not qualitative.

Youth Prop-Up Programme service is essentially counselling and information provision activity to young people in NEET status with an aim to empower and activate them. It is not an educational activity in the sense that it would provide opportunities for the learning of knowledge, skills and competences that might be useful in labour market contexts. But since one of the objectives of adult learning is to empower and activate learners, the programme contributes to adult learning. The service is a new one, and as such it has brought about both qualitative positive change as now young people in NEET status have access to empowering and activating service that was not there before the YG and also quantitative positive change, as the number of young people in a vulnerable situation having access to support measures has increased.

The *YG support programme* is similar to the Youth Prop-Up Programme in its offer to young people in NEET status. It differs from the Prop-Up Programme in that NEETs are identified using national registries and they are approached by municipal social workers. This service too is a

new one, and as such it has brought about both qualitative positive change, as now young people in NEET status have access to empowering and activating service that was not there before the YG, and quantitative positive change, as the number of young people in vulnerable situation having access to support measures has increased.

Workshops directed to youth, introducing labour market and working life essentially consists of workshops organised by the EUIF for pupils in grades 8–12 of the formal education system.

The EUIF has provided several career information services for a long time, but together with the YG programme, the format of the service has been changed – it has become more youth-friendly as the significance of active and non-formal learning methods has increased. Also, the service is now accessible to a larger number of young people. Hence, the launch of YG has brought about both positive qualitative and quantitative changes in adult education policy.

The *Youth Summer Work Programme* essentially means that children and young people engage in some organised work during their summer vacation. As such, this offers a hands-on learning opportunity where young people could acquire skills that will be useful for finding employment in the future. The activity is not new; it has been running since the 1960s, with a new start in the 2000s. Although it is partly financed from the YG funds, it is hard to tell if overall participation in the activity has increased. As such, this activity represents a continuity, not a change.

Mobile workshops introduce selected professions to young people. These workshops give information on some selected jobs, for instance, nursing or doing metalwork, using IT technology and mobile workshops. This is an entirely new form of introducing young people to the labour market and providing them with an opportunity to learn about their own labour market preferences. As such, it is a positive qualitative and quantitative change in adult education policy.

In *Youth Initiatives Programme*, young people have opportunities to start new activities in youth work settings and they are expected to learn new skills through this. Since similar activities have been around for years, it represents primarily a quantitative change, to the extent that the activity is financed from the YG.

Community Practice is a volunteering experience in the NGOs, which lasts over a few weeks and requires 10–15 hours from the young volunteer. Young people participate in activities of an organisation, they have mentor for that period so that they will learn how this NGO operates. The programme started in 2013/2014 but not as a part of the YG. However, to the extent that it is financed by the YG, it is a quantitative change in adult education.

In sum, the YG in Estonia has brought about both qualitative and quantitative changes as the majority of activities offer young people developmental experiences that contribute to their empowerment and activation. The quantitative change is obviously large since the majority of the service was running also before the YG. With financing from YG, some of them were adjusted and tweaked to meet the needs of the groups they were targeting and also the volume of provision of the services increased. All of the services make extensive use of non-formal learning methods. There is some variation across activities though: some lean more towards formal education methods (workshops directed to youth) while others more towards less formalised methods (e.g. Youth Initiatives or Summer Work Programme). Implementation of the YG has increased the significance of non-formal learning and youth work methods in provision of services to young people, making them more youth-friendly. Importantly, more young people in vulnerable position now have access to services that aim to empower and activate them. With this, they have also become more visible in policy-making. This has not come at the expense of some other groups becoming less visible. None of the groups that were targeted by similar activities has become overlooked as the total amount of resources spent on activities has increased. In this process, especially youth field in general and the YAD, the EYWC and the AEYC in particular have gained more visibility and importance in Estonia due to implementation of the YG. None of the policy actors or service providers involved implementing the YG has lost importance.

Notes

1. The data to which we refer for this section are all collected from Eurostat. See Government revenue, expenditure and main aggregates [gov_10a_main]; Main GDP aggregates per capita [nama_10_pc], last update: 02 October 2019; Expenditure on social protection [TPS00098]; Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%) – main indicators [edat_lfse_03], last update: 01 July 2019; Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and educational attainment level [trng_lfse_03], last update: 01 July 2019; Youth unemployment by sex, age and educational attainment level [yth_empl_090], last update: 21 September 2019; Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and educational attainment level (NEET rates) [yth_empl_160], last update: 13 August 2019.
2. Local governments, <https://www.rahendusministeerium.ee/en/local-governments-and-administrative-territorial-reform> [accessed 11 October 2019].
3. Homepage of the Ministry of Social Affairs, <https://www.sm.ee/et/noortegarantii>. Currently only the amended version of the implementation plan is available.
4. Although structural funds' financial period started in 2014, YG activities started gradually during the year 2015.
5. Email communication with EYWC staff on 31 January 2019.
6. Youth, Eesti Töötukassa [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund], <https://www.tootukassa.ee/eng/content/services/youth> [accessed 11 October 2019].
7. Statistics, Eesti Töötukassa [Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund], <https://www.tootukassa.ee/eng/content/about-tootukassa/statistics> [accessed 11 October 2019].
8. As by email communication with the EUIF's staff on 11 January 2019.
9. YGSS for the youth, Tööelu [Working Life] <https://www.tooelu.ee/en/Labour-market-entrants/Youth-Guarantee-Support-System/YGSS-for-the-youth> [accessed 11 October 2019]; Noortegarantii tugisüsteemi kasutamiseks taotluse esitanud KOV-id [Municipalities that have applied to become involved in carrying out Youth Guarantee Support System], <https://www.tooelu.ee/et/Tooturule-sisenejale/Noortegarantii-tugisysteem/Kohalikule-omavalitsusele/Mis-on-noortegarantii-tugisysteem/Noortegarantii-tugisystemeemi-kasutamiseks-taotluse-esitanud-KOV-id> [accessed 11 October 2019].
10. As by email communication with the EYWC's staff on 14 January 2019.

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10

The Slovakian Rejoinder to Youth Guarantee

Ivana Studená and Zuzana Polačková

10.1 Introduction

Youth unemployment has been a long-term focus of policy-makers in Slovakia. Employment policies in the past decades developed support to school-to-work transition and subsidies for job creation. Youth Employment Initiative has therefore been well perceived at the policy level; but the social and economic conditions have been changing dynamically in the short period, since the YG was introduced.

The situation in the Slovak labour market has been around for decades, following the system changes in the 1990s, heavily negatively influenced by structural unemployment, relatively high unemployment of youth and high and long-term unemployment rates of low-skilled adults (including the young ones). The national economic strategy attracting foreign direct investment, negative demographic change and brain drain

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(especially among young generations) has been dynamically changing the labour market situation. Since 2014, when the YG was introduced, the unemployment rate of the Slovak youth gradually declined and, for the first time, dropped slightly below the EU level in 2018. However, as the structure of the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) rate indicates, there are persisting and newly arising problems, to mention at least the increasing rate of early leavers from education and training for females and for young people below 29 years old. With programmes delivered mainly in the framework of active labour market policies and providing support to registered job seekers only, it is crucial to discuss the outreach to all young people and how governance tools and frameworks can respond to a dynamically changing situation. The factors which need to be considered when discussing adaptations related to the Youth Guarantee scheme in Slovakia need to consider a general governance framework. Firstly, it is of interest to consider how do the governance arrangements develop multi-level actions or what is the consequence of their absence. Secondly, it is crucial to address multi-sector arrangement mechanisms and implementation frameworks. Finally, it is important to confront the policy-level arrangement with actual funding and outreach.

10.1.1 State Form and Administration

The Slovak Republic is a parliamentary democracy led directly by an elected president. The National Council of the Slovak Republic (Parliament) is the key executive body for legislation. There are 150 members of the Parliament that voted from the representing parties via a direct popular vote in a secret ballot with the four-year term of office. The principal body of the executive is the Government of the Slovak Republic, which has 15 members. The Government is appointed by the President of the Slovak Republic, based on a proposal from the prime minister, usually the head of the winning party or a selected leader of a coalition of parties. The government is accountable for the execution of its functions to the Parliament.

The execution of public policy is carried out by state administration and local authorities, whereas the territorial self-government in the Slovak

Republic is executed at the regional and local level, with eight governing regions, which represent third level in the NUTS classification (NUTS3) and 2929 local authorities, at the LAU2¹ level of classification.

The division of competencies in the delivery and management of public policies between state administration bodies and regional and local government is defined by legislation.²

The operation of regional and local self-government bodies is financed to a large extent through taxes levied at the central level. Only a marginal part of taxes is levied at a local or regional level, and this goes directly to the budget of local and/or regional authorities.

10.1.2 Socio-economic Conditions

The Slovak Republic has been established as an independent state since 1 January 1993, after the politically driven and peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia. The expectations about the economic future of independent Slovakia were not optimistic. Slovakia was already struggling with the new phenomena of unemployment³ which jumped above 10% in 1991 and remained at two-digit levels in the following years. However, shortly after 1993, Slovakia adopted a model of economic growth, based on low taxes and market reforms. This strategy has provided a strong inflow of foreign direct investment, accompanied by high labour productivity growth and a relatively rapid integration into the global economy.

Slovakia joined the EU in 2004 and became one of the fastest growing economies, with an above average GDP growth rate until today. The GDP at market prices grew by 4.1% in 2018 and improved after a slowdown in 2017, while the average growth rate was at 2.0% for EU28; however, some economies in the Visegrad region have outperformed Slovakia in 2018 (Hungary and Poland).

Despite the steady positive growth also in the GDP per capita indicator to EUR 15,600 in 2018, it remains far below the EU28 average EUR 28,280 in 2018).

The Slovak population was 5,450,400 as of 1 January 2019. The labour market has been one of the key problem areas of the Slovak economy

since the beginnings of democratic development in the 1990s. Double-digit unemployment rates persisted until recently.⁴ The labour market has been improving since 2015, decreasing unemployment to historically low levels during 2018, with the most recent record rate at 5.12% in the third quarter of 2019. The decrease in the unemployment rate is, however, to a large extent the result of a negative demographic trend and consequent replacement demand. Slovakia has one of the fastest ageing populations in the EU.

The engine of the Slovak economy is export, with the share of the three largest export industries being cars, electrical engineering and machines, currently representing up to 55% of its exportations. Sources of extensive growth, which are especially cheap labour and the inflow of foreign investment, are gradually being exhausted, and the Slovak economy is starting to suffer from labour supply shortages. There is also evidence of brain drain (IFP, 2017). While the results at the macro level have been positive overall, there are large regional disparities. Income inequality remains low in Slovakia; however, the structural issues in the labour market indicate the cumulative social disadvantages of lowly skilled, disadvantaged groups and marginalised Roma communities.

The educational attainment and high share of vocational education have been among the positive factors contributing to positive foreign direct investment inflows in the past. The share of adults who completed secondary-level education is one of the highest in the EU (91.4%, compared to EU28 77.5% in 2017). The share of the Slovak population aged 30–34 who have successfully completed tertiary studies has been increasing in the past years, and it is close to the EU28 average now (39.9% in 2017). The percentage of early leavers from education and training (age 18–24) has been below the EU28 average for years, but the trend is negative. Similar to the EU average, the female participation rate in tertiary education is higher compared to participation of men.

The participation rate of the adult population in lifelong education, based on the Labour Force Survey indicator, is one of the lowest among the EU and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. However, the participation rate in

adult education measured by the adult education rate is above the EU average in Slovakia. One of the explanations for this can be due to the importance of on-the-job training not being considered in the participation rate measure by the Labour Force Survey. In both surveys, however, the participation rate of lowly skilled or the unemployed is one of the lowest compared to other EU countries.

The core problem of the labour market has been structural unemployment, regional disparities, high share of long-term unemployment and high unemployment rates of youth and lowly skilled. Despite significant improvements in the labour market over the last three years, Slovakia remained above the EU28 average in the rate of long-term unemployment, and the share of long-term unemployment is one of the highest in the EU. Job opportunities for people with low qualifications are still a problem, and Slovakia remains among the weakest countries with respect to the employability of the lowly skilled with the employment rate of low-skilled adults⁵ at 4.3%, compared to 16.4% average employment rate in the EU in 2018.

Youth has been one of the most critical groups exposed to the negative impact of the global crisis after 2008. Youth unemployment rate has been one of the highest in Europe for years, but the situation has improved recently. Slovakia is above the EU average, also in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) indicator, with a less evident positive trend than in the case of the unemployment rate of young people.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, as well as national testing of 15-year-olds, reveals the increasing conditionality of academic prospects of students on their socio-economic background (OECD, 2014). The results of testing of 15-year-old pupils (ninth year of primary schools)⁶ show that the numbers of pupils repeating a grade⁷ are the highest in the districts with the highest unemployment rates and with incidence of relative poverty. While in terms of early school leavers⁸ (ESL) from education and training, Slovakia has been traditionally well positioned with respect to the EU average, recently the rate of ESL started to increase in some regions, the indicator already increased above the 10% benchmark level set for ET 2020. The trend is specifically concerning for females.

10.1.3 Concluding Remarks

The labour market in Slovakia has been flagged for decades by a high rate of unemployment and structural problems, including a high unemployment rate of lowly skilled and lowly skilled youth in particular, and a high share of long-term unemployment. Compared to other EU countries, Slovakia has been one of the weak countries in these indicators. Therefore, employability of youth has been a policy priority for decades. The labour market problems have dramatically changed, and a shortage of labour supply is currently the most discussed problem. Despite improvements in employment rates and a decline in unemployment rates, the structural problems of the labour market remain a challenge. There are additional worrying signals in connection with education and employment prospects of the youth, especially the increasing rate of early school leavers. Slovakia is also registering worse results in an international comparison test of pupils, with an increasing impact of the socio-economic background and most problematic situation for young people from disadvantaged groups, including young people from marginalised Roma communities.

10.2 The National Response to Youth Guarantee

The implementation plan of the YG was adopted by the Slovak government on 5 February 2014. The initial strategic document “National Implementation Plan of YG” was submitted by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (MLSAF SR, 2014).

The introduction of the YG was included in the National Reform Programme of Slovak Republic of 2014, which was adopted by the government in April 2014. This created conditions for the implementation of the YG, as the National Reform Programme included a number of legislative adjustments in several areas, in addition to implementation of a range of support programmes.

10.2.1 Governance Structure

There has been no specific approach adopted in relation to the YG implementation in terms of governance structures. The usual approach with respect to the integration of the EU initiatives has been followed for the YG as well, based on the involvement of key national-level actors in preparation of the key strategic document, the YG Implementation Plan. The document was prepared and consensually approved by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF), the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS) and the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF), the three key actors in the area of employment and education, representing two distinct sectors in terms of distribution of coalition powers. The sector of employment is represented by the MLSAF and the COLSAF and the sector of education by the MESRS.

The Council of Solidarity and Development of Slovak Republic, a consultative body to the government, consisting of government representatives and key partners including employers' associations, trade unions, non-profit sector, academia, representatives of churches selected for advisory and expert views on long-term strategic areas of national development, also supported the YG.

However, for the implementation of the YG, no additional governance structure was created. As no specific governance entity (e.g. a steering committee or a working group) was created or appointed with specific responsibilities for the implementation of the YG, the governance structure of the YG remained identical with governance structure of priority 2 of Operational Programme Human Resources (OP HR), entitled "Initiative for increasing employment among young people".⁹

Consequently, the governance structure (Table 10.1) also does not explicitly support cross-sectoral cooperation or vertical coordination and does not support involvement of multiple levels of administration.

The YG is governed in a centralised top-down approach. The decision-making is shared between the central state administration and regional state administration. The local level is not a part of the governance model of the YG. The YG is therefore governed in a typical top-down approach

Table 10.1 Governance structure. Key actors that support and implement YG in Slovakia

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competencies
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF)	Public administration	National	Coordination body	The Ministry plays the role of managing authority for OP Human Resources, under which the EYI is administrated and ensures the system activities, monitoring and evaluation, institutional communication
Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS)	Public administration	National	Key stakeholder and intermediate body	The Ministry is a co-author of the initial Action Plan on the Youth Guarantees in its portfolio of lifelong education; the Ministry also plays a role of intermediary body for OP Human Resources priority 1 (education)
Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF) and its local branches	Public administration	National	Implementer of interventions	The Central Office is a key administrator of the interventions on the field of employment/employability on the local level. The Office also administrates the database of the unemployed youngsters same as the young people on the social benefits
Implementation Agency of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (IA MLSAF)	Public administration	National	Intermediate body	The exclusive intermediate body distributing the financial resources of OP Human Resources to individual demand-driven projects

Local municipalities	Local authority	Local	Potential beneficiaries	Many municipalities are at the local level creating opportunities for young people without recognising these initiatives as YG
Regional municipalities	Local authority	Regional	Party concerned	In charge of secondary schools, could be involved to the YG implementation; Their involvement remained limited and formal, a representative of regional municipalities is a member of the OP Human Resources Monitoring Committee
Third sector	Non-profit organization		Party concerned	Possible beneficiaries with the ability to deliver individualised services and outreach also groups of young people who are not registered as job seekers

Sources: Our processing on official documents and regulatory framework

and local-level actors (such as local municipalities and NGOs) that are not in a position to take part in the governance structure of YG.

The implementation plan covers a wide range of activities, which create opportunities of actual development of activities and involvement of relevant actors. These areas allow for specific actors being involved, based on other circumstances of specific activities.

The following areas were outlined in the implementation plan:

- Support for employment and employability of young people
- Social support and social services
- Regional school system
- Lifelong learning
- Work with youth and informal learning

The key actor in the governance mechanism of YG is the managing authority of Operational Programme Human Resources (OP HR) MLSAF. Tasks of the steering body are focused, as a priority, on activities related to the correct setting of the processes and their management. The supreme body of the OP HR management, which decides on the strategic direction of the OP and activities supported through the means of the OP, is, as in the case of other operational programmes, the Monitoring Committee.

In the case of the OP HR, the Monitoring Committee has 35 full members and five observers without the right to vote. Fifteen of the full members are representatives of central government – ministries, government office or the offices of government plenipotentiaries (plenipotentiary for Roma communities or plenipotentiary for civil society). Six members of the Monitoring Committee are representatives of regional or local government. The remaining 14 members are representatives of employers, academia, trade unions or non-profit organisations. The Implementation Agency of MLSAF (IA MLSAF) is acting in a position of an intermediary body in the case of the priority axes 2, 3 and 4 of the OP HR. It is a budgetary organisation of the MLSAF and the director is appointed and removed by the minister.

In order to better manage and involve stakeholders and experts in the decision-making on redistribution of financial resources of the operational programme, the so-called commissions for individual priority axes were established. More specifically, such commissions were established for priority axis 1 (education); priority axes 2 (Youth Employment Initiative), 3 (employment) and 4 (social inclusion) and priority axes 5 (integration of marginalised Roma community) and 6 (technical facilities for municipalities with the presence of marginalised Roma communities). The division of priority axes is to a certain extent linked to the priority group of that axis (in the case of axes 5 and 6, people from the marginalised Roma community), as well as the administrative breakdown OP among individual ministries, which are acting in a position as intermediate bodies for the OP HR (axis 1—MESRS acts as an intermediate body; axes 2, 3 and 4—Implementation Agency of MLSAF acts as an intermediate body; in the case of axes 5 and 6, Ministry of the Interior acts as an intermediate body). Members of the commission for the priority axes 2, 3 and 4 with voting right are representatives of the MLSAF, representatives of expert groups (NGOs [non-governmental organisations] and academic institutions) and representatives of social partners. The total number of members with the right to vote is 21, and 9 other members (the relevant state authorities or bodies for management of European Structural and Investment Funds—ESIF) are in the position of observers, without the right to vote.

10.2.2 Financial Flow

The key decision for the YG financial flow was to include a Youth Employment Initiative in the OP Human Resources. Therefore, Slovakia obtained additional financial resources to support youth employment and had to commit to EC to account for these programmes.¹⁰

Overall, the allocation of ESIF for the period covering the years 2014–2020 in the case of Slovakia is the amount 15,342,435,939 Euro (Table 10.2).

Out of the total contribution, the amount of EUR 2,045,419,821 represents the ESF (European Social Fund) contribution. The total amount

Table 10.2 EU planned and paid funds: Slovakia, 2018 (Euro)

Fund	Planned EU	Total net paid
CF	4,168,251,427	803,674,761
EAFRD	1,559,691,844	437,563,750
EMFF	15,785,000	834,632
ERDF	7,291,460,222	767,453,584
ESF	2,045,419,821	344,678,907
FEAD	55,112,543	14,397,242
YEI	206,715,082	26,236,976
Total	15,342,435,939	2,394,839,852

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018

of ESF contribution is divided between two operational programmes: EUR 278,449,284 is allocated for the needs of the Operational Programmes Effective Public Administration, for which the managing authority is the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, and the remaining EUR 1,889,145,796 is for the needs of the Operational Programme Human Resources, for which the managing authority is the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

The budget of the OP Human Resources also includes funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a total of EUR 243,662,462 and Youth Employment Initiative with a total of EUR 72,175,259.

After adding contribution EUR 423,549,903 from the state budget, the total budget of OP Human Resources is the amount EUR 2,628,533,420. This is divided between seven priority axes, as shown in Table 10.3.

Referring to Act 528/2008 Coll. on assistance and support provided from the funds of the European Community that imply that financial resources from the European Community may be obtained for a project only via full selection process, there are two financial framework tools for the OP Human Resources: (1) demand-oriented projects and (2) national projects.

The key financial source for the YG implementation in Slovakia is the Operational Programme Human Resources, in particular priority axis 2 “Youth Employment Initiative”. Within this priority axis, eight national projects have been supported for a total amount of EUR 282,902,569 by 31 December 2018.

Table 10.3 Operational programmes by priority axis, responsible body, ESF contribution and national resources: Slovakia

Priority axis	Responsible body	ESF contribution	National resources
Education	Ministry of Education (MESRS)	458,746,509	90,338,908
Youth Employment Initiative	Ministry of Labour (MLSAF)	194,350,518	21,560,341
Employment	Ministry of Labour (MLSAF)	795,924,737	154,045,542
Social inclusion	Ministry of Labour (MLSAF)	294,699,290	73,972,688
Integration of marginalised Roma communities	Ministry of Interior	139,000,000	24,529,413
Technical facilities in municipalities with presence of marginalised Roma communities	Ministry of Interior	243,662,462 (ERDF funded axes)	42,999,261
Technical assistance	All	78,600,000	16,103,753

Source: Our processing from official document of MLSAF (OP Human Resources 2014–2020)

Within the category of demand-oriented projects, three calls have so far been put forth for the submission of applications for the non-refundable financial support with a total allocation of EUR 52,015,000:

- New or innovative programmes to improve self-employment of young people (duration: 13 December 2016–10 August 2017)
- Support of the entry of selected groups of young people in the labour market (duration: 30 December 2016–26 July 2017)
- Activation and support of young NEET people (duration: 16 June 2017–30 November 2017)

The total amount of contracted funds by 31 December 2018 within the priority axis 2 “Youth Employment Initiative” represents EUR 285,561,393, which exceeds the total budget of the priority axis by almost EUR 70 million.

Despite the relatively high rate of over contracting within this priority axis, the dynamics of drawing of funds has not achieved more than 31% by 31 December 2018.

Several national and demand-oriented projects were prematurely terminated, since they were unable to fulfil the indicators set to achieving a target number of participants in the project. Given the low level of utilisation of the financial resources, the managing authority for the OP Human Resources is preparing an update of the operational programme, which should include the reallocation of resources from the priority axis 2 (Youth Employment Initiative) in favour of the priority axis 3 (Employment).¹¹

The Operational Programme Human Resources is considered as the main financial source necessary for the YG implementation. Any discussion about additional funding schemes supporting the YG and financed either via public or private sources has been absent. The existing subsidy schemes, for example, one administrated by the MESRS financed from the state budget, with the aim to support programmes for youth, with the yearly budget of EUR 2,155,000,¹² does not explicitly call the activities framed as the YG, despite a number of eligible activities may be considered as the YG complementary and relevant.

Any contributions of other sectors are limited to the compulsory co-financing of granted projects.

10.2.3 Management

There are two main mechanisms for the management of financial support from public funding¹³: (1) national projects and (2) demand-oriented programmes. The two approaches also imply variation as to the projects and their range, importance and budget as well as the selection process.

In the case of national programmes, activities are of a large-scale character, and the organisation carries them out based on a direct invitation. The assessment of the objectives of the national project is subject to approval of the commission for a specific priority axis, followed by the process of inter-sectoral comments, and subject to assessment of two independent experts. In the case of national projects for the YG, the sole

and exclusive recipient of funds is the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF) of the Slovak Republic. The COLSAF distributes the funds further through its 46 regional branches.

In the case of demand-oriented projects, selection is realised via competition of projects submitted within a particular call. A selection is made on the basis of rules that have been set in advance and approved by the Monitoring Committee of OP Human Resources and usually has three rounds. The selection process is demanding both from a technical and a time perspective and often takes more than eight months.

According to the system of financial management, which is applied equally to all projects funded by the ESF, the implementation of projects is financed by a combination of pre-financing and reimbursements. The recipient has the right to ask for an advance payment of up to 40% of the annual project budget. In the case of billing of 80% of the previous payment, the recipient has the right to request a further advance payment, and the advance payments can be combined up to a maximum of 80% of the total project budget. The last 20% of the total budget is paid as a reimbursement after approval of the final report of the project and meeting the set indicators. The model is set this way to ensure a smooth cash flow for the project and to prevent the accumulation of a large amount of unspent funds on the account of the recipient. On the other hand, in practice, the model does not work smoothly and end recipients often experience large difficulties.

The compulsory rate of co-financing is set at 5% of the total budget. In cases of other than state institutions, the funds are allocated in accordance with the rules of the *de minimis* scheme.

Administrative operations related to utilisation of the resources from the European Community by means of national projects are made through the COLSAF; end users are exempt from this administrative process. This model of financial resources being distributed by the regional labour offices is accepted by the end users, which are in this case employers, but also because of lower administrative burden. Contributions for end users are redistributed based on written application and the process from the submission of the application to the signing of the contract, which takes approximately one month. The funds are subsequently

refunded on a monthly basis. Compared to the approach adopted in the case of demand-oriented projects, this is considered as adequate and accepted by the users.

In the case of demand-oriented projects,¹⁴ the funds are allocated through the Implementation Agency MLSAF. Recipients of demand-oriented projects are, to a large extent, non-governmental non-profit organisations. These enter into a contractual relationship with the Implementation Agency and are directly responsible for the proper use of financial resources. This system is considered more transparent and open to all stakeholders involved in actual work with individuals.

One of the rare possibilities is receiving financial resources through demand-oriented projects, carried out in the light of the calls for the submission of projects announced by the Implementation Agency of the MLSAF. However, the administrative model is perceived as inflexible, administratively over demanding, and the setting of this scheme as generally poorly fitting the needs of working with disadvantaged youth and the scheme is therefore rarely opted for by organisations.

The lack of interest from the potential recipients of financial assistance administered through the Implementation Agency MLSAF is reflected in the low number of completed projects within the framework of individual calls (total of 25 for all three calls) and the level of contracted funds, which achieved approximately 5% of the total amount allocated for the announced calls.

The number of participants from the target group (young people under the age of 29 outside of the labour market) is a frequent problem (also in the case of other implemented projects), since the situation on the labour market and subsequently the composition of job seekers have fundamentally changed in the recent months and the number of potential participants of implemented programmes has rapidly decreased.

10.2.4 Concluding Remarks

The key financial source considered for the YG implementation in Slovakia is the Operational Programme Human Resources. Any discussion about additional funding schemes supporting YG and financed

either via public or private sources has been absent. There has been complementary undertakings and relevant activities fulfilling the aims of the YG, but not actually linked with the YG initiative. Contributions from other sectors have been limited to the compulsory co-financing of granted projects.

The MLSAF is the key actor responsible for the implementation of Youth Guarantee initiative, which is coordinated by the Employment Section. This might be one of the reasons why the perception of the YG has been until now limited to *active labour market policies* (ALMP) funding, without a significant link to other themes or departments. Despite the presence of priority axis 2 “Youth Employment Initiative”, the proper implementation of the YG plan adopted in 2014 is discussed in connection with the priority axis 2 only marginally. The implementation of the YG seems to have been narrowed down to receiving funding from the priority axis 2 of OP HR.

There is insufficient awareness about the framework of Youth Guarantee at the level of regional or local government environment and with small exceptions even in environments of non-governmental organisations.

National projects aimed at promoting employment among young people through financial support of new jobs are some of the most popular and sought out by employers. For example, in the framework of the ALMP, the scheme “Traineeship for graduates” is implemented within Article 51 of the Act 5/2004 Coll. on employment services, 4154 young graduates who were registered as job seekers were supported in 2017 by the total of EUR 2,224,319 (COLSAF, 2018).

The ALMPs are mostly limited to the registered job seekers, and the “creaming” effect is often part of the selection of participants. Outreach to young people in the NEET category is relatively weak. Given the weak link between employment services and social services, and an almost complete lack of non-public service providers of employment with a specialisation in individual disadvantaged groups, it is difficult to expect that the situation will change in a short period of time.

Active labour market policies are accessible to registered job seekers only. Young vulnerable groups often fail to register or to remain registered, so, if such a young person is interested in participating in one of the active measures, he or she faces the barrier to do so (the condition is

to be registered in the registry of job seekers and stay in the registry for a certain amount of time. The duration of the compulsory registration period is different within the framework of individual measures).

10.3 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

Youth employability has been generally perceived as an important topic in Slovakia. High unemployment rate, including unemployment of youth and low-skilled youth, has been one of the key problems of the Slovak labour market for the past decades. Youth unemployment is a long-term concern with consensual support both at policy and general public level.

Youth Guarantee framework, therefore, had a very good “starting position” to lay grounds for a long-term systemic policy framework that could support access of youth to learning opportunities as a key mechanism of increasing their employability.

In terms of the governance approach, the YG has been introduced in a centralised top-down approach, with limited multi-level governance considerations. The crucial decision was to formally link the YG with the Operational Programme Human Resources receiving access to additional funding from the YEI. This might have been the reason for limited efforts and opportunities in terms of supporting governance structures and management solutions at the national level.

The potential of the YG for development of missing adult education policies for youth remained untapped. Until now, the YG framework was used to fund active labour market policies for the target group of NEET below 29 years, conveniently supported by further YEI funding. All measures and programmes were included in the OP Human Resources. The key policy actor, the MLSAF, is the key and fairly independent actor in this policy area controlling the policy cycle from design to delivery. Initiatives allowing for improved cross-sectoral cooperation have been limited. Adult education policy is the competence area of different sectors, the MESRS, and that is one of the reasons for underdeveloped and a less comprehensive grasp of YG as an adult education policy instrument.

One of the positive effects of the YG framework was that the understanding and grasp of the learning within the ALMPs has been widened and included elements of a lifelong approach to learning and career chances. Specific measures were developed and included to provide access to career guidance, designed as a preceding stage to other ALMPs providing access to specific vocational or general training activities for young NEETs. Provision of access to career guidance with some, though still limited, capacity for individual counselling services is a progress.

Four years after the YG has been adopted, there is still no systemic offer of opportunities for further education and new skills acquisition by the existing system of public employment services which, in comparison with the OECD countries, is underfunded in the long term. The recognition of the YG as a key policy framework for supporting young people with an emphasis on those in NEET category at local or regional level is limited. A quality system of lifelong education and public employment services can contribute to the solution of problems of structural unemployment and exclusion from the labour market.

Partly as a result of formal approach to implementation of the Youth Guarantee linked with the ALMP measures, there is still very limited outreach to young NEETs who are not registered as job seekers, and this is a key issue for the situation of young NEETs in Slovakia. Labour offices are still working only with registered participants, and minimum of activities are being put in place to reach young people not registered at the labour offices.

The communication of the YG policies has been insufficiently developed. “Youth Guarantee”, as a tool in addressing situations and problems of the youth, has never been strongly communicated by the public authorities. The lack of direct involvement at the local level could be one of the reasons for this, and their involvement could be one of the solutions supporting the YG further.

The absence of perception of a broader context at local level can be seen as a result of the lack of cooperation among individual departments at a national level and the culture of weak links among departmental policies, which is present in Slovakia and causes problems in a number of areas. Organisations, which could have the professional capacity to implement a comprehensive approach and could focus on building capacities

of young people in the context of their placement in the labour market (even with the most disadvantaged groups of young people), more than on the direct employment of young people, have no real access to financial resources.

Recent changes in the labour market introduced new thematic areas in the social and employment policies. The departure of the qualified work force and brain drain abroad remains a challenge, and in recent years, there are increasing migration inflows both in returning Slovaks and increasing work migrants to fill vacant positions. The labour supply shortages, inflow of migrants and qualifications changes can contribute to increasing political priority of adult education related to these labour reallocations.

Further development of the YG in Slovakia would benefit from cross-sectional coordination, especially among the two key relevant sectoral ministries as until now the YG remained within the employment sector, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, with limited, if any, cooperation with the relevant partners responsible for education policies, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

The most problematic issue is inclusion of marginalised groups, which likely fail to register, has not been addressed by the YG framework yet. Focus on locally rooted bottom-up initiatives could be a connecting point to establish the basis for the long-term effects of the YG and YEI and improve the outreach to marginalised groups, which are concentrated in specific local areas. Individual case of initiatives developed to support employability of youth in Central Slovakia without actual access to YG financial framework shows that local interest and demand for programmes supporting youth is relevant and is likely being underserved.

More needs to be achieved also in responding to regional differences in the labour markets. Some regions, in the Eastern and Central Slovakia, still suffer from a serious lack of job opportunities compared to other parts of the country. While there is no quick-fix solution to regional labour market disparities, programmes offering training opportunities and putting emphasis on local job opportunities might be increasing inequality in access to education and training at the level of young job seeker. Unequal chances of youth are evident in regions with a weak labour demand, and at the level of local human capital, there is a pressure

on inner emigration of youth to more developed regions. More diverse learning opportunities for young adults could not only increase attractiveness of the region for the youth but also lead to job growth based on local creation of skills.

Programmes supported by the YG and developing career counselling focused on building skills for developing career could and should be one of the ways forward to lay the ground for robust policy solutions, with long-term positive outcomes for young generations and their integration into the labour market. Involving local actors as key stakeholders and partners in the process of the YG development might be a necessary condition for this initiative to bring long-term improvements for situation of young people across different regions in Slovakia.

There is a momentum for adult education policy to provide linkage and enforcement of lifecycle approach. While the key focus of Youth Guarantee is employability, the connection with adult education and training opportunities is crucial to deliver on this policy instrument. The YG is a viable instrument that would benefit from more explicit connections between employment and adult education policies and further support by cross-sectional cooperation with all relevant partners.

Notes

1. Previously NUTS 5.
2. For example, Act 302/2001 Coll. on self-government of higher territorial units (law on self-governing regions), as amended; Act 416/2001 Coll. on the transfer of some competencies of state administration bodies onto the municipalities and higher territorial units, as amended; Act 369/1990 Coll. on the Municipal establishment, as amended.
3. Formally not possible in the previously centrally planned system.
4. Unemployment rate decreased before 2008 below 10% but increased again in the aftermath of the global economic crisis; the average unemployment rate between 2010 and 2014 was 13.9%.
5. Twenty- to sixty-four-year-old adults with ISCED 1 and 2 education levels [lfsi_educ_a].
6. NUCEM, National Institute of Certified Measurements of Education, Testing 9.

7. While the percentage of pupils repeating a grade has not significantly changed in the period between 2005 and 2015 (2.55% of all pupils in 2005 and 2.71% of all pupils in 2015), in regions with higher rates of unemployment and poverty, in Košice and Prešov region, an average of 1.27% drop was registered in the mentioned period.
8. Recently changed to ELET, early leavers from education and training.
9. Information related to OP HR is based on MLSAF SR, 2016, 2017, 2018.
10. Information in this chapter related to ALMPs based on COLSAF, 2016, 2017, 2018.
11. At the time of preparation of this report, the possible reallocation of financial resources is subject to negotiations between the Managing Body of Human Resources and the European Commission.
12. Budget of the subsidy scheme in 2017.
13. In relation to the Operational Programme Human Resources.
14. Twenty-five projects were implemented within the priority axis 2 as of end of December 2018.

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11

The Bulgarian Rejoinder to Youth Guarantee

Radostina Angelova and Pepka Boyadjieva

11.1 Introduction

The high level of youth unemployment in Bulgaria in the period 2012–2014 drew public attention as well as the attention of the key responsible institutions. The development of suitable policy measures was searched for, additionally stimulated by the respective debate going on in Europe. On policy level the Youth Guarantee (YG) was a quick response to the challenges of youth unemployment providing also needed funds.

Bulgaria was one of the first countries in the EU that adopted a National Implementation Plan for the European Youth Guarantee 2014–2020 in the spring of 2014, and the first measures for the inclusion of young people on the labour market started to be implemented in

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2015. In the period 2017–2018, data show clear evidence for the success of these measures as youth unemployment is significantly decreased.

11.1.1 State Form and Administration

Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic governed in accordance with the principle of the separation of powers into the legislative, executive and judiciary branch. The Administrative Territorial Division of the Republic of Bulgaria stipulates that the territory of Bulgaria is divided into regions and municipalities. Municipalities are administrative territorial units in which local self-government is carried out. There are 28 administrative regions in Bulgaria, including the city of Sofia, which is a separate administrative unit with the status of a region (Sofia capital). The 265 municipalities are the smallest units of local governance; in each of them, the Municipal Council together with the Mayor of the Municipality manage the infrastructure, services and all the policies at local level.

11.1.2 Socio-economic Conditions

The GDP per capita in Bulgaria grew from 4900 Euro in 2008 to 6500 Euro in 2018, but still remains the lowest one in the EU. In 2017, the country's GDP grew by 3.8% in real terms, while in 2018 the growth is 3.1%. Domestic demand contributed positively to growth, while the net export contribution was negative. The smaller growth of the economy in 2018, compared with the 3.8% registered in 2017, was due to the dynamics of imports and exports. The ongoing expansion is being driven by strong private consumption and higher investment. Wage increases continued to boost private consumption, while a recovery in the use of EU investment funding programmes is fuelling the growth of public investment. Domestic demand is projected to remain the main engine of growth. Positive developments in the labour market and real disposable income growth are set to support strong private consumption. Employment growth, however, is expected to ease in 2019 due to labour supply limitations (MFRB, 2018a, b; MLSP, 2018).

Expenditure on social protection in Bulgaria as percentage of the GDP, although increasing in the last years, remains the lowest in the EU – it was approximately 17–18% in the period 2012–2017, while the EU average share of GDP spent on social protection is about 29%.¹

The population of Bulgaria as of 1 January 2018 was 7,050,034 people. The population has been declining over the past years mainly as a result of a negative natural increase² and migration. 35.4% of the population are aged 25–49 years and 20.5% are between 50 and 64 years. People aged 15–24 years are 9.3% of the total population. The group of people aged 65 years and more are 20.8%, while those between 0 and 14 years are 14.1%.

The educational level of the population aged 15–64 is progressively increasing. The share of people with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education declined from 28.3% in 2008 to 21.5% in 2018, while the percentage of those with upper secondary education grew from 52.8% to 53.6%, and of those with tertiary education, from 18.9% to 24.8%. The educational level of females is significantly higher – the share of women aged 15–64 with tertiary education in 2018 was 30.3%, while men with tertiary education in the same year were 19.5%.

Bulgaria is among the countries with the lowest participation rate in *lifelong learning* in the EU. Although there was a trend of increase from 1.6% in 2008 to 2.5% in 2018, the participation rate is a long way below the EU 2020 target of 15% and the national target goal for 2020, which is set at 5%.

