

D 3.5 - Policy Synthesis and Integrative Report on Policy Performance and Evaluation Methodologies in Europe

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STYLE WP3:

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School-to-work transitions; youth unemployment; vocational education and training (VET); apprenticeship; active labour market policies; welfare/benefit system

1. Introduction

This report is based on Task 1 (Performance and Key Drivers of Youth Labour Markets in Europe); Task 2 (The Effectiveness of Policies to combat Youth Unemployment); Task 3 (Quantitative, Case Study-Based Analysis of Performance and Policies); and Task 4 (Comparative Policy Overview of STW Transitions and Youth Labour Markets Dynamics, Performance and Effectiveness) of STYLE Work Package 3 - Policy Performance.

A cross-country comparative approach is used in Work Package 3 covering 27 countries of the European Union and Turkey in order to assess the performance of their youth labor markets and the effectiveness of implemented policies targeted at youth. Additionally, an in-depth analysis was carried out for eight selected countries (DE, EE, ES, NL, PL, SE, TR, UK) which yielded detailed information about the educational system as well as institutions which are responsible for school to work transition. These eight descriptive country reports – with evaluative input from local experts –, the quantitative analysis of country performance and the impact of policies (Hadjivassiliou, Kirchner Sala and Speckesser (2015)) as well as a study on the effectiveness of policies to combat youth unemployment (Gonzalez Carreras, Kirchner Sala and Speckesser (2015)) provide details on potential best practices that can possibly be used together guidance on how exactly these are established and implemented.

In the first task of this Work Package (Analysis of Country Performances and Impact in Policies) youth labour market performance is examined in the light of recent policies in Europe, drawing on an analysis of EU Labour Force Survey data for 2004-2012. A single index measure of labour market performance is developed combining nine variables of labour market inclusion, human capital formation, labour market segmentation and transitions out of education. This index provides a way of comparing relative performance of countries and providing some evidence on how institutional change can affect complex outcomes, such as a range of factors associated with young people's labour market transitions. Following the analysis of country/policy performance, a micro-data based analysis of individual transitions aimed to elaborate key drivers and barriers of transitions was conducted.

The second task of this Work Package (The effectiveness of Policies to Combat Youth Unemployment) provides quantitative estimates on the impact of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) on youth unemployment in Europe based on a macroeconomic panel dataset of youth unemployment, ALMP and education policy variables and further country-specific characteristics of labour market institutions and the broader demographic and macroeconomic environment for 27 Member States.

The third task of Work Package 3 summarizes structured and comparable country reports (the full version of which is available at: <http://www.style-research.eu/publications/working-papers/>) for Estonia, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK which assess the structure of country-specific, youth-related policies using a common systematic framework. Besides descriptive parts detailing education and training, including vocational training, systems, based often on desk research, local experts (comparable groups of policy makers and policy implementing organisations) have been asked to give their appraisal of national systems and how these can be improved – or have been improved – by recent policy innovations.

Task 4 involved the comparative overview of the school-to-work (STW) transition pathways, structures and related effectiveness in the eight case study countries of Task 3. In addition, France (FR) was reviewed since it represents a particular Continental STW transition model. Our comparative framework and selection of country case studies was informed by the Pohl and Walther's youth transition regime typology since we wished to capture, compare and contrast the existing diversity and variety of STW transitions not only between but also within regimes (Pohl and Walther, 2005 and 2007; Walther, 2006). As a result, we distinguished between five main types of youth transition regimes (Pohl, and Walther, 2007; Walther, 2006):

- (i) *Universalistic (SE)*, where the focus of STW transition policies is mainly on education in the broad sense of personal development as well as on supportive activation;
- (ii) *Liberal (UK)*, which focuses more on the young person's rapid labour market entry;
- (iii) *Employment-centred (DE, FR, NL)*, which although belonging to this regime, each has a different STW transition focus: mass (company-based) apprenticeships (dual training) in Germany, school-based STW transition in France and a mixed apprenticeship and school-based VET system in the Netherlands which, in any case, combines elements of both the liberal and universal system;
- (iv) *Mediterranean/Sub-Protective (ES, TR)*, which has traditionally had the weakest links between the worlds of education and work and quite protracted STW transitions; and
- (v) *Post-Socialist/Transitional (EE, PL)*, which has adopted a mix of liberal and/or employment centred approaches.

