

**Ministry of Family and Social Policy**



***Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan***

**in Poland**

***Update 2022***



**Warsaw, 2022**

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## Foreword

This document on support for young people in the labour market is an updated version of the "*Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland*" valid for the period 2015-2021<sup>1</sup> and implementing the *EU Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee*.

On 30 October 2020, the *Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2020/C 372/01)* was published in the Official Journal (OJ C 372 of 04 November 2020, p. 1). The rationale for the new recommendation was the need to adapt the lines of support for young people in the labour market to the current socio-economic challenges, addressed also under the assumptions of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 and - after the publication of the initial assumptions of the new recommendation - in the context of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Employment of young people is a challenge for labour markets in the vast majority of EU countries. Young people are also particularly vulnerable to the effects of the economic slowdown in the labour market, as they have less work experience and skills and have shorter length of employment, resulting in an easier possibility for an employer to part with a young worker in a situation of, for example, declining economic activity. The difficulties experienced by young people in the labour market became apparent on a large scale after the crisis triggered by the economic collapse in late 2008 and early 2009, and it was in response to the persistently high rate of youth unemployment in subsequent years that the EU Council adopted in April 2013 the first Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee. While the immediate and initial rationale for the new edition of the Recommendation was not the impact of the pandemic crisis<sup>2</sup> (which started in Europe in February 2020), during the development of the Recommendation, the perceived and projected impact of the pandemic on labour markets became one of the key considerations for the provisions of the Recommendation - current analyses of the labour market situation in the EU indicated that in most countries young people were one of the groups most affected by the economic impact of the crisis<sup>3</sup>.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation of young people in Poland compared to the EU was relatively favourable. In 2019, the rate of young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET rate for the 15-24 age group) in Poland was 8.1% (against an EU-28 average of 10.1%). The unemployment rate for 15-24-year-olds in 2019 was 9.9% in Po-

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<sup>1</sup> "*Implementation plan for the Youth Guarantee in Poland*" was adopted in 2014 and updated in October 2015. The main rationale for the aforementioned update in 2015 was to adapt the Plan to the legal changes of 2014, including raising the upper age limit of the recipients of the Youth Guarantee in Poland from 25 to 29 years of age.

<sup>2</sup> In November 2019, the President of the new EC, Ursula Von der Leyen, asked the Commissioner for Jobs, Nicolas Schmitt, in a Mission Letter to strengthen the Youth Guarantee initiative. The demand to strengthen this initiative was subsequently included in the EC Communications "*A Strong Social Europe for a Just Transition*" and "*The European Green Deal*". In the following months, the EC prepared background documents for further work, submitted for consultation with Member States, including *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Bridge to Jobs - reinforcing the Youth Guarantee* (COM(2020) 277).

<sup>3</sup> Joint Employment Report 2021, European Commission, p. 22.

land (compared to 14.4% in the EU) and 4.4% for 25-29-year-olds. Over the last two years, in the face of the economic slowdown, these indicators have worsened<sup>4</sup>. For this reason, the situation of young people in Poland is less favourable than that of the working population as a whole, and there is a need to continue measures aimed at facilitating entry into and successful functioning in the labour market for people under 30.

For the purposes of the next edition of the *Youth Guarantee*, the minister responsible for labour has updated this *Plan* so that it takes into account the directions set out in the new EU Council Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee and provides for a range of interventions responding to the needs of young people in the context of employment, providing real support for taking up satisfying employment and acquiring skills that are valuable from the point of view of the "digital"<sup>5</sup> and "green" economy<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> See subsection 1.2.

<sup>5</sup> The digital economy is a combination of several general-purpose technologies and many economic and social activities carried out by people through the internet and related technologies.

<sup>6</sup> Economy in which production and consumption decisions take into account the broader quality of people's lives and the state of the environment.

# 1. Context and rationale for implementing the *Youth Guarantee* in Poland

## 1.1 First edition of the *Youth Guarantee* in Poland

In response to the increasing levels of youth unemployment in Europe, aggravated by the economic crisis of 2008-2009, the European Commission (EC) has taken action to support young people in taking up employment. In December 2012, a *Youth Employment Package* was developed at EU level. Part of the package was the *Youth Guarantee*<sup>7</sup> initiative, which calls on EU Member States to ensure that young people up to the age of 25 who are neither in employment nor in education or training receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within 4 months of leaving school or becoming unemployed. The Council adopted a recommendation on establishing a *Youth Guarantee* (2013 C 120/01) on 22 April 2013, obliging all countries to implement it<sup>8</sup>. Member States with regions with youth unemployment rates above 25% were obliged to develop a *Youth Guarantee* implementation plan by December 2013. A study presenting such a plan for Poland was submitted to the EC on 23 December 2013.

The Youth Guarantee in Poland was aimed at people aged between 15 and 29, especially those in the NEET group. Young people were divided into four subgroups:

- early school leavers aged 15-17;
- people aged 18-29 who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET);
- people aged 18-29 registered as unemployed;
- unemployed young people and job-seeking school leavers and university graduates within 48 months of leaving school or obtaining a vocational diploma, aged 18-29 years.

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Poland for the period 2014-2021 was based on the functioning of 4 basic pillars of support for young people offered by:

- labour offices (wide range of forms of professional activation, competence enhancement, entrepreneurship support and employment incentives for employers);
- Voluntary Labour Corps (educational activities of VLC units and professional activation projects);
- projects selected in competitions at central and regional level (projects at central level were selected by the minister in charge of labour and at regional level by voivodeship labour offices);

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<sup>7</sup> EC Communication: *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee* (COM(2012) 729).

<sup>8</sup> As a complement to the implementation of the *Youth Guarantee*, at the European Council summit on 7-8 February 2013, it was decided to implement the *Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)*, aimed at regions where the unemployment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds exceeds 25%. EUR 550 million has been earmarked for the implementation of the YEI in Poland in the years 2014-2020.

- the loan programme entitled "*First Business – Start-up Aid Government Programme*", implemented by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK).

The Youth Guarantee Programme was financed by national (Labour Fund) and EU funds (under the European Social Fund - ESF and the '*Youth Employment Initiative*', i.e. additional European funds to support regions with the highest youth unemployment rate in Axis I of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development 2014-2020).

Between 2014 and 2021, the Youth Guarantee implemented diverse instruments ranging from advisory (career counselling) to educational (training, courses) to financial ones (loans, business start-up grants, bridging support). The multiplicity and diversity of forms of support enabled young people to choose the action that best suited their personal preferences. In addition to diversity, an important feature of the instruments implemented was their individual character. Support implemented as part of projects selected by the minister in charge of labour, voivodeship labour offices, VLC and powiat labour offices generally began with the preparation of an individual plan for the participant describing his/her predispositions, needs and deficits in relation to the possibility of finding permanent employment. On this basis, specific activities were proposed with the aim of improving the situation of the young person in the labour market.

Another factor positively influencing the achieved results of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee was the diverse and geographically extensive institutional system. The activities of government administration, employment services (voivodeship labour offices, powiat labour offices), other labour market institutions (VLC), financial institutions (BGK) and beneficiaries of competition projects (e.g. NGOs, enterprises) covered the whole country. This ensured good access to professional activation for all young people.

When analysing the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, it is important to bear in mind the specific nature of the various instruments through which the programme was implemented. Activities financed by projects with EU funds (minister in charge of labour, voivodeship labour offices, VLC) were subject to established competition rules and procedures, which significantly influenced their timing and duration. Less formalised in implementation were loans granted under the "*First Business – Start-up Aid Government Programme*". Relatively easy to operationalise and implement were activation measures for young people conducted by the powiat labour offices.

In total, more than 5.5 million young people benefited from the support instruments implemented under the Youth Guarantee in Poland between 2014 and 2020.<sup>9</sup> This represents a higher share than assumed at the *Plan* preparation stage in 2015.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Data was prepared on the basis of data updates as at 31 December 2020 by BGK, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, VLC Headquarters and Department of ESF Implementation, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and in the scope of activities of powiat labour offices - data from CeSAR system.

<sup>10</sup> See: *Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland (updated 2015)*, p. 12.

Table 1. Statistics on the number of people participating in the Youth Guarantee 2014-2020.

|       | Year      | Number of people who started participating (thousands) |        |        | Outcome                |        |        |                       |      |       |
|-------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------|------|-------|
|       |           |                                                        |        |        | Employment (thousands) |        |        | Education (thousands) |      |       |
|       |           | Women                                                  | Men    | Total  | Women                  | Men    | Total  | Women                 | Men  | Total |
| Total | 2014      | 542.8                                                  | 544.9  | 1087.7 | 163.8                  | 167.2  | 331    | 4.3                   | 3.1  | 7.4   |
|       | 2015      | 315.6                                                  | 331    | 646.6  | 161.1                  | 165.2  | 326.3  | 3.8                   | 2.9  | 6.7   |
|       | 2016      | 587.8                                                  | 554.6  | 1142.4 | 277.9                  | 267.9  | 545.8  | 3.7                   | 2.8  | 6.5   |
|       | 2017      | 426.8                                                  | 407.1  | 833.9  | 234.7                  | 227.1  | 461.8  | 2.9                   | 2    | 4.9   |
|       | 2018      | 366.1                                                  | 332.9  | 699    | 203.4                  | 180.6  | 384    | 2.6                   | 1.8  | 4.4   |
|       | 2019      | 322.3                                                  | 290.3  | 612.6  | 177.1                  | 151.8  | 328.9  | 2.1                   | 1.6  | 3.7   |
|       | 2020      | 284.2                                                  | 251.8  | 536    | 158.8                  | 143.5  | 302.3  | 2.2                   | 1.7  | 4     |
|       | 2014-2020 | 2845.6                                                 | 2712.6 | 5558.2 | 1376.8                 | 1303.3 | 2680.1 | 21.6                  | 15.9 | 37.6  |

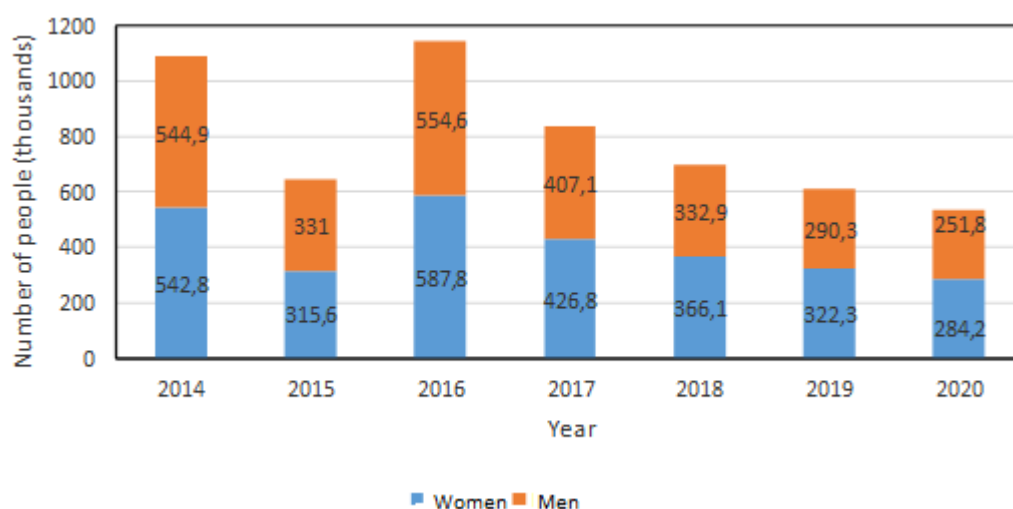
Source: Own elaboration based on data from Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, BGK, VLC and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (CeSAR system).

The largest number of participants (5.4 million) took part in activities organised by the poviats labour offices based mainly on career counselling, enabling them to acquire or improve their qualifications. The high interest in the support instruments offered by the poviats labour offices was undoubtedly to a significant extent the result of their easy accessibility and geographical proximity.

In the range of time, the most intensive activities with the highest number of participants were carried out immediately after the launch of the Youth Guarantee, between 2014 and 2016 (nearly 3 million participants in total). Subsequently, as a result of the improvement in the labour market situation and the fall in unemployment, the number of participants in the programme decreased.



Figure 1: Youth Guarantee participants 2014-2020 (women/men).



Source: Own elaboration based on data from Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, BGK, VLC and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (CeSAR system).

Following the implemented measures, almost 2.7 million of them (1.4 million women and 1.3 million men) found employment, including 2.2 thousand people from the NEET group (0.8 thousand women and 1.4 thousand men) received a loan and opened their own business, and 37.6 thousand participants (21.6 thousand women and 15.9 thousand men) undertook further education. Overall, following participation in the Youth Guarantee programme, 48.9% of participants ceased to belong to the NEET group. The most effective instrument of activation was loans (96.8% of borrowers started a business). Also measures organised by the poviats labour offices (PUP) (63.4% of participants were activated) and the voivodship labour offices (WUP) (49.2% of participants were activated) were highly effective. On the other hand, projects implemented within the framework of competitions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (37.2% of activated participants) and projects of the VLC (32% of activated participants) were less effective. However, it should be emphasised that their target group was young people affected by particularly difficult family or life situations, whose social and professional integration requires comprehensive and long-term actions.<sup>11</sup>

A total of approximately PLN 14.4 billion has been earmarked for activation measures for young people between 2014 and 2020. Approximately PLN 12.2 billion was spent on activities of the poviats labour offices financed from the Labour Fund and European funds (non-competition projects), and more than PLN 1,756.8 million was spent on activities organised by the voivodship labour offices (projects selected in regional competitions - measure 1.2 of the OP Knowledge Education Development 2014-2020). More than PLN 190.5 million was spent on the implementation of VLC projects, and loans of PLN 150.54 million were granted to young people under the "First Business – Start-up Aid Government Programme". PLN 117

<sup>11</sup> Data was prepared on the basis of data updates as at 31 December 2020 by BGK, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, VLC Headquarters and Department of ESF Implementation, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and in the scope of activities of Poviats Labour Offices - data from CeSAR system.

million was allocated to projects selected in competitions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

**Support instruments for young people specified in the Act of 20 April 2004 on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 690, as amended), hereinafter referred to as the "Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions".**

Support instruments introduced as part of the labour market reform of May 2014 played an important role in the activation of young people under 30. These support instruments are mainly: training voucher, traineeship voucher, employment voucher and settlement voucher. They were introduced primarily to encourage young people to find an employer on their own.

