

GOVERNANCE PRACTICES FOR YOUTH GUARANTEE

The case of the Republic of Slovenia

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PREFACE

The European Union is supporting candidate and neighbouring countries in adopting and implementing the Youth Guarantee (YG) scheme to address youth unemployment and ease the transition of young people into quality employment.

To be effective, the YG must be adapted to each region's specific economic and social context. While there is no single EU blueprint that fits all, valuable insights can be drawn from the diverse models and practices of EU member states.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) is contributing expertise in this area by compiling case studies from Belgium, Estonia, and Slovenia to facilitate policy learning across countries. The ETF is particularly focused on documenting "partnerships" formed through the engagement of public authorities and agencies, social partners, civil society organizations, and various associations in the implementation of the YG in the EU. These partnerships have become a critical enabler since the scheme's inception in 2013.

There is extensive evidence on the progress of the YG in Europe, but regarding the governance structures and processes including partnership arrangements the information is often lacking details. Access to primary sources, particularly staff from Ministries of Labour and Public Employment Services in EU member states, has therefore proven invaluable. The ETF is grateful for their professionalism and availability to kindly share expertise.

This case study focuses on Slovenia, with the content solely the responsibility of the authors: Siria Taurelli (ETF Senior Human Capital Development Expert), Matthias Themel (ETF Human Capital Development Expert), and Sladjana Petkovic (independent consultant). The authors acknowledge the essential support of Mirela Gavoci (Human Capital Development Expert) and Liia Kaarlo (Project Officer) at the ETF.

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	3
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CONTENTS	4
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INTRODUCTION	5
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SECTION I: YOUTH GUARANTEE GOVERNANCE, MAIN STRUCTURES AND BODIES	6
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SECTION II: POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE YOUTH GUARANTEE	8
---	---

SECTION III: YOUTH GUARANTEE IMPLEMENTATION AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL LEVEL	11
---	----

SECTION IV: ACHIEVEMENTS, IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED	12
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SECTION V: KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT THE YOUTH GUARANTEE GOVERNANCE	14
---	----

ACRONYMS	16
----------	----

REFERENCES	17
------------	----

INTRODUCTION

This case study examines the participatory governance structures and actors involved in implementing the Youth Guarantee (YG) scheme in Slovenia. It follows an ETF framework to document governance practices for the YG in EU member states, and it has benefitted from the knowledge and policy implementation experience of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity of the Republic of Slovenia (MoFLSA).

Slovenia faces a demographic challenge due to the rapid aging of its population, which is expected to lead to long-term labour shortages. Young people are particularly affected by changes in the labour market.

After the 2008 economic crisis, Slovenia saw a 56% increase in the rate of young people aged 15-29 who were neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)¹. A decade later, the NEET rate remained above the 2007 level. In 2019, 9.5% of young Slovenians aged 15-29 were NEET, totalling approximately 29,000 individuals, slightly below the OECD average (OECD, 2021).

The unemployment rate of young people, age group 15-29, fell from 18.9% in 2014 to 7.5% in 2019, which ranked Slovenia below the EU28 average (11.9% in 2019). Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, youth unemployment (age group 15-29) rose to 9.7% in 2020 and recovered back to 7.5% in 2023. Additional relevant indicators for analysing profile and incidence of young people in NEET situation are the non-school related inactivity rate as well as early school leaving.

In response, the Slovenian Government supported the Youth Employment Support Package in 2020 (European Commission, 2020), which included the reinforced Youth Guarantee (Council of the European Union, 2020). Young people are a key target group of Slovenia's active employment policy (AEP), as they often lack work experience and are more vulnerable to precarious employment. AEP measures for youth focus on training and education aligned with labour market needs, along with specific measures to promote indefinite employment. Through the Youth Guarantee, the Public Employment Service (PES) provides dedicated support to young jobseekers, offering in-depth counselling and additional individualized services for those up to age 29.

Key challenges for the labour market in the coming years include increasing employment among vulnerable youth, facilitating their quicker transition into the labour market, preventing long-term unemployment, and bridging the gap between required and actual skills.

¹ According to Eurostat, the indicator young people neither in employment nor in education and training, abbreviated as NEET, corresponds to the percentage of the population of a given age group and sex who is not employed and not involved in further education or training.

