RESEARCH ON THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH [MALTA]

2015
BELIEVING IN YOURSELF IS THE FIRST SECRET TO SUCCESS

UNKNOWN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marketing Advisory Services was engaged to assist the Ministry for Education and Employment in qualitative and quantitative research, aimed at providing insight into the framework of the Youth Guarantee Programme, with respect to participating NEETs as well as Youth Workers. The findings presented in this document are drawn from one-to-one interviews with one hundred youths who are or were enrolled within the programme, four focus group sessions with youth workers and teachers, and an evaluation questionnaire with YG beneficiaries who completed the programme. The overall purpose of the study was to identify and highlight areas which need to be improved in strengthening key aspects of the programme. The study is also meant to serve as an important foundation tool in developing activities and measures which strengthen the Youth Guarantee as one of the key EU employment strategies that will be mainstreamed over the 2012 - 2020 period.
One-to-One Interviews

- When asked about their status before enrolment, the majority of interviewees declared that they had finished secondary school, were unemployed, and were thus claiming and receiving social benefits. They were contacted by ETC via post and informed about a mandatory choice to either enrol within the Youth Guarantee Programme or lose access to state benefits and social funds for the unemployed. This effectively made these youths feel that they did not have any option but to register with the programme.

- Most youths claimed that they were not aware of the programme before they received a letter addressed to them personally and informing them about it. This seemed to come across as the most effective method of advertising the scheme so far. Word of mouth and references to the scheme on local television also emerged as means through which youths or their relatives learned about the scheme. Many youths also suggested that the programme could be more widely advertised, and its aims more clearly communicated through social media.

- In a significant number of interview cases, youths claimed that their meetings with youth workers were infrequent, sporadic, or had taken place only once throughout the programme. Some youths also claimed that the youth worker would often cancel meetings due to being unavailable, and therefore the opportunities to meet and physically interact were few and far between. Perhaps even more problematic was the fact that, a number of youths claimed that they only had their first meeting with their assigned youth worker after the four weeks of training, rather than at the beginning of the programme. However these youths who have met their youth workers, claimed that these were apt, helpful, and able at doing their job.

- The feedback gathered from youths about teachers and the ways in which the course content was taught during the four weeks of training, was overall positive. In a small number of cases, which seemed to stem from youths coming from the same class or group, the fact that there was a change in teacher mid-course was pointed out. Even in these cases, however, youths tended to declare that all teachers were competent and able at their jobs, and at teaching course content in a way which could be easily understood.

- The majority of interviewees believed that the programme was spread out and structured appropriately, with four weeks of training and three months of work exposure being enough to introduce and familiarise them with the working world. Youths who had previously never worked, or who were completely idle before enrolling, seemed to look favourably upon the new sense of routine the programme instilled within them. A minority of interviewees, on the other hand, declared that they felt the four weeks of training could be compressed into a shorter period of time. Youths also felt that the central location and easy accessibility of the Catholic Institute in Floriana made it easy for them to get to the training sessions on time, via public transport. Youths who sat for the training phase of the course in Gozo also declared that they felt the central location of facilities and classes was appropriate.

- Most interviewees declared that the number of students per class was just right. The majority of youths claimed that they shared a class with another eight to ten people, and that they believe the number was not too large. Some interviewees, however, pointed out the problematic issue of classes being extremely mixed in types of students, and that at times the widely different levels of education and backgrounds presented by youths within the same class caused some problems and discrepancies between the rapidity of learning between individuals within the same class.

- The majority of youths declared that they found the content of the programme relevant and useful, both in terms of their gaining further insight about things they were aware of before the training experience, and in terms of learning and acquiring new knowledge about how to become more employable, getting and maintaining a job, and appropriate conduct of behaviour in the place of work. Overall, youths also responded positively when probed about their general experience enrolled within the programme, and whether they feel they have achieved any personal objectives which they had hoped to achieve by the end of the course.

- A significant number of youths expressed a level of dissatisfaction with a lack of diversity in the type of work posts available. Whilst a number of youths claimed they felt they were exposed to enough stimulating work during the working phase, others claimed that the type of work they were exposed to was inappropriate. Some youths even claimed that their temporary employers had no real work for them, and as a consequence they often ended up doing odd jobs which did not provide them with any valid work experience.

- The overall scores attributed to the programme by youths naturally corresponded to their personal experiences within the programme. Those who felt satisfied with their personal trajectories throughout both the training and working phases of the programme, and those who felt that the programme had contributed to their personal growth in one way or other, graded the programme extremely highly (8, 9, 10). Those who, on the other hand, had a bad experience during their working phase, or had found aspects of the training phase not useful to their personal growth, gave lower grades to the programme (3, 4, 5).

- With regards to programme dropouts, the statements collected in relation to the reasons for abandoning the programme clearly indicated that the vast majority of dropouts interviewed left either because of personal reasons (these were many times undisclosed to the interviewer), or because they found work before finishing the course.
Focus Group Sessions

- Participants across all focus groups agreed about the fact that the majority of youths they met only seemed to have become aware of the programme once they had received a letter from ETC urging them to enrol. Moreover, a number of youth workers themselves had never heard of the programme and were not aware of its function prior to applying for their posts. Some participants also suggested that more could be done in terms of advertising the programme more effectively and openly, through channels that are most popular with local youths, such as social media platforms.

- Many participants stated that they believe that the programme per se is working on some levels, especially in promoting and driving self-improvement of youths who were enrolled within it for the right reasons, and for those who actually took it seriously. Focus group participants were also in agreement, however, on the fact that the programme is wasted and never works when it comes to youths enrolling for reasons other than to improve themselves, and who are not looking to increase their chances of gaining stability and employability.

- Participants claimed that it was clear to them that a number of youths they had tried to guide had only seemed to have become aware of the programme once they had received a letter from ETC urging them to enrol. Moreover, a number of youth workers themselves had never heard of the programme and were not aware of its function prior to applying for their posts. Some participants also suggested that more could be done in terms of advertising the programme more effectively and openly, through channels that are most popular with local youths, such as social media platforms.

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- Participants agreed that there being a need for a more structured and moderated form of recruitment of youths within the programme. They expressed views about the need for youths to be recruited through more systematic methods, rather than through the present ‘blunt force’ approach which allows for an unregulated recruitment and acceptance of all youths, including those who feel forced to register for the programme and those who register for reasons other than to learn and improve themselves.

- Participants across all focus groups agreed about the fact that the majority of youths they met only seemed to have become aware of the programme once they had received a letter from ETC urging them to enrol. Moreover, a number of youth workers themselves had never heard of the programme and were not aware of its function prior to applying for their posts. Some participants also suggested that more could be done in terms of advertising the programme more effectively and openly, through channels that are most popular with local youths, such as social media platforms.

- Participants across all groups unanimously maintained that they believe more should be done in terms of getting to know each individual youth’s background, both in terms of the socioeconomic and psychological levels. Some youth workers declared that in some cases, psychological profiling had been carried out at the beginning of the programme, but they had not been given access to the profiles, or on going support by the assigned psychologists throughout. Psychologists and social workers, as many participants argued, should be present and available for support throughout the duration of the programme, especially when it comes to difficult cases.

- Youth workers and teachers employed during the initial phases of the programme declared that they went through a fairly in-depth course of recruitment, consisting of an interview and training sessions, and face to face interaction with senior staff members responsible for the implementation of programme. Those employed later, however, declared that they had not gone through this process, and felt they were employed ‘en masse’, after submitting their CVs via email, or even through Facebook. These participants claimed that there was not even an interview or meeting between them and a representative of the administration or senior staff responsible for the programme. They were only notified about being accepted as youth workers via email, and sent a PDF file with instructions about their roles. There was no training or face to face interaction in these cases.

- A strongly evident point that emerged from the focus group discussions, and that is clearly at the root of the points raised by participants, is a need for a more defined and solid structure of programme administration, authority, and support. As the situation stands now, youth workers and teachers who participated in the groups do not feel that they have found an adequate supporting structure and reference points or people they can refer to. Participants across all groups in fact spoke out about an obvious need for such a structure to be established, and to serve as a kind of institutional framework for the programme.

- Another issue that emerged during sessions which was as important to youth workers, concerned the duration and amount of sessions they had to sit for with youths. There were two major issues that emerged in this regard. The first was about the structure of the sessions being too rigid, in the sense that it does not allow for flexibility in terms of time and does not consider individual youth situations and backgrounds. The second was about the ease with which youths could ‘sign off’ their attendance for all the sessions easily and at once, and this, coupled with a general feeling of lack of accountability of youth workers, contributed to an overall feeling of carelessness and lack of any solid programme structure.

- Participants across all focus groups also expressed some disappointment with the fact that they, as youth workers and teachers, never got to meet each other, interact, and share experiences. The vast majority of youth workers present for the focus groups, for example, had in fact never met or seen each other at any time before. In view of this, participants voiced strong opinions about the need for round table discussions to be held throughout the duration of the programme.

- All youth workers and teachers present for the focus group sessions declared that they believe there should be a sense of greater rigidity, accountability, and clear cut objectives with respect to what the job entails, as well as the overall aims of the programme. Moreover, youth workers also strongly expressed a need to work in tandem with other qualified professionals such as psychologists and social workers, especially given the nature of cases of youths who come from problematic backgrounds or are facing specific problems such as addiction to drugs and any form of abuse. In these cases, providing youth workers with emailed textbook instructions and leaving them to their own devices without offering further support is certainly not enough.
**Evaluation Questionnaire**

- Out of the 49 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 44.9% were male and 55.1% were female. The respondents were equally distributed amongst the age groups; 24 of the respondents were aged between 15-20 years and the other 25 were aged between 21-25 years.

- The respondents were also grouped according to geographical district. The largest represented district was that of the Northern Harbour with 38.8% respondents, followed by the South Eastern district with 22.4% respondents and the Southern Harbour district with 16.3% respondents. The least represented districts were the Western and Northern which each contributed 12.2% respondents. Age groups were more or less equally represented in each district.

- When asked to rate the extent of which respondents found the Youth Guarantee Programme useful, out of all the respondents only 3 respondents (6.1%) responded in the negative. The large majority (93.9%) found the programme at least useful; 38.8% respondents, only 16.2% of the respondents rated Youth Guarantee Programme’s sequence of topics as ‘useful’, ‘Slightly useful’, ‘Moderately useful’ and ‘Very useful’. Most of the respondents perceived all the topics in a positive manner and deemed them useful. ‘C.V. writing and interview skills’ was considered to be the most useful topic.

- When asked whether the content of the Youth Guarantee Programme met the participants’ initial expectations the majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed (69.4%) that the content met their initial expectations.

- When asked whether training was suitable to their level, the majority of respondents positively and most found the training component of the programme interesting to them (75.5%).

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- When asked to indicate which part/s of the Youth Guarantee Programme the respondents felt was most useful to their future, the highest score was obtained by ‘work exposure’ component.

- On the other hand, when asked about the components of the Youth Guarantee Programme which the respondents felt to be the least useful, ‘meetings with the youth workers’ ranked highest with almost half of the respondents (48.9%) rating this component as the least useful part of the programme.

**Analysis of Common Issues and Country Outcomes**

- Overall, the youth worker component of the Youth Guarantee Programme was perceived positively by the respondents especially in the case where youth workers helped students in difficult situations. The training component received a very positive rating from the respondents and all the respondents agreed that the training component was useful for their future work. The work placement component was perceived positively by all respondents.

- When the respondents were asked if they would recommend the programme to their peers, most of the respondents replied that they would probably or definitely recommend the programme (85.6 %) and in fact, only 14.3% of the participants replied that they would not recommend the programme.

- The three main variables which are positively related to whether or not the respondents reached their personal goals was the usefulness of the programme, the content and the fact that the Youth Guarantee Programme helped the respondents to improve their skills. When a correlation analysis was conducted on which variables relate to the usefulness of the Youth Guarantee Programme the following correlations were found: ‘The content of the Youth Guarantee Programme’, ‘Work placement helped me improve my skills’ and ‘Understandable content’ were amongst the highest correlated variables. However, several other variables mostly related with the content and work placement were also highly correlated.

- The challenges faced by other countries within which the programme is being implemented are similar to the ones being faced in Malta. In being a small nation, however, Malta may find it easier to move rapidly and fully implement certain measures which other countries are slowly working towards in solving some of the problems presented in the section above.

- A major step forward could involve the establishment of a one-stop shop, which would serve as a meeting point for youths, youth workers, and teachers, and a place within which ideas about the strong points and weaknesses of the programme could be discussed.

- Adequate supervision of youth workers, teachers, and employers who are offering youths a job opportunity throughout the training phase is also important in addressing the accountability problem. Moreover, conditions under which youths are hired for apprenticeships and traineeships should be simplified for employers as much as possible, whilst making sure that all employers are following directions about providing useful work experience for youths, and providing suitable working conditions.

- An efficient and safe IT platform, through which relevant and useful data corresponding to NEETs and their backgrounds could be accessed by the team of professionals working with them, would also serve the purpose of reinforcing the structural backbone of the programme, as well as being an important factor in shifting towards a compact team of professionals working together towards common goals.
Recommendations

- There is currently insufficient awareness about the benefits of the programme in terms of the ways in which it can lead to self-improvement and enhance employability. Rather, NEETs are feeling forced to enrol within the programme under a ‘threat’ that any money they are receiving from the state is going to be cut unless they do so. We are not against direct contact of NEETs in advising them to enrol within the programme, but rather for a boost in more public and informative means of promotion about why they should enrol, through a wider spectrum of communication channels.

