

D 4.1 – Barriers to and triggers of policy innovation and knowledge transfer – Synthesis Report

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STYLE-WP4:
Policy Transfer and Comparative Frameworks

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- i) to 'advance the knowledge base that underpins the formulation and implementation of relevant policies in Europe with the aim of enhancing the employment of young people and their transition to economic and social independence', and
- ii) to engage with 'relevant communities, stakeholders and practitioners in the research with a view to supporting employment policies in Europe.' Contributions to a dialogue about these results can be made through the project website www.style-research.eu, or by following us on Twitter @STYLEEU.

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Executive Summary

This Synthesis Report summarizes the main findings of the national reports on Task 1 of WP4. The Introduction presents the main objectives of this deliverable, the data sources used and the methodology followed by the partners. It also sets out the main concepts and explanatory frameworks that provide an important foundation for the analysis undertaken in each of the nine countries studied in this WP. The main part of the Synthesis Report includes, in a summary form, the major findings in each country (executive summaries), while the conclusion highlights comparatively the positive and negative learning and transfer practices with the aim to provide insights that facilitate innovative policies.

The main objective of Task 1 of WP4 is to critically assess the possibilities of, and barriers to, policy learning and transfer at various levels of interaction of major stakeholders (local/regional, national and supranational). Special emphasis is given to the inter-linkages between national institutional contexts and international actors.

The analysis draws upon information obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews carried out in each of the countries with key stakeholders, academics and researchers in the period between December 2014 and April 2015.¹ The available literature on each country has also been scrutinized with the aim to unravel the major planks of academic and public debate on facilitators or constraints of policy innovation.

The explanatory framework used for underscoring the way change is introduced, and what the major aims are, draws upon one (or a combination) of the typologies developed by Hall (1993), Streeck and Thelen (2005), and Dolowitz and Marsh (2000), this latter as to policy transfer. Regarding youth transitions, a combination of Walther and Pohl's (2005) scheme with Gangl's (2001) typology has been found useful for mapping similarities and differences among the countries studied.

Nine countries are studied, having joined the European Union at different stages of enlargement and including Turkey as an accession country. They represent different social protection configurations and STW transition regimes. Clustering of the national cases under scrutiny has been detected in terms of the severity of the 'youth problem' both as indicated by the youth total and long-term unemployment rates, the NEETs rate and the at-risk-of poverty and/or social exclusion rate. In addition, a cross cutting criterion is also to what extent some countries can be considered as innovators, in the sense that policy-making machineries facilitate experimentation with innovative approaches. Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK and, to some extent, France stand out as rather 'proactive', though to varying extents and through different mechanisms, while Belgium, Greece, Spain, Slovakia and Turkey show a higher inclination to path dependency or inertia.

The above notwithstanding, in France and the UK, innovative policies do not seem to yield significant outcomes in dealing with the youth problem on account of the efficiency dimension (e.g. to drastically reduce youth unemployment in France), but most notably on account of the equity dimension, that is to significantly reduce the NEETs rate and the risk of poverty and social exclusion among the young, as well as gender disparities in this respect.

¹ Detailed information on the interviews held in each country is provided in the country reports that are available electronically at <http://www.style-research.eu/publications/working-papers/>.

Drawing upon the classificatory approaches and concepts used for this comparative study, several conclusions have been reached as to the research questions posed, namely, (i) the role played by overall governance structures in the dynamics of policy change and innovation, and (ii) the major institutional aspects and interactions facilitating or hindering policy innovation.

Most of the countries studied exhibit a multi-level governance structure: regional/local administrations have competences over certain elements of policy relevant to youth transitions, while central government institutions play a significant role in strategic policy decisions and in the overall regulatory framework. Differences in policy experimentation and innovation among the countries, be it among those countries found more prone to policy experimentation and innovation (Denmark, UK and the Netherlands) or among those where more intense path dependency or inertia can be detected (the rest) cannot be explained by the governance structures' degree of decentralisation to sub-national policy-makers.

Within the first group of countries, Denmark exemplifies systematic interaction and feedback among all levels of governance from the bottom upwards and the reverse, which is conducive to negotiated and evidence-informed innovation. In the Dutch case, multi-level plans to tackle youth unemployment and facilitate transitions are of significant importance to enhance innovation and learning. In the more centralised UK, market mechanisms, competition and choice are seen as key in driving policy innovation but, at the same time, the marketised logic of competition can act as an obstacle to sharing of best practice among multiple public and private providers.

In the second group of countries, piloting, programme evaluation and impact assessment is performed less systematically. It is also difficult to ascertain whether the acquired evidence feeds into policy design (e.g. Belgium). In France, state dirigisme with policy centralisation implies that most innovations focus on an extensive array of market and non-market youth contracts. In all these countries, barriers for policy-learning and innovation stem from fragmentation and overlapping of policy competences in the fields of education, training and employment for youth. Policy innovation and knowledge diffusion is limited due to highly centralized administration structures (Greece, Turkey) or excessive bureaucratization (Greece). Coerced transfer has been the case in Greece, while political interests overrule policy decisions to different extents in Turkey, Slovakia, Greece and Spain. Nonetheless, Slovakia and a number of regions in Spain stand out as examples of innovative initiatives. Further, in Spain, Greece and Slovakia, a path-shift is under way in VET structures with an attempt to strengthen the dual system.

As to inter-linkages between national institutional contexts and international actors, soft forms of learning across countries and through supranational channels of knowledge transfer/adaptation are of relevance in all national cases. Yet, the influence is more decisive in initiating policy change in the second group of countries, especially as to EU policy priorities and policy patterns of some North-west European countries (in some stances adopted by the EU as best practices).

Finally, a general trend at the macro-level is pointed out in most of the country reports. Namely, structural factors are tending to make STW transitions lengthier and more uncertain while, in parallel, the progressive polarisation of the labour market resulting in fewer intermediate jobs significantly diminishes opportunities for progression beyond entry level among young people.

Key words:

Policy learning; transfer; innovation; path dependence; dual vocational education; school-to-work transition; youth guarantee

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Abbreviations

ALMPs	Active labour market policies
EPL	Employment Protection Legislation
IGOs	International Governmental Organisations
ILO	International Labour organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LFP	Labour Force Participation
NEETs	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	Public Employment Service
STW	School-to-work transition
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VQA	Vocational Qualifications Authority
WHO	World Health Organisation

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1. Introduction

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This Synthesis Report summarizes the main findings of the national reports on Task 1 of WP4. The Introduction presents the main objectives of this deliverable, the data sources used and the methodology followed by the partners. It also sets out the main concepts and explanatory frameworks that provide an important foundation for the analysis undertaken in each of the nine countries studied in this WP. The main part of the Synthesis Report includes, in a summary form, the major findings in each country (executive summaries), while the conclusion highlights, on a comparative basis, the various kinds of learning and transfer processes documented in the country reports, with the aim of providing insights that facilitate positive forms of innovation in policy.

1.1 The countries studied and the research methodology

In Task 1 we examine the institutional settings and processes of information and evidence distribution (within and between countries) that enable or constrain policy learning and innovation with regard to STW transitions and youth labour markets. The aim is to critically assess the possibilities of, and barriers to, policy learning and transfer at various levels of interaction of major stakeholders (local/regional, national and supranational). Special emphasis is given to the inter-linkages between national institutional contexts and international actors (the EU policy recommendations/guidelines and aims linked to the EU funding instruments and programmes, policy advice and diffusion from international organizations like the OECD and the ILO, as well as policy conditionalities of IMF/EC loans).²

WP4 embraces nine countries that joined the European Union at different stages of enlargement (including Turkey as an accession country) and represent different social protection patterns³ and STW transition regimes⁴. Figure 1 depicts the scale of the youth problem in Europe, assessed in terms of the total and long-term youth unemployment rates (15-24 years age-bracket). Among the countries included in this WP (marked in red in the following Figures), Greece and Spain exhibit youth unemployment rates over 50 per cent and also experience comparatively high youth long-term unemployment rates. Slovakia (a country of the eastern enlargement) shares some similarities with Greece and Spain as it scores highly on both these indicators. Meanwhile, Denmark and the Netherlands (together with Germany and Austria, which however are not included in this WP) exhibit the lowest youth unemployment (and long-term unemployment) rates. Belgium and France exhibit higher rates than the latter countries as they have been affected by rising total and long-term youth

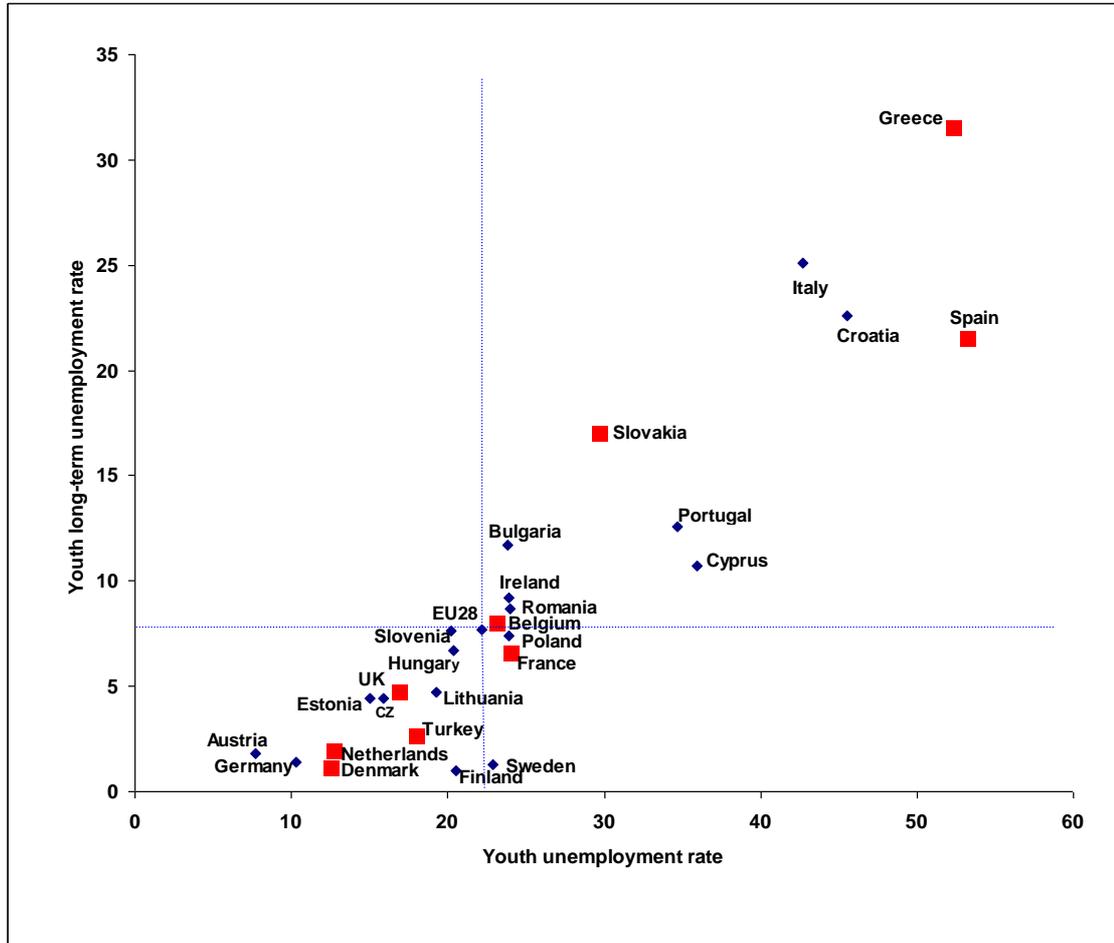
² And World Bank funded programmes, particularly in the case of Turkey.

³ Along the lines of Esping-Ansersen's typology (1990). For a more recent overview of welfare state patterns in North-west, Central-eastern and Southern Europe see the contributions to the collective volume edited by Greve (2013).

⁴ See Walther & Pohl (2005).

unemployment, but not as acutely as is the case in South Europe. The UK performs better than the above two continental countries but less so than the best performers (Germany, Austria, Denmark and Netherlands).⁵ In Turkey the youth problem appears to be less severe than in most Continental, East and South European countries.⁶

Figure 1 How do countries compare on the severity of the 'youth problem' (as indicated by the youth total and long-term unemployment rates – 15 to 24 years), 2014



Source: Figure drawn by the authors on the basis of Eurostat, LFS, 2014 data

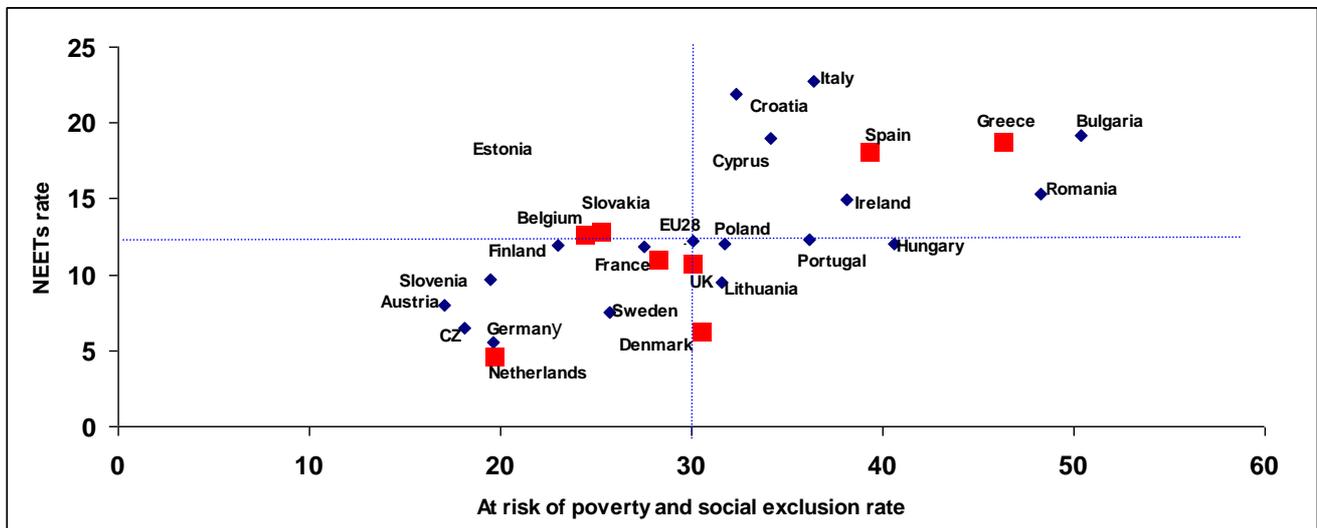
⁵ See also European Commission 2014 (p. 27), where Denmark, UK, Germany and Austria are among the countries with comparatively high rates of transitions from short-term unemployment to employment and from temporary to permanent employment (among all working age groups). The Netherlands is a borderline case with low transition rates from temporary to permanent employment, but comparatively easy returns from short-term unemployment to permanent employment. Greece and Spain are among the worst performers in these two respects. Slovakia also exhibits low rates of return from short-term unemployment to employment.