The numerator of the indicator refers to persons meeting these two conditions:

- they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the International Labour Organisation definition);
- they have not received any formal or non-formal education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey.

The denominator is the total population of the same age group and sex, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question 'participation in regular (formal) education and training' (Eurostat Glossary website).

SECTION I: YOUTH GUARANTEE GOVERNANCE, MAIN STRUCTURES AND BODIES

Main public actors

The Slovenian [Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities](#) (MoLFSA) oversees employment policy, including the management and coordination of the Youth Guarantee (YG), while the Public Employment Service (PES)² is the primary implementing institution. Other key ministries involved in the YG policy cycle include the [Ministry of Economic Development and Technology](#) (MoEDT), the [Ministry of Education, Science and Sport](#) (MoESS), the [Ministry of Culture](#) (MoC), and the [Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment](#) (European Commission, 2023). Each ministry has designated a contact person for youth issues, including YG implementation.

The [Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth](#) is a formal body established in 2011 to ensure the integration of youth issues into all public policies and consideration of young people suggestions for social change. It monitors the position of young people in society, proposes measures, and provides opinions on draft laws and regulations related to youth work and policies. The Council also makes proposals on financing youth activities, advises on a stronger youth dimension in sectoral policies, and promotes youth participation in consultative and co-decision-making bodies at national and local level. The Council comprises representatives from all relevant ministries, youth organizations, associations and networks. Its mandate extends beyond the YG, but it monitors the youth involvement in the YG governance and it can intervene in cases of disagreement or lack of progress between MoLFSA and the non-formal YG Group (see below). The Council's decisions are binding.

At the decentralized level, **Regional Partnership Councils** have been established to guide and connect activities and actors in the local labour market. Their aim is to address labour market discrepancies, identify needs, foster actor cooperation, propose solutions and strategic orientations for the future. These councils focus on the local level, to tailor the implementation of PES programmes and services, including the YG. The 12 Regional Councils, established by 2024, are formal bodies with a four-year mandate. They are chaired by local PES offices and consist of up to seven members, including representatives from local employer associations or chambers of large, medium and small enterprises, educational organizations (incl. schools, universities, adult learning centres, professional associations), trade unions, community organizations, regional development agencies, and social work centres. The coordination and information exchange on youth employment has improved, and local PES offices have a better overview of others' programmes where youth can be referred to.

The **YG Working Group**, established under MoLFSA in 2014, gathers representatives from all departments responsible for YG implementation, youth organisations (such as the National Youth Council of Slovenia, Youth Union Plus, Youth Network MaMa, and the Student Organisation of Slovenia), and social partners, particularly employers since 2019. The group monitors the YG implementation whereby it receives related data; reviews progress and suggests improvements. The YG Working Group holds a non-formal status given the stakeholders' voluntary participation, an approach that facilitates open and practical communication but at the same time raises the challenges of continuity and overstated expectations. The Working Group meets twice a year and produces reports to inform the government about the YG progress and recommend improvements.

Other public actors involved in youth employment and the YG include the Committee of the National Assembly for Labour, Family, Social Affairs and the Disabled; the Slovene Enterprise Fund; SPIRIT Slovenia - Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalisation, Foreign Investments, and Technology; the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia; the Public Scholarship, Development,

² The Slovenian PES is an independent legal entity operating uniformly across the entire country. It contributes to the development of employment policy in cooperation with the MoLFSA, implements active employment policy programmes, and provides services to job seekers, such as career orientation, job placement, provision of unemployment insurance, employment, and insurance of foreign workers. Young people eligible for YG (age group 15-29) mostly register as unemployed at the PES due to termination of employment or loss of student status, to find employment faster, obtain unemployment benefits, or receive basic health insurance.

Disability and Maintenance Fund; the Slovenian Institute for Vocational Education and Training; the Career Centre for Students; the Centre for Knowledge Promotion; and primary and secondary schools.

Non-governmental actors

Slovenia exemplifies participatory governance of the YG. Social partners are involved due to their role in attracting young people to the labour market. Employers provide traineeships, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities, while trade unions inform youth about available opportunities and workplace rights.

Civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly youth organizations, have long been involved in the YG. These organizations play a prominent role not only as service providers but also in monitoring the YG implementation (European Commission, 2023).

