



Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
Ταμείο Συνοχής



ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

The project is co – funded by Cohesion Fund



Directorate General for European Programmes,
Coordination and Development



«Provision of Services for the evaluation of the achievements of the interventions of the common support of the ESF and of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) including the application of the «Youth Guarantee» in terms of sustainable integration of young people into the labour

«Executive Summary»



Introduction

This is a synopsis of the «Evaluation Report», which was elaborated in the framework of the contract titled: Provision of Services for the evaluation of the achievements of the interventions of the common support of the ESF and of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) including the application of the «Youth Guarantee» in terms of sustainable integration of young people into the labour market. The convention was assigned by the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development to «Enoros Consulting Ltd.» and «EEO Group SA», through the 14/3/2018 contract, after relevant contract notice.

Scope of Evaluation

This evaluation is the follow-up/ update of the first evaluation study on the implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) that was prepared in 2015 and focuses on the impact of interventions in qualitative and quantitative terms, including long-term effects.

The overall objective of the evaluation is to examine the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the interventions promoted under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in Cyprus, aiming at the sustainable integration of young people aged 15-29, who are out of employment, education or training, into the labor market.

In this context, the Contractor approaches specific evaluation questions as follows:

- Evaluation of the Strategic Planning for YEI.
- Evaluation of the Implementation Mechanism of YEI.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of YEI's interventions.
- Evaluation of the efficiency of YEI's interventions.
- Evaluation of the impact of YEI's interventions.

The expected results from the evaluation are:

- Assessing the quality of job offers received by YEI participants, including disadvantaged people, people from marginalized communities and those leaving education without qualifications, as well as their progress in continuing education, training or internship including apprenticeship.
- Assessing the results of the interventions of YEI, especially in terms of achieving the objectives set at the project level, the Specific Objective of the Operational Programme and the general objective of the sustainable integration of young people into the labor market.
- Assessing the sustainability of the results of the interventions (significant improvement in the participants' employment prospects) in relation to the resources invested.

- Assessing the contribution of YEI to the implementation of the “Youth Guarantee”.
- Improving the quality of design, implementation and monitoring of YEI’s interventions.
Documentation in decision making.

Short presentation of the YEI

The aim of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is consisted ~~suggested for the~~ to the provision of additional support and targeted assistance to young people under the age of 25 (in Cyprus includes also young people 25-29 years old) in Regions where youth unemployment exceeded 25% during the year 2012, i.e. in areas where more acute problems are referred. In the heart of the YEI are young people who do not work or are not involved at all in a training or educational programme, including the long-term unemployed persons or those who are not registered as jobseekers through the provision of opportunities for Apprenticeship, internship, job placement (Not in Employment Education).

YEI is part of the programming for the utilization of the resources of the European Social Fund (ESF), with the contribution of at least equivalent resources. Within the framework of the Operational Programme (OP) Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion 2014-2020 a separate Specific Objective on Priority Axis for YEI is included.

In order to implement the Youth Employment Initiative (extensively the support of young people for inclusion/reintegration into the labour market as well), a National Youth Employment Action Plan has been prepared, including, inter alia, the Revised Action Plan for the implementation of the ' Youth Guarantee ' suggestion according to which any young person aged 15-24 years old, an opportunity for employment, education or training within 4 months from the day he remains unemployed or who Completes/interrupts his training should be offered.

The total resources available for the implementation of the YEI, including the corresponding ESF support as well as the national contribution, amount to EUR 39,474,197.

By the end of 2018, six (6) projects/ Actions have been approved and implemented by YEI with co-financing, with a total budget of EUR 40,142,781, marginally overlapping the available resources by 1.7%.

Evaluation Conclusions

Since the implementation of the YEI up to the reference period (11/2018), the main findings refer to the following:

Strategic planning Assessment for the YEI

- The Action Plan for the implementation of the “Youth Guarantee” Recommendation is being implemented satisfactorily and in accordance with its objectives.
- Based on the statistics, the long-term development of youth unemployment (aged 15-29) in Cyprus, starting in 2014 until the year 2017, is decreasing, following the same trend as at EU level. The number of NEETs aged 15-29 in the reporting period (2014-2017) both at EU level as well as in Cyprus is also decreasing.
- The forward-looking nature of the YEI seems to have contributed to overcoming the problem of youth unemployment.
- However, statistics show that NEETs aged 25-29 in Cyprus are the most vulnerable group of young people (compared to those aged 15-24). Therefore, the expansion of the eligible age group (up to 29 years) in Cyprus is a positive change in the YEI strategy.
- Regarding the resources allocated, they are considered to be sufficient in relation to the YEI’s interventions which are to be implemented.
- The approved Budget of the interventions implemented goes marginally beyond the fund available, with the overbooking rate reaching 101.7%. Therefore, the full use of resources is considered insecure since most projects and Plans are in progress.

Evaluation of the YEI implementation mechanism

- The implementation plan of the YEI as part of a specific Priority Axis, in the form of a discrete Specific Objective (8.2.1 "Improvement of employment prospects for young people aged 15-29 years old who are NEETs through utilization of the Youth Employment Initiative "), is evaluated as perfectly correct since the process of developing a separate programme which is usually time-consuming is avoided while the necessary support with the input of other interventions of the Operational Programme (OP) "**Employment, human resources and social cohesion**" is ensured.
- the fact that the YEI is governed by the same Management and Control System as that of the OP co-financed by the Cohesion Policy Funds in Cyprus, as well as that the same Authorities are involved in the final level set for the OP "Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion", offer significant advantages of saving time and resources (human and financial), given that no new procedures are required, the issuing of circular/guidelines of individual

procedures, separate Information System, etc., while ensuring the uniform and adequate management, coordination, monitoring and control of all Programs.