⁶ However, this comparative remark needs to be expressed with caution. Turkey shares some similarities with South European societies (e.g. in terms of welfare patterns; see Grütjen 2008), but differences in terms of employment structure are significant. In 2014 roughly about a fifth of the labour force were employed in agriculture in Turkey – the corresponding rates for Italy, Spain and Portugal ranged between 4% and 5%; in Greece it stood at 13%. Moreover, unregistered employment is widespread in Turkey (estimated at about 33% of the labour force (see http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_unemployment-remains-in-double-digits-in-latest-stats_386968.html, accessed 20/8/2015)).

Note: In Figures 1, 2 & 3, the partner countries in this WP are marked in red. The blue line indicates the EU28 average.

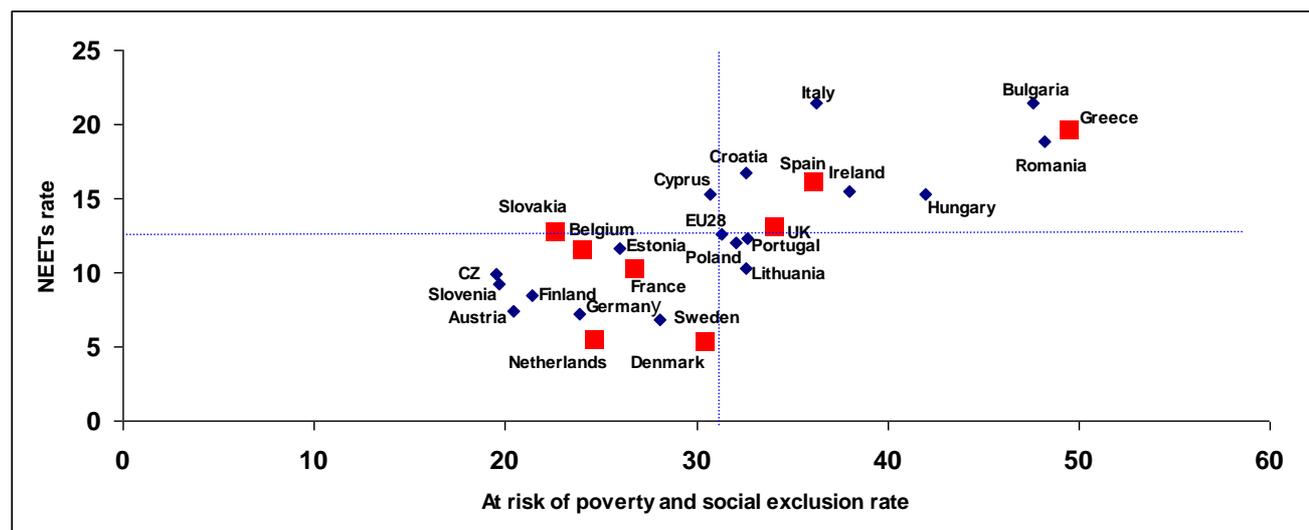
Regarding NEETs and the at-risk-of-poverty and/or social exclusion rates (particularly among young females), the UK performs much worse than the continental and Scandinavian countries (see Figures 2 & 3). Denmark, France and Belgium exhibit no substantial disparities between young males and females. Greece and Spain are among the group of countries where the ‘youth problem’ in terms of disengagement from education, training and employment is most acute with gender disparities being higher in Greece. Among EU countries, Greece appears to be an outlier as it exhibits one of the highest NEETs rate and highest risk of poverty and/or social exclusion among the young (Figure 3).

Figure 2 How do countries compare on the severity of the ‘youth problem’ (as indicated by the NEETs rate and the at-risk-of-poverty and/or social exclusion rate – males 15 to 24 years), 2014



Source: Figure drawn by the authors on the basis of the YOUTH data of Eurostat. The at-risk-of-poverty and/or social exclusion rates refer to 2013; there are no data for Turkey on youth at risk of poverty and social exclusion – The blue line indicates the EU28 average

Figure 3 How do countries compare on the severity of the ‘youth problem’ (as indicated by the NEETs rate and the at-risk-of-poverty and/or social exclusion rate – females 15 to 24 years), 2014



Source (as in Figure 2)

Some of the nine countries studied have often been identified by the European Commission and other international bodies as providing innovative practices in youth labour market policies (see, for instance OECD 2015, the section on pioneering national efforts; and European Commission 2011). Thus we can compare countries according to whether they are considered “innovators” in the search for new systems of youth labour market integration and welfare delivery - namely, whether their policy-making machineries facilitate experimentation with new, proactive youth employment measures, and whether such “innovations” are effective in facilitating youth labour market integration. Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, and to some extent France, stand out as rather “proactive” (though to a varying extent and through different institutional settings and policy-making dynamics, discussed in detail in the respective country reports) in comparison with the rest of the countries studied in this WP.

By contrasting the policy innovation dimension of comparison with the above indicators on the severity of the youth problem (Figures 1 to 3) we can state that in France and the UK a proactive stance in the field of youth policy has not been extensively translated into positive outcomes in dealing with the youth problem either in terms of efficiency (to drastically reduce youth unemployment in France), or in terms of equity (to significantly reduce the NEETs rate and the risk of poverty and social exclusion among the young, as well as the gender disparities in this respect, in France and the UK) - see also the Synthesis Report for WP3.3 available at <http://www.style-research.eu/publications/working-papers/>.

The country reports consist mainly of two parts. The first part develops a macro-level perspective on barriers to and triggers of policy change and innovation. It embraces a critical overview of the governance structures of youth labour market policies (and STW transitions) and the major actors involved, with an emphasis on the factors that contribute to or constrain policy learning and innovation. It traces the dynamics of policy change, assesses the relevance of policy learning in the “political/policy” agenda in each country, and examines the most significant channels of policy influence, transfer and diffusion within and across various levels of governance (including the supranational level). The outputs from policy learning and policy change are examined with regard to

whether they consist of incremental adjustments to the status quo, changes in the policy instruments (e.g. attachment of new arrangements on top of the old ones, which involves a process of amendments, revisions, or layering); changes that “redeploy” old institutions to new purposes (“policy drift” or conversion), or radical changes in the actual goals of policies.

The analysis draws upon data and information obtained through in-depth interviews carried out in each of the nine partner countries with key stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of youth related policies (high ranking officials in Ministries and relevant public services, in Trade Unions & Employers’ Associations, in vocational education and apprenticeship services, in Youth Organisations and other major relevant bodies), as well as with academics and researchers with a good grasp of policy issues and challenges regarding youth labour markets, policy learning and transfer within and across countries, policy negotiation, planning and implementation. Depending on the governance structure in each country, interviewees were selected from different levels of policy competence regarding youth-related policies (national, regional, local). In countries with highly centralised policy-making processes the majority of interviewees were selected among high ranking officials and other stakeholders at the national level, whereas in countries with devolved power in policy-making, it was mostly stakeholders at the regional/local level that were interviewed. A common template laid out the issues to be covered, but each national team had discretion to adjust the themes and issues according to their degree of relevance to each specific national case. In the light of our thematic focus, teams also scrutinized the available literature for each country, with the aim of understanding the major planks of academic and public debate on facilitators of or constraints on policy innovation in the countries examined.

1.2 Definitional issues and explanatory frameworks

Given the emphasis on “innovative” policies, as a starting point we define “effective” innovation as policy changes in objectives, programmes and delivery processes that are conducive to positive results with regard to the labour market and social inclusion of youth (and particularly of the most disadvantaged/disaffected young people). Or, put it in a slightly different way: effective innovations (in terms of youth labour markets) consist of the ability of STW transitions and labour market systems to trigger incentives and outcomes of the largest (possible) youth employment rate (efficiency dimension) and low poverty and social exclusion risks and gender disparities (equity dimension). Our emphasis is on social innovation, namely the development of “new ideas, services and models to better address social issues” (see the Commission’s definition of social innovation at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1022>).⁷

This can be further dissected into a set of questions: What governance modes, institutions, policies and regulations play a significant role in achieving “effective innovations”? How can effective links between vocational learning and qualifications, and the world of work be achieved? How can VET and active labour market policies be vehicles of social inclusion but also –and most importantly– a pathway for advancing in the labour market, and for avoiding the young being trapped in low end jobs

⁷ There is a vast literature on labour market institutions, technological/organisational regimes, patterns of innovation and industrial competition (among others see Kleinknecht et al. 2014, and Verger and Kleinknecht 2014). This draws mainly upon economic theory (e.g. the Schumpeterian view on innovation and entrepreneurship) and examines the issue of how far labour market deregulation and increasing flexibility promotes or hampers innovation, productivity and GDP growth. However, this literature is outside the scope of our analysis, as our emphasis is on how far innovative policies can impact on the social and labour market integration of (young) people.

or caught in “revolving doors” between unemployment and precarious employment? Clarifying these issues is the main focus of Task 1. Moreover, in distinguishing between “innovator” countries and countries exhibiting a more or less strong path dependency (or inertia), we aim to trace successes and failures of policy innovation and underlying institutional factors, collective understandings and policy dynamics. And, in combination with the findings in Task 2, we expect, at a later stage, to draw “best practices” and illuminate possible policy learning and transfer channels among the countries studied.

Regarding the dynamics of policy learning and change, the empirical studies in the nine countries draw upon a combination of explanatory frameworks and classificatory schemes. Crucial in this respect is Hall’s definition (1993) of social learning, as it provides our starting point. Policy learning is defined “as a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information” (p. 278).

However, depending on the institutional settings and policy dynamics in each country, the explanatory framework used for highlighting the way change is introduced, and what the major aims are, draws upon one (or a combination) of the following typologies:

(a) Hall’s distinction (1993) between radical changes in the basic instruments of policy and in policy goals (second and third order changes respectively) on the one hand, and piecemeal changes in the setting of these instruments (first order changes) on the other.⁸

(b) Streeck and Thelen’s new concepts (2005; see also Thelen 2004) for understanding institutional change, namely “layering” and “conversion”, with a greater attention paid to the “grafting of new elements onto an otherwise stable institutional framework” (Thelen 2004: 35). These additions/amendments (or in other words, incremental changes) taking place over long periods can, however, “significantly alter the overall trajectory of an institution’s development” (ibid.). Streeck and Thelen’s approach (as well as the work by Hacker, particularly his emphasis on “policy drift”⁹) attempt to show that significant path-departing reforms can occur beyond “critical junctures” and/or strong “outside pressures”. In this sense they provide an insight on how Hall’s first and second order changes may, in the long-term, extensively alter the core objectives and role of an institution resulting in radical change.

These approaches identify major mechanisms of change and develop partly overlapping, partly complementary typologies. Additionally we refer to a range of pathways in which policy change takes place: (a) Through a more or less intentional policy learning and transfer process that according to Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) could consist in “copying”, “emulation” and/or “inspiration” drawn from abroad; (b) in a context where outside triggers may open up “windows of opportunity” for domestic policy entrepreneurs to push forward reform agendas (see Kingdon 1984; Roberts & King 1996); and, (c) as a more or less coerced policy change and transfer (e.g. in the context of financial conditionality

⁸ In a similar vein, the conventional Europeanisation literature focusing on policy change induced by EU policy options (e.g. Radaelli 2003) distinguishes between inertia, absorption/accommodation, in a piecemeal way, of new elements into domestic policies without significant change in the overall institutional settings, and transformation involving wholesale changes in policy structures and processes.

⁹ Namely, the slow withering away of an institution (or policy measure) due to changing socio-economic conditions that render it inadequate, and in the absence of legislative reforms for adapting it to the changing socio-economic environment (Hacker 2004).

of EU funding and bailout deals). The combination of mechanisms and pathways of policy change and innovation provide our analytical framework.

Finally, regarding youth transitions, a combination of Walther & Pohl's (2005) scheme with Gangl's typology (2001) is useful for mapping similarities and differences among the countries studied. According to this combined typology, Denmark is classified under the universalistic regime, the UK exemplifies the liberal regime, the Netherlands, Belgium and France constitute an employment-centred regime, with the preponderance of occupational labour markets (OLM) - that is, a more standardised vocational education- in the Netherlands, and of internal labour markets (ILM) in Belgium and France (with no clear signals of vocational qualifications),¹⁰ while South European countries (including Turkey, and from the post-socialist countries, partly, Slovakia too) are grouped under the sub-protective regime (for a detailed definition of these STW transition regimes see Walther & Pohl as well as Gangl, *ibid*). Whether the partner countries fit into these transition regimes and how relevant these are for examining policy change and innovation constitute issues that, to one extent or another, are addressed by the country reports.

The executive summaries of the country reports are presented in the following sections. Section 2 includes Belgium, France, Greece, Spain, Slovakia and Turkey, and Section 3 embraces the UK, Netherlands and Denmark. The conclusion provides a comparative analysis of the major findings. For any details on the issues raised in the executive summaries and in the conclusion, as well as for any bibliographical and other documentation of the arguments briefly summarised in the sections below, the reader is advised to consult the full country reports available at <http://www.style-research.eu/publications/working-papers/>

¹⁰ The main representative of the OLM model is Germany (which is not included in this WP) compared to which, the three countries tend to be somewhat closer to the ILM model.

2. The policy challenge in the countries with comparatively high youth unemployment

2.1 Country report, Belgium – Executive summary

Elisa Martellucci and Gabriele Marconi

CEPS

Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report Belgium](#)

This report aims at analysing and understanding the learning and innovation processes related to youth unemployment policy in Belgium, drawing on the EU and national policy frameworks. In terms of methodology, we conducted three semi-structured interviews, with representatives from the main Belgian Public employment agencies: VDAB (Flanders), ACTIRIS (Brussels) and FOREM (Wallonia). The interviews were based on a questionnaire developed in English by DUTH in the context of this research project, which we translated to French for the representatives of ACTIRIS and FOREM. The interviews have been carried out in person (two cases) and by telephone (one case), and were about one hour long. We complemented this information with desk research, gathering and compiling relevant information from the existing literature. Our main conclusions are as follows.