As a result of increased labour demand and rising incomes, the economic activity rate of the working-age population reached a level of 72.5% in the third quarter of 2018.³ The number of employed people had the highest growth rate, 1.8%, in the post-crisis recovery period, and an average growth of 0.4% in the period 2014–2016. In 2018, the *unemployment rate* continued its downward trend and reached 5.2% among people 15–64 years old. There was also an observable structural improvement, as evidenced by the rapid decline in the rate of long-term unemployment, which in 2018 fell to 3.0%, lower by 4 percentage points than the post-crisis peak in 2013, when it was 7.4%. However, the negative demographic developments and their impact on labour supply will reduce employment growth to 0.3% and 0.2% in 2019 and 2020.

Along with increased employment opportunities, positive developments have also occurred with respect to the government policy of supporting target groups in the labour market. In 2018 the number of discouraged persons⁴ (aged 15–64) decreased by half from 165.8 thousand in 2016 to 85.4 thousand in 2018, but the labour force increased by 77.9 thousand, indicating the activation of other groups of people who had been inactive in the previous periods.

The favourable development has extended to all age groups, but especially important is the marked improvement of the labour situation of young people (aged 15–24), the first in the last five years. This was reflected in the growth of *youth employment* to 22.9% in 2017 after a long period of decline between 2009 and 2016. The *unemployment rate for young people* aged 15–24 dropped from 28.4% in 2013 to 12.7% in 2018 and remained at 2.5 percentage points below the EU average; for those aged 25–29, the unemployment rate dropped from 17.6% to 6.2% during the same period. Even though the unemployment rate declines in all groups, it still differs considerably across various educational levels: in 2018 it was 18.4% among young people aged 25–29 with less than lower secondary education and 4.1% among those with tertiary education.

A very serious problem in the country remains the growing level of social inequality. The Gini coefficient reached 39.6 in 2018, which was the highest level in the EU.

The number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is a serious problem in Bulgaria. There were 25.7% and 18.1% of NEETs among young people aged 15–29 in 2013 and 2018, respectively. In the age group 15–24 years, NEETs were 15.0% of that group; among those aged 25–29, they were 22.6%. The trend in both age groups has been towards reduction of the share of NEETs, especially after the start of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) measures in 2014, when NEETs among those aged 15–24 were 20.2%, and among those aged 25–29, 29.6%. The share of women NEETs is higher than that of the men in the same age groups. This difference is more significant among the 25–29-year-olds, where male NEETs are 16.5% while female NEETs are 29.1%.

11.1.3 Concluding Remarks

The policies for increasing youth employment in Bulgaria were a topic and priority in the existing legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria even before the country acceded to the European Union (EU) and began to benefit from the opportunities offered by the European Social Fund (ESF). Chapter III of the Employment Promotion Act, promulgated in December 2001, specifically addresses young people up to the age of 29. The law lays down clear rules for measures related to vocational guidance and adult vocational training; measures to create new jobs; measures for the social and economic integration of disadvantaged people, training and entrepreneurship promotion and activation measures. These measures are still being implemented under the Annual National Employment Plans and are fully funded by the state budget. Additional opportunities for encouraging the employment of young people were created with the start of the Operational Programme Human Resources Development (OP HRD) 2007–2013 and the OP HRD 2014–2020.

In the period 2012–2014, the public debate on youth unemployment was intensified by alarming data on the high rate of youth unemployment and was additionally stimulated by the respective debate going on in Europe.

The launch of the YG has stimulated debate and active labour market policies targeted at young people in the country. It has especially contributed to outlining and bringing to the public attention the problem of NEETs.

11.2 The National Response to the Youth Guarantee

Bulgaria was one of the first countries in the EU to address the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C120/01); this happened through National Implementation Plan for the European Youth Guarantee (NIPEYG) as early as July 2013. The first 2014–2020 NIPEYG was adopted by the Council of Ministers on

18 December 2013. Although the final draft of the National Plan was adopted on 10 May 2014 (NIPEYG, 2014), it was in January 2014 that the Employment Agency launched the implementation of measures for the inclusion of young people, funded by the state budget; they envisaged a 30% quota for unemployed young people up to the age of 24 years, within the existing measures for employment and training (NIPEYG, 2014).

Compared with most other European countries, the implementation of the YG in Bulgaria has three important distinguishing features:

- (1) The age range of the YG has been extended to cover youths up to the age of 29 years instead of 24. Given the significance of the problem of youth unemployment on a national scale, and especially the high percentage of NEETs, Bulgaria has availed itself of the exception provided in Regulation (EC) No. 1304/2013 and extended the age limit of the eligible target groups.
- (2) The gradual implementation of the YG, whereby the first stage gives priority to youths who are long-term unemployed or have been registered for long periods of time with the Labour Office, instead of youths registered for up to four months.
- (3) Sofia City (the district in which the capital city is located) is considered as separate from the south-western region of Bulgaria; that is, in the case of the south-western region, the criteria are applied for districts, and not – as in the other EU member states – for regions (NUTS 2).

The actual implementation of the YG measures started in the early 2015 with the announcement of “Youth Employment”, the first operation targeting unemployed young people aged up to 29.⁵ Subsequently, operations “Active”, “Ready for Work” and “Training and Employment for Young People” were also announced. By the end of March 2018, nearly 27,000 young people had completed their participation in one of the four operations, the largest number of young participants being in the operation “Training and Employment for Young People” (nearly 13,000).

11.2.1 Governance Structure

The governance of the YG and the development of the NIPEYG are based on a *partnership approach*.

The NIPEYG was developed by a working group whose members included representatives from ministries: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS), the Ministry of Economy and Energy, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Transport and Communications, nationally representative organisations of employers, trade unions and NGOs. The NIPEYG was approved by the Council of Ministers, the National Employment Promotion Council, the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation and all relevant ministries.

A **Coordinating Council** coordinates and monitors the implementation of the NIPEYG. The Council is headed by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and includes representatives of ministries, national representative organisations of workers and employees, representative organisations of employers, youth organisations and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB). The directors of the Regional Labour Offices and the Labour Office Directorate are responsible for coordination of the implementation of the NIPEYG at regional and local level.

The YG in Bulgaria is financed by the YEI under the Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014–2020 (OP HRD). As part of the monitoring structure of the Operational Programme, a Monitoring Committee was established. It observes the ESF and the YEI and takes decisions regarding the criteria for the operations, eligible beneficiaries, activities, target groups and funding. The OP HRD Monitoring Committee is a collective body, which includes a wide range of stakeholders and participants from various institutions and works in the spirit of the European Code of Conduct for Partnership within the European Structural and Investment Funds.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) plays the role of Managing Authority of the OP HRD 2014–2020 and ensures the system activities, monitoring and evaluation and institutional communication.

The Ministry is also the key policy-maker in labour market policies and coordinates their implementation. The MLSP organises and coordinates the development and the implementation of the Employment Strategy and the National Plan for employment-related activities, organises the study of the employers' needs for workforce possessing specific professional qualifications, maintains the National Classification of Occupations, develops programmes and measures for enhancing employment and the training of employees and develops methodologies for enhancing the effectiveness of adult education as well as other policy instruments.

The activities for integration in the labour market aimed at unemployed young people registered in Labour Offices are carried out by the MLSP through the Employment Agency (EA), its nine Regional Employment Offices and the local Labour Office Directorates. The EA is an executive agency at the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. A Council under the Executive Director of the EA supports the implementation of the NIPEYG. The Executive Director of the EA provides guidance for the implementation of the NIPEYG to the territorial divisions. The Cooperation Councils at the Labour Office Directorates also support the implementation of the NIPEYG. At local level, the Labour Offices initiate the formation of teams between the institutions and organisations responsible for the implementation of the NIPEYG. Directors of the Labour Offices coordinate the implementation of the NIPEYG for the municipalities they service. The EA is the institution that collaborates with partner organisations on activation and independently contacts young people in connection with their registration at Labour Offices and the use of opportunities for training and work.

With respect to the implementation of activities under the NIPEYG, a *national framework agreement* has been signed between the MLSP, the MES, the MYS, the NAMRB, nationally representative organisations of employers, workers and employees, and young people, and other responsible organisations. The agreement defines the responsibilities and commitments of different organisations and institutions. The key commitments with regard to NEETs include two main types of activities: (1) conducting information campaigns to promote the goals of the YG and (2) identifying and activating young people who are not in

employment or education and are not registered in the Labour Offices, including those who have never studied.

The implementation of the YG in Bulgaria has highlighted the importance of the mediators. The mediator functions are performed by youth mediators, by case managers at the Labour Offices and by labour intermediaries appointed to work with young people. Youth mediators have been appointed in the municipalities with the highest numbers of inactive youths.⁶ Among the main obligations of youth mediators is that of identifying NEETs and activating them by providing support for starting a job, inclusion in training or returning to education. A specific methodology for identifying and activating young people has been developed jointly with all partners; the methodology takes into account the specificity of work with different groups of disadvantaged young people and complies with the European standards for youth work. When working with youths, including youths with disabilities and youths from ethnic minorities such as the Roma, the labour intermediaries, Roma mediators, psychologists, case managers and other employees working with clients at the Labour Offices comply in their activity with the specially elaborated methodological guide. The methodology focuses on the need for personal contact with young people and for providing services (information, motivation, career guidance, traineeship, apprenticeship, training) tailored to the specific needs of each young person.

11.2.2 Financial Flow

For the period 2014–2020, Bulgaria will receive from the EU budget the total amount of 9,982,390,129 Euro, which are the key element of the public investment of the country. A total amount of 1,466,439,031 Euro from the ESF is allocated for investment in human capital and social measures (Table 11.1).

The NIPEYG has three sources of funding: (a) financial sources from the European Social Fund (ESF), including those obtained through the YEI under the implementation of OP HRD, (b) the state budget in the framework of the Employment Agency maintenance funds and the National Action Plan for Employment for the relevant year and (c) sources from employers.

Table 11.1 EU planned and paid funds 2018, Bulgaria (Euro)

Fund	Planned EU	Total net paid
CF	2,278,307,144	213,478,185
EAFRD	2,366,716,966	417,698,830
EMFF	88,066,622	4,656,523
ERDF	3,567,667,612	649,237,817
ESF	1,466,439,031	223,608,092
FEAD	104,815,264	41,364,452
YEI (of which)	110,377,490	68,052,895
YEI ESF M.C.	55,188,745	26,024,080
YEI S.A.	55,188,745	42,028,816
Total	9,982,390,129	1,618,096,794

Source: Our processing from European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018, data source: Information System for Management and Monitoring 2020

11.2.2.1 Financial Sources of the Youth Guarantee

European Social Fund

The money from the ESF is redistributed mainly through the Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014–2020. The other ESF Programmes – the OP Science and Education for Smart Growth and the OP Good Governance – are not linked to YG.

The implementation of the YG is under the Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014–2020 (OP HRD), financed by the European Social Fund. The total EU budget for the YG is 110,377,490 Euro (including the YG-specific allocation 55,188,745 Euro and 55,188,745 Euro under the YG ESF M.C. which refers to the amount matching that of the YG-specific allocation but under the ESF line of budget).

Table 11.2 presents the amount of money the OP HRD received through the YG during the period 2015–2018, and the main beneficiaries of these amounts. It is clear that the EA is the major beneficiary of the contribution from the YG.

Table 11.2 YG: Amount for the period 2015–2018 (Euro). Main governing actor and beneficiaries: Bulgaria

	YG + national co-financing ERK*	YG + national co-financing RDS**
Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014–2020 – MLSP	ERK 120,116,680	RDS 123,152,720
Beneficiary – Employment Agency	N/A	RDS 110,364,875
Beneficiaries – municipalities, NGOs	ERK 13,293,385	RDS 12,787,845
Total amount redistributed to beneficiaries	N/A	RDS 123,152,720
Total amount redistributed to beneficiaries	N/A	RDS 123,152,720

Source: Our processing from YG financing in Bulgaria, Partnership Agreement and OP Management System

ERK*: Amount earmarked

RDS**: Amount redistributed; the redistributed amount exceeds the earmarked amount because national authorities over-contracted the budget, and after saving during the process of implementation, the real money paid will be in the budget line.

National Budget

In addition to the funding of the YG by the European Structural and Investment Funds to the amount of 110,377,490 Euro, the YG measures are co-funded through the national budget to the amount of 9,739,190 Euro (approximately 9.1% of the amount allocated for the YG in Bulgaria). Apart from this, in the framework of the National Employment Action Plans (NEAP) for the years 2015 to 2018, additional state funding is available to the amount of 7,141,270 Euro.

The Contribution of Business

The National Implementation Plan for the European Youth Guarantee (NIPEYG, 2014, p. 35) envisages funding for youth employment for the period 2014–2020 amounting to a total of 9,100,000 BGN (4,652,756.12 Euro). For instance, in 2014, the work of labour mediators with

registered unemployed youths resulted in approximately 10% of the youths (around 7.5 thousand people) starting work on the initial labour market. The employers' financial resources with which this employment was funded represented the contribution of business for the implementation of the NIPEYG. Evidently, the funds that employers have allotted to financing the YEI are considerably less than those provided by the EU and those coming from the state budget. For that reason, the problem of increasing the employers' investment in the YG remains a serious challenge that needs to be systematically addressed.

11.2.2.2 Financial Flows Through Different Schemes and Programmes Under the YEI

As already stated above, the Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014–2020 plays an important function in the implementation and financial mechanism of the NIPEYG. A separate investment priority⁷ focused on the problems of NEETs is envisaged in this programme. The funding of this priority amounts to 120 million Euro and is fully implemented under the YG.⁸ The idea is to use the YG funds as the main tool for structural reforms in the labour market aimed at increasing the employability of young people.

The implementation of the YG in Bulgaria is realised through four schemes: “Youth Employment”, “Active”, “Training and Employment for Young People” and “Ready for Work”.

The largest share of the total funding is allotted to the scheme “Training and Employment for Young People” (see Table 11.3), which is implemented along two lines: training (through vouchers) for youths needing additional professional qualification and/or training in key competencies, who are afterwards directed to subsidised employment in vacancies announced by employers. The youths who have not undergone training but have been directly appointed to the vacancies announced by employers are provided with mentoring for a period of three months. The time of subsidised employment financed under the scheme is up to six months.

The second largest scheme is “Youth Employment”, which provides financing for apprenticeship, training or employment for youths. After

Table 11.3 National funds for the YG by schemes: Bulgaria

Schemes	Share of total YG budget contracted %	Budget contracted	EU funding	Beneficiary	Actors involved
	Total				
Youth Employment Active	34.0	41,925,934,26	38,262,002,97	National Employment Agency Municipalities, NGOs, business entities	National Employment Agency, business entities as employers Municipalities, NGOs, business entities as service providers, emergency centres
Training and Employment for Young People Ready for Work	51.4	12,787,845,67	11,750,751,56	National Employment Agency	National Employment Agency, business entities as employers
	4.2	63,326,023,22	57,947,209,46	National Employment Agency	National Employment Agency, business entities as service providers
		5,112,918,81	4,627,805,08	National Employment Agency	National Employment Agency, business entities as service providers

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018, data source: Information System for Management and Monitoring 2020

the end of the participation in the apprenticeship, training and employment, employers receive incentives to conclude unlimited work contracts with interns/trainees – these incentives cover the social and health insurance costs paid by the employer for the employee for a period of six months after the start of the permanent employment contract. In order to encourage mobility, especially in remote regions and regions with low economic potential, the scheme covers the costs of transport from and to the place of work during the first month of apprenticeship/training at work.

The main part of the financial resource for both schemes passes through business enterprises (see Table 11.3) to ultimately reach the target groups of youths (in the form of salaries, social insurance payments, training, transport expenditure, etc.).

The measures are appropriately combined, and possibilities for training are envisaged under both schemes if the need for them is identified, while apprenticeship in a real working environment or employment includes the provision of mentors. Mentorship is a very important instrument for helping young people acquire knowledge and especially practical skills. The mentors have already acquired work habits, high competence and professionalism in the defined fields and provide youths with exchange of practical experience for their career growth and engagement in sustainable employment.

The other two schemes, “Active and Ready for Work”, have smaller financial resources (Table 11.3), mainly because of the nature of the activities they finance. Both schemes aim at activating inactive persons, thus decreasing the share of NEETs. In the framework of these schemes, funding is provided for activities related to identifying, informing and motivating economically inactive youths up to the age of 29 who are neither in education nor training such as information campaigns, “job search workshops” with a maximum duration of five days, job fairs, psychological support and motivation training.

The *Active* scheme finances the training for professional qualification or for key competencies in foreign languages and digital skills. These measures envisage identifying inactive youths and encouraging or assisting them to choose one of the following activation paths: (1) return to the education system, (2) registering in the Labour Office Directorate,

(3) guiding youths to entry in training relevant to finding employment and (4) guiding them to realisation on the labour market.

What is specific to the last two schemes is that here the *basic activities are carried out by municipalities and NGOs or by business enterprises* in their capacity of providers of services (and not as employers who provide possibilities for employment to young people). In this case, the business is a service provider and performs part of the activities, including those related to activation. After being activated those young people can be oriented to the other two schemes “Youth Employment” and “Training and Employment for Young People”, where they can take part in employment, traineeship or apprenticeship.

Although the first level of distribution of resources passes through the EA, the financial flow is mainly concentrated in the business sector, where the larger part of the measures are actually carried out and where the largest numbers of employed youths are located (around 27,000 persons). The business sphere, which comprises private business organisations – the Professional Training Centres – also carries out the measures for professional and motivational training, mainly through providers of training. Some of the measures for activation and motivation are also carried out by the business in its capacity of a provider of such services under municipal projects or in the framework of activities under the “Ready to Work” scheme.

The activities in the framework of the “Active” scheme, whose beneficiaries are the municipalities, NGOs or business enterprises, may be performed by human resources internal to the beneficiaries or may be sub-contracted. The programming of schemes under which the municipalities apply for and implement projects for activating inactive persons is guided by the wish to provide them with instruments for solving the youth unemployment problems at local level and is done in view of their proximity to the local communities. However, due to lack of capacity for such activities, the municipalities are sometimes not successful agents in the implementation of the YG.

It should be especially pointed out that all activities under all four schemes are performed in a de-centralised way (through the Labour Offices) to reach the target groups. In other words, *although the financial resource is managed centrally (especially in view of optimising the process of*

management, control and payment), the programming of measures and their implementation is fully de-centralised. Shifting the implementation to employers plays an exceptionally positive role with regard to the needs of the target groups and the quick achievement of results. Furthermore, the key role played by the EA (at central level) in the management and coordination of projects and likewise in the course of implementation (at local level, through the Labour Offices) is a very effective way of implementing the YG.

11.2.3 Management

Two approaches have been used in the management of interventions under the YG. The first is based on *the scheme for grant provision* of financial aid to a concrete beneficiary. This group includes the schemes “Youth Employment”, “Training and Employment for Young People” and “Ready for Work”, in which the concrete beneficiary is the EA. Here the EA manages and divides the financial resource to pay the expenditures of business entities and youths, buying training vouchers for persons in need of training, and manages the general implementation of the three system projects.

The second approach uses *competitive selection procedures*, where the eligible candidates are NGOs, organisations providing mediation services on the labour market, centres for career information and guidance, professional training centres, social partners, municipalities and regions within municipalities and employers. This approach is applied in the “Active” scheme, where a large number of candidates apply and compete for a limited financial resource; depending on the ranking, the resource is distributed among the first N projects fitting into the allocated financial resource.

The *basic beneficiary* of projects funded through the YG resources is the state EA (in three of the four schemes), which concentrates 90% of the whole financial resource. With regard to governance, this arrangement ensures speedy programming of schemes and especially rapid procedures with regard to applying, assessing the projects, contracting and reporting the project costs. Although the procedures did not run smoothly at first,

later on, after the basic difficulties and obstacles were overcome, the implementation of the YG gained momentum and began to give results. The main reason why the EA was chosen to be the main beneficiary was to enable it to distribute almost the whole YG resource, and the fact that the Agency had gained experience and capacity as an intermediate body in the implementation of the same measures during the programme period 2007–2013. Simultaneously, the EA, through its regional Labour Office Directorates, has direct access to the target groups and, as part of its employment services, can easily and quickly establish contacts between the youths registered at the Labour Offices and the employers.

The chosen model enables the efficacious and effective management of interventions, because it is based on an approach already used multiple times during the programme period 2007–2013. This approach allows quick application of the YG strategy and addresses key deficits of the unemployed and inactive youths, such as lack of experience, lack of motivation, lack of clarity as to the demands and expectations of employers, lack of qualification and so on. Together with this, the de-centralised implementation of measures makes it possible to reach the target groups and achieve proportionate intervention of the schemes across the whole territory of the country. In terms of the territorial distribution of the youths covered by the measures, the schemes have an excellent outreach throughout the country (proportionate to the registered unemployed youths) (Consortium “SIGMA METRICS”, 2016, p. 57).

The many years of good collaboration of the EA and Labour Offices with business enterprises is an important precondition for the successful implementation of the YG. The work of the Labour Offices at local level and the active provision of information regarding the schemes have played an important role for implementing the measures.

11.2.4 Concluding Remarks

The effects of the YG interventions can be primarily found in the promotion and creation of employment, development of work habits of young people, accumulation of professional experience and the reduction of youth unemployment in the country. The implemented measures

contribute to increasing youth employment – directly, by achieving sustainable employment for part of the participants and, for all of them, by creating human capital and motivation to work and, indirectly, by stimulating the business environment and by this, contributing for general employment in the country.

The planned measures correspond to the requirement to achieve fast results with regard to the dynamics of youth employment and reducing the relative share of NEETs at the individual level as well. For the period 2013–2018, the share of youth unemployment in the age group 15–29 fell from 21.8% to 8.3%, and among youths in the group 15–24, the reduction was even greater – from 28.4% to 12.7%. The YG has created good preconditions for coordination and consultation of stakeholders and inclusion of all key actors at local level (business, local government, NGOs, Labour Offices, training organisations, etc.). At times of youth unemployment peaks, public attention to this problem is sharpened, and the alarming statistical data focus the attention of the main policy-makers as well. There is awareness of the gravity of this problem and of its negative impact for the labour realisation and the well-being of young people. No unplanned effects were identified by the time of fulfilment of the measures. A very positive result to be pointed out is that three years after the fulfilment of the programme, about 80% of the participants are in employment,⁹ with 59% remaining in employment with the same employer. The evaluation of employers is also generally positive. They point out that, thanks to the YG, they have been able to hire the staff needed for their firm¹⁰; 53% of the participants in the YG measures have fully adapted to the working environment and tasks, and 42% have partially adapted (Consortium “SIGMA METRICS”, 2016, p. 76).

11.3 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

Bulgaria was very sensitive to initiatives in the sphere of education and employment coming from the European Union even before the country’s accession to the EU in 2007. These initiatives “triggered” national activities. A previous study has demonstrated that some of the EU initiatives

related to lifelong learning have been adopted mainly through borrowing, imitation and copying (Boyadjieva, Milenkova, Gornev, Petkova, & Nenkova, 2012). The implementation of the YG differs significantly in this respect. The Bulgarian policy-makers, especially those acting at national level, did not yield to the temptation of copying the YG and thus were able to avoid the “dangers inherent in any quick decision-making based on a sudden enthusiasm” for an idea “brought to maturity in a foreign context” (Phillips & Ochs, 2003, p. 460). The implementation of the YG started with a thorough assessment of the national situation, and this resulted in some important differences in the YG in Bulgaria compared with most European countries. From the perspective of adult education, two differences are of crucial importance: (1) the inclusion of young people up to the age of 29 in the YG measures and (2) the priority given to youths who are long-term unemployed or have been registered for long periods with the Labour Office.

Through the YG, *the MLSP has established itself as a key policy actor in adult education*. The flows of financial resources empower two other policy actors – *the EA and business*. The bulk of the financial resources in all schemes and programmes of the YG goes through business entities, although the latter do not contribute significantly to the YG with own financial contribution. In turn, the EA receives about 90% of the financial resources and has become the main beneficiary of the YG-funded programmes and projects. Thus, the EA has enhanced its role in the implementation of measures for overcoming youth unemployment. It has done so, on the one hand, as a beneficiary of projects, by managing financial resources, overseeing how these are spent and reported and monitoring the indicators of implementation and, on the other hand, as one of the main providers of mediation services on the labour market. Cooperation with business entities as partners has been very successful in this process, as the programme uses the potential of business enterprises to train youths and provide internship in a real working environment. The subsidising of employment at the initial stage of hiring stimulates this process by decreasing the risks for employers. *Vocational high schools* come to have a reduced role in adult training, as they do not offer short-term training. This niche is occupied by *centres for professional training*, which are licensed providers of training services. Out of the total 1031

licensed centres whose registration is currently active, only 13 are vocational high schools.

An examination of the procedures of the YG implementation highlights *the importance of networking* between different policy actors and providers of adult education, especially between those acting at national and local level. Specifically, the good cooperation between the national EA, the local Labour Offices and local business has proven crucial for the successful realization of the YG. A specific and very serious problem in organizing adult education and training is to reach the target groups. The Bulgarian experience in the YG points to the importance of *mediators* for adult education, especially with regard to vulnerable young people and disadvantaged groups.

As a strategic document, the YG creates *equal chances for different sub-groups of youths*, and their access to new programming and implementation of measures is not restricted. All target groups are covered in a balanced way in terms of place of residence and gender; with regard to these indicators, the profile of youths covered by the measures coincides with the profile of all youths in the country and/or the profiles of unemployed youths registered at the Labour Offices (Consortium “SIGMA METRICS”, 2016, p. 55). The YG measures overcome regional disproportions and give a chance for persons in economically disadvantaged regions to find realisation. People’s costs of travel to work from one settlement to another are covered. Nearly one fourth of participants have a permanent address in a settlement differing from that of his/her internship or training.

Nevertheless, the way in which the YG is implemented in Bulgaria has made more visible three social groups of young people as targets of adult education policy: *NEETs*, *university graduates* and *low-skilled youths*. Inasmuch as Bulgaria remains one of the EU countries with a very high percentage of NEETs, the YG understandably focuses on this group. It is widely assumed that highly educated people represent the least vulnerable group on the labour market due to their lower levels of unemployment compared with less educated groups. However, in recent years, there has been a widespread, but often overlooked, tendency for university graduates to be employed in jobs not requiring a university diploma. This mismatch amounted to 41.19% in Cyprus and 29.8% in Bulgaria in

2016.¹¹ The comparison between the National Employment Action Plans for 2009 and 2018 reveals that during this period, graduate employability has moved from the periphery to the centre of active labour market policies. In the Action Plan for 2018, graduates are declared eligible for all programmes targeting unemployed young people up to the age of 29.

The YG has placed on the agenda the need to make another important differentiation – between *young people who are registered at the Labour Offices and those who are not*. Reaching NEETs and young people from disadvantaged groups has turned out to be very difficult. According to some analyses “most of the employment measures are towards youth registered with the public labour offices and insufficient attention is paid to economically inactive and long-term unemployed youth who have limited contacts with public institutions” (Jeliaskova, Minev, Draganov, Krasteva, & Stoilov, 2018, p. 75). Thus, very importantly, in order to facilitate the access to registration and adequate services for people, it is currently under discussion to possibly eliminate some of the requirements for registration at the Labour Offices (such as presenting a document certifying length of service).

Having in mind that the employed persons in EU28 tend to participate more in lifelong learning activities in comparison to those who are unemployed, most probably the increase in the participation in such activities among people aged 18–24 and 25–34 in Bulgaria in the last few years (from 53.1% in 2014 to 58.0% in 2018 for the first group and from 6.7% in 2014 to 8.2% in 2018 for the second group) could be partially attributed to the positive effect the YG had on the improvement of the labour market integration among the Bulgarian youth. This trend points to the crucial importance of the engagement of various stakeholders and the interconnectedness of different policies with the problem of participation in adult education and suggests that only by stimulating practices based on joint efforts the participation in adult education can be increased and sustained in the future.

The implementation of the YG in Bulgaria again demonstrates the *strong connection between initial education, employment and adult education* and learning. It should be pointed out that initial education influences the participation of young people in adult education both directly and indirectly (through their employment status). The results of

implementation of the YG measures point to a disbalance in the educational profiles of the young participants, but the evaluation made in 2018 (Consortium “SIGMA METRICS”, 2019) found out that this disbalance was overcome. Changes have been made in the course of implementation, and special measures have been included, targeting people with low education; the implementation of these measures is ongoing.

These observations correspond to a recent country report of the European Commission, stating that measures within the YG “so far have focused on young people with secondary and tertiary education and had only a limited impact on the low-skilled” (European Commission, 2017, p. 31). It is very important to focus YG measures on low-skilled people, for assessments have shown that *the highest net effect of active labour market policies (adult education programmes included) occurs precisely for people with primary and lower education* (E-Research Consortium, 2017, p. 80). According to the assessment of the YG made in 2016, compared with persons not included in the measures, the employment rate of participants with less than secondary education is between 24% and 41% higher (the net effect of the YG for people without education is 41%, for people with primary education, 33%, and for people with basic education, 24%) (Consortium “SIGMA METRICS”, 2016, p. 67). In other words, once included in the programme, low-educated groups increase their chances of employment much more than participants from other education categories. The probability that they would have remained unemployed had it not been for the programme is higher than for the other categories.

The educational profile of participants is a function of the intensity of implementation of measures, and so it would be incorrect to compare the dynamics of percentages with the profile of the whole target group in the country – youths aged 15–29, or with the profile of unemployed persons: for the aim of the measures is, among others, to invest in highly educated youths without professional experience. The intensity of implementation of measures is determined by the needs of the respective target groups and their current status, and hence the educational profile of persons differs in the different measures. For instance, youths with lower education are more often included in subsidised employment, while youths with better levels of education take part in internships or in the measures for

on-the-job training. For people with the lowest level of education, the measures envisage training, which may include return to the education system in the framework of activities financed through the state budget.

The assessment of the YG implementation points to a *significant shortcoming* – its insufficiently effective combination of compensatory measures that would allow persons with lower education levels or with no education to escape from a position of unattractive labour force and to find better realisation on the labour market. Although such measures are planned and financially covered, their implementation is still not intense enough. Very often, the accompanying measures are not combined consistently – persons are included in literacy courses and motivation training, but later the same persons are not included in fast measures for acquiring professional qualification. In some cases, young people fail to understand the importance of these measures and expect to quickly obtain employment before they are ready to pass training suited to this goal. Particularly important in these cases are the measures envisaging consultation, identification of each person's strong and weak points in view of a suitable professional realisation, and based on this assessment, guiding that person to professional training.

Two forms of adult learning are dominant in all measures and programmes of the YG. These are *apprenticeships and on-the-job training*. Formal learning is underrepresented, although conditions and funding have also been supplied for it. To date, most of the weight of the measures is placed on employment and on-the-job training (in view of the numbers of persons included in these), while measures aimed at professional education play a lesser role. According to approximate expert estimations, only 7–8% of the persons are included in educational measures, and an even smaller share of the financial resources, as employment is more resource-consuming. The cause of this lies in the weak connection between vocational education and the needs of the labour market. Employers prefer to provide training for youths in the course of their employment rather than wait for them to be trained by an external organisation. The YG increases the possibilities of doing internships and apprenticeships, including branches that have a good potential to create new jobs, such as information and communication technologies, social services, environmental and energy effective activities.

The period after the financial crisis of 2009 has been marked in Bulgaria by high youth unemployment and an adverse demographic situation on the labour market, especially the long-term trend of decrease of the active population and ageing of the labour force. In this context, human capital and human resources are confined to people's professional qualification, and personal development is generally equated with the person's employability. As a result, economic concerns are primary in the adult education policy in Bulgaria, which emphasises vocational education and training as a factor for encouraging people's active participation in economic life.

Notes

1. If Bulgaria is compared with other Central and Eastern countries, it should be emphasised that "by measuring government expenditure as a share of GDP, Bulgaria comes close to the post-Communist countries classified under the Central Europe welfare model, but when referring to the indicators for income inequality, Bulgaria exceeds the average across those countries referred to as the Eastern Europe welfare model" (Stoilova & Krasteva, [Forthcoming](#)).
2. The natural increase represents the difference between the number of live births and deaths during the year. The rate of natural increase for 2017 was -6.5% .
3. National Statistical Institute (NSI), <http://www.nsi.bg/en/content/6475/labour-force-and-activity-rates-%E2%80%93-national-level-statistical-regions>.
4. Persons of legal employment age who are not actively seeking employment or who do not find employment after long-term [unemployment](#).
5. In accordance with Art. 16 of Regulation (EC) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006.
6. Youth mediators work in 54 of the total 265 municipalities in the country. In 2016, a total of 95 youth mediators were appointed, who worked with 3839 inactive youths.
7. Investment Priority 2: Sustainable integration of the labour market for young people (EMU), in particular those not engaged in work, educa-

tion or training, including young people at risk of social exclusion, and young people from marginalised groups, including through the implementation of the YG.

8. For eligible regions under Regulation (EC) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.
9. <https://www.az.government.bg/bg/news/view/80-ot-mladejite-vklucheni-v-shema-ay-mladejka-zaetost-au-sa-ostanali-na-rabota-2038/>.
10. In fact, these are not negative results as the programme measures are targeted to young people. The satisfaction of the employers simply illustrates the symbiosis of the measures between the needs of the young unemployed and employers.
11. CEDEFOP <http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/indicators/overqualified-tertiary-graduates>, http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en/indicators/over-qualification_rate?field_date_value_filter=&field_countries_tid=6 (accessed on 19 November 2018).

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12

The Spanish Rejoinder to Youth Guarantee

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12.1 Introduction

When the YG was initiated, Spain was one of eight countries experiencing higher levels of youth unemployment in the European Union (EU) due to the global economic crisis (European Commission, 2014). In fact, it was the rising unemployment rate among the young population in countries like Spain that prompted the EU to introduce the YG. At the time of the start of the initiative, the numbers of unemployed young people with higher education were also higher than the EU average. For these reasons, Spain quickly responded to its context by expanding the YG target group to young people in general. Several key policies helped launch the YG, such as the Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment and the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. However, the territorial complexity, with a high degree of de-centralisation, and

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heterogeneity of the target groups, made the implementation of the YG complicated. After the adjustment process, it has proven to be a popular and widely used measure with participation numbers reaching 734,480 by 2017 (Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security], 2018).

12.2 State Form and Administration

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 establishes the institutional organisation of Spain. It establishes a parliamentary monarchy and a system of government based on parliamentary representation. It is governed in accordance with the principle of the separation of powers into the legislative, executive and judiciary branch. A bicameral system, the Cortes Generales, constituted by the [Congress of Deputies](#) (Congreso de Diputados) and the [Senate](#) (Senado), represents the legislative power. Deputies and senators are elected for a period of 4 years by popular vote of all Spanish citizens aged 18 or older. The executive power, the Council of Ministers, is led by the President of Government.

The Spanish constitutional system establishes a system of recognition of territorial autonomy, resulting in a deep de-centralisation similar in many aspects to that of the federal states. Territorially, the de-centralisation system is organised in 17 Autonomous Communities; 2 cities with statute of autonomy – Ceuta and Melilla; and 8125 local entities or municipalities.¹

The Autonomous Communities have political and financial autonomy. This implies the attribution of competence to approve laws in matters recognised by their Statutes, as well as to carry out executive tasks assigned to them by the Statutes. Among the specificities of the autonomous regions, the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands, the Basque Country, Navarre and Galicia stand out with their own and co-official languages. The Autonomous Communities carry out four types of actions:

- Exclusive legislative and executive powers. This is the case, among others, of social services, agriculture and stockbreeding, inland fishing, industry, commerce, tourism, youth or sports.

- Jurisdiction for the development of the basic legislation of the State, as well as for the implementation of this legislation. This is the case of the environment, economic policy, consumer protection, education, health care or public health.
- Jurisdiction for the execution of legislation approved exclusively by the State. This is above all the case of employment and professional training.
- Legislative and executive powers, although indistinct from those that the State has in the same matter, so that both administrative levels can carry out the same actions and initiatives. This is the special case of culture.

They have a financial autonomy, although their income depends partly on the State and partly on their own resources, their own taxes or part of those obtained by State taxes in the Autonomous Community. This system is established by means of a system of participation in the income of the State collected from the main taxes. The Basque country and Navarre have their own fiscal regimes, allowing them to raise their own taxes.

12.2.1 Socio-economic Condition

In order to describe the current economic situation of Spain by analysing the main national indicators, it should be noted that GDP per capita in the last year (2017) was 25,100 Euro per capita, below the European average (30,000 Euro/capita). In terms of its evolution, over the last ten years, Spain's GDP has not increased at the same rate (1200 Euro/capita) as the average European value (3900 Euro/capita). Since 2008, there has been a decline in GDP which will not increase again until 2014 and will not recover its value until 2017.

As regards social protection expenditure (social benefits and administrative costs) as a percentage of GDP, Spain has increased its expenditure by almost 4 percentage points since 2008, reaching 24.3%. In spite of this increase, the difference with the average European value continues to be around 4 percentage points less throughout this decade.

The Spanish population (15–64 years old) has suffered a decrease (1 million) in the decade analysed (2008–2017), which represents almost

a fifth of the population that has been lost in the European Union as a whole during the same period. Males accounted for 70% of this decline, while females accounted for 30%.

With regard to educational levels, the decrease has been concentrated in the lowest levels (less than primary, primary and lower secondary education [levels 0–2]), while in the higher levels there has been a progressive increase, of 4% for levels 3–4 (upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education) and 19% for levels 5–8 (tertiary education). Percentage change has meant going from 49.8% to 41.8% of the total population in the lowest levels: Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0–2] and an increase from 49.4% to 57.2% in the rest of the levels. This evolution confirms an increase in the educational level of the population in this decade as a consequence of a greater demand for training to meet the demands of the economic system and the labour market.

In addition, the rate of participation in education and training shows a slight increase from the beginning of the crisis in 2008 (10.7%) until 2014 (11.4%) and a slight decrease until 2017 (9.9%). The distribution of this rate in both sexes shows similarity, although females present rates 2% higher than males. In this sense, an analysis of unemployment shows, firstly, an increase in long-term unemployment, which has almost quadrupled in the decade under analysis (2009–2017), rising from 18% of unemployment to 44.5% and representing 2% of the active population to 7.7%.

The unemployment rate of young people aged 15–24 fell to 38.6% in 2017 and remained 21.8 percentage points above the EU average (16.8%). This indicator of youth unemployment has evolved since 2009, progressively rising to a peak of 55.5% in 2013 and then declining to the levels of the beginning of the decade.

On the other hand, the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) indicator that measures the percentage of young people without employment or training rose in the last decade from 12.9% (2006) to 16.4% (2017). This indicator, as the youth unemployment rate, has evolved progressively rising to a peak of 22.5% in 2013.

According to Eurostat data, in 2017 the rates of youth unemployment and young people NEET in Spain are higher than the European average (16.4% Spain and 13.4% EU). These differences were even more

pronounced in 2013 (EU-15.9%, Spain-22.5%), the year of publication of the Recommendation about the Youth Guarantee. Data available also shows that the young unemployed population in Spain is characterised by a low level of qualification, often as a result of the premature abandonment of the training system – although the level of unemployment among young people with higher education should not be underestimated, doubling the European average (Rodríguez-Soler & Verd, 2018, p. 5).

As far as young NEETs are concerned, and contrary to what happens in the EU 28 as a whole, in Spain they are characterised by young people who are more unemployed than inactive and who have low level of education. In addition, compared with the EU, young Spaniards have a significant role to play in the unemployment and seasonality in all the age ranges. In addition to this, there is a reduced level of entrepreneurship of young people between the ages of 18 and 24.

