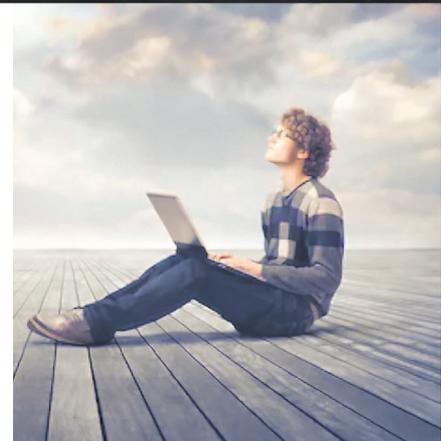


Report Youth training and education in cooperation programmes





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1 Introduction

Young people between 15 and 29 years old made up 17% of the European Union (EU) population in 2018¹, with the highest rate in Cyprus (21.8%) and the lowest in Slovenia (15.1%). Young people are not a homogenous category as they differ by sex, economic situation social origin and age, among other issues. However, they face specific social issues related to education and training, access to their first job, income, access to housing and other social rights.

The economic recession of the late 2000s and its aftermath exacerbated these challenges, while the changes in the labour market needs, with innovations in digitalisation, artificial intelligence and robotics, is constantly generating new and potentially fundamental challenges². One of these³ is greater labour market vulnerability for disadvantaged youth including the low-skilled, migrants and young people with a disability and young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). In the second quarter of 2018, some 3.4 million, out of some 57 million 15-24 year-olds were unemployed in the EU⁴. This is a substantial decline from the peak of 5.7 million in January 2013, the numbers remain high with 15,2% of 15-24 year-olds–unemployed in 2018 in the EU 28 and the NEET rate was 10.4%.

Some EU countries and regions have been hit by the NEET phenomenon more than others. The NEET rate in some EU eastern countries (e.g. Poland and Romania)

was very high in 2001 and declined which correlated with integration in the EU. Ireland suffered during the financial and economic crises, but also had the capacity to react. Southern EU countries, especially Italy and Greece, show a persistent presence of NEETs over the 15 years analysed. Italy is a special concern, because the NEET rate is extremely high, even among young people aged 20-34 with an intermediate level of education. People aged 20-34 with a high level of education had lower NEET rates than other levels of education. This varied from 1.0 % in Malta to 9.6 % in Greece, with a large majority of EU Member States recording rates of 2 to 3 %.

The EC Communication “Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy” (2018) states that “*Despite the economic upturn and lower unemployment, inequalities including between generations persist. For the first time since the Second World War, there is a real risk that today’s young generation will end up less well-off than their parents. 29% of 16-29-year olds are at risk of poverty or social exclusion and 11.6% of those aged 15-24 are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), while 15.9 % of the young people in this age group are unemployed - double the rate of the general population*”.

The importance of education and training for giving youth more job opportunities and hindering social exclusion is

fundamental. For instance, the correlation between education and the risk of falling into the NEET category is high. In 2018, the NEET rate for 20–34 year-olds in the EU was 37.2 % among those with a low level of education, compared with 14.7 % for those with an intermediate level of education and 9.5 % for those with a high level of education (see Figure 5). As such, people with a low level of education in the EU were almost four times more likely to not be in employment nor in education and training as those with a high level⁵.

When properly educated and trained, young people suffer little social exclusion, though in southern countries youth employment remains a big challenge also for people with an intermediate level of education. In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, Youth, Education and Vocational Training policies are decided by each Member State. However, various EU-level policy tools for youth have been put in place in recent programming periods, such as the European Social Fund, Erasmus+, Youth Employment Initiative, Youth Guarantee, and the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the globalisation of higher education, through the mobility of students, has grown considerably over the past 40 years. Among the various categories of migrants, international students have experienced the most rapid increase in relative terms, with the number of international students in Europe increasing by roughly 114% from 2000 to 2010⁶. Internationalisation in higher education has become a priority of the European

Commission in recent years. In 2011 a specific benchmark for learning mobility was established, for at least 20% of higher education graduates having studied or trained abroad by 2020 for at least 3 months or worth a minimum of 15 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits. Improving student mobility is a core goal of the European Higher Education Area⁷ and a major policy priority of the EU agenda for modernising higher education. As stated by the Council in 2011, ‘learning mobility is widely considered to contribute to enhancing the employability of young people through the acquisition of key skills and competences, including especially language competences and intercultural understanding, but also social and civic skills, entrepreneurship, problem-solving skills and creativity in general’⁸.

Around 50% of Interreg and IPA cooperation programmes Cooperation (ETC) programmes are involved in actions related to better access to education, training and job opportunities for the benefit of young people across the EU.

The aim of this study is to analyse the links between EU cooperation projects and youth, education and training. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to collect and analyse the data, especially from **Keep.eu**⁹ for the EU cooperation programmes¹⁰. These are presented in a clear and user-friendly manner and used to draw conclusions and recommendations for the next programming period.

¹ Eurostat, 2018.

² European Commission (2019), *Study on the Youth Guarantee in light of changes in the world of work - Part 1 - Youth Guarantee: intervention models, sustainability and relevance*, p.6.

³ Other challenges include: (i) a dramatic rise of youth unemployment in most countries during the recession, together with relatively low employment rates; (ii) lengthier, complex, unstable, and non-linear STW transitions; (iii) a deterioration in the quality of youth employment combined with greater precariousness; (iv) the patchy availability of quality work experience, which increasingly plays a crucial role in STW transitions; (v) increased inactivity, discouragement and labour market detachment. European Commission (2019), *Study on the Youth Guarantee in light of changes in the world of work - Part 1 - Youth Guarantee: intervention models, sustainability and relevance*, p.6.

⁴ European Commission (2019), *Study on the Youth Guarantee in light of changes in the world of work - Part 1 - Youth Guarantee: intervention models, sustainability and relevance*, pp. 6-7.

⁵ See Eurostat (2019), *Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training - NEETs: analysis by educational attainment level*, Eurostat Statistics Explained.

⁶ European Commission (2017), *Student mobility in tertiary education: institutional factors and regional attractiveness*, p.3.

⁷ The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a unique international collaboration on higher education and the result of the political will of 48 countries with different political, cultural and academic traditions, which, step by step during the last twenty years, built an area implementing a common set of commitments: structural reforms and shared tools. These 48 countries agree to and adopt reforms on higher education on the basis of common key values– such as freedom of expression, autonomy for institutions, independent student unions, academic freedom, free movement of students and staff. Through this process, countries, institutions and stakeholders of the European area continuously adapt their higher education systems making them more compatible and strengthening their quality assurance mechanisms. For all these countries, the main goal is to increase staff and students’ mobility and to facilitate employability.

⁸ Council of the European Union (2011), *Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility*, p.3.

⁹ Keep is the only source of aggregated data regarding projects and beneficiaries of EU cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation programmes among Member States, and between Member States and neighbouring countries. The Interact Programme, with the support of the European Commission and the remaining Interreg, Interreg IPA cross-border and ENPI/ENI cross-border programmes, built this database and maintains it as part of its mission. The database covers the 2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods. This report uses KEEP data updated to 14 March 2019. However, Keep covers only 66% of the programmes’, so some of the information and conclusions here may be conditioned.

¹⁰ EU cooperation programmes include CBC programmes – ERDF, IPA and ENI CBC programmes- as well as transnational and interregional programmes.