- A training voucher (art. 66k of the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions) may be obtained from the labour office by a person under 30 years of age. The voucher guarantees the referral to a selected training course together with payment of costs incurred in relation to undertaking the training course.
- A traineeship voucher (art. 66l of the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions) may be obtained from the labour office by a person under 30 years of age. The voucher guarantees a referral for a six-month traineeship with an employer of choice. The voucher can only be granted to an unemployed person who has found an employer to carry out the traineeship and who has been given an assurance of employment by the employer.
- An employment voucher (art. 66m of the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions) is a guarantee that the employer will be reimbursed part of the salary costs and social insurance contributions in connection with the employment of an unemployed voucher holder under 30 years of age.
- A settlement voucher (art. 66n of the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions) is a guarantee that an unemployed person under 30 years of age will be granted funding to cover, among other things, housing costs associated with taking up employment, other gainful employment or business activity outside the place of current residence.

According to the results of the audit of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) carried out in November 2018, for the years 2014-2017,<sup>12</sup> employment and settlement vouchers were characterised by high employment effectiveness, i.e. the durability of the form of support calculated by the NIK after two years from its granting (over 70%). Traineeship (40%) and training (17.8%) vouchers had lower employment effectiveness.

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<sup>12</sup> Effectiveness of the provision of labour market services, 2014-2017, Supreme Audit Office, Warsaw, November 2018.

At the same time, it is worth emphasising that, in accordance with the above-mentioned audit of the Supreme Audit Office, the highest employment effectiveness was characteristic for financing the start-up of business activity (86.9%).

## **1.2 Assumptions for the new edition of the Youth Guarantee - EU Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020.**

In its March 2020 document "*A Reinforced Youth Guarantee*", the EC highlighted the importance of the *Youth Employment Initiative* (around €9 trillion) together with ESF funding in Financing of the Youth Guarantee. In the new financial framework, the EC proposed a requirement for Member States with NEET rates above the EU average to allocate a minimum of 10% of their ESF+ funding to measures to prevent youth unemployment. In Poland, this rate was 12.9% for the 15-29 age group compared to 13.7% in the EU-27 in 2020. Therefore, Poland is not obliged to set the aforementioned minimum allocation of 10% of ESF+.

The EC has identified the following challenges in the context of implementing the Youth Guarantee:

- still higher youth unemployment rate compared to overall unemployment rate;
- the share of inactive NEETs remained unchanged or even increased in most MS;
- the Youth Guarantee does not reach the majority of persons in the NEET group. In only ten countries (including Poland) more than half of NEETs aged 15-24 are covered by this initiative<sup>13</sup>. Of all young people supported under the Youth Guarantee initiative in 2018, 39% took up an offer within 4 months of registration. Monitoring of the initiative shows that the proportion of NEETs registered under the EU Youth Guarantee in 2018 was around 37%;
- data on the results of the initiative are still incomplete. However, on average, more than half of young people are still in employment, education or training 6 months after leaving the Youth Guarantee and these results persist after 12 and 18 months<sup>14</sup>;
- adapting young people's qualifications to the changing labour market (digital skills, so called "green skills" and soft skills).

Responding to the above challenges and the political commitment of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was the EC's July 2020 proposal for a Council Recommendation on "*A Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee*", based on the experience and lessons learned from seven years of implementing the Youth Guarantee and taking into account the changing realities of the labour market, as well as the digital and green transformation<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> These figures should be regarded as indicative.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that in 20% of cases these results are unknown. Member States still need to work on improving their systems for investigating the fate of young people who have left the *Guarantee*.

<sup>15</sup> In Q1 2022, the EC has also launched work on another initiative to support young people in the labour market, called ALMA (*Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve*), aimed at people aged 18-30 who are neither in employment, nor in education or training. As part of the programme, participants will be given the opportunity to complete a traineeship, between 2 and 6 months, in another EU Member State. After returning home, the support will be continued in order to use the newly acquired skills for work or further education. ALMA will be implemented

On the basis of the above-mentioned EC proposal, the EU Council adopted on 30 October 2020 *A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee*, which replaced the *Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on establishing a Youth Guarantee* of 22 April 2013.

The essential elements of the new Council Recommendation are as follows:

- **All under-30s** will receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within 4 months of leaving school or becoming unemployed.
- **It is important to distinguish between those in the NEET (*neither in employment, nor in education or training*) group who are temporarily in this situation** (often with higher education, sometimes with work experience, perhaps made redundant due to the COVID-19 pandemic or newly entering the labour market during the post-education crisis) **and those who have been in the NEET category for a long time** (often from a vulnerable group with a low level of education). This allows for a more individualised and targeted approach to both groups, as the latter is likely to need more support.
- **It is crucial to reach and activate more young people, especially women (who are more likely to be inactive than young men due to caring responsibilities, such as looking after children or dependent adults, or other personal or family responsibilities) from all backgrounds.** This will be done through the implementation of more targeted information and awareness-raising activities on the need for professional activation, taking into account the challenges faced by rural or more remote areas, thus reducing regional disparities.
- It is important to support young people in gaining work experience and developing the **relevant skills needed for the changing world of work, in particular those related to ecology and digitalisation.**
- **As more than 90% of jobs already require digital skills, the EC proposes to assess the digital skills of all NEETs who register for the Youth Guarantee,** using the European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) and available self-assessment tools, and to ensure that, on the basis of an identified lack of knowledge in this area, all young people are offered specific preparatory training to improve their digital skills.
- **It is important to ensure the appropriate quality of offers,** in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Framework for Quality and Effective Vocational Preparation, the Framework for Quality Apprenticeships, which have been developed since 2013 (ensuring, for example, access to social protection, adequate duration of probationary periods, a clear written agreement or definition of work and rest periods).
- **Youth unemployment and inactivity should be prevented** by strengthening partnerships at all levels of government, between Youth Guarantee programme implementers and relevant stakeholders including the education sector and youth organisations.

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under ESF+. The EC has earmarked €15 million in the initial implementation phase of the programme for activities which support and promote the initiative.

- **It is necessary to improve monitoring and data collection by:**

- strengthening early warning systems and the capacity to monitor those at risk of becoming young NEETs, while contributing to the prevention of early leavers from education and training (for example through career counselling in schools, more flexible learning pathways and more work-based learning) in partnership with the education sector, parents or carers and local communities, and with the involvement of services dealing with young people, social workers, health and employment services;
- encouraging, while respecting data protection legislation, greater sharing of data on tracking, profiling and follow-up between Youth Guarantee partners to improve support, which is particularly important for the success of interventions targeting vulnerable NEET young people;
- a stronger focus on post-employment support and improved measures for young people after an offer has been accepted in order to ensure their sustainable integration into the labour market.

### **1.3 Young people in the labour market - diagnosis.**

The demographic changes and technological and digital advances of recent years also affect the situation of young people in the context of socio-economic processes, including phenomena in the labour market. Among the most significant megatrends influencing the current and future shape of the labour market are the following:

- 1) rapid technological and digital advances, including developments in the use of artificial intelligence,
- 2) climate change and the transformation of economies towards a low-carbon and closed loop economy,
- 3) demographic changes.

**The aforementioned trends influence and will influence the demand for specific specialities and skills in the labour market.** Particularly for young people, it is important that, when they enter the labour market, they are equipped with skills that will not quickly become obsolete and, at the same time, allow them to continuously develop their experience, knowledge and skills.

#### **1.3.1 Young people in Poland in demographic terms.**

In line with the general demographic changes in Poland, typical of developed economies (ageing of the population, declining fertility rate), the share of the 15-29 age group in the overall population structure has been changing over the last few years.

Between 2014 and 2021, the number of Polish citizens in the 15-29 age group decreased from nearly 7.5 million to just over 6.09 million people (a change of approximately 1 million 398 thousand people, i.e. 18.7%).

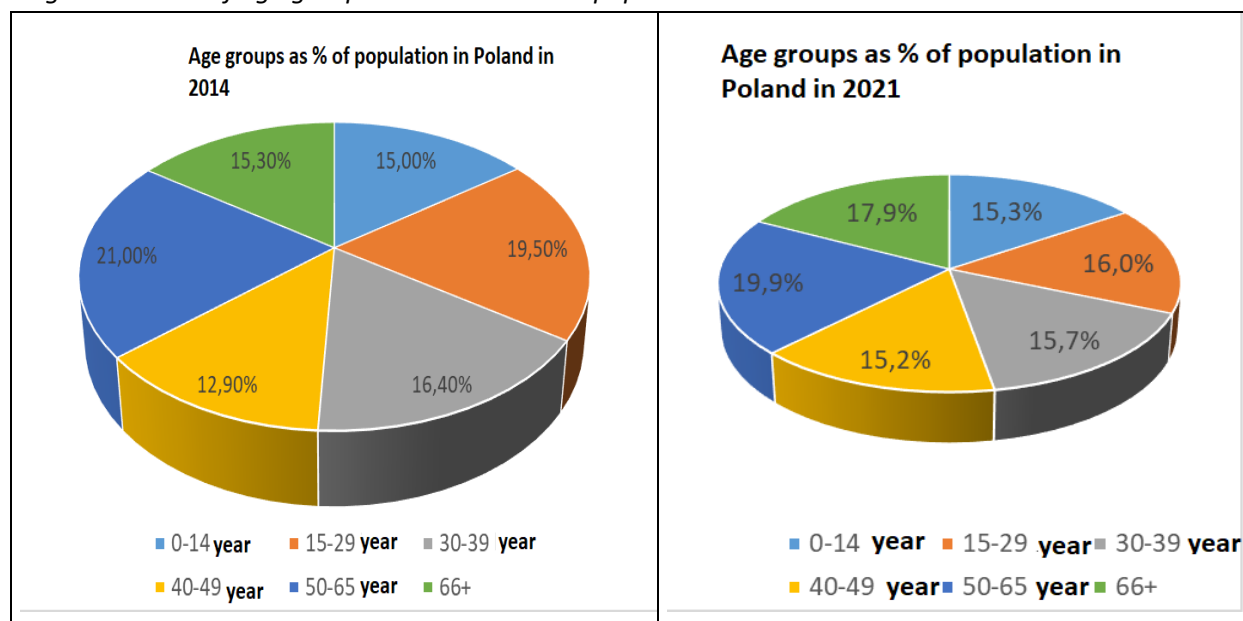
Table 2. Data on the number of 15-29-year-olds, by age group 15-24 and 24-29

| Age group   | 2014      | 2015      | 2016      | 2017      | 2018      | 2019      | 2020      | 2021<br>(the 1st half-year) |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| 15-24 years | 4,560,805 | 4,388,999 | 4,221,767 | 4,072,466 | 3,938,870 | 3,831,389 | 3,763,995 | 3,743,515                   |
| 25-29 years | 2,929,069 | 2,832,463 | 2,760,348 | 2,683,414 | 2,598,818 | 2,512,272 | 2,402,721 | 2,348,271                   |
| 15-29 years | 7,489,874 | 7,221,462 | 6,982,115 | 6,755,880 | 6,537,688 | 6,343,661 | 6,166,716 | 6,091,786                   |

Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Poland data.

If we look at the 15-29 age group against the total population of Poland, over the 6 years (2014-2020), its share has decreased by 3.4 percentage points. In 2014, it accounted for almost one-fifth of the total population, while in 2021 (half-year) its share size decreased to 16.0%. At the same time, an increase in the share of the total population was recorded for the oldest age group, i.e. by 1.9 percentage points, from 15.3% in 2014 to 17.2% in 2020.

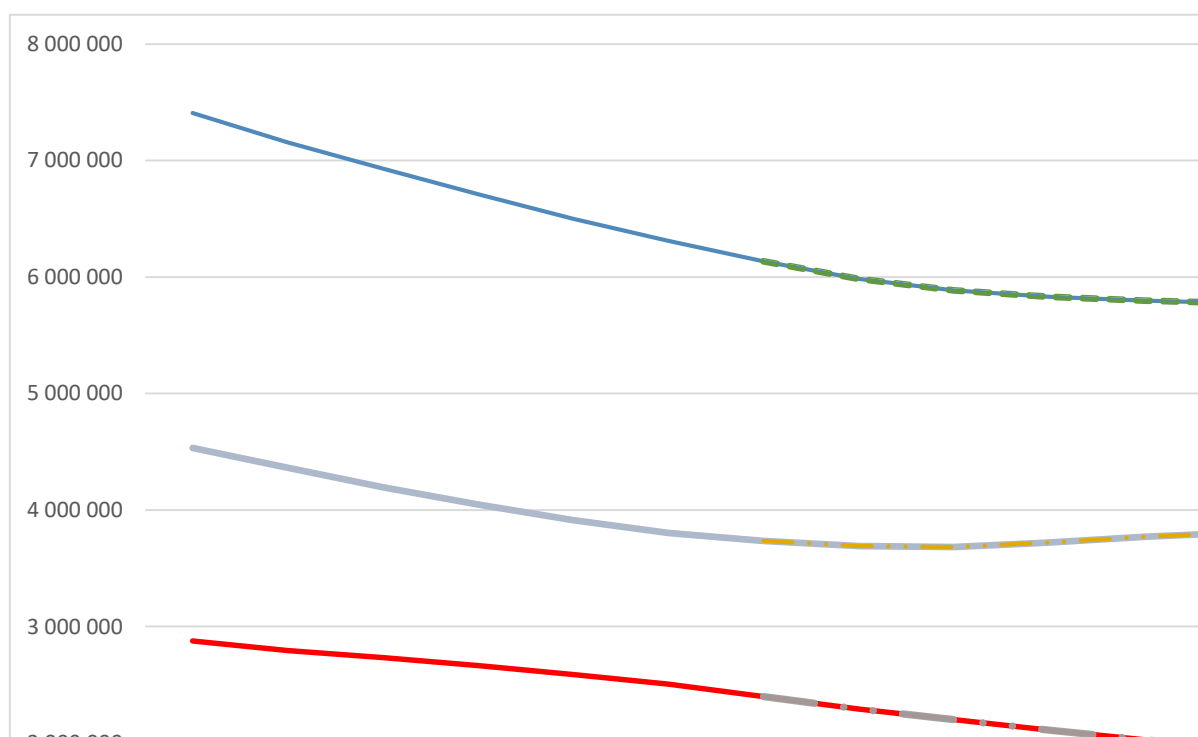
Figure 2: Share of age groups in the total Polish population in 2014 and 2021.



Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Poland data.

The analysis of the number of births in the years allows a general forecast to be formulated for the number of young people in the following years (up to 2030).

Figure 3: Projected number of young people between 2020 and 2030 (15-24 years and 25-29 years).



Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Poland data.

From the point of view of analysing the situation of young people in Poland, data by territory (regions) and area (urban-rural) are also important. At the end of the first half of 2021, out of a total of 6,091,000 persons aged 15-29, 3,286,000 persons, i.e. approx. 53.9%, lived in urban areas. In 2020, the number of 15-29 year-olds was 6,167,000, which means there was a 1.2% decrease in the number of 15-29 year-olds in the period under review, with a 1.1% decrease in the number of urban residents and a 1.3% decrease in the number of rural residents.

### 1.3.2 Young people in Poland in the labour market

Since the beginning of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Poland, the labour market situation of the main programme recipients, i.e. young people, has definitely improved, although the beneficial changes were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

By 2019, there was a steady decline in the NEET rate, with an increase in the employment rate, a decline in the youth unemployment rate and a significant reduction in the proportion of young people in the total number of unemployed registered at labour offices. The level of labour force participation of young people remained unsatisfactory (a problem also found in other EU countries).

The situation was changed by the pandemic and the tightening of economies. The situation of young people was also affected, primarily because it was mainly young workers who had fixed-term or civil-law employment agreements, and therefore ones that were easier to terminate. On the other hand, they may have experienced difficulties in entering the labour market due to fear of infection and/or due to fewer job offers. It was also not insignificant

that the industries that were particularly affected by the pandemic included tourism, catering or the so-called event industry, which tend to employ young people.

**One of the major challenges for the education system and the labour market is to counter the NEET phenomenon**, as the lack of practical skills and work experience is the most frequently raised argument in the context of youth unemployment. Therefore, reducing the number of young people categorised as so-called NEET, i.e. neither in employment nor in education or training, is one of the priorities for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

**Poland belongs to the group of countries where the NEET rate in the group of people aged 15-29 is at the EU average level. In 2021, it amounted to 13.4% in Poland vs. 13.1% in the EU-27**, while in Italy, for example, it exceeded 23%. In the last two years in Poland, as in most EU countries, there has been an increase in this indicator - by 1.4 percentage points.

In 2021, the NEET rate in the 15-24 age group in Poland also reached 11.2% (EU-27 - 10.8%).

*Table 3. NEET rate in Poland between 2013 and 2021 (in %; by age group between 15-29 years).*

| Age group   | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 <sup>16</sup> |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| 15-24 years | 12.2 | 12.0 | 11.0 | 10.5 | 9.5  | 8.7  | 8.1  | 8.6  | 11.2               |
| 25-29 years | 22.7 | 21.2 | 20.5 | 18.9 | 18.0 | 17.2 | 17.7 | 19.4 | 16.9               |
| 15-29 years | 16.2 | 15.5 | 14.6 | 13.8 | 12.9 | 12.1 | 12.0 | 12.9 | 13.4               |

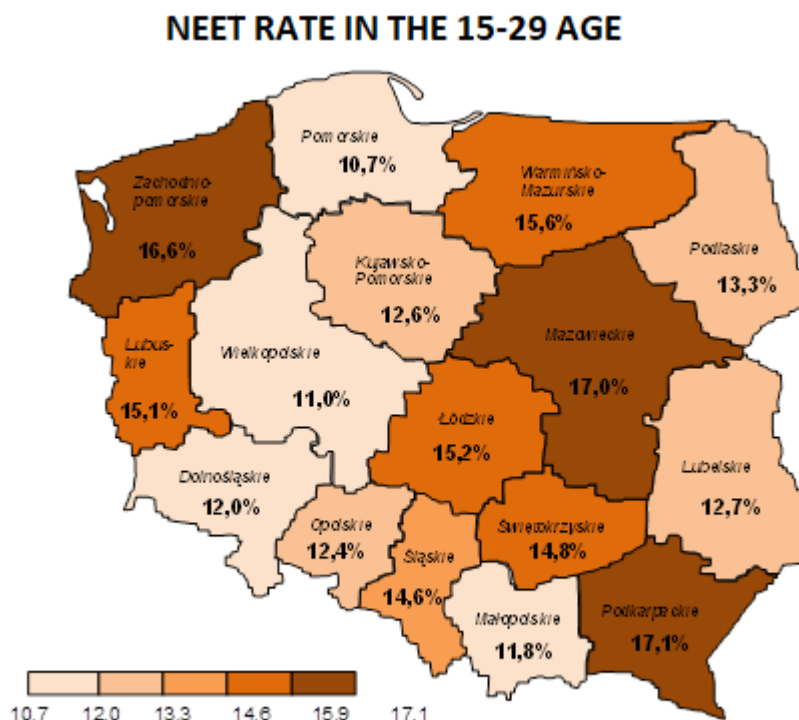
*Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat data.*

In 2021, the highest value of the NEET rate in the 15-29 age group was recorded in the Podkarpackie (17.1%) and Mazowieckie (17.0%) voivodeships, while the lowest value was recorded in the Pomorskie (10.7%) and Wielkopolskie (11.0%) voivodeships.

<sup>16</sup> Due to the implementation of methodological changes resulting from the revision of the European Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), introduced by the Social Statistics Framework Regulation, i.e. Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 October 2019 and its implementing acts, data from Q1 2021 onwards are not fully comparable with previous periods (hence the significant differences in the data series).



Map 1. NEET rate in Poland by region in 2021 (%).



Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat data.

It is also worth mentioning that, in relation to 2013, i.e. the time before the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Poland, the NEET rate in Poland declined significantly (by 2.8 percentage points), even though its value increased in the last two years.

Despite the relatively low percentage of young people who do not continue their education, some of the young people classified as NEETs do not register at labour offices and remain excluded from the labour market primarily because they have not completed their formal education and thus lack professional qualifications. They are not interested in taking up employment, because they do not see the need for it, but they are also not motivated to train and further educate themselves. Hence the need to use specific methods to increase the professional activity of this group of young people.

In 2020, the professional activity rate of young people aged 15-29 in Poland was 51.6%, meaning that only one in two young people in Poland was professionally active (51.6% compared to 53.1% in the EU-27). On the other hand, it should be noted that only one in three people in the 15-24 age group was active (31.8% compared to 37.8% in the EU-27), but in the 25-29 age group, the activity rate in Poland was even higher than in the EU (81.8% compared to 81.0% in the EU-27). In 2021, the rate for the 15-29 age group in Poland was 51.9%

(54.4% in the EU-27), the 15-24 age group in Poland was 31% (39.3% in the EU-27), and the 25-29 age group in Poland was 84.5% (82.4% in the EU-27)<sup>17</sup>.

*Table 4. Labour force participation rate in Poland from 2013 to 2021 (in %; by age group 15-29 years)*

| Age group   | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 15-24 years | 33.3 | 33.9 | 32.8 | 34.5 | 34.8 | 35.1 | 35.2 | 31.8 | 31.0 |
| 25-29 years | 84.4 | 84.7 | 84.3 | 84.5 | 83.5 | 83.5 | 83.2 | 81.8 | 84.5 |
| 15-29 years | 52.8 | 53.2 | 52.4 | 54.1 | 54.1 | 54.4 | 54.4 | 51.6 | 51.9 |

*Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat data.*

The main reason for the low professional activity of young people in Poland is the obligation to study and complete qualifications (indicated as a reason for inactivity by approximately 90% of inactive people aged 15-24).

**In 2020, the employment rate in the 15-29 age group was 48.0% in Poland, 5.2 percentage points higher than seven years earlier**, while at the same time the indicator in the EU-27 increased by 2.0 percentage points to 46.0%. This means that the growth rate of the indicator in question was more than 2 times higher in Poland than in the EU-27. In the 15-24 age group, the employment rate in Poland was 28.4% (compared to 31.4% in the EU-27), but already in the 25-29 age group it was 77.8% (compared to 72.7% in the EU-27).

In 2021, the employment rate in the 15-24 age group was 27.3% in Poland (32.7% in the EU-27), the employment rate in the 25-29 age group was 80.7% (74.3% in the EU-27), and the employment rate in the 15-29 age group was 48.1% (47.4% in the EU-27).

*Table 5. Employment rate in Poland in 2013 - 2021 (in %; by age group 15-29 years)<sup>16</sup>*

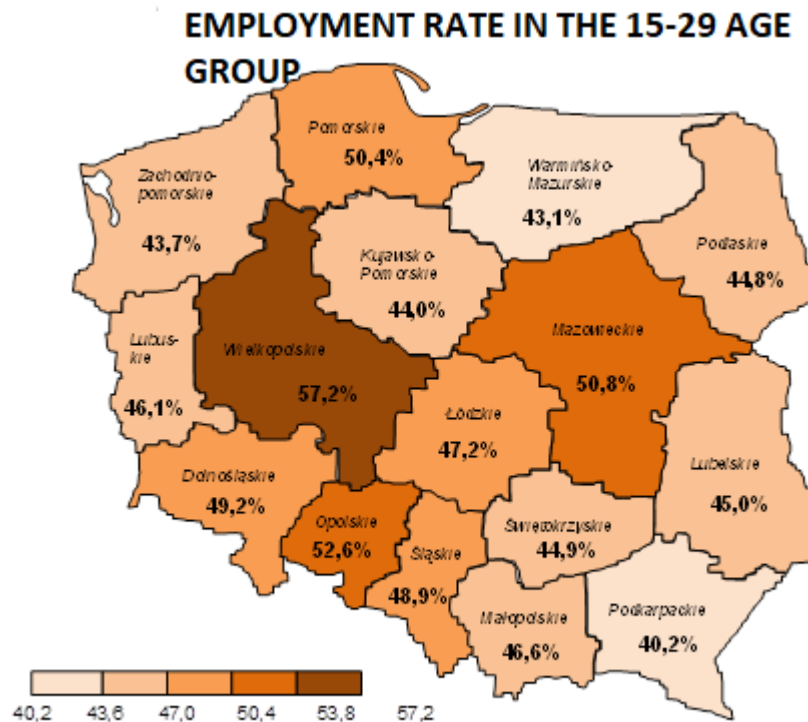
| Age group   | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 15-24 years | 24.2 | 25.8 | 26.0 | 28.4 | 29.6 | 31.0 | 31.7 | 28.4 | 27.3 |
| 25-29 years | 73.0 | 74.7 | 75.8 | 77.7 | 78.5 | 79.3 | 79.5 | 77.8 | 80.7 |
| 15-29 years | 42.8 | 44.4 | 45.0 | 47.7 | 49.0 | 50.2 | 50.8 | 48.0 | 48.1 |

*Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat data.*

The employment rate in the 15-29 age group ranged from 40.2% in the Podkarpackie voivodeship to 57.2% in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship.

<sup>17</sup> Due to the implementation of methodological changes resulting from the revision of the European Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), introduced by the Social Statistics Framework Regulation, i.e. Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 October 2019 and its implementing acts, data from Q1 2021 onwards are not fully comparable with previous periods (hence the significant differences in the data series).

Map 2. Employment rate in Poland by region in 2021 (%).



Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Poland data.

The more difficult situation of young people in the labour market is illustrated above all by the high unemployment rate compared to other age groups. In some countries, it is sometimes 2 or even 3 times higher than for people of working age as a whole.

**In 2021, the unemployment rate of the working-age population (15-64 years) in Poland was 3.4% compared to 7.0% in the EU-27, which means that the rate in Poland was 3.6 percentage points lower than in the EU, and it should be remembered that between 2004 and 2006 Poland was one of the countries with the highest unemployment rate in the EU. In 2020 and 2021 Poland was the country with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU, but this does not change the fact that, as in many other countries, the changes observed in the labour market due to the pandemic strongly affected young people.**

**In 2020, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15-29 in Poland was 7.1%, increasing on the twelve-month scale by 0.5 percentage points.** At the same time, the unemployment rate in the EU-27 in the age group in question increased by 1.4 percentage points to 13.3%. The rate calculated for young people in Poland was more than two times higher than for people of working age. A particularly high rate was recorded for persons aged 15-24 (10.8%), while in the 25-29 age group, its value was significantly lower (4.8%). **In 2021, the unemployment rate in the 15-29 age group in Poland was 7.2% (13% in the EU-27), in the**

15-24 age group - 11.9% (16.6% in the EU-27), in the 25-29 age group - 4.5% (9.8% in the EU-27).