Furthermore, Spain is a country of great regional imbalances that are reflected in the variety of NEET rates in the Autonomous Communities. The differences are especially pronounced between the historically more developed and industrialised Autonomous Communities such as the Basque Country (9%), Aragon (12.5%), Cantabria and La Rioja with rates close to 13%. At the other extreme, some communities reach levels close to or above 20%; such as Extremadura (21.5%), Andalusia (21.4%) and Canary Islands (19.1% NEET rate). In these communities, high NEET rates are matched by high unemployment rates and lower GDP.

12.2.2 Concluding Remarks

The development of the YG is coincident with an increase in the educational level of the population, the participation of young people in new training activities, labour insertion and a decrease in the NEETs population percentage (from 9.1% in 2013 to 5.8% in 2017). However, a cause-effect relationship cannot be established. It should be borne in mind that the YG implementation took place at a time when the employment crisis affected, above all, the least qualified/educated, such as those involved in

the construction sector. This context had an impact on the increase in the number of young people, without any possibility of entering the labour market, in the school system.

The development of the YG interventions in Spain is coincident with the decreasing of youth unemployment rates, the promotion and creation of employment, and accumulation of professional experience. However, a cause-effect relationship cannot be established as the economic crisis is related to higher levels of schooling among the least qualified groups.

Designed mainly as a measure that is supposed to provide fast results regarding the problems of youth employment and the share of NEETs, the YG implementation seems to be particularly important for addressing inequality. The share of unemployed youths aged 15–25 has fallen from 55.5% in 2013 to 38.6% in 2017. However, there are great differences across the Autonomous Communities with the Basque Country reporting 23.9% for 2017, Andalusia 47.9%, Extremadura 51.03% and Melilla 68.6% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE], 2017). Overall, unemployment rates have decreased as well, from 26.1% in 2013 to 17.2% in 2017. In some Autonomous Communities such as Navarre and the Basque Country, the unemployment rate in 2017 dropped to 10.2% and 11.3%, respectively. Overall, NEET numbers have also decreased from 22.5% (2013) to 16.4% (2017).

Due to structural problems of entry into the labour market, combined with a high level of early school leavers, the country had experienced high youth unemployment rates. One of the issues that the launch of the YG highlighted was the age of the NEET population targeted by the initiative. Early on it became clear that targeting only 16–25-year-olds was not enough to tackle the problem of youth unemployment. In 2015, a revision was made, and the age range was expanded to include 25–29-year-old people as an additional target group (European Commission, 2016).

To understand the complete scenario, it must also be remembered that this period of YG implementation coincides with the launch of the reform of the labour market (Real Decreto-ley 3/2012, de 10 de febrero, de medidas urgentes para la reforma del mercado laboral) that makes youth employment even more precarious (Boletín Oficial del Estado [BOE], 2012). In Spain, around 70% of young people are employed

under non-standard and atypical forms of employment, including temporary jobs (European Commission, 2018, p. 34).

12.3 The National Response to Youth Guarantee

Spain was one of eight Member States together with Ireland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Slovakia that were tasked in 2012 with mobilising EU structural funding still available in the 2007–2013 programming period to support employment for young people (European Commission, 2014). In April 2013, the Spanish government launched the Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment in order to tackle the high youth unemployment, a few months later the government adopted a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan which embedded the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), and in December 2014, it launched a Youth Employment Operational Programme (OPYE) in order to implement the YEI and the YG (European Parliament, 2017).

Compared with other European countries, the implementation of the YG in Spain has two important distinguishing features:

- The age limit of the YG was extended in 2015 to cover young people up to the age of 29 due to the extremely high unemployment rate for this age group.
- An additional target group in Spain are young people aged 16–29 with a disability. Currently, there is only a limited explicit focus on particular sub-groups within the YG across the European Union, and Spain is one of the few countries that have set up additional sub-groups as the YG target group.

Since its launch in 2013, the YG participation numbers have been increasing. While there were only 21,905 participants registered in the national YG scheme in 2014, there was a massive increase only a year later when the number of young people registered reached 170,559 (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Employment and

Social Security], 2015a). It is estimated that 734,480 participants have taken part in a YG activity up to 2017 (Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security], 2018).

12.3.1 Governance Structure

Title IV of Law 18/2014 of 15 October, on approving urgent measures for growth, competitiveness and efficiency (Ley orgánica 18/2014, de 15 de octubre, de aprobación de medidas urgentes para el crecimiento, la competitividad y la eficiencia), establishes the guidelines for implementing the National Youth Guarantee System. The subjects who participate in the National Youth Guarantee System are the following:

- a) The General State Administration, as well as the public law entities linked to or dependent on them, each within the scope of its competencies.
- b) The Administrations of the Autonomous Communities, as well as the public law entities linked to or dependent on them, each within the scope of its powers.
- c) The entities that make up the Local Administration, as well as the public law entities linked to or dependent on them, each within the scope of its powers.
- d) The social entities acting in the private sphere.

The process of establishing the governance structure of the YG has not been a straightforward one. The first evaluation of the YEI detected a delay in appointing the managing authority and selecting the intermediate bodies. For example, in December 2015, many of the managing bodies still did not have their role officially assigned (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Employment and Social Security], 2015a).

Most of the actors involved in the YG act on the national and regional level (see Table 12.1). Several actors were identified at the regional level: Autonomous Communities, Public Employment Services (PES), and third sector organisations. At the provincial level one actor was identified: the Network of Chambers of Commerce, and at the municipal level also

Table 12.1 Governance structure. Key actors that support and implement YG in Spain

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competencies
Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security (Ex Ministry of Employment and Social Security)	Public administration	National	Coordination Body /Managing Authority	Ensures the system activities, monitoring and evaluation, institutional communication
The Administrative Unit of the European Social Fund (UAFSE)	Public body established at the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security	National	Instructing, defining and monitoring site for the YG	Instructing, defining and monitoring for YG by involving all interested parties
Spanish Chamber of Commerce	Public corporation	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
INCYDE (Chamber Institute for the Creation and Development of Business)	Public body attached to the Spanish Chamber of Commerce	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
Spanish Public Employment Service (SEPE)	Public body, supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG and since 2017 manages the National Youth Guarantee System
Spanish State Research Agency	State agency affiliated to the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
La Caixa Foundation	Private financial foundation	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG

(continued)

Table 12.1 (continued)

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competencies
EOI (School of Industrial Organisation) Red.es	Public sector foundation	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
	Public business entity supervised by the Ministry of Economy and Business Support	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
High Centre for Scientific Research (CSIC)	State agency attached to the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
Directorate General for Relations with the Autonomous Communities and Local Governments	Public body	National	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
Autonomous Communities	Local authority	Regional	Intermediate Body	Contribute with the Government to the definition of the YG programme. They are delegated to implement the strategy on the territories, and use the forms governed by the ESF Regulation to ensure the involvement of all actors
Public Employment Services (PES)	Public administration	Regional	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG

Third sector organisations	No profit institutions	Regional and National	Intermediate Bodies and/or direct beneficiaries	Involved in the implementation of YG
Network of chambers of commerce	Non-economic public-body	Provincial	Intermediate Body	Involved in the implementation of YG
Local agencies	Territorial agencies	Municipal	Responsible for the minor drop-out	Involved in the implementation of the intervention with specific acts outlining the fields of intervention and the interrelationships with other subjects

Sources: Our processing on official documents and regulatory framework

one actor was identified: local agencies. Apart from playing a role at the national and regional level, third sector organisations can play a role at the local level. The Autonomous Communities as intermediate bodies have a variety of functions: programme management and selection of appropriate operations that ensure the contribution to the achievement of the specific objectives and results; putting in place a computerised data storage and recording system for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, and ensuring that data is collected, recorded and stored in the system; disseminating information and communication for beneficiaries and the public about financing opportunities; participating in the work of the PO Monitoring Committee in order to help ensure its effectiveness and quality; evaluation of the PO; organisation as well as management and financial control in order to ensure proper use of the funds (Gobierno Vasco, & Servicio Vasco de Empleo [LANBIDE], 2016). In order to guarantee the separation of functions, the Autonomous Communities do not participate as a beneficiary in the operations except in the case of axis 8, technical assistance (Ibid., 2016).

The governance of the YG has been based on a partnership approach. This partnership was not set up from the start. In the beginning, the YG involved the national and regional Public Employment Services (PES), a network of 84 Chambers of Commerce, and the National Youth Institute (European Parliament, 2017). However, the need for establishing a partnership was evident from the beginning and this led to other actors joining in such as the High Centre for Scientific Research (CSIC), Red.es, the School of Industrial Organisation (EOI), YMCA, and the Ministry for Public Administrations (European Parliament, 2017). Coordination between the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and the Autonomous Communities was strengthened, and a partnership between regional PES and other public and private actors was established (European Parliament, 2017). Partnerships were also set up within many of the Autonomous Communities. For example, Catalonia has been collaborating with the regional education and social services authorities, and with NGOs that focus on vulnerable youth (European Parliament, 2017). In this way, by putting in place a wide cross-sectoral cooperation, the national administrative capacity governing youth unemployment has been enhanced.

12.3.2 Financial Flow

Spain is to receive more than 7 billion Euro of ESF funding as can be seen from Table 12.2. This funding is managed by the managing authority and the intermediate bodies. Previously, there were also collaborating bodies involved in the implementation of the ESF, but these were abolished in order to simplify the architecture of the ESF, as well as to improve management and achieve better results (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Employment and Social Security], 2014). The YEI represents 6.7% of the total planned EU funds. However, the most important budgetary items correspond to agriculture and regional development funds (EAFDR, ERDF) which have been allocated more than 70% of the total amount.

The ESF is implemented through various Operational Programmes (OPs), which break down the ESF's overarching strategic objectives into specific priorities and actions.

There are 23 OPs in Spain for the programming period 2014–2020 (Table 12.3). Out of these, 19 are regional operational programmes and cover each Autonomous Community and 4 are multiregional (OP Employment, Training and Education, OP Social Inclusion and Social Economy, OP Technical Assistance and OP Youth Employment). Table 12.3 also demonstrates the significant differences that exist regarding funding across the different regions and different thematic areas, which reflect the variety of circumstances (population, economic

Table 12.2 EU planned and paid funds 2018, Spain (Euro)

Fund	Planned EU	%	Total net paid	%
EAFDR	8,297,388,821	20.5	1,800,128,295	30.7
EMFF	1,161,620,889	2.9	80,251,126	1.4
ERDF	20,565,226,650	50.9	2,529,639,204	43.2
ESF	7,087,214,991	17.5	618,134,977	10.6
FEAD	563,410,224	1.4	255,415,225	4.4
YEI (of which)	2,723,321,500	6.7	574,895,318	9.8
• YEI ESF M.C.	1,361,660,750	3.4	212,342,507	3.6
• YEI S.A.	1,361,660,750	3.4	362,552,811	6.2
Tot.	40,398,183,075	100.0	5,858,464,145	100.0

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018

Table 12.3 ESF funding of the operational programmes in Spain (Euro)

Title of OP	Total OP Budget	Total EU contribution	ESF	Total National contribution
OP ESF Employment, Education and Training	3,012,724,036,00	2,115,030,502,00	2,115,030,502,00	897,693,534
OP ESF Youth Employment	3,719,290,442,00	3,290,658,734,00	567,337,234,00	428,631,708
OP ESF Social inclusion and social economy	1,079,558,368,00	800,050,000,00	800,050,000,00	279,508,368
OP ESF Technical Assistance	49,366,393,00	35,000,000,00	35,000,000,00	14,366,393
OP ESF Madrid	642,668,920,00	333,834,460,00	333,834,460,00	308,834,460,00
OP ESF Navarre	39,700,966,00	19,850,483,00	19,850,483,00	19,850,483,00
OP ESF Andalusia	2,493,013,078,00	1,994,410,460,00	954,578,400,00	498,602,618
OP ESF Aragon	157,715,742,00	78,857,871,00	78,857,871,00	78,857,871
OP ESF Canary Islands	191,086,838,00	162,423,811,00	162,423,811,00	28,663,027
OP ESF Cantabria	45,205,764,00	22,602,882,00	22,602,882,00	22,602,882,00
OP ESF Castilla-La Mancha	236,805,624,00	189,444,499,00	189,444,499,00	47,361,125
OP ESF Extremadura	331,550,424,00	265,240,339,00	265,240,339,00	66,310,085
OP ESF Galicia	794,231,022,00	635,384,816,00	313,142,972,00	158,846,206
OP ESF La Rioja	21,907,754,00	10,953,877,00	10,953,877,00	10,953,877,00
OP ESF Basque Country	108,878,214,00	54,735,444,00	54,735,444,00	54,142,770
OP ESF Ceuta	13,179,772,00	10,543,817,00	10,543,817,00	2,635,955
OP ESF Melilla	9,380,243,00	7,504,194,00	7,504,194,00	1,876,049
OP ESF Valencia	354,816,766,00	177,408,383,00	177,408,383,00	177,408,383,00
OP ESF Balearic Islands	176,435,962,00	88,217,981,00	40,891,341,00	88,217,981,00
OP ESF Asturias	108,746,175,00	86,996,940,00	86,996,940,00	21,749,235
OP ESF Murcia	112,883,577,00	90,938,861,00	90,938,861,00	21,944,716
OP ESF Castile and Leon	197,412,384,00	98,706,192,00	98,706,192,00	98,706,192,00
OP Catalonia	609,485,690,00	304,742,845,00	304,742,845,00	304,742,845,00

Source: Our processing from European Social Fund, 2016

conditions) among the Autonomous Communities, commented on in the previous section. While the OP ESF Andalusia has a total of 2,493,013,078.00 billion Euro allocated, the OP ESF La Rioja has been allocated 21,907,754.00 million Euro.

Since the YG in Spain is implemented only as part of the national OP Youth Employment, in the following section we focus on this particular OP. The OP Youth Employment (OPYE) 2014–2020 is entirely devoted to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, and the YEI is entirely embedded in the OPYE, constituting 80% of the OPYE budget (European Parliament, 2017). The OPYE is organised mainly in the Priority Axes 1 and 5, with ESF funding allocated to Priority Axis 1 and the YEI to Priority Axis 5. The remaining 20% of the OPYE budget, that is, the part of the OPYE and the YG that is not funded by the YEI has been dedicated to establishing the infrastructure necessary for the implementation of the YG such as partnerships, the single register and integrated information system (European Parliament, 2017).

Spain is the largest recipient of the YEI funds within the EU. As can be seen from Table 12.4, Spain is to receive more than 2.7 billion Euro in the YEI funding. All regions throughout Spain are eligible for YEI funding. Half of the YEI budget has been allocated to the regional authorities with 63% of the funding going to four Autonomous Communities: Andalusia, Catalonia, Valencia and Madrid (European Parliament, 2017). When distributing the YEI funding to the regions, the NEET rate of each region was taken into account and more funding was allocated to the regions with the highest NEET rates such as the Canary Islands, Andalusia and Extremadura (European Parliament, 2017). In this way, the YEI addresses the regional imbalances that exist in Spain.

Table 12.4 shows that until 2017 only 29% of the total budget allocated to the autonomous regions had been spent, with significant differences across the regions. While Andalusia had spent 56% of its budget, and Extremadura half of its budget, some regions such as Navarre had spent none of their budget allocations.

The same situation can be observed regarding the spending of allocated budgets across the national intermediate bodies. While SEPE had spent 66% of its budget allocation, and CSIC had spent 47% of its budget, several of the intermediate bodies had spent none or almost none of

Table 12.4 Youth Employment Operational Programme financial allocations in the Autonomous Communities: Spain (Euro and %)

Autonomous Communities	Amount earmarked Total YEI+ FSE	Amount spent until 2017 (Euro)	Amount spent until 2017 (%)
Andalusia	230,906,086,00	130.090.153	56%
Catalonia	151,809,540,00	19.036.165	13%
Valencia	103,004,026,00	44.943.609	44%
Madrid	109,780,842,00	20.650.642	19%
Canary Islands	58,610,692,00	N/A	N/A
Galicia	39,105,740,00	380.012	1%
Castilla-La Mancha	47,111,546,00	5.695.118	12%
Castile and Leon	35,823,214,00	1.787.322	5%
Murcia	32,716,706,00	8.828.775	27%
Extremadura	29,764,510,00	14.849.717	50%
Balearic Islands	26,772,986,00	12.082.724	45%
Basque Country	22,611,460,00	2.569.451	11%
Aragon	18,920,464,00	4.410.344	23%
Asturias	12,877,404,00	5.940.698	46%
Navarre	7,082,437,00	0	0%
Cantabria	6,793,482,00	3.313.728	49%
La Rioja	5,119,690,00	356.259	7%
Ceuta	2,456,040,00	706.410	29%
Melilla	2,229,450,00	862.894	39%
Total	943,496,315,00	276.504.021	29%

Source: *Elaborated based on* Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security], (2018)

their allocations (Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security], 2018).

There is very little data on the co-financing of the YG. Regarding the YEI, national co-financing is required only for the corresponding ESF support; and not for the YEI-specific allocation. Spain co-finances 8.19% of the corresponding ESF support. The co-financing can come either from public or private entities. Most of the co-financing in Spain comes from public sources and very little of the YG co-financing comes from private sources. At the time of the first evaluation of the implementation of the YEI, the co-financing from the national budget amounted to 166,499,350 Euro, only 13,319,948 Euro of which came from private sources (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Employment and Social Security], 2015b).

12.3.3 Management

Three methods are used in the management of the YG interventions: subsidies, direct management and public contracting. Each intermediate body is free to choose the methods it will employ, but once the operations have been approved, the intermediate body needs to notify the coordination body of the management method selected in relation to each operation (Gobierno Vasco, & LANBIDE, 2016). Hence, the national and regional intermediate bodies either launch calls for proposals to manage the implementation of the YG activities, or they themselves implement and manage the YG activities directly without issuing a call (European Commission, 2016). The managing authority also issues calls for specific projects (European Commission, 2016).

The YG interventions consist of four main types of measures: measures that encourage individual assessment, professional orientation and guidance in the job search, measures that improve employability (second chance programmes, training programmes with an employment focus, language and ICT training, promotion of dual apprenticeship programmes, internships, trainings to obtain a professional certificate, and mobility programmes), measures that foster entrepreneurship (entrepreneurship training and promotion of entrepreneurial culture, guidance on self-employment, self-employment support and subsidies, and promotion of self-employment within the social economy) and measures that favour hiring (social security discounts and subsidies, subsidies in social enterprises, employment opportunities for young researchers, and coordination with recruitment agencies) (European Commission, 2016). These measures are mostly de-centralised and implemented by the Autonomous Communities, who are free to select which measures need to be undertaken in their community in order to meet the needs of their population (European Commission, 2016).

However, there are still many weaknesses that need to be addressed in order for the partnerships and the management of interventions to be able to function well. For one, the measures offered to tackle youth unemployment do not seem to be adequate. In their analysis of the YG in Spain, Rodríguez-Soler and Verd (2018) argued that the tight schedule

for the YG implementation, and the pressure from the EU financing system, have resulted in measures which already existed before and which had proved ineffective in tackling the high youth unemployment. According to Rodríguez-Soler and Verd (2018), there is not only a lack of specific and flexible measures tailored to the needs and different characteristics of vulnerable groups, but there is also a lack of measures targeting the most vulnerable groups, and there is too much focus on entrepreneurship and self-employment instead of training and requalification.

Secondly, both the PES and the intermediate bodies are in need of modernisation focusing on a greater professionalisation of their human resources and providing sufficient economic resources to successfully achieve the implementation of the YG (Moreno, 2017). Better coordination between territorial administrations and private entities such as companies and the third sector are still lacking (Moreno, 2017). Felgueroso and Jansen (2015, p. 136) explained this weak relationship: “despite various attempts to foster this form of firm-sponsored training, they represent only 2% and 6% of the contracts held by low-educated youths and university graduates, respectively”. Also lacking are well-established evaluation and monitoring systems (Moreno, 2017).

One of the main challenges in coordinating the implementation of the YG has been the failure to set up an integrated system where beneficiaries would register and access the YG activities and where stakeholders would offer services to the registered young people. The National Youth Guarantee System (NYGS) started functioning in 2014, but has not yet been finished and fully functioning which means that regional PES do not know what the rest of intermediate bodies are doing in that Autonomous Community (European Parliament, 2017). The YG in Spain previously had more than 17 databases from the different regions, and an integrated system would allow data sharing and improve coordination and coherence in the services offered. However, the National Youth Guarantee System has encountered many challenges so far. Spain was supposed to demonstrate that it had already in place a rigorous management and control system before 23 May 2016 in order to receive 50% of the frontloaded YEI funds, but since the setting up of the system underwent many delays, the country had to temporally reimburse a portion of the funds (European Parliament, 2017).

After the initial evaluation of the implementation of the YG and the criticism received, some improvements have been achieved. In December 2016, as the initial eligibility criteria were criticised for being too restrictive and not adapted to the changing nature of current labour and education markets, the registration process was made simpler by eliminating the requirement of not having worked in the previous 30 days, and not having participated in education and training activities; and allowing NEETs who are registered with the public employment services but not with the NSYG to register with retroactivity (European Parliament, 2017).

The measures funded under the YG are subject to continuous monitoring, in accordance with regulations from the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. The interim evaluation of the implementation of the YG for Spain was carried out in the first half of 2016, and the second interim evaluation was undertaken in 2018. While the early interim evaluations were mostly negative in terms of budget, targets, milestones, and variety of activities provided, the latest evaluations show that the results are improving. However, the results show that the YG is failing to target the most vulnerable groups.

12.3.4 Concluding Remarks

The launch of the YG in Spain has intensified the partnership between the public administration and non-governmental organisations. However, youth unemployment rates are still 21.8 percentage points above the EU average and NEET rates are also higher than the European average; participation rates in the YG activities are also low. In Spain only 38% of young people registered with the YG in 2015 had found a job or an employment-oriented training action after six months of registration, compared to 71% of Irish or 68% of Italian participants. Furthermore, data gathered from Eurostat show that the participation of unemployed young people in Multiple Active Employment Policies (AEPs) programmes is proportionally lower than in other European countries, such as France, Germany or Austria (Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016). The increase in spending in recent years has allowed access to a greater number of

young people (Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social [Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security], 2018).

Moreover, while the YG has contributed to the promotion and creation of employment, and accumulation of professional experience among young people, the quality of these jobs has been questioned. Jobs offered through the YG are likely to be precarious in the sense that they either do not pay well or do not offer the opportunity of a contract once the measure is completed, thus failing to facilitate young people's emancipation or to provide labour stability (Cabasés Piqué, Pardell Veà, & Strecker, 2016). Instead, young people who are already in a vulnerable situation are left worse off than they were before participating in the programme, putting into question the long-term impact of the YG in Spain (Cabasés Piqué et al., 2016).

Finally, looking at the measures provided through the YG we can conclude that one of the consequences of the implementation of the YG has been the recycling of measures that were already in place before 2013 as well as old mechanisms for tackling unemployment, and the lack of an innovative approach that includes flexible and tailored measures. We can see a resistance to changing old systems and infrastructures both on a national level and on a regional level.

12.4 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

The analysis of the launch of the YG in Spain highlights the necessity to adapt European policies to national social, economic and political situations. In this case, adapting the YG to the Spanish context resulted in some delays and drawbacks. One of the main modifications occurred two years after the launch of the initiative, when the YG target age group was revised and young people up to the age of 29 were included in the YG measures. In 2016, additional changes were introduced regarding the eligibility criteria as a response to the country's current situation.

Regarding the implementation, we can identify several challenges related to three main issues: coordination, implementation measures

(based on the principles of tailoring and targeting) and funding. The territorial organisation of the Spanish state, with a high degree of decentralisation of education, training and employment policies, justifies the pronounced autonomous and local character of the YG. In order to ensure that YG is established throughout the territory, the General State Administration coordination mechanism has a key role at the national level.

Furthermore, political changes in the government have also affected the implementation of the YG, with some delays in appointing the managing authority and selecting the intermediate bodies. Given the country's complex governance structure, the YG has forced the government to address the issue of fragmented responses to different policies. In the extremely regionalised system of governance in Spain, it has been difficult to provide coherent policy responses that span across the different regions and sectors. The reforms that Spain has adopted to implement the YG and YEI such as setting up a partnership and a cross-sectoral cooperation have to some extent overcome the issue of fragmentation (European Parliament, 2017). However, although there are currently partnerships across different entities and sectors, which to some extent have enhanced the national administrative capacity to govern youth unemployment policy and adult education policy, the many delays have had a negative impact on coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the YG. Nevertheless, networking and cooperation between different policy actors and providers of adult education are key for the successful realisation of the YG, and particularly for reaching vulnerable groups.

Secondly, regarding implementation measures there is a need for modernisation of the implementing bodies and putting in place flexible and tailored measures to address the most vulnerable groups of young people. The preliminary results have shown the difficulties to reach the most vulnerable groups. According to the Law 18/2014, of October 15, on the approval of urgent measures for growth, competitiveness and efficiency, the National Youth Guarantee System needs to guarantee access and equal chances for everyone:

Likewise, the implementation and application of the System will be guaranteed in all Autonomous Communities and equal access for all young people object of attention, regardless of their personal and /or social cir-

cumstances, and attending to their specific needs, with special attention to those who are in a situation of disadvantage and /or risk of exclusion. (BOE, 2014, p. 89, authors' own translation)

However, active employment policies and the YG are not achieving the expected results due, among other reasons, to the heterogeneous profile of the young unemployed and to the difficulties of the YG in reaching the target groups: the young people who could benefit most from it (Moreno, 2017). According to the European Commission's 2016 report on the functioning of the PES, access to these services for the most vulnerable unemployed young people remains insufficient despite the progress being made. In fact, it is precisely the young people with the least training and therefore most likely to experience situations of poverty and social exclusion who are least registered as job seekers, together with young people with higher education, although perhaps for very different reasons: the former, because they have fewer skills and competences to seek employment, as well as being demotivated; and the latter, because they do not believe they can find employment through these services (Moreno, 2017).

One area where we can see some progress is the issue of regional imbalances concerning economic and social growth. Funding that is distributed to the regional level takes into consideration the development level of each Autonomous Community. In that way, the YG measures overcome regional disproportions and give persons in economically disadvantaged regions the chance to actively participate in the country's economic life.

Multiple Active Employment Policies (AEPs) have been developed in order to address the high youth unemployment. It seems that part of the YG's programmes are general programmes such as language training and ICTs, Certificates of Professionalism and so on. In general, they do not represent any novelty with respect to the design of previous initiatives, with little possibility of customisation (Rodríguez-Soler & Verd, 2018). Three forms of adult learning are dominant in all measures and programmes of the YG. These are second chance opportunity activities, labour market guidance, and basic skills (particularly languages and ICT). According to the first national evaluations of the YG activities up to 2014, almost 40% of activities were second chance programmes,

followed by labour market guidance and orientation (22%) and language and ICT trainings (21%) (European Commission, 2016). Internships and self-employment support and guidance seem to be neglected. Thus, activities aimed at supporting and promoting self-employment accounted for only 0.8% and internships for 1.2% of all activities (European Commission, 2016). By emphasising activation and increasing employability through second chance education and training, the YG offers supply-side interventions. This is not a viable solution for NEETs who are already qualified. These NEETs would benefit from measures that foster employment such as internships. Furthermore, higher levels of education will lead to increased competition in the labour market and a willingness to accept precarious jobs (European Parliament, 2017).

The third challenge that arose from the implementation of the YG is funding. Many deemed the allocated YEI funding insufficient to address the problem of young people not in employment, education or training. Based on the Swedish model of 'special job search support,' it was calculated that a budget of at least Euro 21,000 million was needed instead of the allocated Euro 6000 million (Cabasés Piqué et al., 2016). In the case of Spain, it was calculated that only a small number of those not in employment, education and training could be reached with the current financial allocation. The YG also focuses on hiring incentives. For example, the SEPE offers recruitment subsidies in the form of 300 Euro/month reduction of social security contributions to those employers who offer a permanent contract to a young person registered in the YG system (European Commission, 2016). In the Spanish context of limited labour demand by companies, this trend may have negative effects and result in non-sustainable jobs that disappear once the incentive comes to an end (European Parliament, 2017).

An examination of the implementation of the YG highlights that the groups that have been made more visible through the YG as targets of the Spanish adult education policy are NEETs and young people. Since December 2015, when Spain submitted the second version of its OP Youth Employment, the focus has been on young people, including those with disabilities, who are registered in the National Youth Guarantee System, irrespective of whether they are registered as job applicants or not. One of the main requirements is that young people register with the

YG national system to be able to access the YEI funded actions. While earlier the focus was specifically on NEETs, this is no longer the case. The change has allowed Spain to respond to a reality where unlike other European countries many recent university graduates have difficulty finding a job. However, this could mean that other vulnerable groups are pushed aside and neglected as people with higher levels of education have the tools to gain easier access to the YG activities.

Through the YG, the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security has emerged as a key policy actor in adult education. The Public Employment Services (PES) have also gained more power at the regional level. In fact, 50% of the NSYG relies on the regional public employment services (European Parliament, 2017). Some types of vocational education and training have also gained more visibility. For example, the Chamber of Commerce has launched a “Comprehensive Programme for Training and Employment” (Programa integral de capacitación y empleo), combining training courses and professional advice (European Commission, 2016). They meet the need for short-term training that is usually not fulfilled by vocational high schools.

In summary, we see an increased focus on the provision managed by labour authorities. In this way, the economic dimension of adult education and learning and lifelong learning becomes central. Adult education and lifelong learning adopt much narrower meanings where their main objective is tackling unemployment and providing work-related skills. In fact, we would like to point out a limitation we encountered in the preparation of this report: the difficulty of finding information on the relationship between the implementation of the YG policies and lifelong learning policies. Neither the interviews carried out with the educators and case managers within the ENLIVEN project, nor the official documents consulted (European Commission, 2017; European Commission, 2018; Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2015a, 2015b) nor the recent literature published on the implementation of the YG in Spain (Cabasés Piqué et al., 2016; Caliendo & Schmidl, 2016; Felgueroso & Jansen, 2015; Moreno, 2017) address in depth the issue of adult education. We believe that one of the reasons may be the YG organisation itself, which depends on the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security. Another point could be that YG measures related to aspects such as

“combating early school leaving” or mechanisms of “educational reintegration”, which have an impact on the fight against dropping out of school, are included in the set of 85 measures with an impact on education at medium and long term (“Measures 4 and 5 within the Education”), with a relatively vague level of definition (Rodríguez-Soler & Verd, 2018). Nevertheless, this lack of information on the relationships between the YG policies and lifelong learning policies also point to the narrowing of the meanings and objectives of adult education and lifelong learning. As one of the worst affected Member States by the 2008 financial crisis, it is understandable that in such a context economic concerns are primary in the country’s adult education policy.

Note

1. More information on this subject is available at the official website: Gobierno de España. Administracion.gob.es

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13

The Italian Rejoinder to Youth Guarantee

Francesca Rapanà and Sandra Vatrella

13.1 Introduction

13.1.1 State Form and Administration

Italy is a Parliamentary Republic with a three-way division of power: executive, legislative and juridical. Executive power is in the hands of the Council of the Ministers, presided over by the Prime Minister; legislative power rests in both national and regional Parliaments, but under the supremacy of the central State; and the juridical belongs to judges, who are responsible for implementing the laws passed by the Parliament.

At the administrative level, Italy comprises four types of territorial bodies: Regions, Provinces, Metropolitan cities and Towns, whose powers and responsibilities have markedly changed over time, as in the case of

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the reform of Title V of the Italian Constitution (1999–2001), in particular, which redistributed the jurisdiction competences between the State and the Regions (Panzeri, 2017).

The reform conferred exclusive legislative power to the Regions for the organisation of local and regional bodies. Moreover, it expanded the legal powers of the country's 20 regions and the 2 autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano and strengthened the financial autonomy of regional and local governments. Inspired by European law (Groppi & Scattone, 2006), the Constitutional Court, with its decision no. 303 of 2003, established the “subsidiarity take over” by conferring general administrative power to the political level which is closest to local citizens.

Moreover, the reform established that legislative powers belonged to the State only in the areas under its exclusive control, and to the regions in all others. In other words, the reform confirmed and strengthened the tradition of “cooperative regionalism” (Milana & Rasmussen, 2018), well represented by the range of liaison bodies that have gradually widened the relationship between different administrative levels. An example is the establishment of the State-Regions Conference in 1983, followed in the mid-1990s by other coordination bodies (the so-called Unified Conference) where state, regions, cities and local autonomies are presented with matters of shared interest.

This new distribution of competences to the State and Regions has included policy spheres such as labour, vocational training and education. Therefore, the Regions have been assigned responsibility for promoting the implementation of active labour policy interventions and training so that they adhere to the needs of the territory and its inhabitants, by responding to the different characteristics of local labour markets.

However, the reform has not changed the conservative-corporatist welfare state regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990) that has traditionally featured public policy approaches which continue to result in fragmented social protection programmes (e.g. pensions, unemployment benefits, family allowances), reproducing both status differentials (e.g. male versus female) and dependence on conventional family structures and forms of welfare provision (Green & Janmaat, 2011).

13.1.2 Socio-economic Condition

Italy is characterised by complex, historically shaped socio-economic conditions, exemplified by deep territorial differences between the North and South regions, high unemployment rates and economic backwardness. Although Italy has experienced continuous economic recovery over the past few years, the overall socio-economic situation remains critical as will be illustrated below.

Between 2006 and 2017, the Italian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at market price rose from 27,400 to 28,500 Euro per capita, whilst expenditure on social protection increased by 7072.19 to 8228.99 Euro per inhabitant. Even though national growth consolidated in 2017, it remains below the other major European economies (ISTAT, 2018) and the balance between the two abovementioned measures remains among the lowest in Europe.

The situation is even more critical if we consider the gap between the historically poorest regions in the South and the more productive regions in the North. Such inequality has so significantly shaped the national landscape that it has inspired pioneering works since the 1970s, when scholars like Bagnasco (1977) started to dub Italy *three Italies* (Bagnasco, 1977).

One of the most serious problems facing Italy is the decline in birth rates (–2% in 2017 compared to 2016) which is not compensated for by the presence of immigrants. According to ISTAT (2018), on 1 January 2018, the Italian population was estimated at 60.5 million residents, with only 8.4% (5.6 million) from the immigrant community.

Moreover, Italy's ageing population affects the sustainability of health-care, pension and social security systems (Esping-Andersen, Gallie, Hemerijck, & Myles, 2002), impacting on investment opportunities in the fields of education and active market labour policies.

Another issue present in Italy regards educational attainment and participation in lifelong learning. From 2008 to 2017, the number of Italian people aged between 15 and 64 who attained less than primary and lower secondary education (levels 0–2) dropped by 7 percentage points (from

47.9 to 40.9), which is consistent with what happened at the European level (from 32.2 to 26.0) during the same period.

Furthermore, the percentage of people who attained tertiary education in Italy (levels 5–8) also increased (from 12.7 to 16.5), although this increase still represents less than the European average (from 21.2 to 27.9) (Eurostat, 2018).

As the focus of this book is on lifelong learning, it is also important to mention the participation rates in lifelong learning of low-skilled adults. It is surprising to note that, while a general stagnation at the European level has been observed, where “the short-term growth between 2013 and 2017 amounts to just 0.5% per year on average, which is not fast enough to reach the target of 15% by 2020” (Eurostat, 2018), in Italy in the same period an increase in participation of 2% was recorded. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the data on the national averages tend to hide the deep differences that persist between North and South Italy in relation to all of the dimensions explored above.

In the years before the European Union (EU) Recommendation which invited the EU Countries to implement the Youth Guarantee (YG), the Italian labour market had gone through a period of profound economic crisis that affected unemployment and inactivity, and notably among young people. Between 2007 and 2012, employment levels contracted by nearly 2 percentage points and at the same time the share of the unemployed labour force grew by 4.6 percentage points (Ministry of labour, 2014). Moreover, long-term unemployment rates are increasing in distance from the European average, from 8% in 2008 (36.9% in EU and 45.2% in Italy) to 13% in 2017 (44.7% in EU and 57.8% in Italy). As expected, young people were definitely the group most affected by the economic and employment crisis (Ferrarotti, 2011; Reyneri, 2014).

The status of educational attainment, participation in lifelong learning and unemployment in Italy affects the rate of people Not in Education, Employment of Training (NEET), which, according to Eurostat, is the highest in Europe. In 2018, the rate of young people defined as NEET aged 20–34 in Italy was 28.9%, while the EU28 average was 16.5% (Eurostat).

Looking at territorial differences, such gaps vary hugely: NEET rates range from 15.6% in the Northeast of Italy to 34.4 in South Italy in 2017 (ISTAT, 2018).

These data are also confirmed by other institutional sources of data such as OECD: in 2017, the rate of young people defined as NEET aged 20–24 in Italy was 30% compared to an average of 16% across the OECD countries. If we then consider people aged between 25 and 29 the rate of NEETs increases to 34%. Italy has the fifth highest percentage of NEETs among OECD and partner countries.

When looking at youth unemployment rates, the Italian situation worsens further, especially if we consider the years of the economic crisis. The gap separating Italy from the EU as a whole increased dramatically from 5.4 percentage points (19.9 EU–25.3 IT) in 2008 to 20.5 percentage points (22.2 EU–47.2 IT) in 2014, when unemployment rates started to slowly decrease. However, even though unemployment rates tended to fall between 2014 and 2018, the situation remains critical and the total gap in relation to the EU has grown by 12.5 percentage points in less than 10 years (Eurostat, 2018).

Finally, and consistently with the dynamics we have outlined above, youth unemployment rates are distributed differently across Italy. The difference between the South and the Northeast reached 25.5 percentage points in 2017 (51.4% and 25.9%, respectively).

In order to complete this brief description of the labour market in Italy, we have to consider the new indicators added by Eurostat and specifically the data related to the group defined as “people available for work but not looking”, that do not fit into the traditional tripartite of “employed, unemployed, inactive” adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In line with the Eurostat definition, this indicator refers to jobless people who do not qualify for recognition as unemployed because they are not actively looking for work. It includes, amongst others, discouraged job seekers and people prevented from job seeking due to personal or family circumstances.¹

This phenomenon is particularly troubling when considering its rate in Italy in comparison with other Europeans – in 2017, 37% of the European people available to work but not looking for work were Italian.

Between 2008 and 2017, the share increased at an average rate in all European countries, except in Italy where it increased almost 6 percentage points more than the European average.

Moreover, this situation is particularly alarming in relation to young people. According to ISTAT, in 2018, the rate of inactivity among people aged from 25 to 34 was 26.7%.² This statistic, when considered in conjunction with the number of young people who move from active job searches to a condition of discouragement, demonstrates a climate of increasing distrust that leads young people to give up to on their own professional and personal life ambitions.

13.1.3 Concluding Remarks

The framework briefly outlined above helps to explain the context in which the Youth Guarantee was implemented in Italy. As underlined, demographic characteristics, economic and financial conditions, educational attainment, unemployment and very deep regional differences create a particular scenario where conditions for young people continue to be one of the most discussed and controversial topics in both public and scientific debates. The financial crisis which began in 2008 has exacerbated the public debate on the situation of young people: on the one hand, as Rosina (2015) recently pointed out, in Italy, public discourse tends to stigmatise young people as being responsible for any delay in the process of freeing themselves from the condition of family dependence. In this instance, what is being questioned is both the ability and willingness of young people to create better personal, professional and life conditions. On the other hand, from a completely different perspective, there are those (Buzzi & De Lillo, 2007; De Luigi & Rizza, 2011) who recognise the political responsibilities and the systemic failure of the country as a whole. They point out that the national economic and production system has remained stagnant, which is penalising the most vulnerable, and young people in particular, and is especially problematic for women and people from the South.

The EU has responded to such concerns by calling for appropriate measures to counteract the risks that long term and youth unemployment

pose to social cohesion and growth: “The low overall activity rate is constraining potential output growth. At the same time, the high level of youth unemployment can hinder young people’s acquisition of skills and future employability” (European Commission, 2018, p. 2).