Belgium belongs to a group of countries in which the problem of youth unemployment is particularly serious, as the ratio between the youth unemployment rate and the prime-age unemployment rate is close to 3, similarly to Greece, Spain and France. Belgium is divided into three regions with different economic characteristics: Brussels (the region of the capital), Wallonia and Flanders. Although the youth unemployment rate is much lower in Flanders than in the other two regions (13.5% against 29.6% in Wallonia and 35.0% in Brussels), the ratio between the youth and prime-age unemployment rate is even higher in Flanders than in the rest of the country, suggesting that the structural problems affecting the transition from education to work are similar in every region. These structural problems, which affect the low-skilled youth the most, are likely to be due to the labour market institutions (minimum wages and employment protection) and to some characteristics of the schooling system (high level of grade repetition, early tracking, and infrequent combination of schooling and work).

In the view of the interviewees, a number of measures have recently been introduced with special attention to low-skilled youth, however further effort should be put to improve the image of the VET (so far mostly seen as a negative option) and to strengthen the coherence between education, lifelong learning, vocational training and employment policies. Along similar lines, social partners are

also in favour of the dual education system (that combines coursework with apprenticeship in a firm), as adequate measure to harmonise VET system and tackle youth unemployment.¹¹

Given the federal institutional setting, tackling the problem of youth unemployment requires joint action between the federal government, the regions and the linguistic communities. This is made complicated by decentralization of competencies on employment and Active Labour Market policies (at regional level) and Education policies (at Community level). The Fragmentation of competencies leads to an inconsistent cooperation across regions and across other actors involved in the field of youth unemployment. This makes policy innovation slower.

Besides this structural complexity, the interviewees identified additional obstacles to policy innovation:

- The complexity of the educational system, characterised by a wide multiplicity of providers. This makes it difficult to take joint action to address the needs of the labour market.
- Small and medium enterprises have little knowledge of Belgian Labour Market Policies.
- The negative image of Vocational Education and Training (VET) options among employers.

In recent years, the cooperation between the public employment and vocational training services of the different regions has been strengthened. This cooperation has been facilitated by several factors, and it has offered interesting opportunities of peer-to-peer policy learning and innovation. In turn, this has helped to start tackling the afore-mentioned obstacles.

First of all, this cooperation has been facilitated by the existence of a number of common policy initiatives. For example, the federal government has created incentives for the employers to hire young, lower educated people through several policy programmes. In addition, the federal government has encouraged the so-called “integration of traineeships”, whereby a young person gains experience in the labour market while receiving an allowance paid for by the employer and the regional government. Finally, the federal government through a two-year long programme worth 12 million Euros supports specific initiatives tackling youth unemployment. These projects, by requiring joint action at the federal level, foster cooperation between institutions and a common discussion about youth unemployment.

Cooperation and learning across regions and institutions is also facilitated by the existence of a number of common features of policy action in all regions, in particular:

- Better matching between skills and labour market needs;
- Early intervention in education to avoid school drop-outs;
- Connecting young jobseekers with the environment of enterprises;
- Developing apprenticeship education and training;
- Strengthening of vocational training, promoting technical and scientific skills.

As a result, the policies implemented at the regional level are not too different as they are mostly concerned with: giving advice to jobseekers; providing them with opportunities for internships or

¹¹ <http://www.cnt-nar.be/RAPPORT/rapport-088-F.pdf>

training; matching labour demand and supply; and developing a “dual” system of secondary education, with a fruitful combination of work and education. In this regard, well ahead than the Flemish and Walloon, the German speaking community has already put in place a dual vocational education system. In the latter community, together with intensive career advice for young people, this educational system is a decisive factor in the regional employment rate for 15-24 year-olds, which is much higher than in the rest of the country.

Furthermore, this cooperation across regions and institutions received impulse from the success of a number of common initiatives. A major improvement in this direction is the joint efforts to strengthen interregional labour market mobility. These efforts include a stronger cooperation between the regional PESs, for example through: the sharing of job offers between different PES; the creation of mixed (Flemish and Wallonian) counsellor teams assisting jobseekers; common events for matching employers and job-seekers ("job dating" and "employment fairs"); and a project for a common file of job-seekers. These initiatives are likely to lay the foundations for further opportunities of policy transfer and innovation.

Finally, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee is currently giving impulse to peer-to-peer policy learning across regions and institutions, even if – as reported by the interviewees – there are differences in the implementation of the common directives, given that there persist important differences in the socio-economic situation of each region.

2.2 Country Report, France – Executive summary

Mark Smith

Grenoble École de Management

Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report France](#)

The French policy making environment can be characterised by a strong central role for the state although this state 'dirigisme' has, to some extent, evolved over recent decades towards a more decentralized policy-making system as a consequence of deregulation, privatization and decentralization. In this environment, the state, nevertheless, remains a strong actor on the youth labour market and youth unemployment has been considered a key political challenge issue for more than 30 years ago. Regardless of the complexion of political leadership, youth employment is an important policy issue and the structurally high level of youth unemployment keeps the issue central in the political debate. Although the majority of young people enter the job market relatively easily and smoothly, a minority face difficult challenges to enter the market.

Segmentation of the job market in France is a particular challenge for young people. France is regarded as a higher security labour market when compared to other OECD countries but for young people a high level of polarization is the reality: a « two speed system » of highly protective CDI (contrat à durée indéterminée) on the one hand (about 85% of total job contracts in France) and more precarious contracts (CDD - Contract Duration Déterminée, interim) on the other hand. Even during the economic downturn, the fixed term contract rate remained at 16% in 2013 in France, compared to the average of 14% within the other 28 EU countries. This polarization is particularly striking for youth. A complex array of "stages", internships and training contracts means that many young people experience a prolonged transition to secure employment. People with low qualifications or none are the most affected by unemployment and job precariousness.

A range of initiatives have been adopted to ease the transition into employment, notably to promote job creation for example the Contrat Nouvelle Embauche (CNE) was implemented in 2005. Although not only directly at young people, this approach was inspired by flexibility principles and introduced a trial period for new employees of up to two years with conversion to a CDI if the trial period was successfully passed. A similar version of this contract aimed at workers aged less than 26 years old (contrat première embauche) was introduced but quickly withdrawn after widespread protests.

In France, the education system can be classified as a traditional state-centered one, being mostly subsidized by public money. It remains a centrally administrated system, since the state plays a major role in programs definition, recruiting, evaluation, control and financing. Inspired by enlightened and democratic ideals, French education system is characterised by being mass directed and quite general in its coverage areas with a supply-push logic. This approach offers a mass and general – rather than vocational – education which is wide-ranging and undifferentiated until students finish high school. Thus, the baccalaureate has become the dominant goal for young people and indeed the education system. However, the model tends to reinforce social differentiation linked to background and families' social status. As a consequence, a clear divide between a major group who enters the labour market relatively easily and a marginal fringe facing stronger difficulties in accessing market

characterizes the educational system. In the light of these system characteristics and main outcomes, we can identify the following list of major obstacles and enablers to innovation.

The philosophy of education in France is infused by the academic (theory oriented) and universalist (mass education) model. The French national educational culture tends to be more focused on the building of critical citizens rather than employable workers, thus widening the gap between education and labour cultures. Successfully entering the labour market thus depends to a great extent on following a linear educational trajectory to obtain an initial selective diploma. Alongside this 'credentialization', a further factor that creates barriers for the reception of policy is that 'academic trajectories' tend to be standardised. 'Years of delay' in leaving the school are not well regarded and individuals who graduate with years of delay upon leaving the school are usually penalised.

On the other hand, the VET system is increasingly decentralized and can now be considered more akin to a vocationally governed system. In contrast with the general and higher education, vocational education is governed by a both more decentralized / regionalized and more company-regulated system. Two types of institutions offer secondary vocational studies. In this particular configuration, the poor image of VET means that the vocational education tends to be considered as a path for students who failed to reach general education goals.

In France, the context for policy learning with respect to youth unemployment needs to be considered against the background of the employment-centred transition regime 'characterized by a strong public sector and broad access options' (Walther, 2006: 127). The prominence of the youth employment challenge has led to a plethora of initiatives. Thus, analysing policies in this field is a major endeavour through a variety of the many schemes that have been put into place by successive governments. Policies aimed at the youth in France have changed over time both in nature and scope of their application and since the mid-seventies around 80 different schemes have been implemented.

In our analysis, we identify a number of tensions linked to policy innovation and learning in the school to work transition system. Firstly, a fragmentation of the system, without a clear pilot and an overarching coordinating structure to act as a barrier. Stakeholders are bounded by their own logic and this creates a certain resistance to change among actors. The accumulation of policies and the long-standing efforts to address these issues has further created a lower receptivity to innovation from these actors. Furthermore, these barriers are reinforced by the tendency for French employers to be less involved in the STW transition, since they don't consider it as part of their 'social responsibility'. As such, the education system is at a distance from the private employment sector. However, there has been a slow cultural shift reducing the gap between the education and private sector worlds and a slow shift of social partners toward 'negotiation' culture. For instance, the social partners initiated the 'contrat de professionnalisation' for those with low-level skills. Here a key role was played by sectorial and inter-professional funding organisations and accredited joint registered collection agencies set up and managed by the social partners – Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés and the OPC (Joint Commission for Collective Training). Although there are many agencies and expert research centres working on youth on France there is limited financial leeway for public actors since funds injected into the educational system have been in decline – falling from 7.6% of the GDP in 1995 to 5.9% in 2011 (in parallel with the drop in PISA results).

Our interview results suggest that one key driver for innovation in the policy arena has been the situation on the youth labour market during the crisis. In fact, the crisis had a significant impact in worsening an existing problem where youth unemployment was already part of the political agenda prior to 2007. Thus, the policy-making environment was characterised by many initiatives to ease the transition from school to work. As a result, although youth unemployment is high, the problem of

young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is somewhat less severe than elsewhere in the EU.

Two symbolic measures have been introduced to address the crisis on the youth labour market. First, 150,000 jobs for youth in the non-market sector have been created (“emplois d’avenir”) and secondly an initiative aiming to push companies to hire youngsters while retaining senior employees (“contrat de generation”). The latter aims to ease knowledge and competences transfer between generations. The data collected from our interviewees suggests that stakeholders are at best sceptical about the impact of these initiatives since they do not address the roots of the problem of youth unemployment and are likely to be expensive and inefficient.

A recent major development in France has been the increased role for measures centred on training and skills acquisition in the firm. The ‘Alternance-based training’ – with the Apprenticeships and Professionalisation Contract – has been the subject of widespread implementation and interest from policy-makers and national government. Along the same lines, schemes such as the ‘Training Accompaniment Contract’ (Contrat d’Accompagnement Formation – CAF) and the Integration Contract in Social Life (Contrat d’Insertion dans la Vie Sociale – CIVIS) have also grown in popularity. The latter were developed in order to aid disadvantaged young people and enable them to benefit from guidance and mentoring and facilitate their access to employment.

The dirigist approach of the state in France can create an ‘institutional stasis’ since the state being perceived as provider and supporter of social services, a bottom-up approach, characterised by the abstention of the state from direct intervention is less evident. However there are some examples of the territorial level acquiring a more important role insofar as local levels have a more direct understanding of the situation within a specific area. In the so-called ZUS (Zone Urbaine Sensible) or within the “territoires à forte concentration de difficultés sociales”, specific measures are adopted. For example le CUCS (Contrat Urbain de Cohésion Sociale) is a measure that was originally implemented from the initiative of the national or city levels but that is being increasingly managed at the ‘intercommunalités’ level.

We identify a number of triggers for policy innovation and change. For example, our interviewees stressed the response to structural problems in youth unemployment exacerbated by the crisis. For example, the challenges created by the elitist nature of the “grand ecole” system have led to initiatives to open up access to groups of society who are underrepresented. This initiative reflects a wider consideration on the chances for young people to enter the elite education system. The role and the extent of economic crisis is also an enabler for policy transfer as the government adopts policy as a response to a worrisome situation related to helping young people. A theme emerging from the interviews was the role of specific social tensions as a further facilitator to policy innovation. An example is the 2005 French suburbs crisis, which created tensions within some French urban areas. This was an important trigger for policy action directly targeting the specificity of the French urban situation including measures targeting young people from underprivileged areas through education, transport and employment facilities.

The French policy environment is also shaped by European-level influences. The introduction of the ‘Youth Guarantee’ has accelerated measures aimed at tackling youth unemployment, ensuring that all young people under 25 would get a good-quality offer. Indeed, France was the first member state to benefit from its part of the €6 billion from the EU to help fight back youth unemployment in the worse hit regions. In the 2013 country-specific recommendations (CSRs) for economic and structural reform policies for France, the Commission encouraged the state to implement Youth Guarantees. A large-

scale programme for the improvement, development and modernisation of apprenticeship implementing policies for quality assurance of traineeships/internships has also been adopted.

A further example of European-based innovation implemented in France is the “Ecole de La Deuxieme Chance” (E2C). This innovation targets young people with no qualifications and weak chances of insertion on the labour market. The “Second Chance School” pilot project was launched in 1997 by the European Commission and since then found fertile ground in France, particularly in recent years. The E2C is funded by the regional councils and from 2009, the State took on part of the finances of such schools as part of the Plan Espoir Banlieues, launched in 2008, and that promoted the dissemination of the initiative. The E2C has been extremely successful in France and receives nearly 14,000 young people in 2013, with successful growth rate each year. When considering external triggers it is also important to note that several observers in France have long been fascinated by the German vocational training system.

However, France is also a pioneer in some policy areas – for example, in relation to interns – that may act as inspiration elsewhere in the EU. For example, a new law aims to increase the juridical penalties for private companies, with the idea of reinforcing inspection in order to increase protection for young people. In July 2011, the French government introduced, a law (Loi Cherpion) aimed at reinforcing existing regulations and safeguarding trainees from abuse.

2.3 Country Report, Greece – Executive summary

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Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report Greece](#)

Since 2008 Greece has been in a deep and prolonged economic crisis. From 2009 to 2013, GDP contracted by a quarter, and unemployment tripled from 9.6% to 27.5%. It slightly fell to 26.5% in late 2014, as GDP grew at an anaemic 0.7%. Youth unemployment stood at about 25.7% in 2009. It reached 58% in 2013, to slightly drop to 52.3% in 2014. Also, the NEETs rate reached dramatically high levels (27% in 2014 among those aged 15 to 29 years).

The comparatively high youth unemployment even before the crisis, and long periods of transition from school to work characterising also upper-secondary and tertiary education graduates, reflect structural causes and education and labour market mismatches. However, it should be noted that, as the crisis has dramatically increased unemployment across all working-age groups, youth unemployment is a relative rather than an absolute problem in Greece. This is in marked contrast to some other European countries (e.g. UK and Netherlands), where the Great Recession hit young people disproportionately hard. Thus, in 2014, among EU countries, Greece exhibited the lowest share of young unemployed (15 to 24 years) 13% of the total number of jobless workers.