An analysis of the 107 cooperation programmes 2014-20 (Interreg V) is on [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2016\)585878](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2016)585878)

2 The added value of EU cooperation in youth, training and education

The increasing mobility of young people within the EU is crucial for the development of Europe's skilled labour force to strengthen its position as a knowledge-based economy¹¹. Cooperation at EU level and in a wider European framework facilitates a high level of comparability, compatibility and exchange among high education institutions and systems and helps EU national education systems achieve significant intra-European internationalisation¹². EU cooperation is one of three key objectives set out by the European Commission for a European Education Area¹³:

- Promote cross-border mobility and cooperation in education and training;
- Help overcome unjustified obstacles that make it more difficult to learn, train or work in another country with the aim of realising the free movement of learners and creating a genuine European learning space;
- Support Member States in improving the inclusive, lifelong-learning based and innovation-driven nature of their education and training systems.

To achieve these objectives, youth policy cooperation activities are grouped around three areas of action¹⁴. These are to engage, by fostering youth participation in democratic life; to connect, by bringing young people together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding and to empower, by supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

In addition to advantages for individuals such as improved education, qualifications, skills, international competences and therefore job opportunities, EU cooperation in youth, education and training provides positive spillovers for territories involved in the projects.

From an institutional point of view, attracting young people from other countries or regions is expected to improve the quality of local education institutions. Mobility, and in particular credit mobility¹⁵, is a strong incentive for education institutions to develop better services to send and receive international students or researchers. This includes individual counselling to

advise on career paths and to facilitate integration into the city/region/country, with language training where appropriate¹⁶. International student exchange within a programme provides an incentive for recognising foreign diplomas. Disciplinary and multidisciplinary networks can also enable staff exchanges and an international curriculum. Moreover, intensive local links between universities and the economy are crucial to using the research and education potential of universities to foster innovation and growth.

From a regional point of view, the attraction and retention of young people can increase the pool of highly skilled human capital and can play an influential role in regional development and growth. Territories that

supply high-level educational opportunities in higher education institutions clearly have a huge advantage for capturing talents. EU cooperation programmes increase human economic potential, ensuring a future workforce that is adaptable and can respond to changes in the economy.

Finally, from a European perspective, EU cooperation in youth, education and training can foster inclusivity. This favours European integration and sharing of European cultural values, tackling radicalisation and discrimination and helping broaden people's horizons and help them learn about other cultures and languages. Youth mobility is therefore a prime mechanism for fostering a sense of European identity and citizenship.

Table 1: The added value of EU cooperation projects: key advantages and opportunities



Key advantages:

- **Improved educational level**, qualifications, skills, international competences and **job opportunities**.
- **Creation of human economic potential** ensure a future workforce that is adaptable and that can respond to changes in the /economy.
- Territories that supply high-level educational opportunities in higher education institutions clearly have a **huge advantage for capturing talents**.
- Mobile youth can **contribute to research and development in the host region**, initially as students and later on, potentially, as researchers or highly qualified professionals.
- Mobile youth are likely **to integrate into domestic labour markets, contributing to knowledge creation, innovation and economic performance**, and to contribute to building business networks with their home countries.
- Youth mobility is a prime mechanism for **fostering a sense of European identity and citizenship**.

Key opportunities:

- EU cooperation is a key objective of the European Commission towards a future European Education Area (i.e. **more support from the EU for cooperation expected**)
- Knowledge intensive economy demands **increasing knowledge and capacities**.
- The **increasing integration of education and labour markets in the EU can improve cross-border and inter-regional mobility and exchanges**.
- Increasing mobility brings new **opportunities for higher education institutions to promote strategic partnerships for research and innovation activities**.

¹¹ European Commission (2017), *Student mobility in tertiary education: institutional factors and regional attractiveness*, p.3.

¹² European Commission (2013), *European higher education in the world*, COM(2013) 499 final.

¹³ European Commission (2018), *Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies*, COM(2018) 268 final, p.6.

¹⁴ European Commission (2018), *Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy*, COM(2018) 269 final, p.3.

¹⁵ Credit mobility is defined as temporary tertiary education and/or study-related traineeship abroad while enrolled in a tertiary education programme at a 'home institution' (usually) to gain academic credit (i.e. credit that will be recognised by that home institution). Degree mobility is defined as the physical crossing of a national border to enrol in a degree programme at tertiary level in the country of destination. The degree programme would require the students' presence for the majority of courses taught. See European Commission (2017), *Student mobility in tertiary education: institutional factors and regional attractiveness*, p.3.

¹⁶ European Commission (2013), *European higher education in the world*, COM(2013) 499 final, p.5.



What can be improved?

Some challenges still affect the potential of EU cooperation. These mainly relate to possibly widening gaps across and within regions.

Regions with high-quality institutions can exploit the positive effect of youth mobility, but territories with no high-level educational opportunities can lag further behind. This could concentrate youth mobility in a few areas and widen the gaps, at institutional level, across EU territories.

The main destinations of degree mobile students appear to be concentrated in certain countries, with the UK, Germany and France covering almost 80% of the mobile student population¹⁷.

The level of urbanisation of a region is an important factor shaping youth mobility, as high-density regions

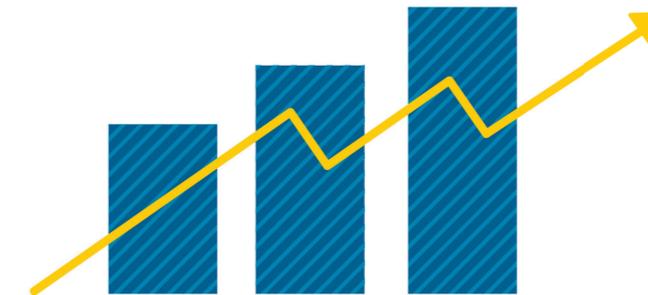
have higher mobility rates¹⁸. This can widen the gap between rural/low populated and urban/high populated areas within a region or across regions. Third, from an economic perspective, while the regions attracting the young can benefit from advantages as described above, sending regions instead can suffer from negative effects of a brain-drain.

Youth, education and training projects require the capacity to mobilise and coordinate local, national and regional public and private actors to increase mobility opportunities¹⁹. This requires financial resources as well as institutional capabilities. Another important challenge concerns the capacity to be inclusive and able to reach out and involve young people with fewer opportunities, not only those who are better off and more naturally open to a learning experience abroad.

¹⁷ European Commission (2017), *Student mobility in tertiary education: institutional factors and regional attractiveness*, pp.13-14. The UK alone attracts 38.4% of degree mobile students, Germany attracts 21.5% and France 16.9%, while the next most attractive country, Austria, receives only 6.1% of such students. A different pattern emerges for credit mobility, which appears to be more equally distributed across EU countries, with the top five destinations (which are also the five largest countries in the EU) receiving just over half of the EU's total credit mobile students. The main destination among Erasmus students is Spain, which received more than 16.3% of credit mobile students in 2013. Germany (12.2%) and France (9.6%) are again the second and third most attractive countries, while the UK is in fourth position with 9.4% of Erasmus students. Italy is also a popular destination, receiving 9.1% of total Erasmus students. This is likely to be the consequence of the way the Erasmus+ programme functions, where the scholarships and their distribution across countries are centrally determined by the Erasmus programme.

¹⁸ European Commission (2017), *Student mobility in tertiary education: institutional factors and regional attractiveness*, pp.38-39.