Key youth organizations involved in the YG Working Group include:

- The [Youth Council of Slovenia](#): An umbrella organisation for national youth organizations and a representative for young people in the EU.
- [Youth Network MaMa](#): A non-governmental umbrella association representing local youth organizations that support young people through youth centres and other initiatives.
- [Trade Union Youth Plus](#): A union dedicated to protecting the rights of students, pupils, and unemployed youth, operating within the Free Trade Union of Slovenia, which is a member of the [Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia](#).
- [Zavod Ypsilon](#): The Institute for Intergenerational Cooperation: A non-governmental, non-profit organisation that connects young people of *Generation Y* and encourages them to develop their own career paths.
- [MOVIT, Institute for Development of Youth Mobility](#): A national agency that manages the EU Erasmus+: Youth in Action programme.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

The [Resolution on the National Programme for Youth 2013-2022](#) outlines additional activities not covered by the AEP Guidelines (see Section II), emphasizing enhanced cooperation between MoLFSA and several other ministries, including MoEDT, the Ministry of Finance, and MoESS (OECD, 2021).

The primary goal of the National Youth Programme is to create a transparent, coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to addressing youth issues. Its value lies in its horizontal dimension, integrating actions across various ministries. The Programme also encourages the **private sector** to support stable youth employment through incentives stipulated in various regulations³.

³ The [Action Plan 2016/2017](#), the [Action Plan 2018/2019](#), and the [Action Plan 2020/2021](#) of the [National Programme for Youth 2013–2022](#).

SECTION II: POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE YOUTH GUARANTEE

The Labour Market Regulation Act (Republic of Slovenia's Official Gazette, 2010 and subsequent years) forms the foundation for strategic orientations on Active Employment Policy (AEP) measures in Slovenia. It defines the roles of the MoLFSA and other institutions in the AEP, assigning MoLFSA responsibility for developing a 5-year strategic plan, the "Guidelines for AEP Implementation," a 2-year "Plan for AEP Implementation," and the "Catalogue of AEP," incorporating inputs from the PES.

The **Guidelines for AEP Implementation** (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2020) serve as the overarching framework for implementing AEP measures. The 2021–2025 AEP Guidelines aim to reduce unemployment, focusing on increasing employment for vulnerable groups, including older individuals, people with low level of education attainment, and the long-term unemployed. The Guidelines prioritise rapid responses to address current labour market mismatches, often caused by changing unemployment patterns and rapid economic, technologic and labour market developments.

The **Youth Guarantee (YG)** is integrated into the 2021–2025 AEP Guidelines under **Objective 3 – A faster transition of young unemployed persons under the age of 29 into the labour market – Youth Guarantee**. To achieve this, efforts focus on activating 15–29-years-old jobseekers as one of the core groups under the AEP, strengthening the PES' role in counselling youth, and targeting youth at risk of long-term unemployment. The starting point for offering traineeships, apprenticeships, or employment is registration at a Slovenian PES office. The MoLFSA and PES are the primary providers of the YG under Objective 3 (OECD, 2021).

The 2021–2025 AEP Guidelines define indicators for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness under Objective 3:

- Indicator 1: Decrease in the NEET rate for 15–29-year-olds from 8.8% (2019 baseline) to 8.3% (2025 target).
- Indicator 2: Decrease in the share of long-term unemployed among the 15–29-year-olds from 27% (2019 baseline) to 22% (2025 target).
- Indicator 3: Reduction in the average unemployment duration for youth from 10.9 months (2019 baseline) to 8 months (2025 target).

Social dialogue and dialogue with CSOs on the Active Employment Policies

Social partners are continuously and formally involved in developing and implementing the AEP and the YG national scheme (European Commission, 2023). They contributed to drafting the 2021–2025 AEP Guidelines, which were harmonized by the Expert Committee of the Economic and Social Council for Labour and Social Affairs and discussed at Slovenia's Economic and Social Council.

Continuing and enhancing social dialogue is crucial for developing effective AEP and YG solutions. Employers' interest in the YG has increased during the 2021–2025 cycle due to labour shortages, skills mismatches, and youth emigration. The AEP Guidelines 2021–2025 also emphasize greater engagement with CSOs, recognizing their value for YG outreach, e.g. by identifying vulnerable youth, especially those who distrust public institutions, and for YG preparation, e.g. by providing counselling and follow-up training to youth. Youth organizations in particular have become trusted advisors on youth employment, including the YG.