- There is a pressing need for more detailed in-depth profiling of NEETs, prior to them beginning their course within the Youth Guarantee Programme. This profiling should also be the first step in assigning youths to youth workers and other professionals working within the programme who are specialised in and capable of guiding these youths in maximizing their potential, whilst addressing specific difficulties which they may encounter in the process. Better class grouping, with different classes offering different learning trajectories, in terms of respective educational background would also be an important objective of a comprehensive and adequate profiling system. There is also an obvious need for greater care to be invested in the recruitment process of youth workers, not only for the purposes of properly employing workers within the programme, but also to instil an impression that the programme and backing structure is solid and adequate at the professional level, amongst the youth workers themselves.

- We strongly recommend choosing and assigning an adequate space to serve as a one-stop-shop where all the professionals involved in the programme can meet and interact. Creating this space is important, in giving some sense of compact organisation sustaining the implementation of the programme, as well as in providing an area where youth workers can meet each other, teachers, and other professionals, as a team, since this sense of teamwork is altogether absent from the programme structure today.

- Establishing organisational structure would also imply defining roles of different professionals, as well as what is expected from them within the organisation. We are recommending that each professional employed within the programme structure should be given more adequate training, and corresponding materials which he or she can refer to in his or her work. The establishment of a strong network and forms of consistent communication between the various professionals is also important in this regard, in creating a system of support for all professionals involved, which will ultimately reflect positively on student progress and improve programme output.

- Youth workers have themselves suggested that there should be stricter monitoring of their own work, with more experienced senior professionals following up on their progress with youths. We recommend acting on this suggestion, as soon as possible, and believe it is one of the most important aspects to consider in terms of current youth worker status. Greater accountability and monitoring should also be applied in terms of all employers, who should be followed in ensuring that they are offering adequate experience and training corresponding to programme objectives.

- Whilst realising that it may not be easy to find and offer the widest spectrum of work options for youths who are fresh out of programme training, we recommend offering as many placements as possible, which include both manual labour and clerical work options. Furthermore, ensuring that appropriate work is being offered by all employers at all time is crucial. We are also recommending that, where possible, employers offer longer-term prospects to youths, in the sense of keeping them within their ranks for longer than six months. In terms of long-term prospects, enrolled youths should also be instructed in and given the opportunity to pursue further studies once they complete the programme. The opportunity of registering at MCAST or ITS, for example, could be offered to those youths who are inclined towards pursuing further study instead of the training phase.
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INTRODUCTION
1.1 OVERALL PURPOSE

The present study was carried out by Marketing Advisory Services, in association with the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE), in providing insight and information about the current status of the Youth Guarantee Programme, with respect to participating youths who are not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) as well as Youth Workers. The overall purpose of the study was to identify and highlight areas which need to be improved in strengthening key aspects of the programme. The study is also meant to serve as an important foundation tool in developing activities and measures which strengthen the Youth Guarantee as one of the key EU employment strategies that will be mainstreamed over the 2012–2020 period.

1.2 SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

The results and findings presented in this report are based on three main research activities carried out by Marketing Advisory Services, one-to-one interviews, focus groups, and distribution, collection, and analysis of an evaluation questionnaire. An overview of each specific activity is presented below.

1.2.1 One-to-One Interviews

One hundred (100) interviews with Youth Guarantee participants were carried out by Marketing Advisory Services in Malta, on dates between May and June 2015. Each interview session involved a one-hour discussion between an interviewer and an interviewee who was either enrolled within the programme at the time of the interview, or used to be enrolled at some past point. Eighty-five (85) out of the one hundred interviewees were youths enrolled within the scheme at the time of interview. These included ten (10) Gozitan youths. Fifteen (15) interviewees were youths who had dropped out of the scheme at the time of interview.

The interview sessions were carried out to inform MEDE about:

- Reasons and factors that drive youths to enrol and participate within the programme;
- Overall impressions of participants in terms of whether participation within the programme has had any tangible impacts, in terms of their prospects as workers and students as well as more general aspects of their life experience;
- Youth Guarantee participant impressions about the appropriateness of the current structure of the course, the availability, helpfulness, and competence levels of youth workers and teachers, and the strong and weak points of the associated system;
- Participant impressions about the relevance and effective usefulness of the subjects covered throughout the programme, and the course content and material presented;
- Participant experience of the work exposure phase of the programme, perceived associated weak points and strong points of the experience, and perceived usefulness and applicability of the experience in terms of future employment prospects.

Marketing Advisory Services were engaged to lead the qualitative research study involving the organisation and facilitation of the focus group sessions, the interpretation of results, and delivery and reporting of the main findings through this document.

1.2.2 Focus Group Sessions

Four (4) focus group sessions were organised and carried out by Marketing Advisory Services with Youth Workers and Teachers, on Wednesday 1st July 2015, Friday 3rd July 2015, Monday 6th July 2015, and Thursday 3rd September 2015. Each focus group session involved a two-hour discussion between a moderator and groups of seven (7) to ten (10) youth workers, with the fourth and last session also including a number of teachers.

The focus group sessions were carried out in order to:

- Provide insight into whether there is enough popular awareness about the Youth Guarantee Programme and its functions and scope, from the youth worker and teacher perspectives;
- Qualitatively assess and measure the effectiveness of the programme as it currently stands;
- Assess the reasons for enrolment of youths within the programme, from the youth workers’ and teachers’ points of view;
- Gather youth worker and teacher views about the current methods of youth recruitment;
- Enquire about the system through which youth workers and teachers are employed and train, and gather views about the adequacy and efficiency of this system;
- Gather youth worker and teacher insights about the modes of assignment of youths to respective youth workers and classes, and about how these could be improved;
- Assess stronger and weaker points of the present system and programme structure, and gather youth worker and teacher suggestions about possible improvements in this respect.

Marketing Advisory Services were engaged to lead the qualitative research study involving the organisation and facilitation of the focus group sessions, the interpretation of results, and delivery and reporting of the main findings.

1.2.3 Evaluation Questionnaire

As part of the research conducted on the Youth Guarantee Programme, an evaluation questionnaire was designed and distributed to all the beneficiaries who completed the YG programme. The questionnaires were distributed online via email as well as by post and the data collection period started from the 3rd of July till the 27th of August 2015. The total number of valid responses was 49. In the analysis phase of this exercise, the level of significance chosen for this study was 0.05 which means that there is less than 5% probability that the results obtained are due to chance.

Marketing Advisory Services were engaged to lead the quantitative research study involving the organisation and distribution of the questionnaire, the analysis of the data, and delivery and reporting of the main findings.

The evaluation questionnaire was aimed at assessing the Youth Guarantee scheme overall and various aspects of the Youth Guarantee scheme from the perspective of the youth guarantee beneficiaries. These including:

- The role of the Youth Worker
- The training undertaken
- The job-exposure experience
- The experience of further training (if applicable)
#2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
2.1 ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEWS

Each of the one hundred interviews was carried out with one youth who has had ongoing or recent experience as a participant within the Youth Guarantee Programme. Interview duration averaged at forty-five minutes to one hour per interviewee, and followed a structured but flexible agenda presented in Appendices Section 6.1, on page 71 of this document.

A main purpose of the sessions was to provide interviewees with the opportunity to openly express their opinions and feelings, in relation to their experiences within the programme. In attempting to generate a session setting which was as comfortable as possible, participants were told that within the context of the interview session, the interviewer present is only representing a local independent market research agency, and is not an MEDE employee. Interviewees were also told that whilst their responses would be documented, they would be presented in a way that ensures anonymity. Besides creating a more comfortable setting for the sessions, this also aided the interviewer in obtaining relatively truthful and unbiased responses.

2.1.1 The Interviewer

One interviewer was present at each session, on the basis of:
- Having an extensive experience in the field of consumer and market research;
- Being capable of communicating clearly, and of adapting to different types of people.

The interviewer sought to:
- Approach different interviewees in a way to instil optimal confidence and establish a short and close rapport with them;
- Be flexible with the interview agenda in order to obtain important information for the purpose of the study, therefore recording any observations not directly related to any of the questions made as part of the structured interview.

2.1.2 A Note on Language Used

The necessary agendas that served as guidelines for the semi-structured interviews were drafted in English, and subsequently translated to Maltese. In the vast majority of interviews, the Maltese versions of the interviews were followed, as interviewees were more comfortable speaking the language. The interviewee statements are presented in this document translated to English. Whilst literal translations are not always appropriate, the statements are always presented in ways through which the original sense of the respondent’s answer is not lost in translation.

2.1.3 Limitations & Precautions

This research is intended to provide a general indication of the interviewees’ perceptions and experiences in relation to recent courses of the Youth Guarantee Programme. A degree of precaution must be exercised in the interpretation of results, considering the qualitative nature of the study. This should not, however, decrease the significance of results and observations noted during the sessions. Some strong similarities in participant discourse and expression have been noted, across many interviews. Such consistency could lead to reasonable conclusions in relation to the topics of interest, and should provide MEDE with valuable and useful information in working towards improving courses in the future.

2.2 FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

Each of the focus group sessions were carried out with youth workers and teachers who are currently actively employed within the Youth Guarantee Programme. Focus group duration averaged at between one hour and forty-five minutes to two hours, and followed a structured but flexible agenda presented in Appendices Section 6.2, on page 74 of this document.

A main purpose of the sessions was to provide participants with the opportunity to openly express their opinions and feelings, in relation to their experiences within the programme. In attempting to generate a session setting which was as comfortable as possible, participants were told that within the context of the focus group sessions the interviewer present is only representing a local independent market research agency, and is not an MEDE employee. Participants were also told that whilst their responses would be documented, they would be presented in a way that ensures anonymity. Besides creating a more comfortable setting for the sessions, this also facilitated expression of relatively truthful and unbiased feedback.

2.2.1 The Moderator

One moderator was present at each focus group session, on the basis of:
- Having an extensive experience in the field of consumer and market research;
- Being capable of communicating clearly, and of adapting to different types of people.

The moderator sought to:
- Approach participants in a way to instil optimal confidence and establish a short and close rapport with them;
- Be flexible with the focus group agenda in order to obtain important information for the purpose of the study, therefore recording any valid observations not directly related to any of the questions presented on the agenda.

2.2.2 Limitations & Precautions

The focus group research exercise aimed at providing a general indication of the participants’ perceptions and experiences in relation to recent courses of the Youth Guarantee Programme. A degree of precaution must be exercised in the interpretation of results, considering the qualitative nature of the study. This should not, however, decrease the significance of results and observations noted during the sessions. Some strong similarities in participant discourse and expression have been noted, across the four focus group sessions. Such consistency could lead to reasonable conclusions in relation to the topics of interest, and should provide MEDE with valuable and useful information in working towards improving courses in the future.

Here, a note about youth worker participants is also however in place. Participation in the focus group sessions was not in any way forced upon youth workers, and those who participated did so out of their own will. Out of the large number of youth workers contacted, there were others who either refused to participate, or never turned up for the focus group sessions. It is only reasonable to assume that those youth workers who actually accepted to participate and turn up at the sessions are those who are most dedicated and actively interested in seeing improvements in the programme. It is also reasonable to argue that they are most likely to be the ones who have adhered to instructions and have not broken protocol. This should be considered in interpreting the results presented below.
2.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

2.3.1 The Research Instrument

A research instrument was designed specifically for this research study to assess the Youth Guarantee Programme. The questionnaire mainly consisted of close-ended questions such as Likert scale items and multiple choice questions, and some open-ended questions. The questionnaire took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Data was collected from the 3rd of July till the 27th of August 2015. Reminder emails were sent out on the 17th and 30th of July 2015, and on the 7th of August 2015.

The evaluation questionnaire was distributed to all the participants who completed the Youth Guarantee Programme as online surveys. However, for those participants who had difficulties in completing the questionnaire electronically, a hard copy of the questionnaire was sent to the participants by post together with self-addressed envelopes to facilitate the process of compilation and re-postage of the questionnaire for these youths. The evaluation questionnaire was available in both English and Maltese languages to cater for the beneficiaries’ preferences, language competencies and ensure the best response possible.

In the analysis phase of this exercise, the level of significance chosen for this study was 0.05 which means that there is less than 5% probability that the results obtained are due to chance. Observations exceeding the 95% confidence interval were highlighted in the report.

Several measures were taken to improve this exercise. These include:

- **Opting for online surveys:** this type of questionnaire enhances the quality of survey data in a number of ways, including: avoidance of routing problems, interviewers cannot omit questions, questions are ’customised’ correctly, mathematical calculations can be carried out within the program, inadmissible or inconsistent responses are reduced and errors from separate data entry are eliminated.

- **Keeping the questions neutral and unbiased:** care was taken to ensure that all questions were as neutral as possible and did not lead the respondents to a particular answer. In order to achieve this, the questionnaire was reviewed and tested several times from both Marketing Advisory Services and the Ministry for Education & Employment.