¹⁹ See Günter J. Friesenhahn, Hanjo Schild, Hans-Georg Wicke and Judit Balogh (2013), *Learning mobility and non-formal learning in European contexts - Policies, approaches and examples*.



Finally, the beneficial effects of EU cooperation projects for youth, education and training, especially for expected improved job opportunities, can be hindered by the persistent labour market segmentation in the EU and mismatches between labour demand and supply. Young people are still over-represented in temporary or part-time employment, in particular involuntary part-time, casual, atypical or precarious work²⁰. Although such non-standard forms of employ-

ment have increased for all age groups, the more recent cohorts of younger workers have been particularly adversely affected. For instance, youth employment has not yet recovered from the crisis and, although in 1995 23% of younger workers in the then EU 15 were on non-standard contracts, by 2016 this proportion had increased to 32% for the same age group²¹.

Table 2: What can be improved? Key obstacles and threats



Key obstacles:

- EU cooperation is a key objective of the vision set out by European Commission towards a future European Education Area (i.e. **more support from the EU for cooperation in the future is expected**)
- KA knowledge intensive economy requires **increasing knowledge and capacities**.
- The **increasing integration of education and labour markets in the EU can improve cross-border and inter-regional mobility and exchanges**.
- Increasing mobility brings new **opportunities for higher education institutions to promote strategic partnerships for research and innovation activities**.

Key threats:

- Sending territories can suffer the **negative effects of a drain-brain**.
- Mismatches between labour supply and demand as well as persistent labour market segmentation, **can prevent transforming education and training into job opportunities**.
- **Young people with less education, cultural background or social skills are also the most difficult to reach through inclusive social policies**. With a real risk of long-term exclusion and marginalisation.

²⁰ European Commission (2019), *Study on the Youth Guarantee in light of changes in the world of work - Part 1 - Youth Guarantee: intervention models, sustainability and relevance*, p.17.

²¹ See European Commission (2017), *Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2017*, and European Commission (2018), *Employment and Social Developments in Europe - Annual Review 2018*

3 Quantitative analysis of EU cooperation projects for youth training and education

This chapter presents the analysis of EU cooperation projects and programmes focusing on youth, education and training during the 2014-2020 programming period.

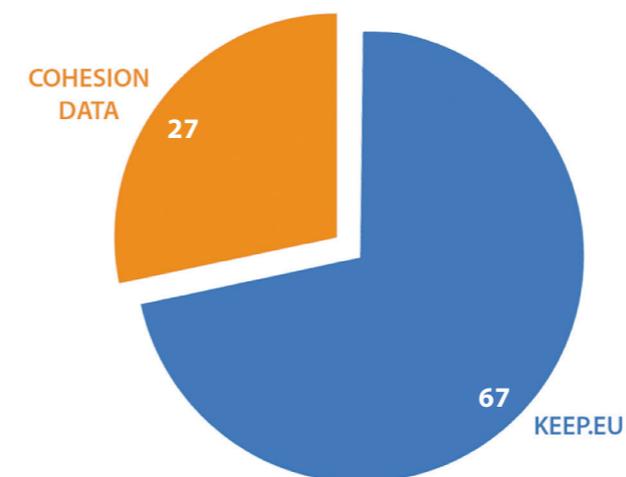
Cooperation projects focusing on youth, education and training

To select on-going projects specifically related to youth – education and training, the **keep.eu** database was first filtered with the keyword ‘Youth’ for the 2014-2020 programming period, identifying 204 projects. This list was further screened using the criterium “Education and Training” and each project was individually checked to identify its scope (i.e.: educational vocational and training, cross-border mobility, entrepreneurship, school and university), the target group (e.g. students, NEET or young entrepreneurs) and the expected project results (e.g. more skills and competences or access to job opportunities).

As a result, the final list includes **66 on-going projects directly linked to Youth, Education and Training**. These projects belong to Interreg V-A, Interreg V-B, Interreg V-C, IPA CBC and PEACE programmes.

Regarding ENI CBC programmes, 75% of the 15 existing ones have among their themes education and training among young people. However, these programmes have not yet been included in this document since there is no data available in Keep while this Desk Research was developed.

Figure 1: Number of identified EU cooperation projects in youth, training and education



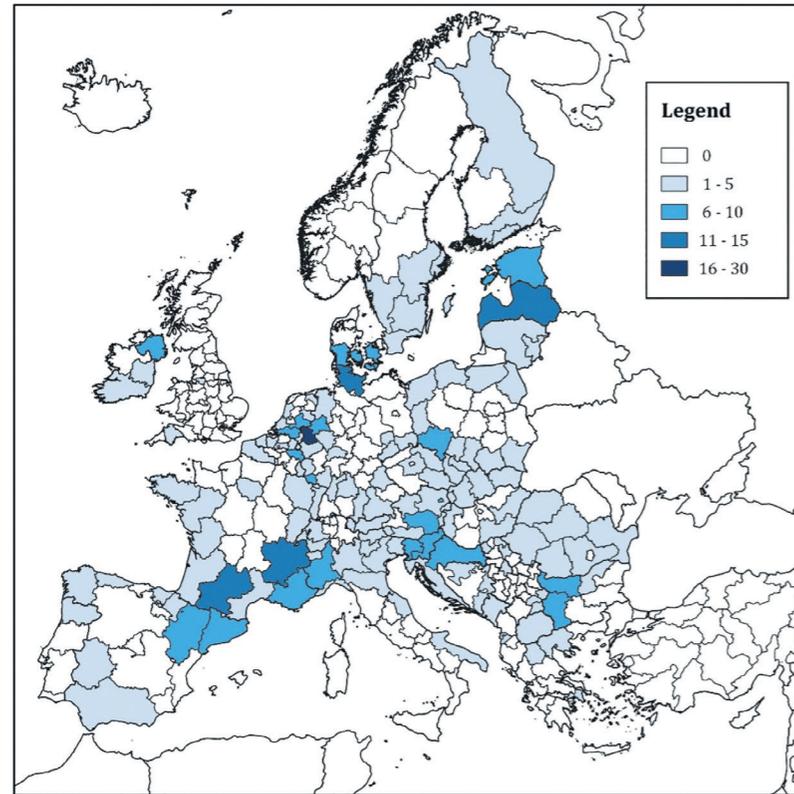
The programme database in **cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu**²² was also checked to identify projects not included in the keep.eu database. Only programmes with Thematic Objectives (TOs) 8, 10 and 11 were screened, excluding those already covered by keep.eu. Only 27 projects related to Youth, Education and Training were extracted and included in the study database.

In total, **94 on-going projects** have been considered relevant and included in the study Youth education and training database, of which 66 are from keep.eu and 28 from Interreg programme sources. The projects involve **550 partners**, of which 70% are from the public sector, and the remainder are private bodies. Most partners are in Germany (91), France (60), Italy (32), Spain (32) and Belgium (30).

²² This source gives access to data on financing and achievements under ESI Funds 2014-2020. The platform visualises, for over 530 programmes, the latest data available (December 2017 for achievements, September 2018 for finance implemented and daily updates for EU payments). It can be used to explore the data by EU level, theme, Member State - linked to programmes - or fund and check progress in delivering investments. This report uses data collected through COHESIONDATA updated to 28.03.2019.