*Table 6. Unemployment rate in Poland between 2013 and 2021 (in %; by age group 15-29)*

| Age group   | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 15-24 years | 27.3 | 23.9 | 20.8 | 17.7 | 14.8 | 11.7 | 9.9  | 10.8 | 11.9 |
| 25-29 years | 13.6 | 11.8 | 10.1 | 8.1  | 5.9  | 5.0  | 4.4  | 4.8  | 4.5  |
| 15-29 years | 18.9 | 16.5 | 14.2 | 11.8 | 9.4  | 7.6  | 6.6  | 7.1  | 7.2  |

*Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat data.*

Currently, the main barrier for young people in the labour market is the lack of professional experience. One should notice a change in this issue in relation to the earlier edition of the Youth Guarantee - at that time it was diagnosed that one of the two main barriers (apart from the aforementioned lack of experience) were inadequate professional qualifications. Nevertheless, during the 8 years of implementation of the Youth Guarantee, the situation of young people in Poland has clearly improved and the prospects are also favourable. This is also confirmed by data on registered unemployment.

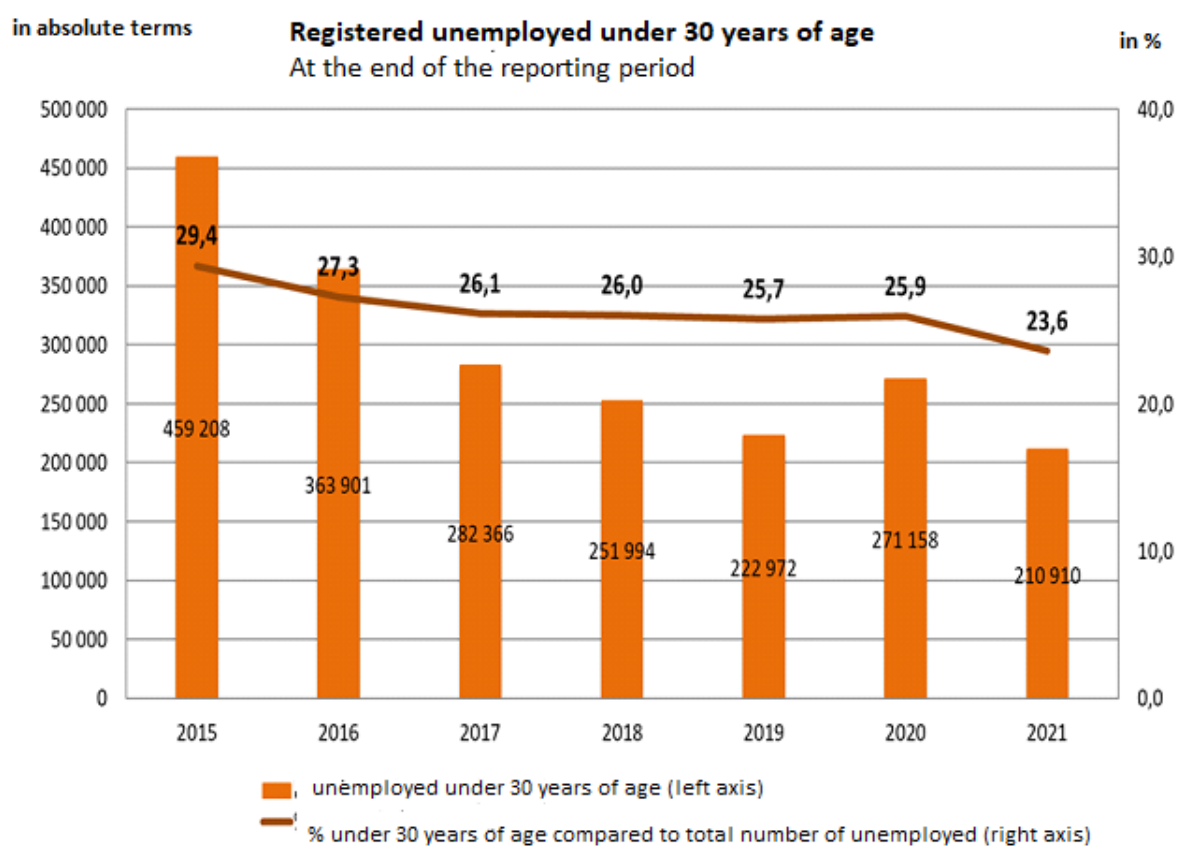
*Table 7. Unemployed people in Poland between 2013 and 2021 (by age group 18-29).*

| Age group   | 2013                                         | 2014    | 2015    | 2016    | 2017    | 2018    | 2019    | 2020    | 2021    |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|             | in absolute terms                            |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 18-24 years | 401,037                                      | 301,952 | 236,837 | 179,203 | 134,333 | 118,577 | 106,145 | 130,815 | 100,597 |
| 25-29 years | x                                            | x       | 222,371 | 184,698 | 148,033 | 133,417 | 116,827 | 140,343 | 110,313 |
| 18-29 years | x                                            | x       | 459,208 | 363,901 | 282,366 | 251,994 | 222,972 | 271,158 | 210,910 |
|             | in % compared to total registered unemployed |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 18-24 years | 18.6                                         | 16.5    | 15.1    | 13.4    | 12.4    | 12.2    | 12.3    | 12.5    | 11.2    |
| 25-29 years | x                                            | x       | 14.2    | 13.8    | 13.7    | 13.8    | 13.5    | 13.4    | 12.3    |
| 18-29 years | x                                            | x       | 29.4    | 27.3    | 26.1    | 26.0    | 25.7    | 25.9    | 23.6    |

*Source: Labour market report MRPIPS-01, no data for specific age brackets in 2013-2014.*

Since the start of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in January 2014, the situation of young people in the labour market in Poland gradually improved. This trend was temporarily disturbed in 2020 - at the end of 2020, the number of unemployed in this group increased compared to the end of 2019. In 2020, with an overall increase in unemployment by 20.8%, the number of unemployed people under 30 years of age increased by 21.6% and the share of this group of unemployed people in the structure of registered people increased from 25.7% to 25.9%. In 2021, the total number of the unemployed fell by 14.5% and the number of the unemployed under 30 years of age fell by 22.2%, while the share of young people in the structure of the registered unemployed decreased from 25.9% to 23.6%.

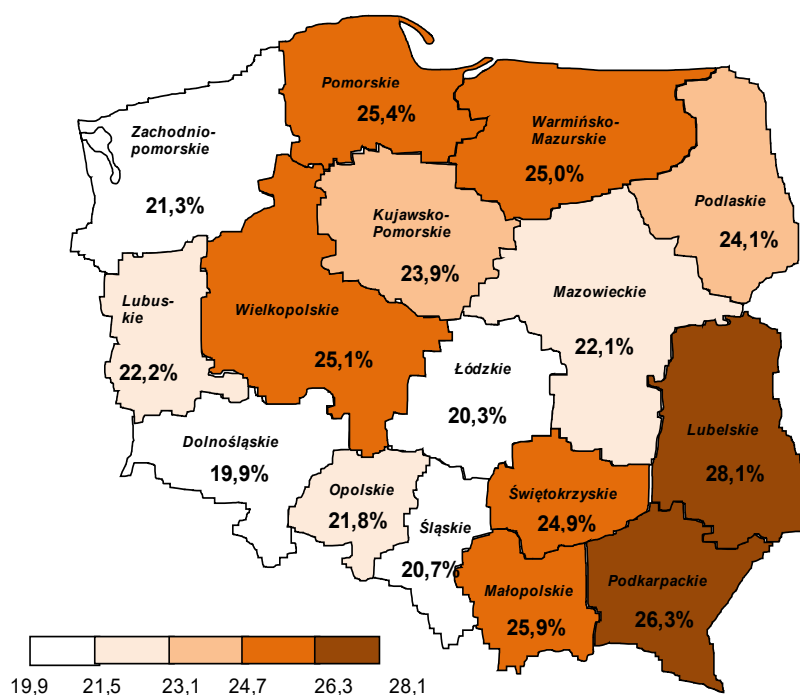
Figure 4: Registered unemployed under 30 years of age between 2015 and 2021



Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Poland data.

At the end of 2021, the number of unemployed people under 30 years of age amounted to 210,900 and, as mentioned, decreased by 22.2% compared to the same period in 2020. At the end of 2021, the young unemployed aged 18-29 accounted for 23.6% of the total number of registered unemployed, although the situation in this respect varied territorially.

Map 3. Share of the unemployed under 30 years of age in the total number of the unemployed at the end of 2021 (%) (by region).



Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Poland data.

It is worth adding that young people are one of the main recipients of activation measures carried out by labour offices. In 2015-2017, young people under 30 accounted for more than 50% of the activated unemployed, and in subsequent years their share fell to around 46.5%. This does not change the fact that still **the share of this group in the number of activated unemployed was more than 2 times higher than the percentage of young unemployed in the total number of registered unemployed.**

In 2021, almost 126,000 unemployed people under 30 years of age benefited from active forms of counteracting unemployment, including 72,300 people under 25 years of age, and they accounted for 45.3% and 26.0% of the unemployed who benefited from active forms of support, respectively. In the past year, the young unemployed accounted for almost 69% of participants in adult vocational preparation, more than 58% of participants in apprenticeships, more than 47% of participants in training, and about 40% of participants in subsidised work.

It is worth mentioning that in 2014, the so-called new labour market instruments were implemented to support, inter alia, the employment of young people under 30 years of age, i.e.: training vouchers, apprenticeship vouchers, employment or settlement vouchers. From the beginning of the launch of these instruments until the end of 2021, almost 135,000 young unemployed benefited from them.

### **1.3.3 Promotion of quality employment of young people within the Polish labour market policy.**

As indicated above, reducing youth unemployment and promoting employment of this group in high-quality jobs has been one of the priorities of the Polish labour market policy for years. The Youth Guarantee is one of the essential elements of comprehensive measures for supporting employment of young people.

#### **Regulatory context**

The Act on *Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions*, amended in 2014, extended the definition of young people in a special situation in the labour market under 30 years of age<sup>18</sup> and shortened the maximum time limit for providing support to unemployed persons under 25 years of age from 6 months to 4 months from the date of registration at the labour office. Since the entry into force of this provision - which took place in the second quarter of 2014 - the support directed to unemployed youth by labour offices has been sanctioned by law, and thus, the Youth Guarantee is firmly anchored in Polish legislation<sup>19</sup>.

#### **National strategic context and actions complementary to the Youth Guarantee**

The issue of supporting employment for young people, among others, is particularly strongly emphasised in one of the nine development strategies - Human Capital Development Strategy 2030 (HCDS). The HCDS responds to the challenges facing Poland in terms of strengthening human capital and social cohesion. Human capital is developed by improving the level of education and increasing the competences of people so that they can fully participate in social, political and economic life. Human capital is a resource that determines success in economic, social and personal terms. Skills (competences), health, including mental well-being and cultural capital determine the economic advancement of individuals.

For this reason, the most important elements of the HCDS implementation include activities aimed at both increasing the competences, including social competences, of young people, including increasing the potential for creativity and innovation and the possibility to use them, as well as support for active participation of young people in social processes. In the strategic approach, this means not only providing a job or running a business, but also continuous personal development and all social activity. One of the objectives that the strategy sets itself is to reduce social and professional inactivity and reduce youth unemployment, which is a necessary condition for improving young people's quality of life in the medium term.

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<sup>18</sup> The amendment also introduced the obligation to prepare an Individual Action Plan for all registered unemployed persons pursuant to Article 34a of the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions.

<sup>19</sup> In 2021, the minister responsible for labour undertook work on a package of new regulations aimed at carrying out a comprehensive modernisation of the labour market concerning active labour market policies, the functioning of public employment services and procedures regulating the employment of foreigners. One of the elements of the proposed package of regulations are the provisions on supporting employment of persons under 30 years of age.

Among the main activities planned in the HCDS for young people is the improvement of their skills by, among others: strengthening information activities as well as educational and career counselling, development of voluntary assessment of young people's skills as a basis for planning individual skills improvement pathways, work-based learning and competence development through the implementation of social activities), promotion of the benefits of lifelong learning.

In view of the need to support young people in the labour market, the HCDS envisages different support instruments depending on the degree of readiness of young people so far inactive and the nature of the barriers they have to overcome in order to take up a job or change their job for a better one. In particular, these are active labour market instruments, including: information activities as well as educational and career counselling integrated with similar counselling in education, skills assessments needed to plan individual pathways to improve skills, training matched to the results of skills assessments, traineeships, apprenticeships, grants and repayable financial instruments to start a businesses. This will also include support related to activation opportunities offered by social and solidarity economy entities. In addition, the strategy envisages that labour market institutions are to strive to improve the quality of cooperation with employers and eliminate barriers to employment - including with the use of programmes co-financed by EU funds.

In the case of young people with disabilities, activities focus on creating the conditions for easier entry and retention in employment or return to the labour market, e.g. through stimulating motivation, rehabilitation, completing qualifications or eliminating mental and environmental barriers.

Within the framework of measures developed on a national basis as a response to new development challenges, it was planned to implement a comprehensive package of measures addressed to young people entering the labour market under the initiative entitled *Decent Jobs for Youth. Youth Guarantees*. They will be one of the components of this broader project.

The *Decent Jobs for Youth* programme aims to increase the employment stability of young people. This is to be achieved by investing in young people's competences and providing them with comprehensive professional support. The programme is targeted at the under-30s and will involve labour offices in cooperation with training institutions. Labour offices will cooperate with young people in the process of planning further career paths, providing professional career counselling. The implementation of the Decent Jobs for Youth initiative will make it possible to ensure greater stability and quality of employment among young workers than hitherto, through a better match between their skills and the needs of the labour market and by ensuring that young people have access to employment in occupations that both pay well and offer prospects for the years ahead.



In addition to the Youth Guarantee implementation component, the above-mentioned package of measures will include complementary national programmes targeted at young people and regulatory changes.

#### **1.3.4 Key institutional actors in the field of employment of young people under 30 years of age, including NEETs**

The key institutions implementing measures to support young people in entering the labour market are:

##### **A. Poviat and voivodeship labour offices**

Labour offices are the primary institutions for supporting unemployed people to return to the labour market throughout the country. Their tasks also include researching and analysing the local labour market. Labour offices are local government units subordinate to the marshal of the voivodeship (voivodeship labour offices - WUP) or to the starost of the poviat (poviat labour offices - PUP).

