



The European youth are amongst those most severely affected by the pandemic<sup>1</sup>. One in six young people lost their job because of the economic consequences of COVID-19<sup>2</sup>. In September 2020, the youth unemployment rate in the EU was 17.1%<sup>3</sup>. In a number of countries youth have been particularly hit hard resulting in unemployment rates that have soared, to name a few: Spain (40,5%), Italy (29,7%), Bulgaria (18,3%) and France (19,6%).

Overall, youth unemployment in the EU has increased by 438,000 in the last year as compared to December 2019.<sup>4</sup> A percentage of unemployed young people tends to remain out of the official data, either because these people do not apply for unemployment benefits or do not enrol with employment agencies. Therefore, it can be assumed that the real figures could be even worse than those reported by Eurostat.

Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis has further aggravated the situation of the NEETs, young people not in employment, education or training<sup>5</sup>. The number of NEETs in Europe, especially in countries like Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, is once again on the increase as a result of job losses and lack of employment opportunities. This category includes the most vulnerable people, they are at a high risk of marginalisation, poverty and permanent disengagement from employment.

Together with the unemployed youth, this crisis is particularly affecting workers in 'non-standard forms of employment', such as part-time, temporary or 'gig' work. Unfortunately, there is a predominance of young people within the category of non-standard workers. Such jobs are often low paid, with irregular working hours, poor job security, and little or no social protection (paid leave, pensions, sick leave, etc). Often, such work does not qualify for unemployment benefits or short-time work schemes. This type of work can be found mostly in sectors and industries that are particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, like tourism, wholesale, retail, accommodation and food sectors.<sup>6</sup>

In the EU, many forms of contracts are not covered by employment laws, leaving the incumbents without right to holidays, employment protection and/or the benefits allowed by social insurance contributions. This affects a large number of young workers and leads to social exclusion.<sup>7</sup> These types of contracts have become commonplace due to, among others, the structural reforms introduced during and after the last financial crisis, that increased labour market flexibility and

<sup>1</sup> Young people are (mostly) defined to be between 15 and 29 years old

<sup>2</sup> European Youth Forum, <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/blueprint.pdf>, 22.01.2020

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10663786/3-30102020-CP-EN.pdf>, 22.01.2020

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/portlet\\_file\\_entry/2995521/3-01022021-AP-EN.pdf/db860f10-65e3-a1a6-e526-9d4db80904b9](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/portlet_file_entry/2995521/3-01022021-AP-EN.pdf/db860f10-65e3-a1a6-e526-9d4db80904b9)

<sup>5</sup> Eurofound, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/neets>

<sup>6</sup> ETUC, <https://www.etuc.org/system/files/document/file2020-06/ETUC%20Statement%20on%20COVID-19%20outbreak-FINAL%20AFTER%20EXCO.pdf>, 22.01.2020

<sup>7</sup> ibid

weakened employment protection systems, social protection systems and collective bargaining institutions. Research shows that these measures did not result in increased employment around Europe, but rather in the creation of more precariousness and subsequent social exclusion.<sup>8</sup>

The results of ETUC internal monitoring point to strong shortcomings when it comes to the inclusion of social partners in the design and implementation of recovery measures. Furthermore, while youth is being present in the narrative of EU and national institutions, the actual measures targeting young people and binding measures for the creation of quality jobs for young people is missing from all currently available national and European strategies.

### Findings from the questionnaire:

- 25 answers
- 15 EU countries

### Section 1 – Reinforced Youth Guarantee

A- What are the points that need to be improved concerning your national context?

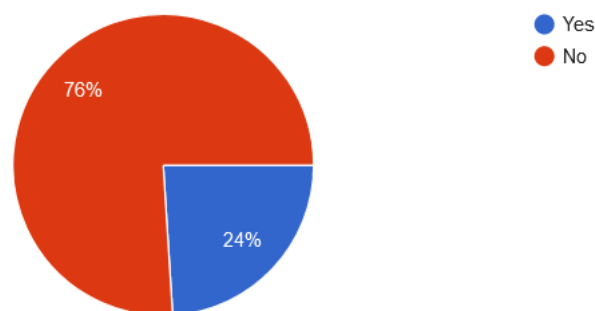
The vast majority of the respondents agreed that the points to be improved within Youth Guarantee's implementation at their national levels are:

- lack of quality standards for job/traineeship offers (72% of the respondents)
- failure to generate new stable employment (76%)
- failure to link training offers to the skills required by the world of work (72%)
- failure to transform internships into stable employment contracts (76%)

B-

Are there any particular good practices about the implementation of Youth Guarantee measures in your country that you think should be extended to European legislation?