The strengthened dialogue with social partners and CSOs reflects lessons and recommendations from previous YG implementation cycles, showcasing Slovenia's policy learning process as summarised below.

Progress from previous Youth Guarantee cycles

Slovenia presented its first YG Implementation Plan (YGIP) for 2014-2015 in January 2014, following consultations with key stakeholders. Since then, the government has implemented measures to facilitate youth transitions from education to work, including innovative employment incentives. The YGIP 2016-2020 (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2016), co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), had a total budget of EUR 300 million. It comprised both systemic reforms and shorter-term measures, grouped into two areas:

1. Early intervention and activation for youth outside the labour market, including three systemic reforms and two measures:
 - a. Lifelong guidance
 - b. Systemic changes to traineeships
 - c. Reform of the vocational education and training (VET) system
 - d. Promotion of creativity, entrepreneurship, and innovation
 - e. Scholarships
2. Activation of young people in the labour market, including four systemic reforms and six measures:
 - a. Strengthening youth counselling at PES
 - b. Prevention and detection of precarious labour
 - c. International mobility for youth
 - d. Information and communication about the YG
 - e. Training and education for unemployed youth
 - f. Incentives for youth employment
 - g. Measures for vulnerable youth
 - h. Support for youth entrepreneurship
 - i. Youth in rural areas
 - j. Projects for youth.

After completing the YGIP 2016–2020, the YG Working Group prepared a final report (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2021). The report concluded that most employment objectives were met, although the COVID-19 crisis posed new challenges. A key success factor was the institutionalization of youth counsellors at PES offices during 2016-2020.

The report recommended that the next YG cycle prioritize:

- Youth counselling and guidance
- Systematic funding for the YG (rather than project-based)
- Preventing school dropouts and reducing school-to-work transition time
- Involvement of youth organizations in outreach to NEETs
- Preventing long-term unemployment and collaborating with social centres for support services to long-term unemployed
- Providing additional practical training to address skills gaps
- Employer incentives for indefinite youth employment

- Entrepreneurship training and support
- Promoting active citizenship as a means to empower young individual and youth organizations
- Strengthening inter-governmental coordination and cooperation with youth organizations
- Improving YG communication to foster positive attitude and trust.

These recommendations, based on lessons learned and proposals by relevant ministries, European Commission guidelines, and OECD suggestions, informed the YGIP for the 2021-2025 period (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2020). Proposals formulated by youth organisations were taken into account.

As previously noted, Slovenia's YG reflects a policy learning process. The government and stakeholders have adapted the policy framework based on concrete experience, demonstrating two key conditions for policy learning: (a) regular dialogue among government institutions and stakeholders, and (b) continuous monitoring, self-assessment, and external review of both processes and results.

SECTION III: YOUTH GUARANTEE IMPLEMENTATION AND ROLE OF LOCAL LEVEL

The high tertiary education enrolment rate in Slovenia contributes to first labour market entries after the age of 23-24 and a high share of young people aged 25-29 who are in NEET situation. The first YG implementation plan already expanded the target group to include individuals up to age 29 (previously limited to age 24 in the EU). Since then, youth registered as unemployed with the PES have been prioritized in various AEP measures, including the YG.

While Slovenia's NEET rate remains below the EU average, over half (53%) of young people in NEET situation does not register with the PES. Therefore, outreach to these unregistered, often older, inactive youth without work experience, is essential. NEETs in Slovenia are more likely to be women, often are aged 25-29, and the share of those born abroad is increasing. Approximately 53% of NEETs remain in this status for over a year, which negatively impacts their future employment prospects and income. Low levels of educational attainment and motherhood are the strongest factors determining NEET duration (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2021).

Examples of Youth Guarantee measures at sub-national level

Youth employment regulations are also implemented at the local level. For example, the Municipality of Ljubljana has the 2016-2025 local Strategy for Youth and, within the YGIP 2016-2020, launched in 2016 the '[Cool Job!](#)' project to help young people who are considered hard to employ. The project offered employment opportunities in occupations with high demand, such as printer, electrician and librarian.

