

European Youth Guarantee: Supporting Homeless Youth & Young People Facing Multiple Barriers

European Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee was conceived of as a policy response to youth unemployment. It pitches a Europe in the throes of a youth unemployment crisis. The reality on the ground demonstrates a deeper and wider social crisis. Employment, training and education are of course important ingredients in combatting the social exclusion of young people, but we can and must go further. Youth homelessness is rising. The number of young people in housing exclusion or at risk of homelessness is increasing. To date, the Youth Guarantee has not reached the most vulnerable and social excluded in Europe, but it can.

Youth Guarantees' Starting Mission:

In its initial conception in the December 2012 *Council Recommendation on Establishing a Youth Guarantee*, the Council identified two target groups which should be the intended beneficiaries of the Youth Guarantee, namely vulnerable youth and NEETs (not in education, employment or training).

Unfortunately, the Youth Guarantee has so far prioritised the latter, targeting NEETS, at the expense of young people living in poverty and experiencing homelessness and social exclusion. In recognising that “*young people are not a homogenous group facing a similar social environment*” and requesting tailored solutions to meet the needs of specific problematic groups, the Guarantee does, however, have the political support to reach out and support homeless youth.

‘Young vulnerable people facing multiple barriers (such as social exclusion, poverty or discrimination) and NEETs, and taking into consideration their diverse backgrounds (due in particular to poverty, disability, low educational attainment or ethnic minority/migrant background)’

*December 2012 Council Recommendation
on Establishing a Youth Guarantee*

Additionally, the Council recognised the lasting impact of youth unemployment on the health status and overall well-being of young people. It highlighted the risk in institutionalising poverty and creating intergenerational poverty. The Council wanted to ensure that a Youth Guarantee could support the transitioning period adolescents go through, prevent the transmission of intergenerational poverty and keep early school leavers below 10%.

From this perspective, homeless youth fit neatly into the framework of the Youth Guarantee:

- Combatting youth homelessness means more than addressing a transition to housing, but a healthy transition to adulthood, complemented by social supports in housing, education, employment, training and healthcare.
- Homelessness is often episodic, meaning that it happens in episodes throughout the life cycle. A lack of effective and early interventions for those experiencing youth homelessness increases the

likelihood of repeated experience of homelessness. Therefore, youth homelessness has the potential to embed poverty and social exclusion into a person's life cycle if there are a lack of effective early interventions.

- Evidence also demonstrates that homeless youth have higher rates of leaving school early and dis-engaging from social, employment and educational services. Targeting homeless youth under the Youth Guarantee has the potential to address this problem too.

How Can the Youth Guarantee Support Homeless Youth:

The Youth Guarantee was developed along 6 Axis which provide the best framework for ensuring youth homelessness is given appropriate space and adequate resources within the Youth Guarantee.

Cooperation:

The Youth Guarantee sets out to work with all stakeholders in ensuring that all young people have access to information about the Guarantee. FEANTSA and our members can collaborate with the Youth Guarantee and the wider youth sector in ensuring those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness have access to information. Often, we talk in terms of young people being out of the reach of social services, but in reality, its often the services that are out of the reach of young people.

Building relationships with the homeless sector, facilitated by FEANTSA, can ensure a wider uptake and impact of the Youth Guarantee among the most vulnerable youth farthest removed from the labour market. FEANTSA can also share best practices on employment and training opportunities for homeless youth, which have proved to be successful interventions.

Prevention:

The Youth Guarantee aims to provide early interventions to prevent young people become NEETs. Additionally, the recommendation proposing the Youth Guarantee places an emphasis on early school leavers. Evidence shows that a substantial portion of the homeless youth population are early school leavers.

FEANTSA and our membership can assist the Youth Guarantee in re-engaging with early school leavers. FEANTSA can further provide a set of best practices on both preventing and reaching out to early school leavers in the homeless sector.

Integration:

Young people often need integrated services to assist an effective return to the labour market. This is also true for homeless youth.

Young homeless people possess complex needs. The most effective services for homeless youth have used holistic approaches to combating youth homelessness with integrating housing, training, education, employment and health services. In pursuing integrated approaches, FEANTSA and our membership can share their expertise on how to holistically address youth specific needs.