2.3.2 Precautions and Limitations

Precaution must be exercised in the interpretation of results in view of the small sample base of respondents who completed the evaluation questionnaire. One of the limitations of this exercise was that completing the questionnaire was not in any way forced upon the youth guarantee beneficiaries, and those who responded did so out of their own will. Out of all the youth guarantee beneficiaries only a small number completed the evaluation questionnaire and therefore, this should be considered in interpreting the results presented below.
RESEARCH ON THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

FINDINGS
3.1 ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEWS

3.1.1 Reasons for Enrolment

In opening each interview session, the interviewer asked each youth whether they could recall the way in which they became aware of the Youth Guarantee (YG) Programme. Participants were specifically asked whether they were contacted by the Employment & Training Corporation (ETC) directly about the programme, and whether they felt that in any way pushed or forced to enrol within it, rather than register voluntarily.

A large number of interviewees declared that they had finished secondary school, were unemployed, and were thus claiming and receiving social benefits. They were contacted by ETC via post and informed about a mandatory choice to either enrol within the Youth Guarantee Programme or lose access to state benefits and social funds for the unemployed. This effectively made these youths feel that they were forced into registering within the programme:

- “I had finished school and was claiming social benefits... and then I received a letter from ETC, and I had to register for the programme.”
- “I was not doing anything and just registered as unemployed, claiming social benefits... then I received the letter at home telling me that I needed to register for the YG programme or else I would not be receiving any more social benefits.”
- “I was registered with ETC... and I received the letter at home notifying me about the YG programme and that I must register or lose the social benefits I was receiving.”

Others declared that they did not feel forced to take part in the programme, were not claiming social benefits but were just out of school and looking for work, and thus opted to enrol out of their own free will once they got to know about the scheme:

- “I was out of school... I decided to apply and enrol within the scheme because I felt I had nothing to lose...”
- “I just applied because I was looking for a job, and I felt that it would help me improve myself enough to get one.”

In a number of instances, it was reasonably clear that some pressure from senior family members had played an important role in pressing youths to enrol within the scheme. Although the interviewees themselves did not always explicitly and readily state this, parents’ support for enrolment emerged as a strong factor to consider, especially in the cases of younger youths who had recently finished secondary school.

3.1.2 Effectiveness of Promotion and Advertising

Most youths claimed that they were not aware of the programme before they had received a letter addressed to them personally and informing them about it, and this seemed to come across as the most effective method of advertising the scheme so far. Word of mouth and references to the scheme on local television also emerged as means through which youths or their relatives learned about the programme:

- “I got to know about the programme when I received a letter at home.”
- “I had no idea the programme existed until I received the letter.”
- “The letter I received at home made me aware of the programme.”
- “My mother had seen the advert for the programme on television, and she told me about it and that I should enrol.”
- “A friend of my father’s knew about the scheme and he told my father, who told me about it... that is when I got to know about the course.”

When asked whether they believed the programme was well advertised in Malta, most youths declared that they think it could be more widely advertised. Moreover, a number of youths also claimed that they felt things like aims and content of the programme were not well presented to the public, and information about it could be more widely propagated. A number of interviewees also suggested advertising and presenting the programme through channels that are most popular with Maltese youths, such as social media channels like Facebook, as they believe this could work well in generating more active interest:

- “Not enough people know about it...”
- “It should be advertised more... I had never heard of it before ETC got in touch with me directly.”
- “It should be advertised more... especially on Facebook, since it is very popular with young people.”
- “I think they should inform more people about it... about what it really is and what it does, and where it can lead to... even when I got to know about it, I still felt I was not well informed about these things...”

3.1.3 Youth Worker Relationship

A crucial and particularly revealing section of the interviews involved questioning and probing youths about their experiences with their assigned youth workers. The youths’ feedback here exposed two important and rather opposite aspects of current youth worker to youth relationships. In a significant number of interview cases, youths claimed that their meetings with youth workers were infrequent, sporadic, or had taken place only once throughout the programme. Some youths also claimed that the youth worker would often cancel meetings due to being unavailable, and that therefore the opportunities to meet and physically interact were few and far between. Perhaps even more problematic was the fact that, a number of youths claimed that they only had their first meeting with their assigned youth worker after the four weeks of training, rather than at the beginning of the programme:

- “I only met my youth worker once at the beginning...”
- “My youth worker cancelled meetings a couple of times... called me to say they could not make it because they had something else...”
- “I did not see my youth worker during the training phase... I only met them once I completed the four weeks...”

The fact that youths’ meetings with some youth workers do not seem to be occurring as frequently and consistently as they should be is obviously indicative of a serious problem, and should therefore be addressed. The second, more positive aspect of the youth to youth worker relationship that emerged through the interviews, however, is that the majority of youths who have met their youth workers claimed that these were apt, helpful, and able at doing their job:

- “My youth worker was very helpful and able to help...”
- “The youth worker was very helpful... ready to give me advice whenever I needed it...”
- “My youth worker was good... I could even phone them when I needed anything and she was always ready to help...”
- “My youth worker was able and very good... helped me with everything I needed and could always offer some good advice...”

It is reasonably clear, therefore, that where and when the youth workers were available to meet and follow youths throughout the programme, the youths themselves generally felt that the meetings were of some benefit to them. The main problem of youth worker to youth relationship thus seems to be stemming from insufficiency in frequency of these meetings. This issue was discussed further during focus group sessions carried out with the youth workers themselves, and is discussed and presented further in the corresponding focus group report.
3.1.4 Teachers and Training Supplement Material

The feedback gathered from youths about teachers and the ways in which the course content was taught during the four weeks of training, was overall positive. In a small number of cases, which seemed to stem from youths coming from the same class or group, the fact that there was a change in teacher mid-course was pointed out. Even in these cases, however, youths tended to declare that all teachers were competent and able at their jobs, and at teaching course content in a way which could be easily understood.

- “I cannot complain about the teacher... I understood everything he said and he was always willing to explain anything that was not clear.”
- “The teacher was good... I felt that she made me more motivated to learn...”
- “The teacher couldn’t have explained things better...”
- “The teacher was very good and competent...”
- “We changed teachers a couple of times during training, and that was not ideal, but I cannot complain about the teachers themselves.”

Youths were also asked about the notes and material that was given to them during the training phase, and about whether they found this material useful at all. Responses here seemed to be mixed, with some claiming that they found the material useful and they still refer to it, whilst others declared that they never used it:

- “I found the notes useful... they complemented what the teacher said.”
- “I found the material they gave us useful and kept referring to it...”
- “I didn’t really need to refer to the notes they gave us during the course that often...”
- “To be honest with you, I have never taken the time to go through the notes...”

3.1.5 Length, Times, and Facilities

Interviewees were asked about whether they think the length of the programme, as well as how it was split between training and working phases, was adequate. They were specifically asked whether they believe a four week training period and three month working phase provided them with all of the necessary material and exposure needed to find work and stability. The majority of interviewees declared that they believe the programme was spread and structured appropriately, with four weeks of training and three months of work exposure being enough to introduce and familiarise them with the working world. Youths who had previously never worked, or who were completely idle before enrolling, seemed to look favourably upon the new sense of routine the programme instilled within them. A minority of interviewees, on the other hand, declared that they felt the four weeks of training could be compressed within a shorter period of time:

- “The training phase and the work phase duration was good... we had enough exposure in both...”
- “I found the length to be good... training gave me enough time to get used to doing something with my hands again before getting to the work phase...”
- “The way it was structured was good... the length of the training period especially was perfect...”
- “I was not doing anything before I went into the programme... the length was good, and the way it was structured also gave me enough time for me to get into the new routine...”
- “Those four weeks of training were a little too long... they could have been brought down to two weeks...”

Youths were also asked about whether they think the time and place at which, and facilities within which, the training phase of the programme took place were appropriate and convenient. The majority of youths interviewed declared that they found the central location and easy accessibility of the Catholic Institute in Floriana made it easy for them to get to the training sessions on time, via public transport. Youths who sat for the training phase of the course in Gozo also declared that they felt the central location of facilities and classes was appropriate. The times during which the training sessions took place were also generally looked upon favourably by interviewees. Whilst most youths declared that they were satisfied with the facilities within which the sessions took place, some claimed that these could have been better, and that on-going construction work within or close to some of the classrooms also distracted them at times:

- “The place was good... I don’t drive so I had to catch the bus, but it was not a problem, Floriana is easy to get to by bus...”
- “It’s easy to get to the Catholic Institute, so it was never a problem for me... the times were good for me as well.”
- “The rooms were OK...”
- “The only thing that I could complain about is the construction work going on during some of the sessions... the noise was distracting...”

3.1.6 Class Size and Student Distribution

When asked about the number of other youths they shared classes with, and about whether they think the total number of youths per class was appropriate, most interviewees declared that the number was just right. The majority of youths claimed they shared a class with another eight to ten people, and that they believe the number was not too large. Some interviewees, however, pointed out the problematic issue of classes being extremely mixed in types of students, and that at times the widely different levels of education and backgrounds presented by youths within the same class caused some problems and discrepancies between the rapidity of learning between individuals within the same class.

- “It was about ten of us in class... the number was just right.”
- “I think it was a class of nine or ten... we were a good group, I didn’t feel I was too many of us in the class.”
- “Number of students was OK, the problem was that not everyone in class was on the same level. I have O Levels, for example, and there were some others in my class who did not, and could not be at my level of learning... so that made things go slower than they should have gone for me...”

3.1.7 Usefulness of Programme Content

Youths also expressed generally positive impressions when asked about what they thought of the content of the training programme and the topics covered in class. The majority of youths interviewed in fact declared that they found the content of the programme relevant and useful, both in terms of them gaining further insight about things they were aware of before the training experience, and in terms of learning and acquiring new knowledge about how to become more employable, getting and maintaining a job, and appropriate conduct of behaviour in the place of work. Lessons about how to write a successful CV, how to conduct and present oneself properly during an interview, and rights and privileges of employees, emerged frequently as most useful to the students.

- “I think content wise it was good, and it should stay as it is... everything was useful to me and I learned a lot.”
- “The part when we role played and was taught how to act in an interview was particularly useful to me...”
- “Learning how to write a CV helped me a lot... I had no idea how to do it properly before...”
- “I sort of knew what had to be in a CV, but the programme helped me improve my CV a lot... everything was useful to me.”
- “When the lawyer came and explained what our rights are, and about what the minimum wage is... that was very useful to me... I did not know anything about that before...”
3.1.8 Personal Experiences and Perceived Benefits of Programme

Overall, youths responded positively when probed about their general experience enrolled within the programme, and whether they feel they have achieved any personal objectives which they had hoped to achieve by the end of the course. Importantly, many youths declared that they felt they had improved on a personal and individual level, and that they could maintain better interpersonal relationships and felt more confident since they finished the training phase of the course. Some youths also declared that, before the programme, they felt they were not confident and could not express themselves well, but these issues had improved since they participated in the programme training phase. Many youths interviewed also remarked that they felt that any objectives and expectations they had of the programme were achieved. Others, especially those who have finished the programme and still did not manage to find work, declared that they felt disappointed about not finding one they were out of the programme. Nonetheless, the general views about the experience of the programme, in itself and as a whole, remained largely positive:

- “It was a positive experience for me, for sure... I learned a lot...”
- “Even if I look at just what I learned during training... it was a positive experience...”
- “I was hoping I would find a permanent work position and get employed as soon as the programme was over... but even though that did not happen, I feel that my experience was positive and I learned some things that will be useful for me in the future...”
- “I did not have any precise objectives when I enrolled and started the programme, but today I'm glad I did... I feel that it has changed me for the better... considering, for example, that before I would just sleep all day and today I am in the work phase of the programme... it has made me wake up in the morning and do something with my life...”
- “The course has changed me... I feel much more confident now and I feel I can speak out about anything...”
- “I would not have been able to be speaking with you as I am now had I not gone to the course... I was very shy and not confident before...”
- “I feel stronger and more confident now... it was definitely a positive experience for me...”

3.1.9 Choice of Posts and Level of Exposure

In relation to the work exposure phase, youths were asked about whether they think they had enough choice in terms of work placement options, and whether they feel their work placement has given them enough overall experience within a work environment. A significant number of youths expressed a level of dissatisfaction with a lack of diversity in the type of work posts available. Whilst many admittedly appreciated the fact that the choice could not possibly cater for specific aims and tastes of everyone, they still affirmed that it could be improved in terms of variety.

- “I think there could have been a wider choice and more work placement options...”
- “I know it’s difficult to cater for the tastes of everyone... but I think there still could be more varied options...”
- “I don’t think that there was enough choice for the working phase... I think they should bring more types of work places in...”

With respect to level of exposure, youth impressions were contrasting. Whilst a number of youths claimed they were exposed to enough stimulating work during the working phase, others claimed that the type of work they were exposed to was inappropriate. Some youths even claimed that their temporary employers had no real work for them, and as a consequence they many times ended up doing odd jobs which did not provide them with any valid work experience.

- “Sometimes I used to end up washing my employer’s car... that is not work exposure...”
- “I tended to polishing tiles and washing floors... I don’t believe that gave me anything...”
- “I didn’t think I got any valid experience from the working phase, my employer did not have any real use for me and I felt I was wasting time... there should be stricter monitoring of employers...”

3.1.10 Long-Term Benefits and Usefulness of Work Experience

Youths were also asked whether they think the working phase of the programme has in any way helped them in terms of long-term job prospects and experience. Youths who declared the work exposure phase of the programme was adequate, and who were satisfied with the jobs they were given, also affirmed that they think it was useful in providing them with experience for future jobs. Those who expressed most satisfaction with their work experience in terms of how it could affect them on a long-term basis were those youths working for employers who offered to keep them working after the working phase expired, as regular employees of their company. On the other hand, those who declared the work they were assigned during the working phase was not satisfying, also felt less gratified and saw less value in the experience in terms of having learned anything which they could use and apply within future places of employment.