Slovenia participated in the [Youth Employment Initiative \(YEI\)](#) from 2015-2017. After consulting youth representatives, Slovenia allocated YEI funds to address key labour market issues in Eastern Slovenia, focusing on helping young people find their first job, benefit from work experience opportunities, or quality apprenticeships. One of the programmes funded by the YEI, the First Challenge, aimed at providing permanent employment to young people aged 15-29, particularly first-time job seekers and youth with no work experience. The programme offered a combination of on-the-job training with mentorship, and subsidised employment for 15 months, including a 3-month probation period. Employers received subsidies of up to EUR 7,250 for each full-time position created for young beneficiaries (proportionally less for part-time employment).

The First Challenge was launched via public tender specifically for Eastern Slovenia, a region affected by high youth unemployment, building on a YG nation-wide measure that had supported 900 young in 2014. While only Eastern Slovenian youth were eligible, employers could take part from across the country. The evaluation of The First Challenge showed that 79.5% of participants were employed at the programme's end, with 76% still employed six months later, indicating long-term employment success. A system of indicators was in place to allow specific and timely monitoring of the programme implementation. Satisfaction with the programme was 68%, with 29% very satisfied and 39% satisfied. The programme was implemented by MoFLSA and PES with a budget of EUR 20.7 million, co-funded by YEI and ESF together with national funds.

For low-skilled NEETs (dropouts), the PES implements the **Project Learning for Young Adults (PUM-O)** programme, recognized as a good practice by the EC and OECD. PUM-O targets vulnerable young people with limited prospects of employment or re-entering education, and it features an in-depth approach to the social integration of youth with difficult family backgrounds. The programme aims to enhance their skills and employability through project-based learning in groups and personalised support. Mentorship is provided by highly qualified professionals. PUM-O helps 500 young people annually (ages 15-26) to enter the workforce or complete education. It is implemented by local providers selected via public tender, who tailor the programme to participants' specific needs.

SECTION IV: ACHIEVEMENTS, IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED

The YG has been effective in supporting young people not in employment nor in education and training in Slovenia. The YG management has attained significant integration with other active employment measures, on one hand; and with support to students in collaboration with the education system, on the other. The overall good performance was sustained by capacity to learn from experience and adjust to improve the results.

From 2014 to 2019, over 113,000 young people registered in Slovenia's YG scheme, with more than 31,000 entering subsidized employment. The total number of youth employments exceeded 131,700, and approximately EUR 314.3 million was spent on YG measures during this period. Positive outcomes reflected in labour market statistics and YG implementation data, as noted by the YG Working Group in its report (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2021).

The NEET rate fell during the period 2014-2019 from 12.9% to 8.8%. The long-term downward trend in the NEET rate was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and Slovenia was among the EU countries where the trend partially resumed thereafter (European Commission, 2024). In 2022, the NEET rate was 8.4% mainly due to the increased inactivity notably of those aged 15-19, remaining well below the EU level of 11.7% (Council of the European Union, 2024a).

The review by the EU-level Employment Committee reported that, in 2022, 63.7% of young people in the YG were active six months after participation, an achievement that positions Slovenia above the EU average. Moreover, longer-term follow-up data indicate that outcomes are sustained or even improved over time (Council of the European Union, 2024a). This relevant result suggests that most of the offers are of high-quality and long-term, a progress to which different stakeholders have contributed, not last youth organizations. In their role of YG monitoring party, youth organisations have been advocating for appropriate promotion of the YG, increased oversight of employers' job offers to ensure their quality, and more job-creating measures (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2020). Yet, the waiting time for receiving an offer has been longer than four months for 63.6% of those registered in the YG in 2022, an improvement compared to 2021 but still a value less positive than the EU average (52.8%) (Council of the European Union, 2024a).

One of the success factors has been the development of a support system for both students and young people in NEET situation. The combination of measures to prevent school dropouts and reduce youth unemployment, through national and EU co-funded programmes, has underpinned the YG good performance in Slovenia in terms of coverage and follow-up of participants (Council of the European Union, 2024b). With 4.0% of early leavers from education and training, Slovenia remained well below the EU average of 9.7% in 2022, although the gap seemed to reduce in 2023, when the early leavers rose to 5.4% in Slovenia and decreased to 9.5% at EU level (Eurostat website, visualisations education and training). Preventive measures put in place within the YG scheme to identify at-risk students and provide professional and educational support through school counselling will therefore remain needed.