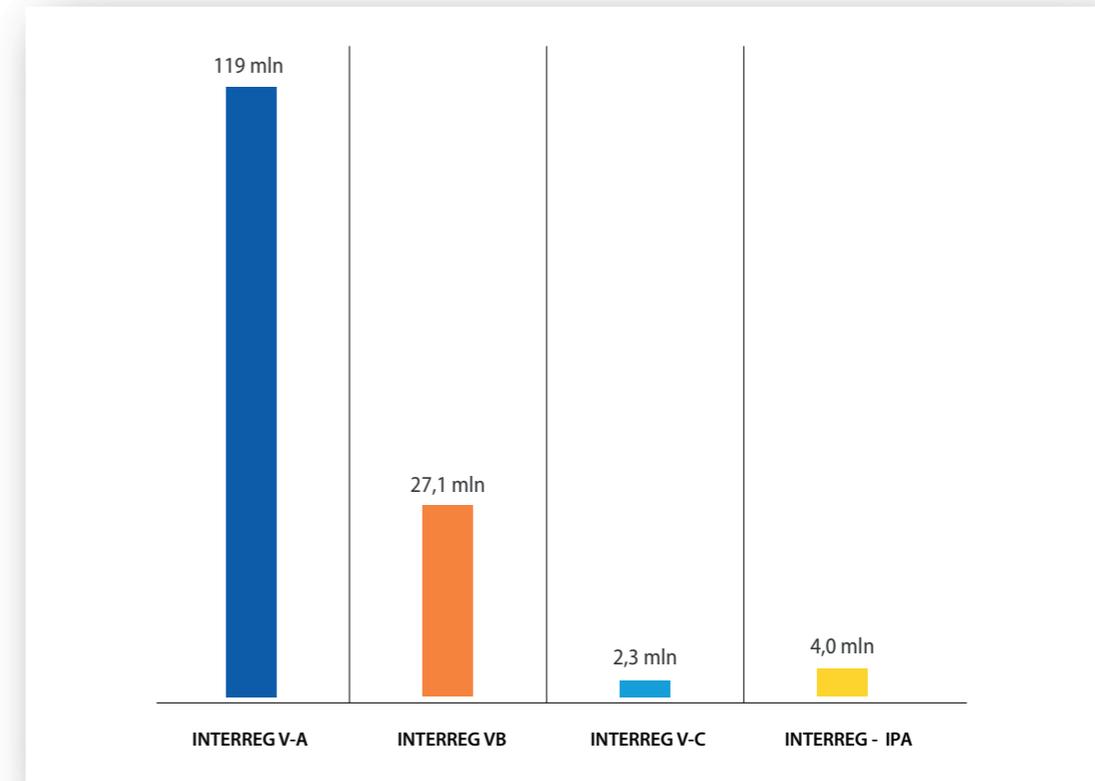
²³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/cross-border-cooperation_en

Figure 2: Map of partners involved in EU cooperation youth, education and training projects



Source: own elaboration

EU cooperation youth, education and training projects Total budget



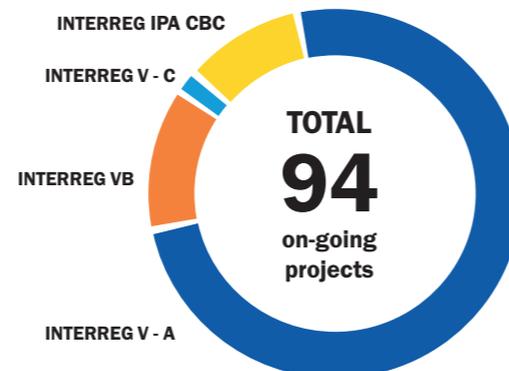
Budget and type of programme

The resource allocated to the **projects addressing youth, education and training** are **EUR 153.09 million**, with an EU contribution of **EUR 105.27 million**. On average, each project has a budget of around **EUR 1 639 166** and an EU contribution of around **EUR 1 132 410**.

Figure 3: Number of identified EU cooperation projects in youth, training and education, by stand

These projects are financed by different types of INTERREG, as underlined at the beginning of this part, in which:

- 74% are financed by INTERREG CBC (A);
- 15% are financed by INTERREG TRANSNATIONAL (B)
- 2% are financed by INTERREG C;
- 9% are financed by INTERREG IPA CBC;



Of the EUR **153.09 million** allocated, 56% are dedicated to projects financed by INTERREG A, 18% for INTERREG B, 1% for Interreg C, 3% for Interreg IPA CBC, 21% for Interreg Peace, and less than 1% for INTERREG ENI CBC. The budget allocated to INTERREG Peace project includes two projects, one of them with a budget of some EUR 29 million, and the other of EUR 4 million.

Projects under ENI and IPA are likely to be higher in a next future, considering the state of play and the thematic coverage of the programmes. At programme

levels, ENI and IPA programmes potentially address the topic of youth, education and training through respectively thematic objectives 2 Support for education, research, technological development and innovation and 4 Promotion of social inclusion and fight against poverty, for ENI programmes, and under IPA through the thematic priorities 'a' related to employment, 'e' addressing youth and education and 'f' covering regional governance²⁴. Five ENI programmes include TO 2 while three include TO 4; while almost all the IPA programmes address thematic covering youth and education and training.

²⁴ Thematic Priority a: promoting employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders through, inter alia: integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility; joint local employment initiatives; information and advisory services and joint training; gender equality; equal opportunities; integration of immigrant communities and vulnerable groups; investment in public employment services. Thematic Priority e: investing in youth, education and skills through, inter alia, developing and implementing joint education, vocational training, training schemes and infrastructure supporting joint youth activities; and supporting investment in public health and social services. Thematic Priority f: promoting local and regional governance and enhancing the planning and administrative capacity of local and regional authorities.

Cooperation projects focusing on youth, education and training

The **94 on-going projects** relating to Youth, Education & Training analysed in this study cover different types of interventions. By looking into each project description, five main types were identified. The projects can support youth through entrepreneurship initiatives or actions aiming at their social inclusion. Others aim at enhancing youth mobility across the EU. Most of the

projects, however, have a specific focus on providing educational and vocational training, some of which are tailored to schools and universities. These projects are mainly focused²⁵ on T08, T010 and T011 (11 projects)²⁶. A smaller group includes projects related to T01, T03, T05, T06, and T09.



²⁵ According to the databases used for this report, not all projects include information on the TO or Investment Priority addressed.

²⁶ T08: promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility by integrating cross-border labour markets, including cross-border mobility, joint local employment initiatives, information and advisory services and joint training T010: investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning by developing and implementing joint education, vocational training and training schemes. T011: enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions

The first category, **'entrepreneurship'**, includes projects supporting self-employability of young people through training, or youth entrepreneurs to develop

their ideas, structure their business plan and understand the main rules necessary to manage its own enterprise.

iEER - INTERREG C EUROPE 2.29 million

iEER is an Interreg Europe funded flagship project bringing together 10 regions around Europe. Initiated by a group of regions with the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) label, iEER intends to define smart paths and solutions to boost regional entrepreneurship ecosystems supporting young entrepreneurs. For the next four years project partners will learn from each other to build better services and regional policies in support of startups. The project aims to break down silo mentality and bring together all actors with a hand in entrepreneurial success. Universities, local and regional authorities, entrepreneurship support organisations and SMEs are closely involved in the project on local and interregional levels.

iEER is about working together across borders and organisations to find the best solutions for regional entrepreneurial ecosystems. Key to the project are learning camps, where project partners study the best practices of a region and brainstorm in workshops to identify what makes or breaks a budding business. In addition to learning camps, peer reviews are an important part of the learning process. Peer reviews provide an external perspective for the region and the feedback is a valuable tool in improving the local ecosystems. iEER learning process was conducted during 2016-2018, since then the findings are being collected, analysed and compiled into regional action plans and an iEER Boost Growth Handbook. The handbook gathers the best practices and most useful policies into a practical guide to benefit other European regions.