The Italian response to the YG is therefore a result of internal and external pressure and of a complex overlapping between historical-systemic and contingent factors that lead to the governance structures underlying the YG, and the ways in which it is both financed and managed. It is, therefore, an interaction between the EU pressures and local tensions and, therefore, provides an interesting example of national adaptation to European-level policy.

13.2 The National Response to the Youth Guarantee

The Italian government started working on the YG in 2013 when the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies decided to implement the YG through a National Operational Programme (OP). With the establishment of a Mission Structure (art. 5 of Legislative Decree no. 76 of 28 June 2013), comprised of representatives from both national and local bodies, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (that in turn was also the Managing Authority until 31 December 2016) had the main task of developing the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP).

Enacted in May 2014, the YGIP recognised a greater prominence for central government while offering the possibility for local authorities to implement adequate measures to respond to the needs of the territories. In this context, the national response to the YG is characterised by three distinctive elements:

1. A multi-level governance structure coordinated:
 - a. At the central level, by the Ministry for Labour and Social Policies and from 1 January 2017 by the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL) (see: Governance Structure section below);

- b. At the local level, by the Regions, as Intermediate bodies, which are delegated to implement the strategy within the territories, but also to contribute with the Government to the definition of the YG programme;
2. The creation of a unified Information Technology (IT) system in which the participants' master data sheets converge and become available for consultation at the central level and by each region³;
3. The extension of the age limit of participants to 29 years due to the significant increase in the unemployment rate in the 18–29 age group (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2017).

13.2.1 Governance Structure

As stated in the Italian Youth Guarantee Programme 2014–2020 (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2014), the governance structure of the YG operates at both national and regional levels: the central level is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation system, the definition of communication and information activities and the enactment and functioning of the technology platform mentioned above, while the local level is responsible for the fulfilment of policy actions addressed to the young people targeted by the programme.

Such a “governance system is based on compulsory and shared rules, that allow possible degrees of discretion within defined and agreed boundaries” (ISFOL, 2016, p. 28) that consist of “national standards and opportunities for the development of synergies between the different territorial areas and the different actors involved” (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2014, p. 27). The objective is to offer young people more opportunities for choice in a “context of efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of actions aimed at them” (Ibid.).

These quotes make clear that in Italy the YG is supported by a multi-level governance structure, where the ‘old’ bureaucratic ways of managing employment and education at national level coexist with the ‘new’ managerialist ways (Gunter, Grimaldi, Hall, & Serpieri, 2016) carried out by the EU governance system.

As a result, the governance structures we describe intertwine a series of actors and knowledge(s). On one hand, it consists of the actors who support and implement the YG in Italy. On the other hand, it consists of knowledge(s) about the YG that develop through the legislative and regulatory powers, to be exercised at both national and EU levels (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007). In this way, actors and knowledge/s connect to each other to produce the Italian response to the YG, and it is this connection that allows the YG to work in Italy, by making clear the differing role actors play in enacting the YG, and their respective responsibilities and practices.

The governance structure of the YG accounts for more than 10 different types of actors (Table 13.1). Amongst them, there are three in particular which illustrate the way in which the YG is governed in Italy: the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL), the Active Policies, Employment Services and Youth Guarantees Committee and the Regions.

13.2.1.1 ANPAL – National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies

In order to create greater coordination at central level in the field of active labour market policies, the Legislative Decree 150/2015, among other things, conferred on the National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL) the role of Managing Authority of the YG. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the ANPAL is responsible for monitoring, evaluation and information/communication activities at the national level and the implementation of the IT platform.

Among its tasks, the ANPAL coordinates the National Network of Labour Services, which promotes the rights to work, training and professional development, and includes regional structures for active labour market policies, public administrations, employment agencies and other authorised intermediaries, inter-professional funds for continuing education and bilateral funds, chambers of commerce, universities and secondary schools.

Table 13.1 Governance structure. Key actors that support and implement YG in Italy

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competences
Ministry of Labour and Social Policies	Public administration	National	Supervisory and audit authorities	The ministry is the body under whose supervision ANPAL acts and it is also audit authority for the National Operational Programme Youth Employment Initiative (OP YEI)
Active Policies, Employment Services and Youth Guarantees Committee	Public administration	National	Representative body	The active policies, employment services and youth guarantees, composed by representative of the managing authority and the intermediate bodies, represents the place for exchange between the different levels of governance
National Social Welfare Institution (INPS)	Public administration	National	Intermediate body	Managing measure 9: Employment bonus/youth employment incentive
Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR)	Public administration	National	Co-funded	The Ministry of Education has made available some of the resources of the National Operational Programme School (OP School) to implement YG. In addition, it contributes to the certification of the NEET status that permits individuals to be eligible for YG
State-regions conference	Public governance body	National	Representative body	Foster the cooperation between the activities of the state and the regions, in particular regards

Department of Youth and National Civil Service of the presidency of the Council of Ministers National Agency for investment attraction and Enterprise development (INVITALIA)	Government department	National	Management of civil service	Manages measure 6: The civil service within the framework of Youth Guarantee
Regions and Autonomous Province of Trento	Public agency	National	Resources management	INVITALIA is own by Ministry of the Economy that in the YG manages the programme SELFIEmployment that provides interest-free financing for the start-up of small business initiatives promoted by young NEETs The regions eligible are intermediate bodies (i.e. "delegated managers") in charge of implementing active labour market policies actions addressed to beneficiaries
Employment services and accredited bodies	Local authority	Regional	Intermediate body	Employment services and accredited bodies are in charge of reception, taking charge, orientation and job placement training

Sources: Our processing on official documents and regulatory framework

The ANPAL is also responsible for the information system for the management of the labour market, which brings together all of the information on job seekers. The Agency manages the national register of accredited subjects for active policies, the national repertoire of employment incentives, European activities and programmes for training and employment. Through its research structures, ANPAL carries out analysis, monitoring and evaluation of active policies and services for employment.

As Managing Authority of the YG, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the ANPAL may intervene operationally if specific Regions have difficulties in achieving the stated objectives. Therefore, from the beginning the ANPAL has played a critical role in the governance of the YG in developing institutional partnerships crucial for the success of the programme. Furthermore, the ANPAL promotes meetings with Regions and the stakeholders involved (e.g. associations, trade unions, youth associations and civil service, student representatives, non-profit associations, the Third Sector and the Civil Service) (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2017), and coordinates the Active Policies, Employment Services and Youth Guarantees Committee (see below).

Finally, the ANPAL is also the Managing Authority of the National Operational Programme Systems of Active Employment Policies (OP SAEP), and chairs the Joint Monitoring Committees OP YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) and the OP SAEP to promote discussion and insights into the actions carried out under the OP YEI (National Operational Plan, p. 80).

13.2.1.2 Active Policies, Employment Services and Youth Guarantees Committee

The Active Policies, Employment Services and Youth Guarantees Committee (hereafter the Active Policies Committee) is a representative body aiming to connect the different levels of governance which the YG requires. It was established on 4 April 2015 by the former Director General for Active Policies, Labour Services and Training of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The Active Policies Committee is

composed of the representatives of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, with the involvement of the intermediate bodies of the Italian National Operational Programmes Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). The Committee, which meets approximately monthly, is a place of technical discussion between the central and the local levels, where different needs and issues arise. Created to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, it has become a broad space for discussion and the coordination of Active Policies in general.

13.2.1.3 Italian Regions and the Province Autonomous of Trento (Intermediate Bodies)

The Italian Regions are Intermediate Bodies in charge of implementing active labour market policy actions. As stated, the Italian YG Plan sought to create a multi-level governance structure that ensures that territorial specificities within national guidelines are taken into account, and aims to promote stronger consistency between local and national governance. To this end, the regions were recognised as key actors that work as “intermediate bodies” (“delegated managers”), located between the network of Employment Services and other partners in the territories (which are the first contact point for young people), and the Managing Authority (Ministry of Labour until 2016, replaced by ANPAL in 2017).

While the Italian YG Plan identifies the general framework and lists the different measures of Active policy that could be implemented, each Region had to sign up to a bilateral agreement (Regional Implementation Plans—PAR) with the Managing Authority where measures the region intends to promote, the global allocation available (the resources of OP YEI can be integrated by each region with their own European, national or local resources) and the allocation of resources for each measure are included.

The Regional Implementation Plans are policy tools that allow for the development of highly flexible, autonomous measures complementary to those of the OP YEI 2017, in relation to both the target group (young people that in some cases extends up to 35 years) and the actions taken (OP YEI, 2017). Moreover, they outline the regional/provincial strategy

for active policies in favour of all young people, describing current and future interventions and the possible co-financing of other European funds or national or regional resources.

Regions also have responsibility for managing the financial resources (OP YEI, 2017), for monitoring and evaluating the interventions, the processes of implementation, the services provided, the number and profile of beneficiaries, the progress of expenditure and other characteristics relating to the employability of young beneficiaries.

In conclusion, the ANPAL, the Active Policies Committee and the Regions are not only those actors that best represent and evoke the governance structure under which the YG works in Italy but, as we shall explain in the following section, they also play also a significant role regarding both the financial flow and the management of the YG.

13.2.2 Financial Flow

Table 13.2 shows the distribution of the European funds in Italy in 2018 where the most conspicuous is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) representing 47.8% of the total amount allocated to Italy, followed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Social Fund (ESF) (respectively above 23%, and 22.5%). Among the EU funds, YEI – the main financial channel for the enactment of the Italian Implementation Plan – represents only 4% of the planned funding, but 12% of the total net paid funds.

Table 13.2 EU planned and paid funds: Italy, 2018

Fund	Planned fund	Total net paid
EAFRD	10,444,380,770	1,696,160,653
EMFF	537,262,559	28,407,758
ERDF	21,660,538,270	1,772,301,507
ESF	10,192,857,620	948,068,797
FEAD	670,592,285	153,617,555
YEI (of which)	1,821,064,560	628,542,635
• YEI ESF M.C.	910,532,280	231,982,187
• YEI S.A.	910,532,280	396,560,449
Total	45,326,696,050	5,227,098,905

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018

Therefore, by comparing planned and executed funds, we note that although the YG is not among the priority areas of the investment identified at the European level, its weight tends to increase with respect to the expenditure actually incurred in 2018 in Italy. Moreover, by examining the data for the years 2016 and 2017, we notice how they anticipate those of 2018. In fact, from 2016 onwards, the YEI represents a figure between 2% and 3% of the total planned fund, but it accounts for between 12% and 13% of the total expenditure.

Even though it is important, the YEI is only one of the sources that financially supports the YG, which depends upon a complex system of different funding sources and management mechanisms, as we present below.

13.2.2.1 Financial Instruments and Mechanisms

The YG in Italy was developed in two stages, beginning respectively in 2014 and in 2017. In the first programming period (2014–2017), the YG acquired three types of funding sources: the YEI-specific allocation, the YEI ESF matching component and national co-financing. Specifically, out of 1.5 billion Euro available, 567.5 million came from the YEI; 567.5 million came from the ESF and 378 million from the national contribution. Most of the resources are allocated to the Regions for the implementation of the measures: in fact, the Regions not only owned 1.4 million of the 1.5 million available, but managed most of them (1140 million), leaving the management of only 270 million to the central level, in particular to the Youth Department, the National Social Welfare Institution (INPS) and the National Agency for Inward Investment and Economic Development (INVITALIA), owned by the Ministry of Economy.

On 1 December 2017, Italy submitted a request for modification of the OP YEI which was approved within a few days by the Commission (European Commission, 2017a). The amendment provides for both the technical adjustment of the ESF funding resources and the refinancing of the YEI.

As Table 13.3 shows, the additional resources of the OP YEI (programming period 2017–2020) are divided into two “Axes” (“NEET youth employment Axis 1”; “Youth employment Axis 1bis”) and three categories of regions (“most developed”, “in transition” and “less developed”). This increased earmarking in financial resources consists of:

- a. Euro 343 million from the refinancing of the YEI (i.e. they will be used entirely on Axis 1 of the OP YEI);
- b. Euro 560 million in the ESF funding (resulting from the technical adjustment to the European budget) for measures to counteract “youth unemployment”. Such resources are conceived in part as match funding for the YEI (239.3 million); and in part (320.7 million) will be allocated on a parallel axis of the OP YEI (Axis 1a), for projects in transitional and less developed regions with a direct impact on youth employment. So, in addition to the priority Axis 1 *NEET youth employment* under both the European Social Fund and the specific budget YEI, the second axis, called *Youth employment* under the European Social Fund, was created.

Moreover, Italy has decided to take advantage of the 10% flexibility clause (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2013) to also include regions with a youth unemployment rate (15–24 years) of less than 25%, but still high. Therefore, all regions (including the most developed) and the Autonomous Province of Trento are eligible for the YG (only the Autonomous Province of Bolzano is excluded).

Therefore, with this initiative, the second stage of the YG, which will last until 2020, began with a redefined economic set-up. Briefly, an amount of 75.84 million Euro of the ESF from the OP SAEP, allocated to more developed regions, has been reallocated to the OP YEI to match funding for additional IOG resources; an amount of 27.91 thousand Euro of the ESF from the National Operational Programme School (OP School), originally allocated to more developed regions, has been reallocated to the OP YEI in order to ensure match funding for additional IOG resources, while maintaining the balance at the national level of the territorial distribution of resources.

Table 13.3 Breakdown of additional resources of OP YEI between Axes and Categories of regions in Italy (Euro)

Axis	Fund	Categories of Regions				Total
		Most developed	In transition	Less developed	Total	
Axis 1 NEET youth employment	IOG refinancing	173,250,562	19,952,525	149,817,945	343,021,032	
	ESF Technical adjustment	69,500,000	19,952,525	149,817,945	239,270,470	
	OP SAEF	75,844,415	-	-	75,844,415	
	OP School Total	27,906,147	-	-	27,906,147	
Axis 1bis	FdR*: OP SAEF New Co-financing Total	43,037,988	-	40,863,134	43,037,989	
	ESF Technical adjustment	389,539,112	44,506,197	340,499,024	88,502,270	
	FdR New Co-financing Total Axis 1 bis	389,539,112	30,047,475	290,682,055	774,544,334	
Total IOG		20,031,650	156,521,106	320,729,530	176,552,756	
		50,079,125	447,203,161	497,282,286		
		94,585,322	787,702,185	1,271,826,620		

Source: Our adaptation from ANPAL Data, in YG Quarterly report Number 4/2017

FdR*: The Rotation Fund (Law 183/87) is the instrument through which the State guarantees the coverage of the national part of the interventions co-financed by the Structural Funds

In summary, the total budget for the OP YEI including the first phase and reprogrammed resources is Euro 2,785,351,487.

In relation to the resources that are directly managed by the Regions, the indicators confirm the geopolitical divide we have discussed so far, as well as the performance indicators. In fact, in the most developed regions of Southern Italy, particularly in Campania, Calabria and Puglia, performance indicators (e.g. use of financial resources) are significantly lower when compared to the Centre and Northern Italy. The data relating to the Operational Programme for the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is also of interest.

As of 31 December 2017, the legally binding commitments for the direct management of the Regions amounted to more than 1033 million Euro, that is, 90.6% of the planned resources. Expenditure amounted to over 791 billion Euro (69.4% of the planned amount). The measures with values of financial performance indicators higher than the average are the re-entry of young people aged 15–18 in training courses (96.5% use of financial resources and 78.5% efficiency); extra-curricular training (96.0% use of financial resources and 77.2% efficiency); and accompaniment to work (however, against a 90.3% capacity of use of financial resources, the spend has only represented 62.3% of planned resources).

13.2.3 Management

The management of the YG is characterised by three elements that create the high level of coordination between the State and the Regions. We refer to:

1. The principle of contestability (*contendibilità*) of services, whereby the Regions undertake to bear the costs relating to the interventions (and services) that young people defined as NEET resident in their territory receive in other Regions;
2. The establishment of a technological IT platform (see Governance Structure), based on a single system that coordinates the different actors interested in exchanging information and services. In short, information converges in a single “virtual” space, becoming available

at all governance levels with the same methods and at the same time. This is made possible by an agreement within the Conference State-Regions, which allowed for communication between the regional portals and the computer system of the ANPAL;

3. The introduction of standard costs to provide further uniformity in the management of services among regions, and to simplify reporting practices.

However, the Regions are also responsible for the implementation and enactment of the actions resulting from active policy measures, through the coordination of public employment services. In some regions, this takes place through accredited private individuals that have the task of carrying out the identification of the needs and potential of young people and their guidance in order to identify the most suitable training or work, according to their attitude and professional experience.

According to the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, the first step for any agency intending to start the Youth Guarantee Programme is registering as an employment service.

For this reason, the data entry on the National Portal or Regional Portals is a compulsory step, in which the young person expresses his willingness to participate in the programme and chooses the Region(s) from which he wishes to receive the services provided by the Youth Guarantee. These steps imply a self-selection process by the most motivated and talented young people that actively seek to register to the programme.

Within 60 days of joining, the relevant service contacts the young person to set up an interview in which, after the reception phase (information, orientation and support), the individual is profiled and a personalised path for the job placement or the return to the training/school system is defined.

The profiling activity allows for the differentiation of the interventions and in particular the economic investment, on the basis of the “employability rate” of a person: the lower the possibility that s/he can find work, the higher the financial investment expected. Within four months of taking charge, the person should receive an offer of integration/re-integration

in education/training courses or work experience. The possible actions are defined at the national level and, according to the different territorial needs, each Region decides which to implement.

13.3 Concluding Remarks

This section explores in depth how Italy has translated the Council Recommendation relating to the establishment of the YG, in terms of governance structures, funding flows and management.

Italy adopted a multi-level governance structure made up of compulsory and shared rules decided at central level that is strictly interconnected with the local level. This cooperation represents an innovation in the traditional Italian approach, in which Italian Regions usually dealt with youth unemployment, often in a multi-dimensional way, with actions tailored to the characteristics of their territories, but without a consistent direction. However, what has emerged to date is the persistence of a fragmented framework made up of the different measures enacted and the related aims pursued (see the section on Management), which translate into the heterogeneous ways in which they are realised. Such fragmentation also prevents the possibility of supporting and enhancing other policy domains that, however closely connected to the YG, remain substantially separated in Italy. This is certainly the case for the active labour market domain, as well as adult education, which could only be enhanced by the YG in the presence of a political vision of clear, connected and shared objectives.

At the same time, and perhaps because of such fragmentation, Italy was able to reinterpret the YG. In fact, it not only tailored the provision (see measures in the section on Management), but also showed flexibility, in large part due to a willingness and capacity to redirect the financial flows, by matching the different funding sources available. This enabled Italy to broaden the boundaries of the YG measures and the target group/s, by addressing both the specific contextual needs and the national employment conditions and resulting data.

The YG has been interpreted from the beginning by the Minister of Labour as a chance to promote coordination and uniformity in relation

to the system of active policies, fragmented at regional level, through a national Operative National Plan. In addition, it was decided to implement a series of initiatives to support this principle. In particular, we refer to standard costs, the principle of contestability and the establishment of an Active Policy Committee in which national and local bodies frequently meet.

Not only has the YG in Italy been the driving force behind some practices that are also extending to other areas, but it has also helped improve them. This is the case of the Active Policies Committee that was created for the implementation of the YG but now represents the space where the different levels of governance meet to discuss other active policies as well. Obviously, it is also the case in relation to the unified IT system.

The effort to make the different databases owned by different institutions (i.e. Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education) accessible and interconnected has just started and much more will have to be done, both in terms of inter-institutional agreements and technical implementation. However, as stated by an Italian Manager of ESF Operational Programmes and confirmed by an expert in evaluation of employment services and employment policies we interviewed, this is the direction in which the implementation of the whole system of Active Policies is moving.

13.4 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

The YG takes shape against an institutional backdrop of cooperative regionalism where the legal powers of the Italian regions are consistent with the European-inspired principle of subsidiarity, through which general administrative power is conferred on the political level that is closest to the population. In this way, the socio-economic and cultural divide, which historically characterised Italy, can be addressed in a way that is tailored to the specific needs of each territory. Additionally, youth unemployment is dealt with by resorting to a complex system of programmes and measures aimed to sustain young people in an effective process for entering the labour market.

As is widely recognised, such processes are closely connected to educational attainment. Not by chance, Italian youth unemployment rates related to those aged 15–29 (i.e. the age group which has access to the YG in Italy) increase especially if their ISCED level is low. Therefore, if such a framework naturally leads to the integration of active labour market policy with educational policies, it seems that by considering them as a unique policy domain Italy has created a *third way*. To carry out the YG, Italy developed a multi-level governance structure, which complemented the fragmented framework made up of a range of different measures and their related aims. Then, it transformed this fragmentation by reinterpreting the YG, by redefining and widening both the boundaries for intervention and the target groups in order to address specific contextual needs, with particular regard to youth unemployment. However, far from considering the YG as a terrain on which to build a single policy domain, recognised as a complex whole, Italy has chosen a workfarist dimension where education mainly plays an ancillary role, and rewarding, encouraging and enforcing work is the primary objective. Specifically, measures have been consistently developed which separate the YG from educational plans, with the aim of enforcing employability for young people. Such measures are not without interest as it is no coincidence that documents, plans, programmes and monitoring reports are all focused on the outputs in terms of employment rates and employability. Consequently, those programmes devoted to training and education play a relatively minor role within the YG. Moreover, few of these programmes focus on how the YG has impacted on educational policies. On the one hand, these programmes are devoted to strengthening work-based learning through compulsory traineeships or apprenticeships and, on the other, “Apprenticeships and work-based learning are being strengthened to improve the labour-market relevance of education” (European Commission, 2017b, p. 8).

This means that whatever the syntactic role of the educational component in official communications, programmes and reports, the functions assigned to it do not change; education continues to be viewed instrumentally. From this perspective, education and training become objects valuable only on the basis of the neoliberal principles of their expendability in the labour market field. In addition, a programme’s success is

consistently assessed using standardised indicators and benchmarks (Borraz, 2007), which in turn come from a neo-managerialist and economic way of thinking.

Notes

1. Glossary: Definition of Person available to work but not seeking in *Eurostat. Statistic explained*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Person_available_to_work_but_not_seeking.
2. National data on “inactive people” (ISTAT). Retrieved from http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_INATTIVMENS1#.
3. The IT system has multiple functions: information on employment, labour market perspectives and job opportunities; guidance and support for active job searching and training pathways; links with the different education and training institutions/organizations; direct enrolment system and first basic information input; tailor-made consulting services request (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2014, p. 13).

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14

The Austrian Response to Youth Guarantee

Günter Hefler and Eva Steinheimer

14.1 Introduction

In 2013, the Austrian government decided to not participate in the European Union (EU) Youth Guarantee (YG), nor earmark resources for related activities. Austria already had a similar comprehensive framework, funded mainly through national means. However, the European Social Fund (ESF) has funded from 2014 to 2020 various components of Austria's 'transition system' for young people. This chapter discusses how the ESF (2014–2020) currently supplements national resources for various initiatives targeting young people in Austria. Moreover, it focuses on the so-called 'Initiative for Adult Education' (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, I:AE*).¹ Although ESF money supports very different initiatives, the I:AE provides the most relevant and interesting example for the adult education sector. By following the development and implementation of the

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I:AE in Austria, much can be learnt about the ‘politics of Europeanisation’ at the Member State level, because the Austrian initiative and its use of the European Social Fund reveal various ways to respond to both EU policy prescriptions (discourse, symbolic legitimacy) and the EU funding offers.

14.1.1 State Form and Administration

Austria is a parliamentary republic and a federal state, where the nine autonomous federal provinces also have legislative and executive power to shape policy. The balance of power between the central authorities and the federal provinces are particularly important in fields with shared competences, among them many subfields of education, employment, and labour market policies.

Executive power is concentrated at the central level within the government. The directly elected president, formally the head of state, holds some control powers while not expected to interfere in politics. The Austrian parliament has two chambers. Members for the first chamber (*Nationalrat*) are elected based on a proportional system (parties are represented if they win at least 4% of the votes). While the *Nationalrat* exerts the legislative power, the second chamber (*Bundesrat*), consisting of delegated members of the federal provinces, holds mainly consultative power without a particular role in policy-making.

In 2017, with a GDP per capita of Euro 42,100, Austria belongs to the group of most economically prosperous states of the EU (6th place among the EU28) and the world. After the economic downturn in 2009 resulting from the global financial crisis and a relative recovery of the Austrian economy in 2010 and 2011, several years of low economic growth and a sharp rise in unemployment were followed by a marked increase of people active in the labour market. The federal provinces have large differences in unemployment with by far the highest unemployment figures in Vienna. It was not until 2017 that the economy significantly expanded, which also continued in 2018, while a weakening of the growth has been forecast for 2019.

The Austrian welfare state has been rightly labelled as conservative and shares important features of the Bismarckian tradition that strongly emphasises using social policy to sustain stratified levels of income. However, since the 1970s, social policy reforms, introduced elements of the social-democratic as well as the liberal welfare states. The Social Democratic Party's participation in Austrian governments (1970–2000, 2006–2017) has shifted policy towards an extended welfare state model with some marked progress between 2006 and 2017. High levels of social expenditure demonstrate this overall trend, at least up to the change in government in 2017. In 2015, total social expenditure made up for 29.8% of the GDP in Austria, a value among the highest in the EU28.

Austria's population has grown steadily and reached 8.8 million at the beginning of 2018. In addition to a recent slight increase in the birth rate and rising life expectancy, this is mainly due to migration. The often mentioned 'aging society' will intensify in the future. In recent decades, the younger generation's share of the population has fallen sharply, while the proportion at 60 years or older has risen. Immigration slows down this development. Nevertheless, the share of the working-age population is predicted to shrink.

The last decade was marked by persistently strong immigration inflows both from the EU and other countries, with a significant surge in 2015 due to exceptional high numbers of refugees.

The qualifications of Austria's working-age population are shaped by replacing older generations who did not benefit from the expanded educational opportunities in the 1970s. The completion rates in upper secondary education and tertiary education have continued to see a small but steady increase. However, the completion rates in higher education are still comparatively low. From 2014 onwards, this can be seen only in the detailed data on educational attainment, as forms of upper secondary education have been reclassified on the ISCED11 5 level.²

Participation in lifelong learning (LLL) in Austria is comparatively high and among the top third of the EU28 countries, although still significantly lower than in the top-performing Scandinavian countries. In 2017, after a decade of steady increase, the LLL indicator reached 15.8% thereby exceeding the ET2020 target.

All in all, the Austrian economy has strongly benefited from the EU economic integration. However, the comparatively low levels of *unemployment* even in the 1980s could not be sustained under the new conditions. Based on the national definition, unemployment has tripled from 1980 (2%) to 2000 (6%) and reached its highest level in 2016 (9.1%). The EU accession (1995) and the required changes in economic policies had winners but also losers.

While low, compared to other countries, in 2016, youth unemployment has reached the highest rate (11.2%) ever reported according to the Eurostat definition and more than twice as high as 20 years earlier. Moreover, low unemployment rates are mainly caused by a high proportion of employed young people (e.g. all the apprentices are counted as employed) and not by low numbers of unemployed ones – when expressing the unemployed as a share of the total population (the so-called *unemployment ratio*), Austria's figures (5.5% in 2017) no longer look exceptionally good among the EU-28 as ten EU Member States had lower or equal proportions of young people unemployed, according to this indicator.

The share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) among the population aged 15 to 29 years in Austria is clearly below the EU28 average. Over the past decade, figures have slightly decreased with some small up and downs. This downward trend is expected to continue with the effects of recent reforms including *Ausbildung bis 18* (Education/Training until 18) and the start of the 'Training Guarantee' for unemployed persons between 19 and 24 years old (see Sect. 14.2). The share of early leavers from education and training (age 18–24) has also decreased from 10.2% in 2008 to 7.4% in 2017, thereby already meeting the ET2020 target of less than 10%. This indicator should continue to improve because of the previously mentioned reforms.

14.1.2 Concluding Remarks

Since the 1970s, all political parties in government have unconditionally supported policies to combat youth unemployment.

From the mid-1990s onwards, Austria has developed a comprehensive, multi-faceted framework for safeguarding young peoples' access to education or training or for finding a job. These policies are funded mainly from national sources, including income from the unemployment insurance. Austria's comparatively good figures on education and youth (un-) employment can be partly explained by this institutional support. However, deep-seated problems of the Austrian education system persist and remain widely untouched by the reforms understood mainly as part of the employment policies for young people.

Austria's decision to not earmark any EU funds to implement the Youth Guarantee needs to be analysed in the context of an already developed 'transition system' perceived as a sufficient 'safety net'. However, as shown in the next section, ESF funds are used to co-finance various components of the continuously updated transition system.

14.2 The National Response to Youth Guarantee

As already mentioned, the Austrian government decided to not participate in the EU Youth Guarantee scheme. The reasons are manifold. Successive Austrian governments have promoted the 'Austrian way' to combat youth unemployment among EU policy-makers from the late 1990s onwards and Austrian policy-makers regularly claim that – among other countries – Austria has provided the blueprint for what has become the EU Youth Guarantee in the aftermath to the 'Great Recession' of 2008.³ In 2013, the Austrian government had no reason for earmarking additional EU funds to establish the Youth Guarantee scheme, because it already had a complex system of provisions, for which the term 'Training Guarantee' (*Ausbildungsgarantie*) had been coined in 2008, ensuring all young people up to 18 years old (24 years for vulnerable groups) had an apprenticeship position and the opportunity to complete vocational education in the dual system. In 2013, when the European Council recommended establishing a Youth Guarantee scheme in all Member States, Austrian national policy actors⁴ were already working on further developing the existing programmes towards a general mandatory education and

training scheme that extended the existing nine years of compulsory schooling. The ‘Education/Training until 18’ (*Ausbildung bis 18*) framework introduced obligatory education or training for everyone under 18 years old and became effective in July 2017. This requirement can be met by attending general or vocational secondary schools, completing (in-company or supra-company) apprenticeships, or participating in labour market or educational programmes designed to support young people on their educational and career pathways.

The Austrian Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (N.N., n.d.), in consequence, reports on a broad variety of initiatives developed on various occasions – including the Initiative for Adult Education (I:AE), the focus of the current chapter – which should further expand the established system.

Without earmarking money to implement a Youth Guarantee, nevertheless, the Austrian government will use most ESF funds from 2014 to 2020 for co-funding national programmes that support young peoples’ access to education and training or employment. While the schemes selected for co-funding by the ESF often do not support exclusively young people, young people make up for the majority of their beneficiaries, as is the case for the chosen example, the I:AE

The I:AE framework has its own story. It was mentioned among the measures of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in 2014 and among the measures of the Austrian Youth Strategy in 2016. It has received substantial ESF co-funding after 2015. Although open for participants of any age, the framework (gradually) funded courses catering mainly to young people (with more than 50% of participants younger than 25 years and 75% younger than 35 years). After 2015, young people’s participation increased because the scheme could fill gaps in providing courses for recent refugees (mostly young men from Afghanistan and Syria). The initiative has various sub-programmes open only for people between 18 and 25 years old. Young adults most frequently participate in the courses preparing for the school-leaving certificate equivalent to the degree achieved by the end of compulsory education (age 15; ISCED11 2). These courses are perceived as part of ‘second chance education’, a sector with a particular strong tradition in Austria (Hefler, Steinheimer, & Wulz, 2017).

Beyond its intersection with the field of policies related to the Youth Guarantee, the Initiative for Adult Education merits further study. In Austria, adult basic education (ABE) emerged as a specific sector because of close relations with both EU policy-making in the field of LLL and available funding lines, in particular the ESF. Only backing from EU policies and funding enabled local advocates of adult basic education to make substantial progress, finally leading to the I:AE in 2011. Moreover, the I:AE represents a rare case of (partly) overcoming a key difficulty of the Austrian adult education system: the central state has a lack of legal competences for adult education and the nine federal provinces lack funding. By applying the complex and – on a political level – demanding instrument of a binding agreement between the central state and the nine provinces (the so-called 15a Agreement), a model solution has been achieved, demonstrating how to overcome the ‘legal void’, stemming from constitutional compromises made 100 years ago, to promote adult education (without adding a constitutional revision requiring an extraordinary majority).

14.2.1 Governance Structure

14.2.1.1 Governance Structure of the ESF in Austria

Overall responsibility for the operational implementation of the European Social Fund as well as financial administration, evaluation, and communication lies with the Managing Authority (*Verwaltungsbehörde*). The Certification Authority (*Bescheinigungsbehörde*) is responsible for financial management of the programme. Their duties include certifying declarations of expenditure, preparing payment claims to the EU Commission, and disbursing ESF funds to the funding agencies. The ESF Audit Authority (*Prüfbehörde*) is responsible for examining the implementation of the ESF and for producing control reports sent to the European Commission. The three previously mentioned authorities are located in the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection. The Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority are assigned to the labour market section. The audit authority is assigned to a high-ranked department (*Präsidialsektion*).

To implement the ESF programme, the Managing Authority delegated tasks to 16 intermediate authorities (*Zwischengeschaltete Stellen*, ZWIST) as funding agencies involving national agencies (e.g. divisions in the ministries of education and social affairs) as well as agencies on the level of federal provinces (*Bundesländer*). This delegation of authority to intermediate bodies is also reflected in the operational programme determining which priorities will be implemented by each ZWIST. The Managing Authority also implements projects within its own sphere of influence. Technical working groups establish constant exchange between actors – across departments and at the national and regional level.

A Monitoring Committee (*Begleitausschuss*) ensures that the programmes are effectively and properly implemented. The ESF Monitoring Committee includes the participating ministries and federal provinces, the social partners, some non-governmental organisations, and the European Commission.

Programming and budget allocation decisions are made based on lessons learned from previous funding periods and proposals from implementing authorities. The most important players include the Social and Education Ministers and the Ministry of Finance. In addition, provincial governors assert the interests of the federal provinces in this negotiation process.

14.2.1.2 Governance Structure of the Initiative for Adult Education

The I:AE is a telling case that for each framework co-funded by ESF means a specific governance structure can be in place. The central government's main policy actor is the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, responsible for accrediting the educational providers that intend to apply for funding, for allocating funds to federal provinces, and for distributing ESF funds under the investment priorities 8iv and 10iii. This ministry decides on funding including ESF allocations. On the level of the federal provinces, the regional governments have responsibility for funding within the Initiative for Adult Education.

To implement the Initiative for Adult Education, new organisational structures were set up. A small agency (*Geschäftsstelle*) serves as a

communication platform and supports all the partners involved (providers, regional governments, the Federal Ministry for Education, monitoring group, accreditation group, and steering committee). The so-called ‘steering committee’ (*Steuerungsgruppe*) supervises the project’s strategy and design and ensures respect for the interests of the partners (the regions). The regions and the ministries have representatives with voting rights on the committee and social partners have representatives with advisory functions. The committee also has six adult education experts to ensure high-quality standards for an accreditation. The experts accredit the individual providers and their programmes based on standards of the institutional framework, the quality of the programme concept, and staff qualifications.

14.2.2 Financial Flow

14.2.2.1 Financial Flow of ESF Funds

For Austria, a total of Euro 442 million is allocated within ESF from 2014 to 2020 (see Table 14.1). ESF funds in Austria are allocated according to the Operational Programme (Sozialministerium, 2015). In accordance with the objectives and priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy and the Council Recommendations on the National Reform Programme, the ESF Programme for Austria is oriented on the thematic key objectives of (1) promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility, (2) promoting social inclusion while combating poverty and discrimination, and (3) investing in education, training, and lifelong learning.

Table 14.1 EU planned and paid funds: Austria, 2018 (Euro)

Fund	Planned	Spent
EAFRD	3,937,551,997	1,669,537,343
EMFF	6,965,000	798,073
ERDF	536,262,079	61,796,525
ESF	442,087,353	56,472,861
FEAD	18,032,733	6,292,563
Tot.	4,940,899,162	1,794,897,365

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018

Many administrative units implementing the ESF in Austria have received national funding in advance for most activities. Consequently, settlements with the ESF are often submitted later, which explains the low reports for expenditures in 2018 compared to the allocations. The implantation year for the ESF measures is not directly linked to the year when Austrian authorities receive ESF funds. Programmes under the same framework can be linked to different ESF funding priorities; similar activities (e.g. new educational opportunities for young refugees) can be labelled under different Austrian frameworks and different ESF priorities. Thus, it is not possible to draw a clear picture of funding flows connecting the total allocated ESF funds, the policy actors redistributing the funds, and the funding priorities.

In Austria, EU funds are often perceived as redeeming a substantial share of Austria's contributions to the EU budget. Therefore, administrators seek to claim all EU funds earmarked for Austria and submit various reports informing the Austrian parliament about the success of this endeavour.⁵

ESF funding might increase the available funds for particular activities of the government departments. However, when ESF funds become 'endogenised', meaning that an administrative unit can take for granted a steady supply of EU funds, recipients of ESF funding may receive less national funding. ESF funds can have a clear advantage over discretionary national funding arrangements in being earmarked over longer stretches of time, thereby binding the decisions of future governments, at least to a certain degree. To the contrary, most national funds result from annual allocations.

Using ESF funds to support national policies adds a substantial administrative burden for the responsible administrative units and the organisations finally implementing the schemes. Moreover, it involves the considerable risk that some activities and the reclaimed costs are found ineligible for ESF funding. Typically, many details concerning the interpretation of the funding framework are worked out between the EU and the Member States only within the process. In return, regulations for ESF co-funded projects are often redefined, the clarification might be applied to completed activities. Organisations implementing ESF projects might

therefore have considerable risk due to the complex accounting requirements and to unforeseen changes in the interpretation of rules by national and EU authorities.

Many have observed that rules have tightened, and accountability requirements have sharply increased for ESF projects over the past funding periods. The administrative burdens were retrospectively described as moderate for the first (1995–1999) and second (2000–2006) funding periods. However, the rules became more rigid from 2007 to 2013. Requirements have become even more onerous for the current period. Administrative units have responded to increasing administrative burdens and risks by changing the type of activity foreseen for ESF co-funding. Before 2006, innovative frameworks had been frequently co-funded with ESF funds. Today, administrators prefer to use ESF means to co-fund recently introduced, but well-established programme lines. Only by relying on proven activities can Austrian authorities minimise the risks of failure to redeem the planned ESF contributions.

Organisations have substantial administrative burdens and risks when providing services based on ESF co-funding, no matter which ESF funding regime has been chosen. They need to develop accounting systems complying with the ESF rules, along with their established approaches used with the Austrian authorities. On top of this additional burden, ESF rules and/or their interpretation by the Austrian authorities or their accounting firms directly interfere with many organisational decisions and limit the organisation's autonomy in some key areas of personnel management and salary.

For example, within the ESF framework, personnel costs must not exceed the minimum income of the applicable collective labour agreements, although the latter states only the lower bound of wages and organisations should pay more to reflect demonstrated achievements. While any employer typically has considerable leeway in rewarding previous job experiences when defining the entry pay level, the ESF rules apparently limit this autonomy. Organisations might be required to provide the employment history from social security registers to determine whether the lowest legally possible salary level has been used. Similar practices were not common in Austria in the social policy field.

To conclude, ESF money comes at a high administrative cost, compared to funds from the Austrian budget. However, the advantage of multi-year funding arrangements might outweigh this disadvantage.