2. Major findings

In presenting some key findings of Task 1, 2, 3 and 4, this report is Work Package 3's integrative report, and, as such, signifies the completion of this Work Package.

Although the labour market situation of young people is improving, youth unemployment remains very high (European Commission, 2015a; Eurofound, 2015). In January 2016, the EU-28 youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) was 19.7% (Eurostat, 2016).¹ In 2014, the youth long-term unemployment rate for those aged 15-24 and 25-29 stood at 7.8% and 6% respectively.

Task 4 shows that there is, however, a large divergence between Member States. High youth unemployment rates reflect young people's difficulties in securing employment. However, this does not necessarily mean that the number of unemployed young people aged 15-24 is large, since many in this age group are in full-time education and are, therefore, neither working nor looking for a job. This, in turn, may make meaningful comparisons between countries difficult since in some countries young people in education and/or training such as apprentices are defined as 'employed but taking part in vocational training in school' and, as such, as being out of the labour force.

Task 4 reveals that young people's employment is characterised by a number of specific working patterns which, in many cases, contribute to greater labour market vulnerability. Across the EU, the incidence of precarious, including temporary and atypical (as well as part-time), employment is significantly higher among young people. This reflects the high degree of segmentation and dualism that characterise youth labour markets and which increased during the economic crisis. In 2014, 43.4% of young people aged 15–24 were in temporary employment (compared to 13% of the total working population) (Eurostat, 2015),² although with considerable differences between Member States. The share of temporary employment among those aged 25-29 is much lower (22.7% in 2014), although it has also increased since 2008.

Similarly, part-time employment is more widespread among young people, with proportions increasing across the EU-28 between 2008 and 2014: from 26% to 31.3% for those aged 15–24 and from 12.3% to 15.9% for those aged 25-29. Crucially, reflecting young people's deteriorating situation in the labour market, the rate of involuntary part-time employment generally increased across the EU between 2008 and 2014: from 26.1% to 29.4% for those aged 15–24 with Spain and France recording the highest incidence of involuntary part-time employment in 2014. A significant increase in the rate of involuntary part-time employment was also observed for the 25-29 age group, albeit again the extent of the increase

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics

² <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

varies widely among the countries under review. Since 2009 across the EU there has also been a steady rise in the NEET rate of those aged 15-24. In 2014, the NEET rate for those aged 15-24 and 25-29 in the EU-28 stood at 12.5% and 20.4% respectively, but again with considerable country differences, notably a clear North-South divide.

Across the EU, VET, including apprenticeships, is considered key to lowering youth unemployment and facilitating the STW transitions of young people and policy makers across Europe have been attempting to improve VET in order to provide an attractive alternative to general upper secondary and tertiary education and in order to better meet the skill requirements of the labour market (European Commission, 2015b; Quintini and Martin, 2014). Both Tasks 3 and 4 show that, overall, VET/apprenticeships still play a critical role in facilitating fast and smooth transitions, albeit to varying degrees and depending on the path-dependent institutional and cultural context.

According to the findings of Task 1, Germany and the Netherlands have established the most effective institutions to achieve a high integration of 15-19 year-olds in education and employment. High performance is consistent over time (2004, 2009 and 2012) showing that institutional effectiveness is robust for different stages of the economic cycle. The picture is slightly less positive for 20-24 year olds, although both countries are amongst the highest performing. Austria and Denmark also achieve good youth labour market and employment outcomes. For 20-24 year-olds performance is highest in Austria and, as for 15-19 year olds, it has improved since 2004, which coincided with the extension of job search instruments, the introduction of youth guarantees and extension of ALMP for young people in Austria.