3.1.11 A Further Note on Adequacy of Work Offered

Youths who were unsatisfied with their experience during the working phase also tended to affirm that they believe they were being exploited by the employer, and that the employer benefitted more from the scheme than they did. It is also important to note, however, that there were a number of companies that youths praised in terms of the level and type of work exposure. These included Maltapost and Consolidated Biscuit, with the latter also looked upon especially favourably in terms of offering long-term posts to youths who did well during their working phase.

3.1.12 Overall Grades Attributed

The overall scores attributed to the programme by youths naturally corresponded to their personal experiences within the programme. Those who felt satisfied with their personal trajectories throughout both the training and working phases of the programme, and those who felt that the programme had contributed to their personal growth in one way or other, graded the programme extremely highly (8, 9, 10). Those who, on the other hand, had a bad experience during their working phase, or had found aspects of the training phase to not be useful to their personal growth, gave lower scores to the programme (3, 4, 5).

3.1.13 General Comments & a Note on Stipend

It should be noted here, that the majority of youths interviewed admitted that the idea of the programme itself was good, and if developed further and properly (particularly in relation to the work exposure phase), it could prove to be a better, essential experience for participants. The overall impression gathered from most youths was in fact that the programme could be fine-tuned and refined, but that it is undoubtedly useful and provides individuals who for some reason or other have not been able to develop opportunities through other channels of education with tools to improve themselves and be able to find work which is fulfilling over time.

A note on stipend should also be made here. The vast majority of youths interviewed strongly complained about a lack of consistency in stipends and payments, which was pre-stipulated in the programme contract. Marketing Advisory Services is informed that MEDE is aware of this issue, and is seeking to improve it through the necessary action and channels.
3.1.14 Programme Dropouts

Interviews with programme dropouts were carried out in order to shed light on the reasons why these individuals stopped attending during the training or work phases of the programme. The interview agenda for dropouts used was a modified version of the original interview agenda, translated directly into Maltese. The primary aim of these interviews was to gather any evidence for defects in the programme - as pointed out by dropouts themselves - which drove these individuals to leave the programme, in order for these defects to be corrected in the future. Any answers from dropouts about aspects of the programme phases which they actually attended for and completed before stopping are incorporated and considered in the discussion above.

From the statements collected in relation to the reasons for stopping the programme, it was fairly clear that the vast majority of dropouts interviewed left either because of personal reasons (these were many times undisclosed to the interviewee), or because they found work as they were going through the course:

- “I had some personal problems so I stopped... it was not because of the programme itself...”
- “I stopped because I needed to go abroad for an extended period of time in the middle of the training phase...”
- “I found work after the 4 weeks of training so I did not go through with the working phase...”
- “I found work... so I did not feel the need to go through with the training phase...”

3.2 FOCUS GROUPS

3.2.1 General Awareness of Programme

In opening each focus group session, the moderator asked participants a general question about whether they think youths in Malta are exposed to and are aware of the Youth Guarantee Programme. The overall consensus across all focus groups was that the majority of youths the focus group participants met only seemed to have become aware of the programme once they had received a letter urging them to enrol from ETC. Moreover, a number of youth workers themselves had never heard of the programme and were not aware of its function prior to applying for their posts:

- “The youths I met only became aware of the programme when they received the ETC letter...”
- “I didn’t think there has been enough public awareness about the course and about its benefits so far...”
- “I hadn’t even heard of it myself before the applications for youth worker sessions came out...”

Some participants also suggested that more could be done in terms of advertising the programme more effectively and openly, through channels that are most popular with local youths, such as social media platforms:

- “I think more people would know about it if promoted through Facebook for example, even if just to hit those who use the internet...”
- “It could be advertised and presented to youths in a more accessible way... more information about it should be out there...”

3.2.2 Effectiveness of Programme Function

The moderator proceeded by prolonging the participants for their views about whether they think Maltese youths are making full and good use of the scheme, and whether, judging by the trajectories of youths which they had met and interacted with, it is being effective in fulfilling its function.

Participant reactions to this question were mixed. Many stated that they believe the programme per se is working on some levels, especially in promoting and driving self-improvement of youths who were enrolled within it for the right reasons, and for those who actually took it seriously. Focus group participants were also in agreement, however, on the fact that the programme is wasted and never works when it comes to youths enrolling for reasons other than to improve themselves, and who are not looking to increase their chances of gaining stability and their employability:

- “The programme works when the individual is in it for the right reasons... the idea of it is good and there are youths who genuinely need it and want to improve... but it never works when youths are just there for the sake of it or other reasons...”
- “There are aspects of the programme that are good... there is always room for improvement but as it is it works for those who want to work... but it never works for those youths who are just in it because they feel they have been forced, for example...”
- “In some respects the programme works... I have seen some youths improve in the way they communicate and interact... but it has to come from the youths themselves to want to improve... if they don’t want to learn, they won’t...”

3.2.3 Factors Driving Enrolment & Programme Recruits

A discussion about the various reasons youths enrolled within the programme followed. In this respect, participants claimed that it was clear to them that a number of youths they had tried to guide had enrolled within the programme for the wrong reasons. Some youths, for example, were only driven by the promise of receiving a stipend, or the threat of being denied access to any government social funding and benefits unless they participated in the programme:

- “I had a couple of youths who misbehaved... they were just there because they said they needed money and were not doing anything... they definitely did not enrol because they wanted to improve themselves...”
- “I know youths who only enrolled because of the threat of having the relief funds from registering with ETC cut... they were definitely not in it for the right reasons...”
- “Some youths I met did not even want to come to the youth worker sessions... they even offered to just sign the attendance sheet for all sessions once and leave to never come back again... these were definitely in it for the wrong reasons...”

3.2.4 Youth Attendance

A concern about the youth worker to youth relationship, which youth workers voiced out during the sessions, should be noted here. According to participants, the method through which attendance of youths for youth worker sessions is recorded is presently problematic. In the youth workers’ own words, it allows for ‘playing around’ with records, as youths could easily sign off and fake their attendance for all sessions, in one single session. In practice, therefore, youths could go to a single session, strike an agreement with the youth worker about signing off the rest of the sessions, and never turn up again. Youth workers who were present for the focus group sessions expressed significant worry about this option, and stressed the need for a greater rigidity in structure and accountability of youth workers to responsible superiors, in preventing it from happening.
3.2.5 Modes of Youth Recruitment & Evaluation

The discussion about reasons for which youths enrolled was followed by expression of strong opinions about the need for a more structured and moderated form of recruitment of youths within the programme. Participants across all groups expressed views about the need for youths to be recruited through more systematic methods, rather than through the present ‘blunt force’ approach which allows for an unregulated recruitment and acceptance of all youths, including those who feel forced to register for the programme and those who register for reasons other than to learn and improve themselves:

- “The way in which youths are brought into the programme should change... those who clearly don’t want to be in it should not be in it...”
- “Bringing those who do not want to improve into the programme is useless... they will just feel forced to be there...”
- “The need for a more defined and solid structure of programme administration, authority, and support. As such, there is a need for a more structured and moderated form of recruitment of youths within the programme. Participants across all groups unanimously maintained that they believe more should be done in terms of getting to know each individual youth’s background, both in terms of the socio-economic and psychological levels. Some youth workers declared that in some cases, psychological profiling had been carried out at the beginning of the programme, but they had not been given access to the profiles, or on going support by the assigned psychologists throughout.

Further points about the lack of appropriate methods of psychological and individual profiling were raised. Participants across all groups unanimously maintained that they believe more should be done in terms of getting to know each individual youth’s background, both in terms of the socio-economic and psychological levels. Some youth workers declared that in some cases, psychological profiling had been carried out at the beginning of the programme, but they had not been given access to the profiles, or on going support by the assigned psychologists throughout.

Participants believe that this profiling should be consistently carried out by qualified professionals, and youth workers should be made aware of potentially problematic individuals and situations. Moreover, psychologists and social workers should be present and available for support throughout the duration of the programme, especially when it comes to difficult cases. There was general agreement between participants about the need for strict confidentiality, and awareness about the delicate nature of this exercise. Nonetheless, participants across all groups declared they believe it is needed in giving both youth workers and teachers necessary information about the youths they meet and guide:

- “I would like to have more information about those people...”
- “I need more information about those people...”
- “There needs to be support from psychologists and social workers throughout the course...”

Moreover, many youth workers also argued that there were not enough youth workers employed to cover the amount of youths enrolled within the programme, and this may have led to rapid and unmonitored mass employment of youth workers.

3.2.6 Modes of Youth Worker Recruitment & Training

An important point about the recruitment of youth workers themselves also emerged during the groups. There seemed to be important changes and shifts between the recruitment process of those youth workers employed during the first months and phases of the programme, and those youth workers employed later. Training of youth workers and teachers also came across as different between the earlier and later phases of the programme. Moreover, many youth workers also argued that there were not enough youth workers employed to cover the amount of youths enrolled within the programme, and this may have led to rapid and unmonitored mass employment of youth workers.

Youth workers and teachers employed during the initial phases of the programme declared that they went through a fairly in-depth course of recruitment, consisting of an interview and training sessions, and face to face interaction with senior staff members responsible for the implementation of programme. Those employed later, however, declared that they had not gone through this process, and felt they were employed ‘en masse’, after submitting their CVs via email, or even through Facebook. These participants claimed that there was not even an interview or meeting between them and a representative of the administration or senior staff responsible for the programme. They were only notified about being accepted as youth workers via email, and sent a PDF file with instructions about their roles. There was no training or face to face interaction in these cases:

- “I had just received an email telling me I got accepted after sending my CV... there was no interview...”
- “I don’t think there were enough youth workers at one point... so they just had to employ as many as they could, as quickly as they could...”
- “I have never met anyone else from the programme and never had an interview. I had just sent my details through Facebook and they got back to me telling me I can start, with the list of youths...”
- “I never had any training... I never even met anyone senior or anyone else from the programme. contact was just via email and it was all faceless...”
- “I just received instructions via email, on a PDF file. I went through the file, but there were still cases when I felt I did not know what to do... and I felt that I had no one to ask or report to...”
- “I thought it was all too up in the air... there was no monitoring and no one I felt I could report to...”

3.2.7 A Need for Structure and Support

A strongly evident point that emerged from the focus group discussions, and that is clearly at the root of the points raised by participants, is a need for a more defined and solid structure of programme administration, authority, and support. As the situation stands now, youth workers and teachers who participated in the groups do not feel that they have found an adequate supporting structure and reference points and people they can refer to. Participants across all groups spoke out about an obvious need for such a structure to be established, and to serve as a kind of institutional framework for the programme. As part of this structure, there is also a need for a clear definition and description of roles, and of what is expected from youth workers, teachers, and other professionals involved within the scheme. Teachers and youth workers should not, for example, have the same roles and do the same work with youths. As it currently stands, this seems to be happening because of a lack of clear-cut and on-going instruction about who should do what.

As participants also declared, a clear framework should be established both in the sense of physical structure and premises, as well as in the sense of a network of professionals working together consistently throughout the programme, towards common goals:

- “There needs to be a clearer job description... PDF is not enough...”
- “First of all we need an adequate place as a sort of headquarters or something similar... where we can have classes and meet our youths... it needs to be a one stop shop...”
- “We need more support, someone to report to... I felt I was not accountable to anyone and I was just left on my own... I think this needs to change...”
- “Most of the time I felt that had nowhere to go to ask about any difficulties I came across... I had no one to go to or to report to... this should be corrected...”
- “I think teachers and youth workers end up doing the same things, or just doing each other’s work with particular youths... what we have to do needs to be more clear...”
- “There needs to be a clearer job description... PDF is not enough...”
- “An email with a PDF of guidelines is not enough to support us and instruct us about what we should do. There must be some actual team of professionals supporting us, consistently...”
3.2.8 Youth Worker Session Timetable

Another issue that emerged during sessions which was as important to youth workers, concerned the duration and amount of sessions they had to sit for with youths. There were two major issues that emerged in this regard. The first was about the structure of the sessions being too rigid, in the sense that it does not allow for flexibility in terms of time and does not consider individual youth situations and backgrounds. As it stands now, it is a ‘one-suits-all’ structure and timetable which is expected to be applied to every youth in the programme. This, according to focus group participants, should change. The timetable should be made more flexible and there should be less focus on duration and amount of sessions with youths, and more focus on content, guiding the youth workers in the topics that should be discussed as well as bringing in a psychologist or social worker in when needed for some of the sessions. The second issue brought up by participants involved the way in which youths could ‘sign off’ their attendance for all the sessions easily and at once, and this, coupled with a general feeling of lack of accountability of youth workers, contributed to an overall feeling of carelessness and lack of any solid programme structure.

3.2.9 Round Table Discussions

Participants across all groups also expressed some disappointment with the fact that they, as youth workers and teachers, never got to meet each other, interact, and share experiences. The vast majority of youth workers present for the focus groups, for example, had in fact never met or seen each other at any time before. In view of this, participants voiced strong opinions about the need for round table discussions to be held throughout the duration of the programme. These discussions would bring youth workers together among themselves, and give them the opportunity to talk about their experiences, give continuous feedback about the programme, and discuss any issues and possible improvements. These round table discussions should also involve teachers and other people working within the structure of the programme, in serving as an ideal platform for dialogue between different professionals responsible for different areas of the programme. Naturally, these round table discussions could only be held successfully once the support structure discussed in Section 3.2.1 observed is up and running.

