

Youth Unemployment and Social Exclusion: the Role of the National State and the European Union

YOUNEX FINAL CONFERENCE
Brussels, August the 30th 2011



YOUNEX

Youth
Unemployment
& Exclusion in Europe



Research Objectives

main objective:

to monitor and assess national and European policies in the realm of youth unemployment:

- national level:
 - policies: goals, instruments, commitments
 - local practice: implementation reality
- EU-level:
 - policy initiatives: goals and instruments
 - coordination processes (Open Method of Coordination)

Methods and Data

national level:

- findings from other work packages: institutional analysis, organizational survey, youth survey and interviews
- two discussion groups with local authorities and welfare associations, unemployed organizations and jobless

EU-level:

- study of policy documents and statements
- analysis of 15 interviews with policy actors: Commission, Parliament, EMCO (support team, national members), trade union and social NGOs, and members of national governments in 6 countries.

National Policies and Practices

Interviews pointed to major deficiencies

- contextual: legal and financial, jobs and measures, coordination with private actors
- organizational: jobless confronted with fragmented information, various authorities or units, sometimes little qualified personnel
- individual case-work: discontinued, rigid, reactive approach; supply-dominated; no answer to the most vulnerable groups

Recommendations

Discussion groups proposed

- at the contextual level:
 - improve legal framework, and
 - increase the budget of activation policies
 - develop local labor markets (increase quantity and quality of jobs, sensitize employers and enterprises)
 - cooperate more with local civil society in innovative activation measures

Recommendations (...continued)

- at the organizational level:
 - in regard to clients:
 - increase availability of and access to all information relevant to clients,
 - coordinate and/or centralize organizational responsibilities ('one contact point')
 - in regard to case-workers:
 - reduce case loads per case-worker, and
 - develop qualified personnel (training and supervision, job satisfaction, etc.)

Recommendations (...continued)

- at the individual level of case-work:
 - adapt to the reality of today's youth (e.g., increase of age category up to 30)
 - develop a more multidimensional and individually tailored case work (e.g., flexibility, focus on resources and talents, long-term perspective)
 - develop programs devoted to the most vulnerable groups of the unemployed

Recommendations (...continued)

- general policy options:
 - incremental reform of the established system, or
 - path change, e.g., basic income guarantee

European Initiatives and Processes

Progress being made (important milestones):

- adaptation of European Employment Strategy guidelines (e.g., life-long learning) since 2001
- Green Paper on “Confronting Demographic Change”, the “European Youth Pact” (both 2005)
- Commission Paper on “An EU Strategy for Youth”, Council resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010–2018), Parliament paper on “Generation Lost” (all 2009)
- EU 2020 Strategy: Youth as a proper target within European strategies for employment and social inclusion, the “Education and Training 2010” work programme, the flagships “Youth on the Move”, “New Skills for New Jobs”

Weaknesses

- Policy initiatives in the realm of youth unemployment:
 - no comprehensive and systematic approach for youth, the latter being one (age-specific) target amongst others
 - bias on education and labour market flexibility, less concern for job and social security
- ‚One Size Fits All‘ - approach
- **Flexicurity**

Weaknesses (...continued)

- European coordination (OMC):
 - general and vague objectives and targets
 - little coordination of various OMCs
 - little learning, focus on political marketing
 - implementation gap, weak incentives to comply
- ➔ favours 'business as usual' at national level
- ➔ well performing states (e.g., Swedish young unemployed) benefit the least

Recommendations

- ***A lean EES or target-specific strategies?***

develop a youth-specific policy approach within and across existing OMCs:

- better understanding of youth's reality
- more integration of various measures into a multidimensional and cross-sectoral strategy
- more coordination of field-specific EU-initiatives and OMCs in regard to youth

Recommendations (...continued)

- ***Abandon or develop peer learning?***
 - shift of competencies to the EU
 - improvements of the OMC
- concentrate more strongly on practitioners (private and public sector)
- develop a more rigorous and critical monitoring and learning exercise, e.g., by
- seeking more input of social NGOs and scientific evaluation

Thank you for your attention!



Youth
Unemployment
& Exclusion in Europe

www.younex.unige.ch