##### **B. Voluntary Labour Corps**

The Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC) are a state budgetary unit supervised by the minister competent for labour. The main objective of VLC's activity is to create conditions for the proper social and professional development of young people - with particular emphasis on activities addressed to young people from disadvantaged environments, requiring assistance from state institutions. The most important tasks carried out by VLC in this respect include supporting the educational system through social, professional and economic activation, taking measures aimed at increasing professional qualifications or retraining, supporting initiatives aimed at counteracting unemployment and educating in the work process, including providing employment and developing international youth cooperation.

The recipients of VLC activities are people aged 15-25, a large part of whom fall into the NEET group. The first group of recipients of VLC activities are minors, with diminished opportunities, coming from socially maladjusted environments, requiring upbringing activities and vocational education conditioning an independent start in adult life. The second group is made up of graduates from secondary and post-primary schools and universities - young people who are educated and have some professional qualifications, but who are not able to find their own way in the labour market and are therefore at risk of unemployment. For these young people, VLC envisages labour market activities, implemented through a coordinated system of career counselling, employment services and vocational training, responding to the local demand of the youth community for specific labour market services.

VLC activities are carried out by the VLC's main headquarters and its subordinate 16 voivodeship VLC's headquarters and 7 educational centres.

## Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego

Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK) is a state-owned financial institution specialised in handling the public finance sector. BGK's mission is the efficient and cost-effective implementation of activities commissioned by the State, complemented by the development of its own activities for selected market segments.

BGK has been involved in activities to support young people who enter the labour market through its involvement in the implementation of a loan programme tested since 2013 in the form of the pilot programme "First Business - Start-up Support", which, after the entry into force of the amended Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions in 2014, was expanded nationwide. The essence of the programme is to support business start-ups with preferential loans. BGK's task is to manage the programme.

Meanwhile, financial intermediaries selected by BGK are responsible for receiving and processing applications and granting loans.

## **2. Concept for the implementation of the *Youth Guarantee* in Poland.**

### **2.1 Definition of the *Youth Guarantee* in Poland.**

As recommended by the EU Council, the *Youth Guarantee* aims to ensure that all young people under 30 years of age receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed.

**Each Member State may clarify the definition of the Youth Guarantee according to its situation. In view of the data presented in the diagnosis concerning the situation of young people in the labour market in Poland, the recipients of the *Youth Guarantee* are people between 15 and 29 years of age, in particular from the so-called NEET group (*not in employment, education or training*)<sup>20</sup>.**

In the case of support provided by poviats labour offices, the starting point for receiving support under the Youth Guarantee - i.e. a period of four months - for persons under 25 years of age is calculated from the **date of registration at the poviat labour office of the young person as unemployed**<sup>21</sup> (or a jobseeker in the case of a person with a disability who is not in employment).

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<sup>20</sup> A young person aged 15-29 who fulfils all three conditions, i.e. is not in employment (i.e. is unemployed or professionally inactive), is not in education (i.e. is not enrolled in formal full-time education or neglects compulsory schooling or study) or training (i.e. does not participate in extracurricular activities aimed at obtaining, completing or improving vocational or general skills and qualifications needed to perform work; in the process of assessing whether a person is not in training, and thus qualifies as NEET, it should be verified whether they have participated in this type of publicly funded form of activation in the last 4 weeks).

<sup>21</sup> Pursuant to Article 50(1) of the Act of 20 April 2004 on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 1100).

In the case of projects of poviats labour offices, voluntary labour corps co-financed from European funds and projects selected through competitions, as well as other activities co-financed from European funds and organised under the Youth Guarantee, the period of four months during which a young person under 30 years of age is to be provided with an offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or another form of assistance leading to professional activation is calculated from the date of the person's entering the project<sup>22</sup>.

## **2.2 Priorities for the Youth Guarantee implementation in Poland.**

The priorities for the implementation of the new edition of the Youth Guarantee in Poland result from the general directions of activities within the national employment policy, shaped in the context of global trends. As mentioned, the fundamental challenges for contemporary labour markets arise primarily from:

- technological change, automation and the digitalisation of social life, work and economic processes;
- climate change and the resulting energy transition towards a low-carbon economy;
- demographic changes (ageing of developed societies and migration processes).

An additional challenge for labour markets from 2020 onwards has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The identification of these determinants of labour markets is well reflected in the provisions of the new *Recommendation on the Reinforced Youth Guarantee*.

### **2.2.1 Thematic priorities in the area of skills.**

In Poland, the document setting the strategic policy framework for the development of the skills needed to strengthen social capital is the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030<sup>23</sup>. The lines of intervention included in the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 are oriented towards the development and use of basic, transversal and vocational skills. The document also emphasises issues concerning the social and professional inclusion of young people.

#### **Digital skills.**

The Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 places particular emphasis on the development of digital skills. The dynamic progress in the development of digital technologies has increasingly visible consequences both in the economy and in everyday life. In the context of

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<sup>22</sup> According to the provision in the section titled "Types of projects and examples of actions under investment priority 8ii", which was modified in the Operational Programme Knowledge, Education, Development 2014-2020 in December 2019 - support for young people up to 29 years of age who are unemployed or professionally inactive will be provided in accordance with the standards set out in the "Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland", i.e. within 4 months of joining the project.

<sup>23</sup> The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 consists of two parts: a general part (Resolution No. 12/2019 of the Council of Ministers of 25 January 2019) and a specific part (Resolution No. 195/2020 of the Council of Ministers of 28 December 2020).

the functioning of the labour market, it is estimated that, in the short term, the use of AI-based solutions may lead to a decrease in employment in certain sectors, while in the long term, it may lead to an increase in total employment and its quality (i.e. higher quality jobs)<sup>24</sup>.

Digitisation is certainly an opportunity for a good and decent job for a large group of young people, both well-educated people who have completed the full path of education in mathematics, computer science, electronics, mechatronics, chemistry and other sciences, and the rest of the youth. This is therefore an indication of how the Youth Guarantee support should be targeted. First and foremost, there should be an assumption that every young person should have some minimum preparation in digital competence, which will soon be necessary regardless of their occupation. Next, it is important to identify those occupations that require some preparation in digital skills but do not necessarily require a university degree (e.g. operation of controller-based machinery, transport systems, logistics, electric and autonomous car mechanics).

### **Skills needed for green jobs.**

In the context of the green economy, the prospect of working in new sectors/industries related to energy, construction, climate change adaptation, waste management and environmental protection opens up to young people.

The prospects for stable employment for young people (with varying skill levels) will certainly be found in the construction industry, which will use increasingly newer and more efficient low- or even zero-emission technologies.

Interesting career opportunities are offered by the alternative energy sector - especially renewable energy, e.g. in the production, assembly and installation of photovoltaic cells or solar panels.

Other sectors with strong employment prospects include the construction or improvement of water and waste management infrastructure, as well as occupations related to the urban greening and the protection of biodiversity.

### **Skills in the care and health services professions.**

Not without significance for the employment prospects of young people are issues related to demographic trends. The country's medium-term development strategy, the Strategy for Responsible Development, states that "unfavourable demographic processes - the ageing of the population and migration out of Poland - have a negative impact on the prospects of securing an appropriately skilled and creative workforce"<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> EC report, *Future of Work? Work of the Future*, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Strategy for Responsible Development, Warsaw 2017, p. 23, <https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/informacje-o-strategii-na-rzecz-odpowiedzialnego-rozwoju>.

In the context of young people, it can be inferred from this statement that the demographic changes described are opening up a whole sector of the 'silver economy' based on services aimed at the elderly. These include rehabilitation workers, carers, assistants and physical activity facilitators for older people. Current analyses at European level show that occupations related to the care of the elderly and people with disabilities, occupations such as social workers and workers in the broader health services sector, will become increasingly scarce.

The above-mentioned professions will involve little automation in the coming years, hence the need to include in training and education programmes the competences necessary to perform them.

In the context of the above paragraph, it should be emphasised that the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected most countries in the world, demonstrates the importance of ensuring well-functioning and crisis-resilient social protection systems, especially the systems for health protection, social assistance and care, including long-term care. The impact of the pandemic, both in its health and socio-economic dimensions, will most affect people from vulnerable groups<sup>26</sup>. It is therefore particularly important to ensure the availability of qualified human resources in the above areas, as well as to give appropriate prestige, including in terms of pay, to professions in the health and care services sectors<sup>27</sup>.

### **2.2.2 Priorities in process terms: better quality of offers, more comprehensive support, reaching out to the most remote people, better cooperation with stakeholders.**

In addition to the above-mentioned priorities concerning the skills on which the offers under the Youth Guarantee will be focused, it is necessary to identify priorities in terms of how the support will be implemented. These include:

**Assessment of participants' digital skills** – as called for in the Council Recommendation, every NEET person registering for the Youth Guarantee should undergo digital competence assessment. Depending on the results of this assessment, digital skills training will be offered so that the appropriate form of support can take place at an adequate level adapted to the trainee's skills and needs.

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<sup>26</sup> The Commission Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Fund entitled *2020 European Semester: Country Specific Recommendations*, 20 May 2020., [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-european-semester-commission-communication-country-specific-recommendations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-european-semester-commission-communication-country-specific-recommendations_en).

<sup>27</sup> The Commission Communication *2020 European Semester: Country Specific Recommendations* states: "Overall, the crisis has exacerbated existing structural challenges related to effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of health systems. (...) The crisis has put additional strain on health systems' revenues, which risk deepening inequalities in access, particularly for disadvantaged groups. In many Member States, shortages of healthcare staff have become critical due to working conditions that discourage the attractiveness of these professions."

The above assessment will be carried out by means of a test combining elements of self-assessment with practical tasks<sup>28</sup>.

**Offers of better quality** – in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Framework for Quality and Effective Vocational Training, the Framework for Quality Apprenticeships, which has been developed since 2013. Among others, the following should be ensured: access to social protection, reasonable duration of probationary periods, a clear written agreement or definition of working and rest periods.

In the previous edition of the *Youth Guarantee* programme, an evaluation study submitted to the EC found that around one third of participants did not rate positively the usefulness of the training offered<sup>29</sup>. Another diagnosed problem is low-paid employment after participation in the project, which was close to the minimum salary<sup>30</sup>.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the wide range and appropriate quality of apprenticeships and their modalities, so that they actually contribute to the acquisition of useful experience and, at the same time, offer decent working conditions.

**More comprehensive and individualised support** – support is to be targeted at people under 30 years of age with regard to professional and educational activation through the use of labour market instruments and services. One of the complementary actions aimed at providing comprehensive support will be services based on the principle of a "one-stop shop", where people interested in support will receive the necessary information and assistance in one place<sup>31</sup>.

The new EU Council Recommendation draws attention to the fact that the target group of the Youth Guarantee is not homogeneous - it includes both those with higher employability (in terms of skills, motivation and/or general life situation) and those in need of multifaceted and in-depth support. Counselling support for people registering for the programme will be used to plan an appropriate range of activation measures<sup>32</sup>.

Despite the fact that the previous edition of the Youth Guarantee provided for many support instruments which could be used by employers (e.g. provision of additional equipment, subsidised employment, intervention works), the level of their use was low. To a large extent

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<sup>28</sup> The Chancellery of the Prime Minister has submitted a proposal to the European Funds for Social Development (2021-2027) programme for the creation of a tool entitled Virtual Assistant for Digital Competence Development (WARKC) - systemic support for the identification and implementation of *training needs in digital competences*. This tool will support the completion of skills, retraining or obtaining education in the desired ICT-related direction. The tool will provide the user with an opportunity to diagnose their own digital competences, and then, depending on their preferences and predispositions and the needs of the labour market, it will allow them to set an individual path for the development of competences, thanks to data obtained from various sources (including, among others, the Integrated Register of Qualifications, the Development Services Database, universities, training companies, enterprises in the ICT industry).

<sup>29</sup> Report on the implementation of the *Youth Guarantee* in Poland.

<sup>30</sup> Applies to POWER axis I.

<sup>31</sup> This approach will be piloted in Poland under ESF+ measures.

<sup>32</sup> See subsection 2.3.

this was limited to the use of traineeships<sup>33</sup>. This suggests that, in addition to setting up comprehensive support programmes, it is also necessary to popularise particular forms of support.

**Reaching out to those furthest from the labour market** – targeted information and awareness-raising campaigns to reach different target groups. The analytical activities of the National Coordinator of the Youth Guarantee will serve to develop standards in this respect. The general outline of the communication activities is presented in the Youth Guarantee Communication Plan in Appendix 1.

**Better cooperation with stakeholders** – preventing youth unemployment and inactivity should involve strengthened and active cooperation with, among others, the education sector, non-governmental organisations, especially youth organisations, employers and local government units. This will allow for a better diagnosis of the local labour market and thus a more effective planning and implementation of forms of support.

## **2.3 The logic of intervention carried out to improve the labour market situation taking into account the needs of young people**

### **2.3.1. Recipients of the *Youth Guarantee***

The Youth Guarantee is aimed at young people in four sub-groups:

- (1) (1) 15-17-year-olds dropping out of school or neglecting compulsory schooling or education;
- (2) 18-29-year-olds:
  - a. registered as unemployed;
  - b. not in employment, education or training (NEET);
  - c. who are unemployed or job-seeking school leavers or university graduates;
- (3) persons who have left foster care;
- (4) women under 30 raising children.

**(1) With regard to persons aged 15-17 years who leave school early, neglect compulsory schooling or education**, who are at risk of social exclusion and who have problems with finding their way in the labour market and becoming independent, priority is given to measures in the VLC. They focus on providing support leading to obtaining education and practical vocational preparation in the form of apprenticeship or vocational training.

**(2) In relation to 18-29-year-olds**, the support will be either standard or in-depth/complex (for NEETs<sup>34</sup>).

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<sup>33</sup> Applies to POWER axis I.