- “I think we should have more sessions like this... and get the chance to talk and share experiences between us...”
- “I had never met any of these other youth workers before... I am seeing them for the first time today, I think this focus group was very useful in itself in allowing us to share experiences... sessions like this should be done more often...”
- “There has to be some form of discussion and dialogue between us and other professionals... it has to keep happening, not just once and that’s it... we need to meet one another more and talk about our time with the youths... that would be a step forward...”
- “Discussions between us and teachers and other professionals would already be a significant step forward... but everything needs to be more organised for them to happen... it would definitely be good for us to meet and talk like we’re doing today...”

3.2.10 Towards a Compact Team

The most problematic issue that transpired during all focus group sessions was undoubtedly the current lack of clear direction and compact team structure that should be at the foundation of the programme. All youth workers and teachers present for the focus group sessions declared that there should be a sense of greater rigidity, accountability, and clear cut objectives with respect to what the job entails as well as the overall aims of the programme. Moreover, youth workers also strongly expressed a need to work in tandem with other qualified professionals such as psychologists and social workers, especially given the nature of cases of youths who come from problematic backgrounds or are facing specific problems such as drug addiction and any form of abuse. In these cases, providing youth workers with emailed textbook instructions and leaving them to their own devices without offering further support is certainly not enough in working towards improving the youths’ status, or youth workers’ working conditions. This emerged as an evidently immediate problem which should be addressed as soon as possible, and which needs to be accompanied by more organised and appropriate methods of enrolment, training, and support for youth workers and teachers.

3.2.11 Youth Worker & Teacher Suggestions

Focal Points and Topics of Interest

One of the questions put forward by the moderator during the sessions was about the scheme’s focal points which were most useful for and needed by youths. Training in motivation and behaviour, labour market orientation skills, training in CV writing and interview skills, and training in communication skills were all deemed important, and participants across all groups agreed that with regards to this content, the programme was on the right track. Moreover, participants also agreed on the fact that the programme does tend to enhance and improve life skills of those youths who are in it for the right reasons. In linking this aspect to the points presented in the previous sections of this document, however, participants agreed on the fact that different youths coming from different backgrounds would need focus on different areas. This, therefore, also calls for a better system of profiling and assessment. Youths with different needs and coming from different educational, social, and economic backgrounds should be more systematically assigned to teachers and youth workers trained specifically to cater for these different needs, in not only improving the chances of improvement for these youths themselves, but also in catering for different paces of learning and skill acquisition.

Work Exposure & Scheme Output

Youth workers expressed reasonable concern about the choice and types of jobs youths are being offered. In congruence with the responses obtained through the interviews carried out with youths, youth workers present at the sessions also maintained that whilst there were some employers who were giving youths adequate work and placing them in a good position to improve themselves, other work phase positions were inadequate. Even amongst youth workers, there is a sense of doubt about whether all of the employers involved in the work phase of the programme are providing youths with a good and useful work experience. Youth workers across all groups also emphasised a need for a wider choice of work places and types of jobs. Participants also agreed on the argument that a greater focus on providing youths with an adequate work experience would improve scheme output, in that youths would have a greater chance of becoming more employable and landing a good job and not revert to relying on state benefits, once they are out of the scheme.
3.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

3.3.1 Respondent Demographics

Out of the 49 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 44.9% were male and 55.1% were female. The respondents were equally distributed amongst the age groups, 24 of the respondents were aged between 15-20 years and the other 25 were aged between 21-25 years.

When asked to what extent respondents found the Youth Guarantee Programme useful, out of all the respondents only 3 respondents (6.1%) responded in the negative. The large majority (93.9%) found the programme at least somewhat useful.

The respondents were also grouped according to geographical district. The largest represented district was that of the Northern Harbour with 38.8% respondents, followed by the South Eastern district with 22.4% respondents and the Southern Harbour district with 16.3% respondents. The least represented districts were the Western and Northern which each contributed 12.2% respondents (refer to Figure 2). Age groups were more or less equally represented in each district.

When asked to rate the extent of which participants reached their personal objectives, the average score was 7.25 out of 10. Out of 48 respondents, only 16.2% of the respondents gave a negative score of 5 or lower.

Overall, the majority of the respondents answered positively when rating the YG programme both overall and when scoring specific aspects of the programme. Below are the responses to overall questions about the YG programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Respondents (n=49)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern District</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western District</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Harbour</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Harbour</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Eastern</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No statistical differences were found between groups*
When asked about the content of the Youth Guarantee Programme, the majority of respondents (79.6%) believed that the content was either good or very good.

When asked about the duration of the Youth Guarantee Programme, most respondents (81.6%) also agreed that the duration of the YG Programme was ‘just right’.

When the respondents were asked whether they believe that the YG program was conducted in a ‘logically sequenced manner’, the majority (81.7%) of the respondents rated YG’s sequence higher than 5 on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 was the lowest possible score and 10 was the highest). The average score was 7.42.

3.3.3 Evaluation of the Topics Covered

The taught component in the Youth Guarantee Programme had four main topics which were:
- Motivation & behaviour
- Guidance on employment
- CV writing & interview skills
- Communication skills

Respondents were asked to score the usefulness of the topics covered during the Youth Guarantee training programme according to how useful the topics were. The options were ‘Not useful’, ‘Slightly useful’, ‘Moderately useful’ and ‘Very useful’. Most of the respondents perceived all the topics in a positive manner and deemed them useful. ‘C.V. writing and interview skills’ was considered to be the most useful topic. The chart below presents a breakdown of the responses given on how useful the respondents found the individual topics.
3.3.4 Evaluation of Specific Aspects of the Programme

When asked whether the content of the Youth Guarantee Programme met the participants' initial expectations, the majority of the respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' (69.4%) that the content met their initial expectations.

The training provided was perceived to be suitable for the participant's level of experience by the majority of respondents (69.4%).

When asked whether training was suitable to my level of experience the mean score was 3.8 out of 5.

The large majority of the respondents (87.8%) also found the content taught in the YG programme to be understandable.

When asked whether the content of the programme was of great immediate use, the majority of respondents (77.6%) stated that they believed that the training was immediately useful.

Most of the respondents also found the training programme to be well organized (79.6%).

When asked whether the content of the programme was of great immediate use, the majority of respondents (77.6%) stated that they believed that the training was immediately useful.
3.3.5 Ranking of the Programme’s Components According To Usefulness

When asked to indicate which part/s of the Youth Guarantee Programme the respondents felt was most useful to their future, the highest score was obtained by ‘work exposure’ component.

Figure 15 - Ranking of the most useful individual components of the YG programme (n=49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work exposure</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV writing skills &amp; interview skills</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on employment training</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation &amp; behaviour training</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with youth worker</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further training in an educational institution</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, when asked about the components of the Youth Guarantee Programme which the respondents felt to be the least useful, ‘meetings with the youth workers’ ranked highest with almost half of the respondents (48.9%) rating this component as the least useful part of the programme.

Figure 16 - least useful components of the YG programme (n=49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with youth worker</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further training in an educational institution</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV writing skills &amp; interview skills</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation &amp; behavior training</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on employment training</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work exposure</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.6 Evaluation Of The Youth Worker Component

Overall, the youth worker component of the Youth Guarantee Programme was perceived positively by the respondents especially in the case where youth workers helped students in difficult situations.

Figure 17 - Evaluation of the individual aspects of the youth worker component of the YG programme (n=49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The youth worker was available to help with any difficulties</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The youth worker encouraged me to learn</td>
<td>30.60%</td>
<td>53.10%</td>
<td>28.60%</td>
<td>46.90%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The youth worker was knowledgeable about the subject</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>8.20%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
<td>46.90%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The youth worker was well prepared</td>
<td>34.70%</td>
<td>40.80%</td>
<td>36.70%</td>
<td>42.90%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongly Disagree  | Disagree  | Not Sure | Agree  | Strongly Agree
3.3.7 Evaluation Of The Training Component

The training component received very positive rating from the respondents and all the respondents agreed that the training component was useful for their future work.

Figure 18 - Evaluation of the individual aspects of the Training component of the YG programme (n=7)

- The training facilities were appropriate: 14.3%
- The training course will be useful for my future work: 28.6%
- The training course was well organised: 14.3%
- The training was based on current, up-to-date information: 57.1%
- The teaching material provided was relevant: 28.6%
- The training course was of help in strengthening the knowledge and skills relevant to my area of study: 14.3%

![Evaluation of the training component](image)

3.3.8 Evaluation Of The Work Placement Component

Similarly, the work placement was perceived very positively by the respondents.

Figure 19 - Evaluation of the individual aspects of the work placement component of the YG programme (n=42)

- The work placement motivated me to look for future jobs: 47.6%
- The work placement helped to regain confidence on the workplace: 50.0%
- The work placement helped me to put knowledge into practice which can be added on to my CV: 47.6%
- The work placement helped me to improve my skills and competencies in line with the needs of the labour market: 50.0%

![Evaluation of the work placement component](image)
3.3.9 Recommending the YG Programme

When the respondents were asked if they would recommend the programme to their peers most of the respondents replied that they would probably or definitely recommend the programme (85.6%) and in fact, only 14.3% of the participants replied that they would not recommend the programme.

Figure 20 - Percentage of respondents that would recommend the YG programme (n=49)

38.7% Definitely not
8.2% Probably not
6.1% Probably yes
46.9% Definitely yes

3.3.10 Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis was run between some of the variables in the study.

The following items have been found to correlate significantly with the respondents reaching their personal objectives. The variables are presented with the highest correlated variables first.

The three main variables which positively related to whether or not the respondents reached their personal goals was the usefulness of the programme, the content and the fact that YG programme helped the respondents to improve their skills.

Table 1 - Correlation of variables with the reached personal objectives of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of YG programme</td>
<td>.749</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of YG programme</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work programme helped me improve my skills</td>
<td>.569</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical sequence of YG programme</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content being immediately useful</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understandable content</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work placement helped me to put knowledge into practice</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting content</td>
<td>.419</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable training</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YG met initial expectations</td>
<td>.407</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well organised</td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work placement helped to regain confidence on the workplace</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When a correlation analysis was conducted on which variables relate to the usefulness of the YG programme the following correlations were found: ‘the content of the YG programme’, ‘Work placement helped me improve my skills’ and ‘Understandable content’ were amongst the highest correlated variables. However, several other variables mostly related with the content and work placement were also highly correlated (refer to Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content of YG programme</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work placement helped me improve my skills</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understandable content</td>
<td>.611</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical sequence of YG programme</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content being immediately useful</td>
<td>.582</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting content</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well organised</td>
<td>.526</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work placement helped me to put knowledge into practice</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work placement helped to regain confidence on the workplace</td>
<td>.402</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
#4

ANALYSIS OF COMMON ISSUES & COUNTRY OUTCOMES
4 ANALYSIS OF COMMON ISSUES & COUNTRY OUTCOMES

Besides Malta, the Youth Guarantee Programme is also concurrently being implemented in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. A synopsis of aims and outcomes of the Youth Guarantee Programme within these countries, together with a list of sources from which the corresponding information has been drawn, and is attached to this document, in Appendices Section 6.3. A synoptic discussion of common problems, issues, and outcomes across countries is presented hereunder.

4.1 Common Problematic Aspects

Across all countries, a complete implementation of the programme in fulfilling all of the projected objectives remains problematic. There is an overall lack of sufficient resources in the public employment services sector, which is widely regarded as the main service provider with respect to the Youth Guarantee Programme, and a resulting failure in providing complete, individual action plans which are tailored to the specific profiles of NEETs. There is also some concern and indecision about whether the sustainability of the Youth Guarantee Programme will be compromised in the long-term because of lack of sufficient and adequate funding. There is the problem of early school-leavers and insufficient outreach methods to the resultant demographic of inactive youths. In this respect, there also seems to be an overall lack of rigid structures supporting the programme, both in the sense of premises and in the sense of some governing body which is able to coordinate and manage the programme with regular and consistent effort.

There is also a pressing need for stronger links between schools and employers, in securing smoother youth transitions from education to employment through apprenticeships and traineeships. With respect to this issue, education and training also need to be better aligned with the needs of the labour market. The low frequency of transitions from temporary to permanent employment within the scheme is also a common issue across countries, which needs to be addressed. Overall, youth engagement must be improved, but this can only occur once all the required institutional structures are solidly in place.

4.2 Towards Possible Solutions

As the research exercise discussed throughout this document also suggests, the challenges faced by other countries within which the programme is being implemented are similar to the ones being faced in Malta. In being a small nation, however, Malta may find it easier to move rapidly and fully implement certain measures which other countries are slowly working towards in solving some of the problems presented in the section above.

A major step forward could involve the establishment of a one-stop shop, which would serve as a meeting point for youths, youth workers, and teachers, and a place within which ideas about the strong points and weaknesses of the programme could be discussed. The place would be a connection hub to a team of managers and coordinators, thus also possibly solving problems of lack of organisation and accountability currently being felt by youth workers and teachers.