25 risposte



Some good practices brought by YC members:

Austria: the Austrian training guarantee within the framework of supra-company apprenticeship (ÜBA)

Bulgaria: It should be extended but monitored better, as in Bulgaria it serves as a procurement hub.

France: Discussion with trade unions among other stakeholders regarding the Youth Guarantee within the French National Monitoring Committee on the European Social Fund through the principle of partnership for EU cohesion funds.

<sup>8</sup> ibid

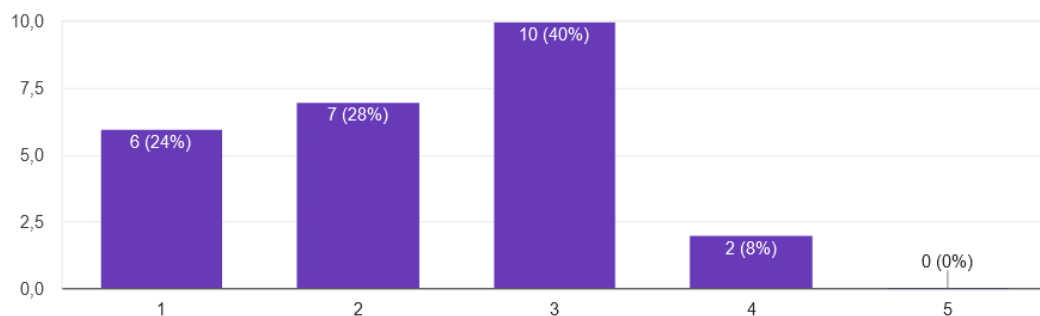
Poland: guarantees from the beginning covered persons under 30 years of age

Slovenia: Working with young drop-outs; established governemental working group on YG where also our trade union have a seat; employing more young labour inspectors for tracking violations at the labour market; banned unpaid internships and financing payed internship with funding of YG

C-

Do you think trade unions/Youth committees are sufficiently involved in the development and implementation of Youth Guarantee in your country? Rate on a scale of 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum)

25 risposte



More than half of the answers made clear that trade unions/youth committees are not sufficiently involved in the development and implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Only 2 out of 25 stated that they are satisfied.

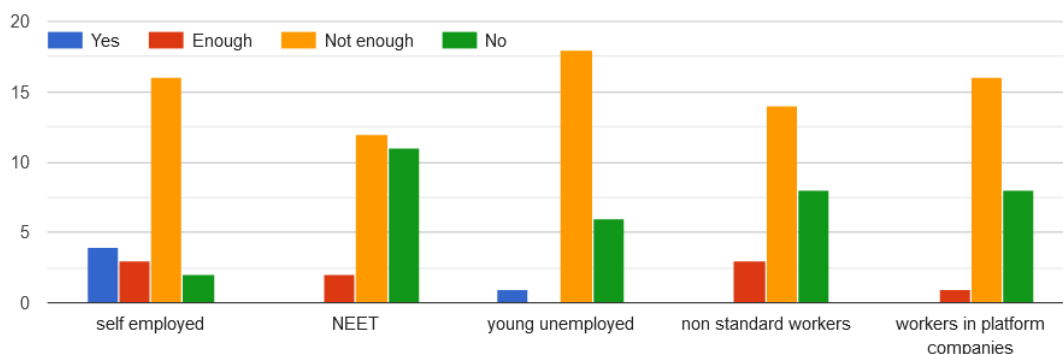
The extent of involvement often depends on the government in charge. In several cases, there have been strong changes in the level of involvement as the government changed.

In certain circumstances, trade unions (less the Youth Structures) were informed/part of consultive committees but lacked a stronger executive role or access to monitoring.

In some countries, active labour policies are perceived as insufficient, and underfinanced.

## Section 2 – Extension of SURE and employment-related emergency measures

Are employment-related emergency measures in your country (e.g. social protection, income support) extended to the following categories?



A-9

Self-employed (72%)

NEET (92%)

Young unemployed (96%)

Non-standard workers (88%)

## Workers in platform companies (96%)

All the above categories were considered “not enough” or “not” covered by the emergency measures, especially NEET, unemployed, self employed. Basically all non-standard young workers are not or insufficiently covered. This highlights a strong ineffectiveness within these policies, and a high risk of social injustice.