- The YEI has now been activated to its best extent and the implementation of the interventions is considered satisfactory. Furthermore, the fact that the implementation of the YEI was prolonged until 2023 (from the 2018 initially) ensures the unrestrained implementation and completion of the interventions that are implemented in this context with full utilization of the available funds.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of YEI Interventions

- With regard to the interventions implemented, they primarily relate to the acquisition of work experience (on-the-job training), including counseling and vocational guidance. These interventions are considered topical and serve the needs of the target groups.
- It is also worth mentioning that within the framework of YEI there are also targeted interventions in special categories of graduates (Law and Architecture/ Civil Engineering) for the realization of the internship required by the Law in order to obtain the license to practice the profession, which is also the necessary qualification for their sustainable integration into the labor market. These interventions are estimated to contribute to the reduction of the number of graduates up to 29 years old of the above-mentioned specialties who fall in the category of NEETs.
- The delay in activating the YEI in its first years of implementation has resulted in only one intervention being completed to date¹ and evaluated in terms of its results.
- The viability of the YEI's interventions is generally assessed as satisfactory, and so is their added value in terms of promoting young people into employment.
- At the level of implementation, the achievement of targets on the basis of benchmarks and output indicators (the Performance Framework) within the Operational Programme seems to be positive.
- As regards the problems in the implementation of interventions, these are mainly related to individual parameters of placements in companies/ organizations, such as remuneration issues, working conditions, etc. There have been cases where these problems have led to the interruption of the YEI beneficiaries' participation, but they are not of a nature that could lead the YEI's interventions to delays or deviations from their objectives.

¹ It is the plan of placing unemployed young graduates of high schools, lyceums, technical schools and post-secondary education of up to two years in enterprises/ organizations, in order to acquire work experience, HRDA (2014 and 2015).

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Yei interventions

- YEI has a positive contribution to the sustainable integration of young people into the labor market in relation to the available resources and the means used.
- The unit costs of the Projects which include internships are varied according to the duration and type of internship (e.g. acquisition of work experience, compulsory under the law for obtaining a practicing license). However, taking into account the different characteristics of the Projects, these variations are considered reasonable.
- It is not possible to draw safe conclusions at this stage with regards to which interventions are proved to be more cost-and benefit effective due to the small number of interventions that have been completed.

Assessment of the impact of interventions

- As regards the impact of interventions on the target groups, particularly in the interventions that have been completed,² the impact seems to be very positive. An important percentage of beneficiaries continued to work after the end of the intervention (either in the internship or in another company), and there was also a large number of beneficiaries who said that they have also benefited in terms of upgrading their skills (personal, professional) and generally in terms of their personal development.
- YEI's interventions have a direct contribution to the enhancement of the employability of the participants and thus to the suppression of the problem of youth unemployment. This is also supported by the statistics on youth unemployment in Cyprus (cited above), which shows a downward trend.
- The implementation of the YEI had no negative impact on the labor market, such as the occurrence of employment shifts, deadweight or substitution.

² As cited above.

Recommendations

The main recommendations focus on the following points:

- Effective activation of the Unified System for Monitoring and Evaluation of Active Employment Policies, with emphasis on the monitoring requirements of the YEI and provision to cover its various parameters (e.g. for the economically inactive).
- Inclusion of an additional project/ Plan with a high degree of maturity and/ or expansion/ extension of an existing project/ Plan to the overbooking of the YEI available funds to safe levels.
- Activation of the modernization interventions for Public Employment Services, focused on actions concerning the youth, and particularly the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the YEI. It is appropriate to immediately enhance the human resources of the Services (as provided for in the Memorandum and highlighted in the ILO Study) as well as to implement a series of modernization actions (evaluation system for active policies, update of methodological tools of personalized approach, training of employment consultants on approaching and empowering young people, upgrading the information system of Public Employment Services, etc.).
- Investigating the possibility of a partnership between Public Employment Services and Licensed Private Employment Agencies which could be co-funded by the YEI and included in the National Action Plan on Youth Employment (NAP). The Employment Agencies can serve as support structures to the Public Employment Services to cover the needs of young people. Based on good practices, the Employment Agencies could take on finding jobs for young people.
- Creation and implementation of training programmes, combining training and work experience. An important role here should be played by the HRDA, both at the design level (due to its relevant assessments/ studies) and at the implementation level (due to previous experience).
- Adaptation of good practices applicable in other Member States. For example, networking among stakeholders, prevention actions (cooperation between Public Employment Services and schools), creation of specialized teams on youth issues, provision of one-stop shops to young people, etc.
- Continuous updating of the mapping data of NEETs, aiming at the design and implementation of targeted interventions at local or national level.
- For the purpose of preventing employment shifts, substitution etc. from the implementation of Plans subsidizing internship/ placement in job positions, it is proposed to consider establishing specific conditions to enterprises of non-redundancies during the time of

participation in a Plan subsidizing employment, or even of limitation of the placements that can be made to an enterprise compared to its size.