On the basis of the fourteen in-depth interviews we conducted with policy experts, officials and researchers with a good grasp of youth labour markets and school-to-work transition issues, and also by drawing on the available literature, we examine the major barriers to and triggers of effective policy innovation

Some major points with regard to the causes and profile of youth unemployment are the following. First, comparatively high youth unemployment prior to the crisis may have cumulative effects over time, as young cohorts get older. Since the eruption of the crisis, such a “cohort effect” has intensified. For instance, when the crisis hit, those who are today 24 to 29 years were at the point of making the transition from school to work, but faced significant difficulties that have been aggravated by the deepening recession. Second, in the last decades, increasing unemployment was the combined effect of de-industrialisation, the continued shrinking of the agricultural sector, women’s increasing engagement in the labour market, the formal/informal labour market divide, and low competitiveness in the markets of goods and services. At the same time, there were no signs of a transition to an economy with innovation potential that could provide an increasing number of jobs for meeting labour supply. Third, a polarisation of the employment structure accompanied these macro-trends of the economy until the eruption of the crisis: the share of middle rung jobs decreased, while that of professional, technical and managerial jobs, and of elementary jobs (e.g. in construction, market sales and tourism) increased.

The first part of the report focuses on governance structures and the dynamics of reform and traces the major barriers to / enablers of innovation, while the second part briefly reviews policy learning / policy transfer with regard to major institutional aspects (employment protection legislation, ALMPS, wage setting institutions, VET structure etc.) and how these impact on youth employment.

(A) Our analysis highlights the following barriers to effective policy reform:

- Policy decision-making in the areas of employment, education and training is highly centralised. This does not allow much scope for initiative in policy design and management/implementation by regional and/or local authorities. Rather it stifles any bottom-up innovation potential. Excessive bureaucratisation, in tandem with a formalistic/legalistic tradition, goes hand-in-hand with strong central control.
- Social dialogue and negotiation among relevant stakeholders (state agencies, employers associations, trade unions, educational institutions and others) over policy-making have traditionally been weak in Greece. Conflictual relations between the social partners and fragmentation of trade unions accounts for this. The absence of a culture of collaboration also partly explains the weak links between the education system and labour market needs, the low use of apprenticeships, and an often-expressed attitude of mistrust (by some trade unions, academics, students and others) to employers' involvement in education policy. The bailout deal has dealt a serious blow to the weak social dialogue (social partners and, often, democratic procedures have been bypassed), and has fuelled disappointment and mistrust. Repairing these conditions is of utmost importance.
- The “path dependent” way of accommodating new programmes, mostly introduced through EU initiatives and funding, reflects some major “reform pathologies” in Greece (i.e. the strong grip of clientelistic politics on institutions and labour market programmes, and the absence of a, more or less, systematic process of evidence-informed policy-making). Hence a “failing reform technology” producing an inertia vis-à-vis what Hall (1993) defines as “first- and second-order policy changes”.
- We can distinguish between different views as to the barriers to (and facilitators of) change expressed by most of our interviewees. These reflect two opposing discourses on labour market policy that predominate among major stakeholders in Greek society: a neoliberal discourse supported by representatives of large industries and ministerial executives¹² (along the lines of the bailout-deal stipulations), with an emphasis on lack of skills and rigid labour market regulations as the main obstacles to business development and increase of labour demand; versus a social-democratic discourse that strongly opposes a deepening relationship between higher flexibility and insecurity. None of the “representatives” of major stakeholders, we interviewed, referred to the “flexicurity” paradigm as a realistic reform option (under the acute crisis conditions). Markedly, according to the social-democratic view, a major barrier to effective policies for tackling unemployment is the “wrong diagnosis” under the neoliberal perspective, namely that youth unemployment is mainly the result of lack of skills. This “diagnosis” has a doubly negative effect. It not only turns a macro-economic and social problem into an “individualised” problem (lack of practical and personal skills for finding a job). It also aggravates it, as the measures ensuing from this diagnosis gradually displace regular employment by a cheap labour force of apprentices and trainees.

(B) The major channels of policy learning / policy transfer brought out in our analysis refer to “external” triggers: EU influence (through EU policy priorities, programmes and funding) has been

¹² We refer, here, to high-ranking officials under the previous coalition government between New Democracy (a right wing party) and the Panhellenic Socialist Party (PASOK)

prominent; though, as indicated above, “reform pathologies” and “path dependency” have decisively shaped the accommodation of new policy measures to the national institutional setting. Policy advice (and prescription) tendered by international organisations is another channel of influence. However, since the eruption of the crisis, crucially important “triggers” of reform stem from the bailout deal. Strikingly, even though youth unemployment has been comparatively high for a long time, it emerged in the national policy agenda as late as 2011-2012, mostly as a consequence of the priority assigned to the youth unemployment problem by the EU.

The various channels of policy influence/learning and transfer (ranked in a descending order of “coercive impact”) are the following:

- “Coerced transfer” (imposed by the bailout deal) as well as “reforms” directly tied to “EU hard law” and/or to requirements for accessing EU funding (e.g. under the National Strategic Reference Framework).
- Systematic expert knowledge provided by the “Task Force” and by specific missions by international organisations (OECD, IMF, ILO, WHO and the World Bank) for “assisting” Greece to deliver the EU/IMF structural adjustment programme.
- “Experimental emulation” of policies through bilateral agreements of cooperation (e.g. the currently undergoing VET reform on the basis of a German-Greek agreement for the provision of expert knowledge on the dual education system).
- “Softer” forms of learning, such as the peer reviews under the “mutual learning” programme of the European Commission and other bilateral or multilateral exchanges of expert knowledge in the EU, and other international networks and fora.
- There are hardly any bottom-up channels of policy learning and innovation, for instance, along the lines of the so-called “triple helix”, consisting in a dynamic interaction between actors in three major institutional fields (education, industry and government) that can offer important insights for innovation and job creation. There are a couple of such initiatives recorded, with rather limited scope, prompted by the availability of EU funding (as is, for instance, a collaboration project between Greek and Bulgarian academic institutions, governmental bodies and the business community in order to support start-up businesses by about 200 young graduates in both countries).

(C) Our analysis highlights the views of major stakeholders on two areas of policy reform: the attempt to introduce the dual VET system, and the innovative potential of the Youth Guarantee within the realm of ALMPs.

Among our respondents, there is agreement that repairing trust between the social partners, reinstating social dialogue and collective negotiations, and encouraging stakeholder engagement in policy decision-making and implementation are the linchpin of an effective reform. Yet, there are contrasting views as to how the youth unemployment problem is defined, and whether the “policy transfer” pursued by the government can have positive outcomes. The views are framed within the two discourses on labour market policy mentioned above. Some respondents (ministry officials, policy experts from research institutes and from private firms, under contract with relevant authorities for implementing labour-market-related schemes, and the interviewees from the associations of large employers), view positively any improvement of VET and of the practical skills of young jobseekers, as well as the policies enhancing flexibility (in hiring/dismissals, pay, working hours etc.) introduced in the last few years. Nevertheless, most of these respondents agree that active labour market policies

(including training) can hardly be a vehicle of effective labour market (and social) integration under conditions of a deep economic crisis.

On the other hand, particularly the trade unions and the association of small businesses strongly criticised the “experimental transfer” of the dual system, as well as the main ALMPs schemes implemented over the last few years (e.g. the voucher for labour market entry). They described the above “transfer” as a “copying” process with low effects on improving VET and ensuring real opportunities for young people. The reasons are: (1) The very small size of firms, which raises doubts as to the quality of training. (2) The absence of an in-firm training culture and of a clear demarcation and accreditation of skills acquired. (3) The lack of commitment by enterprises with regard to the governance, funding and implementation of the dual system. These conditions are in marked contrast to the apprenticeship tradition in Germany, where enterprises undertake a large part of the training cost and actively participate in standardising and monitoring the quality of training content. In Greece, training is largely subsidised by public funding, and firms are inclined to use cheap (and non-insured) trainee labour as substitute for regular employees. (4) Even if the attractiveness of vocational training increases, it is highly likely that there will be any significant return on such a human capital investment for the country, given the draws on Greece’s skilled labour by North European countries via immigration. In a nutshell, despite enhanced flexibility, sub-minimum wages for youth, and active measures, youth unemployment remains high.

Overall, the severe and protracted crisis has highly stretched resources and tools and has made it very difficult to “experiment” in policy-making, given the fact that there are so many vulnerable groups not only among youth but also across many segments of the population. It remains to be seen whether pending reforms (e.g. the “Re-engineering of the Manpower Employment Organisation [OAED]” and the piloting of integrated policies by the Public Employment Services) can add up to major improvements particularly in the policy-making machinery and management process. In this respect, the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan may have an innovation potential. It definitely cannot solve the youth unemployment problem. But, given its emphasis on integrated policies for matching “youth” to “education/training and employment solutions” it presents a challenge on various fronts: to tackle fundamental “pathologies” of policy management by reinforcing monitoring and analyses that feeds into the policy process; to address the “guidance” challenge (that OEAD, demonstrably understaffed, risks to be unable to deal with), which is pivotal for successfully incorporating a great number of youth into YGIP programmes; and to raise the effectiveness of vocational and professional education.

2.4 Country Report, Spain – Executive summary

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Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report Spain](#)

The report presents an exploratory analysis of the institutional aspects and social learning processes influencing exposure to new information, knowledge management and policy change in Spain regarding youth employment, training and welfare. Barriers to and triggers of policy innovation and knowledge transfer in the overall institutional governance architecture as well as in the specific areas of labour market, education and training, and welfare are of particular interest. The analysis presented is based on interview data obtained between mid-December 2014 and mid-February 2015. Eleven interviews were held with key experts, actors and stakeholders at national, regional, and local level, either in an independent capacity or representing public agencies and social actors.

Institutional rigidity and path dependency are two salient characteristics of policy change in the Spanish case, both likely derived from a strong administrative culture with little exposure to results' evaluation as the main barriers to innovation. Besides the policy inertia thus generated, the other structural barriers to innovation identified are: limited renewal of actors representing civil society; no incentives for active policy cross-learning among administrations; limited availability of funds for policies outside the script provided by the national government; lack of co-ordination between the education system and the employment policy system; and a political, not linked to results, competition between different levels of government for decision-making capacity. Thus, for instance, administrative ritualism and competition among levels of governance explains the failure of the policy information systems currently used to reach the young as to the Youth Guarantee.

While there are some instances of innovative behaviour in some regions and localities (in connection to information systems, profiling, appraisal of policies impact, youth guarantee pilot schemes and dual training), exhibiting better administrative co-ordination and social actors' co-operation, these processes are thought necessary but not sufficient conditions for innovation. Since the EU and the ESF are found to be the main motors of policy change in Spain, funds' conditionality to specific policy instruments, goals or appraisal is clearly a most powerful driver of innovation. However, it remains to be seen if any subsequent innovations and examples of policy transfer, for instance connected to the Youth Guarantee pilot projects, become actual improvements in policy once the funds are withdrawn.

Even though the impact of the Youth Guarantee in Spain is yet to be assessed, views are generally pessimistic. In the mix explaining these negative views, beyond the barriers highlighted above, a further argument appears prominent: the limited potential for addressing the employment and training problems of the youth in Spain of a scheme designed for countries institutionally and economically different (i.e. the Nordic ones). In essence, the EU design is found lacking in that, first, it is a framework ill-suited to tackle the urgent problem of the high proportion of low-skilled youth with a high risk of chronic underemployment (or long-term unemployment), especially given their group characteristics (difficult to reach and to motivate to participate); and second, it is a framework that requires the business sector co-operation, itself a significant systemic challenge.

In fact, the low engagement of the business sector with youth employment and training policy was identified as a further structural obstacle to policy innovation and effectiveness in the study. The high presence of micro-firms in the Spanish economy, often ran by persons with low educational level themselves, may be mentioned as a further connected barrier to policy innovation and learning. In this type of organisation, with less capacity to obtain the institutional and financial support available for training, training is often seen simply as a too costly activity.

In any case, employability concerns are high in Spain and have been present in recent reforms of education strengthening the role of work experience. Much is particularly hoped of the new Dual Professional Training (the training contract is fully operational while the education branch entailing traineeships in enterprises from the first day is in the pilot phase). However, with regard to civil society, the conflicting views of the social actors on trainees' extant situation need to be balanced. At the moment, this would imply tightening the control of the training contents and improving the quality of the mentoring at the organisations offering training placements, and a lower minimum wage for those under nineteen in training. Furthermore, the regulation of training contracts, dual training placements and grants is variegated and full of gaps as to the applicable labour legislation (such as on health and safety, holidays, etc.), creating multiple juridical situations at the same firm and a fear of social dumping among the established permanent staff.

A further current reform of the training system signifies a path shift towards life-long learning and tries to address a mismatch between training supply and firms' demands. The reform aims to improve the access to and the quality of the opportunities for training and life-long learning. As a consequence of some prominent corruption scandals, this reform also weakens the social actors' previously most prominent role on the implementation of training programmes.

Few of the policies affecting the youth have been considered a key issue for either tackling youth unemployment or easing STW transitions, with the partial exception of ALMPs and, to a much lesser extent, unemployment protection. When key actors are considered, the crisis has witnessed a clear impoverishment of the policy-making process due to the haste with which reforms had to be adopted; this has posed major barriers to dialogue and consensus building. Thus, decision-making has been restricted to governmental action in most policy domains. Hence, changes have tended to be largely based on transfer processes (or rather impositions or recommendations issued by the EU/Troika) than on learning ones. Last but not least, no relevant changes may be ascertained in the domain of welfare protection during the crisis. In any case, it is suggested that a consideration of the effort put by Spain in increasing the levels of youth access to tertiary education and of unemployment protection throughout the economic crisis may render the 'subprotective' comparative tag as somehow misleading in that it underplays the systemic concern about and the associated efforts to reduce the risks among the youth in transition from study to work.

From the assessment of barriers to and enablers of policy innovation and learning carried out in this exploratory study some policy recommendations may be derived. In general, innovation and knowledge transfer may likely be fostered in Spain by creating a framework of funding that, first, allows for greater experimentation, since creative policy-making may be curtailed in the current system; second, that puts incentives for inter-administration collaboration since existing policy-making and policy-implementing epistemic knowledge communities are currently underplayed, even by its own members, as a result of centrifugal political forces; third, that increases the policy system accountability, implying an extensive assessment of policies by results, and regular reviews of the suitability of the policy performance indicators used, in order to increase effectiveness; fourth, that promotes the professionalization of employment agencies' staff as effective counsellors and match-makers; and fifth, that fosters a greater connection between education and employment policies and

with the business sector, with a focus on employers' social responsibility in preventing social exclusion in the long-term, rather than on the capacity of the education system to respond to market demands in the short-term.