Support will cover the full range of available labour market instruments and services. For young people who are closest to employment, career counselling and placement and active job search assistance are offered to give the young person the chance to enter the labour market smoothly and gain employment that allows them to use the skills and competences they already have.

The introduction to the labour market, by raising the level of competences and skills, as well as the acquisition of the necessary experience, are mainly served by traineeships and training courses. In addition, these individuals will be able to take advantage of funding opportunities for further education (e.g. postgraduate studies, scholarships for continuing education), which translates into further enhancement of their competences and thus their chances of finding employment. Such a comprehensive offer consisting of a range of forms of support is financed by national and European funds.

Entrepreneurship development was identified as an opportunity for some of the young unemployed, particularly those with the appropriate skills. This is supported by non-repayable funds for business start-ups available at poviats labour offices, as well as a loan programme implemented in cooperation with BGK. The BGK loan programme is open to unemployed people and job-seeking graduates who have not been self-employed for the last 12 months before applying for a loan. The programme will also be available to young people up to the age of 29.

In-depth/complex support includes all forms of assistance that are undertaken to improve a person's situation in the labour market or to obtain employment (carried out with national and EU funds). This support is aimed at vulnerable people who face a range of problems in entering or remaining in the labour market. These difficulties may be related, for example, to a lack of professional qualifications and experience or to qualifications in the profession that do not match the needs of the labour market.

**(3) One group of young people in need of special support are those leaving foster care (up to two years after leaving foster care):**

- foster care leavers over the age of 15, who have returned to their natural families after a stay in foster care has ended;
- foster care leavers over the age of 18 who have established their own households;
- foster care leavers over the age of 18 who are becoming independent and have difficulties finding employment after leaving foster care.

The foster care system is a set of people, institutions and activities designed to provide temporary care and upbringing for children in cases where it is not possible to provide care

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<sup>34</sup> Due to the high internal diversity of the NEET group, it will be necessary to individualise support according to the needs of the person/subgroup of people.

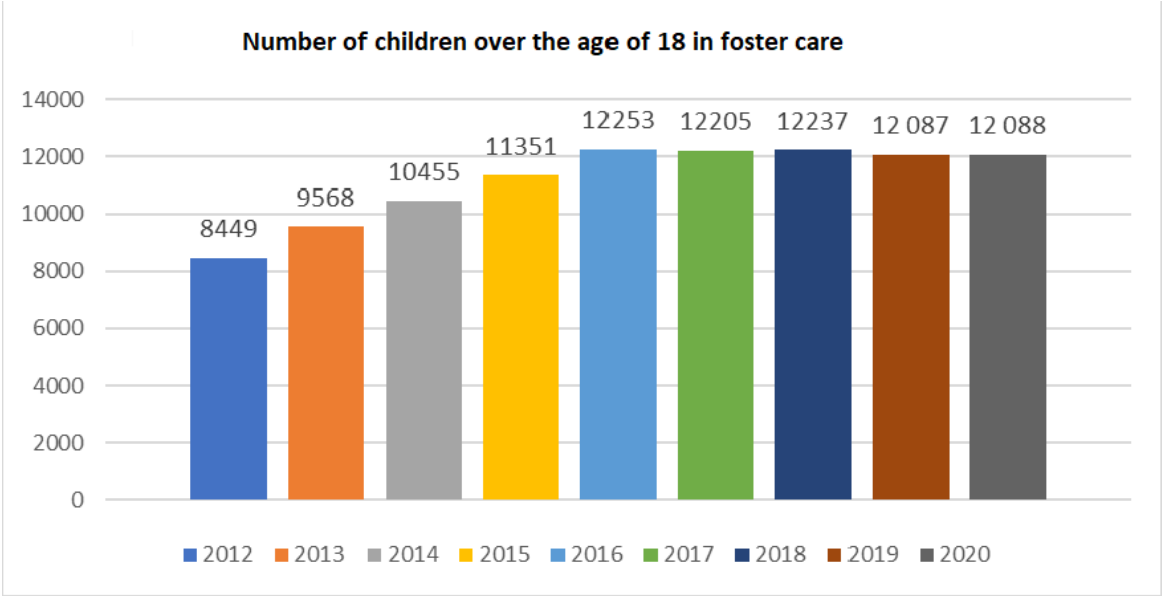


and upbringing by parents. Upon reaching the age of majority, a person leaving a foster family, a family-type children's home or other care and educational facilities is granted assistance to continue their education, to become independent, to relocate, to help them obtain suitable housing, employment, as well as legal and psychological assistance. How foster care leavers cope with their new life depends largely on their degree of independence and the real support they can receive in the process of vocational training, finding a job, relocation. It is not easy to capture foster care leavers in indicators on employment, unemployment rate, belonging to the NEET group, unless by using one-off reports commissioned specifically for this purpose. The only data available to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy regarding foster care leavers are material and financial reports on the performance of tasks in the field of family support and the foster care system.

According to statistical data, in 2020, the number of children over the age of 18 who left foster care was 6,409, of whom 3,939 adults left family forms of foster care. Adult foster care leavers have established their own households in 79% of cases (3,095 people), which should be considered a very good result. Of the adults who left foster families in 2020, 159 returned to their natural families, while of the adults who left family-type children's homes, 19 returned to their natural families. A group of 10,240 foster children aged 18-24 remain in their current foster families and family-type children's homes.

The chart below shows data on the number of adults in foster care.

Figure 5: Number of adults in foster care by year 2012-2020.



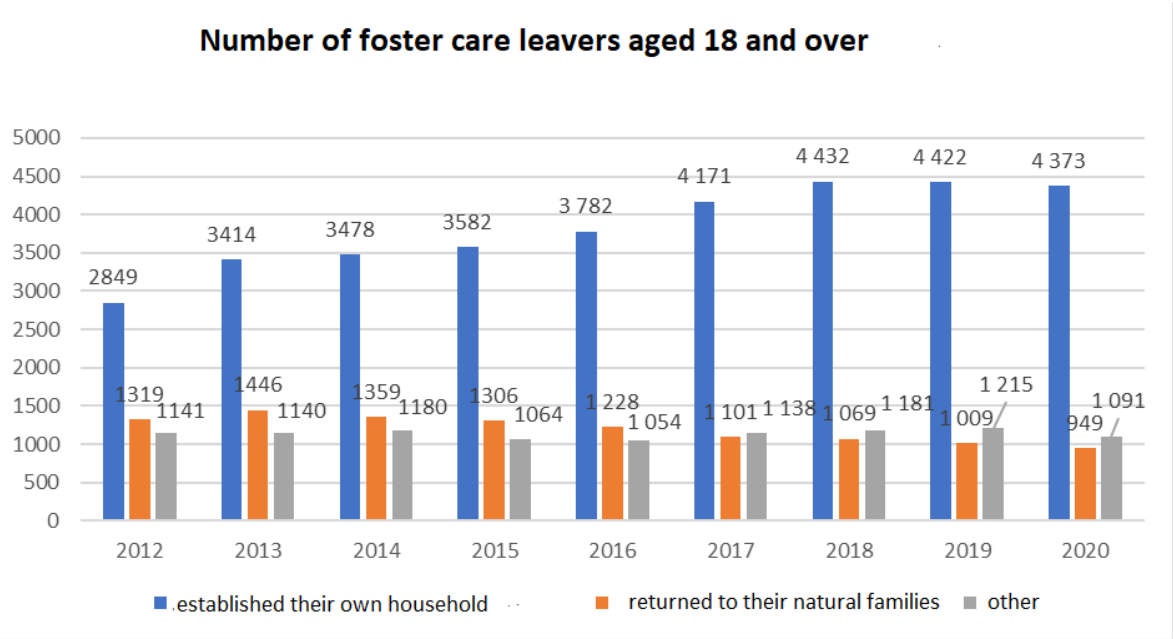
Source: Own elaboration of the Family Policy Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

In turn, 2,474 adults left foster care, of whom 771 (i.e. 31%) returned to their natural families, while 1,278 (i.e. 52%) established their own households. This fact, in comparison with

the 79% of children who started their own households after leaving foster families, seems to indicate worse preparation for the start of adulthood for children growing up in institutional care. As of 31 December 2020, 1,848 persons between the ages of 18 and 24 are still in care and educational facilities.

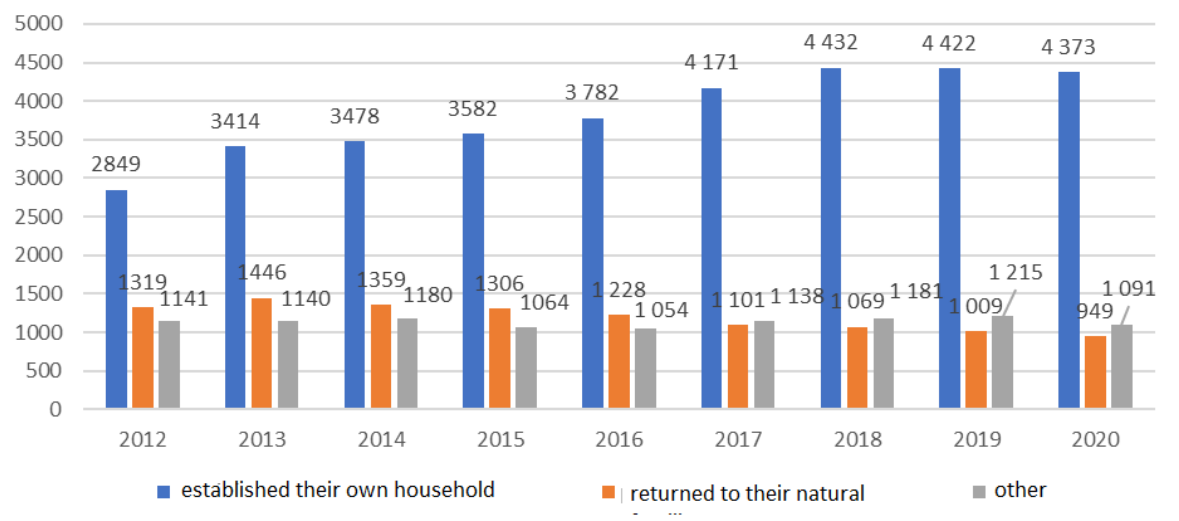
The chart below summarises in statistical form the effects of the independent living process. From the point of view of a long-term social effect, it seems that the evidence of the quality of foster care is the preparation of the foster child for adult life. One such element, in addition to building a value system, is the ability to enter into social roles in adult life and to become independent.

Figure 6: Number of foster care leavers aged 18 and over, 2012-2020.



Source: Own elaboration of the Family Policy Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

**Number of foster care leavers aged 18 and over**



Source: Own elaboration of the Family Policy Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The provision of assistance and support to persons leaving foster care is the poviats' own task.

In accordance with Article 145 of the Act on Family Support and Foster Care System, the condition for granting assistance for the continuation of education and for independent living is submitting an application and having an approved individual programme of independent living, specifying in particular:

- 1) the scope of the interaction between the person supported into independent living and the independent living assistant;
- 2) the manner in which the person supported into independent living will obtain education or vocational qualifications, assistance in obtaining suitable housing and in undertaking employment.

The person supported into independent living at least one year before he/she reaches the age of majority shall identify a person who undertakes to act as an independent living assistant. The independent living assistant may be any person indicated by the person supported into independent living and accepted by the head of the poviats' family assistance centre which is competent to incur the expenditures on financing the support for the continuation of education and independent living.

The individual programme of independent living is developed by the person supported into independent living together with the independent living assistant at least one month before the person supported into independent living reaches the age of majority, and is then accepted by the head of the poviats' family assistance centre which is competent to incur the expenditures on financing the support for the continued education and independent living.

The inclusion of foster care leavers in the Youth Guarantee can create a support system around them, involving local authorities and local entrepreneurs, which will favour their entry into adulthood. In addition to foster care leavers, the digital skills development support offered by the Youth Guarantee can also be extended to their independent living assistants, thus enhancing the acquisition and development of relevant digital skills.

#### **(4) Women under 30 raising children.**

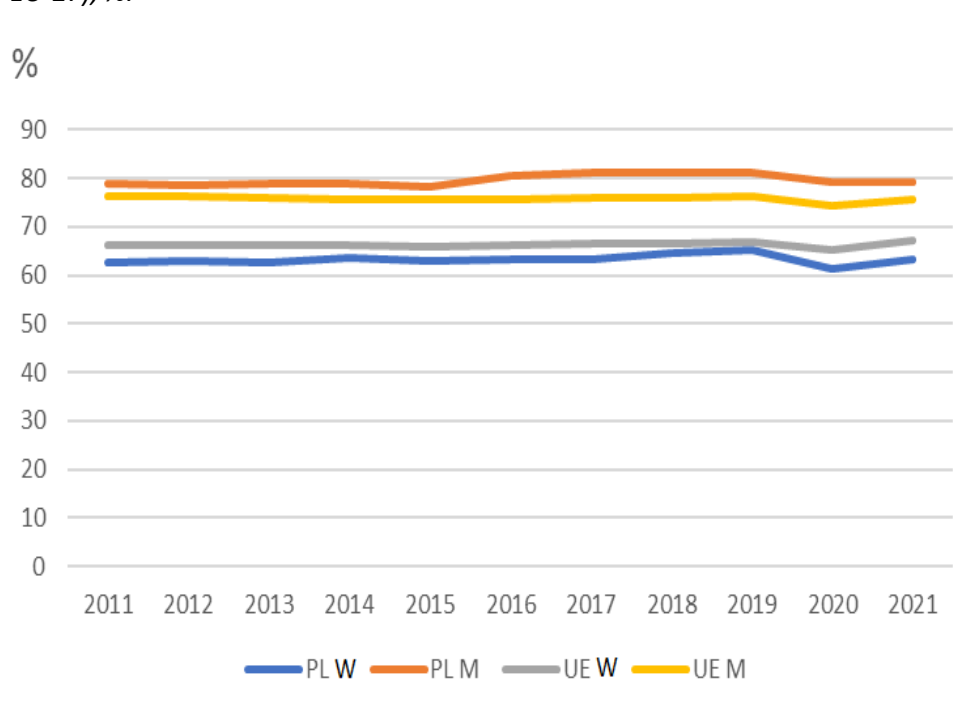
The labour force participation rate for women aged 20-64 in Poland in 2021 was 70.7% (compared to 85.3% for men); they also make up the majority of the professionally inactive population (61.3%<sup>35</sup>). Barriers to women's labour force participation - especially for the less educated, those living in smaller towns and cities and mothers of young children - are inflexible working hours, financially unattractive and inaccessibly located workplaces, the burden of domestic and caring responsibilities, the lack of educational and childcare facilities for young children, and the lack of public transport to get to and from work.