In 2018-2020 iEER will move from learning to implementation. Regional actions plans are put into practice and their progress is closely monitored. The results and lessons learned from the implementation of the action plans are collected into a policy recommendation. Action plans, the Boost Growth Handbook and policy recommendation will be shared to provide others the chance to implement lessons learned.

ProVocEnt - INTERREG VA, Bulgaria - Serbia 0,24 EUR million

Entrepreneurial skills are essential competences for business, yet they are often neglected or unexploited. The Bulgaria - Serbia border region is not an exception and the region's entrepreneurial potential is far from being fully utilised at the moment. This project supports the development of an attractive environment for young people's future in the border region; On the one hand, it promotes entrepreneurship among youth through the means of continued training and skills based courses, and; on the other, it improves the access to information in the field of career development in the cross border region.

The project envisages to improve the supply of educational equipment for young medical experts and capacity building of young citizens of the CBC region, to develop parental skills, health care mediation and capacity building of young people - 540 to be trained. In addition, it will create a center for innovation and it will improve young doctors' skills in the cross border region - 30 doctors to be trained; Introducing health care career opportunities to students from highschool - 60 planned to be trained; Development of curriculum for school class Health care and healthy living; Research Demographic change in the CBC region Bulgaria- Serbia: Strategies for resilient labour markets and; Skills building- new technology for new knowledge.

Source: *keep.eu* and *cohesiondata* database.

A second category of projects aims at **social inclusion**, by helping young people be fully integrated into society by enhancing their education and providing training. In

this category are projects improving the job qualifications of those working with the young so they can support the social inclusion of young people.

Youth Empowerment - INTERREG A, Latvia -Lithuania, EUR 0.12 million (EU contribution)

A common challenge in Latvian and Lithuanian municipalities is to motivate young people, help them to improve their practical skills and involve them in educational, social and cultural activities. This is especially challenging with youth at risk such as young people from socially deprived families, early school dropouts and youngsters with addictions or criminal records. The objective of the project is therefore to promote social inclusion of youth at risk in Kuldiga and Panevezys.

The project youth centres in Panevezys and Kuldiga will be equipped with artistic tools as well as musical instruments and equipment for a recording studio. Three creative workshops (two to five days long each) will be organised in Kuldiga and Panevezys youth centres and some 120 young people should benefit from the project activities. Methodological material will be developed and made available for organisations working with youth in the Programme territory.

As a result of the project more youth at risk living in towns as well as rural areas will benefit from more accessible and efficient social inclusion measures and improved services at youth centres.

www.EUR.Friends - INTERREG A Belgium - Germany - the netherlands, EUR 3.03 million

www.EUR.Friends meets the priorities defined in the cooperation programme Interreg VA, axis 3: "social inclusion and training" which specifically aims to develop integrated cross-border actions fostering inclusion (preventing early dropping-out of school) and to optimize the relevance of cross-border training systems to the labour market. Previous project investments (INTERREG IVA : Linguacluster, TIComKMO, ...) must now be capitalized towards the cross-border regions sustainable development. We need to keep on stimulating cross-border mobility and EMR populations skills and motivation to communicate "on" as well as "offline".

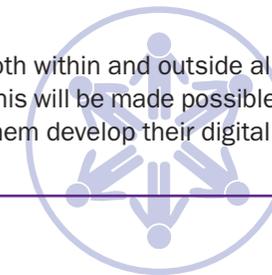
The project meets the objectives and project categories mentioned in the Interreg VA programme by supporting actions fostering language learning and in-company placements, reevaluating vocational education, cross-border mobility, students, workers and job seekers training. The core idea of this project is to create a sustainable network within the EMR by stimulating professional mobility and improving communication skills (languages and interculturalism).

The key results are: the following:

- The reevaluation of technical and vocational education thanks to a euregional schools-businesses network facilitating the organization of cross-border placements., An online database (complementary development of Babelreg/ Interreg IVA) of 720 cross-border placements will centralize supply and demand.
- An open source App designed for tablets and smartphones; its "upbeat" lay-out is expected to work as an incentive to young trainees intrinsic motivation. This will be customizable and downloadable on Google Play/App Store.
- An optimization process for placements (stakeholders roles, use of the tools, organizational arrangements) taking the form of a validated scenario.
- Directly operational (future) workers and job seekers thanks to better communication and intercultural skills in a foreign language through the use of 9 interactive and contrastive e-modules (source language/culture to target language/culture). These will be developed from an analysis of the needs of SMEs throughout the EMR (TIComKMO) and of the cultural differences and similarities between the partner regions (INTERCOM).

- Easier and closer interaction between all youngsters and young adults of the EMR, both within and outside all types of secondary education schools, including technical and vocational education. This will be made possible through a digital communication platform. It is expected that this platform will help them develop their digital, media education, language and intercultural skills.

Source: keep.eu and cohesiondata database.



The third category of projects relate to the **mobility** of students, thorough cross-border internships and cooperation between educational establishments.

These projects mainly aim to enhance the ability of youth to work on both sides of the border, increasing their employability.

B.E.L.T. - INTERREG A, Germany - Denmark EUR 0.27 million

The Fehmarn Belt fixed link will open in 2021. This creates new opportunities of co-operation between German and Danish educational institutions and companies in this region. This brings with it both economic and social challenges. Despite the geographical closeness of the two countries, there are still resentments, a lack of interest and a certain insecurity when dealing with each other. This should be changed through natural contact in business and culture.

The main aim of this project is that the young people of this region come to recognise it as one area for culture and business and identify with it. The project will prepare them for challenges in the region and Europe. Examples are a lack of mobility and high unemployment young people. A company and traineeships will give participants the necessary competence help develop and the region and sustainability. Multiple visits and close co-operation will increase interest in the other country and enhance economic and social competences. The Fehmarn Belt region will be strengthened, because participants will be able to cope with the demands of border trade between the two countries. The project will prioritise mobility and dismantling the language barrier.

Participants in the project will work as a multiplier, transmitting positive experiences and attitudes to friends, family and other students. To achieve this goal the students will establish their own company in both Germany and Denmark. Close co-operation is necessary to create this product.

Only a direct, permanent and structured contact between the young people will strengthen the region. This intercultural competence cannot be taught in class alone, personal contact is essential. Learning the partner's language as well as tolerating and understanding each other are necessary to unify the Fehmarn Belt region and create a common labour market. To avoid only simulations, there will be annual one to two-week traineeships. Moreover, the teachers will use up-to-date methods (tandem learning, co-operative learning and interdisciplinary learning).

A chance for development - INTERREG A, Romania - Bulgaria EUR 0.64 million

The project "A chance for development" aims to increase employability by developing professional skills and by ensuring a better communication between employer and the persons that are in search of a job in the counties of Dolj, Vidin and Veliko Tarnovo. Its priority is the inclusion in the labour market of students and university graduates of the region of implementation of the project. In this region, the unemployment rate is high enough (8.9% in Dolj and 23% in Bulgaria), the unemployment rate for young graduates tops 7% in Dolj and 18% in Bulgaria.