2.5 Country Report, Slovakia – Executive summary

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Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report Slovakia](#)

This paper explored the impact of actors' and policy characteristics on policy innovation and diffusion of youth employment policies in Slovakia. More specifically, it examined which actors promoted the policy innovation and why, what capacities they drew upon and which diffusion mechanisms were used. For the purposes of this study, seven officials were interviewed in Bratislava in the period of February to March 2015.

Following policy innovations, i.e. policies new to Slovakia, were examined: (1) the reform of the vocational education system along the model of the dual system, (2) the Project KomPrax, which aimed to enhance competences of young people through informal learning activities outside the school, and (3) the cross-sectoral coordination of youth policy.

What was transferred? There was a substantial knowledge transfer in all examined cases. Policy learning was enhanced by participation in networks, such as those established by the European Union. The case of the VET reform further involved the transfer of institutions. The new Slovak dual education law was a hybrid of VET systems in “corporatist” welfare states, such as Germany, Switzerland or Austria. The hybrid transfer was motivated by the need to better fit the dual education model to Slovak conditions. Finally, the pilot testing of the dual education model within the Project RSOV – “Development of secondary vocational education” was associated with a massive transfer of personnel from employers associated in ZAP SR – Automotive Industry Association to ŠIOV – State Institute of Vocational Education.

Who was involved in the transfer? A number of internal actors, external actors and go-betweens were involved in the policy transfer. Policy innovation in the project KomPrax and the Cross-sectoral Working Group was driven by internal actors, particularly IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute, a state organization directly managed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereafter, Ministry of Education). The VET reform was driven by employers in the car producing sector, who were concerned about shortages of qualified workforce. This supports the view that motivation to innovate increases with increasing perceptions of the problem pressure. Employers acted as policy entrepreneurs who developed their preferred policy solutions in advance and sold them to policymakers when the economic crisis opened the window of opportunity. For example, the Automotive Industry Association – ZAP SR, before it approached the Ministry of Education, prepared the first draft of the dual education law. Other go-betweens acting across multiple governments included professional associations, foreign chambers of commerce, transnational corporations, consultation firms and supranational organizations.

The European Union acted as a facilitator of learning and a funding agency. To induce policy learning, the EU relied on the facilitated coordination, i.e. it did not produce European legislation but operated like a forum for discussion and a platform for policy transfer. In July 2013, the European Commission launched the European Alliance for Apprenticeships to support the aims of the European Commission's “Youth Guarantee”. The Alliance served as a platform that brought together relevant

stakeholders and encouraged them to pledge to increase the quality, quantity and attractiveness of apprenticeships in the European Union. Actors, such as Nestlé and the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) pledged to implement pilot projects in order to establish a dual apprenticeship system in Slovakia. Studies commissioned by the WKÖ were used as background materials in the working group responsible for drafting the law on dual education. Furthermore, Slovakia and Germany began to cooperate closely to reform the Slovak VET system based on Germany's model. In the case of the project KomPrax and the Cross-sectoral Working Group, the European Union contributed to policy learning through diffusion of European policy documents.

Second, the European Union contributed to policy innovation and adoption of policies as a funding agency. Some of the pilot vocational schools, as well as the project KomPrax were funded by structural funds. Initial project proposals therefore had to be modified to fit into the format and eligibility criteria. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that some of these projects would never have become reality without the EU funding. The length of the funding programme period was cited as an obstacle to policy innovation. As regional operational programmes had to be approved by the European Commission prior to the outbreak of the crisis, they reduced flexibility of organizations to respond to new challenges.

What capacities did the actors draw upon? The empirical evidence supports the view that the policy innovation depends on financial, bureaucratic and epistemic capacities. Policy innovation was enhanced by epistemic capacities in all examined cases. Inefficient administrative capacity was the main obstacle to policy innovation in the case of the project KomPrax and cross-sectoral coordination of youth policy. Interviewees pinpointed the lack of communication within and between relevant ministries. Finally, financial capacity was crucial for policy adoption. Employers had significant resources and therefore could proceed with establishment of pilot centres extremely fast. In contrast, the implementation of the project KomPrax was delayed due to lack of funding.

Which diffusion mechanisms dominated? Actors relied exclusively on policy learning. As already noted, policy learning was stimulated by participation in networks, high epistemic capacity and various EU initiatives. The evidence in favour of the hypothesis about the relationship between the policy characteristics and the learning-based diffusion is mixed at best. Dual education was associated with high relative advantage, high observability and relatively low trialability. All of these traits are predicted to induce policy learning. Low compatibility should reduce the role of learning in the diffusion process. Nevertheless, interviewees explicitly cited lack of compatibility of dual education system with the existing legislation as an impulse for policy innovation and subsequently policy learning. In contrast, the hypothesis does not seem to hold for the project KomPrax and the cross-sectoral coordination of youth policy.

2.6 Country Report, Turkey – Executive summary

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Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report Turkey](#)

This report presents a detailed analysis of the institutional framework and policy learning process regarding school to work (STW) transition, youth employment, and the vocational education and training (VET) system in Turkey. The report is based on a desk study and a qualitative fieldwork, which included eleven in-depth elite interviews with key personnel from several ministries, representatives of civil society organizations, one major corporation, and representatives of international agencies.

Turkey's working age population will expand by over 800,000 every year during the next decade and will reach 68.6 % of the population in 2023. The increase in the productive population will either lead to a demographic advantage or a threat of youth unemployment. Despite the potential of labour capacity with a significant proportion of the population below age 15 compared to other OECD countries, quality and equity remain as challenges for youth's further education and employment. In the field of STW transition, Turkey has various issues to solve, including improving equity between regions and urban and rural areas; addressing the needs of disadvantaged students; preparing quality teachers and school leaders, improving access to and completion of upper secondary education, VET and tertiary education; strengthening links to the labour market and adequately funding the education system.

Regarding the labour market, the employment rate for the working age population (15+) is around 45%, significantly lower than the OECD average of around 55%. The low level of female LFP lies behind Turkey's low employment rates. While male LFP was recorded as 76% in 2012, female LFP is only 30%, less than half of the average of OECD countries. The unbalanced relation between Turkey's employment protection legislation (EPL) and job quality has been one of the main controversial issues that shapes Turkey's labour market. Turkey's employment protection rules are still one of the most rigid among OECD countries in terms of temporary employment, employment through work agencies and severance pay. On the other hand, Turkey performs poorly among the OECD countries in three job quality dimensions: earnings quality, labour market security and quality of the working environment. Furthermore, Turkey still has the highest proportion of NEETs among 15 to 29 year-olds across OECD countries: 29.2% compared with the OECD average of 15%. Under these conditions, policy learning is a major issue in terms of implementing structural changes.

Since 2004, the EU accession negotiations process has left a big mark on Turkey in terms of policy making and projects. The conditionality for the EU accession process has shaped policy frameworks in diverse fields in Turkey, leading to legislation in line with the EU acquis. However, in the past few years, EU's impact on Turkey's political agenda has slowed down, which is also reflected in policy making on employment-related issues. State bodies still actively operate EU-funded projects, whereas the EU's agenda setting role is diminishing. Rather national programs/projects, originally derived from EU projects, have started to be implemented for increasing youth employment with the same objectives.

The centralized structure of the major policy making institutions in Turkey leads to a significant rigidity in policy design and change. The two chief state authorities in employment and education policy-making are the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS).

In recent years, through various projects and programs, the government has sought to tighten the link between students' skills and the demands of the job market, and improve teacher quality and curricula. In 2001, the Board of Vocational Education was established with representatives from government, employees, employers and other social partners, while a Provincial Board of Vocational Education was also established in each province. In 2002, the Government initiated The Project on Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System (SVET), a 5-year project with support from the EU, to design new national vocational standards developed in co-operation with the industrial sector and other social partners. The Modernization of Vocational Education and Training Project included initiatives to improve VET teacher quality.

The reform has been effective in developing occupational standards and respective training standards with the foundation of VQA. However, MoNE's unwillingness to involve social partners in the reform process curtailed its reach to other areas of VET. One of the considerable problems of the reform process was the failure to develop competency-based and modular VET curricula and learning outcomes in line with VQA's vocational qualifications.

Alongside national actors, policy players from global and international level assist in reforming Turkey's VET system. In terms of policy learning, the EU has an impact on designing the VET system, since Turkey lacks policy experience for facilitating the transition from education to the labour market. The conditionality for the EU accession process has shaped policy frameworks in diverse fields in Turkey, leading to legislation in line with the EU *acquis*. The EU is a significant channel of policy influence also because it provides technical and financial support throughout the accession process. Aside from projects, "The Instrument of Pre-accession Process 2007-2013" (IPA) funds are one of the major channels that make the EU a significant facilitator of policy change. Turkey's 9th Development Plan's (2007-2013) objectives were aligned with the IPA Programme so that the implementation can be carried out in an environment of collaboration and social dialogue. The EU IPA 1 Programme focused on reducing regional inequalities between eastern and western provinces of Turkey. In collaboration with the MoLSS, "IPA 2 Sectoral Operational Programme 2014-2020" offers a policy agenda for Turkey whose goal is increasing employment and the quality and access to education for social inclusion.

The World Bank (WB) and the ILO stand as two major international actors in Turkey that provide loans & technical expertise, issue policy reports and work with the government in order to facilitate STW transition. Among WB projects, Growth with Decent Work for All: A Youth Employment Programme in Antalya (2009-2012) in collaboration with İŞKUR and the UN Joint Programme (ILO, FAO, IOM and UNDP) investigated the needs and difficulties that youth and women experience in Antalya during STW in order to improve the work opportunities for youth (aged 15-24). Restoring Equitable Growth and Employment Programmatic Development Policy Loan-I & II (2010- 2011) was aimed at supporting Turkey's efforts to promote equitable growth and job creation over the medium term.

Policy changes in STW transition and youth employment can be summarized as follows: (a) incremental, marginal adjustments; (b) changes in policy instruments; (c) changes that redeploy old institutions to new purposes; and (d) radical changes in the actual goals of policies.

The establishment of İŞKUR and the Vocational Qualification Authority (VQA) as the main institutions of employment and skill generation is the chief policy change in the last decade in the context of EU harmonization process. Since the 1990s, supranational bodies such as the OECD, the WB and the EU have been increasingly playing active roles in the dissemination of employment and education strategies through projects and programs in Turkey. Until the EU accession process started, policy transfers by IGOs were rather fragmented, diverse and project-basis. Accession negotiations brought fundamental changes to youth employment and training policies through a more coherent agenda, accompanied by the necessary funds, projects, and more importantly institutions. In this scope, the restructuring of İŞKUR in 2004, as an example of change of policy instruments, led to the creation of jobs through activation measures such as on-the-job trainings and vocational programs in a more active and systematic way. This process led to enactment of a law for the establishment of an Occupational Standards Institution in 2000, and the VQA in 2006.

İŞKUR's restructuring presents a transformation that redeploys old institutions to new purposes like ALMPs, whereas VQA is more likely to be considered as a change in policy instruments by founding new institutions for establishing the National Qualification Framework.

Nevertheless, these newly established institutions face certain constraints in terms of their role in the decision-making process of education and employment policies. Even though MoNE and MoLSS have been the primary actors, the collaboration between these ministries and newly established institutions are relatively weak. Our interviews show that the dialogue between public institutions remains weak, despite joint projects and programs. Interestingly, İŞKUR and VQA, in their administrative structures, have strong relations with private sector organisations and local partners such as municipalities and regional directorates. Nevertheless, interviewees stated that the lack of communication with upper bodies such as MoNE weakened the influence of the activities of İŞKUR and VQA, and hindered the spread of new policies. The deepening gap between old and new public institutions creates major problems in the implementation phase, which translates into an obstacle for comprehensive and inclusive agenda for youth employment.

Overall, for the specific case of Turkey, it is possible to talk about three main trends that lie at the root of likely failures of such policy transfer projects concerning STW transition: 1) Decreasing impact of European Union harmonization process; 2) over-centralized structure of the governance of education and the labour market, and 3) the dominance of fragmented series of project-based solutions and inability to convert such projects into long-term, sustainable policies.

Before decentralization attempts are accomplished, it seems difficult for IGO-led or funded projects to turn into long-term and sustainable policies. Likewise, as long as the overall structures of MoNE and MoLSS remains such centralized, these kind of project initiatives are likely to remain as short-term development programs; since they cannot include diverse social actors into the decision making and implementation processes by simply forcing them to implement projects approved by the central authorities of MoNE and MoLSS. As a result, all these programs and projects discussed above appear as fragmented series of projects, which can only provide temporary solutions. Particularly, the inability to receive feedback from local actors and to conduct impact analysis makes it even harder for such programs to provide sustainable solutions to the problems characterizing STW transition.

In terms of welfare policies, the family still represents the core supporting mechanism for the young employed. Families are still expected to protect youth from the risk of unemployment and to facilitate their STW transition by providing financial support. Despite this situation, some policy reforms have direct or indirect benefits for youth. Since healthcare became universal in 2012, it has decreased the destructive effects of unemployment, including for youth. Another policy measure that has an indirect

impact on disadvantaged youth is social assistance programs for alleviating poverty. For instance, conditional cash transfers for poor households have played a role in encouraging the school enrolment of girls and boys.

In conclusion, reflecting major features of the sub-protective regimes, policy making in Turkey can be characterized by a clash between comprehensive reform initiatives and very centralized and monolithic structure of the institutions to implement these reforms. While formulating policies geared towards preventing youth unemployment and increasing employment, the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the demographic structure of Turkey and unique features of the labour market should be taken into account. In the long-term, policies designed to eliminate disparities that prevent youth from participating in education and the labour force, to mitigate the negative effects of rural-to urban migration on youth and to keep students in school longer must be implemented.

First, there has to be systematic and reliable data collection on the activities undertaken. In the absence of data to conduct impact analysis, their effect on changing the existing labour market structures remains to be seen. Second, barriers to VET reforms are mostly of the structural kind and need sustained commitment for resolution. All of these are important for success in STW policies and improving youth's access to higher quality jobs. For all efforts and budgets spent to be successful and sustainable, there is need for holistic approaches, which take into consideration the multifarious barriers that stand in youth's labour force participation. While what is currently done produces an impressive array of experience and expertise in the field, this needs to be translated into future models and sustainable policies rather than program applications.