### B- Which specific categories of young people are not covered at all by emergency measures?

Students, NEETs, young unemployed people, trainees and interns are the most vulnerable categories.

Requirements for a certain number of “worked months” in the previous year/period in order to access the benefits/short time schemes, in fact cut out most young people from these categories. This should be sorted out.

Austria: You only get unemployment benefits if you have already been employed for 26 weeks. This is a big problem, especially in the Corona crisis, as many young people cannot find a job after completing their schooling.

France: Youth under 25 who have not worked in the past 18 months or who have some kind of support from their parents are not covered. Students are the forgotten of the sanitary crisis and experience great precarity as students may not work anymore – with further risks of dropping out. They led a collective action on the 20th of January. Their main demand is to open the French minimum income scheme to Youth aged between 18 and 25 years old.

Spain: Those people who were unemployed before the start of the pandemic, or with short-term contracts or working as false freelancers are in a difficult situation. Emergency measures have been approved for those who lack sufficient income or had certain precarious contracts, but for now these measures are reaching an insufficient number of people.

### C- Do you think trade unions/youth committees are sufficiently involved in the development and implementation of emergency measures in your country?

Only in a limited number of cases (Austria, Portugal) trade unions and youth structures are part of stable committees making decisions on their country’s labour policies. In most other cases (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Spain) unions are consulted within the framework of Social Dialogue or more informally, but their proposals are not binding, and it is the government that ultimately decides whether to adopt the positions of the social partners. In some cases there is not a real involvement (Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey)

What clearly emerges from the survey is that Social Dialogue must not be just mere consultation of stakeholders.

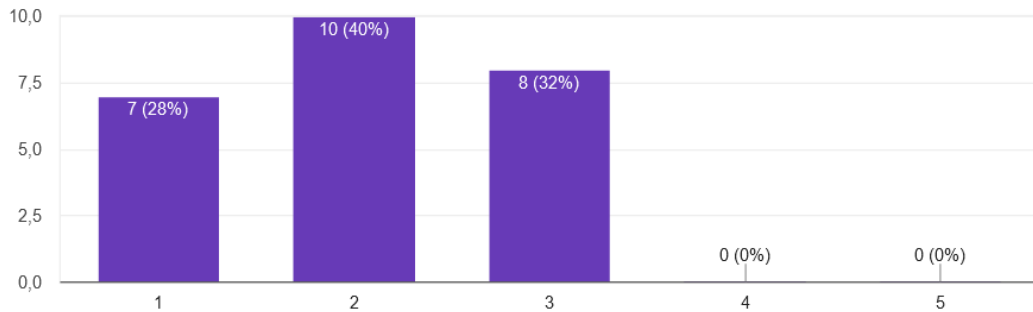
YC members call for an effective and structured Social Dialogue bringing concrete results, including collective bargaining and binding agreements at national and sectoral level.

### Section 3 – Recovery Plan

A-

To what extent does the draft of your National Recovery and Resilience Plan address youth issues? Rate on a scale of 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum)

25 risposte

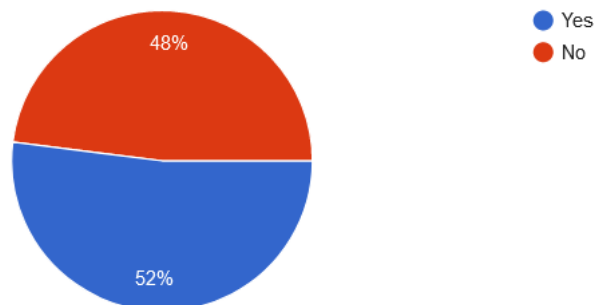


The general opinion of the Youth Committee members is that National Recovery and Resilience Plans do not address youth issues to a satisfactory extent.

B-

Does the draft of your National Recovery and Resilience Plan include any actions or measures targeted at young people or addressing youth employment issues?

25 risposte



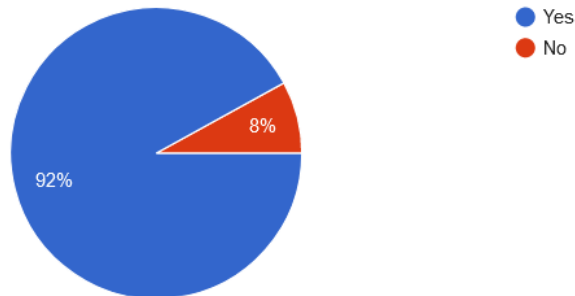
According to half of the members of the respondents, the youth employment issues are not properly addressed in the draft NRRPs.