Adequate supervision of youth workers, teachers, and employers who are offering youths a job opportunity throughout the training phase is also important in addressing the accountability problem. Moreover, conditions under which youths are hired for apprenticeships and traineeships should be simplified for employers as much as possible, whilst making sure that all employers are following directions about providing useful work experience for youths, and providing suitable working conditions.

An efficient and safe IT platform, through which relevant and useful data corresponding to NEETs and their backgrounds could be accessed by the team of professionals working with them, would also serve the purpose of reinforcing the structural backbone of the programme, as well as being an important factor in shifting towards a compact team of professionals working together towards common goals.

Individual action plans, which cater for the needs of different NEETs coming from different social and economic backgrounds, would also need to be drafted in addressing some of the problems presented above.

Overall, it is obvious that these solutions cannot be implemented overnight and working towards them requires careful planning and thought. There can be, however, greater effort invested on the local level in beginning to consider the implementation of these solutions as from today. Undoubtedly, creating a more solid organisational structure backing the Youth Guarantee Programme would be an important first step in this respect.
RECOMMENDATIONS

#5

I
5.1 PROMOTION OF PROGRAMME

5.1.1 Generating Awareness
There is more that can be done in terms of propagating awareness and information about the existence and availability of the Youth Guarantee Programme, and more importantly about its functions and aims. As the results presented in this document suggest, there is currently not sufficient awareness about the benefits of the programme in terms of the ways in which it can lead to self-improvement and enhance employability. Rather, NEETs are feeling forced to enrol within the programme under a ‘threat’ that any money they are receiving from the state is going to be cut unless they do so. Here, we are not against direct contact of NEETs in advising them to enrol within the programme, but rather for a boost in more public and informative means of promotion about why they should enrol.

5.1.2 Channels
There is also a need for promotion to occur over channels which are most popular across groups of NEETs. ‘Traditional’ channels such as local newspapers, television, and public advertisement spaces should be used, but should be supplemented with a solid online presence on social networks and media. An informative promotional campaign about the programmes should be backed by the creation and maintenance of a Facebook page, which would serve the twofold purpose of being a platform through which updated adverts and announcements relative to the programme are published, and an online point of contact for those who wish to enquire about the programme.

5.2 BETTER RECRUITMENT

5.2.1 Students
There is a pressing need for more detailed in-depth profiling of NEETs, prior to them beginning their course within the Youth Guarantee Programme. The results presented above indicate that as it currently operates, the programme adopts a shotgun approach to enrolment of students, and expects them all, irrespectively of their individual histories, social backgrounds, and educational needs, to follow same course trajectory. This tends to be self-defeating, in that it denotes a system that fails at identifying strengths and weaknesses of individual NEETs, and working on these respectively throughout the programme.

This profiling should also be the first step in assigning youths to youth workers and other professionals working within the programme who are specialised in and capable of guiding these youths in maximizing their potential, whilst addressing specific difficulties which they may encounter in the process. Better class grouping, with different classes offering different learning trajectories, in terms of respective educational background would also be an important objective of a comprehensive and adequate profiling system.

Whilst being aware that this could be an exhaustive task, and practically impossible to apply in terms of each and every NEET, we believe that actively working towards this model would improve programme output, in terms of the success of youths once they complete the programme.

5.2.2 Youth Workers
The same shotgun approach seems to be currently employed in the process of recruiting youth workers. Many of those who participated in the focus group sessions discussed above declared that they did not go through interviews before being engaged as youth workers, and were instead rather hastily recruited via email. There is an obvious need for greater care to be invested in the recruitment process of youth workers, not only for the purposes of properly employing workers within the programme, but also to instil an impression that the programme and backing structure is solid and adequate at the professional level, amongst the youth workers themselves.

5.3 ESTABLISHING & MAINTAINING ORGANISATION

5.3.1 Structure
There is currently a strong void in terms of physical and organisational structure that should serve as the set foundation of the Youth Guarantee Programme. Following the various perspectives gathered through the present study, we strongly recommend choosing and assigning an adequate space to serve as a one-stop-shop where all the professionals involved in the programme can meet and interact. Creating this space is important, in giving some sense of compact organisation sustaining the implementation of the programme, as well as in providing an area where youth workers can meet each other, teachers, and other professionals, as a team, since this sense of teamwork is altogether absent from the programme structure today. Establishing structure also implies employing an adequate group of qualified professionals, including psychologists and social workers, who are able to follow the students throughout their time within the programme and provide support. In this respect, entrusting youth workers with all of the needs of the youths (especially when these are employed through the current method), is not adequate and sufficient.

5.3.2 More Defined Roles & Better Networking
Establishing organisational structure would also imply defining roles of different professionals, as well as what is expected from them within the organisation. There is a current lack of clarity when it comes to the differences between the roles of youth worker, social worker, psychologist, and teacher, for example. These differences should be cleared up, for the benefit of professionals and students. We are also strongly recommending that each professional employed within the programme structure should be given adequate training, and corresponding materials which he or she can refer to in his or her work. The establishment of a strong network and forms of consistent communication between the various professionals is also important in this regard, in creating a system of support for all professionals involved, which will ultimately reflect positively on student progress and improve programme output.

5.3.3 Accountability
There is also a rampant lack in terms of sense of accountability from the youth worker perspective. The fact that many of them have never had one-to-one interaction with senior professionals within the programme, and have been left to their own devices after only being provided with a booklet of instructions via email, is counterproductive. Youth workers have themselves suggested that there should be stricter monitoring of their own work, with more experienced senior professionals following up on their progress with youths. We recommend acting on this suggestion, as soon as possible, and believe it is one of the most important aspects to consider in terms of current youth worker status. Greater accountability and monitoring should also be applied in terms of all employers, who should be followed in ensuring that they are offering adequate experience and training corresponding to programme objectives.
5.4 EMPLOYERS

5.4.1 Wider Choice and More Appropriate Placements

A common issue encountered throughout the present study was the question of whether there is enough selection in terms of work placements for youths within the programme. Whilst realising that it may not be easy to find and offer the widest spectrum of work options for youths who are fresh out of programme training, we recommend offering as much placements as possible, which include both manual labour and clerical work options. Furthermore, ensuring that appropriate work is being offered by all employers at all times is crucial. Employers offering odd jobs such as washing floors and cars, which do not provide any valid experience to the youths, is unacceptable. In this respect, as stated in Section 5.3.3 above, more adequate monitoring and accountability with respect to employers is needed.

5.4.2 Long-Term Prospects

We are also recommending that, where possible, employers offer longer-term prospects to youths, in the sense of keeping them within their ranks of employers for longer than six months. As youths interviewed have stated, the thought that they may go back to square one in terms of the situation they end up in after the course ends is disheartening, but there have been some employers who have made notable efforts to employ valid trainees beyond the six-month training period. There should be more employers prepared to follow suit.

In terms of long-term prospects, enrolled youths should also be instructed in and given the opportunity to pursue further studies once they complete the programme. The opportunity of registering at MCAST or ITS, for example, could be offered to those youths who are inclined towards pursuing further study instead of the work placement phase.

5.5 SOME FURTHER NOTES

We cannot overemphasise the importance of consistent and timely payment of stipends to youths enrolled within the programme. As feedback gathered from youths themselves through the present study clearly suggests, many depend on and even live off the programme stipend to some extent or other, throughout the duration of the course. In ensuring that those enrolled are retained and do not drop out for this reason, therefore, the payment of stipend system needs to become much more efficient than it currently is.

Finally, we also recommend establishing a record system, which follows up on youths during and after they have left the programme. This would serve the function of knowing about any problematic cases and acting on them in a timely manner, but also of knowing about and gauging success stories, and gaining direct feedback from the youths in a consistent manner, over time.
6.1 INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTHS (AGENDA)

Introduction:
Good morning/afternoon [name of interviewee],
Thank you very much for finding some time for this interview. My name is _______ from Marketing Advisory Services. I would like to ask you some questions about the Youth Guarantee (YG) Programme that you attended. Your information will be useful to evaluate and improve future Youth Guarantee training programs.

Questions:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION
What was the reason for participating in the YG?
How did you get to know about the YG? Were you contacted by the ETC or did you register voluntarily?
What are you doing now that the YG period is over?
Do you think it was a good idea to participate in the YG?
How would you describe your experience with the YG?

PROFILEING AND TRAINING PHASE
How was your relationship with the youth worker during the profiling and training phase?
Was the youth worker enthusiastic and ready to help you?
Was he/she effective and knowledgeable?
Was a good level of counseling offered?
How appropriate was the length of the training program?
How appropriate was the time of the training program?
How appropriate was the program’s location?
How appropriate were the training facilities?
How relevant was the program to your needs?
How appropriate was the content?
Were the materials given useful and was the program relevant to your needs?
Which parts of the training programme do you feel will be most useful for your future?
Which parts of the training programme do you feel will be least useful, or not at all useful for your work in the future?
Are there any other subjects which you would have liked to be included in the training programme?
Was the teaching method appropriate?
Did you understand the contents?
Were you motivated to learn the contents?
How many people were undertaking the training with you? Were too many people assigned to one youth worker?
Did your classmates at any point disturb the training session to the detriment of others who wanted to learn?
Which of your personal objectives were not achieved, and why?
Do you think you will need further training in the future?
Would you be willing to undergo further training in the future if needed?

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YG
Was there enough job exposure in the YG period?
Did you have enough options to choose from during the job exposure period?
Do you think that the program helped getting you/will help you find a job?
Do you think that the program helped getting you/will help you find a quality job?
Do you think you would have completed your studies/got the job you have now if it was not for participation in the YG?
Was the financial allowance payment of YG participation made on time?

CONCLUSION
Is the YG program well promoted in the Maltese Islands?
On a scale from 1 to 10, what is your overall rating of the YG program?
Any other comments...
How will you apply what you have learned?

Thank you for your time. We wish you all the best (in your job/studies).
6.2 FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUTH WORKERS & TEACHERS (AGENDA)

**Improving the Youth Guarantee Scheme in Malta: Youth Workers’ Perspectives**

**INTRODUCTION**
(Estimated Time: 10 minutes)

AIM: To introduce participants to the research, put them at ease and encourage them to express themselves in the most open and comfortable way

Moderator to introduce session: confidentiality, open discussion, all opinions welcome, focus on personal experience, viewing and recording, asks participants to introduce themselves.

Introduce participants to topics of discussion briefly outlining:
- The Youth Guarantee scheme in Malta and ways in which it could be improved, from the youth worker perspective

**CURRENT SITUATION**
(Estimated Time: 35 minutes)

Do you think Maltese youths are currently aware of the Youth Guarantee scheme and its function? Do you think Maltese youths are making full use of the scheme? Do you think more could be done in terms of making the scheme more popular among the Maltese public in general? If yes, what?

Thinking of the following activities and scheme focal points: training in motivation and behaviour, labour market orientation sessions, training in CV writing and interview skills, training in communication skills

Which of the above do you think are currently most required by youths enrolled in the scheme? Do you encounter any particular difficulties when engaged in any one of these particular activities? Which of these activities and areas could be reinforced? How?

Do you think current methods through which training is being provided within the scheme could be improved? If yes, how do you suggest this could be done?

**ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING METHODS**
(Estimated Time: 20 minutes)

In thinking about your own experiences as youth workers...

Which areas and activities of the scheme do you feel are most useful and successful? Which methods of application and training do you feel work best? Which methods of application and training do you feel work least? In which ways do you think these methods could be improved?

**ADEQUATE PREPARATION OF YOUTH WORKERS FOR SCHEME**
(Estimated Time: 20 minutes)

Do you feel you have been properly prepared and trained as youth workers? Are there any areas in which you feel particularly weak and you feel you could be trained better in? Are you currently receiving on-going training as youth workers? If not, do you think on-going training could improve your skills and make you more confident as youth workers?

**SCHEME OUTPUT AND OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS**
(Estimated Time: 35 minutes)

Do you feel the scheme is effective in terms of improving enrolled youths in terms of their situations with regards to becoming more employable? Can you think of ways in which the scheme could be rendered more effective in terms of specifically tailoring for Maltese youths? Finally, would you have any suggestions with regards to possible ways of improving:

- the structure of the scheme
- scheme modules and their implementation
- methods through which participants are recruited and distributed according to their specific needs
6.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the Youth Guarantee Programme, did you:
Bħala parti mil-iskema tal-‘Youth Guarantee Programme’, inti:

Choose one answer:
Agħzel risposta waħda:

○ Continue to further your studies in an educational institution (e.g. at MCAST or ITS)
Komplejt l-istudji tiegħek l’istituzzjonijiet edukattiva (e.g. kors l-MCAST jew l-ITS)

○ Took part in a 3-month work placement experience
Għamilt esperjenza ta’ xogħol għal tlett xhur

On a scale from 1 to 10, to what extent have your personal objectives for attending the programme been achieved?
Fuq skala minn 1 sa 10, kemm taħseb li rnexxielek tilħaq l-għan tiegħek permezz tal-Youth Guarantee Programme?

Not at all
Lanqaż xejn

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Fully
Totalment

Please provide a short comment on your score indicated above:
Jekk jogħġbok, niżżel kumment qasir rigward l-għażla tiegħek li ndikajt hawn fuq:

On a scale from 1 to 10, to what extent was the Youth Guarantee Programme logically sequenced?
Fuq skala minn 1 sa 10, kemm taħseb li l-Youth Guarantee Programme kien imqassam tajjeb?