3. The policy challenge in the group of countries with moderate to low youth unemployment

3.1 Country Report, UK – Executive summary

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Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report UK](#)

At present, youth unemployment in the UK stands at 16.1%, which, although relatively high, compares favourably with the EU-28 average of 21.5%. Moreover, the UK's youth unemployment has, over the years, been consistently below the EU-27 average. Yet, the UK youth labour market's relatively better performance masks a number of structural and institutional characteristics that have an adverse impact on young people's school-to-work (STW) transitions. Compared to other Member States, the UK is characterised by fast but unstable STW transitions, although in line with most other Member States, young people are taking longer to move from education to (permanent) employment. Indeed, STW transitions in the UK have become lengthier and more uncertain. Young Britons move more frequently between jobs and into and out of education, while a large number are employed in precarious part-time or temporary jobs, including the controversial zero hours contracts (37%).

The UK is also characterised by a relatively high number of early school leavers (12.4%) and NEETs (13.3%), most of whom face serious difficulties in their labour market entry due to their low level of (basic) skills and employability. Indeed, a significant minority of young people continue to leave secondary education without the skills and qualifications to compete in the labour market and saw their job prospects disproportionately affected by the economic crisis. This is important because, compared to other Member States, qualifications and skills are more critical for smooth labour market entry in the UK.

Linked to this is the recurring criticism of the UK's education and training system that it equips young people with inappropriate or insufficient skills (vertical and horizontal skills mismatch and/or basic and 'soft' skills deficit). A contributing factor is considered to be the traditional lack of rigour, quality and/or breadth on the UK's VET provision which often results in young people being trapped in low-end jobs, intermittent employment spells, or even unemployment with no prospect of progression onto further learning which could result in sustained and quality employment. This is exacerbated by the fact that non-academic pathways between education and employment are unclear, complex and difficult to navigate. There is also a pronounced and persistent inter-generational cycle of disadvantage, low skills and youth unemployment

The problems young people face are fairly long-standing, but were exacerbated by the Great Recession of the late 2000s, while the changing structure of the (youth) labour market and the associated greater difficulty in accessing entry level jobs poses another major challenge. The decline of sectors such as manufacturing which traditionally provided employment to young people, is well documented. Moreover, as our stakeholders stressed, young people have also been hit by the progressive polarisation and hollowing out of the labour market that has resulted in fewer jobs for the low and mid-qualified. This is exacerbated by the reduction of intermediate level jobs that results in fewer opportunities for progression beyond entry-level jobs. As a result, young people also face intense and growing competition from older and more experienced workers as well as migrants, especially in the UK's expanding low wage service economy.

The UK's approach to addressing structural youth unemployment issues such as those described above can be characterised as light touch labour market regulation, state investment in education coupled with reforms (supply side policies), and strong activation, all of which have consistently involved policy and process innovation, albeit to varying degrees. The UK exemplifies the Walther, and Pohl's 'liberal regime' characterised by workfare (coercive activation) and characterised by a priority on youth employment/employability, a 'work-first' approach, especially for specific categories of young people, including those with limited or no work experience. An array of sanctions of increasing severity is aimed at controlling compliance.

A) Enablers and barriers to policy innovation

Our analysis of existing literature and our stakeholder interviews¹³ have highlighted a number of enablers and barriers to policy innovation.

- Reliance on market mechanisms, competition and choice in the way youth-related policies and services are designed and delivered is seen as key to driving policy innovation in the UK (as well as improving range, quality, effectiveness of policies). Government respondents argued that the introduction of a 'payment-by-results' model of delivery for its main flagship ALMP programme for youth, the Youth Contract, and other welfare-to-work programmes such as the Work Programme should in theory function as a facilitating condition for learning and spreading of good practice, by encouraging public, private, and third sector organisations involved in their delivery to adopt innovative solutions and learn flexibly from each other. This view is contested by other stakeholders according to whom the fact that providers have been required to 'compete' with each other to win contracts for delivery of these programmes may have, in turn, acted as an obstacle to learning and peer-to-peer sharing of best practice, by introducing a marketised logic of competition in their working practices and in their delivery model.
- Linked to the above is risk aversion (linked to path dependency) on part of policy-makers can act as a major barrier to learning and, consequently, innovation. Indeed, since the 1980s onwards, the ideological commitment to a 'slim' state and towards minimal government regulatory intervention, as well as more recently the turn towards 'employer ownership' of skills and growth means that UK government has been always very reluctant to consider policy solutions, even innovative ones, that may a) place greater regulatory burden on

¹³ Eleven in-depth interviews were held between January and April 2015.

employers especially; b) be perceived by the public as an increase in government's interference in various areas of economic life.

- Another condition preventing learning and possibly innovation is, arguably, the dynamics arising from intra-departmental competition and fragmentation of responsibilities. The fact that different government departments have responsibilities for different age groups and areas of policy affecting youth, and are led by different ministers with sometimes conflicting policy agendas, results in a situation in which at times government departments seek to push their 'own' policy priorities and defend their institutional power resources at the expenses of collaborative learning and spreading of good practice.
- The widespread use of Pilots, Pathfinders, Trailblazers, Controlled Experimentation and Zones in the UK has also been traditionally enabled innovation in that they provide 'safe spaces' for testing innovations and managing their risks within defined parameters before a new policy is widely implemented. For example, at present the Apprenticeship Trailblazers are expected to test and deliver a whole array of new employer-designed apprenticeship standards.
- Moreover, at the regional level, devolution of powers to the nations has arguably created good, conducive conditions for policy learning and innovation. Indeed, the creation of national, more localised policy-making machineries facilitates local experimentation of new/innovative approaches targeted at young people. For example, Wales (as opposed to England) has introduced a Youth Guarantee that arguably represents a key innovation within that nation. Devolution also enables the easier spreading of good practice and more careful consideration of emerging evidence from previous experiences and from policy implementation at the local level in the design of new programmes.
- The existence of a very well developed and 'crowded' policy community, with very well developed networks of think tanks and numerous research organisations producing knowledge on issues surrounding youth employment and STW transitions does arguably act as a facilitator for learning and innovation and for the spreading of policy ideas. In a similar vein, the presence of very well-developed network of third sector training providers and charities working on youth issues can also potentially facilitate the emergence of innovative localised practices which can then be spread further (see national report <http://www.style-research.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/STYLE-D4.1-Country-Report-UK.pdf>).

B) Policy learning and transfer mechanisms/channels

The UK has a long and well-established tradition of robust evidence-based policy making. Whilst this may not be framed in terms of policy learning as such by policy makers, policy evaluation practices are deeply embedded within the UK policy machinery and within the practices of the UK civil service. Evidence emerging from evaluations of existing policies is often taken into account in the design or re-formulation of programmes, and evidence of policy effectiveness originating from international sources also often forms the basis of policy design. For example, the Youth Contract (as well as the more intensive integrated additional support for disengaged 16-17 year-olds) have been designed in such a way as to take into account factors which have been shown by UK-based and international research to increase the effectiveness of a policy measure. However, this mainly takes place in relation to the fine-tuning of instruments at the programme level, rather than in relation to the direction of policy as a whole.

Indeed, whilst there is a large body of evidence and a great attention devoted to policy evaluation and trialling before introduction, and an increasing attention to lesson-drawing from international examples, it is questionable the extent to which this large body of knowledge actually penetrates policy-making practices at a deeper, strategic level. Some interviewed stakeholders (trade unions and employers organisations in particular) acknowledged that policy learning as a deliberate activity could and should be further developed and does not often take place to a great extent, as the evidence that is produced from evaluations is not consistently taken into consideration or used as much as it could be.

Although the UK does look beyond its borders for policy innovation and learning, this typically means looking at other countries with similar/common Anglo-Saxon traditions, notably North America (the US and Canada), Australia and New Zealand. In contrast, the influence of the EU on policy development and learning tends to be more limited. It is well acknowledged by government and all major stakeholders alike that the EU and its policy recommendations do not exercise a big influence on the direction of policy change in the UK. Indeed, a recent government consultation into supranational influence found that, although the EU provided a helpful contribution to student mobility and language learning, its impact was limited in terms of policy development. That said, the UK is open to learning from individual EU countries. For example, its 2012 Richard review of apprenticeships in England was informed by experiences in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark and Germany.

Both our stakeholders and existing literature confirm, other supranational organisations, notably the OECD, have traditionally exercised a critical role in the UK's policy formation and transfer. For example, the OECD's recommendation that well designed activation policies encourage the jobless, including unemployed youth, to find jobs has been fully adopted by the UK in all its active labour market policies (ALMPs), including those aimed at young people such as the Youth Contract.

Given the fact that the UK's system of policy making has traditionally been voluntarist, by which is usually meant the abstention of the state from direct intervention, another key level for policy transfer is the use of benchmarking coupled with voluntary guidelines, codes of conducts, charters, quality symbols indicating quality attainment such as 'kite marks', etc. In general, the advantage of voluntary over compulsory schemes is seen as an avoidance of unnecessary bureaucracy and regulation which might cause firms to either abandon or not offer programmes, including employment and/or training, aimed at young people. The government, including local government, and the regions engage in policy transfer especially, mainly through benchmarking, lobbying, employer consultations, and expert panels. Linked to the above is the peer-to-peer policy learning and transfer that is promoted by employer and other professional associations.

C) Approach to policy learning and innovation

The prevailing approach to both policy learning and innovation in the UK typically follows its traditional empirical, incremental and stepwise approach, at least in a number of policy areas. However, there are also instances where a more radical approach to policy learning and innovation has been adopted. For example, at present there is a major VET reform in process that combines elements of both radical and incremental innovation. For example, by putting employers at the centre of the design of the education and training system, including VET, the Apprenticeship Trailblazers (which are part of the reform) represent a radical departure from the past when training providers dominated the VET/apprenticeship arena. Likewise, the recently introduced Traineeship Programme with its explicit aim of improving the basic and 'soft' skills of young people, so that they can then secure an apprenticeship placement and/or job is quite novel within the UK context and, according to stakeholders can be characterised as a rather radical change.

On the other hand, some of the youth-related policy changes currently under way are incremental such as the current expansion of apprenticeships (although, according to stakeholders, the aim is that in due course and, notably from 2017 onwards, this will lead to a more radical change in the area of improving intermediate/technician level skills). As was stated by our stakeholders, the way this policy and other youth-related policies are implemented is 'typically British' in that progress is made incrementally and organically; however, it is expected that, in due course, these changes will acquire momentum/critical mass and lead to a more radical change. The same incremental change through pilots, trailblazers and the 'test, learn, adapt' method to policy-making can be observed in other policy developments such as the Employer Ownership Pilots and the Youth Contract.

3.2 Country Report, Netherlands – Executive summary

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Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report Netherlands](#)

The paper reports on the barriers and enablers of policy change and innovative policy reforms in the Netherlands to tackle the barriers to ‘successful’ school-to-work transitions on the labour market which youngsters face.¹⁴ It starts with sketching the way the institutional structures operate as barriers or enablers of innovation and the launching of ‘best practices’. Although youth unemployment and NEET’s rates are relatively low in the Netherlands, they peaked during the recent crisis (see national report). Moreover, the average picture masks the large heterogeneity or diversity among the young people. Those without a minimum or start level qualification on the labour market have very little chances to get a secure job that fits their skills whereas for the high skilled ICT worker the chances to make a career are fairly high. Young people are increasingly enrolled in temporary jobs with reduced chances over time to move into regular employment and therefore lack income and employment security. Finally, there are significant qualitative mismatches between supply and demand of labour that confront notably low-and medium skilled youngsters. The Dutch labour market therefore faces many challenges with respect to youth. This asks for innovative policies that take up these challenges by removing the barriers within the education, labour market, social security and welfare institutions to improve the employment and income perspectives of youngsters and to reduce these mismatches.

At national level, we observe that the stakeholders in the social domain conclude social covenants, social accords and multi-lateral agreements to change existing policies or to find agreement on innovative reforms and practices that are better suited to tackle the main issues. Because policies in these domains are implemented at local level we will also devote attention to policy innovations and best practices at the local level. Notably, we will report on local initiatives to realizing a *youth guarantee plan* (called a “Youth Unemployment Free Zone”) in the region Mid-Brabant in the Southern part of the Netherlands and innovative education reforms practices in the main capital Amsterdam. We argue that a novel innovative way of ‘governance’ known as the ‘knowledge triangle’ or ‘triple helix’ (collaboration at local level between the public sphere, the knowledge institutions and the market) may receive common support among stakeholders at local level. This novel approach mirrors a shift from the classical way of governance that is project-oriented and subsidy-based and coupled to financial incentives to a network-based collaborative and more pro-active and preventive approach that is conducive to innovative ‘best practices’.

¹⁴ The country report draws upon data collected through interviews with 25 stakeholders and five focus groups with national and local representatives from the education sector, the business sector, the government, the welfare, safety and care sector, and the youngsters themselves.

3.3 Country Report, Denmark – Executive summary

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Full national report available here: [STYLE-D4.1 Country Report Denmark](#)

Compared to many other European economies, Danish youth has experienced relatively low youth unemployment rates following the crisis. Historically, Danish youth unemployment rate has been considerably lower than the EU-average and even during the crisis years, since 2008, it has not risen above 15 per cent. The relatively low youth unemployment rate has affected the policies directed at youth employment and school-to-work transitions in a number of ways. Increasing the labour supply has been a primary policy goal rather than combating youth unemployment per se. The background for aiming policies at labour supply is the demographic changes in Denmark with large cohorts retiring from the labour market in the near future. With demand being strongest for higher educated workers, there has been a push for designing incentives for young people to enrol into education – either vocational or upper-secondary education – and incentives to make young people finish education faster than hitherto.¹⁵

In the background sections of the report we outline the institutional framework in Denmark for combating youth unemployment. We argue that the so called flexicurity model on the one hand should create many job-openings for younger workers, thus facilitating smoother school-to-work transitions, but on the other hand, with high reservation wages and collectively agreed minimum wages, there is a strong demand for young workers to be productive from day-one. This in turn puts a strong pressure for employment-relevant education and training, which presumably is procured through the apprenticeship-based vocational education and training (VET) system, while somewhat neglected in tertiary education in the universities.

A key ingredient in Danish policies to combat youth unemployment has been to reform the benefit structure for young people. In recent reform efforts, the aim has been that young people should not be on passive benefits unless cognitive, social, or physical conditions do not allow the individual to be active. The visitation procedures have gradually been revised and focused on separating young people into categories depending on their ability to enrol into education programs. The answer to unemployment among young people without a vocational education or secondary education is thus to oblige them into enrolment by way of tightening benefits – these policies relate to the notion of obligation to education, rather than right to education. Moreover, an education benefit has been introduced to signal that young people under 30 years without ordinary education should not receive the ‘normal’ benefit. As such, educational benefit and the stress on education for young people indicate a shift from traditional labour market policies to education oriented policies in combating

¹⁵ The report is based on a review of existing literature on Danish VET, policy analysis and six in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.

youth unemployment. Educational policy is thus the *sine qua non* tool to combating youth unemployment in Denmark.