In some cases, there are specific measures addressing youth employment and training/education (France, Germany). In other cases, the plans contain measures that will impact on young people (eg. Creation of employment in digital/green economy, financial support for certain categories of workers, skill upgrading and education), or mention young workers, but do not define yet the actions to be taken (Greece).

C-

Are there any categories of young people that you think should be covered by the plan, but are overlooked? (e.g. working students, NEET, people in traineeships/internships, non standard workers, self employed, unemployed, workers in platform companies etc.)

25 risposte



92% of the respondents think that some relevant categories of young people are overlooked by draft National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

The categories uncovered tend to be the same not reached by employment-related emergency measures: Students, NEETs, young unemployed people, trainees and interns, self-employed, workers in bars, restaurants and tourism.

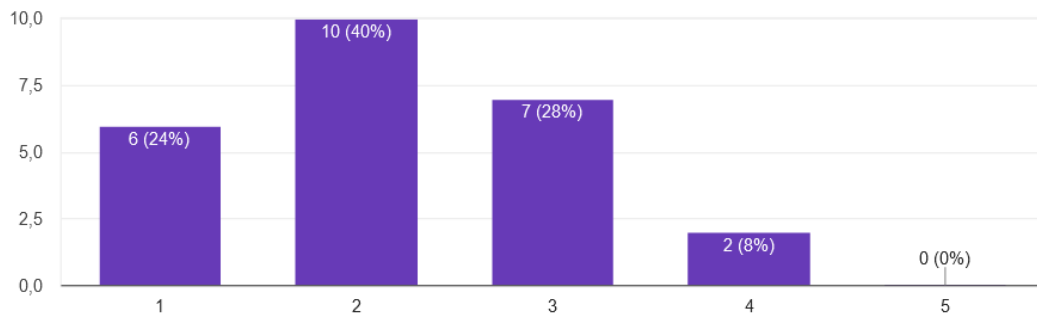
In some cases funds are allocated to companies or to institutions providing inclusion-based support, thereby leaving many young people out, and not building strong active labour market policies.

**Worryingly, the questionnaire highlights that the categories overlooked by the NRRPs are the same not included yet in SURE and other employment-related emergency measures. We ask for the extension of such policies to all workers.**

D-

Do you think trade unions/Youth committees are sufficiently involved in the development and implementation of your national plan? Rate on a scale of 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum)

25 risposte



64% of the respondents consider the involvement of TU/youth structures insufficient. Social Dialogue is not strong on this matter, and some measures were considered more company- than workers- friendly.

## Section 4- European Pillar of Social Rights

A- Which measures envisaged by the European Pillar of Social Rights could, once implemented, allow a significant improvement for young people?

Also in this field, the measures that respondents feel as urgently needed in order to improve the conditions of young workers are those already highlighted for the Youth Guarantee and SURE:

- adequate employment benefits of reasonable duration (80% of the respondents)
- limitations on precarious work (84%)
- right to quality education, training and lifelong learning (80%)

Also, the categories of young people not covered by social protection and unemployment benefits are recurrent: precarious and non-standard workers, NEET, working students, trainees, newcomers to the labour market etc.

These findings stress that an intervention to support these categories is urgently needed throughout Europe.

B- Do you think trade unions/Youth committees are sufficiently involved in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in your country?

Respondents to our questionnaire highlighted how social dialogue on EPSR issues is in many cases lacking or not at all on governments' agendas. Where social dialogue is active, there is a general tendency not to directly involve youth structures.

## Section 5- Legislative initiative on platform work

A- What do you think are the main problems to be tackled, with regard to your national context?

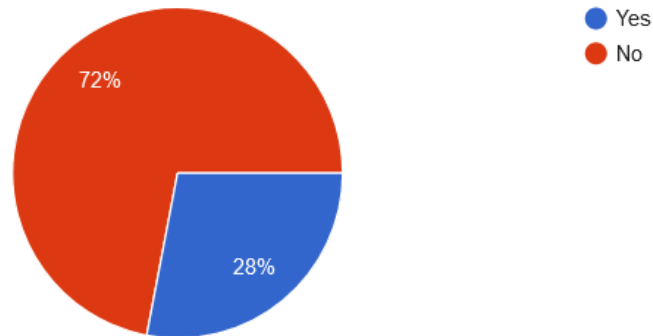
The main problems related to platform work appear to be (for 60% of the respondents):

- no access to social protection/income compensation
- no rights at work, notably: working hours, collective bargaining, right to strike, sick leave etc.
- being applied the status of self-employed instead of the status of employees

B-

Are there any particular legislative protections/trade union conquests for workers in platform companies in your country that you think should be extended to European legislation?