The general objective of the project is to increase the degree of employability by developing the workers' professional competences and by ensuring a contact between the employer and the unemployed. The value of the project is of 749 062,46 euros. Activities included: information and promotion, selection of the target group, professional

training for the target group, the setting-up of a Romanian-Bulgarian centre for career and recruitment, Design of an interactive site and organisation of themed meetings between the employers and persons in search of a job, Working visits of students and professors to potential employers in Bulgaria and Romania.

Among its results there are 14 initiatives (12 initiation and training courses, 1 internet domain, 1 job fair), 400 participants in local joint and employment initiatives, 300 participants in joint education and training programmes.

Source: keep.eu.

The fourth category, **educational and vocational training**, cover projects which build new formation strategies for youth, to sustain their future employability giving them skills and working experience.

MikroINTERREG, INTERREG A, Poland - Slovakia EUR 0.71 million

The overall objective of the project is to support cross-border educational measures for employment and new vocational qualifications through microprojects in the Polish-Slovak cross-border area.

It contributes to adjusting vocational education to the needs of the cross-border labour market and expectations of employers from the area of support. Microprojects will be implemented to improve the quality of cross-border specialised and vocational education, enhance cross-border initiatives for exchanges of experience, recognised and effective educational curricula in schools and universities, as well as joint cross-border initiatives for students and teachers in specialised and vocational education facilities, such as internships, study visits, language courses or cross-border preparatory vocational courses.

Microprojects will enrich training and education, in particular further education, as well as develop the potential for lifelong learning to obtain skills and qualifications facilitating job finding for cross-border area residents. Integration of educational measures and their adjustment to the labour market will improve the effectiveness of human resources in the cross-border area. In addition, it is planned to reinforce joint initiatives aimed at defining needs for specialised and vocational education. Preference will be given to microprojects including measures supporting social inclusion and social engagement. The project will contribute to reducing the economic migration of people from the area and developing its economic potential. Moreover, unemployment may decrease if new companies are attracted to the cross-border area by an opportunity to safely invest and use professional and well-educated human resources that would respond to their needs.

INTERREG A, Poctefa, Spain - France - Andorra EUR 1.98 million

People, especially young people, who live in the Pyrenees, need VET adequate to the socio-economic environment and improving their employability. Border areas, because of their geographical, cultural and labor market proximity, become the priority space for employing their population.

This project aims to provide guidance and access to training, qualification services and resources for regions on both sides of the border. The interrelation of professional orientation, training, validation and recognition services, and the recognition of prior work experience can be a powerful tool for increasing and improving employment opportunities. It aims to provide information services and career guidance, taking into account existing resources and services in the border area. So, youth would be able to choose training or experience recognition best suited to their interests.

The project also aims to improve students' skills in VET, through cross-border mobility so they:

- study VET mutually recognised by vocational schools of origin and destination.
- learning in cross-border enterprises with curricular value.

Source: keep.eu.

The last category identified in this study, is related to **schools and universities**, often improving the supply topics of particular relevance for the labour market (i.e. robotics, mathematics).

PANaMa - INTERREG A, Germany - Denmark EUR 1.69 million

Unused potential for growth, continuing skills shortages and demographic change are problems in the program region between Germany and Denmark. In addition, the region has a low level of education. Specific cross-border activities are therefore required to show career prospects in the region already for youth when they choose priorities at school (e.g. elective courses and profiles). This would better adapt them to the regional labor market at an early stage.

The project PANaMa - perspectives on the labor market with science and mathematics - is designed to develop innovative formats for academic and professional orientation for students in 9th and 10th grades at all types of schools. It is tailored to the region and includes learning and information together with a targeted exchange and communication phase. Project applicants therefore use existing structures such as curriculum subjects as well as their own innovative activities and expertise. The project focuses on highly relevant sectors for the program region (such as energy, agri-food, high-tech materials, robotics and resins). Interesting jobs in regional companies should be made visible for young people already while at school. These actions will be supplemented by education ambassadors who are young adults (trainees, university students) from both countries with a cross-border career in the region. Teacher training on-the-job reduces the information deficit on regional professional opportunities.

Another innovative part is the dissemination of student-generated knowledge (occupational/study information) to fellow students (cross-border peer to peer) as well as parents and the general public. The teams of trained ambassadors offer cross-border exchanges 'at eye level'. The emerging PANaMa network of schools, universities and local companies improve the conditions for a transition to seminal occupations in the program region. Thus, the project leads to a sustainable strengthening of the labor market.

RoboCoop - INTERREG A, Austria -Slovakia EUR 1.07 million

Schools and universities are currently experiencing a lack of interest in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and well-trained teachers in Austria and Slovakia. Women are especially underrepresented in these scientific areas. This creates bottlenecks in the labour market although there is an increasing demand for STEM staff throughout the region. Robotics in education has proven to be a valuable tool for practical learning, not just for robotics itself, but in general for STEM topics.

RoboCoop is a unique project with the aim to exploit the multidisciplinary potential of robotics and to establish cross-border educational activities in order to increase interest in STEM topics. Through complementary activities such as workshops, student conferences and competitions, young people get different entry points in science and technology. In particular, more girls should be interested in MINT as the mix of methods focuses not only on technology but also on creativity. In addition, an educational portal will provide access to digital materials that can be used in classroom, off-school, and home-based courses. The project will also provide teachers with new tools to integrate STEM subjects into their lessons.

The RoboCoop project encourages and engages more than 4,000 students and innovative STEM educators at an interregional level to serve as a positive example of broader national engagement in the two countries. In addition, a comprehensive evaluation of all project activities should result in policy recommendations to ensure a systematic and long-term implementation of project ideas leading to the early introduction of robotics at secondary school level.

Source: keep.eu.



Other EU initiatives targeting youth training and education: Erasmus+ and YEI

Finally, one project from the ENI programme Baltic Sea is illustrated in the following box.

ENT-MIND, INTERREG Baltic Sea Region, EUR 0.05Mln

This project promotes an entrepreneurial culture, mindset and attitudes among Europeans and is paramount in fostering youth entrepreneurship. ENT-MIND aims at improving the entrepreneurial education of young people by integrating new and innovative education approaches and methodologies into existing education.

Project partners are the South-Eastern University of Applied Sciences (FI), Social innovation Centre (LV), Innovation Office (LT), Foundation Latvian New Entrepreneurs' Centre 'Jobs&Society' (LV), Nordic Association for Social Innovation (SE)

Source: keep.eu.



Ensuring equal access for young people to high quality education and training at all levels and opportunities for lifelong learning is at the core of the EU Youth Strategy²⁷. In addition to reinforcing their participation in formal education, Member States and the European Commission have agreed to promote and recognise young people's engagement in non-formal and informal learning and facilitate their transition from education and training into the labour market. Two key objectives of the Youth Strategy are to:

- Create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market.
- Promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

To implement the EU Youth Strategy, the European Commission has developed several instruments. Among these, the two most important focusing on education and training of youth are Erasmus+ and the Youth Entrepreneurship Initiative.

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Its budget for the 2014-2020 period of EUR 14.7 billion is to provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train and gain experience. It aims to foster

quality improvements, innovation, excellence and internationalisation of organisations active in education and training, youth and sport. Erasmus+ also helps European countries to modernise and improve their education and training systems as well as their youth and sport policies, reinforcing their role as drivers for growth, employment, competitiveness, innovation and social cohesion.