Not useful
Mhux utli

Slightly useful
Ftit utli

Moderately useful
Utli mhux ħazin

Very useful
Utli ħafna

From the following list of topics that were covered during the training programme, please indicate how useful you found each topic to be.
Fil-lista ta’ hawn taħt, immarka għal kull wahda kemm sibt dawn is-suggeriti li saru fit-tahrir tal-Youth Guarantee Programme utli?

Motivation & Behaviour
Motivazzjoni u Mġieba

Guidance on Employment
Għajnuna fuq Xogħol

CV writing & Interview skills
Għajnuna fuq kif tikteb CV u mgieba waqt interview

Communication Skills
Għajnuna fuq kif tinkomunikaw

Not useful
Mhux utli

Slightly useful
Ftit utli

Moderately useful
Utli mhux ħazin

Very useful
Utli ħafna
From the following list of topics that were covered during the training programme, please indicate how useful you found each topic to be.

Fil-lista ta’ hawn taħt, immarka għal kull wahda kemm sibt dawn is-suġġetti li saru fit-taħrig tal-Youth Guarantee Programme utli?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The content of the Youth Guarantee Programme met my initial expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training was suitable to my level of experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses were understandable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content will be of great immediate use to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which part/s of the Youth Guarantee Programme do you feel will be most useful for your future?

Liema partijiet tal-Youth Guarantee Programme taħseb li ser ikunu l-inqas utli għall-futur tiegħek?

- Training regarding motivation & behaviour
- Training regarding guidance on employment
- CV writing skills and interview skills
- Communication skills
- Meetings with youth worker
- Further training in an educational institution e.g. MCAST or ITS
- Work Exposure

Other, please specify:

Are there any other subjects which you would have liked to be included in the training of the Youth Guarantee programme?

Hemm xi suġġetti oħra li xtaqt li kienu inklużi fit-taħrig tal-Youth Guarantee Programme?
Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements about the youth worker by choosing the appropriate answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ma naqbel xejn</td>
<td>Ma naqbilx</td>
<td>Mhux cert/a</td>
<td>Naqbel</td>
<td>Naqbel hafna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The youth worker was well prepared
Il-youth worker kien/kienet ippreparat/a tajeb

The youth worker was knowledgeable about the subject
Il-youth worker kien/kienet jaf/taf x’ qed jgħid/tgħid dwar is-sugjett

The youth worker encouraged me to learn
Il-youth worker nkoraġżini / nkoraġżitni biex ntni għallem

The youth worker was available to help with any difficulties
Il-youth worker kien/kienet lest/a u prezenti biex jgħin/tgħin f’kull diffikulta li kelli

The following questions are applicable to those who completed further training in any educational institution as part of the Youth Guarantee Programme.

Il-mistoqsijiet li jmiss huma applikabbli biss għal dawk li lestew aktar taħriġ f’istituzzjoni edukattiva bhala parti mill-Youth Guarantee Programme

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about the training by choosing the appropriate answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ma naqbel xejn</td>
<td>Ma naqbilx</td>
<td>Mhux cert/a</td>
<td>Naqbel</td>
<td>Naqbel hafna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The training course was of help in strengthening the knowledge and skills relevant to my area of study
Il-kors ta’ taħriġ kien relevant biex isahl ħal il-tħallim waqt ikont qegħid/qegħda nistudja.

The teaching material provided was relevant
Il-materjal li ġie użat waqt it-taħriġ kien relevanti.

The training was based on current, up-to-date information
It-taħriġ kien isbbazat fuq informazzjoni attwali u kurrenti.

The training course was well organised
Il-kors ta’ taħriġ kien organizzat tajeb.

The training course will be useful for my future work
Il-kors ta’ taħriġ ser ikun utti għal-futur tieghi fi-dinija tax-xogħol.

The training facilities were appropriate
Il-faċilitajiet fejn sar it-taħriġ kienu xerqa
The following questions are applicable to those who completed the work placement as part of the Youth Guarantee.

Il-mistoqsijiet li jmiss huma applikabbli biss ghal dawk li lestew il-work placement bhala parti mill-Youth Guarantee Programme.

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements about the work placement by choosing the appropriate answer.

Immarka kemm taqbel mad-dikjarazzjonijiet t’hawn taħt rigward il-work placement billi tagħżel risposta waħda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ma naqbel xejn</td>
<td>Ma naqbel</td>
<td>Mhux cert/a</td>
<td>Naqbel</td>
<td>Naqbel hafna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The work placement helped me to improve my skills and competencies in line with the needs of the labour market

Il-work placement għeni nizviluppa l-kompetenzi tiegħi għad-dinja tax-xogħol

The teaching material provided was relevant

Il-materjal li ġie użat waqt il-kors kien relevanti

The work placement helped me to put knowledge into practice which can be added on to my CV

Il-work placement għeni biex niskeb esperjenza fuq dak li tghallilm, u li nista r要学会 u nuni fi CV tiegħi

The work placement helped to re-gain confidence on the workplace

Il-work placement għeni nerġa nikseb kunfidenza fuq il-post tax-xogħol

The work placement motivated me to look for future jobs

Il-work placement immotivani biex infittex xogħol għall-futur tiegħi

Would you recommend this Youth Guarantee Programme to others?

Tirrakomanda l-Youth Guarantee Programme lil persuni oħra?

- Definitely not
- Probably not
- Probably yes
- Definitely yes

Comments and suggestions for improving the Youth Guarantee Programme

Kummenti u suggerimenti oħra li jistgħu jtejbu l-Youth Guarantee Programme

**Gender / Sess**
- Male / Ragel
- Female / Mara

**Age / Eta’**
- 15-20
- 20-25

**Locality / Lokalita’**
- Attard
- Balzan
- B’Bugia
- B’Kara
- Bidnija
- Bahar ic-Caghaq
- Bahrija
- Birguma
- Bugibba
- Burmarrad
- Comino
- Cospicua
- Dingli
- Fgura
- Floriana
- Ghajn Tuffieħa
- Għargħur
- Ghaxaq
- Gozo
- Gudja
- Gwardamanjia
- Gżira
- Hamrun
- Ibragg
- Iklīn
- Kalkara
- Kirkop
- Lija
- Luqa
- Madliena
- Marsa
- Marsaskala
- Marsaxlokk
- Manikata
- Mdina
- Mellieħa
- Mgarr
- Mosta
- Mqabba
- Msida
- Mtarfa
- Naxxar
- Pembroke
- Pietà’
- Qawra
- Qormi
- Qrendi
- Rabat
- Safi
- San Ġwann
- San Pawl tat-Targa
- Santa Lucija
- Santa Venera
- Senglea
- Sigġiewi
- Sliema
- St. Julian’s
- St. Paul’s Bay
- Swatar
- Siġġiewi
- Ta’ Xbiex
- Tarxien
- Valletta
- Vittoriosa
- Wardija
- Xemxija
- Xghajra
- Żabbar
- Żebbuġ
- Żejtun
- Żurrieq
- Others / Ohrajn:
6.4 SYNOPSIS OF AIMS AND OUTCOMES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

**AUSTRIA**

What does the programme involve?
- 2 key measures:
  1) Training Guarantee
  2) Future for the Youth
- Every young person up to the age of 18 is guaranteed an apprenticeship position after registering with the AMS.
- Young people up to 25 receive an offer in line with the council recommendation (as an apprenticeship position, employment, education or formation or subsidised employment) by the AMS within a period of three months.
- In addition to this measures:
  - focus on outreach activities to reach young people not registered within the AMS and help them to find a (further) education or get registered with the AMS (as e.g. youth coaching and low-threshold offers)
  - strategies have been developed to ease the school-to-work transition and reduce drop out (e.g. ESL strategy)

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG
- A large proportion of young people, particularly those with a migrant background, lack adequate basic skills and there is a strong link between educational performance and socio-economic background.
- At the same time the higher education sector is confronting strategic and financial challenges (Studienchecker, a scheme introduced to offer more guidance and support to pupils in their final two years of pre-university education, to help them in choosing the right direction for their studies; this may also help to reduce drop-out rates)

Source
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3336
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_AT)

**BELGIUM**

What does the programme involve?
- 4 distinct sub-plans (Flanders, Wallonia, Bruxelles-Capital, German-speaking Implementation Plan) established at Regional/Community level

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG
- Youth Guarantee schemes remain incomplete and their implementation patchy
- Effective partnerships between public employment services and education authorities, and more comprehensive strategies to reach out to people not in education, employment or training, are still lacking.
- There is also a need to set up earlier, tailor-made support for the young.
- Also necessary are coordinated reforms to remove structural impediments to accessing the labour market and improving skill levels and their relevance to labour market needs, notably by improving the vocational and educational training systems and preventing young people from leaving education early.
- Better articulation of the various initiatives and better communication and information about the Youth Guarantee are needed.

Source
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3324
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_BE)
BULGARIA

What does the programme involve?
- Improve the efficiency of the Employment Agency by developing a performance monitoring system and better targeting the most vulnerable.
- Extend the coverage and effectiveness of active labour market policies to match the profiles of job-seekers, and reach out to non-registered young people who are neither in employment, education or training.

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG
- Delays in education (including second chance schools and higher education) still exist.
- There is also need for better linking PES with employers and ensure more engagement with the first labour market, for tailoring/creating active labour market policies (ALMP) and for promoting measures to reach out to young unemployed, in particular NEETs and Roma.

Source
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3333
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_BG)

CROATIA

What does the programme involve?
- Prevention of early school leaving
- Activation support to the inactive youth
- Labour market integration measures are envisaged
  - strengthening job creation
  - encouraging employers to offer quality traineeships and apprenticeships
  - encouraging youth entrepreneurship

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG
- The policy measures seem to be going to the right direction, but they require active follow-up and effective monitoring. Comprehensive evaluation measures are lacking so far.
- Additional measures are necessary regarding
  - better matching skills and education to labour market needs
  - promotions of apprenticeships
  - strengthening PES capacities
  - enhancing outreach efforts for non-registered NEETs

Source
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3328
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_HR)

CYPRUS

What does the programme involve?
- The major reform measures foreseen in the YGIP include the restructuring of:
  - The Secondary Technical Education and Post-Secondary Vocational Education
  - The number of vocational and technical specializations offered at secondary and post-secondary level will be reduced and aligned to the requirements of the labour market.
  - The Existing School Priority Zones Activity:
    - Aims at promoting educational actions, in order for the school unit to offer all students the necessary skills for integration into society, information about the labour market and employment, and/or higher education choices

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG
- A fully-fledged outreach strategy for young people not-in employment-education-or-training is lacking.
- The pace of implementation of on-going reforms seems to be too slow to have an impact on the employability of young people even in the medium term.
- The biggest challenges for the delivery of a Youth Guarantee in Cyprus remain:
  - the capacity of the public employment services to provide YG
  - the provision of good quality offers under the Youth Guarantee
  - the creation of a partnership approach for the delivery of the Youth Guarantee

Source
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3334
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_Cyprus)
**CZECH REPUBLIC**

**What does the programme involve?**

- Provision of Youth Guarantee offers
- First steps towards the introduction of a dual system in vocational education and training
- Launching of traineeship programmes
- A programme that aims to improve human resource management and build staff capacity in PES
- Prevention of early school leaving and facilitating the return of early school leavers back to school
- Training and skills development

**Outcome:** Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG

- Lack of an ambitious, comprehensive and long-term approach to implement the YG
- Insufficient effectiveness of the public employment service, foreseen as the main YG service provider
- Lack of labour market related measures within the YG Implementation Plan, which currently focuses on increasing the quality of education system
- Omission of providing a YG offer to the most vulnerable groups such as inactive and unregistered NEETs

**Source**

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3329 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_CZ)

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**ESTONIA**

**What does the programme involve?**

- Activities to reach out to those who are not in employment, education or training and not registered with the unemployment Insurance Fund and not targeted by existing outreach programmes

**Outcome:** Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG

- Major obstacles preventing young people from finding employment:
  - Low level of education
  - Lack of relevant work experience
- A remaining challenge is the identification and activation of nonregistered young who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in order to ensure that they receive a quality job offer in less than four months.

**Source**

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3329 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_CZ)

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**GERMANY**

**What does the programme involve?**

- In form of a package comprising advice and an action plan tailored to the young person’s specific needs.
- Rather than losing young people in the integration process (e.g. with follow-on services), to guide them towards attaining both vocational qualifications and subsequent employment.

**Outcome:** Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG

- Germany has made some progress in raising the educational achievement of disadvantaged people, but the link between educational achievement and socio-economic background remains strong.
- More than half of the young people not in education, employment or training are inactive and Germany has not yet presented a comprehensive strategy for reaching out to and delivering the Youth Guarantee to those who are not registered with an employment service

**Source**

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3329 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_CZ)
**FINLAND**

**What does the programme involve?**
- The youth guarantee is delivered through five main axes:
  1) Education guarantee
  2) Skills Program for Young Adults
  3) Employment and Economic Development services for youth
  4) Rehabilitative services including municipal social and health services
  5) other individual services for young people (youth outreach work and youth workshop activities)

(source: PDF: QUAL IMP the-local-implementation-youth-guarantee-final)

**Outcome:**
- Ensuring a better coordination between private-public-people partnerships (national, regional, and local authorities, trade unions, young people and several ministries), in the context of the on-going administrative reform.
- Ensure stable long-term funding.