25 responses



In a few countries relevant legislation has been enacted to regulate work in platform companies (Slovenia) or collective agreements have been signed (Austria, Greece). In some cases a number of court judgments have stated that workers in platform companies should be considered as employees (Spain, Italy, Belgium), but very often the law or agreements are not applied by platform companies.

EU's legislative initiative on platform work is strongly needed, and it should be as effective and chargeable as possible.

## Section 6- Mainstreaming youth

A- Which do you think are the most important issues relating to youth in the context of your country?

Unsurprisingly, respondents to the questionnaire, regardless their country of origin and trade union, indicated the following issues as the most critical for young workers in Europe:

- a high level of youth unemployment (76% of the respondents)
- absence or difficult access to stable and quality employment (80%)
- absence of policies addressing youth issues (84%)
- most of the young people are employed in precarious, intermittent and non-standard forms of employment (68%)

This is a clear call for action for European institutions and national governments: these topics must be at the center of recovery policies, implementation of the EPSR and next work-related European legislative initiatives.

The survey showed a strong need for greater listening and presence of youth structures in decision-making fora, within Social Dialogue and in the elaboration of the main employment-related policies, at both European and national levels.



## Conclusions:

### **1. Involving social partners and young trade unionists in the design, monitoring and evaluation of national recovery plans must be assured.**

Youth structures of trade unions have to be informed and included in the process of shaping European and national recovery plans.

The European Commission's updated guidance to member states' Recovery and Resilience National Plans require member states to carry out, and document, a wide consultation with social actors, including youth organisations. It also introduces transparency requirements in the communication of plans at national level.<sup>9</sup>

Transparency and a democratic approach in the allocation of public funds must be assured. Young people deserve to know if, and how, their government is addressing their needs and how the money is being spent.

### **2. Specific recovery measures for youth and workers in non-standard forms of employment must be developed.**

These workers are facing specific circumstances, with limited or no access to workers' rights and social protection. Therefore, a more comprehensive approach addressing this category of workers should be implemented. Due to high segmentation within the labour market, the current recovery measures are not addressing the circumstances of vulnerable groups. SURE is not protecting this category of workers. This issue must be addressed in the national recovery plans and should be aligned with the principles of European Pillar of Social Rights.

All categories of workers and young unemployed people should have access to social protection and the unemployed should have a comprehensive safety net, as foreseen by the European Pillar of Social Rights.

### **3. Quality jobs and decent working conditions must be available to all. Meaningful conditions related to the recovery funds must be developed, these should be based on the respect for the rule of law and workers' rights.**

Young people have been trapped and forced in low quality jobs. We cannot allow this to keep on happening. In order to prevent precarious conditions, quality standards for all recovery measures must be put in place. This should also cover traineeships and internships. Precarious jobs should be reduced and discouraged by incentivising stable employment. Fair wages, as well as quality lifelong learning programs, should be guaranteed to all workers regardless of their age. These standards should be essential conditions when it comes to the granting of the recovery resources.

In this regard, we affirm the quality criteria defined by ETUC Youth, presented in June 2020 alongside with a Reinforced Youth Guarantee.<sup>10</sup>

Member States should commit to implement and respect those quality criteria and ensure young people are not being used as cheap labour.

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<sup>9</sup> "5.Consultation process: Member States should also provide a summary of the consultation process of local and regional authorities, social partners, civil society organisations, youth organisations, and other relevant stakeholders, as implemented in accordance with the national legal framework, for the preparation and, where available, the implementation of the plan.

7.Communication :Member States are invited to describe an outline of their intended national communication strategy aimed at ensuring public awareness of the Union funding.The national communication strategy sets out how a Member State plans to communicate on the RRF."

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/document\\_travail\\_service\\_part2\\_v3\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/document_travail_service_part2_v3_en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See annex: ETUC Youth Committee brochure „Reinforced Youth Guarantee – It is time for Quality Jobs“