While the post-pandemic recovery created many permanent jobs, the incidence of precarious employment is higher for youth compared to adult workers. Young people are more likely to work in non-standard employment, including self-employment, temporary, involuntary part-time work, and low-paid jobs, a situation that the country is addressing through dedicated measures with support of EU funds. Slovenia has implemented several projects targeting Roma, young mothers, and migrants. Further efforts could help identify specific needs and improve coordination between these projects and the YG scheme. The country continues to implement social support programs encouraging SMEs to hire youth with disabilities and provide on-the-job training for young adults (Council of the European Union, 2024b).

The evolution of the YG has benefited from YG Working Group advice, such as the recommendation to focus on practical training for the labour market, particularly for first-time job seekers. To increase youth employment, incentives for indefinite employment have been provided. Improvements to

apprenticeships have included better matching of employers and apprentices, supporting companies to become high-quality training providers, boosting student interest in apprenticeships, and systematically evaluating apprenticeship outcomes (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2021).

A key lesson from early YG implementation has been the need to strengthen targeted counselling. More comprehensive training for counsellors and educators has been introduced, along with deeper engagement with employers. The capacity of national and local employment agencies, particularly in outreach and motivation of youth for the YG, a individualized counselling and guidance, has been a focus. Additional training on digital, green, entrepreneurial competencies, and career management skills has been emphasized (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2021).

The ratio of counsellors to unemployed youth has not always been optimal and has required attention (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2021). To complement its capacity, the PES trained 40 young people as youth counsellors at the sub-national level, in cooperation with youth centres, CSOs, and public institutions assisting youth transitions into the labour market. Youth counsellors are now the main point of entry to the YG scheme, leading job search activities, career counselling, and enrolment in various youth employment programmes.

Slovenia has used peer learning to improve outreach to unregistered NEETs. Building on the example of other EU countries, it has involved youth organizations in mapping and outreach activities. Youth organizations, such as the Youth Network MaMa, assist the MoLFSA and PES in promoting the YG through national campaigns that involve local youth centres, and consultations that engage in dialogue both organized and non-organized youth. Information campaigns have reduced the distance between young people and the YG and increased its attractiveness. Considering the low trust in government institutions among Slovenian youth (17%) (OECD, 2024), youth counsellors and CSOs play a crucial role in bridging this gap and enhancing trust in PES services.

At the same time, the outreach to young people not registered with the PES can further improve, especially in rural areas. It would be beneficial to share data on at-risk youth among institutions, including PES, CSOs, and YG providers; to this end, however, a solution to ensure the protection of personal data should be found (Council of the European Union, 2024b).

In line with OECD and European Commission recommendations, Slovenia started considering options for moving from short-term, project-based YG implementation to a more systemic and permanent approach to planning and financing (Republic of Slovenia, MoLFSA, 2021). A key aspect of this shift is securing sufficient and continuous funding for the YG. The ongoing debate is nourished by governmental and non-governmental actors alike, given the limitations of short-term financing in addressing education and labour markets changes that have a long-term nature. Back in 2021, the OECD had already advised to better fund the AEP including the YG, as spending was about 50% lower than the OECD average (OECD, 2021). Meantime, new opportunities have emerged through the Next Generation EU facility, representing however a temporary and project-based type of response.

SECTION V: KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT THE YOUTH GUARANTEE GOVERNANCE

Interinstitutional Coordination

Slovenia has developed a cohesive approach to youth policies through horizontal coordination across sectors. Each ministry designates a youth coordinator to represent youth interests within its policy domain. The Council of the Government for Youth serves as an advisory body, providing recommendations on legislation, financing, and policy modifications. These recommendations are binding for government consideration and implementation where feasible, ensuring youth perspectives are integrated into decision-making.

Collaboration Between Government and Non-State Actors

Youth organizations and social partners actively participate in the non-formal YG Working Group, whose mandate is to monitor the YG implementation although its role has grown beyond that. The YG Working Group is an instrument for flexible and practical exchanges, and it meets once or twice per year. This flexibility fosters collaboration and responsiveness but also presents challenges, such as expectations management, inconsistent participation, and communication gaps.