**Source**
- [PDF: YG_country_fiche_FI]

**GREECE**

**What does the programme involve?**
- To offer individual action plans tailored to the specific profile of the NEETs

**Outcome:**
- Due to the high number of NEETs registered at the PES, the access to individualised action plans and to the support provided by the PES will be prioritised for the registered NEETs in a first phase

**Source**
- [PDF: YG_country_fiche_EL]

**FRANCE**

**What does the programme involve?**
- Improving the qualification and vocational training of young people
- Improving the employability of young people by strengthening the involvement of enterprises in training and renewed partnerships
- Implementing pathways to employment for young people within a global approach

**Outcome:**
- Coordination between a variety of stakeholders may not be sufficient
- YG only tackles a minor part of the overall youth
- Lack of a comprehensive outreach strategy to ensure that all young (non-registered) NEETs are proposed a quality offer within four months

**Source**
- [PDF: YG_country_fiche_FR]

**HUNGARY**

**What does the programme involve?**
- As an overarching goal, the Strategy aims at ushering every young person to the upper-secondary level of education with the assistance of a suitable inclusive educational system, which is able to identify and serve the personal needs of those at risk of early school-leaving.
- Limited capacity of the Public Employment Service, foreseen as the main Youth Guarantee service provider
- Efficient coordination of Public Employment Service branch offices - serving as only Youth Guarantee entry point - with educational institutions and youth NGOs active at local level to reach out to NEETs the furthest away from the labour market
- Improvement of the quality and preventive mechanism in education and training particularly to the very low skilled, including a large share of Roma people.

**Outcome:**
- Coordination between a variety of stakeholders may not be sufficient
- YG only tackles a minor part of the overall youth
- Lack of a comprehensive outreach strategy to ensure that all young (non-registered) NEETs are proposed a quality offer within four months

**Source**
- [PDF: YG_country_fiche_HU]
### IRELAND

**What does the programme involve?**
- It will build on existing programmes, with additional reforms designed to:
  - engage earlier and faster with young people
  - reserve places on existing programmes for young people who are already long-term unemployed
  - develop variants of these programmes/offers tailored specifically for unemployed young people

**Outcome:**
- To reduce the time span in which the offer to young people is to be made, currently 9 months period for unemployed young people (18-25) in order to avoid scarring effects (up to 4 months)
- To develop a comprehensive strategy to reach out to non-registered NEETs
- The data on involuntary temporary employment as a result of employer uncertainty arising from the financial and economic crisis also shows the importance of providing good-quality offers of employment or education, traineeships or apprenticeships relevant to labour market needs and leading to permanent jobs

**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3339 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_IE)

### ITALY

**What does the programme involve?**
- Conditions for hiring on apprenticeship contracts were simplified to make them more attractive for employers
- Profiling methods were adopted to identify young job-seekers according to the type of intervention required
- A national website was launched to foster outreach
- To improve the efficiency of support measures, services delivered to young people such as training, apprenticeships, assistance for employment search, etc. were standardised in terms of costs, modalities and duration
- An increased use was made of private placement agencies

**Outcome:**
- Lack of sufficient resources in public employment services, foreseen as the main service provider for the Youth Guarantee.
- Unclear structure of incentives for non-registered youth not in education, employment or training to register for the services and the ensuing need for a proactive outreach strategy tailored to the different subgroups
- Need for effective and continuous coordination between national and regional levels in the delivery of Youth Guarantee measures
- Necessity to raise the commitment of the private sector and to step up cooperation with education institutions in delivering quality apprenticeships and traineeships
- Although the level of commitment is high, there are substantial concerns that the sustainability of the Youth Guarantee is compromised by the lack of a long-term implementation perspective

**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3340 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_IT)
What does the programme involve?

- To increase the coverage of young NEETs and facilitate their participation in measures fostering employment and raising qualification
- To address obstacles to the labour market
- To improve communication with young people
- To reduce waiting time for services provided at the State Employment Agency (SEA)
- To launch a new project aimed at activation of less motivated NEETs in cooperation with a large number of partners - municipalities, social workers, youth specialists, youth NGOs and other non-governmental institutions

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG

- Insufficient administrative capacity to provide effective services
- Developing sufficiently ambitious outreach measures to non-registered, inactive young people

Source

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3341 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_LV)

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**LUXEMBOURG**

What does the programme involve?

- Youth Guarantee scheme based on three pathways adapted to the individual needs of the youth: professional, education or activation orientated
- Coordination of the public service providers in order to create synergies between them and to offer an integrated package of services addressing the specific needs of the young people

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG

- The need to ensure that hard-to-reach non-registered young people not in education, employment, or training benefit from this initiative
- To facilitate access to job offers for the youth registered with Public Employment Service
- Actively involving social partners and municipalities
- Providing suitable linguistic support (insufficient language skills are an important obstacle) due to Luxembourg’s requirements for multilingualism

Source

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3345 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_LU)

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**MALTA**

What does the programme involve?

- To promote and enhance high quality literacy practices among children, youths, adults, third-country nationals and persons with learning difficulties
- Current basic skills programmes will be consolidated and extended further in order to make them more effective

Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG

- The lack of resources in the government’s public employment service (PES) constrains its capacity to reach out to young people
- Effective responses will also depend on commensurate efforts to tackle early school leaving and to reform the apprenticeship schemes

Source

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3346 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_MT)
What does the programme involve?

- Focus is placed on general improvement of the quality of education
- Incentives for employers to provide more and better quality internships
- More opportunities for students’ personal development including more attention to avoiding drop-outs

Outcome:

- Increasing the amount of work-based learning

Source

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3347
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_NL)

What does the programme involve?

- To strengthen the outreach to unregistered young people
- Provide young job seekers with job brokering, vocational counselling support and new activation tools such as vouchers (vouchers for training, internship, employment and settlement) and start-up loans from the Labour Fund

Outcome:

- Ensuring the quality of offers under a Youth Guarantee in order to support lasting labour market integration of the young persons, accounting for the urban/rural differences among young people, who are neither in education, nor in employment or training
- The transition rate from temporary to permanent employment is low
- Effectively implementing a pro-active, tailored outreach to the different subgroups of non-registered young people
- Developing quality partnerships between all relevant stakeholders (in particular strengthening cooperation between schools and employers) allowing for a strong and coherent intervention
- Setting up of a monitoring system enabling continuous progress evaluation and underpinning regular policy review

Source

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3348
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_PL)

What does the programme involve?

- Three new measures, covered by the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, were adopted in July 2014:
  1) “Active Youth Employment Programme” (offering socio professional integration of young people with low qualifications and furthest from the labour market, within a work project of limited time duration)
  2) “Investe Jovem Programme” (a financial and technical support granted to young unemployed, between 18 and 30 years old, who present a viable business idea)
  3) “Resume Programme” (supporting young people to return to a higher education course, after leaving the university without graduating)
- Development of an IT Platform
  - for the registration of NEETs
  - for the exchange of information on YG
- Could be a useful tool to replicate in other Member States as a core part of their strategies to reach out to NEETs

Outcome:

- Effective coordination and engagement of different partners
- Lack of a YG one-stop shop, which would facilitate outreach to young people, and their access to the different services
- Weak early intervention and outreach measures to NEETs who are not registered with the public employment service
- Need to better align education and training with labour market needs: skills anticipation is necessary

Source

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3349
(PDF: YG_country_fiche_PT)
**ROMANIA**

**What does the programme involve?**
- Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan includes a wide range of measures supporting:
  - early intervention and activation
  - entailing initiatives keeping young people in schools so as to enable them to graduate, as well as comprehensive “second chance” set of initiatives
  - labour market integration revolve around the three main reform pillars on which action in the field has been recently focusing:
    1) modification of the unemployment insurance act
    2) apprenticeship act
    3) traineeship act
- establishment of 27 pilot Youth Guarantee centres
- development of an integrated database for young NEETs
- the introduction of a professional card

**Outcome:**
- Insufficient administrative capacity of the public employment service, foreseen as the main YG service provider, to offer individualised services to all young unemployed and those NEETs not registered
- Rigid service provision and insufficiently diversified offer of activation measures and of training and education to young people
- Lack of sufficient outreach activities to non-registered young NEETs and in particular to the young Roma
- Lack of a genuine involvement of the private sector in apprenticeship and dual training initiatives, as well as traineeships for university graduates

**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3350 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_RO2)

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**SLOVAKIA**

**What does the programme involve?**
- Ensuring adequate funding
- Strengthening administrative capacity
- Building partnerships at local level for a wider outreach to non-registered young people
- Creating modern youth centres in most districts (78 districts in total in Slovakia)
  - more opportunities for information, counselling and training activities

**Outcome:**
- Too much emphasis on provision of counselling and advisory services to young people while the YG is about guaranteeing a job offer, training, internship or apprenticeship
- High reliance on EU funding might compromise sustainability of the delivery of the YG
- Insufficient capacity of the PES, for early intervention, for adapting services according to jobseeker profiles and for providing a wider range of activation measures
- Lack of active outreach to young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and are not registered with the public employment service
- More focus is needed on early intervention measures to ensure outreach to the most vulnerable young people, including young Roma
- Insufficient administrative capacity of the public employment service, foreseen as the main YG service provider, to offer individualised services to all young unemployed and those NEETs not registered
- Rigid service provision and insufficiently diversified offer of activation measures and of training and education to young people
- Lack of sufficient outreach activities to non-registered young NEETs and in particular to the young Roma
- Lack of a genuine involvement of the private sector in apprenticeship and dual training initiatives, as well as traineeships for university graduates
- Insufficient capacity of the PES, for early intervention, for adapting services according to jobseeker profiles and for providing a wider range of activation measures
- Lack of active outreach to young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and are not registered with the public employment service
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**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3351 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_SK)
**SLOVENIA**

**What does the programme involve?**
- Cut-off age: 29
- The outreach to non-registered youth has improved due to the cooperation with school counsellors, who were referring drop-outs directly to the public employment services.
- The public employment service has adapted its online tools to extend its outreach.
- At least two counselling sessions combined with short group presentations and online communication were offered in order to reach early activation goals and find a proper tailor-made offer.

**Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG**
- Increased regional disparities in youth unemployment and inactivity, which might not be appropriately levelled out as they are interlinked with the other challenges.
- Partnerships between employment services and all other relevant stakeholders are not yet fully in place to align the interventions with labour market needs and to be able to cover the whole range of interventions (from education and training to access to the labour market).
- Diverse capacity of the public employment service, expected to be the main YG service provider, to design and implement support schemes tailored around the needs of young people and in particular of non-registered NEETs or young people with a migrant background.
- Setting up an overarching framework, covering the whole country, to deliver the Youth Guarantee (which would include common standards, monitoring and evaluation and a homogenous information system).
- Ensuring in all regions a clear political ownership and accountability.

**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3352 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_SL)

**SPAIN**

**What does the programme involve?**
- Participation of young people in these programmes is facilitated by online registration.
- A comprehensive analysis of the labour market prospects of young people is currently in preparation.
- Reduce the early school leaving.
- Address skill mismatches.

**Outcome: Challenges/Problems/ difficulties to deliver YG**
- Risk that not all young people under the age of 25 years who are unemployed or who have left formal education are considered as target population.
- Non-availability of comprehensive ex-ante evaluation of the effectiveness and adequacy of the proposed short-term training, hiring subsidies and social security reductions to facilitate the sustainable labour market integration of young people.
- Lack of sufficient resources in the Public Employment Services, foreseen as the main entry point for the YG initial assistance, to provide adequate personalised guidance and individual action planning based on the profiles established initially.
- Unclear outreach mechanisms for non-registered unemployed or inactive youngsters.
- Need for better targeting of the regional disparities and needs, continuous monitoring and effective coordination between the central authorities and the autonomous regions that will be among the main responsible for the implementation of the YG.
- Lack of complementary national funding, which could undermine the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the short- and long-term.

**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3353 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_ES)
**SWEDEN**

**What does the programme involve?**
- New measure called a 90-day guarantee for youth aiming to that no young person should have to be unemployed for more than 90 days without being offered a job, a support that leads to a job or an education, has been announced

**Outcome:**
- Insufficient outreach to non-registered NEETs and need to develop adapted quality offers for young people far from the labour market
- Scope to strengthen avenues for work-based learning in vocational training, in particular apprenticeships
- The transition from school to work remains a challenge
- Lack of partnership strategy for implementation and review
- Insufficient arrangements for the evaluation of the overall scheme

**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3354 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_SE)

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**UNITED KINGDOM**

**What does the programme involve?**
- Youth Contract, a programme of tailored support to young people
  - Sector-based work academies (pre-employment training, work experience placement and a guaranteed interview), led by labour market demand and run in sectors with high volumes of local vacancies and apprenticeships
  - Job search support (job search interventions, face-to-face interviews and referrals to the National Careers Service)
  - Work Experience placements
  - Mandatory Work Activity
- 2 new measures were recently launched (aiming at strengthening the Youth Contract offer)
  - The first targeted at young people with low skills
  - The second pilot measure looks at reducing the number of non-registered NEETs through partnerships with local authorities and voluntary and community sector organisations

**Outcome:**
- Providing more and higher quality labour market relevant apprenticeships, traineeships and education to equip all young people for the labour market
- Improve outreach to inactive NEETs to ensure a school to work transition to permanent employment
- Improve engagement of young people and employers with national policies such as the Youth Contract

**Source**
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1161&langId=en&intPageId=3354 (PDF: YG_country_fiche_SE)
Notes
Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007-2013
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