14.2.2.2 Financial Flow for Adult Basic Education in the Initiative for Adult Education

In the following, as an example, the funding flow devoted to Adult Basic Education within the I:AE is analysed in detail. Three significant observations can be made. First, funding increased greatly between the first and the second funding period: funding nearly doubled when ESF funding became available. Second, funding stagnated during the third funding period (with an increase in total funding but earmarked for four instead of three years) except for the capital region of Vienna. Third, the funding levels strongly diverged in relation to the number of residents in the various federal provinces; this mirrored, on the one hand, the different sizes of the target groups with more people needing basic skills in the capital region and, on the other hand, federal provinces devoting differing funding levels to basic skills education (Fig. 14.1).⁶

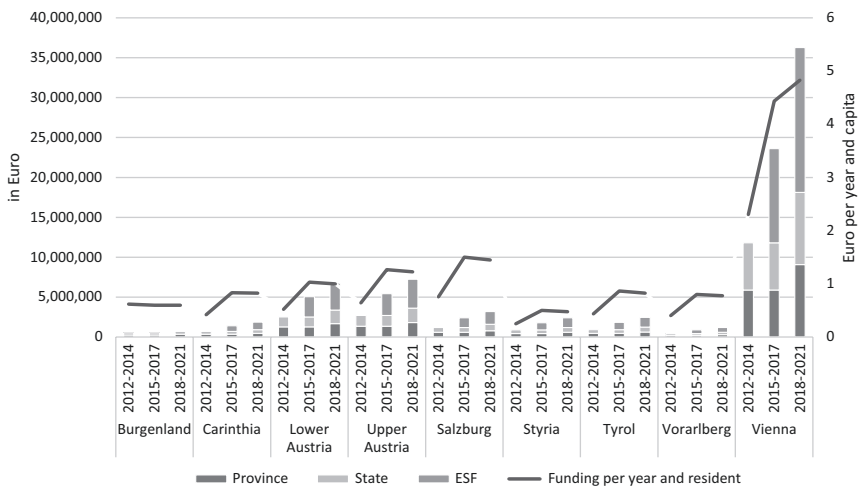


Fig. 14.1 Funding planned for the Initiative for Adult Education for the three funding periods – Basic Skills courses. (Source: Our analysis of 15a Agreement, 2017)

14.2.3 Management and Implementation of ESF Funding in Austria

ESF funding in Austria addresses a broad variety of programmes that include a wide range of programmes for ‘alternative education’ for young people (15–18, 19–25). The management and implementation of these programmes also vary widely. The 16 intermediate authorities play a key role and their placement at either national or regional levels results in different implementation structures. In addition, management practices differ according to their different fields of activity and their interrelation to larger policy-making frameworks.

14.2.3.1 The Example of Initiative for Adult Education (I:AE)

The Initiative for Adult Education has two categories of educational programmes, courses for literacy and basic skills and courses preparing for acquisition of a school-leaving certificate (ISCED11 Level 2) (for a comprehensive description see Table 14.2).

During the 1990s, when the field of adult basic education (ABE) was poorly developed in Austria, pilot projects to promote basic skills for adults were started in Vienna, Linz, Salzburg, and Graz. New methods for alphabetisation and language instruction were established for people learning German without strong literacy in their first language. After Austria’s accession to the EU in 1995, the new EU funds and particularly the ESF gave a large boost to the field. More money for adult basic education became available in 2000 when the Ministry of Education gained access to ESF funding, previously administered exclusively by the Ministry of Social Affairs. From 2000 onwards, large-scale ABE-related project-based consortia (*Entwicklungspartnerschaften*) were co-funded by ESF and enabled the broader provision of basic adult education and the development of network structures and projects – including training for teachers. Building on the regionally very different measures and experiences from networks and projects, policy-makers placed more importance on strategically planning the further development of adult education.⁷

Table 14.2 The educational programme of the Initiative for Adult Education

The framework Initiative for Adult Education has two categories of programmes

1. *Basisbildung** [Austrian term] refers to
 - a. Graduates of the Austrian school system AND (former) migrants with a fair command of German
 - i. Alphabetisation
 - ii. Provision of basic skills on elementary level (equivalent to ISCED11 1) in literacy and numeracy
 - iii. Basic ICT skills
 - iv. Learning to learn
 - v. Life skills and political skills
 - b. Migrants (without a basic command of German) with no or very low levels of literacy in their first language AND with only limited schooling on primary or lower secondary level
 - i. Elementary German (Level A1, A2)
 - ii. Alphabetisation in German (exceptional cases: also, in their first language)
 - iii. Provision of basic skills on an elementary level (equivalent to ISCED11 1) in literacy and numeracy
 - iv. Basic ICT skills
 - v. Learning to learn
 - vi. Life skills and political skills
2. *Erwachsenengerechter* *Pflichtschulabschluss* (Preparation for acquiring the school-leaving certificate – designed for adults (ISCED 11 2)) (part of Second Chance Education)
 - a. Preparing for an examination, covering the lower secondary curricula in reading/writing, maths, English, and a selected further topic

Basic skills courses (1) are funded for 100–400 teaching hours per participant, whereas for preparatory courses for acquiring the school-leaving certificate (2) there is funding for up to 1180 teaching hours per participant according to the individual need.

In addition to content-based courses a range of accompanying guidance offers form part of the programme including an entrance phase, learning guidance, social-pedagogic support and career guidance.

Sources: Programme planning documents, own description

Based on the PIAAC survey 2011/2012, the target group for literacy courses and courses for basic skills was estimated to be at least 243,000 people between 15 and 64 years old (equal to adults with no literacy or literacy below Level 1 of the PIAAC framework) (Steiner & Vogtenhuber, 2014). Estimates for the target group for preparatory courses for gaining the school-leaving certificate range between 220,000 and 337,000 people

(Steiner, Pessl, Kuschej, Egger-Steiner, & Metzler, 2017; Steiner & Vogtenhuber, 2014). All policies estimated the share of the population in need of ABE was smaller for the 15- to 24-year olds compared to other age cohorts. All age groups of migrants were more likely to need ABE.

In 2011, a new programme was launched under the name ‘Initiative for Adult Education’ (I:AE) based on a contractual agreement of federal and regional governments. For the agreement, a specific instrument foreseen by the Austrian constitution is applied that allows for mutually binding agreements between the federal government and the regions (the so-called ‘15a Vereinbarung’). The budget for the first funding period 2012–2014 was Euro 54.6 million to finance basic education and compulsory education free of charge for adults. During this period, the programme aims of promoting basic education and skills of adults were also recorded in the Action Plan of the Austrian National Lifelong Learning Strategy LLL:2020 launched in 2011 (Austrian Government, 2011). In the following decade, the programme was prolonged two times for the funding periods 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 and budgets were raised to Euro 75.8 million (for three years) and Euro 111 million (for four years). With the second funding period starting in 2015, co-financing by the ESF allowed an additional intensification of activities.⁸ Based on evaluations of each funding period, the programme was developed and adapted as stated in programming documents for each phase (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, 2015, 2018; Länder-Bund-ExpertInnengruppe “Initiative Erwachsenenbildung”, 2011). Adaptions were made concerning the required qualifications for trainers and counsellors, the definition of target groups, and the facilitation of participants’ progress to higher level courses.

The accreditation process for the Initiative for Adult Education is open for organisations in different fields of activity and results in a broad variety of providers. The funding framework allows some leeway in implementation and thereby takes into account different practices, experiences, and structures developed prior to the start of the framework programme. The organisations providing courses in the I:AE framework have existed on average for more than 20 years. Many belong to other organisational fields outside adult education; however, they provide ABE courses to their various client groups, such as courses for German as a second language to

migrants and particularly refugees. Among providers of courses in the I:AE in the second funding period (2015–2017), there was a strong emphasis on organisations supporting migrants and refugees followed by (traditional) Adult Education providers (e.g. the *Volkshochschulen*) and non-profit CVET providers. Another important field of activity with providers joining the I:AE framework is social work, particularly social youth work. For the recently started third funding period (2018–2021), no clear report is available yet, but interviews with ABE teachers indicate that in 2018 some of the small migrant NGOs did not receive renewed support.

The I:AE programme's impact in the field of ABE in Austria can be seen in the increased participation. Before the start of the Initiative for Adult Education, participants in basic skills courses were estimated at approximately 750 a year (Länder-Bund-ExpertInnengruppe "Initiative Erwachsenenbildung", 2011). During the first funding period of I:AE (2012–2014), the monitoring indicated between 2500 and 3000 entrants to basic skills courses every semester. The nearly doubled funding resulted in a significant increase of participants during the second funding period (2015–2017) with up to 4500 entrants per semester. Planned participation goals were clearly exceeded except for a few provincial regions (Steiner et al., 2017).

The I:AE monitoring reports used the providers' data on participants and programmes and the regional funding bodies' data on funding. Monitoring reports are published twice a year. In addition, for the first and second funding period, an external ex-post evaluation gained more information and suggestions for further adaptations of the framework (Steiner et al., 2017; Stoppacher, Edler, & Reinbacher-Fahrner, 2014).

The two different categories of the I:AE have differing procedures for applications and funding decisions. The processes also differ according to the use of ESF co-funding. The procedures are defined by the 15a agreement (2017):

Without ESF funding. Accredited adult education providers (note that the accreditation does not imply any entitlements for funding) can apply for funding to the department within the provincial authority with the power to approve. The following criteria determine the decision: a well-balanced regional distribution of the educational measures; an overall balance of targeted groups; and the availability of funds. In the basic skills

category, the federal-level share (50%) is paid to the provincial authorities by the Federal Ministry of Education in the beginning of each year and immediately transferred to the approved providers. The provincial share (50%) is paid by the end of November each year. Within the school-leaving certificate category, the federal provinces also transfer funds to providers in November, whereas the federal-level share is only transferred after the provinces verify their payment to the providers. Federal funds not requested by a province can be re-distributed to other provinces. A province can re-distribute up to 20% of the total funding between the two categories of the I:AE if the federal state gives its consent.

With ESF funding (for all provinces except Burgenland). The decision on funding is made at the federal level in accordance with a recommendation by each province based on the above-mentioned criteria. Funding shares of the federal state and provinces are increased by ESF funds allocated by the ESF managing authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs. All payments go directly to the providers. The federal-level share is transferred at the beginning of the year, when the funding contract comes into force, whereas the share of the provinces is paid by the end of November each year. The ESF share – except 10% of approved funds – are paid by the federal state to the providers. The remaining 10% are transferred after the final account has been accepted. Redistribution of funds is only permitted from the category of school-leaving certificates in the direction of basic skills courses.

The ESF co-funded professionalisation, development, and training projects already before the start of the I:AE framework. The Ministry of Education issues calls for proposals in this field.

14.2.3.2 Implementation of the I:AE Framework

The following section describes the implementation of the I:AE framework based on examples of the Vienna Adult Education Centres and contrasted in some key points to the courses provided by Innovative Social Projects (ISOP) in the region of Styria in southern Austria. Both providers had been among the pioneers of ABE in Austria in the early 1990s. The Vienna Adult Education Centres (*Volkshochschule Wien*, VHS), were founded more than 130 years ago and belong to the most

traditional organisations in the field of adult education in Austria. ISOP (*Innovative Sozialprojekte*) was established in 1987 and combines activities in the field of alternative and adult education, support for migrants and refugees, and various types of social work (particularly in schools).

The literacy and basic skills programmes of the Vienna Adult Education Centre address a wide range of target groups and therefore provide four different types of courses. Participants in courses for speakers of another language are assigned to classes according to their language skills and find themselves in comparatively homogenous groups with a standard size of ten participants. An emphasis is made on reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in German. Numeracy and digital skills are integrated into the main concept of the course. Because of the high inflow of refugees and a lack of alternative opportunities in recent years, these courses became more numerous and supported the refugees orienting themselves to the Austrian society and preparing for further education. They compensated to some extent for the lack of suitable German-language courses. Also, more courses for speakers of other languages address specific groups, such as mothers with child-care obligations for whom free child-care is arranged during classes, or for migrants between 15 and 25 years old with an emphasis on specific needs of that age group.

In basic skills courses for adults with a good command of German or German native speakers, participants' skill levels are more heterogeneous with participants striving for very individual goals. Standard group size is set at six participants or ten in case of team-teaching.

ISOP, by contrast, only provides one type of basic skills course that mainly addresses adults with a good command of German. Group sizes do not exceed six participants so each student can receive tailored support. Empowerment of the students is a key goal of the ISOP approach to adult basic education.

14.2.4 Concluding Remarks

The development and implementation of the Initiative for Adult Education (I:AE) has provided something like a stable, multi-year framework to provide adult basic education for the first time in Austria's

history. Based on the framework, educational provision has increased. However, it is not known to what extent the newly introduced programmes have replaced courses offered previously under different funding arrangements. In 2015, ESF co-funding for I:AE measures allowed for a significant expansion of courses, despite a reduction in national funding. The administrative burdens and risks coming with the ESF money, however, have been an important problem for all involved organisations. The new funding arrangements made for the 2018–2021 period has – gauged by the reactions of providers at an early stage of the process – made administration even more difficult for the providing organisations.

14.3 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

14.3.1 The Impact of EU Funding Arrangements on National Policy-Making

By opening up EU funding lines, the European institutions intend to create – following an ideal-type, top-down plan – new provisions to fulfil the agreed-on policy goals. In a simple world, each Euro of EU funding should be traceable to a new activity at the Member States level. However, things are certainly not so simple. National policy-makers need, first of all, to decide on how they are going to mobilise resources for their required national contributions: any EU co-funded initiative competes therefore for funding with other goals on the national level. Beyond funding new initiatives, EU money might be channelled so that national initiatives are boosted by additional money. Finally, they may attempt to use EU money as a substitute for national funding for closely related activities and thus leave the overall situation unchanged.

All in all, because one ESF funding period follows another, Member States likely ‘endogenise’ EU funding and assume funds will be available. Therefore, governments must react effectively and efficiently and not lose too much money with burdensome administration while not making

'mistakes' that result in activities not eligible for ESF reimbursement. For rich countries, where ESF funds make up only for a small proportion of all spending on related social policies, administrations can choose which activities should be co-funded by the ESF and which activities remain supported only with national funds. What looks like a steering effect of EU policy might turn out to be a clever technique to 'bring back' a country's EU contribution while following mainly their own policy agenda.

Experienced policy-makers may succeed in linking their specific policy goals, for which they find it difficult to mobilise locally sufficient support, to an emerging EU policy agenda with funds available from the EU, thereby generating legitimacy and additional funding, so that they finally succeed with their projects, which might have otherwise failed. While the projects might be portrayed as resulting from top-down EU policy-making, they might actually be better understood as examples of effectively using EU agendas to give crucial extra support for a local project hampered by insufficient resources. Within the Austrian government, highly skilled administrators could symbolically merge EU agendas with local goals and achieve a local breakthrough when local opponents yield to a project obviously fitting EU prescriptions and funding opportunities.

We have demonstrated that in Austria the field of adult basic education and the Initiative for Adult Education have strongly benefited from EU policies. However, it is also important to analyse the I:AE as a genuine creature of Austrian policy-making, with skilful institutional entrepreneurs making space for an unprecedented funding framework. The I:AE marks the first large-scale attempt to provide stable public funding for adult education outside the field of active labour market policy in Austria.

A crucial factor for success is whether EU funds are the only money available or whether EU funds complement substantial national funding in a policy area. Because European Union funding has specific accountability demands and therefore limits the autonomy of all involved parties, policy-makers and beneficiaries of public funding might prefer national money with less bureaucratic requirements and related risks. A policy-maker could feel defeated if forced to accept insecure EU funding instead of safe national funds. To sweeten the additional administrative burdens

of EU funding, the responsible administrators might be promised more funds than they would have available without seeking EU funding. The I:AE clearly allows consideration of how EU funds expand the funds available, yet also increase administrative burdens and decrease autonomy.

To conclude, at a local level, the use of EU funds might be analysed as a game, when administrative units fight for access to budgeted funding with EU funds as one source among others, and potentially not the most attractive. Government administrators often have the goal of ensuring that no available EU funding remains unused and anyone helping to achieve this goal might be celebrated. However, the politics of using EU funding need to be situated in much wider struggles among competing fields of policy-making.

14.3.2 The Larger Picture: EU Policy-Making and the Development of the Austrian Adult Education Sector

The implications of EU policy-making for developing adult learning and adult education requires consideration of both the particular impact of the European Youth Guarantee, as a broad European framework, on the use of the ESF for youth-related projects in Austria – and the larger picture of the change driven by European integration after Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995.

Austria and other countries have policies little affected by Europeanisation, while other policies have undergone a complete change based on European funding and policy prescriptions. For example, EU accession has only weakly affected Austria's education system on the primary and secondary levels and Austria's approach to VET. However, the field of adult learning – including adult education – has been substantially changed by the new ideas, policies, and funding lines available for supporting lifelong learning, a concept rarely addressed in Austria prior to 1995.

The impact of EU policies on adult learning have been strongly mediated by the effects of the European employment and labour market policies, a field, radically changed by European integration. In the light of

European policies, Austrian Keynesianism favouring demand-side employment policies building on debt-funded, anti-cyclic public investment programmes had to be broadly replaced by supply-side measures, active labour market policies in particular (Pernicka & Hefler, 2018). Keynesian policies had conflicted with key principles of EU law (e.g. ban on state subsidies for local firms) and the Maastricht criteria for budgetary discipline, making the change in employment policies an example for the effects of negative integration (Marks, Scharpf, Schmitter, & Streeck, 1996). Beyond the disruption of established policy patterns, the European funding programmes helped to further develop demand-side-oriented employment policies. After the accession, the Public Employment Service, based on income from the unemployment insurance, quickly became by far the most important funding agency for an ever-wider range of training activities and has remained in this position ever since. With the unprecedented public funding for employment-related training measures, the whole landscape of adult education has been altered significantly.

Overall, Austria has had a loose coupling (Weick, 1976) between ‘soft’ EU policies and funding directives and the resulting Austrian policy implementation in various fields. The I:AE provides a good example for analysis. By 1995, the field of adult basic education was highly restricted to a few local providers and lacked any stable funding. From 2000 onwards, the Ministry of Education used the newly gained access to ESF funds to implement a series of large-scale development projects across Austria, giving the whole field an initial boost.

However, the driving forces behind the I:AE have been mainly specific to Austria. Representatives of the Ministry of Education tried to forge a framework capable of providing stable funds for ‘adult education’ – here standing for anything outside the regular education system – even without the (constitutional) legal competence at a central state level and at the level of provinces. With the aid of one specific, highly complex and demanding legal instrument (the so-called 15a agreement), the nine provinces and the central state created a legal base to fund two specific types of adult education and create a framework for implementation. In principle, it would be possible (and had already been proposed) to use a similar framework for other types of adult learning, thereby overcoming

the dominance of active labour market policies in the public funding of adult education.

In turn, from 2015 onwards, the established funding instrument, which had been based solely on national funds, has been expanded based on ESF funding. While the overall funding available for adult basic education has increased, the Austrian contributions have decreased. Moreover, all providers in the field have a much higher administrative burden and lower levels of autonomy in organising their programmes and paying employees.

Starting with its achievements, the establishment of a framework for stable provision of ABE significantly improved adult education in Austria, which has benefited greatly both from European Union policy prescriptions and funding between 2000 and 2013. For the first time, alternative education for people needing basic skills were not created only through ad hoc projects. The framework has been stable enough to allow early steps towards the professionalisation of adult educators specialised in providing support for adults with difficulties in achieving basic skills. Because the funding framework prefers teachers employed via regular contracts (instead of taking advantage of self-employed teachers), the framework has contributed to a marked increase in adult educators enjoying some levels of social security.

The programme's introduction has made clear for the first time that, in adult basic education, demand outstrips provision. In the past years, many regions needed to establish waiting lists for adults interested in participation. Moreover, the places funded within the framework were used as a stopgap, because the Austrian government and the regions had inadequate provision for large numbers of refugees coming during 2015. Many refugees entered the I:AE programmes and further overwhelmed the available places. Finally, some data indicate that other organisations, particularly the Public Employment Service, have (partly) withdrawn from funding basic skill programmes. The widespread interest in participating in the I:AE reveals the need to further expand adult basic education.

Links to EU policy prescriptions generally serve as a valuable tool to promote the field of adult basic education nationally. However, the link between specific EU policies and the I:AE framework is loose and somewhat arbitrary. The scheme has been marketed in various ways. Currently,

it is portrayed as one measure of the Austrian Youth Guarantee Plan, but also of the Upskilling Pathway scheme. It is seen as one of the most remarkable outcomes of the Austrian LLL:2020 strategy (2011), itself the response to both the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) supporting the Lisbon Strategy and the ET 2020 programme.

To conclude, while the positive and negative effects of EU integration can be hardly overestimated for adult education policies in Austria, it is a completely different question whether the ideas attached to a single EU programme or funding line can be traced directly to activities implemented in Austria. While it is certainly possible to learn about every single Euro from EU programmes spent on Austrian projects, it is a completely different challenge to understand under what circumstances EU funding has effectively created new structures and in what cases the new EU funds have only replaced national funding.

Notes

1. A more extended account and analysis of the Initiative for Adult Education is presented in the Austrian contribution for WP2 (Hefler, Steinheimer, & Wulz, 2018).
2. In ISCED11, graduates of VET colleges – a form of upper secondary education – are counted on ISCED 5 level; therefore, the comparatively low graduation rate in higher education is not visible any longer in international data sets pooling data for ISCED11 5–8.
3. See an often-given presentation of one head of the Austrian Public Employment Service Johannes Kopf <https://www.socialeurope.eu/youth-unemployment-austrians>.
4. This joint project involved several ministries (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, Federal Ministry of Families and Youth, Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy) along with the social partners, the provinces and relevant (youth) organisations.
5. For example, https://www.bmf.gv.at/budget/budgetangelegenheiten-der-eu/181008BMF-Bericht_EU-Haushalt_FINAL.pdf?6o2q75; see page 4 for the funds redeemed from the ESF.

6. In the second category of the I:AE, concerning the preparatory courses for gaining the school-leaving certificate, funding sums were the same during the first and second funding period but increased slightly when ESF-funding was introduced in the third funding period. The regional distribution also favours the capital region but is more varied among the other regions.
7. For a more detailed account on the development of the field of ABE and the I:AE in Austria see Country Chapter WP2 (Hefler et al., 2018).
8. The share for the basic skills programme was EUR 22 million (2012–2014), EUR 43 million (2015–2017) and EUR 62 million (2018–2021).

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15

The Belgian Response to Youth Guarantee

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15.1 Introduction

The Youth Guarantee (YG) has been implemented in Belgium since January 2014. At the time of the presentation of the Belgian Youth Guarantee implementation plan (BYGIP) in 2013, youth unemployment in Belgium was at the highest level in the last 25 years, at 23.7%. Urban regions like Brussels and Antwerp, and the South of the country, Wallonia, were especially affected.

Because of the Belgian federal government structure, the BYGIP consists of four different implementation plans: one for Flanders, one for Brussels-Capital Region,¹ one for Wallonia, and one for the German-speaking community in Eastern Belgium. The situation is especially complex in Brussels, where the Flemish Community and the French-speaking community share responsibility towards youth. Only Brussels and

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Wallonia were eligible for funding by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) due to their elevated youth unemployment rate. This chapter focuses only on Flanders and Brussels.

In Flanders, employment policy was already sharply focused on youth unemployment since 2004, and a Youth Employment Plan was implemented since 2008. The Youth Guarantee was therefore largely a continuation of this policy, especially since Flanders was not eligible for YEI funding. The situation was different in Brussels, where the YG Action Plan was used to develop a whole new approach to young job seekers, making use of the YEI-funds. The Brussels public employment service (Actiris), established a dedicated Youth Guarantee service within its organisation. In the press, the Actiris director called the new approach a “Copernican revolution in tackling youth unemployment” (Hubo, 9 October 2013).

As both regions experience not only different socio-economic conditions, but also a different institutional framework in the approach towards youth unemployment, they provide together an interesting case to describe two different but interwoven contexts and implementations of the YG within one country.

15.1.1 State Form and Administration

Belgium is a federal State consisting of three Regions, namely the Flemish Region (Flanders), Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region and three Communities, Dutch-, French- and German-speaking. The regions and communities overlap to a large extent, but while the regions are geographically determined, the communities are determined based on the language. The Flemish Community incorporates the inhabitants of Flanders and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. The French Community incorporates the inhabitants of the French-speaking area of Wallonia and the French-speaking inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region. The German-speaking Community incorporates the inhabitants of the German-speaking area of Wallonia. Each region and each community has its own Government and Parliament. It should be noted that in Flanders, the Government and the

Parliament of the Flemish Region ‘merged’ at the outset with the Government and Parliament of the Flemish Community.² In practice, therefore, only one Government and one Parliament exist in Flanders.³

The Regions have powers in the fields that are connected with their region or territory in the widest meaning of the term. As a result, the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region have, for example, powers relating to the economy and employment in their own region. The Communities hold powers connected to the individual – the idea behind it being that communities are based on the concept of ‘language’ and language is ‘dependent on the individual’. Powers over education and vocational training belong to the Communities – since these are issues linked to individuals. The different communities have separate ‘mini-parliaments’ in the Brussels Parliament: the community commissions. They are composed of representatives of the communities in Brussels and are called the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) and the French Community Commission (CoCoF).

The Flemish Community incorporates the inhabitants of Flanders and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. As a result, the Flemish Government has a responsibility not only towards the inhabitants of Flanders, but also towards the inhabitants of Brussels-Capital Region, including the youth. Although in theory their responsibility is limited towards the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of Brussels-Capital Region, in practice most institutions don’t make a strict division.

15.1.2 Socio-economic Conditions

Belgium is a relatively wealthy country within Europe, with a GDP per capita of 39,500 Euro in 2018. Like almost all European countries, Belgium was affected by the economic crisis of 2008. While it also had a negative real GDP growth in 2009, at –2.3% this decrease was amongst the smallest of the European Union (EU). Since then yearly growth rates have remained positive at an average of 1.4. In 2018, the GDP growth rate was amongst the lowest of the EU at 1.4.

Expenditure on social protection in Belgium is relatively high at 29.6% of the GDP, compared with the European average (28.1% in 2016).

Since 2008, expenditure on social protection expressed as a percentage of GDP has remained relatively stable, ranging between 27.7% (in 2008) and 30.2% (in 2015). The share of social expenditure intended for unemployment is above average but has decreased sharply, from 12.2% in 2008 to 6.9% in 2017.

The educational level of the population has increased during the last decade. While in 2008, 28.4% of the population (aged 15–64) had a tertiary education level, in 2018 this share was already at 36.0%. The share of people with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education declined from 33.6% in 2008 to 26.3% in 2018. The share of people with upper secondary education fluctuated around 38%. In the same period, the share of early school leavers (18–24-year-olds) also decreased from 12.0% to 8.6%. Participation in lifelong learning is rather low, at only 8.5% in 2018, below the EU average of 11.1%.

Around 301,000 people were unemployed in Belgium in 2018. The unemployment rate is at 6% of the active population, which is below the European average of 6.8% but still in the top half of EU countries (the median being 5.7%). Between 2008 and 2010, the unemployment rate rose from 7.0% to 8.3%, and in 2014 and 2015 it was at its highest at 8.5%. Since 2015, unemployment rates have been decreasing steadily⁴ following the European trend which has begun a year earlier. Youth unemployment (the percentage of active population under 25 years old) is higher than the European average (15.8% in Belgium compared to 15.2% in Europe in 2018), but has decreased a lot since 2013, when it was at its highest in the last 25 years (23.7%) (Eurostat, 2019). Employment rates differ greatly between low-skilled youth (9%) and high-skilled youth (44%) (Steunpunt Werk, 2019a). In Belgium, around 118,000 young people aged 15–24 are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The NEET rate was 9.2% in 2018, which is higher than the EU average of 10.4%.

The figures differ greatly for the different regions in Belgium. Flanders generally performs better than the other regions. In 2018, youth unemployment was at 10.9% in Flanders, 30.6% in Brussels, and 22.5% in Wallonia (Eurostat, 2019; [yth_empl_110]). Between 2013 (the start of the BYGIP) and 2018, Brussels reduced its youth unemployment rate from 39.9% to 30.6%, and the Flemish youth unemployment rate

dropped from 16.6% to 10.9% (Eurostat, 2019).⁵ In Flanders, the NEET rate is 7.8%, while in Brussels it is 13.3%. Between 2013 and 2016, the Brussels NEET rate dropped from 18.7% to 15.2%, and the Flemish NEET rate dropped from 10.5% to 7.5% after having increased considerably between 2008 and 2013 (6.3% to 10.5%) (Steunpunt Werk, 2019b).

15.2 The National Response to the Youth Guarantee

The main distinguishing feature of the Youth Guarantee in Belgium is the fragmentation of the Belgian implementation plan for the Youth Guarantee in four implementation plans. The (Belgian) Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (BYGIP) was presented in December 2013 and started in January 2014. The BYGIP consists of one implementation plan for each region, namely for Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital, and one for the German-speaking Community (BYGIP, 2014). Each region implements a specific YG Action Plan which takes into consideration its specific context and challenges. This chapter focuses only on Flanders and Brussels since the Flemish Community shares responsibility towards youth in Brussels.

In Flanders, the employment policy already focused on youth unemployment since 2004 with the aim to connect every jobseeker to an individual pathway at the public employment service within six months of unemployment. This was further strengthened by the implementation of the Youth Employment Plan (YEP) in 2008, which already set as a goal to reach unemployed youth within five months after registering at the public employment service with an offer of employment or personal guidance. As from 2014 onwards, the YEP became the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. The Youth Guarantee did therefore not lead to big policy changes in Flanders, nor did it contribute to a newly found awareness for youth unemployment. The Youth Guarantee nevertheless did lead to optimisation and strengthening of existing policy, where the most substantive change was the ambition to aim for linking jobseekers with the service within four months from 2014 on for all registered people between the ages of 18 and 25 years (Desiere et al., 2017).

Given that the unemployment rate of young people under the age of 25 was below 25% in 2012, Flanders is not eligible for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). Therefore, Flanders supports the YG objective through what already was in place making use of ESF funds. The focus of the YG is on three specific actions: all young job seekers under the age of 25 years will be offered a tailored trajectory with competence enhancement actions within 4 months after registration as a job seeker; all unqualified school leavers will start by the end of the sixth month after registration with a vocational training and/or work experience; and those NEET young people who do not register with the PES are 'tracked down' and motivated to be counselled by partners at municipal level. The starting point for the non-registered NEETs is the moment they leave school. Therefore, essential administrative data (education, social services, municipalities, etc.) will be combined.

In Brussels, the unemployment rate of young people is a lot higher than the national average, and the YG Action Plan was used to develop a whole new approach to young job seekers making use of the YEI-funds. The implementation of the YG and the YEI in Brussels has one important distinguishing feature from Flanders: the age range of the YG and the YEI has been extended in Brussels to cover youths up to the age of 29 years instead of 24. Given the significance of the problem of youth unemployment and especially the high percentage of NEETs, Brussels has availed itself of the exception provided in Regulation (EC) 1304/2013 and extended the age limit of eligible target groups by including young people up to the age of 29 in its implementation plan. Because of the specific situation and context in Brussels, they also decided to give special attention to non-registered NEETs. Four different kind of actions are developed with YEI funding: training and formation offered by public employment service of Flanders (VDAB) and by Bruxelles Formation (French), internships, counselling and temporary jobs.

15.2.1 Governance Structure

The implementation of the National Youth Guarantee is coordinated by Synerjob, the Belgian Federation of public services involved in the areas of employment and vocational training in Belgium. Four Public Employment Services (PES) are gathered under this federation.⁶ The

federal government itself has no further competencies regarding the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and supports it mainly through the unemployment benefit system. The most important institutions are therefore the bodies that have the competency with regard to employment (the PES): VDAB for Flanders and Actiris for the bilingual Brussels. The tables below (Table 15.1) show an overview of the stakeholders involved in the Youth Guarantee policy and implementation thereof in Flanders and in Brussels.

In Flanders, VDAB is the most important actor and implementer of Youth Guarantee. The VDAB decides on the most appropriate method to activate young people (vacancy counselling, guidance, mediation, training, work experience, internship, apprenticeship, etc.). The entity 'European Social Fund' is another very important actor. It is an entity of the Department of Work and Social Economy and the managing body for ESF in Flanders. While most actions regarding Youth Guarantee are coordinated by VDAB, the entity ESF takes care of some specific actions.

Brussels is complex and public action in the areas of transition from education, training and employment is situated on multiple levels:

- on a political level, with the Regional Government, the Boards of the Community Commissions in Brussels, as well as the authorities of the French and Flemish Communities responsible for education and aid to young people;
- in terms of social consultation, mainly with the Brussels Committee for Economic and Social Consultation;
- on an operating level, with the public services for employment and vocational training (Actiris, Bruxelles Formation, VDAB), including ongoing training for employees and with the parties involved in education and social action (ranging from general information to specific aid) aimed at young people.

The most important actor in Brussels regarding the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is Actiris (the PES). Actiris is the main managing authority for YEI funds and does the coordination and implementation of the YG. Since 2016, Actiris acts as National Coordinator of the Youth Guarantee in Belgium. Assignments of Actiris within the context of the

Table 15.1 Governance structure: Key actors that support and implement YG in Flanders and in Brussels by role, level and competencies

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG/ESF	Competencies
Flemish Government	Public administration	Regional	Legislator – provider	Exercises legislative powers and executive power of the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region. Responsibilities in training and education and employment. Manages and executes the following European programmes: ESF, AMIF and EGF.
Entity 'European Social Fund' of the Department of Work and Social Economy	Public administration	Regional	Coordinator – Management authority of the ESF	
Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Education – VDAB	Public administration	Regional	Coordinator – implementer – provider	Flemish public employment service. Coordinates most actions regarding Youth Guarantee. The organisation helps job seekers to find an adequate job and if necessary, also supports them on the job floor during the first months. VDAB is also an important provider of vocational training through its own 'competence centres and by using the capacity in other (e.g. private) training centres. VDAB provides information, advice and support through a partnership with organisations accredited by VDAB to provide those services.

Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurship Training – SYNTRA Flanders	Public administration	Regional	Provider	A governmental agency (within the policy domain Work and Social Economy) promoting entrepreneurship in Flanders mainly by stimulating and guaranteeing education and training through a network of accredited centres for the education and training of entrepreneurs or those training to work in SME.
Department of Education and Training (Flanders)	Public administration	Regional	Coordinator	Supports the Minister of Education with regard to educational policy. Implements YG with regard to activities in the field of education and training.
EPOS	Public under the Department of Education	Regional	Coordinator	Epos is responsible for the execution in Flanders of European and international programmes and actions for education, training and lifelong learning.
Provinces	Public	Provincial	Implementer	Involvement in the implementation of the intervention with specific acts outlining the fields of intervention and the interrelationships with other subjects.
Municipalities	Public	Local	Implementer	Involvement in the implementation of the intervention with specific acts outlining the fields of intervention and the interrelationships with other subjects.

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG/ESF	Competencies
Social welfare organisation – OCMW	Public	Local	Implementation – Potential beneficiaries	The OCMW of each municipality has the task to guarantee the right to social integration to those who have insufficient means of subsistence and who fulfil the conditions of the law. The OCMW has three important instruments: employment, a dole and an individualised project for social integration, whether or not combined.
Organisations authorised or accredited to provide employment services	Private firms – enterprises – not – for-profit organisations	Regional – Local	Providers – Potential beneficiaries	
Schools (from primary education till adult education)	Public/Private	Local	Providers – Potential beneficiaries	
NGO's (e.g. youth organisations,...)	Private	Regional – Local	Providers – Potential beneficiaries	
Government of Brussels-Capital Region	Public authority	Regional	Legislator	Responsible for matters defined by the regional competences: includes employment. Coordination of aims and implementation of the YG programme

Brussels Regional Public Service – Economy and Employment	Public administration	Regional	Legislator	Amongst other tasks: promotes economic development and job creation; manages public funds and organises their monitoring; provides an effective representation of the BRPS in national, European and international bodies and coordinates the actions of the administrations
French Community Commission	Public administration	Regional	Legislator/ coordinator/Potential beneficiaries	Is the competent authority for political initiatives relating to French Community matters in Brussels-Capital Region (BCR).
Flemish Community Commission (VGC)	Public administration	Regional	Coordinator/Potential beneficiaries	Is the competent authority for political initiatives relating to Flemish Community matters in BCR.
Common Community Commission	Public administration	Regional	Coordinator/Potential beneficiaries	Regulates and manages matters common to the two communities in BCR.
Entity 'European Social Fund' of the Department of Work and Social Economy – ESF	Public administration	Regional	Coordinator/ Management authority of ESF Flanders and of Flemish part of ESF BCR	Cfr. Table "Key actors in Flanders".
Agence FSE: Entity 'European Social Fund' of the French-speaking community of Belgium	Public: Institution governed by Walloon regional government	Regional	Coordinator/ Management authority of the ESF FWB and of French part of ESF BCR	Manages and executes the following European programmes: ESF and AMIF, for the French-speaking community in Wallonia and BCR.

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG/ESF	Competencies
Actiris: Brussels Regional Employment Office	Public administration	Regional	Coordinator/Provider/ implementer	Public employment service of BCR: implements employment policy and ensures the proper functioning of the employment market in the BCR. Manages YG in BCR.
Bruxelles Formation	Public administration	Regional	Provider	French language occupational training institute – provider of vocational training (through its own 'competence centres and by using the capacity in other (e.g. private) training centres Cfr. Table "Key actors in Flanders".
Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Education – VDAB	Public administration	Regional	Provider	
Brussels Service for Formation for small- and medium-sized enterprises	Public operator	Regional	Potential beneficiaries	Complementary actions with PES actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complementary actions and differentiated targets • on alternate training, training leading to a qualification, job trials and reinforcement of attractiveness of technical jobs Develop actions to engage against training drop-outs

Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurship Training – SYNTRA Flanders Municipalities	Public administration	Regional	Provider	Cfr. Table “Key actors in Flanders”.
	Public	Local	Implementation	Involvement in the implementation of the intervention with specific acts outlining the fields of intervention and the interrelationships with other subjects
Social welfare organisation – OCMW-CPAS	Public	Local	Implementation/Potential beneficiaries	Cfr. Table “Key actors in Flanders”
Organisations authorised or accredited to provide employment services	Private firms/enterprises/not-for-profit organisations	Regional/Local	Providers/Potential beneficiaries	
Schools (from primary education till adult education)	Public/Private	Local	Providers/Potential beneficiaries	
NGO's (e.g. youth organisations)	Private	Regional/Local	Providers/Potential beneficiaries	

The first twelve actors are key actors in Flanders; the following seventeen actors are key actors in Brussels

Youth Guarantee programme are to organise the transition of young jobseekers to employment; to offer every young jobseeker registered with Actiris the range of the YG services and to ensure matching between employers and young jobseekers.

Actiris is a bilingual organisation that works closely with structures and institutions of both (Flemish and French) communities in Brussels. For instance: as the Entity ESF is the coordinating body for ESF funds for the Flemish-speaking part of Brussels, the *Agence FSE* is the coordinating body for ESF funds for the French-speaking part (although they do not necessarily conduct the same actions). In close cooperation with Actiris, the Entity ESF coordinates one of the main action lines on counselling of the YG plan for Brussels.

For both Flanders and Brussels, it was clear from the outset when the Youth Guarantee was introduced, that not only the activation part was an important part of the implementation, but that the entire transition education-labour market deserved the necessary attention. Therefore, the sector of education is an important stakeholder. Several other stakeholders are involved at regional and local level in reducing youth unemployment and especially in reaching NEETs: government agencies, welfare centres (OCMW), municipalities, career guidance providers, NGOs and other organisations. Partnerships across the domains must ensure that the various services are adequately aligned, and that young people are effectively guided through the different phases. NGO's and not-for-profit organisations working with young people are recognised as important stakeholders and partners, especially in outreaching towards hard-to-reach target groups.

15.2.2 Financial Flow

The YG in Flanders and in Brussels (for as far the Flemish Community in Brussels is concerned) has two sources of funding: the financial sources from the European Social Fund (ESF), including those obtained through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), and the annual budget of Flanders.