Funding:

The Guarantee will be supported through the effective use of EU funds.

Funding streams such as the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) prioritises young people in particularly vulnerable situations. Part of the YEI should be set aside to support services and interventions which support vulnerable youth like the homeless.

Evaluation:

The Youth Guarantee will be underpinned by evaluation aimed at monitoring effectiveness in implementation.

The European Court of Auditors have highlighted that a stronger and more robust monitoring system is needed to ensure more vulnerable target groups can be reached by the Youth Guarantee. For this it will be important to clearly identify homeless youth as a 'vulnerable' group.

Immediate Application:

To quickly apply the Youth Guarantee to combat youth unemployment.

While the Youth Guarantee has been implemented in the EU, it had failed to reach out to those farthest removed from the Labour market.

Actions to Improve Outreach to Homeless Youth

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) has conducted a review of the Youth Guarantee in 6 different European Countries. The ECA made three concrete recommendations to improve how the Youth Guarantee is implemented, which can support a framework to address the employment and training needs of homeless youth.

Set realistic and achievable objectives and targets

The ECA was critical that there are no specific targets for the Youth Guarantee. While it's clear that "all" young people should be addressed, with a focus on vulnerable youth, there is no elaboration on what constitutes vulnerable. The spirit of the Youth Guarantee in supporting vulnerable youth is welcomed, but if we do not elaborate on the term it creates an ambiguity which means the most vulnerable get left behind. Implementation of the Youth Guarantee has left homeless youth behind.

The ECA was critical of the 'vulnerable' dimension and noted that vulnerable youth, with the lowest skills and furthest removed from the labour market, are under-represented in the Youth Guarantee. Addressing youth homelessness can help address this criticism.

In the future the Youth Guarantee should explicitly include homeless youth, accompanied with a profile of the list of needs and supports of homeless youth to assist the implementation of the Youth Guarantee on the ground.

Perform a Gap Assessment

The Youth Guarantee has been implemented without a needs and gap assessment, which has raised criticism by the ECA. This disadvantages anyone with multiple and complex needs. For the Guarantee to support the most vulnerable it will need to have a better understanding of the NEET population and how needs vary. For example, the interventions required for people with different family, social, economic and education backgrounds will change how supports should be structured and delivered.

Improve Monitoring and Reporting Systems

The effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee is still unclear. The Youth Guarantee needs to invest in better monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems that can appropriately capture its implementation. The ECA hope that better monitoring will lead to a clearer outline of how the Youth Guarantee is implemented which can then be used to make changes where necessary. Through a better reporting and monitoring system it will be clearer to what extent the Youth Guarantee is assisting homeless youth, and will provide scope to allow greater feedback into how the Youth Guarantee can be amended to improve reach out to homeless youth.

Summary and Actions

7 key things to REMEMBER about the Youth Guarantee (YG)	7 actions to Ensure Homeless Youth are not FORGOTTEN within the Youth Guarantee (YG)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YG sets out to target NEETS and vulnerable youth, but vulnerable youth have been forgotten 2. Prioritizing youth homeless can fit into the YG framework. 3. Cooperation with all stakeholders is necessary for successful implementation of YG 4. Prevention is key to pre-empting long-term impact of unemployment 5. Integrated approaches are effective in meeting needs of youth. 6. Funding for the YG is underpinned by EU funds 7. Evaluation is critical to ensure YG can achieves its goal in supporting all young people. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Vulnerable' needs to be clarified with a clear reference to youth homelessness 2. Targets and objectives to support homeless youth need to be set 3. YG needs a profile of youth homelessness, to better understand required needs and supports. 4. Homeless stakeholders need to be consulted to ensure YG is available to homeless youth. 5. Homeless service providers can provide expertise on preventing early school leaving and re-engaging vulnerable youth with education and training services. 6. FEANTSA can provide case studies and best practices on how to develop and implement integrative approaches to assisting vulnerable youth. 7. Homeless youth must be included in any evaluation and monitoring system for reaching out to vulnerable youth.