In 2018, ERASMUS+ financed 18 793 projects for EUR 1.77 billion with an average per project of around EUR 94 000. According to the database, 923 projects include youth (Participation, Youth Work, Youth Policy) as the main topic for a budget of EUR 25 million and an average of around EUR 27 000.

This theme is addressed through different types of intervention. Some refer to social inclusion (i.e. disadvantaged categories, disabilities, gender equality, migrants), European values (i.e. social dialogue, EU awareness and democracy, EU citizenship, civil engagement), R&D and innovation (i.e. ICT, new technologies, digital competencies) or to more transversal issues such as the environment or health and well-being. However, a significant part of the projects is linked to education and vocational training. These include (as a secondary focus):

²⁷ The EU Youth Strategy is a cooperation framework established through a Council Resolution of 27 November 2009, based on previously existing mechanisms for coordinating Member State policies on young people (EU Youth Strategy, European Implementation Assessment, European Parliament, February 2018).

- Cooperation between educational institutions and businesses: 4 projects with an average budget of EUR 24 400;
- Early school leaving: 6 projects with an average budget of EUR 30 300;
- Entrepreneurial learning: 18 projects with an average budget of EUR 24 000;
- Intercultural/intergenerational learning: 81 projects with an average budget of EUR 31 600;
- Labour market issues including career guidance: 27 projects with an average budget of EUR 31 000;
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning/-credits: 12 projects with an average budget of EUR 22 300;
- Teaching and learning of foreign language: 13 projects with an average budget of EUR 58 100;
- New innovative curricula/educational methods: 39 projects with an average budget of EUR 22 500.

According to the recent mid-term evaluation²⁸, Erasmus+ is well on track to achieve its performance indicators notably over less than three years, with 1.8 million individuals taking part in mobility activities and more than 240 000 organisations involved in cooperation projects. Considering the baseline of the evaluation, between 2007 and 2016, the programmes under review funded learning mobility for more than 4.3 million young people and more than 880 000 practitioners. In addition, many more people benefited from cooperation projects involving 940 000 participating organisations.

The evaluation found that Erasmus+ is highly valued by its stakeholders as well as the general public, which identifies the programme as the third most positive for results in the EU. Programme beneficiaries report satisfaction rates above 90%.

Moreover, for students, apprentices, volunteers and young people, the evaluated programmes continue to have a positive effect on the acquisition of skills and competences. This increases employability and entrepreneurship and shortens the transition from education to employment (13% higher, compared to individuals who did not take part in Erasmus+ or its predecessor programmes). The evaluation indicates that the Erasmus+ programme fosters willingness to work or study abroad (+31%)

and the development of foreign language skills (7% higher in tested proficiency). It also influences individuals' positive perception of the value of learning for their professional and personal development (+8%); and improves students' completion rates (+2%)

Though less visible, the evaluation also confirmed that the programmes had an impact on the formulation and implementation of education, training, youth and sport policies, especially for higher education where the budget was large enough, or had an indirect effect by funding policy cooperation between authorities. In the long run, the programmes have instilled the perception that learning mobility brings benefits to individuals and the learning outcomes are to be commonly validated and recognised. The programmes have also been important for the EU's global outreach, notably in facilitating the recognition of qualifications between Europe and partner countries.

There is also evidence of a contribution to a more cohesive Union. The Erasmus+ programme fosters positive social and civic behaviour and a sense of feeling 'European' (+19% compared to non-participants). It reaches out to disadvantaged young people (11.5% of participants in Erasmus+) more than its predecessors or comparable national schemes. Yet the evaluation points to the need to do more to reach out to the more vulnerable in society and to facilitate the participation of smaller organisations.

The **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)** main objective is to fight against youth unemployment in the worst-affected EU regions. It targets NEETs between 15 and 24, with Member States free to decide to extend support to young persons under the age of 30. Nevertheless, the YEI is integrated in ESF programming and, according to its regulation, programming arrangements can take the form of a dedicated operational programme, a dedicated priority axis within an operational programme or a part of one or more priority axes. The YEI supports implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG). Under the YG, Member States should ensure that young people up to the age of 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed.

The YEI budget is EUR 8.8 billion for 2014-2020²⁹. Of this, €4.4 billion comes from a dedicated Youth Employment budget line, which is complemented by €4.4 billion more from ESF national allocations. The ESF contribution is complemented by funds from eligible Member States.

Through the YEI, a very large and varied array of actions to promote the inclusion of NEETs in the labour market have been financed across more than 120 eligible regions in 20 Member States. These include³⁰:

- Stepping up early activation and intervention with the development of individual action plans;
- Improvements to the quality of general education and training, including reforms to the vocational education and training system and the apprenticeships system, better digital technologies, foreign language learning, as well as support for young people who have not completed secondary education to return to education or training;
- Easier school-to-work transitions, for instance by helping young people secure their first work experience or traineeship, with the objective of increasing their employability and labour market attachment, including in the public sector;
- Acquisition of professional skills in new professions or professions where there are labour shortages, training and on-the-job training;
- Strengthening public employment services capacity, with a new integrated system of career guidance, as well as help for job seekers, such as CV, cover letter, or job interview preparation;
- Implementation of mentoring schemes as a part of labour market services, when the young person is in training or on-the-job;
- Activation support for self-employment, such as start-up support (including mentoring) for young entrepreneurs;
- Incentives for employers, such as wage and recruitment subsidies and lower non-wage labour costs.

The YEI has undoubtedly contributed to lower unemployment and NEET rates, especially because it supports young people individually and has also provided structural reforms. The commutation provided by the European Commission in the second part of 2016³¹ highlights that there were delays in setting up the programmes, designating authorities and submitting payment applications. Nevertheless, once the structures were in place, over 1.4 million young people benefited from the YEI and 404 500 young persons finalised a YEI-financed operation, well above initial projections. Of the initial total budget of EUR 6.4 billion, EUR 4.7 billion has already been allocated to specific actions and projects. In some countries, such as Spain, the YEI is the main financial support for the Youth Guarantee.

However, the European Youth Forum Board has underlined some bottlenecks concerning the application of YG including the YEI³². Despite the potential for the YG and YEI to improve the situation of young people, the YG, on its own, cannot be the solution to youth unemployment or social exclusion in Europe. It can only be part of a broader and more comprehensive approach, tackling the root causes of social and economic exclusion. Moreover, the YG highlights the difficulty of reaching young people in general and the most vulnerable young people in particular. Other issues include, for example, the lack of coordination between public authorities; lack of involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as youth organisations and young people; and the lack of a long-term vision. In addition, the European Policy Centre in September 2016³³ concluded that the YG had brought important reforms to education and labour market policies and points out some weaknesses. These include the lack of continuity in the measures adopted over time, the disconnection between activation and protection measures, flaws in the partnership approach and insufficient effort to reach out to non-registered NEETs.

²⁹ The initial budget was €6.4 billion; however, in September 2016, given the continued high levels of youth unemployment, the European Commission proposed to increase this budget. €2.4 billion was added for eligible Member States for the period 2017-2020.

³⁰ European Parliament (2017), *Youth Employment Initiative*, Briefing - How the EU budget is spent, pp.4-5.

³¹ European Commission (2016), *The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on*, COM (2016) 646 final.

³² European Youth Forum (2018), *Updated position on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee*.

³³ European Policy Centre (2016), *Towards a Europeanisation of Youth Employment Policies. A comparative analysis of regional Youth Guarantee policy designs*.