In the 20-29 age group, the labour force participation rate in Poland in 2021 was 70.4% compared to 70% in the EU-27. For women, the rate was 63.4% in Poland and 67.1% in the EU. The male participation rate was 79.3% in Poland and 75.6% in the EU. Thus, there is a significant difference between men and women in this age group in Poland (a difference of 15.9 percentage points compared to a difference of 8.5 percentage points in the EU). For this reason, special support is needed for women aged 20 to 29 in terms of labour market activation, especially for women with children.

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<sup>35</sup> Information on the labour market in Q2 2021, Statistics Poland, 29 October 2021.

Figure 7: Labour force participation rates for women and men aged 20-29 (2011-2021, Poland and EU-27), %.



Source: Own elaboration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy based on Eurostat data.

#### 2.4 The principle of partnership in implementing the Youth Guarantee.

In accordance with the principle of partnership, each of the entities implementing the Youth Guarantee in Poland, through their organisational units and facilities, cooperates with a dense network of socio-economic institutions, NGOs, foundations, associations. New regulations are always subject to extensive consultation and agreements at the drafting stage, followed by consultation on the envisaged changes. This implies the involvement of the social partners in each of the above-mentioned stages of planning and carrying out activities for the Youth Guarantee in Poland.

Forms of partner involvement include:

- involvement of social partners within the framework of labour market councils at central, voivodeship and poviast levels, which are opinion-advisory bodies of the minister in charge of labour, the marshal and the starost, respectively, with regard to labour market policy; the functioning of labour market councils is regulated by the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions;
- inviting representatives of youth (youth organisations) to take part in the work of the Youth Guarantee Monitoring Team<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> See subsection 5.1.

It is also worth noting that as part of the work on the concept of the Youth Guarantee implementation in Poland, the minister in charge of labour, as the institution coordinating the implementation of this initiative, consulted it with social partners interested in activities for young people.

## 2.5 Reaching the target groups.

An important element in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Poland is to provide an activation offer to all people between the ages of 15 and 29 who are not in employment, education or training. This poses a particular challenge for young people furthest from the labour market, from disadvantaged backgrounds, for whom contact with public employment services and education and training facilities is very limited.

To this end, the official website of the *Youth Guarantee* (<https://dlamlodych.praca.gov.pl/>) was modernised in 2021, where young recipients of the Youth Guarantee and other stakeholders can find comprehensive information on the offer of support. In addition, increased outreach to target groups is achieved through cooperation with youth organisations and youth social partner structures within the *Youth Guarantee* Monitoring Team. The planned communication and information activities to reach the target groups are described in the Youth Guarantee Communication Plan, attached as Appendix 1.

Individual Youth Guarantee implementers also use their own mechanisms to reach out to young people.

While conducting professional activation of young people, **labour offices** try to reach the members of this group in a way that is also typical for other groups of the unemployed, i.e. through information materials, leaflets, posters, information in the local media or through websites and social media. However, labour offices also establish cooperation with various partners allowing them to reach broad groups of young people. This is cooperation with Academic Career Offices, care and educational facilities, as well as social welfare institutions.

It is worth emphasising that, pursuant to the amendment to the provisions of the Act on Employment Promotion, which entered into force on 15 April 2022<sup>37</sup>, it is possible for the poviats labour offices to allocate funds from the Labour Fund and the ESF to initiate and implement undertakings aimed at reaching people who are not registered as unemployed or seeking employment with information about the possibilities of using forms of activation referred to in the Act. In practice, this provision will enable the poviats labour offices to take steps to actively reach out with information about possible support to young people not yet registered with the labour offices.

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<sup>37</sup> The amendment was introduced by the Act of 8 April 2022 amending the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of the State and Certain Other Acts (Journal of Laws 2022, item 830).

**Within the BGK loan programme**, in accordance with the guidelines adopted by BGK, the communication channel used for promotional activities is all mass media sources. Through a communication channel, information (voice, announcement, article, slogan, drawing or video) reaches its audience. Official and unofficial communication channels are used to reach potential loan programme participants. Official ones are mainly related to various types of advertising (press, television, radio). Unofficial ones involve information provided between clients.

**Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC) also use their own organisational capacity** – a network of local organisational units located throughout the country (also in smaller towns and cities) and staff employed there, who independently undertake activities to reach out to young people, as well as Mobile Vocational Information Centres. Promotional activities carried out through the following communication channels are used to inform about the scope of the offered support and recruitment actions: the VLC website, the Electronic Youth Activation Centre, the "Green Line" Employment Services Information Centre, local, regional and national media, social media and participation in or organisation of open local events (e.g. job fairs and exchanges, education fairs, conferences).

## **2.6 Supporting youth labour mobility.**

### ➤ Support for internal mobility:

Support for internal mobility, since the entry into force of the amendment to the Act on the Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions in May 2014, has been facilitated, among others, by instruments such as the settlement voucher and the telework grant

### ➤ Support for mobility within the European Union:

Access to job offers from the European Union/European Free Trade Association (EU/EFTA) countries is provided by the EURES European Job Mobility Portal [www.eures.europa.eu](http://www.eures.europa.eu). The EURES common IT platform run by the European Commission presents job offers from labour offices, accredited bodies and CVs of people interested in working abroad in EU/EFTA countries. The EURES platform contains an information block on traineeships and apprenticeships in EU/EFTA countries. This includes information on the definition of a traineeship and apprenticeship in EU/EFTA countries, the type of agreement for traineeships and apprenticeships, where traineeships and apprenticeships are advertised, and forms of funding for traineeships and apprenticeships for employers. The EURES platform allows you to search for traineeships and apprenticeship vacancies by selecting the type of agreement: traineeship and/or apprenticeship.

The list of job vacancies on the EURES portal is being developed. An important Europe-wide initiative is the reform of this tool.

Voivodeship and poviats labour offices disseminate information on opportunities for university graduates and secondary school students to undertake traineeships and apprenticeships

abroad in the EU within the framework of selected European Commission programmes and job and traineeships offers received from partners - EURES advisers from EU/EFTA countries.

Traineeship programmes abroad for Polish youth will be continued (e.g. the "Traineeships in Austria for the Best" project under the EURES cooperation of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship Labour Office and Austria and Austrian employers and secondary schools educating in the hotel, catering and tourism industry), if pandemic conditions make such cooperation possible.

Information meetings, consultation points, information and workshop meetings, job fairs and exchanges are organised, also in virtual form. During the above-mentioned events, issues such as the opportunities offered by mobility in the European labour market, the use of the EURES portal, the rules on the recognition of professional qualifications, the writing of CVs and application letters, information on the coordination of social security systems, etc. are discussed. During the job fair, job offers will be made available and recruitment interviews will be held between employers from EU/EFTA countries and selected candidates.

The organisation of European job fairs including online fairs, European information and recruitment days, European entrepreneurship, job and education fairs, European job and information fairs, etc. is continued. Such events are organised depending on the needs in the regional labour markets and are also dependent on the epidemic situation. Such events attract national and EU/EFTA employers, representatives of EU network, representatives of: training institutions, institutions supporting entrepreneurship, institutions dealing with, inter alia, labour rights, social security, institutions involved in issues of occupational and geographical mobility. During the fairs, the range of services provided by the EURES network are presented, interviews with candidates for work abroad are organised, and consultations are held on living and working conditions in selected EU/EFTA countries, how to find employment and prepare application documents, and how to set up one's own business.

Within the scope of career counselling services, group counselling, professional activation, meetings organised by other organisations and meetings with interested parties, information on EURES network services is provided, also using, inter alia, modern communication tools (e.g. SKYPE, e-mail, You Tube, chat).

The above-mentioned activities, carried out mainly by the voivodeship labour offices and the voivodeship VLC's headquarters, are available to all those interested in working abroad.



### 3. Youth Guarantee components.

The new edition of the Youth Guarantee will be based on the good practices and institutional set-up tested in the previous edition.

The implementers will therefore be labour offices, VLC and BGK. The main changes compared to the previous edition will concern the implementation of support from the European Social Fund (ESF+ 2021-2027). In accordance with the adopted approach, support for young people will be offered within the framework of regional programmes, based on recommendations of the minister in charge of labour, prepared in agreement with the minister in charge of regional development (as the Cohesion Policy coordinator in Poland).

In addition, the coordinating role of the minister in charge of labour (being the Youth Guarantee National Coordinator) will be strengthened through tasks aimed at:

- developing new standards of support for young people, reaching out to specific groups,
- carrying out research and analysis on the situation of young people in the labour market (with particular emphasis on young mothers),
- testing the one-stop-shop approach in Poland by developing a model for *one-stop shops* for young people,
- developing a system for assessing young people's digital competence,
- setting up a system for monitoring the fate of young people after the end of support,
- implementation of information and promotion activities aimed at young people on the available support,
- carrying out evaluation research on the effects of support for young people under the Youth Guarantee and the effects of support for the long-term unemployed in Poland.

Diagram 1. Institutional set-up of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland.



### 3.1. Implementation of the Youth Guarantee under regional programmes 2021-2027 (RP 2021-2027)

As noted, in order to ensure uniform implementation standards, the minister responsible for labour, in agreement with the minister responsible for regional development, developed recommendations for regional programmes in the area of professional activation of young people.

The specific objectives of ESF+, into which the Youth Guarantee fits, are set out in Article 4(1)(a), (b) and (h) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013, and they concern:

- a) improving access to employment and activation measures for all job seekers, **in particular young people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee**, the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups in the labour market as well as the professionally inactive, and through promoting self-employment and the social economy;
- b) the modernisation of labour market institutions and services in order to assess and anticipate skill needs and provide **timely and well-targeted assistance** and support for the matching of skills and qualifications with labour market needs and for labour market flows and mobility;
- c) supporting active social inclusion to promote equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and to enhance employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups.

In accordance with the agreed line of demarcation<sup>38</sup>, under Policy Objective 4: *Europe with a stronger social dimension through the implementation of the European pillar of social rights*, support for young people's professional activation will only be possible at regional level within the framework of:

- specific objective a - it will be provided in projects of poviats labour offices and voivodeship VLC headquarters, within the framework of which instruments and services of the labour market will be offered, aimed at comprehensive professional and educational activation of young people, who are registered as unemployed or who are in a disadvantaged situation in the labour market;
- specific objective h, enabling a combination of social and professional activation instruments - in the case of professionally inactive people (those furthest from the labour market).

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<sup>38</sup> Draft *Partnership Agreement for the implementation of the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 in Poland*, [www.mfipr.gov.pl](http://www.mfipr.gov.pl).

Support will be provided through the following types of action:

(1) Labour market instruments and services indicated in the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions, including:

- identification of young people's needs and diagnosis of career opportunities through the development of individual action plans,
- job placement in relation to obtaining appropriate employment in line with
- qualifications and competences of the supported person or career counselling in the field of choosing a suitable profession and assistance in planning a professional career,
- the provision of high quality training courses aimed at acquiring, modifying or improving competencies or qualifications required to perform a specific occupation or tasks in a particular job;
- the acquisition or enhancement of professional experience and practical skills in a given profession through apprenticeships that meet the standards indicated in the European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships,
- support for employment of a young person at an entrepreneur or another employer, constituting an incentive for employment, inter alia, by covering the costs of subsidising employment, employment vouchers or settlement vouchers for persons for whom a given form of support was identified as appropriate;
- support for young people in setting up and running their own business by providing non-repayable aid (grants) for setting up a business and training to gain knowledge and skills necessary to start and run a business - only as part of projects carried out by povi-at labour offices.

(2) Activities accompanying educational and professional activation implemented (as a follow-up to the activities indicated in item 1) in VLC projects, including:

- identification of educational and socio-educational deficits, needs and skills of a person in order to select forms of support (instruments and services of the labour market) to the individual situation of a person;
- young person-centred care through, inter alia, counselling, guidance and mentoring to motivate and prepare the person for the labour market and for lifelong learning requirements;
- support to young people with the aim of bridging educational gaps and developing skills and abilities through, among other things, the organisation of extracurricular activities and integration and personal development activities;

- support of the development of young people's emotional and social competences, e.g. through therapeutic and corrective activities, training in so-called soft competences aimed at reducing dysfunctional behaviours;
- support to young people in improving their professional skills and social competences needed to perform a given job, inter alia, by organising various types of training to help them successfully enter the labour market and function in society.

In order to implement the provisions of the *EU Council Recommendation*, the managing authorities of regional programmes should observe the following **horizontal principles** when providing support to young people:

**(1) participation of a young person under 30 years of age from the NEET group in a form of support should be preceded by a digital skills assessment;**

**(2) the appropriate quality of support should be ensured** through:

- defining thematic priorities for support (based on regional labour market diagnoses), with a focus on (1) digital skills, (2) "green" skills, (3) skills needed for regional/local specialisations, (4) skills needed for health and caring professions;
- development of an action plan to provide comprehensive support to the young person (combining several forms of support);
- in the case of traineeships, they should meet the following requirements:
  - the traineeship is carried out on the basis of an agreement and a traineeship programme concluded with the with the traineeship provider;
  - the nature of the traineeship location fits in with, inter alia, the above-mentioned priority areas in the region in question;
  - an appropriate traineeship grant is provided (guaranteeing paid traineeships within the limits allowed by national legislation);
  - formal requirements: traineeship supervisor, traineeship programme, evaluation of the traineeship.