This is signalled by the so-called 95% aim of the government, namely that 95% of a youth cohort completes at least upper secondary education. Especially, the VET-system has attained a more and more prominent position in Danish reforms, as policy-makers and social partners have realised that a narrow focus on academic education for young people is not adequate for the future labour market, in which skilled labour will be in demand. VET has therefore become high-politics in combating youth unemployment.

The Danish VET-system is based on the dual training principle, i.e. a sandwich process where periods in schools are combined with periods of training in enterprises (apprenticeships). Owing to the continuing high involvement of employers and the heavy government funding, the VET-system in Denmark is considered as a collectivist skill formation system as opposed to for example the Swedish system where employers are marginalized. In Denmark, on the contrary, social partners – trade unions and employers associations – are heavily involved in the governance of VET; an involvement that dates back to in the guild tradition. Corporatist governance structures exist at the macro/national, meso/industry and micro/school level.

The Danish vocational education system has been well placed to counter the worst effects of the crisis on youth unemployment. With its dual structure – combining school periods with apprenticeships – the Danish vocational education system is tightly coupled with the labour market, which helps establishing a relatively smooth school-to-work transition. Upon receiving their degree, students are already accustomed to the demands of work life, and the tight integration of employers and unions in the governance structure helps developing vocational education to match industry requirements. Moreover, employers can trust that students having finished their vocational education have both the necessary technical and theoretical skills along with quite extensive experience being in a workplace environment, which is necessary given the relatively high wages for young workers.

According to social partners interviewed for this report, looking back at the pre-crisis period, VET-schools had through the decades become the education institution for ‘residual’ groups that were not qualified for upper-secondary schooling. A significant turning point came in the wake of the financial and economic crisis. While manufacturing took a very heavy blow in terms of job losses, it also became apparent that university graduates had a very hard time finding jobs – skills obsolescence and ‘lost generations’ became a real concern. The political discourse started to change from promoting ‘any-kind of university degree’ to getting the right university degrees. This coupled with an aim to increase the labour supply with 135.000 persons to finance the welfare state in 2020 meant new educational policies. Concomitantly, estimates have shown that the labour market shortage in 2020 would in fact be for skilled workers – educated in VET-schools – while there would be an over-supply of unskilled workers. While the latter point about unskilled workers was no surprise, the former point about skilled workers was, and it underlined that a myopic focus on university degrees was not sufficient to meet the skills-demands of the future.

The main challenge of the dual structure relates to the transitions inside the vocational education system. In recent decades a number of issues have put pressure on the Danish vocational education system. First, the system has been challenged by a lack of apprenticeship positions, which has had a consequence that too many students drop out before getting a degree. It has also led to students shuffling between programs leading to rising costs of education. Although recent reforms have strengthened the youth guarantee by offering school based apprenticeships, a lack of company-based apprenticeships is still considered a major problem for vocational education in attracting the

best and brightest students. Second, and following this, the esteem of Danish vocational education has been hurt by the continued rise in uptake in Gymnasium and previous governments' expansion of tertiary education. Vocational education has thus come to be considered something of a 'dead end' for young people – an option for those who cannot manage a tertiary education. Third, the strong emphasis on activation through education has meant that vocational programs have accepted a large number of students with little motivation and a weak school record, adding further to the waning quality of education and teaching and hurting the reputation of vocational education.

Recent reforms have sought to address these challenges to Danish vocational education. The most recent reform of Danish vocational education, called 'Bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddannelser' (Better and more attractive vocational education), presented in an agreement between government and opposition (excluding 'The Unity List') in February 2014, has been particularly important in building a political consensus around the centrality of high quality vocational education for economic growth in Denmark. Although to a large extent characterized by continuity in key areas of Danish vocational education – notably by bolstering the central role of the social partners, and seeking to create strong bridges between vocational education and higher education – the reform also introduces significant gradual transformations, notably with the grade requirements for entering vocational education. The introduction of grade requirements signifies a stronger emphasis on building a strong reputation for vocational education at the expense of its role of social integration. An important outcome of the reform is thus a changed political discourse on vocational education: from leaving VET in the shadow of tertiary education to placing it centrally in the growth agenda of Danish politics.

The 2014-reform of Danish VET looks like a case of institutional layering, where an institutional element representing a different logic of action – the grade requirements – is attached to the existing institutional setup, leading to a re-balancing of the focus of the policy area, i.e. the increased focus on the esteem and quality of vocational education may come at the expense of the role that vocational education has played in social integration of working class youth as the weaker members of this group is left in other programs to qualify for entrance. With the reform still in the implementation phase, it is still too early to say what these gradual shifts will amount to in the long run. Notwithstanding, the longer-term consequences of the reform, in our interviews we found that what was most important for the stakeholders, especially the social partners, was that vocational education was at the top of the policy agenda.

The policy-learning framework of Danish VET has been important for developing recent reform efforts. The report has highlighted two main policy learning channels and has illustrated their interaction in VET reforms: 1) Continuous feedback and recommendations from social partners in macro-, meso-, and micro-level corporatist bodies, and 2) evidence-based adjustments using a common knowledge-repertoire based on micro-data on students and school-to-work transitions. The two channels of policy learning are to some extent complementary as they fulfil different but mutually supporting functions. The corporatist channel produces practical information and recommendations that can at once inform policy reform and facilitate its implementation because key stakeholders are involved. The channel is historically based on the guilds tradition and serves as practical knowledge about what skills are needed and how policies should attempt to match VET-programs with the labour market 'realities'. The common knowledge-repertoire based on micro-data produces analyses that policy-makers use to update their statistical knowledge on the performance of VET-programs, which then might feed into policy innovation. The channel is recent and has gained prominence due to its clear potential for evaluating performance of schools and programs in line with more general trends of new public management tools. Finally, it is worth noting that the reform presents a specific set of

goals for evaluating the success of the reform. These goals are to be used on a general level to continually judge how well the reform is working, but also on the level of specific vocational education institutions to measure their success, as well as to compare educational institutions.

4. Conclusion

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In this concluding section, the main findings of the nine country studies are very briefly summarized with regard (a) to the dynamics of policy change and innovation at the macro-level (overall governance) and (b) the policy learning framework (major institutional aspects and interactions facilitating or hindering policy innovation). We also very briefly refer to labour market and welfare policy dimensions where youth-related policy changes may have been introduced over the last few years. Finally an overall synthesis of outputs of policy learning and innovation is presented, drawing upon the classificatory approaches and concepts outlined in the Introduction.

4.1 Governance structures

With regard to the extent to which governance structures in the youth employment policy field promote or inhibit policy learning and innovation, there is significant variation among the nine countries. Most of the countries studied exhibit multi-level governance with regional/local administrations having competences over certain elements of policy relevant to youth transitions, but at the same time central government institutions (such as relevant Ministries and other national bodies) play a significant role in strategic policy decisions and the overall regulatory framework.

However, the degree of decentralization/devolution in itself cannot explain significant differences among the countries. On the one hand, among the three countries considered as more prone to policy experimentation and innovation (Denmark, UK and Netherlands) there are significant differences as to the governance structure in policy-making (and policy change). Denmark exemplifies a corporatist governance (and policy-learning) framework at all levels (the macro-, meso- and micro-level) with systematic interaction and feedback from the bottom upwards and the reverse, which is conducive to negotiated and evidence-informed innovation.

The Dutch system is characterised by progressive decentralisation in implementation competences from the national to the local level. It shares with Denmark a corporatist tradition at the national, sector and local level. Of significant importance, in the Dutch case, are multi-level plans to tackle youth unemployment and facilitate transitions: national action plans, sector plans on work-to-work transitions, and bottom-up experimentation of new policies, such as the Youth Starter's Grant launched in some localities through joint efforts by local authorities, the youth sections of the trade unions and employers' associations. The latter constitutes a bottom-up policy innovation, along the lines of the so-called "triple helix" model, consisting in a dynamic interaction between major local stakeholders.

In the UK governance structures indicate contradictory trends. Under central government auspices, market mechanisms, competition and choice are seen as key in driving policy innovation. Devolution of powers to cities and some regions also contributes to policy learning and innovation, as more localised policy-making machineries facilitate experimentation with new policies, evidence dissemination and mutual learning that can feed into new programme design. Yet, at the same time,

the marketised logic of competition (for winning contracts, under the “payment-by-results” model of policy delivery) can act as an obstacle to sharing of best practice among multiple public and private providers. Moreover, in this “liberal model”, fragmented governance may be a structural obstacle to effective innovation in the long-run, as it inhibits a co-ordinated, strategic approach to policy change and innovation between the various levels (and arms) of government.

In the second group of countries examined, Belgium and Spain are characterised by a (quasi) federal institutional setting with responsibilities in the youth employment field shared: by the federal government, the regions and the linguistic communities, in Belgium; and the central government, the autonomous communities and localities, in Spain. System complexity and multiplicity of providers (in the fields of education and youth employment policies) has persistently hampered joint innovative action and sharing of good practices in Belgium. Nevertheless, in recent years, various factors have boosted cross-institution and cross-region cooperation, creating a fertile environment for peer-to-peer policy learning and innovation. In Spain, devolution may in principle facilitate innovative behaviour at the local level. Such has been the case in some social protection fields such as healthcare and minimum income policies, where a ‘domino effect’ may be clearly ascertained. As to youth policies, there are indeed some examples concerning effective learning and innovation in specific regions and localities, as well as evidence of substantive informal dialogue, more institutionalized since 2014.

France presents a highly centralised top-down approach to policy governance. The traditionally weak dialogue between social actors, while improving, has rarely been a source of policy innovation, leaving the state (despite some decentralisation) and civil society as main policy actors. Decentralisation is limited and focused mostly on providing policy information. However, there are some instances of good practices spreading from the bottom up. Also, learning from EU bodies is visible in recent improvements to trainees’ legal protection and in the success of Second Chance Schools. Most innovations focus on an extensive array of market and non-market youth contracts.

Greece and Turkey exhibit a highly centralized governance structure in the areas of education, training and employment. In the case of Greece, this goes hand-in-hand with excessive bureaucratisation and a formalistic/legalistic tradition. These hamper bottom-up initiatives in policy design and management/implementation by regional and/or local authorities and other stakeholders.

Finally, Slovakia exemplifies a case of policy innovation (in VET) driven primarily by employers (in the automotive sector), who pushed it through when the crisis provided a “window of opportunity”. In a sense, the Slovakian case exemplifies Kingdon’s approach (1984) on how policy entrepreneurs (in this case, the Automotive Industry Association) with issues they want to put on the public agenda seize the opportunity to promote problem recognition linked to solutions they have prefigured. Thus, a “window is opened”, and a policy change process begins. Yet for this to happen, policy entrepreneurs need to have access to power (Zahariadis 2008).

Moreover, a general trend at the macro-level is pointed out in most of the country reports. Namely, structural factors make STW transitions lengthier and more uncertain, while in parallel the progressive polarisation and hollowing out of the labour market resulting in fewer intermediate jobs, significantly diminishes opportunities for progression beyond entry level among young people. Interestingly, in Denmark, forecasts about the oversupply of unskilled workers and a pressing need for skilled workers (educated in VET-schools) by 2020 have been a major driver of reform in the VET system. Polarisation of skills is a significant concern of major stakeholders in other countries as well (e.g. in the UK, Spain, France and Greece).

4.2 The policy learning framework: “enablers” of and “barriers” to policy learning and innovation

Table 1 summarises the main “enablers” of and “barriers” to policy learning and innovation. The countries are grouped according to the size of the youth problem (as defined in the Introduction) and by whether they more often “export” or “import” policy innovations.

Institutional (and process) “enablers” and “barriers” in the sphere of policy learning and innovation are examined with regard to whether the political/policy environment is conducive or not to policy learning and innovation (Column A), and the major policy learning and transfer channels within a country, across countries and from supranational organisations to domestic institutions and actors (Column B). In addition, column (C) provides some brief information on main areas/programmes regarding youth policy innovation over the last few years (with a focus on VET, the Youth Guarantee or similar programmes, and selected aspects of labour market policy targeting youth).

Denmark and the UK stand out as the countries with the policy environments most oriented to evidence-based adjustments. In Denmark, corporatist learning supports a highly co-ordinated sharing and diffusion of knowledge between different levels of administration and joint stakeholders’ bodies (see the example of the recent VET reform in the country report), processes that are not visible in the UK.