²⁸ European Commission (2018), *Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020)*, COM(2018) 50 final.

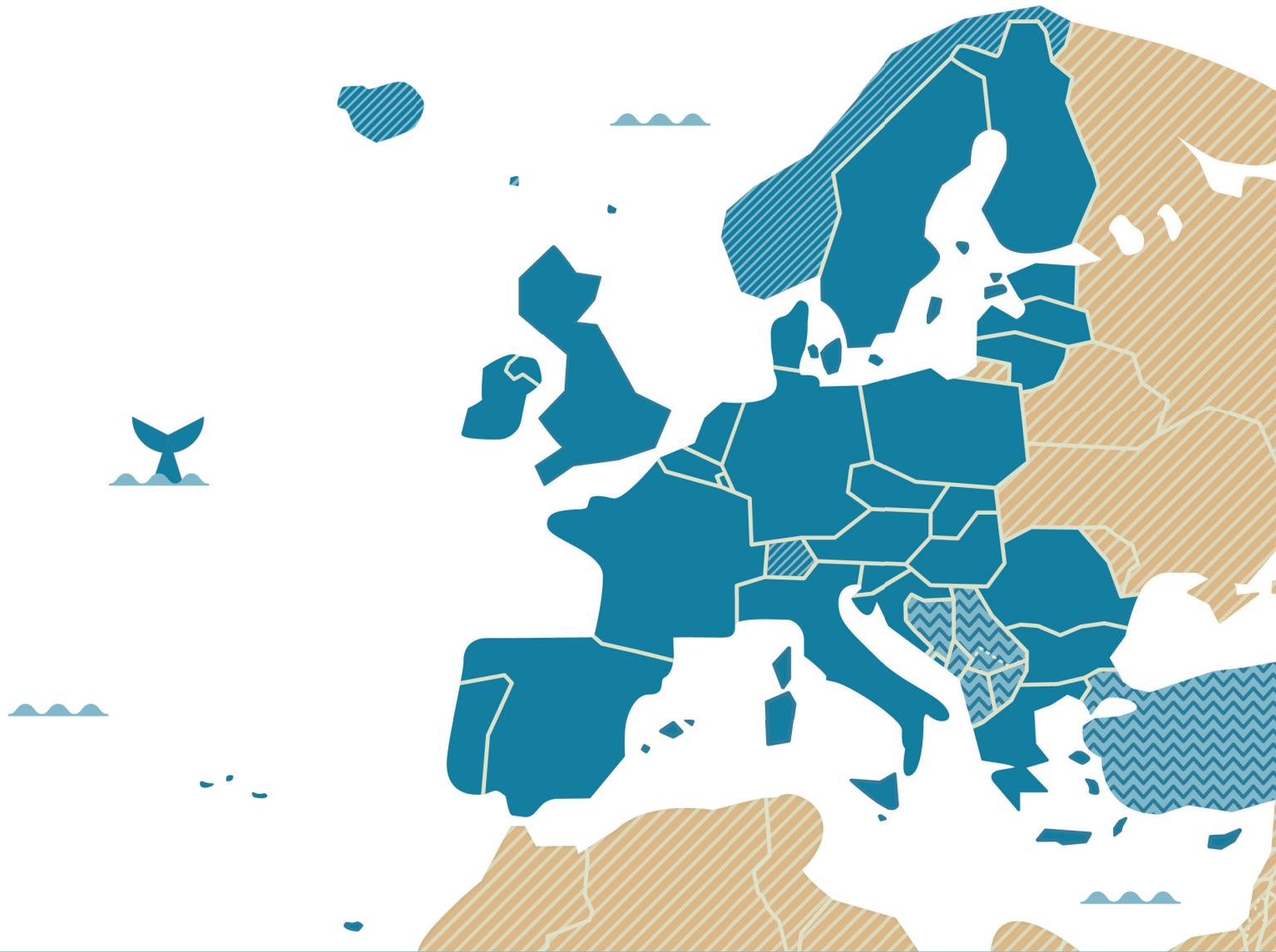
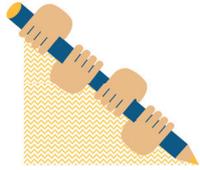
5 Conclusions and recommendations for the future of ETC on youth training and education

The conclusions of the studies are that:

- At European level, young people, between 15 and 29 years old, were 17% of the population in 2018. Even if young people are not a homogenous category - considering the sex, economic situation, social origin and culture - they face specific social issues related to education and training, employment (access to the first job), income, access to housing and other social rights. Unemployment is still high and social exclusion threatens young people, especially in eastern and southern regions. The average youth unemployment rate stood at 15.2% in 2018 in the EU 28, and the NEET rate (the share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training) was 10.4%.
- The importance of education and training for giving young people more job opportunities and preventing them from social exclusion is fundamental. In 2018, the NEET rate for young people aged 20–34 in the EU was 37.2 % among those with a low level of education, compared with 14.7 % for those with an intermediate education and 9.5 % of those with a high level of education. As such, people with a low level of education in the EU were almost four times as likely to not be employed, or in education and training as those with a high level.
- European cooperation (Interreg and IPA) currently supports 91 projects related to youth, education and training, mainly through cross-border cooperation (Interreg A) with 75% of the projects. The projects cover mainly thematic objectives 8, 10 and 11 and include investments in vocational training, cross-border mobility, entrepreneurship, as well as social exclusion schools and universities.
- ERASMUS+ and the Youth initiative target youth directly with vouchers, personal grants or financial instruments, or indirectly through social organisations and trainers such as schools, cultural and sport organisations. Interreg supports fewer projects and people with less financial allocation. However, the type of interventions supported is broader and not only related to mobility and personal exchanges (Erasmus +) or supporting NEETs (Youth initiative). Interreg finances training, small investments and experimental educative projects addressing territories with specific handicaps and opportunities based on an integrated territorial approach. The average cost of projects targeting youths in Interreg is bigger than for Erasmus + and the Youth initiative programmes.

Recommendations for the next programming period:

- Promote ESI fund (ESF, ERDF and Interreg) specialisation with a specific emphasis for Interreg on:
 - overcoming administrative and institutional barriers in Member States and cross-border regions in educational and vocational training systems for youths to facilitate youth mobility and to increase job opportunities for youths (all cooperation programmes);
 - developing and managing joint infrastructure for education, culture and sport at cross-border level (CBC programmes);
 - specific focus on border areas with socio-economic disadvantages (with high unemployment rates for youth) or in economic decline (with fewer job opportunities) and isolated areas (e.g. rural and mountains areas) (CBC programmes);
 - focus on local and territorial initiatives which aim at maintaining or attracting youths in areas in economic decline or with socio-economic and geographic disadvantages through investments in infrastructure and the delivery of services to young people (including immigrants).
- Disseminate best practices among Member States and border regions related to education and training for youths (e.g. innovative approaches in teaching and learning in a multicultural context), enhanced mainly through Interreg B and C; provide specific technical support to national and regional managing authorities and diffusing information to stakeholders and competent authorities (e.g. to tackle NEET issues in a multi-cultural context); improve programme governance and the accountability of cooperation programmes in this field of youth, education and training.
- Define specific strategic objectives within the ERDF and Interreg regulatory framework devoted to youth, education and training, with specific indicators and eligible expenditure, such as the reference to youth in article 14 of the new ETC regulation (EC proposal COM(2018) 374 final) related to intervention aiming at improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognised across borders.



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