15.2.2.1 European Funding of Youth Guarantee

For the period 2014–2020, Belgium will receive from the EU budget the total amount of 2,815,527,200 Euro (Table 15.2). A total amount of 973,364,655 Euro from the ESF is allocated for investment in social measures.

The Table 15.3 presents more in-depth financial information on ESF with the total amount of money (both European and national) received and redistributed through different operational programmes in Belgium. As Table 15.2 shows and as mentioned above, each region in Belgium has its own ESF operational programme and its own governing actor.

As Flanders has a youth unemployment rate under 25%, it does not qualify for YEI funding. Brussels and the Walloon Region, on the other hand, do qualify. Actiris is the coordinating actor for the YG in Brussels-Capital Region and the Agence FSE Wallonie-Bruxelles is the coordinating actor for the Walloon Region. In sum, Flanders has no YEI funding, but does receive ESF funding which is (partly) used for the implementation of the YGIP. In contrast, Brussels receives YEI funding as well as ESF funding. As Flanders has a shared responsibility towards the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of Brussels, part of the ESF funding Flanders is used for projects in Brussels.

Table 15.2 EU planned and paid funds: Belgium, 2018 (Euro)

Fund	Planned EU	Total net payed
EAFRD	647,797,759	171,794,276
EMFF	41,746,051	4,617,411
ERDF	953,009,307	110,394,716
ESF	973,364,655	157,959,160
FEAD	73,821,504	36,309,677
YEI (<i>of which</i>)	125,787,924	35,552,550
YEI ESF M.C.	62,893,962	11,623,190
YEI S.A.	62,893,962	23,929,360
Total	2,815,527,200	516,627,790

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018

Table 15.3 Operational programmes in Belgium by actor, OP budget, EU contribution and ESF and national contribution (Euro)

Title of OP	Governing actor	Total OP Budget	Total EU contribution	ESF	Total national contribution
Operational Programme ESF Flanders 2014–2020	ESF Flanders	1,024,665,509,00	398,502,847,00	398,502,847,00	626,162,662,00
ESF Operational Programme Wallonie-Bruxelles 2020.eu	FSE Wallonie-Bruxelles	1,214,434,685,00	634,313,440,00	525,929,050,00	580,121,245,00
Operational Programme ESF 2014–2020 of the Brussels-Capital Region: “Investment for growth and jobs”	Actiris	101,970,817,00	55,336,292,00	37,932,758,00 €	46,634,525,00
European Social Fund 2014–2020 – German-Speaking Community of Belgium	Ministry of German Community	22,000,000,00	11,000,000,00	11,000,000,00	11,000,000,00
Total		2,363,071,011	1,099,152,579	973,364,655	1,263,918,432

Source: our processing from 2014–2020 ESF operational programmes, 2018

15.2.2.2 Co-financing of the Youth Guarantee in More Detail

Flanders

The second source of funding for the YG is co-financing from Flanders' budget. This co-funding can be found in various articles in the general expenditure budget. The co-financing for the closed calls to the institutional partners (such as VDAB, education, Syntra Vlaanderen) is included in the annual donations and subsidies that those institutional partners receive. The exact amount of co-financing is not detailed in the general expenditure budget. For example, the VDAB is responsible for implementing the YG in cooperation with partners. The VDAB chooses the most appropriate method to activate the young people (vacancy counselling, guidance, mediation, training, work experience, internship, apprenticeship, etc.). The method can be offered by the VDAB itself or by a partner. For the co-financing of those trajectories with intensive counselling and mediation (TIBB), a sum of 3,707,500 Euro has been earmarked in the VDAB budget.

Since 2007, the co-financing for open calls is done by the so-called *Vlaams Fonds voor Cofinanciering*, the Flemish co-financing fund (VCF), which is included in the budget of the entity ESF-Flanders. Non-institutional project promoters can appeal to the co-financing fund for the share of co-financing. They do this by indicating in the budget of their project proposal which funds they request from VCF for co-financing. If their proposal is accepted, they will receive 100% financing (40% by ESF and 60% by the VCF).⁷ The Youth Guarantee initiatives financed by ESF Flanders comprise: Work Experience Programme for Young People (WIJ) (ESF funds: 6,678,000; Flanders co-funds: 8,162,001); Preliminary trajectories for vulnerable young people (ESF funds: 540,000; Flanders co-funds: 660,000); and SectorConvenanten⁸ (ESF funds: 2,250,000; Flanders co-funds: 2,550,000) (Government of Flanders, 2018).

Brussels-Capital Region

The BYGIP is unclear as to the source(s) of co-funding in Brussels. However, the implementation plan did state that the institutional partners guarantee the necessary funds for the implementation of the Action Plan by funding of measures by means of (1) the (non-increased) operational budget of the departments involved; (2) new funds in the budget provided by institutional actors; (3) institutional co-financing and ESF funds (e.g. YG Service Euro 3,454,780 for the organisation of the new YG service within Actiris) and (4) institutional co-financing and ESF funds and YEI. In addition, the Flemish Minister of Labour stated in his policy letter of 2015 to have made available Euro 6,400,000 to co-finance the Youth Guarantee plan of Brussels for young people with a Dutch-language job perspective (Vlaams Parlement, 2015). These funds are meant to identify 3000 people between the age of 18 and 30 who have no work and no education or education (the so-called NEET) and to orient and guide them to work, internship or training.

Federal Level

In the BYGIP, it is stated that the Federal Government is responsible for legislation on social security contributions (reductions), labour market entry traineeships, unemployment benefits and reductions on social security contributions. The means spent on those measures are seen as a means of co-financing for ESF and the YG. However, no precise figures were found to calculate the size of these means of co-financing at the federal level. They already existed and are included in the federal budget as part of ongoing policy.

On top of this, the Federal Government funds federal integration traineeships for max. 10,000 young people with an earmarked sum of 41,800,000 Euro. These means are managed in cooperation with the four regional PES including VDAB for Flanders and Actiris for Brussels-Capital Region.

15.2.3 Management

Synerjob has been designated as the coordinating instance for Belgium. The federation was created in July 2007 as a non-profit organisation according to the Belgian Law, gathering four Public Employment Services under one banner.

In both regions, Flanders and Brussels, the YGIP is coordinated and implemented mainly by the public employment services: VDAB for Flanders and Actiris for Brussels. Cooperation between the PES, between PES and education, between PES and external stakeholders such as the social partners or youth organisations runs like a thread through both the Flemish YG implementation plan and the Brussels YG Action Plan. The entity ESF agency is another important stakeholder in both regions responsible for coordination and implementation of some action lines of the YG implementation plans.

15.2.3.1 Flanders

VDAB has decided not to create a new plan, but to optimise and strengthen the existing YEP so that VDAB can offer every young person either a job or personal counselling within four months after registration (i.e. Flanders contribution to the BYGIP, 2014).

Partnerships are at the heart of the management of the YEP. Partnerships make it possible to better tie-in between education and the labour market. Cooperation between the Ministry of Work and the Ministry of Education already resulted in a plan against early school leaving. Cooperation with sectors to create forms of workplace learning make workplace learning like a standard module of the trajectory of unqualified young people. Partnership is also important to acquire a greater involvement of subregional and local administrations such as local social networks, *talentenhuisen* (talent houses), (vocational) schools and public centre for social welfare (OCMW) at local level. This leads to an improved information exchange between those many organisations that work for or with young people.

As the VDAB does not seem to be able to reach the NEET, collaborations have been set up with partner organisations in major cities to ‘track down’ young people who have never been registered as jobseekers, and lead them towards the VDAB services. By partnering with organisations that have a strong link with young people and good experience in working with them, VDAB wants their counsellors and instructors to adjust their working methods to the needs of young people. To stimulate direct participation, VDAB organises digital Youth Panels in cooperation with the Flemish Youth Council. These panels function as a barometer: what do young people find important in the world of work and what service do they want VDAB to offer them? The voice of the young people is taken into account when setting up new projects or putting new working methods in place.

VDAB has a separate direction which makes the arrangements with partners and puts them in agreements/contracts. VDAB controls and monitors the quality of the services of the partners. They receive funding for the guidance/training and an additional amount when the young person gets sustainable employment. For the entire youth employment plan, the Government of Flanders (with VDAB heading the project) is employing an extra 308.1 full-time equivalents (FTEs) as instructors or counsellors, through outsourcing or within the own services.

All reforms and initiatives are included in the annual business plan of VDAB. This plan is monitored, evaluated and adjusted (qualitatively and quantitatively) quarterly by the Ministry, the board of directors of VDAB and the experts. In the plan, there are 20 operational objectives (e.g. ‘to guarantee a comprehensive and tailored mediation and counselling offer to all registered job-seekers under 25 years’); 16 objective indicators (e.g. the satisfaction must be 75%, 60% of the young job seekers get a job 6 months after registration) and 17 monitoring indicators (e.g. 17,800 IBOs on an annual basis).

The initiatives in the context of ‘Early School Leaving’ are also listed in the ‘Early School Leaving Action Plan’. This plan is monitored and adjusted by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Work, the technical workforce for early school leaving and the steering committee for early school leaving: every year at least three meetings of the technical workforce, at least one meeting of the steering committee, an annual

evaluation rapport (qualitative and quantitative results), and an annual meeting between Ministries, inspectorate education and the educational counselling service.⁹

15.2.3.2 Brussels-Capital Region (BCR)

Actiris takes an integrated and transversal approach in cross-sectoral policies to tackle youth employment. Actiris collaborates with 11 key institutional actors to implement the YG. The design and follow-up of the Action Plan is done in the institutional steering committee. For each of the six thematic areas, a technical work group is established. The four main institutional players (education, youth care, vocational training, employment) take part in the steering committee as well as in the technical groups.

For the execution of the measures, Actiris has set up a YG service with more than 40 people specially trained and dedicated to the implementation of the measures. This YG service has developed a specific strategy and a holistic coaching method for 100% of newly enrolled young job seekers. During three afternoons per week no less than 150 coaches are dedicated in the local offices to the young job seekers. The YG service is organised in five poles corresponding to the five main economic sectors in BCR to better respond to the employers' demand. Actiris matches the young job seekers and the employers by means of their own recruitment service (Select Actiris). This service offers pre-recruitment and pre-selection free of charge, a screening of potential candidates within 48 hours and 6 selected candidates within 15 days.¹⁰

Each operator or provider of services is asked to put a regular theme-based evaluation system in place for its reforms and initiatives, based on objectives defined in advance. In addition, an overall monitoring programme for the Brussels Youth Guarantee plan is guided by the Minister-President of the BCR. This programme ensures the coherence with the theme-based evaluation systems of the operators who feed it with their data and analyses. The financial aspects of the reforms are reported by the different institutions based on the available indicators and operational objectives.

A common counting tool for training and employment is set in place, with monitoring of programme measures (training, work experience placements, jobs) as well as individual monitoring of the YG beneficiaries. Monitoring and evaluation for the measures within the area of education are regulated in five decrees regarding the organisation of joint policies to prevent students from dropping out of education, the cooperation relative to work-linked training, the equipment of schools and the cooperation in that regard between the different levels of government, the certification, the organisation of adult education and technology centres.¹¹

In Flanders, as well as in Brussels, there are (bi-annual) evaluations done by an external audit office or research institution (via tendering). Those evaluations are reported to the regional government and may lead to changes in the programme (Desiere et al., 2017). Both Flanders and Brussels follow the requested indicators and methodology of reporting set up by the European Employment Committee (EMCO). EMCO has an important role in monitoring the implementation of the YG. It does so through a combination of reviews of the progress of individual Member States towards the objectives of the guarantee and an agreed indicator framework.

Some footnotes should be made regarding the use and interpretation of data. In the recent evaluation of the Flemish YG, Desiere et al. (2017) found that although both the European Commission and the VDAB use administrative data for monitoring the Youth Guarantee, there are some important differences between the interpretations of both institutions. According to the VDAB, nine out of ten youths receive a quality offer within four months. These very positive figures are, however, partly due to the broad definition of 'quality offer' used by the VDAB. According to the VDAB, estimating the required services and orientating a young person towards the right services are also considered to be a quality offer. According to the European definitions, however, such services are insufficient. Only jobs, training or courses are considered to be a quality offer. Furthermore, the VDAB also includes the youths who stop looking for work within four months (inactive youths) as being reached within four months. With the stricter EU definitions, approximately 60% of the youths meet the Youth Guarantee criteria. Moreover, there is a large

difference between high and low levels of education. In this first group, approximately 80% flows through to work or a course/training, while this is the case for only 50% in the second group.

15.3 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

We focused on the implementation of the YG in Flanders and Brussels, a complex issue due to the institutional framework of Belgium. Only Brussels was eligible for funding from the YEI. In addition, the Flanders ESF funding is partly spent in Brussels as the Flemish-speaking inhabitants of Brussels belong to the Flemish Community. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that despite the constitutional division between the Flemish and the French Community in Brussels, the institutions in Brussels don't always make a strong distinction between Flemish- and French-speaking inhabitants.

Since 2004, Flanders has been focusing on youth unemployment, in part to continue the implementation of the YEP in 2008, and included the Youth Guarantee in the already-existing Action Plans. In general, it can be said that the European Youth Guarantee did not lead to a fundamental difference in the VDAB's (Flemish PES) way of working nor that it strongly contributed to an increase in awareness (and resources) for youths. For other stakeholders in Flanders, including OCMWs and local authorities, the effect of the 'youth guarantee' was limited and has hardly led to additional initiatives. In short, in Flanders – in contrast to the policy in a number of other European regions, including to some degree Brussels – the Youth Guarantee cannot be seen as a game changer. It is more of an additional instrument to keep the problem of youth unemployment high on the (political) agenda (Desiere et al., 2017).

In Brussels, a whole new approach towards young job seekers has been developed within the Actiris services, with new structures, new instruments and new partnerships. Also, in Brussels, a reinterpretation to the objectives has been given by adjusting the age limits for the YG target group to 30, adapted to the local situation and context in Brussels. For

young people defined as NEET, the four-month period is extended to six months. On the other hand, the follow-up afterwards is not limited to the European YG standard. Every single young job seeker is followed until at least 18 months after their leaving each of the destinations. Furthermore, a job is considered durable only after one month of employment.

However, in both regions, institutions became more aware of some target groups. For the VDAB, the most important substantive change was the ambition to estimate the service within four months for all of the registered youths, and no longer just those with a low- to mid-level education. In Flanders, but even more so in Brussels, there is a group of highly educated young people who despite their education level have problems to find a durable employment within a reasonable time frame. In Flanders, initiatives such as the VDAB Job Bar in Antwerp and support from bottom-up initiatives such as co-searching are already heading in that direction (Desiere et al., 2017). In Brussels-Capital Region, apart from a more intensive guidance, also special internship programmes (inland and abroad) have been developed for these young people. In addition, the NEET target group came more into the foreground because of the Youth Guarantee. Not only public employment services, but also institutions in the education sector became more aware of the fact that NEETs are a larger group than originally thought and that additional efforts must be made to reach the unreachable.

In practice, many of the NEET are still not reached by VDAB nor Actiris. On the one hand, this concerns youths who are simply not registered with them. On the other hand, it concerns NEET who are registered but do not show up and therefore also cannot be reached by the VDAB or Actiris. Why exactly and how this can be improved is unclear, and this has become a priority. In Brussels-Capital Region, monitoring has also brought to attention the high percentage of young people with a foreign background that are not reached by the formal institutions. In other words, the YG drew more attention to the problem of unreached groups, not only within the PES services, but also at the policy level (more specific in education policy, in cooperation on the transition education-labour market and in youth policy) and at the level of local authorities and organisations. There seems to be a big consensus that only

intense cooperation between all stakeholders will lead to an efficient way of reaching and supporting all NEET.

One of the indirect results of the YG in both regions is the strengthening of the cooperation between all stakeholders involved one way or the other in youth employment. The importance of collaborations between different actors was also emphasised in Desiere et al. (2017). The actors involved in young people (unemployment) at local level are limited in number. Although the researchers remark this in itself is not a bad thing, it makes the organisation of the policy more difficult. To support cooperation across the domains, the actors use cooperation instruments. Within the cases, we identify two important types of instruments for collaboration. On the one hand, the cooperation agreements (e.g. in Antwerp and Ghent) have been concluded between the city, VDAB and OCMW. The authors of the evaluation regard the cooperation agreements as a 'top-down' instrument, which is created from a (supra) local policy framework. On the other hand, there are bottom-up instruments, such as the 'Ghent, City in Action' (GSIW) platform in Ghent and the Stakeholder Forum in Antwerp. Bottom-up instruments facilitate a broad cooperation between the various (local) actors, starting from the (local) needs of stakeholders.

It is stated by Desiere et al. (2017) that a good mix between more formal management through top-down cooperation agreements on the one hand and more loose cooperation agreements which are rather bottom-up on the other seem like a good choice but can be further developed. Important measures concerning NEET in formal education are the Flemish Action Plan to reduce early school leaving and the five decrees in Brussels regarding measures of the YG plan. Apprenticeships, dual education, all forms of on-the-job training are higher on the agenda, especially in BCR. Also, the cooperation between PES and education is gaining more importance, which shows in the development of projects like 'Jump to Work'. Jump to work coaches Brussels pupils from the last year of Brussels Dutch-language secondary education in their first steps to the labour market. The project consists of a training package with five workshops of half a day each. During those workshops pupils are made aware of their transition from education to working life.

Interviewees from Actiris stressed the importance of the cooperation with youth centres to build programmes/projects to help young people to gain more self-esteem and work attitude. They show a lot of interest in the way those centres work and succeed in outreaching to the ‘invisibles’. It was clear in the interviews that transversal work was seen as a major advantage and a major innovation. This is also commented on in the evaluation of the Flemish YG by Desiere et al. (2017).

In sum, Flanders has been targeting youth unemployment since 2004 with goals comparable to those of the Youth Guarantee. That is why in Flanders the Youth Guarantee is not considered to have been a change-maker: they were already working in the spirit of the YG. But even so, the emphasis on NEET (and some other target groups) and the awareness of the lack of visibility of NEET has grown. A second result is the more intensive cooperation between different governance levels, between different policy areas and between policy-makers and fieldworkers. This has not (yet) resulted in a new structural approach. Structures and policy instruments are readily available in Flanders, but are maybe not always put to the best use possible. Insight in the need to further define existing structures and collaborations has increased.

In contrast to Flanders, the Youth Guarantee in Brussels is considered a key driver for change and reform in education/formation and youth employment. The EU funds are considered to have facilitated setting up innovative projects for reaching young people who are furthest from the labour market and for learning how to reach NEET's. As in Flanders, the Youth Guarantee has also been a driving force in strengthening collaborations between several employment, education and vocational training actors. In the words of one interviewee: “local conditions and local actors need to be integrated in a global strategy towards NEETs”.

Notes

1. In this chapter, we will use the terms ‘Brussels-Capital Region’ and ‘Brussels’ interchangeably, for readability purposes. The most correct term is Brussels-Capital Region, as strictly speaking, Brussels refers only to the municipality of Brussels.

2. Constitutionally, the two assemblies are still distinct. However, in practice the Assembly of the Flemish Region, made up of the 118 Flemish Regional Deputies, sits with the six Dutch-speaking Brussels Region deputies, and they together constitute the Assembly of the Flemish Community. The six Brussels parliamentarians only take part in voting on decrees falling within the competence of the Community. The two “merged” assemblies jointly adopted the single title *Vlaams Parlement* (Flemish Parlement). The Flemish Parlement appoints a single President, a single office and a single Extended Office. Similarly, the sole Flemish Government manages both regional and community matters; the Brussels minister(s) only take part in decisions affecting the Community.
3. The French-speaking Community maintained the separation between the bodies of the French Community and those of the Walloon Region because there are many more French speakers in Brussels compared with French-speaking Walloons than there are Dutch speakers in Brussels compared with Dutch speakers in Flanders.
4. Note that a statistical break in time series occurred in 2017 for Belgium. However, as there was also a decrease between 2015 and 2016 and between 2017 and 2018, we consider it an overall decrease. The same observation applies to the figures on youth unemployment.
5. It should be noted that there are differences between European survey data and Belgian administrative data, where the definition of unemployment is slightly different from the international definition. In administrative data, youth unemployment in 2017 was 27.8% in Brussels and 17.4% in Flanders, compared to 33.2% and 12.8% respectively for the 2017 Eurostat data. The decrease since 2013 is also less pronounced in the administrative data, especially in Flanders.
6. The four PES are VDAB (Flanders), le Forem (Wallonia), Actiris (Brussels) and ADG (German-speaking Community).
7. Source: interview with project manager ESF-YG Flanders.
8. The sector covenants are protocols of cooperation between the sectors (sectoral social partners) and the Flemish Government on current themes, laid down in a substantive framework, such as a better connection between education and the labour market, stimulating competence development and increasing diversity on the labour market. Each sector corresponds to one or more jointly composed organizations (e.g. funds) and receives financing for the employment of a sector consultant who carries out the actions included in the covenant.

9. Flanders contribution to the Belgian YGIP, 2013.
10. Interview with national coordinator YG—November 2018.
11. Brussels-Capital's contribution to the Belgian YGIP.

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16

The Danish Response to Youth Guarantee

Palle Rasmussen and Tilde Mette Juul

16.1 Introduction

The concept of Youth Guarantee is not new in Denmark. According to an encyclopaedia of Danish terms, Youth Guarantee means ‘a municipal scheme which guarantees young unemployed people an offer of education or work’, and the term first appeared in Danish language in 1978. In fact, there was considerable political debate about this kind of scheme in the following years. At the time youth unemployment had been growing following the ‘oil crisis’ of the 1970s, and the government, led by the Social Democrats, proposed a Youth Guarantee scheme in response. An important element in the scheme would have been to oblige private and public employers to make temporary jobs available for unemployed young people. Although the scheme was tried out as experiments in some regions of Denmark (Arbejdsministeriet, Indenrigsministeriet &

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Udenrigsministeriet, 1982), the business stakeholders as well as Liberal and Conservative forces in parliament objected to the proposals. They too wanted to reduce youth unemployment, but their strategy was to offer training to young people and leave the rest to the market forces. Attempts to introduce a Youth Guarantee effectively ended in the fall of 1982, when the Social Democratic minority government had to withdraw and was replaced by a Conservative-Liberal government (Kolstrup, 2015).

Nevertheless, the principles of the Youth Guarantee scheme have not disappeared from Danish social and labour market policy. During the last two decades, these policies have increasingly emphasised activation as a condition for social or unemployment benefits, in line with international 'workfare' trends (Kananen, 2012). This is evident in one of the most recent reforms, the cash benefit reform introduced in 2013 (Regeringen, 2013), although the attempt to oblige private employers is more or less missing. While the principles are to some extent being pursued, the concept of Youth Guarantee has generally not been used in national policy; it now refers mainly to the European Union (EU) initiative and policy.

It is a paradox that the EU Youth Guarantee (YG) and related national programmes have much of their impact on adults. In the Danish education system, 'youth education' designates general or vocational upper secondary education, where young people are supposed to start at the age of 16 or 17 and finish three or four years later, depending on the type of programme. However, the persons receiving education and training as part of Youth Guarantee initiatives are older than that. Some have started an upper secondary education and dropped out; some have been working after leaving school but are now unemployed; many have had periods of illness or personal troubles. More than half the persons who entered vocational education in 2017 were over 20 years of age (Danske Erhvervsskoler og Gymnasier, 2018). According to the policy of 'activating' young people receiving benefits, municipalities can demand that they start an education; the 2013 cash benefit reform extended this policy to persons up to 30 years of age. So much of the education activity that takes place under the Youth Guarantee umbrella is in reality adult education, although not in the formal framework of adult education programmes.

16.1.1 State Form and Administration

Denmark is a nation state governed through parliamentary democracy. The Danish state has a long democratic tradition, starting with a relatively peaceful transition to a democratic political system by the middle of the nineteenth century (Kaspersen, 2013). Denmark is formally a monarchy, but the role of the monarch is purely representative. The parliament (called Folketing) is elected directly by all citizens who are aged 18 or more.

The executive part of government consists of departments known as Ministries. A cabinet member known as Minister for the relevant department or portfolio leads each department. A department acts as the secretariat to the Minister. Its functions comprise overall planning, development and strategic guidance on the entire area of responsibility of the Minister. The politically neutral civil service within the department implements political decisions.

The local political and administrative level consists mainly of the 98 municipalities, which are governed by boards and executives chosen through local elections. Both state and municipalities collect taxes, but all public expenditure follows guidelines decided by the state. One responsibility for municipalities is local employment services, helping unemployed citizens to develop skills and find jobs. A further administrative level is the five regions. Their boards and executives are also decided through local elections, but they do not collect taxes on their own. Their main task is managing the health system, but they also have a role in regional economic policy.

Traditionally, public policy has had a strong emphasis on welfare, especially in the form of universal provision of benefits and services such as health care, childcare and education combined with income transfers to various groups of people in need. This type of policy characterises the social-democratic type of welfare state regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Although neoliberal approaches have gained some influence, support for the welfare state remains strong.

During the twentieth century, a coalition government was the rule rather than the exception, and during the post-war period, the Social

Democratic party in combination with different liberal partners formed most governments (Christensen & Klemmensen, 2015). The last three decades have seen an increased polarisation between right-wing populist forces (especially the Danish People's Party) on one hand, social liberals and socialists on the other. The biggest liberal party (called 'Venstre') has headed most of the government coalitions, with support from the right.

16.1.2 Socio-economic Condition

Denmark is a small open market economy with a high dependence on foreign trade. National GDP in market prices was 292,806 million Euro in 2017, and GDP per capita was 50,800 Euro (Eurostat 2019),¹ which is among the highest in the EU. Expenditure on social protection constituted 31.6% in 2016, higher than the EU average of 28.2%. The share of Danish GDP spent on social protection has been relatively stable since 2009. The main sector in the Danish economy is services, which amounts for 80% of all jobs, whereas about 10% of all employees work in manufacturing and 2% in agriculture.

Denmark has approximately 5.8 million inhabitants, of which some 4.35 million are aged between 15 and 74. The population has been growing in recent years, partly because people are healthier and live longer, partly because of immigration and increased fertility. Income inequality has traditionally been low in Denmark, but has increased somewhat during the last decades. Eurostat data indicate that the Gini coefficient for disposable income rose from 25.2 in 2007 to 27.6 in 2017. However, this is still low both in the EU context and in broader international comparison.

Schooling and higher education are generally free in Denmark. The education system includes the 'Folkeskole' (primary and lower secondary education), general and vocational upper secondary education organised in two separate systems, and three levels of higher education (Rasmussen & Werler, 2015). By 2017, 32.4% of the Danish population between 15 and 64 years had a higher education degree, 41.2% had an upper secondary education degree (most often a vocational degree) and 26.4% had completed no more than primary or lower secondary school. While the

group with upper secondary education has remained stable in recent years, the group with some type of higher education has been growing. The enrolment of women in higher education has been growing and they now constitute more than half the group of Danes with a higher education degree.

Part-time education for adults is available at all levels of education; it is supported by public funding, but adult students still have to cover part of the costs (Danish Ministry of Education, 2007). Participation in life-long learning is high, significantly above the EU average, but has been falling during the last few years. The participation rate of 25–64-year-olds fell from 31.9 % in 2014 to 26.8 % in 2017. The reasons for the reduced participation in lifelong learning are not entirely clear, but one important factor is no doubt that public funding for many types of adult education has been reduced so that students have to pay more.

The labour force participation rate among the Danish population is relatively high, 78.8% in 2017 for people aged 15 to 64 years (OECD labour force data). An important contribution to this is a high female participation rate. The labour market is characterised by a high degree of union membership rates and collective agreement coverage. Youth unemployment is relatively low, partly because of the so-called flexicurity system (Jensen, 2017; Kvist & Pedersen, 2007) that allows for considerable circulation of workers among jobs. The system has combined a relatively high level of benefits with low barriers for laying off employees and with active labour market intervention. Benefits have traditionally come from the unemployment insurance funds, historically established in close collaboration with trade unions; they are based on membership payments supplemented by state funding and benefits are relatively high. However, benefits from an unemployment fund demand a period of previous work, and for many young people this is difficult to achieve. Consequently, more people have been transferred to the public system of cash benefits, which is administered by municipalities (Mogensen, 2017). These benefits are substantially lower, and living on them is difficult. Recipients of both types of benefit are obliged to be active in preparing themselves for employment, especially through education, and this is supported by guidance and other measures.

Following the financial crisis youth unemployment rose; it was 14.1% in 2012, but has since stabilised at a lower level, being 11.0 in 2017. The gender difference in youth unemployment is limited; in 2017 the rate for men was 11.3%, for women 10.7%.

As can be expected, unemployment is higher for young people with no education apart from basic schooling. In 2017, unemployment rates for young people under 25 was 13.3% for those with only lower secondary education, 8.1% for those with upper secondary education and 9.8% for those with some kind of higher education. While unemployment has fallen over the last five years for those with an upper secondary vocational education, this is not the case for the group with a higher education degree. The combination of relatively low youth unemployment and high participation in education means that the share of young people who are neither in education or employment (NEET) is small. The NEET rate in 2017 was 6.3% for persons with education at levels 0–2 and 7.6% for persons with educational levels 3–4. While the NEET rate for Denmark rose somewhat from 2008 to 2011, it has fluctuated around the same level since then.

Like other EU member countries, Denmark has since 2011 received comments about labour market and education issues in the Country-Specific Recommendations issued under the European Semester procedure (European Commission, 2011–2018). The primary concern, repeated year after year, is a concern about future labour supply and about labour productivity. For instance, the 2015 recommendations state that “An adequately skilled long-term labour supply is a precondition for sustainable growth in Denmark” (European Commission, 2015, p. 3). This concern has led the EU to recommend a number of changes to raise labour supply, including restrictions on early retirement and disability benefits, better targeting of subsidised employment, improving the employability of people on the margins of the labour market and improving the quality of (especially) vocational education. Declining growth in labour productivity has been another concern. The 2011 recommendations stated that “There has been a declining trend in productivity growth since 1995, one of the potential causes being weak educational performance” (European Commission 2011, p. 4). In recent recommendations, this argument has not been pursued, instead sluggish productivity growth

is linked to restrictions on competition in the domestic services sector. In the years from 2011 to 2014, the EU gave both comments and direct recommendations related to education and employability; since 2015 there have been no direct recommendations.

16.1.3 Concluding Remarks

The EU debate about the Youth Guarantee in 2013, when the scheme was being launched, sparked limited public interest in Denmark. It was clearly realised that the extra funding made available for the YG would mainly go to member states in the South of Europe, and that Denmark would not be eligible because of the relatively low level of youth unemployment. Information about the EU scheme was circulated among stakeholders in youth employment and education policy, but there is no indication that it influenced the national policy debate. The Cash Benefit reform, which was at the time being introduced by a government headed by the Social Democrats (Regeringen, 2013; Hansen & Schultz-Nielsen, 2015), provoked much more attention and debate.

In fact, the Cash Benefit reform was in line with the EU recommendations following the financial crisis. In the 2011 European Semester Country-Specific Recommendations for Denmark, the Commission recommended that Denmark should ‘Phase out as planned the Voluntary Early Retirement Pension (VERP) scheme, reform the disability pension, and better target subsidised employment schemes (the “flexjob” system) towards the most vulnerable groups’ (European Commission, 2011–2018). The recommendation was repeated the next year, and in the 2013 recommendations the cash benefit reform was greeted with satisfaction, but with a cautionary comment that it should not undermine the flexicurity model.

In the Danish context, the policy problem that the EU Youth Guarantee responds to is seen mainly as an education problem. The assumption is that if young people are educated to have relevant degrees and skills, they will eventually find employment. This basic idea has a long history in Danish welfare policy and has been framed in different ways over the years, but it is still very visible in the 2013 Cash Benefit reform as well as

in reforms of vocational education and higher education. In this perspective, Youth Guarantee is the guarantee of getting an education; the education will then guarantee work and income.

16.2 The National Response to the Youth Guarantee

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Denmark is primarily a national matter. The fact that youth unemployment is relatively low and that the country does not receive special YG funding from the EU may be seen partly as a result of national policy interventions. This seems to be the approach that the Danish government takes in its implementation plan, which is discussed below. But EU funding is still part of the picture, because part of the funds Denmark receives from the European Social Fund are earmarked for projects contributing to the Youth Guarantee's objectives. Thus, describing the Danish response to the European launch of the Youth Guarantee has two aspects. One is the national policies and interventions aimed at meeting the YG's objectives, the other is the ESF interventions and funding aimed at these objectives.

As part of the Youth Guarantee, member state governments are required to document how they live up to the policy. The Danish government produced an implementation plan (Danish Ministry of Employment, 2014) outlining partnerships, initiatives in early intervention and activation as well as supportive measures for labour market intervention. The Danish government's interpretation of the policy problem is broad, but has a main focus on education. In the introduction to the implementation plan, it is stated that (Danish Ministry of Employment, 2014, p 3):

The overall objective for the Danish youth schemes is to:

- Get young people without an education into education,
- Get young people with an education into employment,

- Give young people without an education and without the preconditions to begin and complete an ordinary education the needed upgrading of skills to obtain an ordinary education.

It is added that “Education is a special focus of the Danish policy concerning unemployed people below 30 years’ (Danish Ministry of Employment, 2014, p. 3). These policy statements reflect the strong emphasis on education as the way to get young people into employment. It should probably be seen on the background of the fact that unemployment and marginalisation among young people is relatively limited compared to many other EU countries. It may also reflect the historical experience of generations and groups in Danish post-war society, for whom education has clearly served to improve employment and social mobility.

16.3 Governance Structure

In policies targeting unemployed young people and the NEET group many perspectives and actors interact, including ministries and public organisations responsible for education, welfare and benefits and employment services.

Table 16.1 lists the key actors in the Danish context, including actors involved in ESF funded activities as well as those that only work with nationally funded activities.

The actors in the governance structure are located at different levels. At central government level, there are the ministers and their executive agencies. It is difficult to say which of the three ministries involved is the most important one, because each has a distinct and important role. The Ministry of Education regulates many of the educational activities and institutions that contribute to the Youth Guarantee objectives. The Ministry of Labour and Employability, through its executive agency STAR, regulates policies for employment and activation of young people, even though these are mainly implemented at the municipal level. Finally, the Ministry of Business Affairs, through its executive agency the Danish

Table 16.1 Governance structure

Actors	General role	Level	Role about YG
Ministry of Business Affairs	Public administration	National	Governmental responsibility
Danish Business Authority	Executive unit of Ministry of Business Affairs	National	Administrative implementation
Ministry of Labour and Employability	Public administration	National	Governmental responsibility
Danish Agency for Labour market and International Recruitment	Public administration	National	Implements national employment policy, including YG activity
Ministry of Education	Public administration	National	Governmental responsibility
Municipalities	Public administration	Local	Implementation of interventions
Youth Guidance Centres	Educational and vocational guidance	Local (municipal level)	Offers guidance to young people. Potential partner in youth projects
Job Centres	Public administration	Local (municipal level)	Guidance and allocation of cash benefits for unemployed young people. Potential partner in youth projects
Educational institutions	Public education	Local	Provide vocational and general education for young people and adults. Potential partners in youth projects

Key actors supporting and implementing Youth Guarantee objectives in Denmark
 Sources: Our processing on official documents and regulatory framework

Business Authority, regulates and funds Youth Guarantee activities as part of the European Social Fund in Denmark.

At the local level, the municipalities are the most important actors, because their job centres are responsible for implementing policies contributing to the Youth Guarantee objectives. Still much of the activity is

the responsibility of different types of educational institutions; vocational schools, labour market training centres, higher education institutions, production schools and others.

Some educational programmes or institutions have been developed with a special focus on unemployed young people. One example is the production schools (Nielsen, 2012) which aim to prepare unemployed young people for education or work by including them in work-like activity with an educational dimension. The first schools were established in the late 1970s and through legislation they became a regular part of the education system, often with the task of preparing young people in the 'ready' group for vocational school. At the moment they are in the process of being replaced by a new type of education, the 'Preparatory Youth Education', that will be run in new schools being established in most municipalities.

The most important intermediate actors are the Youth Guidance Centres, which offer educational and vocational guidance to young people leaving the 'Folkeskole' at lower secondary level. They collaborate with different educational institutions and also have part of the responsibility for bringing unemployed young people into education.

16.4 Financial Flow

For the period 2014–2020 Denmark will receive a total amount of 1,550,743,876 Euro from dedicated EU funds (data from ESIF website, 2018). By far the largest part of this (918,803,690 Euro) comes from the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) in support for Danish farmers. Three other funds contribute almost equal amounts, the maritime and fisheries fund (EMFF), the fund for regional development (ERDF) and the social fund (ESF). Only the ESF funding of 213,024,265 Euro can be regarded as a contribution to the Youth Guarantee.

The Danish Youth Guarantee implementation plan includes a preliminary estimate of the national funding for activities that contribute to the YG's objectives (Danish Ministry of Employment, 2014, pp. 25–27). For obvious reasons the list is not very precise; many of the activities in the field are temporary and some cannot be foreseen at the start of the

implementation period. The list includes two major reforms, the cash benefit reform and the vocational education reform as well as a number of smaller temporary initiatives related to either vocational education or inclusion of the unemployed. It also includes ongoing activities such as the work of the youth guidance centres (estimated at 82 million Euro per year). All in all, the national funding listed in the implementation plan sums up to around 1080 million Euro for 2014–2020, with the cost of the youth guidance centres representing nearly half the amount.

The national YG activities are funded partly by the state and partly by municipalities. The cash benefits for young people (and other people lacking income) are paid by municipalities, but half the costs are refunded by the state. Vocational schools are independent institutions, but they receive almost all their funding from the state through an activity-based system, while the social partners co-fund the costs of company training. The youth guidance centres are mainly funded by the state.

As noted above, the Danish Business Authority handles funds received from the European Social Fund for use in Denmark. The total amount of ESF funding for the period 2014–2020 is 213 million Euro. Priorities for the distribution of this funding have been formulated in a national programme developed by the Danish Business Authority on the basis of the ESF framework, the general EU 2020 goals and national considerations and objectives (Erhvervsstyrelsen, 2018). The programme includes four general priorities (so-called priority axes) and distributes the funding among them as follows²:

1. Entrepreneurship and job creation (41% of funds)
2. Cross-border mobility (2% of funds)
3. Inclusion through education and employment (20% of funds)
4. Vocational training and higher education (33% of funds)

The Youth Guarantee Initiative corresponds roughly to priority axis 3 but also to parts of priority axis 4.

Under the current ESF strategy (lasting 2014–2020), it has been decided politically that Denmark allocates 20% of the national ESF budget to priority axis no. 3. This is the minimum allocation allowed by the general ESF strategy. According to an official in the Danish Business

Authority, the reason for choosing the minimum allocation is that based on experience from previous ESF-funded projects, the authority holds the view that youth initiatives do not have sufficient effect to justify investing more resources. The official states that Youth Guarantee projects are evaluated as having limited effect on education and employment, and so they are not given high priority.

In this period (2014–2020) we have very much emphasized results, so we have looked at what initiatives evidence indicated had been most successful in the Social Fund projects of the previous period. That is what we have based the construction of programmes on. So the types of projects described are those that we mostly believed will have an effect on employment and on the level of education (...) And throughout this process no one has cried ‘Youth Guarantee’. (National Business Authority official)

The official adds that this should be seen in light of the fact that ESF funding is limited compared to the national resources already invested in the youth field.