Table 1 “Enablers” of and “barriers” to policy learning and innovation

	Political/policy environment conducive to policy learning and innovation (A)		Policy learning and transfer channels (B)				Main areas/programmes regarding youth policy innovation (C)		
	Evidence-based policy making / Use of piloting, controlled experiments etc.	Policy inertia, path dependence & risk aversion barrier to learning	Diffusion of knowledge between different levels of government and stakeholder organisations	Soft forms of learning, from other countries and/or from international bodies (EU/OECD policy recommendations - expert networks, mutual learning programmes etc.)	Coerced transfer (based on EU funding requirements & “bailout” deals)	Voluntarist learning (peer-to-peer, codes of conduct etc)	VET & National Qualifications Infrastructure	Youth Contract / Youth Guarantee	EPL/ALMPs, Minimum Wage, Welfare Programmes
Countries considered “policy innovators” (with comparatively low youth unemployment)									
Denmark	Evidence-based adjustments using a common knowledge repertoire that systematically feeds into policy innovation (see recent VET reform)	-	Corporatist learning framework with significant knowledge diffusion channels between the micro-meso- and macro- levels of governance (and stakeholders’ bodies)	More of an exporter than importer of policy ideas, particularly in relation to active labour market policy (inspiration from the Swiss system)	Eligibility for EU funding not a major stimulus of policy innovation	Some evidence of this	Significant changes in the institutional set-up of VET (introduction of grade requirements, bringing VET at the centre of the growth agenda)	Fine tuning of the “flexicurity” model	
Netherlands	No tradition of ex ante or ex post evaluation research change nor to extensively conduct controlled experiments	-	The influence goes both ways (more bottom-up initiatives – “triple” helix model)	Moderate (the influence goes both ways)	Eligibility for EU funding not a major stimulus of policy innovation	Some evidence of this	Creation of a regional investment fund for improving dual learning-work programmes on Co-funding by the companies	“Youth Starter’s Grant” (an innovative local scheme for young people) Sector plans (may also embrace youth transitions)	2013 Social Accord (easing of dismissals) High ALMPs spending Youth min wage Youngsters less than 27 years: 30 days waiting period for welfare benefits
UK	Well-established tradition of robust evidence-based policy-making	But evidence is used more for fine-tuning policies rather than for strategic decision (risk aversion and path dependence)	Liberal tradition (no co-ordinated diffusion and feedbacks) Devolution facilitates policy learning, but	Influence from OECD, and other countries with similar/common Anglo-Saxon traditions. On apprenticeship: influence from Germany, Denmark, Netherlands and Switzerland	Eligibility for EU funding not a major stimulus of policy innovation	High reliance on voluntarist learning and transfer Dense network of think tanks and policy communities	Radical change: Shift of focus from trainers to employers (Apprenticeship Trailblazers) Payment-by-results to providers	Youth Contract (flagship programme) - Provision of personalised and sustained support	Given high flexibility EPL not an area of policy intervention Min wages for youth Stricter activation and increased conditionality

	Political/policy environment conducive to policy learning and innovation (A)		Policy learning and transfer channels (B)				Main areas/programmes regarding youth policy innovation (C)		
	Evidence-based policy making / Use of piloting, controlled experiments etc.	Policy inertia, path dependence & risk aversion barrier to learning	Diffusion of knowledge between different levels of government and stakeholder organisations	Soft forms of learning, from other countries and/or from international bodies (EU/OECD policy recommendations - expert networks, mutual learning programmes etc.)	Coerced transfer (based on EU funding requirements & "bailout" deals)	Voluntarist learning (peer-to-peer, codes of conduct etc)	VET & National Qualifications Infrastructure	Youth Contract / Youth Guarantee	EPL/ALMPs, Minimum Wage, Welfare Programmes
Countries with comparatively high youth unemployment									
Belgium	Programme evaluation is widespread - Several pilot projects exist but it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which these systematically feed into policy design	Some evidence of this	The language issue between linguistic communities makes transfers even more of an issue	The review of the Belgian National Reform Plan suggests a strong influence of the EC on policymaking (through various channels: soft forms of learning and EU project priorities) – Some of the reforms recently passed derive directly from EC recommendations,	Fragmentation of competences and inconsistent cooperation slows knowledge transfer and innovation "Synerjob" facilitates peer-to-peer learning	Social partners ask for harmonization of the VET system at federal level and a clear definition of common minimum requirements in terms of labour law and social security	Implementation of the YG is currently giving impulse to peer-to-peer policy learning across regions and institutions	EPL at OECD average levels Min wage for youth abolished Large investment in ALMPs - Strict benefit sanctions, but the frequency of monitoring is very low	
France	Strong monitoring and evaluation transition that functions as a trigger of policy learning/transfer	Institutional stasis due to the "dirigiste" tradition	Barriers due to segmentation - Relatively poor coordination between different institutional actors	Second chance schools introduced as a result of EU influence – But France is also a pioneer in some areas	EC recommendations and programmes have accelerated measures for youth	Limited: Low involvement of employers – But union activism important in policy innovation	Shift from centralised to a decentralised and company regulated system	The YG functions as an umbrella for a number of interventions	Contrat Nouvelle Embauche (CNE) 'Emplois d'avenir contract', 'les contrats de generation' and 'le dispositif d'accompagnement'
Greece	Weak Evaluation linked to EU-funded programmes – It does not feed into policy design	Excessive bureaucratisation and high degree of policy inertia – path dependence	Mostly through EU influence, the bailout requirements and the "Task Force" guided policy reform	Strong (in rhetoric) / weak in policy implementation and policy outcomes until the eruption of the crisis / Binding stipulations by the bailout programme guide reforms under the crisis	Coerced transfer under the "bailout deal" EU programme funding priorities are also important	Very limited (not enough dialogue with civil society, absence of a network of think tanks and policy communities)	Path-shift: to a stronger dual system (under the influence of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships) Co-operation with Germany	Implementation of the YG started with great delay (it funds a pre-existing scheme) The YG has a potential for policy innovation, but this remains to be seen Evidence supports the argument of a sub-protective regime	EPL changes boosting flexible and precarious employment, & facilitating redundancies Dismantling of collective bargaining Sub-min wage for youth
Spain	Weak Evaluation linked to EU-funded programmes – It feeds into policy design	Some degree of policy inertia – path dependence - Emphasis increasingly on policy planning	Political competition and centrifugal trends restrain knowledge diffusion and policy learning among administrations at various levels Some examples of effective policy learning within regions with a high	Strong in terms of policy goals & resources; weaker and needing evaluation in terms of outcomes – EU channels (mutual learning, expert networks) are important	EU programme funding priorities are important, as are also impositions or recommendations issued by the EU/Troika	Limited dialogue but evidence of informal networks	Path-shift: towards a stronger dual system (under the influence of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships) Co-operation with Germany.	Policy transfer in pilots of the YG. Yet it remains to be seen whether any innovative measures will be maintained once the funds are withdrawn	EPL changes (reduction of dismissal costs for permanent contracts) Stricter activation and increased conditionality New types of contracts: the entrepreneur's contract and the renewed

	Political/policy environment conducive to policy learning and innovation (A)		Policy learning and transfer channels (B)				Main areas/programmes regarding youth policy innovation (C)		
	Evidence-based policy making / Use of piloting, controlled experiments etc.	Policy inertia, path dependence & risk aversion barrier to learning	Diffusion of knowledge between different levels of government and stakeholder organisations	Soft forms of learning, from other countries and/or from international bodies (EU/OECD policy recommendations - expert networks, mutual learning programmes etc.)	Coerced transfer (based on EU funding requirements & "bailout" deals)	Voluntarist learning (peer-to-peer, codes of conduct etc)	VET & National Qualifications Infrastructure	Youth Contract / Youth Guarantee	EPL/ALMPs, Minimum Wage, Welfare Programmes
			degree of co-ordination between regional/local administrations				Evidence of consideration of reinforcement of dual system pre crisis.	Evidence does not fully support the argument of a sub-protective regime	training contract (2012 reform)
Slovakia	Weak evidence-based policy – Very limited piloting	The range of possible policy innovations is limited by party politics (but some important innovations are in progress in VET, informal learning outside school and cross-sector youth policy co-ordination)	No systematic feedbacks among different levels of administration Cross-sector coordination of youth policy (and KomPrax) two "innovative channel" of knowledge diffusion driven by domestic actors and facilitated by EU and bilateral co-operation (with the Czech National Institute for Children and Youth)	EU as a major facilitator of learning (through various channels)	EU programme funding priorities are important, as are also recommendations issued by the EU	Automotive sector very active in triggering (and co-designing with the relevant authorities) VET reform	Path-shift to a more efficient dual vocational system Automotive sector trigger of policy reform (bottom-up policy innovation) Motivation to innovate increases when actors acknowledge pressing problems Co-operation with Germany	The Youth Guarantee will be implemented in two phases, the preventive and the corrective phase	Although the labour market remains flexible, the Labour Code amendment that entered into force on 1 January 2013 increased labour costs and discouraged employers from hiring when the economy is weak Money spent on ALMPs in Slovakia is not used efficiently Internship subsidy for the less than 26 years old with no regular paid job yet
Turkey	Absence of systematic and reliable data collection for impact analysis Piloting is rarely done, baseline studies are not available Overall, policy environment is haphazard – Mismatches between policy goals and outcomes, and educational goals and outcomes	Barriers to policy learning and innovation due to over-centralised structure, dominance of fragmented project-based solutions and inability to convert such projects into long-term sustainable policies	The centralized structure of the major policy making institutions leads to rigidity in policy design and change. Political interests overrule policy transfers. Clash between comprehensive reform initiatives and very centralized and monolithic structure of the institutions to implement these reforms	Increasing EU impact (but legislative changes in line with the <i>acquis communautaire</i> not in harmony as far as employment creation and protection are concerned) Decreasing impact of EU harmonisation process	EU programme funding priorities and also of projects funded by the World Bank and other international organisations are important. Decreasing impact of EU harmonisation process in the last few years	Codes of conduct, charters and good practice schemes are very rare, and only recently being discussed among the higher echelons of the business sector	A VET system in place but business and education co-operation at a rudimentary stage. An Occupational Standards Institution established in 2000 introduced a new policy instrument	No Youth Guarantee or similar programme in place Indications of a sub-protective regime for youth	Strict employment legislation and high tax wedge. Firms may choose to hire workers informally in order to escape the cost of hiring or firing due to rigid regulations. The restructuring of İŞKUR (Turkish Employment Agency) introduced ALMPs Indications of a sub-protective regime for youth

Note: Tables 1 and 2 are compiled on the basis of the detailed information provided by the country reports (and not only on the executive summaries included here). Thus for any further information see country reports.

Table 2 Policy learning & innovation outputs

Mechanisms of & outputs from policy learning					Pathways of learning/transfer				
	Incremental adjustments, fine-tuning	Changes in policy instruments, new innovative schemes	Changes in specific or broad policy goals	Layering and/or redeployment of old institutions/measures to new purposes	Inspiration	Copying/ Experimental emulation	Coerced transfer	Eligibility criteria of EU programmes	EU recommendations / Mutual learning / EU policy options etc,
Denmark			Strengthening the reputation of VET at the expense of its role of social integration	Adding the "grade" requirement					
Netherlands		Bottom-up introduction of the Youth Starter's Grant							
UK	Overall focus on fine-tuning		It may indicate a shift of policy goal	Shifting focus of VET from education providers to employers	From Anglo-saxon countries & the OECD	It may imply emulation			
Belgium		Increasing cross-regional co-operation in new programmes						Highly relevant	Highly relevant
France	Incremental changes	But also pioneer in certain areas			From other EU countries, e.g. Germany (dual VET)			Highly relevant	Highly relevant
Greece			Path shift towards a dual VET system			Experimental emulation of dual VET	In the field of EPL	Highly relevant (but when funding stops policy learning is not sustained)	Moderately to highly relevant
Spain			Path shift towards a dual VET system			Experimental emulation of dual VET	In the field of EPL	Highly relevant. Learning is sustained over time	Moderately to highly relevant
Slovakia			Path shift towards a dual VET system			Experimental emulation of dual VET (triggered by the employers)		Highly relevant (but when funding stops policy learning is not sustained)	Moderately to highly relevant
Turkey		Vocational Qualification Authority (VQA)		İŞKUR (The Turkish Employment Agency) redeploying old instruments to new purposes (as for instance ALMPs)	Linked to inspiration,	copying and/or emulation		Policy transfer through projects funded by the World Bank and through the accession process (that stalled in the last few years)	

Even though there is a robust evidence-based tradition in the UK and a dense network of epistemic/policy communities and think tanks facilitating extensive piloting, trailblazers etc., there is

no systematic and co-ordinated flow of information into high levels of (strategic) policy decision-making. Rather, accumulated evidence is used for fine-tuning policies and for changes in policy instruments - that is, mostly for first and second order changes, according to Hall's approach to policy change. Compared to Denmark, in the Netherlands corporatist learning is less robust, though bottom-up innovations are usually introduced through concerted action between various local stakeholders (for instance the "Youth Starter's Grant" described in the country report). Denmark and the Netherlands are mostly "exporters" rather than "importers" of policy innovations. Yet, soft forms of learning across countries and through supranational channels of mutual learning and knowledge transfer/adaptation are also important (to varying degrees) in the above three countries (for the UK it is OECD recommendations rather than EU policy priorities that provide policy orientations).

In any case, the influence of supranational channels and of the policy patterns of some North-west European countries (as for instance Germany with regard to the dual VET system) is more decisive in initiating policy change in the second group of countries examined here. In this latter group, piloting, programme evaluation and impact assessment is performed less systematically, and even if programme evaluation is widespread (as in Belgium), it is difficult to ascertain whether the acquired evidence systematically feeds into policy design. In Belgium, significant institutional barriers emerge from fragmentation/overlapping of policy competences in the fields of education, training and employment policy for youth between the two levels of government (federal, regional) and the different language communities. This condition significantly slows the sharing of information on good practices. At the same time, influence from the EU is extensive, while some new schemes (e.g. the "Synerjob" scheme) open up opportunities for peer-to-peer learning across regions and language communities.

France stands out with respect to monitoring and evaluation. It fits the evidence-based tradition (of the first group of countries), particularly as to its VET system, paired with a long standing concern about youth unemployment. At the same time, a high degree of institutional stasis is identified as a barrier to innovation. Notwithstanding youth policy accumulation effects and policy compartmentalization, the main enablers of and barriers to policy innovation in youth employment and education policies are public opinion and social tensions, which have sometimes triggered (or stopped) reform, particularly in connection to labour contracts. The EU and other supranational bodies are identified as important sources of innovation.

In the other four countries, the range of policy innovation and knowledge diffusion is limited due to highly centralised administration structures (e.g. Greece and Turkey), excessive bureaucratisation in Greece, policy inertia and path dependence in Spain, and the fact that political interests overrule policy decisions (mostly Turkey, but also Slovakia and the other two South European countries). However, Slovakia as well as a number of regional governments in Spain (particularly those where policy co-ordination between regions/localities is stronger) stand out as examples of innovative initiatives (e.g. the initiative by the automotive sector for VET reform in Slovakia, and specific examples of policy learning and sharing of good examples in the regions of Aragon, Asturias and others in Spain). Greece has experienced coerced transfer under the bailout (particularly in the field of labour protection legislation, with coerced reforms dismantling collective bargaining, introducing sub-minimum wages for youth and increasing flexibility in hiring and dismissals). Particularly in Spain, Greece and Slovakia a path-shift is under way in VET structures with an attempt to strengthen the dual system under the initiative provided in the context of the "European Alliance for Apprenticeships" and bilateral agreements between Germany (as an exporter of the dual system) and six EU countries, (among them Spain, Greece and Slovakia).

Finally, in Table 2 we provide a summary presentation of policy learning and innovation outputs by combining (and adapting) the typologies and approaches laid out in the Introduction - namely (a) Hall's distinction between radical changes in the basic instruments of policy and in policy goals (second and third order changes respectively), on the one hand, and piecemeal changes in the setting of these instruments (first order changes), on the other; (b) Streeck and Thelen's new concepts for understanding institutional change, "layering", "conversion" and/or redeployment of old institutions to new purposes; and (c) the pathways of change involving more or less intentional policy learning (as "emulation", "copying" or "inspiration"), empowerment of policy entrepreneurs, or coercive change. We also indicate the policy field and/or policy programme on which each country report focuses in order to examine innovative practices (whether there is a broad focus on STW transition and youth labour market policies, or a more specific focus on, for example, VET reform).

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

www.eurofound.europa.eu

ILO: International Labour Office

www.ilo.org

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

www.oecd.org

OSE: Observatoire Sociale Européen

www.ose.be

SOLIDAR: European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe

www.solidar.org

EurActiv

www.euractiv.com

European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

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