Noticeable improvements in the position relative to the best performing countries and relative to the 2004 base levels were observed for Belgium, Poland, and Romania, where policy reform focused on increasing incentives for employing young people and, in the case of Belgium, on introducing sanctions for firms not employing particular proportions of young people. However, while Belgium and Poland improved to about 60% of the best performers (Netherlands or Germany), Romania is still among the weakest countries. Most other countries achieved some improvements in the position of 15-19 year olds, although structural weaknesses in the southern EU Member States remain. Both before (2004) and after (2012) the crisis Spain, Italy and Greece were amongst the lowest performers for both age groups. Although the situation of 15-19 year olds improved relative to 2004 in all three countries, that for 20-24 year olds deteriorated, in particular in Italy.

While these countries introduced many elements of policy reform similar to other countries, more labour market flexibility did not improve the situation for young people. In addition, the consistent lack of labour

demand following the financial crisis suggests that incentive mechanisms like those included in ALMPs are widely unsuitable to create opportunities under difficult macroeconomic conditions.

While based on index-measures aggregate country performance improved or deteriorated, changes affected both specific groups of young people (broken down by gender, age and education) and individual drivers and barriers differently over time. Consistent with the earlier labour market performance assessment, in countries with improving youth labour market conditions, individual barriers like gender or parental background decreased most. However, there are some countries where people with low education levels have more difficulties today than before the recession. Such evidence is crucial to both improve the targeting of policy to specific groups and decrease inequality, which continues to affect individual transitions to the labour market in many countries.

Crucially, there has been a convergence in policy across all clusters, in that apprenticeships are now being promoted as a high quality route to achieving improved outcomes for young people in all clusters. However, the success of this policy shift is dependent on the specific structural and institutional frameworks in place to support this agenda, which varies greatly between clusters. Consistently shown to be key to the success of particular VET schemes, notably apprenticeships, is the extent, type and nature of social partner involvement (European Commission, 2013; ILO, 2015). However, this involvement varies considerably between Member States and VET programmes. In general, the role of social partners is clearly prescribed in highly regulated VET/apprenticeship systems with a corporatist form of governance such as Germany and Sweden which, in turn, leads to very strong and active social partner involvement. In contrast, in market-led systems such as the UK, social partner involvement is rather uneven. Likewise, social partner involvement in school-based VET systems tends to be less extensive than in work-based VET systems (European Commission, 2013).

Task 3 and 4 reveal that improving the situation of many millions of young Europeans failing to find gainful employment and, more generally, suffering from deprivation and social exclusion, has been identified as a clear priority for policy both for both national (EU Member States) and EU-wide initiatives. Indeed, EU and national policies have in recent years intensified support for young people with, *inter alia*, a much greater focus on enhanced VET and youth-related ALMPs, notably the Youth Guarantee, as unemployment rates increased substantially in many countries following the Great Recession.

According to Task 2, much of the policy reform is guided by good practice. For example, there has been a concerted effort to extend the dual apprenticeship model in line with that of Central European Member States such as Germany and Austria, which have traditionally had very low youth unemployment. Likewise, there is currently a major policy push across the EU regarding Youth Guarantees/ALMP

interventions for young people at risk of disengagement, which have been found to be effective policy instruments in the Scandinavian countries or Austria. Obviously, programmes have heterogeneous impacts and designs vary considerably across Member States. In general, policy should enable young people to gain genuine work experience in workplaces because it reduces individual's risk of unemployment, although vocational education also clearly matters.

Moreover, again in line with good practice there has been a distinct focus on prevention and early intervention at key stages of the STW transition. Given the importance of educational attainment in determining a young person's employment chances, there has been a major policy push (at both the EU and national levels) to prevent early school leaving (ESL), as exemplified for example by the Dutch diagnostic ESL-related measures for early identification and intervention. Despite this policy focus is on preventing ESL, a number of young people do unfortunately drop out of school and need help in re-engaging with the world of education. To this end, a raft of remedial measures aimed at re-integrating early school leavers are also being implemented, including tracking or 'catch-up' or outreach services and Second Chance education programmes.