In Denmark we are low on the list of EU structural funding, we get almost nothing. That is why we choose to direct the funding in this way. Other social or educational initiatives we handle with other means, which will typically be national funding. (National Business Authority official)

Both the national implementation plan and the fact that the Danish Business Authority has chosen the minimum allocation of ESF funding for projects contributing to inclusion of youth indicate that the impact of the EU Youth Guarantee in the Danish context has been limited. The policy of including young people in the labour market through measures focused on education, which has a long tradition in Denmark and has been pursued strongly in recent years, is in line with the Youth Guarantee. The administrative system developed for interventions allows for collaboration between different actors on projects with special approaches and aims. ESF funding is an important contribution to such projects, but not a contribution with strong impact on the governance system.

The ESF funds are dedicated to projects within the priority axes and distributed after application from regional or local actors. Co-funding is demanded from the local actors responsible for projects. Decisions on funding are made by the Business Authority. Until recently, applications have been forwarded through the Regional Growth Fora that also offered guidance for potential applicants. However, the Growth Fora were abolished by the end of 2018 and applications are now made directly to the Danish Business Authority. The priorities under the axis ‘inclusion through education or employment’ are either projects about inclusion through socio-economic companies or projects helping marginalised young people back in education. It should be noted that educational objectives under priority axes 3 and 4 have a strong focus on vocational education and training. This must be seen on the background that enrolments in this type of education have fallen steeply in recent years and the state and the social partners fear a lack of skilled workers in the near future.

There is no pre-defined distribution of ESF funding between the five Danish regions, and the number of projects granted in each region thus reflects the number of approved applications. Most applications are in fact approved for funding. In the current period (2014–2020), the highest number of projects funded has been in the North Denmark region (8 out of 17 projects). Of the funded projects, seven target marginalised young people.

16.5 Management

The nationally funded activities under the Youth Guarantee umbrella are managed and controlled by the municipalities and the relevant ministries as part of the system described above. The Danish Business Authority handles control of projects receiving ESF funding at state level.

The present system of public benefits, rules and initiatives regarding young people without jobs and not in education was established by the 2013 cash benefit reform. Its main logic can be seen in Fig. 16.1 (inspired by Danish Ministry of Employment, 2014, p. 16).

For young persons who have completed an ordinary education, such as a secondary vocational degree or a higher education degree, the

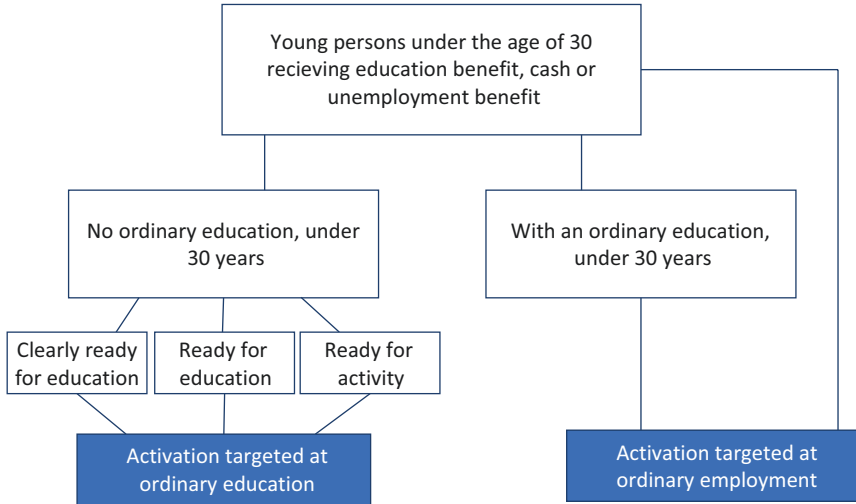


Fig. 16.1 Rules for the Danish employment effort for youths. (Source: Extracted from Danish Ministry of Employment [2014], p. 16)

intervention will focus on activating the person for employment, for instance, through an internship or a temporary job with supplementary public funding. The intervention may also include supplementary education related to current labour market demands.

Young persons who have not completed an ordinary education are placed in one of three categories: those clearly ready for education, those ready for education and those ready for activity. For all three categories, the objective is to have the persons enter and complete an ordinary education, but the efforts needed for this are assumed to be different. The ‘clearly ready’ group should begin an education as soon as possible. The ‘ready’ young people are supposed to be ready for education within one year, and they can be prepared through upgrading of skills and qualifications, short internships, mentoring and practical work training in companies. The ‘ready for activity’ category includes those who are in need of extra measures in order to gradually become ready for education.

The readiness categories define what services the job centres offer the young people and what obligations the people have to fulfil in order to receive cash benefits.

The efforts to guide or force young people into some kind of education is generally coordinated by local public authorities, but involves collaboration with many actors. This includes educational institutions, where people from the 'clearly ready' group are to be enrolled and who may contribute to upgrading activities for the 'ready' group. It further includes public organisations such as the municipalities and private companies, which may contribute to activities for the 'ready' and the 'ready for activity' groups through internships and practical work training. Some of the activities for unemployed young people are organised as projects where several actors (typically involving job centres, vocational schools and specialised schools such as production schools) collaborate on a special set of activities for a certain group of young people in order to improve the quality of interventions and the effects. Projects may get supplementary funding from other levels than the municipality, either dedicated national funds or the European Social Fund.

16.6 Local Implementation

In order to gain better knowledge about the ways Youth Guarantee activities are implemented at the local and institutional level we have made closer studies of two of the projects supported by ESF funding, one project in the West Zealand area and one in North Denmark (Juul & Rasmussen, 2018). Both projects are based on collaboration between different educational institutions and public agencies.

The Zealand project is called SUME, an acronym for 'special youth effort with effect'. It is a collaboration between two municipalities and a vocational college. The general objective of the project is to help marginalised young people on education benefit (a kind of cash benefit) to start a vocational education programme, to stay in it and to complete. The activities of the SUME project include assessment of prior learning, a course clarifying the participants' motivations and competences, and – for part of the group – enrolling in an upper secondary education. The project in North Denmark is a collaboration between a labour market training centre, the youth department of the local municipal job centre and the local youth guidance centre. Young people enrolled in this

project are offered a mentor who is at the same time a social worker and can make some administrative decisions. This is an unusual element; normally guidance and administrative decisions (regarding benefits and activities) are strictly separate. The young person and the mentor meet once a week at a location, which is decided by the young person in order to help him or her feel more at ease. The target for this project, fixed after negotiation with the Business Authority, is that 80% of the young persons have to start an ordinary upper secondary education.

Both projects have experienced challenges in recruiting young people for the activities. For the SUME project, the plan had been for the participants to include persons with different degrees of 'readiness'. Most were to come from the 'ready for education' group, motivated for education but lacking some competencies; but it was planned also to include some from the 'ready for activity' group. The leaders of the project had originally wanted to include more from the latter group; but this was not approved by the Business Authority officials, because they wanted a large proportion of the project participants to enrol in education relatively quickly.

In both projects funding structures came to play a role, although not a very clear role. One of the professionals in the SUME project said that from the outset the process of referring young people from the job centre to the project was too hasty, because the project management was eager to reach the number of young persons necessary to get the EU funding. As a result, several of the persons referred did not in fact meet the criteria for participating in activities. The issue of funding was also noted by the young persons in the project; one of them said that the possibility of EU funding was the first information he had been given about the project.

The young participants offer a generally positive assessment of the projects. They indicate three areas where the projects have helped them. One is confronting social and personal challenges, such as difficulty in establishing or maintaining social relations; another is handling practical challenges in everyday life, such as understanding and handling tax and insurance. The third area is planning for one's future and taking steps to realise plans. The persons interviewed agree that the personal mentor has been very important. This is in line with experience from other projects (Görlich & Hansen, 2017, Andreasen et al., 2016). The crucial thing,

according to these young people, is to have the same professional as their mentor or social worker, not being sent around to different professionals. This also makes it easier to recognise the problems and the life situation of the young people as basis for professional intervention.

The assessments from professionals differ according to their roles in the projects. The project managers and coordinators worry about fulfilling the success criteria (target figures) defined as basis for funding, while the mentors focus on the pedagogical work with the young people. Still, worries about meeting the target figures are also felt by the mentors. Professionals from both projects voice criticism of the fact that the success criteria are almost exclusively focused on vocational education. They find it problematic and difficult to have to guide young people towards one specific type of education, because young people have different qualities and interests and should have the options to choose between different types of education. The SUME project was allowed to have a small part of the project participants choose a general secondary education, but only after re-negotiation with the business authority. The professionals in the Aalborg project also said that the ideas about education among the policy-makers and funders were too narrow, as they recognised only vocational education as a success, not other types of education.

The professionals find that EU-funded projects involve many demanding administrative tasks. For instance, professionals from the SUME project said that registering a young person for the project took 2.5 hours and that action plans for each participant were to be written every 2 months. All contact to the young people involved in the project had to be documented and signed by the young people, and that contributed to a heavy administrative load.

In sum, interviews with managers, professionals and young people leave an overall positive impression. It seems that the two projects have made it possible to develop and innovate both organisational and pedagogical aspects of the work with marginalised young people, and that the projects have improved the situation and the prospects of many of the participants. But it also seems that the projects have been limited by narrow success criteria (focused on vocational education), that there have been difficulties in the coordination with other projects and activities for the target groups, and that the professionals in the projects experience a heavy administrative load.

16.7 Concluding Remarks

The Danish activation policy for the NEET group and for the broader group of young people depending on cash benefits or unemployment insurance benefits is generally in line with the EU Youth Guarantee, although it has more emphasis on education. EU funding for the Danish YG activities comes only through the ESF, which has co-funded projects under two of the priority axes in the Danish ESF strategy. The priority axis ‘Inclusion through education and employment’, which most obviously fits with the objectives of the Youth Guarantee, has only been allocated the minimum 20% of funds demanded by the EU. Specific reasons are given for this, but more generally it reflects the fact that youth unemployment is comparatively low and thus a less urgent problem in Denmark.

A closer study of two ESF-funded projects show them mainly as a positive contribution. The extra funding available allows for a higher quality, not least through a more stable and versatile mentoring of the participants in the projects. But there are also less positive consequences. One is the detailed administrative control demanded by ESF projects, giving considerable extra work for the professionals working with the young people. Another is the fact that competition may arise between the projects and the ordinary activities, for instance, when persons ‘ready for education’ are recruited for projects while the less ready are left with colleagues in the job centre. Professionals from both projects worry that the success criteria for the projects focus exclusively on vocational education, which they do not find relevant for all the young people they work with.

16.8 Conclusion: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

Over the last three decades, Danish employment and labour market policy for young adults has gradually become based on the ‘activation’ principle (Hansen & Schultz-Nielsen, 2015). Young people over the age of 18 who receive welfare cash benefits from the municipality or unemployment insurance benefits have to be active in either work or education.

Activation is an obligation for unemployed persons, who have to actively start education or seek jobs, and also for the public unemployment services, which have to help the persons find their way into education or work. This is done through a mix of individual guidance, organised preparatory activity and pressure (through the threat of losing the benefit). The measures employed depend on the degree of 'readiness' that persons are assessed to have.

The increasing focus on activation has been in line with international developments and with recommendations from influential international organisations such as the OECD. In recent years, it has also been co-regulated by the 'integrated surveillance' of economic policy in the EU. Country-Specific Recommendations for Denmark given as part of the European Semester procedure have emphasised the importance of securing an adequate supply of qualified labour though limiting the opportunities for early retirement, disability benefits and subsidised employment, as well as through improving employability by means of activation and education. While such recommendations are not binding, they certainly have influence.

The EU Youth Guarantee has added little to already existing policy and programmes. EU funding for Danish Youth Guarantee activities comes only through the ESF, which has co-funded projects under two of the priority axes in the Danish ESF strategy. The priority axis 'Inclusion through education and employment', which most obviously fits with the objectives of the Youth Guarantee, has only been allocated the minimum 20% of funds demanded by the EU.

As noted above, a closer study of two ESF-funded projects showed how competition may arise between the projects and the ordinary activities, for instance, when persons 'ready for education' are recruited for projects while the less ready are left with colleagues in the job centre. The funding systems of the Danish public sector may contribute to such problems. If an unemployed person is enrolled in education, he or she transfers from cash benefit paid by the municipality (although partly refunded by the state) to education benefit, which is paid by the state. This releases money that the municipality may use for other urgent tasks, such as eldercare. Placement of unemployed young persons in a specific

category or programme is in principle based on a professional assessment, but it is hard to overlook that the funding mechanisms may influence the decisions.

The success criteria pursued by the Danish Business Authority are regarded as too narrow by professionals from both studied projects. The criteria focus exclusively on enrolment in vocational education and this prospect is not relevant for all the young people participating in the projects. The narrow focus emerges mainly from national worries about a potential lack of skilled workers, but it is supported by the EU recommendations.

A challenge for this kind of employment policy is the availability of jobs. Even if young adults are ready for jobs, the job market may not be ready for them. Earlier initiatives (for instance, the proposals for a national Danish Youth Guarantee in the 1980s) have involved obliging private and public employers to create job openings through agreements. Such organised creation of job openings is extremely difficult in a capitalist market economy, even one combined with a strong welfare state. In principle, creation of job openings should be possible in the public sector and this has sometimes been attempted, but currently such initiatives are limited by budget squeezes and New Public Management approaches. Creating job openings through supplementary public funding is still an element in Danish employment policy, but on a limited scale, used, for instance, in supporting people with physical or mental disability and in some programmes for higher education graduates.

The priority given to education in Danish activation policy as can be seen as a progressive element because it tries to develop the capacities and choices of unemployed persons as a basis for future employment. In fact, the presence of well-educated workers is in itself an incentive to economic investment and job creation (Lundvall, 2002). Furthermore, most education involves 'extras' in knowledge and personal development apart from the vocational competencies gained (cf. Illeris, 2004), and education-based activation may thus contribute to well-being and civic culture.

Notes

1. The data from Eurostat to which we refer in this section are the following: GDP at market prices (Eurostat code: tec00001), accessed 8 January 2019; Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income [ilc_di12], accessed 8 February 2019; Population by sex, age and educational attainment level [lfsa_pgaed], accessed 8 January 2019; Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and educational attainment level [trng_lfse_03], accessed 8 January 2019; Unemployment by sex and age – annual average [une_rt_a], accessed 8 January 2019; Youth unemployment by sex, age and educational attainment level (Eurostat code: yth_empl_090), accessed 8 January 2019; Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and educational attainment level (NEET rates) [yth_empl_160].
2. The percentages do not add up to 100 because administrative costs are not included.

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17

The Response of the United Kingdom (England and Scotland) to Youth Guarantee

Sharon Clancy, John Holford, and Ellen Boeren

17.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Youth Guarantee (YG) in the two largest of the United Kingdom's (UK) four constituent countries. England represents about 85% of the UK's output and workforce, Scotland about 8.5%. Some of the data refer to England or Scotland; some are UK-wide. The chapter examines the forms, systems and funding which underpin the Youth Guarantee, the conditions currently affecting young people socially, economically and geographically, the UK government's rationale for not embracing Youth Guarantee, and the impact of this decision. The chapter's broader objective is to examine how European Union (EU) policies and structural funding influence public and regulatory agencies

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within the UK and its devolved administrations – such as Scotland – when intervening in adult education and employment markets.

17.1.1 State Form and Administration

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) is a constitutional monarchy comprising four countries (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).¹ The supreme legislative body, Parliament, comprises the appointed [House of Lords](#) (once hereditary, its members are now largely appointed for life), and the elected [House of Commons](#), each of whose 650 Members (MPs) represents a geographical constituency (electoral district). General elections are held at least every five years on a “first-past-the-post” basis. Most of Scotland’s internal affairs have been governed since 1999 by a Scottish Parliament (comprising 129 MSPs) and government, based in Edinburgh; the Scottish Parliament has devolved authority over Education.² The Conservative Party is currently the largest in the UK Parliament though the Brexit crisis has led to its now being in a minority. In the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish National Party (SNP) holds power and forms the Scottish government.

The UK government, headed by the Prime Minister, exercises executive authority through departments, each composed of permanently employed civil servants, and accountable to Parliament through a minister (generally, a Secretary of State). Where administration is devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as in Education, the UK Parliament’s and government’s remit is limited to England. The Department for Education is headed by a Secretary of State. In Scotland, the government is headed by a First Minister, supported by Cabinet Secretaries. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has ministers for Children and Young People, for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, and for Business, Fair Work and Skills.

The UK Coalition (Conservatives and Liberal-Democrat, 2010–2015) government and three subsequent Conservative administrations (2015–2017, 2017–2019, and from July 2019) have followed policies of decentralisation and localism (within England) leading, in theory, to increased local powers. Many decisions about delivery of services for young people are made at sub-national level. Since 2012, regions no

longer have devolved governmental functions, but are still used for statistical and some administrative purposes (e.g., elections, “NUTS 1” regions).³ Local authorities, covering areas of varying sizes but smaller than regions, retain a role in education – for example, in state schooling – especially in Scotland. Local government structures are complex. Most English local authorities are divided into single-tier (unitary) or two-tier authorities. Unitary authorities provide all local government services within a district; in two-tier areas, responsibility is divided between county (responsible, *inter alia*, for education) and borough or district councils. In England, 152 local authorities have responsibility for education. Central government funding for local authorities fell by around 50% in real terms from 2010/11 to 2017/18, though demand for social services rose; services not required by law (this includes most adult education) have particularly suffered. In the 32 responsible local authorities in Scotland, education spending has also fallen sharply (by 20% since 2010/11), with cuts in Further Education especially disadvantaging students with care responsibilities (McMurray, 2019).

17.1.2 Socio-economic Conditions

The UK economy (GDP) contracted sharply 2007–2009 (from €2252 billion to €1725 billion), before entering a slow upward trend. Nevertheless, only in 2014 did GDP (€2.287 billion) pass the 2007 figure, and it fell back again (to €2338 billion in 2017 and €2390 billion in 2018). At the same time, the population has been rising. In 2017, therefore, GDP per capita (€35,400) was lower than in 2007 (€36,700). GDP *per capita* was €31,100 in 2007, fell to €27,700 two years later, before beginning to rise again. However, it remained below the 2007 figure until 2015. The UK faces fiscal risk in the longer term, linked to age-related spending on pensions, health and long-term care (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2018a).

As a percentage of GDP, expenditure on social protection, just under 25% during 2005–2007, rose to a high of 28.9% (2011 and 2012) before falling back to 27.5% (2014), 27.6% (2015) and 26.2% in 2016. While around the EU average (+/–0.6 percentage points) during 2008–2013, since 2014 it has been around 2 percentage points below the EU-28

average. This reflects a cap on welfare spending introduced in 2014. Recent social reforms have generated increasing in-work poverty, with over 5 million employed people below the living wage (IHS Markit, 2017); coverage of unemployment benefits is below the EU average and falling. Recent reports show 14 million people, a fifth of the population, living in poverty, with 4 million more than 50% below the poverty line (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018), and 1.5 million destitute (unable to afford basic essentials such as food and heating) (Social Metrics Commission, 2018, p. 97). At the same time, the gulf between the richest and poorest is growing. The disparity between disposable income in the richest area (Inner London) and the poorest (West Midlands) is the highest in Western Europe (Inequality Briefing, 2015).

The UK population, which stood at 61,571,647 in 2008, rose to 65,808,573 in 2017 (Eurostat data), and appears set to continue to grow. Around 56.0 million live in England, 3.1 million in Wales, 5.4 million in Scotland, and 1.9 million in Northern Ireland (ONS, 2017, 2019). The population is ageing, with 18% of people aged 65 and over and 2.4% aged 85 and over in 2016. The proportion of children under 16 in the population fell from 24.5% in 1976 to 18.9% in 2016 (ONS, 2017).

In terms of educational attainment, in 2017 the overall number of people aged 15–64 who have educational levels less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0–2) was approximately 8 million (20%), whilst those in the same age bracket attaining upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) was almost 17 million. Young people, in England particularly, are spending longer in education than previous cohorts. Full-time education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16. In England, compulsory education or training has been extended to 18 for those born since 1997. In Scotland, primary and four years of secondary school are compulsory, with two further secondary school years being optional, and more are leaving school with qualifications. Broadly speaking, the proportion of the UK population with qualifications at ISCEDII levels 5–8 has risen steadily over the last decade, from just under 30% of the population to just under 40%; the proportion at ISCED 3–4 has fallen slightly (from

around 44% to just over 40); while the number at ISCED levels 0–2 has fallen from around 27% to 20%. When compared to the EU-28, while the trends are not dissimilar, the proportion at higher ISCED levels is markedly higher.

The total overall UK participation rate in education and training for men and women aged 25–64, at all educational attainment levels, was 14.6% in 2018 (Eurostat: *trng_lfse_01*). However, having risen to over 20% just before the recession, this represents a significant decline. Participation rates in adult learning have fallen at all levels of education and across the entire UK (Tuckett, 2018). With government-funded part-time educational provision declining, fewer opportunities are available, particularly for vulnerable young adults. While ten years ago, the UK had a participation rate roughly twice that of the EU as a whole, it is now only 3.5% points higher than the EU average.

The overall youth unemployment rate for under 25s, having ranged between 19% and 21% between 2009 and 2013, had since fallen quite steeply (13.0% in 2016, 12.1% in 2017). According to the Office for National Statistics, unemployment for those aged 16–24 dropped to 11.1% in mid-2018 – still over twice the overall unemployment rate (4.1%) (ONS, 2018b). When compared with the EU as a whole, the UK rate was only slightly below the EU-28 average during 2009–2011, but has fallen more sharply. Youth unemployment in Scotland has also decreased: from over 20% in 2012 to under 10%.

The rate of young people aged 15–24 not in employment, education or training (NEET), at 10.9%, may demonstrate that education and employment are “on an improving or stable path” (European Commission, 2018a, p. 6). The Institute for Employment Studies, however, considers too many still fall into the NEET category (Hillage, 2018). The overall trends mask considerable variation across and within local authority areas and demographics. In Scotland, for instance, males seem more likely to belong to the NEET category: in 2016, 10.7% of young people aged 16–19 fell into this category but more boys (12.7%) than girls (8.7%) (Scottish Government, 2017). On a comparative basis, the NEET rate in the UK was slightly above that of the EU as a whole from 2007 to 2013, but has since fallen below the EU average.

17.1.3 Concluding Remarks

Given the torrid nature of EU-related political debate in the UK – and the politics of devolution and (in Scotland) independence – any impression that the European Youth Guarantee might shape UK policy was fiercely denied. The Minister of Employment (for England) emphasised “the non-binding [nature of the] Recommendation establishing a Youth Guarantee agreed by the [European] Council in 2013”. In her view, it merely

suggested a range of avenues for Member States to explore in tackling youth unemployment, in ways suited to national and local conditions and priorities. The UK does not have a youth guarantee scheme of the kind envisaged by the EU. Instead the Government prefers to pursue its own programme of successful interventions and support for young people.⁴

In contrast, the Scottish government emphasised its positive engagement with EU priorities. The Scottish Minister for Youth Employment was “very pleased to take the issue of the European Youth Guarantee, an EU-wide measure to ensure the earliest possible intervention with unemployed young women and men, to the Scottish Parliament.” She “urged the UK government on several occasions to properly consider the benefits of [the] scheme”, but had

so far been frustrated by their failure to fully endorse it. Were Scotland to have the full levers of independence, including our own welfare system and the freedom to fully implement the Youth Guarantee, we could create even more opportunities to support young people into employment.⁵

As elsewhere, youth employment was a strong focus of debate during the post-recession decade. According to the Institute for Employment Studies, the government spends £10.5 billion a year on youth interventions,⁶ but with no overarching strategy at least six different government departments and 10 groups of delivery partners manage this work – and that leaves aside the role of Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish administrations. The main approach has been ‘learning or earning’. Though problematic, this is

in line with many OECD governments which have “prioritise[d] short-term and utilitarian programmes, focused primarily on labour market entry for young people” (Tuckett, 2018). The result is that many UK young people find themselves on out-of-work benefits, “disjointed back-to-work and in-work support”, unable to escape a “low pay, no pay” cycle, with uncertain working conditions, hours, earnings and job security. The current generation of young people earns less than generations (when aged 16–24) born in 1959. Recent decades have seen larger proportions of 16-year-olds engaging in education (either vocational or general), whilst the overall participation rate in youth employment has declined (Speckesser & Sala, 2015).

17.2 The National Response to the Youth Guarantee

The UK government’s 2013 decision not to establish a Youth Guarantee scheme was based on the view that existing provision – in particular the Youth Contract (launched in 2012)⁷ and additional support for 16–17-year-old NEETs – was appropriate and similar to the YG, despite not using the same framework. It argued that the Youth Guarantee was too prescriptive, particularly in coming into play after four to six months. While it submitted a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan and received Youth Employment Initiative funding, it was the only EU member state not to participate in the Youth Guarantee initiative (Eurofound, 2015b, p. 37).

UK devolution arrangements were significant in the response to and operation of YG-related schemes. The UK government responded on behalf of the whole UK; devolved administrations were more sympathetic to the YG. This reflects devolution, and especially the political complexion of the governments in Edinburgh (Scottish Nationalist), Wales (Labour or Labour-led), and Northern Ireland (where power-sharing encouraged accommodation). While education is devolved to Scotland and Wales, labour market regulation remains with the UK government. The Youth Contract combined negative and positive incentives: failure to participate rendered a young person (aged 16–24) who had

been unemployed for 13 weeks or more ineligible for Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA: a social security benefit). Several incentives were available to employers to provide work experience placements: 18–24 year old JSA claimants were offered weekly (not fortnightly) signing-on meetings at "Jobcentre Plus" (the government employment exchange), while some of them were offered training, work experience, and a job interview at a local firm.⁸ This involved education funding, and while the training element was fully funded by the Skills Funding Agency in England and by the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly Government did not fund sector-based work academies, but "similar support ... through the 'Routeways to Work' programme for claimants". Thus, while between January 2011 and November 2014 there were 27,700 "Work Experience starts" and 15,700 "Sector based work academy preemployment training starts" in Scotland, in Wales there were 18,330 of the former but none of the latter.⁹

17.2.1 Governance Structure

UK Government Youth Contract expenditure (£131.4m in 2014–2015) supported schemes to help young people into sustained employment, such as increased Jobcentre Plus support, regular opportunity to meet an adviser, and combining existing benefits schemes with new ones. These included Job Seeker's Allowance, the main unemployment benefit for those seeking for work, and the employment-related element of Universal Credit, a UK-wide social security benefit that replaced six means-tested benefits and tax credits in 2013.¹⁰ Universal Credit targets the unemployed, but also aims to incentivise those who cannot work or need assistance, such as disabled people, to move towards employment. Employed claimants continue to receive benefits in certain circumstances (e.g., if responsible for a child and having limited capability for work) provided a maximum earning threshold is not reached.

The Youth Contract, criticised for not supporting the most disadvantaged young people, was terminated in 2016. From April 2017, a new employment support programme, the Youth Obligation, has been rolled out for 18–21-year-olds.¹¹ It emphasises 'earning or learning'. Young

people must engage in intensive work-focused support from the first day they claim, including workshops, one-to-one coaching, and exercises to improve job search, job application and interview skills. If still unemployed and claiming Universal Credit after six months they are referred for work-related training or work experience. Young people who do not find work after six months on Youth Obligation, move into a sector-based work academy (SBWA) placement or traineeship (both combine vocational training with work experience).

The most disadvantaged, the ‘hardest to help’ and those with complex needs, are especially challenging to these employability initiatives. The Work Programme, the primary UK government welfare-to-work programme under the 2010–2015 government, introduced in June 2011, was discontinued in April 2017 after widespread criticism (Davies & Raikes, 2014; House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2014).

Civil society organisations, and the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, have argued that if new youth programmes are to succeed, as the Work Programme and Youth Contract did not, they need to respond to long-term social factors, including educational attainment, parental income levels, and factors such as ethnicity, disability, and geography.

In Scotland, the Opportunities for All scheme, targeting 16–19-year-olds, was seen as similar in nature to the Youth Guarantee, offering education or training to NEETs. A Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce was established in 2013 and a Developing Young Workforce programme (mainly targeting under-18s) runs until 2021. Implementation focuses on cooperation with schools, colleges and employers, and on apprenticeships and equality (Scottish Government, 2014).

The Scottish Public Employment Service developed the Employability Pipeline,¹² which is also available to young adults who are older than 18–19. The ‘pipeline’ supports people in searching for a job through five steps: (1) referral, engagement and assessment, (2) needs assessment, (3) vocational activity, (4) employer engagement and job matching, and (5) in work support and aftercare. Scotland, like England, participated in the Youth Employment Initiative (until 2018); this was open to young adults between aged 16 and 29. It focused on South West Scotland and was

delivered through the College sector, leading to nationally recognised qualifications. European Social Funds supported this initiative (Scottish Funding Council [SFC], 2016). ESF supports the Developing Scotland's Workforce Programme (2018–2023), which targets learners in colleges.

As we have seen, the UK has not adopted Youth Guarantee but instead manages various European Commission programmes on youth employment and education. The ESF Programme delivers significant funding in the UK. In England, the Department for Work and Pensions acts as Managing Authority (MA) for the delivery of ESF priorities, part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Growth Programme for England (2014–2020). The focus of the Operational Programme is to increase labour market participation, promote social inclusion and develop the skills of the potential and existing workforce (Table 17.1).

The DWP, as MA, reached agreement with the European Commission and adopted the European Social Fund Operational Programme in 2014. This sets out strategy and priorities for the ESF 2014–2020 to support the Europe 2020 strategy, and outlines how the fund will be delivered, managed and evaluated. The Scottish Government is Managing Authority (MA) for two types of European funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The government distributes these to partners and organisations for projects addressing the funds' goals (e.g., learning skills and job search, in case of ESF). Scotland received €465 million in ESF contributions during 2014–2020.

To bring the Youth Guarantee (or associated programmes in the UK) into being, the EU advocated prioritising youth employment in national budgets to avoid higher future costs from long-term unemployment. The EU adds to national spending on youth schemes, as outlined above, through ESF and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). In England, most of this matched funding comes from employment and skills programmes managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA). The latter, established in 2017 is a single agency funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. A European Social Fund co-financing organisation, ESFA helps deliver the learning and skills elements of local

Table 17.1 Governance structure. Key actors that support and implement YG-related programmes in England

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competencies
Department for Work and Pensions Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	Public administration Public administration	National National	Coordination Body and Managing Authority (MA) Responsible for regional and local government Intermediate Body	The National Administration plays the role of Managing Authority and ensures the system activities, monitoring and evaluation, institutional communication. The UK Government, and specifically the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), is responsible for regional and local government
Regions	Former regional development agencies	Regional		The regions no longer have devolved governmental functions but continue to be used for statistical and some administrative purposes. They define areas (constituencies) for the purposes of elections to the European Parliament. Eurostat also uses them to demarcate first level Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) regions ("NUTS 1 regions") within the European Union
Local Authorities	Public administration	Local	Local government	There are 152 local authorities, divided into single-tier (unitary) or two-tier authorities. Local authorities are responsible for services such as education, youth provision, social care, housing and strategic planning
Local Enterprise Partnerships	Co-ordination of economic priorities and development	Local Authority level	Deployment of Youth Employment Initiative monies	LEPs play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and job creation, improve infrastructure and raise workforce skills within the local area. They specifically help co-ordinate provision of apprenticeships, work experience placements and youth entrepreneurship programmes

(continued)

Table 17.1 (continued)

Actors	General role	Level	Role on YG	Competencies
Education Skills and Funding Agency	The single agency accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults	National	A European Social Fund co-financing organisation	The body accountable for funding education, further education (FE) and skills for children, young people and adults – it is sponsored by the Department for Education. It provides match funding for ESF and YEI and helps deliver the learning and skills elements of local European Structural and Investment Fund strategies
The Big Lottery Fund	The Big Lottery Fund gives grants to organisations in the UK to help improve their communities.	National	A European Social Fund co-financing organisation	The Big Lottery Fund gives money awarded by the UK National Lottery through grants to voluntary and community organisations, public sector organisations, and private sector organisations. The Big Lottery Fund's Building Better Opportunities (BBO) is matching ESF funds in support of projects that tackle poverty, improve employability and promote social inclusion throughout England
Rural Payments Agency	Give grants amounting to over £2 billion each year to support a thriving farming and food sector.	National – rural focus	The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) manages the EAFRD grants	The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) provides grant funding to the Growth Programme, which in turn provides funding to help projects in England which create jobs and help economic growth in rural areas within the country. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) manages the grants, working with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
Register of training providers	ESFA funded providers offering training	Local	Acts as a register for recognised providers	All training and apprenticeship providers are required to be part of the Register, managed by the ESFA.

Sources: Our processing on official documents and regulatory framework

European Structural and Investment Fund strategies. The ESFA works through registered colleges, training organisations and employers.

The DWP is a co-financing organisation (CFO) funding projects to improve employability and support people moving to sustained employment. Co-financing organisations provide eligible matched funding and use their expertise to procure and contract manage, or grant fund, ESF provision. In the 2014–2020 ESF programme most co-financing organisations fund locally-defined activities through competitive grant-giving or procurement processes.

In Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) are the two major players. The SFC funds 26 Scottish colleges – also eligible for ESF funding – and 19 universities. SDS manages the Government’s Employability Fund which helps the Developing the Young Workforce programme.

Other co-financing organisations include the Big Lottery Fund – available across the whole UK – and the ESFA. The Big Lottery Fund’s Building Better Opportunities (BBO) scheme matches ESF funds to support projects that tackle poverty, improve employability and promote social inclusion in England.¹³ Funding is available to voluntary or community, public, and private sector organisations. The funding made available ranges from £330,000 to £10.6m. It is delivered in Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas according to LEP priorities; the 39 LEPs have European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) sub-committees, providing advice on local needs, which the ESF MA considers when deciding local provision and funding. In Scotland, a variety of funding schemes is available through the Big Lottery Fund, such as the Young Start programme (to help young people up to age 24 to increase their confidence). While several schemes are UK-wide, some are specifically Scottish. Other charitable foundations, such as Foundation Scotland, also make donations towards community projects.

The ESF expects **strong partnerships** between all key stakeholders: “public authorities, employment services, career guidance providers, education and training institutions, youth support services, business, employers, trade unions, etc”. In the UK cooperation is more developed at local/regional than national level. Regional diversity has led to differing ESF allocation between regions deemed ‘more developed’ (GDP per capita over

90% of the EU average), ‘transition’ (between 75% and 90%), and ‘less developed’ (less than 75%) (DWP & ESF, 2014).¹⁴ LEPs have been charged with managing a large part of the YEI funds. They are expected to extend provision of apprenticeships, work experience placements and youth entrepreneurship programmes (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 48; 2015b, p. 48).

17.2.2 Funding Flow

Table 17.2 shows the UK-specific funding allocation of the ESF, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which provides food or basic material assistance (clothing, toiletries etc.) to those in greatest need, and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In England, ESF 2014–2020 has been brought together with the ERDF and part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to form the ESIF Growth Programme. This aims to increase labour market participation, promote social inclusion and develop skills among the potential and existing workforce. Table 17.2 outlines funding allocations under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

The UK is a beneficiary of European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds and is scheduled to receive up to €16.5 billion (£14.5 billion) by 2020. This represents around 3% of annual public investment 2014–2018.

Table 17.2 EU planned and paid funds: UK, 2018

Fund	Planned EU	Total net paid
EAFRD	5,195,417,491	1,918,162,181
EMFF	243,139,437	35,759,590
ERDF	5,856,532,225	650,644,556
ESF	4,763,553,589	533,109,477
FEAD	3,944,660	0
<i>YEI (of which)</i>	412,196,248	27,473,209
<i>YEI ESF M.C.</i>	206,098,124	13,736,604
<i>YEI S.A.</i>	206,098,124	13,736,604
Total	16,474,783,650	3,165,149,013

Source: Our processing from ESIF 2014–2020 EU payments, 2018

By December 2017, an estimated €10.23 billion (£8.97 billion) (62.8% of the total) had been allocated. The UK is using ESI funding to reduce inactivity among young people and long-term welfare benefit recipients, to improve training and skills, including through apprenticeship schemes, to invest in lifelong learning, and to promote social inclusion by fighting poverty and discrimination. The Scottish Government manages the ESF and ERDF programmes (it has received €465 million and €476 million respectively for these) – a total of €941 million structural funds contributions.¹⁵

The Growth programme incorporates Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) money for areas with very high rates of youth unemployment. The YEI is implemented in England as part of the European Social Fund (ESF). In 2016 prices, this represented €6.4 billion to support young people in specific regions of the EU.

In financial terms, YEI in England was supported by a total of just over €461 million over its lifetime (ending 2018). This figure comprises a YEI-specific allocation of c. €160 million, matched by equivalent ESF funding. The latter is increased through further matched funding in England of €142 million. Allocations are shown in Table 17.3.

Table 17.3 LEP areas eligible for YEI, and their funding allocation in million Euro for YEI and ESF

	YEI specific allocation	ESF allocation	Match for ESF part	Total YEI
Black Country (all)	23.0	23.0	23.0	69.0
Coventry and Warwickshire (Coventry)	4.9	4.9	4.9	14.7
Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire (Nottingham)	4.8	4.8	4.8	14.4
Greater Birmingham and Solihull	22.8	22.8	22.8	68.4
Humber (Kingston-upon-Hull)	4.5	4.5	3.0	12.0
Liverpool City Region (All)	26.6	26.6	17.7	70.9
North East (Durham)	9.0	9.0	6.0	24.0
South East (Thurrock)	1.8	1.8	1.8	5.4
Tees Valley (All)	14.7	14.7	9.8	39.2

Source: DWP, 2015, Youth Employment Initiative, Information Note

Table 17.4 Allocations to Scottish Agencies under the Youth Employment Initiative (pounds)

Agencies	Amount
Dumfries and Galloway Council	1,113,298,82
East Ayrshire Council	1,950,000,00
East Ayrshire Council Consortium	1,015,050,00
East Dunbartonshire Council	134,000,00
Glasgow City Council	7,966,992,00
Inverclyde Council	920,000,00
North Ayrshire Council	2,130,000,00
North Lanarkshire Council	5,019,999,78
Renfrewshire Council	5,030,253,40
South Ayrshire Council	647,950,50
South Lanarkshire Council	2,984,190,00
South Lanarkshire Council	632,298,00
West Dunbartonshire Council	1,744,196,20
Scottish Funding Council	27,954,825,00

Source: Scottish Government News release (2016)

In Scotland, the YEI invested £60 million, focussing on the South West (Scottish Government, 2016). Allocations to local authorities and the Scottish Funding Council are shown in Table 17.4. The ESF Operational Programme specifies that the YEI complements, and does not duplicate, existing labour market provision, such as traineeships, apprenticeships and employability Jobcentre Plus initiatives. According to the 2017 YEI Process Evaluation report, some design challenges were encountered: mismatch between the boundaries of LEP areas and YEI and ESF eligible areas; perceived restrictiveness of YEI guidance and eligibility rules; the requirement for local matched funding. In Scotland, the YEI is terminated, and a similar initiative is now part of the Scotland's Workforce Programme phase 2 (2018–2023).

17.2.3 Management

Given that the UK has not adopted the Youth Guarantee, but has received European funding for what is considered a Youth Guarantee equivalent, this section examines how interconnected elements of the Youth Obligation are managed. They cover employment, youth and adult

education sectors. The Youth Obligation, as stated, focuses on ‘earning or learning’. Young people may be in education, apprenticeships, expected to engage in work-based activity to improve their job search, job application and interview skills, or referred to work-related training or guaranteed work experience. In Scotland, Developing the Young Workforce is the dominant strategy. A mix of provision is available through colleges, managed by Skills Development Scotland and the Public Employment Service.

Further and sixth-form¹⁶ education expenditure has been cut back much more sharply than other types of education. For each sixth form student, there has been a funding reduction of 21% since 2010. The FE sector has experienced an 8% cut in real terms since 2010/11, leading to course closures, job losses and reductions in student support services.¹⁷ The number of adults participating in government-funded further education fell 10.8% between 2013/14 and 2015/16 (Skill Funding Agency [SFA], 2016).