Youth organizations in Slovenia are very dynamic and their commitment adds value to the YG. The National Youth Council, Youth Network MaMa, student organisations and other youth representatives are members of the YG Working Group since its establishment and have advanced initiatives like expanding YG coverage. Employers have increased their involvement especially in recent years, driven by labour market skills shortages and the need to engage young talent.

Youth organisations represent a very dynamic component of Slovenia's CSOs and strongly support the YG. The Students Organisations, the National Youth Council of Slovenia, Youth Union, Special Council for Young Entrepreneurship, Youth Centres and their network are part of the non-formal YG working group since its establishment in 2014, where they have advanced proposals such as the extended coverage of the YG. Employer representatives have progressively increased their commitment to the YG. At present, the skills shortage in the labour market is their main motivation to join the YG scheme.

Local-Level Governance in the Youth Guarantee Model

The creation of 12 Regional Partnership Councils has enhanced local coordination in Slovenia's ALMP and YG governance. These councils, chaired by local PES offices, include representatives from employers, unions, youth organizations, educational institutions, community organizations, regional development agencies and social work centres. They facilitate improved information sharing and referral processes, for stronger YG effectiveness as intended by YG Implementation Plan (YGIP) 2021–25. This localized approach strengthens the connection between youth needs and available resources.

Financing the Youth Guarantee

The YG relies on multiple funding sources, including the ESF, the European Regional Development Fund, national funds, and bilateral donor grants. Slovenia's strong dependence on EU funds highlights the need for a more systemic approach to integrate the YG into the national framework. To this end, policymakers are shifting from viewing youth policies as costs to recognizing them as long-term investments with significant returns.

Public tenders for funding YG-related services by non-state actors are managed across various institutions, primarily ministries. These tenders are designed to be broadly accessible to non-state actors. However, one key lesson learned concerns the required level of co-financing from applicant organizations, as high co-financing requirements can restrict the participation of CSOs. Grant contracts are typically awarded for one year, with the option of annual extensions for up to four years.

However, this extension mechanism does not effectively reduce uncertainty and keeps service providers constrained to short-term planning.

Strengthening Youth Guarantee Effectiveness

A shift in youth outreach strategy significantly improved YG effectiveness. The focus moved from expecting young people to seek out the YG to actively reaching them. This led to well-designed public campaigns and festivals featuring celebrities and youth ambassadors, successfully attracting and engaging young people. The MoLFSA was tasked with coordinating and implementing the strategy in collaboration with youth organizations and the PES, with funding from the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility. This shift was based on the following key lessons:

1. The YG only works if young people trust it. The government learned to build a positive perception by organizing events that young people found enjoyable and by sharing relatable success stories.
2. Trust grows when youth organizations and social partners are engaged in every phase of YG implementation and monitoring. These stakeholders need access to data - both successes and challenges - to foster a shared understanding and contribute to improvements.
3. Disadvantaged or demotivated NEETs, such as young people belonging to vulnerable groups, require tailored interventions. Effective approaches included involving mediators, providing individual pathways and mentoring, and offering apprenticeships and workplace coaching in collaboration with worker and employer organizations.
4. Data management is key for efficiency gains but legally complex. In terms of acceptance, a survey revealed that most young people oppose inter-institutional data sharing. As a result, joint case management has been implemented only to a limited extent, primarily through local PES offices and Centres for Social Work.

Flexibility and adaptability of youth policies

Slovenia's labour market and youth preferences are evolving rapidly. While public sector jobs were previously favoured, today's youth prioritize meaningful work aligned with values like sustainability and solidarity. Interest in the green economy is rising, and financial compensation has become less important compared to personal fulfilment. Policymakers are adapting youth policies to address these changing preferences, ensuring that Slovenia remains an attractive place for young people to live and work.

ACRONYMS

AEP	Active employment policy
AEP Guidelines	Guidelines for the active employment policy measures
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
CSO(s)	Civic Sector Organisation(s)
EC	European Commission
EMCO	Employment Committee of the European Council
ESF(+)	European Social Fund (Plus)
ETF	European Training Foundation.
EU	European Union
HCD	Human Capital Development
MoAE	Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment
MoC	Ministry of Culture
MoEDT	Ministry of Economic Development and Technology
MoESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport
MoLFSA	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
NEET	(Young people) Not in Education, Employment, or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Public Employment Service
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative
YG	Youth Guarantee
YGIP	Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

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