Furthermore, integrating or centralizing the support for young people by ensuring effective cooperation between administrative bodies can be another important pillar in fostering smooth STW transition because it prevents young people from getting lost between different policy domains. Furthermore, early vocational guidance in combination with early job search assistance and further support is another promising approach in improving STW transition, especially for less advantaged young people. However, a general lack in labor demand will soon show the limitations of ALMPs, if these are used on their own as a means for addressing youth unemployment.

In general, all programmes and concrete policy changes should be subject to rigorous assessments of the micro- and macroeconomic impact of policy so that the social benefit of programmes can be better understood. In our overview of policies and programmes as part of Tasks 1-4, we were struck by the dearth of rigorous and comparative evaluation data.

In relation to the Pohl and Walther typology used for our comparative analysis, we found that, although it was developed in mid to late 2000s, a number of features for each regime of STW transition still holds. However, our analysis has also highlighted that, especially as a result of the Great Recession of the late 2000s, some of the characteristics of each of the Pohl and Walther's STW transition regimes are in a state of flux. For example, VET (and apprenticeships) are becoming more important STW transition mechanisms even in clusters such as the liberal (UK) and the Mediterranean (ES, TR) clusters. On the other hand, in the universalistic cluster the quality and effectiveness of the Swedish education and training system, including VET is currently under-performing, with obvious implications for these

transitions. At the same time, VET take-up is falling. That said, it is still early to assess whether such changes represent paradigmatic shifts in the key STW transitions mechanisms, especially in view of the path dependency and cultural and institutional specificity of STW transitions.

Even so, given the extent of reforms that are under way either in education and training, notably in reforming/expanding VET/apprenticeships and in incorporating work experience as an integral part of educational programmes, or in strengthening activation, for example through the national implementation of the Youth Guarantee in all Member States, one can assume that there is scope for at least some change. Another key factor that will increasingly need to be taken into account in any typology is that of migration which affects all clusters, be it inbound (DE, NL, SE, UK) or outbound (EE, ES, PL). In other words, our analysis point to the need for updating and further refining the Pohl and Walther's typology of STW transitions on the basis of the developments that have occurred during and after the recent crisis and which have led to an ongoing reconfiguration of education and training systems, labour market policies and institutional arrangements which are pertinent to young people's successful entry to sustained employment. Linked to this is the need for further differentiation within the clusters themselves since there is variation in a number of institutional arrangements and this leads to variation in the STW transition outcomes as is, for example, the case of the employment centred cluster (DE, FR, NL).

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| 1. University of Brighton – BBS CROME | – United Kingdom |
| 2. Institute for Employment Studies | – United Kingdom |
| 3. Institute for the Study of Labor | – Germany |
| 4. Centre for European Policy Studies | – Belgium |
| 5. TARKI Social Research Institute | – Hungary |
| 6. University of Trento | – Italy |
| 7. National University of Ireland Galway | – Republic of Ireland |
| 8. Democritus University of Thrace | – Greece |
| 9. University of Oxford | – United Kingdom |
| 10. Economic & Social Research Institute | – Republic of Ireland |
| 11. University of Salerno | – Italy |
| 12. University of Oviedo | – Spain |
| 13. University of Tartu | – Estonia |
| 14. Cracow University of Economics | – Poland |
| 15. Slovak Governance Institute | – Slovakia |
| 16. Metropolitan University Prague | – Czech Republic |
| 17. Grenoble School of Management | – France |
| 18. University of Tilburg | – Netherlands |
| 19. University of Graz | – Austria |
| 20. Copenhagen Business School | – Denmark |
| 21. Norwegian Social Research | – Norway |
| 22. Swedish Institute for Social Research | – Sweden |
| 23. Koç University Social Policy Centre | – Turkey |
| 24. University of Turin | – Italy |
| 25. EurActiv | – Belgium |

<http://www.style-research.eu/research-organisations>

Advisory Groups

Consortium Advisory Network

Business Europe

www.buinesseurope.eu

ETUI: European Trade Union Institute

www.etui.org

European Youth Forum

www.youthforum.org

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

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1036>

Local Advisory Boards

including employers, unions, policy makers and non-government organisations

www.style-research.eu/project-advisors/local-advisory-boards/