At the same time, the apprenticeship levy, introduced by the UK government in April 2017 (and also applicable in Scotland) led to a large reduction in apprenticeship numbers: only 113,700 young people (aged 24 and under) started apprenticeships in 2017/18, the lowest level in a decade (Powell, 2019). The levy is intended to encourage greater employer “ownership” and to counteract the long-term decline in employer investment in training. An early analysis of Apprenticeship Levy’s impact (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2018, p. 2), however, shows that many employers expect to write off the levy as a tax and not to use it to fund apprenticeships; others, especially in the public sector, believe it will disincentivise apprenticeships and detract from their quality; still others suggest it will further entrench a growing tendency to offer more apprenticeships to those over 25. Those most in need of apprenticeship opportunities, particularly young people with qualifications below level 3, are likely to be hardest hit.

The apprenticeship picture is further complicated by the ESFA’s register, on which local training providers must register. This includes many small and inexperienced or newly incorporated companies with scant or no trading history or experience of managing apprenticeships. Sector leaders have argued that continuing devolution of training provision,

with inadequate monitoring or accountability systems, alongside reduced funding, is leading to a crisis. The government in England is currently reviewing the FE sector, and also initiated a review of post-18 education funding, exploring the ‘efficiency and resilience’ of the FE sector and its ability to deliver access to higher education (Augar et al., 2019). In Scotland, apprenticeships are administered through Skills Development Scotland; employers paying the levy can apply for £15,000 to cover the costs of training.

One problem with the complex plethora of education, benefits and programme changes across the UK, especially those targeting young people, is that (in contrast to the Youth Guarantee), no specific monitoring data are required. 2015 data showed that UK provision reached only one in five NEETs under 25 (19.9%), while only just over a fifth of those ending a benefit claim in 2015 took up an offer within four months.¹⁸

For out-of-work young people, arrangements for benefits and support to gain employment are complex and punitive. According to the Institute for Employment, half of those unemployed young people who could legitimately claim benefits do not do so. The European Commission’s UK Country Report for 2018 suggests this is particularly serious for the most vulnerable, particularly NEETs. Local authorities are required to collect information about young people so that those not participating, or NEET, can be identified and supported to re-engage. However, in England, young people aged 18 and over, or 25 and over with additional needs, are no longer a local authority responsibility. The main source of support is Job Centres, but the Institute for Employment Studies found that Job Centre Plus (JCP) organisations have become a source of fear for many young people, especially the most disadvantaged. The sanctions culture has sapped trust in them.

17.2.4 Concluding Remarks

A recent Learning and Work Institute Youth Commission Report suggests a ‘patchwork’ of devolution to local authorities (Evans & Egglestone, 2019, p. 5) is creating considerable variation in education and employment outcomes for young people. Poverty and deprivation are “perhaps

the clearest predictors of poorer performance ... suggesting a need to support and improve education and employment opportunities in these areas” (Evans & Egglestone, 2019, p. 4). A recent report by Inequality Briefing, shows that in the UK the gap between the richest and poorest regions, in terms of disposable income, is the widest in the EU (Inequality Briefing, 2015). This has a direct impact on educational and work opportunities for young people. English councils, struggling to balance their books, ‘face a funding gap of more than £3 billion’ in 2019/20, according to the Local Government Association (2019). In Scotland, college funding has been slashed over recent years: only 1 of Scotland’s 20 colleges is not forecasting a deficit over the next 5 years, according to Audit Scotland (Auditor General for Scotland, 2018, p. 18).

The full implications of Brexit remain unclear. Whilst the Leave vote has often been ascribed to the anger felt by people from former manufacturing areas, European funding has been vital in many such areas and their future may be bleak. However, the long-term impact of EU Structural Funds such as the Youth Guarantee is difficult to gauge due to the lack of robust evaluations of individual, social and societal impact, as well as the fiscal.

17.3 Conclusions: Implications for Adult Education Policy Development

In declaring the Youth Guarantee’s aims to be already addressed by existing UK government programmes, the government was both denying the very real extent of EU policy influence and recognising how far its own adult education policies already focus on employability and young adults. This trend set in well before the recession. The Leitch Report (2006) – significantly established by and reporting to the Treasury, and seen as economic rather than educational policy – called for the UK to become “a world leader in skills by 2020”. This meant a “focus on economically valuable skills” that “provide real returns ... in the labour market for individuals and employers”, and “strengthening the voice of employers” in the shaping of training policy and provision (Ibid., p. 3). It has

encouraged a continuing strengthening of ‘human capital’ thinking in policy circles. Economistic approaches had long been powerful in any case. This focus has marked subsequent Labour, Coalition, and Conservative majority governments.

As Holford (2017) has argued, there is an “arresting” coincidence between trends in participation in adult learning (which rose from around 11% in 1994 to 29% in 2004): “sadly, 2004 was as good as it got. Since then UK adult learning participation has been in freefall” (Ibid., 3 para). The number of adult apprentices rose by around 500,000 in the decade after Leitch, though this growth has been arrested by the Apprenticeship Levy. “Yet the price of half a million more apprentices has been a million fewer adults learning. Across further education, the capacity to provide learning to adults outside the apprenticeship context has been radically damaged” (Ibid., para 9).

While the temporal coincidence between the collapse in the number of adults participating in learning – formal, non-formal and (so far as evidence is available) informal – over the past 15 years and governments’ focus hardly proves a causal link, it is hard to believe that the radical erosion of adult educational infrastructure, particularly in the public sector, has not been a significant factor. That erosion has been predicated on the assumption that the route to ‘world-class skills’ lies in encouraging employers to take a lead in shaping provision. ‘Employer-led’ provision – particularly in the context of frequently changing funding rules and regimes – has failed to generate a strong training infrastructure.

This weakness has been particularly felt among the most vulnerable groups in society. The ongoing decline in government-funded part-time educational provision, in further and higher education, has implied fewer opportunities for the most excluded young adults in particular – their participation being influenced by factors such as childcare, low-paid work, disabilities and elder care. The European Commission’s Report on Youth Guarantee in the UK has highlighted over two consecutive years (2017 and 2018) that social disadvantage remains a persistent issue.

Lower educational attainment remains a significant factor among young people in the NEET category. According to the European Commission’s 2018 UK Report on Youth Guarantee, when in work the most disadvantaged young people tend to “be stuck in low-wage,

low-hours and/or low-progression jobs. Many new skills initiatives are targeting the flow of new entrants to the labour market but a large share of the current work force is either low-skilled or in jobs not matching their qualifications” (European Commission, 2018b, p. 4)

Recent Institute for Employment research demonstrates the negative impact on subsequent life chances of a young person’s not finding work. A lack of meaningful work, what one might call the dignity of labour – whether technical, manual or professional – has profound social, economic and health implications (Marmot et al., 2010).

It has yet to be seen how the Youth Obligation and Universal Credit will work. However, previous government failure to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and least visible people in society, including many young people, suggests “a one-size fits all approach does not work. Education, employment and welfare services must begin to recognise the unique potential of each young person and that what works for one does not necessarily work for all” (APPG on Youth Employment, 2018, p. 40). With England’s deepening social and economic inequality, this is a major challenge. While Scotland’s government has been highly critical of austerity measures implemented by the UK government, funding cuts have also occurred “north of the border”, making it more difficult for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter further education.

Notes

1. There are also various colonies (now referred to officially as “dependent territories”), all (except Gibraltar) outside Europe; and three crown dependencies (the Isle of Man and the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey).
2. Broadly similar arrangements apply for Wales and Northern Ireland (in the case of Northern Ireland, devolved government has been suspended de facto since early 2017, although administration is still conducted by the civil service in Northern Ireland).
3. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are NUTS1 regions in themselves.
4. Priti Patel, Minister of State for Employment, Memorandum dated 8 June 2015, quoted in report of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee, 21 July 2015, at <https://publications.parliament>.

- uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmeuleg/342-i/34222.htm. Patel was, and remains, a leading Eurosceptic and advocate of “Brexit”.
5. Speech by Angela Constance, Scottish Minister for Youth Employment, 19 March 2014, reported at: <https://news.gov.scot/news/110-million-youth-funding>.
 6. Tony Wilson, Director of the Institute for Employment Studies, presentation at the Talent Match/University of Nottingham conference: Tackling youth unemployment – The need to employ a new approach? November 2018.
 7. The Youth Contract programme ended on 31 March 2016; see below.
 8. For full details, see: <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06387>.
 9. Department for Work and Pensions (2015) Youth Contract Official Statistics: April 2012 to November 2014. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417182/youth-contract-statistics-to-nov-2014.pdf.
 10. Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support.
 11. The introduction of Universal Credit was phased, affecting different areas of the country at different times.
 12. See <http://www.employabilityinScotland.com/employability-pipeline/the-employability-pipeline/> (accessed 13 Oct. 2019).
 13. See <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/building-better-opportunities> (accessed 13 Oct. 2019).
 14. Areas deemed “more developed” (GDP per capita over 90% of the EU average) are all of London, South East England, and the East of England, plus Dorset, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, South Western Scotland, Eastern Scotland, North Eastern Scotland and East Wales Areas deemed to be in “transition” (between 75% and 90%) encompass Cumbria, Devon, East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire, Highlands and Islands, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Northern Ireland, Shropshire and Staffordshire, South Yorkshire, Tees Valley and Durham. The less developed areas (under 75%) include Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, West Wales and the Valleys.

15. Scotland also receives 44% of the total UK European Maritime and Fisheries Fund allocation (the agriculture sector receives £500 million in European funding on an annual basis under the Common Agricultural Policy). This is for projects that make the fisheries and aquaculture sectors more sustainable, conservation of the marine environment, and support growth and jobs in coastal communities. Some of the projects funded include education and training elements.
16. Sixth-form refers to the final 1–3 years of secondary education, when students (typically between 16 and 18 years of age) prepare for A-level (or equivalent) examinations.
17. *The Guardian*, 18 September, 2018.
18. UK data refer to exits within 3 months as routine monitoring does not include a 4-month observation point; the figure is likely to be understated because the destination was unknown for 64.2% of leavers.

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18

Youth Guarantee and Welfare State Regimes: Cross-Countries Considerations

Marcella Milana and Sandra Vatrella

18.1 Introduction

The European Union's (EU) codification of the Youth Guarantee (YG) aimed to 'guarantee' young adults, under the age of 25, a job or a learning, or training solution, within four months after they have become unemployed or have left formal education (cf. Chap. 8). The processes of its 'domestic adaptation' (cf. Chap. 1) in Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom was explored in depth in Chaps. 9–17. This chapter further examines such processes through the Welfare Regimes framework (Esping-Andersen, 1990), and its recent applications in the examination of lifelong learning systems and adult education infrastructure across Europe (Boeren, Whittaker, & Riddell, 2017; Roosmaa & Saar, 2017). This allowed taking the context for domestic adaptation even more seriously (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2011).

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18.2 Welfare Regimes and Adult Education Research

The Welfare Regimes framework by Esping-Andersen (1990) identifies Weberian ideal-type typologies of welfare, based on a “deductive techniques applied to the social policy history of 18 OECD states” (Isakjee, 2017, p. 5). On this ground, Esping-Andersen (1990) distinguishes between liberal, conservative and social-democratic regimes of welfare. In liberal regimes (e.g. the United Kingdom), social security is the result of market forces and a low level of state intervention. By contrast, in conservative regimes (e.g. Italy), social security “would provide relatively more generous benefits based upon principles of insurance contributions” (Isakjee, 2017, p. 6), whereas in social-democratic regimes universal social security benefits are secured by an interventionist state. Such a Welfare Regimes framework was capable to explain differences across countries as the resultant of their histories, political movements and policy reforms. Yet, it has been criticised, for instance, for the limited number of countries considered, and its inadequacy to account for welfare regimes found, among others, in Mediterranean countries (cf. Ferrera, 1993, 1996) or in Central-Eastern Europe, following the break-up of the Soviet Union (cf. Ebbinghaus, 2012). Albeit not immune from criticisms, the Esping-Andersen’s (1990) Welfare Regimes framework has nonetheless given raise to multiple “models of welfare states [which] deliver fairly consistent results in terms of the typologies they assign to various states” (Isakjee, 2017, p. 8).

Among these is the model proposed by Roosmaa and Saar (2017), based on an exploration of cross-national differences in the intensity of perceived barriers to adult learning in Europe. Drawing on previous typologies of Welfare State Regimes (WSRs), varieties of capitalism and models of lifelong learning (cf. Bohle & Greskovits, 2007; Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999; Estevez-Abe, Iversen, & Soskice, 2001; Green, 2006; Hall & Soskice, 2001; Nölke & Vliegenthart, 2009; Roosmaa & Saar, 2012; Saar, Ure, & Desjardins, 2013; Sapir, 2006), Roosmaa and Saar (2017) propose a country typology that distinguishes between seven types of WSRs:

Social-democratic WSRs (e.g. Denmark) are characterised by a generous income protection and a strongly developed active labour market

policy. In these countries participation in adult education is prevalent and for the most subsidised by the State.

Liberal WSRs (e.g. the United Kingdom) are characterised by a minimal income protection when it comes to labour market policy, and present a relative widespread participation in adult education that is unevenly distributed, and with a prevalence of in-company training.

Conservative, continental WSRs (e.g. Austria) are characterised by a good income protection and a medium developed active labour market policy. In these countries, participation in adult education is comparatively low, as education and training provide adequate skills.

Southern European WSRs (e.g. Italy) are characterised by a medium income protection and less developed active labour market policy. In these countries, participation in adult education is low yet it presents high inequality.

Post-socialist, neoliberal (e.g. Estonia) *embedded neoliberal* WSRs (e.g. Slovakia) and *Balkan* WSRs (e.g. Bulgaria) share a minimal income protection and less a developed active labour market policy. Nonetheless, when it comes to participation in adult education, in *neoliberal* WSRs it is on medium level and unevenly distributed; in *embedded neoliberal* WSRs it is quite low and so is inequality in participation; whereas in *Balkan* WSRs it is very low but inequality in participation is quite high.

Using this typology, Boeren et al. (2017) also appreciated existing adult education infrastructures, and explored their strengths and challenges in the countries under consideration in this book. In the next section, we draw on Roosmaa and Saar's (2017) typology and Boeren et al.'s (2017) work to better comprehend the domestic adaptation to the YG in the context of different WSRs, and adult education systems' characteristics.

18.3 The Youth Guarantee and Welfare States Regimes

In this section, we connect evidences from Chaps. 9–17 to selected WSRs characteristics, covering also adult education. The results, shown in Table 18.1, point at cross-countries features that are not independent from a country's WSR and adult education systems.

Table 18.1 Welfare State Regimes and the domestic adaptation of the Youth Guarantee, selected countries

Analytical level	Youth Guarantee within the Welfare Regimes							
	Denmark	The United Kingdom	Austria, Belgium/Flanders	Belgium/ Brussels Capital Region	Italy, Spain	Estonia	Slovakia	Bulgaria
Countries ^a								
Welfare state ^b	<i>Social democratic</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Conservative, Continental</i>	<i>Conservative, Continental</i>	<i>Southern Europe</i>	<i>Post-socialist, neoliberal</i>	<i>Post-socialist, embedded neoliberal</i>	<i>Post-socialist, Balkan</i>
Implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes (Yes/No)	No						Yes	
Governance structure	De-centralised approach						Centralised top-down approach and implementation mechanism	
Financial flow: Youth Employment Initiative	Collaborative			Federalist			Multilevel	
Management	Coordination by local public authorities, but involving collaboration with other actors	Patchwork of devolution: plethora of providers in a fragmented context	Partnership between a broad variety of providers	Integrated and transversal approach in cross-sectorial policies to tackle youth employment	Eligible	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible
Adult education (participation) ^b	Prevalent, often subsidised by the state	Relatively widespread, unevenly distributed, mostly in-company training	Education and training provides appropriate skills. Comparatively low participation	n.d.	Low participation, inequality in participation high	Participation on medium level, unevenly distribute	Participation quite low, inequality in participation quite low	De-centralised implementation of measures enables reaching the target groups and achieving proportionate intervention of the whole territory of the country Participation very low, inequality in participation quite high

Adult education infrastructure (main characteristics) ^c	Public sector providers in all types of provision; Existence of adult education institutions; Third sector provision mainly focused on personal and social learning; Existence of adult education institutions; Access to structured VET including apprenticeships, for no or low fees; Training available through ALMPs; but some further work required	Wide range of providers: Public and third sector providers in all types of provision; Complex VET provision and high number of private providers; Lack of training as part of ALMPs for older adults; Some financial support for learning, but loans for post-secondary formal education; Limited employer investment in workplace learning; NQF well developed	Good overall provision across range of education types; Public sector providers in all types of provision; Existence of adult education institutions; Third sector provision mainly focused on personal and social learning; Existence of adult education institutions; Access to structured VET including apprenticeships, for no or low fees; Training available through ALMPs; NQF developed but some further work required	Uneven provision and participation geographically; Existence of adult education institutions and use of distance learning; Third sector provision mainly focused on personal and social learning; Low attainment suggests need for more second chance education; ALMPs being developed / funding too low; Public funding available for job-related learning; NQF still under development	Use of initial education schools but also specific adult education institutions; Limited third sector provision except in liberal education; Good post-secondary VET provision for adults; Limited basic/second chance education; Limited role for apprenticeships; Some financial support for learning; NQF still under development	Limited infrastructure including lack of adult education institutions; Limited third sector provision; No basic and limited second chance education; ALMP training limited; Apprenticeships / dual VET being developed; Lack of financial support for learners; NQF developed but some further work required	Limited infrastructure including lack of adult education and institutions and uneven geographical spread; Third sector provision mainly focused on personal and social learning; Limited basic/second chance education; Apprenticeships/ dual VET being developed; ALMP training available but with low effectiveness; Lack of sufficient financial support for learners; NQF developed but further
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Acronyms: VET Vocational Education and Training, ALMP Active Labour Market Policy, NQF National Qualification Framework

Source: Our processing drawing on Roosmaa and Saar (2017), Boeren et al. (2017) and Chaps. 9–17 of this book

^aCountries analysed in this chapter

^bRoosmaa and Saar (2017), p. 261

^cBoeren et al. (2017), p. 267

As Table 18.1 shows, the first difference worth attention is between those countries that implement national or regional YG schemes (i.e., Estonia, Bulgaria, Belgium/Brussels Capital Region, Italy, Slovakia and Spain) and those that use the European Social Funds (ESF) to address YG-like objectives (Austria, Denmark, Belgium/Flanders and the United Kingdom). This divide, however, connects countries with different WSRs. On the one end of the spectrum are countries with post-socialist WSRs (Estonia, Bulgaria and Slovakia) and Southern European WSRs (Italy and Spain) that implemented national YG schemes; on the other end are countries with social-democratic (Denmark) and liberal (the United Kingdom) WSRs, as well as conservative, continental WSRs (Austria), that addressed YG-like objectives in more flexible ways. In other words, responding to the YG through the implementation of national schemes works as a dichotomous force that attracts or separates countries with different WSRs. Interestingly, Belgium represents a case of its own. In fact, while the Brussels Capital Region adopted a regional YG scheme, Flanders did not. This supports recent critiques that traditional Welfare Regime theory and frameworks tend towards welfare uniformity, which “takes no account of local differentials” on which ground “provision of welfare is necessarily unequal over space rather than uniform across states” (Isakjee, 2017, p. 12).

When we consider the governance structure of a country’s response or rejoinder to the YG, we observe a generalised trend towards de-centralisation not only in those countries that, financed through the ESF, still aim at reaching YG-like objectives (Austria, Denmark, Belgium/Flanders and the United Kingdom) but also in countries that are eligible for funds under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and implemented national YG schemes (Belgium/Brussels Capital region, Spain and Italy). But de-centralised governance structures can build on collaborative, federalist or multi-level approaches. A collaborative approach in which governance works through the sharing of responsibilities between all actors involved is found in Denmark, a social-democratic WSR. A federalist approach in which the interests of the federal states, and their logics, enter a negotiation process is found in Austria, a conservative, continental WSR. Finally, a multi-level approach to governance, which builds on cooperative regionalism, is found in both Italy and Spain, representative of a Southern Europe WSR. By contrast, the

governance structure in all post-socialist countries (Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria) shares a centralised, top-down approach, and this independently from their differentiation in neoliberal, embedded neoliberal and Balkan WSRs. As we will see, this widely affects how specific measures are implemented, regardless of financial flows and mechanisms.

With regard to the financial flows, the YG mainly works through two European funding sources, the ESF and YEI (cf. Chap. 8). In particular, for the planning period 2014–2020, the ESF is allocated on the basis of the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head compared to the EU average. The YEI is allocated to counteract youth unemployment only in those regions recording a share higher than 25% both in 2012 and 2016. When we consider how the amounts are allocated among the countries under consideration (cf. Chap. 8), the highest fund allocation went to Italy and Spain, representative of a Southern Europe WSR, the second highest fund allocation went to the United Kingdom, a country with a liberal WSR. Bulgaria, Estonia and Slovakia, all post-socialist WSRs, followed with a medium fund allocation, whereas the lowest allocation of funds went to Austria and Belgium/Flanders, both countries with a conservative WSR. Regardless of the amounts of fund allocated to each country, the mechanisms of financial redistribution through the ESF connected with the related policy instruments at both European and national level in a heterogeneous, idiosyncratic way (cf. Chaps. 9–17).

In fact, across countries with different WSRs we identify only two discriminant features in relation to the financial flow. The first feature is whether a country was or was not eligible for the YEI; the second feature is how national co-financing intertwines with the sources coming from the private sector. It shall be noted here that the role private actors play tends to increase in all countries under consideration, from the liberal to the post-socialist WSRs. Interestingly, also those countries with a Southern Europe WSR (Spain and Italy) show an undeniable growth of private sector contributions, regarding funding and functioning mechanisms, even if considered late comers (Kickert, 2007), when it comes to the introduction of neoliberal reforms in education (Serpieri, Grimaldi, & Vatrella, 2015).

Finally, when we consider the management of the programmes and initiatives that fall under the YG at country level, we observe a widespread trend in an attempt to coordinate actions and measures through

cooperation at different levels. Such cooperation develops between the different actors that share responsibilities about both decision-making and the local enactment of the programmes. Briefly, with the sole exception of Slovakia (a post-communist, embedded neoliberal WSR), all the countries de-centralised the management of the measures to be implemented at national and local levels, yet in different ways. In the remaining post-socialist WSRs (Estonia and Bulgaria) a cross-sectoral, cross-ministerial and cross-level type of cooperation was found, with the objective to reach the target groups across the whole territory of the country. In the conservative, continental WSRs (Austria, Belgium/Flanders) an integrated, transversal approach in cross-sectoral policies prevails in order to tackle not only the YG target population but also youth employment in general. Finally, in the Southern Europe WSRs (Spain and Italy), despite coordination between the state and the local levels aimed at meeting the needs of both the regional/local economy and the population, we found also a substantial lack of coordinated measures able to reach vulnerable groups.

In conclusion, in spite of the differences in the governance, financial flow and management structures, all countries under consideration have enacted actions and measures through cooperation mechanisms that concern a variety of actors involved in both decision-making and educational practices at the different sub-national levels, which include public employment services, social services, but also adult education providers. However, in none of the countries, the YG seems to be seen as an instrument that has a potential to strengthen adult education to better face the educational concerns of young adults.

Despite this, in some countries (cf. post-socialist, neoliberal WSRs in Table 18.1), where participation in adult education is on medium levels and unevenly distributed, the implementation of YG schemes matches with the significance assigned to education and learning; but in other countries that record similar levels of participation in adult education (e.g. Italy), the response to the YG has not invested in such a crucial field as adult education.

18.4 Concluding Remarks

By connecting the evidences from Chaps. 9–17 to selected WSRs' characteristics (including adult education), this chapter analysed the domestic adaptation to the YG to show how this phenomenon widely depends on WSRs. However, as noted, it represents also a missed opportunity, across WSRs, of connecting this instrument more strongly to adult education. This is what emerged when taking into consideration the governance structure of a country's response or rejoinder to the YG, the financial flows subsumed to it, the way in which the related amounts are allocated among countries, as well as a country's management of programmes and initiatives.

Albeit the European regulatory route towards the YG aims at modelling active labour market measures, where education and employment are increasingly connected, the practices that result from the complex processes of domestic adaptation reveal specific aspects of the countries' responses and rejoinders.

In spite of the differences between national YG schemes, a common and strictly linked feature emerges: none of the countries in focus considers YG as an instrument contributing to better face the concerns of young adults from an educational perspective. This despite the fact that, in all of the countries under examination, YG measures and initiatives allow private actors to intervene in, and modify, adult education markets, through the managing of YG provisions.

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19

Conclusion: The Influence of European Governance on Adult Education Markets

Marcella Milana and Gosia Klatt

Lifelong learning, from a market perspective, represents a system in which different types of providers can supply education and training activities in demand, and for which families, youth, adults or their employers are willing to pay, if not subsidised by the state. Such an understanding of lifelong learning markets derives from micro-economic theories, where the market refers to the exchange of goods or services that happens through the direct or mediated contract between buyers and sellers. Along this line of thinking, Europe's lifelong learning markets may refer to the interplay between supply and demand for education and training, within and across member states, that involves European citizens, of which a subgroup are adults, and another are youths and young adults Not in Education, Employment

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or Training (NEETs). Alternative logics, however, may substantiate policy interventions on such markets by the European Union (EU). For instance, behavioural economics assumes that modelling human behaviour can trigger people's demand for education and training activities, bringing about a 'natural' market adjustment. But a different logic, on which this volume draws, maintains that institutional formations and structures are important determinants for the structuration of lifelong learning markets. It is in this line of thinking that Hefler and Markowitsch (2013) note that different market segments co-exist. In each market segment, the supply-demand interplay is dependent on a number of factors (e.g., existing regulations, available resources, a provider's position in relation to its competitors) on which policy can intervene. Consequently, there is neither a lifelong learning nor an adult education market that may be affected by EU policy, but rather a plurality of market segments.

In today's Europe, the adult education segments of lifelong learning markets embrace the interplay between supply and demand for education and training for the adult population, but also for NEETs. Thus, adult education markets are to respond to the composite demand for education and training of people that, independently from its biological age, have left formal education and (1) have become unemployed or economically inactive or (2) are in employment but have a low level of skills or are in need for acquiring upper secondary qualifications in a flexible way. Therefore, adult education markets have become the most complex of other market segments (i.e., pre-primary education, basic education, secondary education, tertiary education) on which EU policy can intervene. Such complexity encompasses:

The fuzzy boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning supply—The less formal a learning opportunity is, the more difficult is to identify a corresponding market segment for its supply. In other words, there are valuable alternatives for youths and adults to learn across and beyond specific market segments. Moreover, it is harder for policy to encourage the demand for informal learning, as it implies regulating private lives and behaviour, which fall beyond the scope of public policy.

The heterogeneous motivations for, and functions fulfilled by, adult education—Adult education may contribute to personal development (e.g., obtaining a diploma, developing one's talents, cultivating hobbies);

support economic prosperity (e.g., finding a job, moving between jobs, occupational recycling and upgrading); and support social cohesion and welfare (e.g., learning for socio-cultural participation, introduction courses for migrants, rehabilitation of offenders). So some outcomes of adult education and training are private, while others are collective or common goods.

The multi-faceted determinants for younger and older adults to participate in education and training—The determinants of adult's participation in education and training relate to three interconnected layers at micro (individual), meso (organisation) and macro (country) levels (Boeren, Whittaker, & Riddell, 2017). In other words, one-fits-all policy solution at either European or national level as well as simplistic duplications of best practices from one context to another are equally unattainable.

The interdependence between market segments—Public regulations and interventions in adult education markets are inter-reliant on those in other market segments (e.g., higher education), but also on those bridging between education and labour markets (e.g., youth and adult apprenticeships and similar government schemes), or resulting from active labour market policies (e.g., the taking over by employment agencies to help unemployed to find work).

In short, such complexity amplifies the difficulty of regulating and intervening in the adult education segments of lifelong learning markets within multi-level governance systems like the EU.

Nonetheless, the theoretical arguments outlined in the introduction to this volume (Chap. 1) accept that European governance has direct and indirect effects on such market segments within EU member states, as it facilitates domestic adaptation of Europe's lifelong learning markets through policy coordination. But the question of how the institutions of the EU coordinate policy in education yields not a simple answer.

In order to address this phenomenon, we argued in our theoretical framework that the EU shares some characteristics with other international organisations in that much of its power in influencing policies at country level makes use of a combination of hard and soft governance mechanisms and policy instruments. But policy coordination at EU level is a-typical, when compared to other international organisations, as it

entails both horizontal coordination within the institutions of the EU and vertical coordination with the political systems of EU member states. Moreover, it entails going well beyond avoiding conflicts that may arise in a policy area (e.g., education) from decisions made in other areas (e.g., labour, welfare). In fact, policy coordination at the EU level is strategic (Peters, 2018), as it involves the coordination of different policy areas around broad European, strategic goals for economic growth and social cohesion. In this regard our approach, outlined in the introductory chapter to this volume, allowed gaining insights on how such coordination is pursued, and contributes to the developments of lifelong learning markets, and their adult education segments, at European (Part I) and national level (Part II).

In what follows, we summarise the main results of the empirical studies presented in this volume.

19.1 Regulatory Politics and Wealth Redistribution

In recent decades, changes in the role, meanings and place of adult education in Europe's lifelong learning markets, as noted in the Preface, have not been independent from global governance trends, namely the evolution of transnational and supranational governance, the growth of network governance and the expansion of data governance. So Part I of this volume explored the mechanisms and instruments of policy coordination within the Union, and the actors it involves, questioning in what ways European governance contributes to regulating and intervening in Europe's lifelong learning markets.

The analyses brought to light that different intergovernmental, multi-sectoral policies – that we call policy mixes in this volume, have been developed at European level in the areas of education and training (Chap. 2), adult learning (Chap. 3) and youth (Chap. 4), each involving multiple policy goals that at times intermingle across these areas of policy intervention. For instance, the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) working programme (Chap. 2) adopts the principle of lifelong learning,

covering learning in all contexts, to promote cross-country cooperation in favour of higher quality, more transparency and increased mobility within the Union. Hence, the Renewed European Agenda on Adult Learning (Chap. 3) contributes by enhancing the possibilities for adults to engage in learning activities (including as non-traditional students in higher education institutions) and promotes adult learning as a means to increase solidarity between age generations and cultures. Whilst, the European Youth Strategy (EU Youth Strategy) (Chap. 4) contributes by bringing young people together, increasing youth participation in democratic life and supporting quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. In so doing, all three policy mixes face the challenge posed by high rates of unemployment levels between youths and adults and the percentage of 15–34-year-old European citizens NEETs at risk of social exclusion.

Chapters 2–4 brought to light how four mechanisms are employed by EU institutions (and the European Commission particularly) to govern ET 2020, the Renewed Agenda and the EU Youth Strategy:

Standard- and target-setting involves normative actions and setting common goals that concur towards the establishment of a single, European model in the areas of education and training (Chap. 2), adult learning (Chap. 3) and youth (Chap. 4), respectively. Such common goals include increasing the number of adults that participate in lifelong learning (Chaps. 2 and 6), or guaranteeing a job or a learning or training solution to young people under 25 years of age, within four months after they have become unemployed or have left formal education (Chap. 8).

Capacity-building helps orienting the implementation of policy solution (e.g., Upskilling Pathways – UP, Youth Guarantee – YG) to common European problems like the high rates of adults with low levels of education and literacy (Chap. 7) or the high percentage of 15–34-year-old NEETs among European citizens (Chap. 8).

Elite-learning instigates changes in the value system of national actors through peer-learning, peer counselling and so on. This occurred, for instance, with the modernisation of ET 2020, and its increased emphasis on targets, benchmarks and data, and the narrowing down of the themes and objectives of the working groups established, coordinated and tasked by the EC to assist with the implementation of current EU legislation,

programmes and policies, and to coordinate with member states, through views' exchange (Chaps. 2 and 3).

Financial redistribution implies that EU financial resources are redistributed to member states, as a deliberate effect of joint decisions that include conditionality, and are used in support of reforms and activities within a certain area. For instance, in support of adult learning, the Europe Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), has financed *Awareness-raising activities on "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults"* (Chap. 3). In the area of youth, some objectives of the EU Youth Strategy (Chap. 2) are pursued by member states as part of national Youth Guarantee schemes financed through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) (Chap. 8).

A number of policy instruments concur, in the areas of education and training, adult learning and youth, to the working of the above mechanisms. These include implicit and explicit European benchmarks (Chap. 6), which result from complex negotiations that progressively build consensus among the Heads of states and governments of the Union's member states. When we restrict attention to the 16+ populations, under ET 2020, Heads of states and governments agreed that:

- The rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18–24 should be below 10%.
- At least 40% of people aged 30–34 should have completed some form of higher education.
- At least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.
- At least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18–34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad.

Yet, as recent as 2018, the European Commission proposed a new framework for benchmarking in order to strengthen cross-country monitoring within the *European Semester* (Chap. 5), and focused on the labour market domain. In so doing, a new kind of indicators has been introduced (i.e., 'policy levers'), to support convergence in reaching better socio-economic outcomes.

Negotiations and consensus-building in turn, are assisted by different kinds of data generation activities and mutual- and peer-learning arrangements (of which various examples are provided in Chaps. 2–4), and by working groups established, coordinated and tasked by the EC to support ET 2020 (Chap. 2) and the Renewed Agenda (Chap. 3). Such working groups assemble local, national, European and global actors (i.e., third sector associations, trade unions, employee associations, national ministries, EU agencies, international organisations), to work on specific policy issues over a period of time.

Finally, in both the adult learning and youth areas, as mentioned, dedicated EU financial resources are re-distributed to member states, via funding schemes, so as to reach explicit European benchmarks, as it is the case with YG (Chap. 9, and below).

In short, standard-setting through negotiation and consensus-building is a powerful mechanism to regulate Europe's lifelong learning markets, yet requires parallel mechanisms (i.e., capacity-building and elite-learning), which involve both the EU institutions and member states in mutual- and peer-learning, not least through the coordination of, and participation in, working groups, and the generation of new data. At the same time, portions of the EU budget support the working of such mechanisms and facilitate interventions in Europe's lifelong learning markets. But, the same processes constrain interventions in adult education markets that do not comply with – or even contrast conformity to, expected member states' performances, which cannot be measured, compared and judged towards agreed (explicit and implicit) standards.

In fact, ET 2020, the Renewed Agenda and the EU Youth Strategy, each embody specific identities, values and practices that are created and promoted through collaborative activities between, as much as across, the EU institutions, member states, the private sector and civil society. So, for instance, in both ET 2020 and the EU Youth Strategy, education and training is addressed as a single market sector, especially when discussed in relation to 'multi-sector' cooperation across policies (including welfare, economic etc.). Similarly, the Renewed Agenda refers to 'adult learning' as the outcome of adult education markets. However, within member states, public power authority on education and training, and adult

education particularly, is more often than not fragmented between (and even within) ministries, and across governmental levels (from central to local). Hence regulations and interventions on national lifelong learning markets, and especially on adult education market segments, involves vertical as much as horizontal collaboration among political institutions and between the public sector, the private sector and civil society.

Alongside policy developments in European education, adult learning and youth policy, the European Semester, first codified in 2010 in response to the unprecedented financial and economic crisis faced by EU institutions and member states, has further developed ever since (see Chap. 6). Such a new governance architecture, although born to govern European fiscal and economic policy, also influences Europe's lifelong learning markets as it enables the EU institutions to exercise policy formulation, supervision and guidance on issues that fall within member states' competency (Costamagna, 2013; Stevenson, Milner, Winchip, & Hagger-Vaughan, 2019).

All of the above brings to light the distinctiveness that substantiates multi-level European governance, namely the EU's regulatory politics and wealth redistributive capacity. Both qualities are key for the institutions of the EU to influence policies to regulate lifelong learning, as well as approaches to intervene in lifelong learning markets, at both European and national levels.

19.2 The Domestic Adaptations of Lifelong Learning Markets

How regulatory politics and wealth redistributive capacity *de facto* influence policies and interventions in national lifelong learning markets requires in-depth analyses within and across member states. Part II of this volume was dedicated to such analyses by concentrating attention on one instrument of European governance (i.e., funding schemes) to trail its influence on at least some segments of national (adult education) markets. Attention was paid to the way nine member states responded to the European launch of YG (Chaps. 9–17).

Undoubtedly, the European regulatory route towards YG aims at modelling active labour market measures, where education and employment are increasingly connected (Chap. 8), however, the practices that result from the complex process of domestic adaptation reveal important aspects of a country's response or rejoinder, and how YG affects or does not the adult education segments of lifelong learning systems in that country.

By adoption of a Welfare Regime approach, our cross-country analysis (Chap. 18) highlights a generalised attempt by the countries under consideration to coordinate actions and measures at national level through a cooperative approach, aimed at connecting different actors (e.g., public employment services, adult education providers and social services) involved in the enactment of YG at different sub-national levels. Nonetheless, both the challenges and the solution found at governance as well as management levels are strongly dependent on the form of welfare state regimes, but also on the national perceptions of the needs of vulnerable populations. All countries, in fact, paid attention to intercepting the educational needs of their youths, in line with EU prescription, in ways that would meet country-relevant needs. Also, regardless of a country's welfare regime, the role private actors play in financial terms tends to increase everywhere – and this seems a consequence of the workfarist approach subsumed to the way YG is conceived and enacted. Albeit, we caution towards 'welfare uniformity' – as national welfare regimes frameworks do not fully account for intra-country, local differences, our analysis also points, however, at the missed opportunity, across countries, of recognising YG as a policy instrument connected to adult education in facing the educational concerns of young adults.

But our empirical studies also question the effectiveness of regulatory politics if not clearly linked to wealth redistribution. For instance, contrary to YG, the domestic adaptation to the UP can be funded through diverse streams, particularly the European Social Fund (ESF). This has given rise to far more diverse approaches adopted by member states. Three case studies covering Northern Europe (United Kingdom), Eastern Europe (Slovakia) and Southern Europe (Italy) highlight that: People in predominantly low-skilled, disadvantaged regions are the least able to take advantage of skills development opportunities – unless programmes are targeted at their particular needs in terms of access, support and

outreach; communication – between government, policy-makers, providers and institutions – is key for tackling disadvantage, inequality and social exclusion, and that in regions with weak labour demand and limited job opportunities, financial contributions for job creation (rather than education and learning opportunities only) makes a significant difference.

To conclude, as Milana noted in Chap. 3, well before the first codification of the European Semester, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament had pointed at three potential and distinctive strategies for the development of Europe's lifelong learning markets, as embedded in the Lisbon Agenda (2000):

- An elite strategy (i.e., to develop new skills in knowledge-intensive sectors);
- A compensation strategy (i.e., to combat social exclusion with priority to basic education for marginal groups);
- A comprehensive strategy (i.e., to set full employment as a priority goal).

Two decades later, a key question is whether European governance, with its distinctive qualities (i.e., regulatory politics and wealth redistributive capacity), influences Europe's lifelong learning markets, and its adult education market segments, via an elite, compensation or comprehensive strategy (or any combination of these). While it is reasonable to assume that different member states may be differently responsive to either/or strategy, the evidence brought together in this volume (Chap. 7, and Part II) seem to point to a hybrid compensation-comprehensive strategy affecting the development of (at least some segments of) national lifelong learning markets. But more research is needed on European governance and policy coordination, focussing on the effects of particular governance mechanisms and policy instruments, to fully appreciate how EU institutions contribute to the developments of lifelong learning markets, and their adult education segments, at both European and national level. Such research agenda calls for multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to adequately capture the multi-dimensional and complex nature of European governance and policy coordination in education.

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