The activities described above will be complemented by activities in the field of improving the skills and competences of persons conducting activities aimed at professional activation of young people, in order to ensure individualised and effective support for this group (under specific objective b).

#### **4. Financing of the Youth Guarantee.**

The Youth Guarantee Programme is implemented with both national resources and with funding from the EU budget under the ESF and ESF+. Measures for the benefit of young people are implemented in labour offices through funds from the Labour Fund earmarked

for the activation of the unemployed and by the VLC through budget funds for the implementation of statutory tasks.

Funding from the EU budget for 2021-2027 for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (ESF+) - for young people under 30 years of age - have been planned under 16 regional programmes (see section 3.1.)<sup>39</sup>.

## **5. Monitoring and evaluation system for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Poland.**

The main objective of implementing the measures set out in the Youth Guarantee is to improve the situation of young people in the labour market, both those registered in labour offices as unemployed, as well as those seeking work and those professionally inactive, all of whom could return to the market.

The coordination of the monitoring process is carried out by the Minister in charge of labour, with significant involvement of the Managing Authorities at regional level and all partners involved in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee at national level. Partners are obliged to provide reliable and comprehensive data within the scope and deadlines set by the national coordinator of the Youth Guarantee.

The monitoring includes both the analysis of changes in the main macroeconomic indicators describing the situation of young people and NEETs in the labour market and the analysis of all other undertakings concerning the participants in the activities specified in the Youth Guarantee. The results are examined with regard to the status of the participants at a certain time after the end of these activities. The Minister responsible for labour draws up an annual report on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Poland by 30 June of the following year<sup>40</sup>.

### **Key indicators monitoring the results of the Youth Guarantee:**

| <b>Macroeconomic indicators</b>                       | <b>2013</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> | <b>2030</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| labour force participation rate of persons aged 15-24 | 33.3 %      | 31.8 %      | 31.0 %      | 37 %        |
| labour force participation rate of persons aged 25-29 | 84.4 %      | 81.8 %      | 84.5 %      | 88 %        |
| labour force participation rate of women aged 20-29   | 62.7%       | 61.2%       | 63.4%       | 68%         |
| employment rate of persons aged 15-24                 | 24.2 %      | 28.4 %      | 27.3 %      | 33 %        |

<sup>39</sup> As of the date of this update, the negotiation of the 2021-2027 programmes has not been completed and therefore the allocation of available ESF+ funding to support young people has not been indicated.

<sup>40</sup> The first annual report prepared on the basis of this update will be the one for 2022.

|                                                                       |        |        |        |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| employment rate of persons aged 25-29                                 | 73.0 % | 77.8 % | 80.7 % | 81 % |
| unemployment rate of persons aged 15 - 24 (Labour Force Survey - LFS) | 27.3 % | 10.8 % | 11.9 % | 9 %  |
| unemployment rate of persons aged 25-29 (LFS)                         | 13.6 % | 4.8 %  | 4.5 %  | 4 %  |
| NEET rate of persons aged 15-29                                       | 16.2%  | 12.9%  | 13.4%  | 10%  |
| NEET rate of persons aged 15-24                                       | 12.2 % | 8.6 %  | 11.2 % | 6 %  |
| NEET rate of persons aged 25-29                                       | 22.7%  | 19.4 % | 16.9 % | 12 % |

**At European level**, regular annual monitoring of progress in implementing the Youth Guarantee is carried out by the European Commission.

### **5.1. Involvement of youth representatives in the implementation and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee in Poland.**

The *Youth Guarantee* Monitoring Team was established in 2015 and is a subsidiary body of the Minister responsible for labour<sup>41</sup>. The Team ensures the cooperation of the Ministry - as the Youth Guarantee National Coordinator - with youth organisations and youth social partner structures, as well as with institutions participating in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, in terms of developing the best possible mechanisms to support young people in the labour market.

The tasks of the Team are to give an opinion on the activities undertaken under the Youth Guarantee, as well as on the reports concerning the implementation of this initiative, and to propose new solutions. In addition, the Team's task is to disseminate information about and promote the activities of the Youth Guarantee.

In 2021, the composition of the Team was modified with regard to the participation of social partners and NGOs. Representatives of the ministers responsible for climate, information technology and agriculture and rural development were also included.

Representatives of social partner organisations and non-governmental organisations have been identified by the Social Dialogue Council and the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation respectively.

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<sup>41</sup> The Team operates on the basis of Ordinance No. 23 of the Minister of Family and Social Policy of 28 June 2022 on appointing the Youth Guarantees Monitoring Team (OJ of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, item 23). It was originally established by Ordinance No. 26 of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 24 July 2015 on appointing the Youth Guarantee Monitoring Team (OJ of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, item 29).

## **Appendix 1. Communication and outreach plan for the *Youth Guarantee* programme.**

### **I. Objectives of the *Communication Plan*.**

The main objective of the *Communication Plan* is to **support activities that increase youth employment in high-quality jobs**, through the following specific objectives:

- 1. Reaching out to young people**, especially those in the NEET group, with information about available support and encouraging participation in forms of support.
- 2. Strengthening the image of labour market institutions among young people.**
- 3. Building awareness among young people** and the rest of society of the importance of skills development for career management and **reaching out to employers and social partners** with information on the career expectations of young people.
- 4. Active involvement of stakeholders and partners** in activities related to comprehensive support for professional activation of the most disadvantaged young people in the labour market.

**Target groups for communication activities:** young people, society as a whole, employers, training and educational institutions, NGOs, social partners, teachers and people working with young people, central and local administrations.

**Implementers:** Minister responsible for labour, Managing Authorities of Regional Programmes 2021-2027, voivodeship labour offices (WUP), powiat labour offices (PUP), Voluntary Labour Corps - VLC (Polish: Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy - OHP), BGK, Government Plenipotentiary for Youth Policy and the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation (institutions conducting an ongoing dialogue with young people and creating tools for their activation and involvement in public life).

**Source of funding:** European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) - a project of the Youth Guarantee National Coordinator implemented under the European Funds for Social Development Programme 2021-2027<sup>42</sup>, regional programmes 2021-2027, co-financed by the EU Cohesion Policy, national resources.

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<sup>42</sup> See section 3.

## II. Tools for implementing the *Communication Plan*

| <b>OBJECTIVE: To reach young people with information about available support</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>Minister responsible for labour</b>                                           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Revised website <a href="https://dlamlodych.praca.gov.pl/">https://dlamlodych.praca.gov.pl/</a>.</li> <li>2) Profile on Facebook and/or Twitter and/or TikTok.</li> <li>3) Development of a concept for the voivodeship labour office and poviats labour office websites to adapt them to the needs of young people.</li> <li>4) National information campaigns (articles in the press, information in public transport, small billboards, series of interviews with young people), social media campaigns - pointing to the implementing institutions of the Youth Guarantee, i.e. poviats labour offices, VLC, BGK.</li> <li>5) Leaflet, posters and multimedia announcements (to be used by schools on social networks) for schools, developed with the minister responsible for education and upbringing).</li> </ol> |
| <b>Voivodeship labour offices</b>                                                | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establishment of a service point for young people within the Information and Career Planning Centre at the voivodeship labour offices.</li> <li>2) Enriching the methods of online service provision by the Information and Career Planning Centre, e.g. the possibility to attend online meetings on Skype or to participate in a training course in this way or to take part in a webinar given by a career counsellor.</li> <li>3) Establishing ongoing cooperation with school career counsellors in providing and communicating information on employment promotion and professional activation measures, labour market and vocational information addressed to students, parents, teachers.</li> </ol>                                                                                                              |
| <b>Poviat labour offices</b>                                                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increased promotion of the offer (e.g. in the form of an information stand) at local events, e.g. town/municipality days, local sports and cultural events, local fairs, harvest festivals, open days of local institutions.</li> <li>2) Displaying information material (posters/brochures/leaflets) not only in the premises of local authorities and social welfare institutions (including poviat family assistance centres), but also in NGOs, social care facilities, local cultural centres, prisons.</li> <li>3) Cooperation with secondary schools for the professional activation of graduates.</li> <li>4) Promotion of the activation offer not only through traditional methods (website, local media) but also through social media, newsletters sent</li> </ol>                                            |



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|                   | <p>by e-mail, SMS or mobile applications.</p> <p>5) Actively reaching out with an offer to young people not registered in labour offices (possibility resulting from the provision of Article 9(1)(25) of the Act of 20 April 2004 on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions (Journal of Laws of 2022, item 690, as amended).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>VLC</b>        | <p>1) Rebuilding and upgrading VLC organisational units' websites and/or increasing communication on social media.</p> <p>2) Profile promotion and information activities on the scope of support offered and project recruitment activities carried out through the following communication channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– VLC homepage – <a href="https://ohp.pl/">https://ohp.pl/</a>,</li> <li>– Electronic Youth Activation Centre (ECAM) - <a href="https://dokariery.pl/strona-glowna">https://dokariery.pl/strona-glowna</a>,</li> <li>– "Green Line" Employment Services Information Centre - <a href="https://zielonalinia.gov.pl/pl">https://zielonalinia.gov.pl/pl</a></li> <li>– local, regional and national media, e.g. radio, press, television,</li> <li>– social media.</li> </ul> <p>3) Increasing the number of active redirection links from the VLC homepage to pages dedicated to youth support, e.g. Youth Guarantee tabs on the websites of partner institutions implementing the programme.</p> <p>4) Reaching out through the Mobile Vocational Information Centres to young people who have difficult access to labour market services (a team of staff equipped with computer equipment, technical devices and libraries and a minibus for mobility).</p> <p>5) Co-ordination of the information system on offers for young people - functioning of contact points in the Centres for Education and Youth Work located in former voivodeship cities (before the administrative reform of 1999), which have a consultation support position in their structure.</p> <p>6) Participation in or organisation of open local events (job fairs and exchanges, education fairs, conferences, seminars).</p> <p>7) Establishing cooperation with schools as part of the recruitment process for young people at risk of social exclusion to VLC.</p> |
| <b>BGK</b>        | Information material on the website and press articles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Government</b> | Participation in the development of the youth campaign and providing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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| <b>Plenipotentiary for Youth Policy at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation</b> | feedback on the planned activities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>OBJECTIVE: To strengthen the image of labour market institutions among young people</b>                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Minister responsible for labour</b>                                                                                                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Activities to promote the benefits of using activation services through, inter alia:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a nationwide campaign targeting young people, including celebrity partnerships, TV and radio programmes, articles in the press, information on public transport, small billboards.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Collecting information from the voivodeship labour offices on quantitative and qualitative indicators on training courses<sup>43</sup>, conclusions from the training needs analysis, which can be used to plan other development activities for employees of labour market institutions and training programmes for employees of labour market institutions.</li> </ol>                        |
| <b>Voivodeship labour offices</b>                                                                                                       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Promotional activities for labour market institutions implemented by promoting the benefits of using activation services through, inter alia:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– voivodeship campaigns targeting young people, including celebrity partnerships, TV and radio programmes, articles in the local press.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) Commissioning an external research company to carry out a survey and analysis of the training needs of labour market institutions at district level. Preparation of training tailored to local needs and its evaluation. One company should provide services to the labour offices or VLC units within the voivodeship.</li> <li>3) Training in modern customer service.</li> </ol> |

<sup>43</sup> Indicators concerning the number of: conducted research on training needs in individual voivodeships, training programmes adjusted to the local conditions of the labour market institutions, training courses for the employees of the labour market institutions, conducted training evaluations.

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| <b>Poviat labour offices</b>                                                                                               | Training for employees in modern customer service, including tailoring of training to local needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>OBJECTIVE: To build awareness among young people and to reach out with information to employers and social partners</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Minister responsible for labour</b>                                                                                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Media information, press articles (aimed at the general public and at young people).</li> <li>2) Educational competitions aimed at young people.</li> <li>3) Competitions for employers, social partners and non-government organisations and those working with young people.</li> <li>4) Seminars and training courses.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>The Managing Authorities of the Regional Programmes and Voivodeship labour offices</b>                                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Educational competitions aimed at young people.</li> <li>2) Job fairs, meetings with employers and those working with young people.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Poviat labour offices</b>                                                                                               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Information meetings in schools aimed at students, school councils and parents.</li> <li>2) Information and training meetings with local employers and those working to help young people.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>VLC</b>                                                                                                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A series of TV programmes on exploring one's career path with VLC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– presentation of the largest Polish companies as stable and reliable employers,</li> <li>– presentation of the role of the psychologist and career counsellor in young people's choices,</li> <li>– my way to success (interesting people who have fulfilled their professional dreams, VLC leavers),</li> <li>– broadcasting spots on YouTube, social media campaign, broadcasting on modern electronic media.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |
| <b>OBJECTIVE: Active involvement of stakeholders and partners</b>                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Minister responsible for</b>                                                                                            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Conferences and seminars with stakeholders and partners.</li> <li>2) Regular publications and analyses concerning the participation of part-</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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| <b>labour</b>                                                                             | ners in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>The Managing Authorities of the Regional Programmes and Voivodeship labour offices</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establishment of regional partnerships, working out lines of support for the most disadvantaged young people in the labour market, adapted to the specifics of the region in question.</li> <li>2) Participation of representatives of youth organisations in the Monitoring Committee of regional programmes 2021-2027.</li> <li>3) Establishment of a working group within the Monitoring Committee of regional programmes, dealing with the issues of support for young people.</li> <li>4) Organisation of conferences and meetings on youth employment support.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Poviat labour offices</b>                                                              | Establishment of local partnerships, working out activation measures for the most disadvantaged young people in the labour market, adapted to the specifics of the poviat in question.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>VLC</b>                                                                                | Cooperation within the framework of the local partnership established by the poviat labour offices.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |