

The background of the slide is a high-magnification microscopic image of tissue, likely stained with hematoxylin and eosin (H&E). The tissue shows various cellular structures, including what appears to be a glandular or ductal structure in the upper left, and a more densely cellular area in the lower right. A dark blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and date.

An Australian Youth Guarantee

12 August 2022

An Australian Youth Guarantee

Proposition

A youth guarantee that young people aged 15-24 will be given a good offer of:

- a job
- further education
- work-focused training, including an apprenticeship or traineeship

within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed

Why is a Youth Guarantee required?

Prior to the pandemic Australia had experienced two decades of continuous economic growth. Despite higher rates of employment than most countries across the OECD, youth employment rates have remained stubbornly high. Young people have not shared in Australia's jobs boom.

Around 175,000 of young people aged 15-24 were unemployed in June 2022¹. In May 2020, around 391,000 (12%) were completely disengaged from work, education and training (NEETs)². Since the GFC, the share of people aged between 20 and 24 years old that are NEET has stopped falling and during the COVID-19 pandemic there was a notable increase in the NEET share of males in this group³. Participation is lowest amongst young people who face additional barriers to work (for example young carers and youth with a disability or serious mental health condition).

The quality of jobs has also deteriorated. The industries that are the largest employers of young people - accommodation and food services and retail services - have become more casualised and are the very industries that have borne the brunt of two years of COVID-19 lockdowns.

The impact of the pandemic on aggregate demand, and accelerating automation and digitalisation of products and services has compounded the enduring impacts of the global financial crisis.

More than 40% of young people entering the labour market after leaving education are casually employed. 15% per are underemployed.

Labour market surveys show that only 38% of casual employees transition to permanent employment within 5 years. For young people without post-school qualifications, finding a

¹ ABS, Labour Force

² Australia's youth: Engagement in education or employment, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

³ *The effect of the Covid-19 recession on the youth labour market in Australia*, E61 Institute

secure footing in the workforce is harder still. The resumption of skilled migration could compound structural barriers to their sustainable integration into the labour market.

Australia's future workforce will need to be able to easily upskill and reskill as job roles change. The quality of early work experiences matter in building and embedding the social and technical skills necessary to be adaptable, think critically, solve problems, communicate effectively and perform non-routine cognitive tasks.

Without active labour market interventions to match young jobseekers to jobs that build their skills and improve their long-term career prospects, home ownership and economic security will be out of reach for a growing number of young Australians.

Unemployment and underemployment do not just hurt the young people of today. Underinvestment in employment-related skills acquisition and career paths will jeopardise future labour productivity. This in turn will compromise Australia's future competitiveness, hamper service sector productivity and threaten the viability of regional towns. We cannot continue to grow our economy, maintain the living standards Australians expect, or provide decent care to those who need it most if we do not invest in the workforce of the future.

In 2013, the member states of the EU committed to a youth guarantee, backed by training and active labour market policies. They implemented the guarantee through a combination of funding from the European Commission and nationally owned policy making and operational decision making. They have learnt important lessons and have significantly outperformed G7 countries in reducing youth unemployment and inactivity. Despite differing political dynamics, economic conditions and labour market dynamics, every country has agreed to intervene in how their labour markets function to protect their competitiveness and living standards for the longer term.

How would a Youth Guarantee work?

Past skills and employment policies in Australia have relied on voluntary effort by employers, with Commonwealth, State and Territory governments subsidising recognised training to improve employability, mobility and productivity.

Youth unemployment will only reduce with more active labour market policies agreed and led collaboratively by all jurisdictions in partnership with industry peak bodies, industrial partners, education and training providers and employers.

The experience of implementing a youth guarantee across the EU highlights the importance of local recognition of barriers to attracting, retaining and developing young employees. A shared commitment to addressing those barriers is critical to achieving more sustainable integration of young people into the labour market. Leadership within a partnership of employers, educators and support services matters - the right fit and connections will often make or break the success of the market intervention.

Positioning youth to gain a more secure footing in the world of work will require:

- **Place-based partnerships** between employers, unions, employment services and education and training services that are all committed to growing educating workplaces and sustainable integration of young people into the world of work

- **Personalised support** - better connecting skills and employment services with relevant social services and supports to overcome barriers to participation and make sure no one is left behind
- **Highly skilled intermediaries** in the labour market that facilitate high quality matching of jobs and job seekers and the development of skills that are needed for the jobs of today and the jobs of the future

Implementing a Youth Guarantee will involve 4 basic steps:

1. Mapping clients, jobs and supports

Supported by the Jobs and Skills Australia and relevant Industry Clusters, a core local partnership of employers, education and training providers and employment services would be responsible for mapping youth who should be engaged in their community, vacancy rates/opportunities and appropriate education and training options. They would track the impact of the youth guarantee on sustainable youth employment outcomes, including for NEETs and priority cohorts at greater risk of unemployment or inactivity

The partnerships would also need to demonstrate how they would formally involve other local health and social service partners in mapping local services and referral pathways to help overcome any barriers a young person may face in participating in education, work-focused training or employment.

2. Outreach and enrolment of youth guarantee participants

Employment services would be contracted to identify local youth who would benefit from the youth guarantee and manage the offer and placement process. Successful employment services would be required to demonstrate they can support young people through one of the most critical and stressful transitions of their life.

A youth guarantee co-ordinator would be appointed within the employment service to manage the process of registration, offers and preparation of young people. The co-ordinator would have strong connections with local education, training, youth and social service providers. They would find 'hard to reach' young people and connect them to any supports they need in other parts of their life.

3. Preparation and placement

Whether a young person takes up an offer of a job, a return to formal education, work-focused or an apprenticeship or traineeship, they will be supported to develop skills that will set them up for the jobs of the future. This would include opportunities to build digital skills; skills needed for a green transition; and entrepreneurial and career management skills of interest to them.

A job placement would be facilitated with participating employers, with follow up pastoral care and continuing career guidance.

4. Employer support

A subsidy or tax concession would be made available to businesses supporting priority industries or workforces, who are prepared to commit to giving young people in their community a good start to their working life. This would de-risk the initial period of employment of a young person when they are likely to be least productive.

Government contracts would be adjusted to require service providers to meet youth employment targets focused on the quality as well as the quantity of job opportunities.

To assist small to medium businesses to participate in the scheme, Group Training Organisations would be funded to support local employers to work together to provide sufficient hours of employment and access to appropriate training for each participant.

The support of safety regulators would be important. They would share industry lessons on how best to tailor workplace safety processes to younger, less experienced employees. Employers may also need help on cultural adjustments and HR practices to transition their workplace practices.

A rigorous approach to continuous learning and improvement would need to be built into the implementation of a youth guarantee, with partnerships resourced to monitor outcomes and share learnings. Regular dialogue between the partnerships, government and the intermediary services (employment services and group training organisations) would enable the program model to be refined as necessary to ensure young people benefit as intended. Active oversight of progress against youth employment targets would indicate what is required to continuously improve the experience and quality of young people's skills and career development.

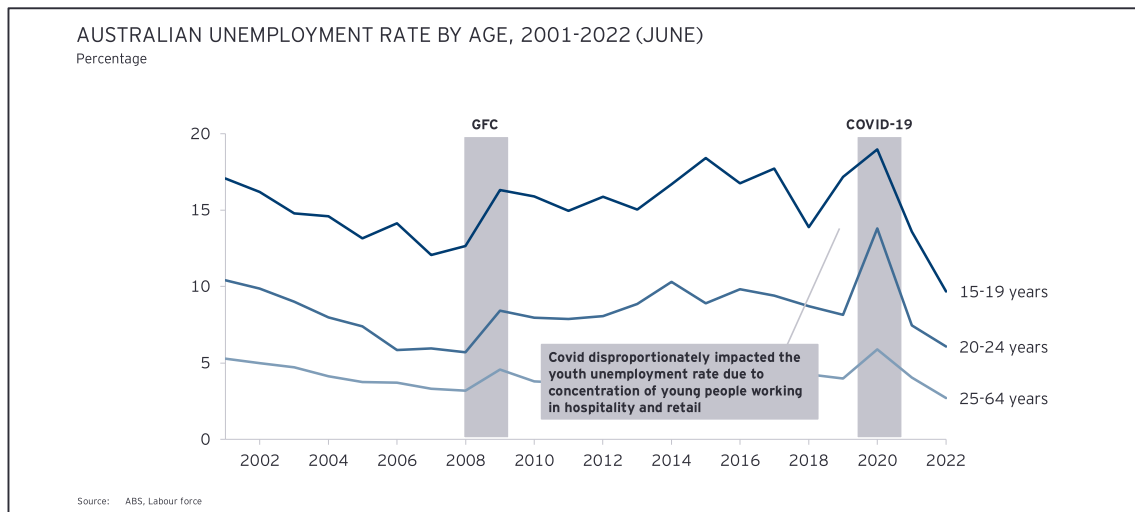
Background briefing note

Case for Change

Young Australians have not shared in Australia's job boom

There have been improvements in the unemployment rate for young Australians and a narrowing of the gap with the wider population since the peak COVID-19 lock-down periods. However, while the overall unemployment rate in Australia is 3.5%⁴, 9.7% of Australians aged 15- 19 and 6.1% of those aged 20-24 cannot find work.⁵ This represents 175,000 young people and excludes those that are not seeking to participate in the labour force.

Figure 1: Australian unemployment rate by age, 2001-2022 (June)



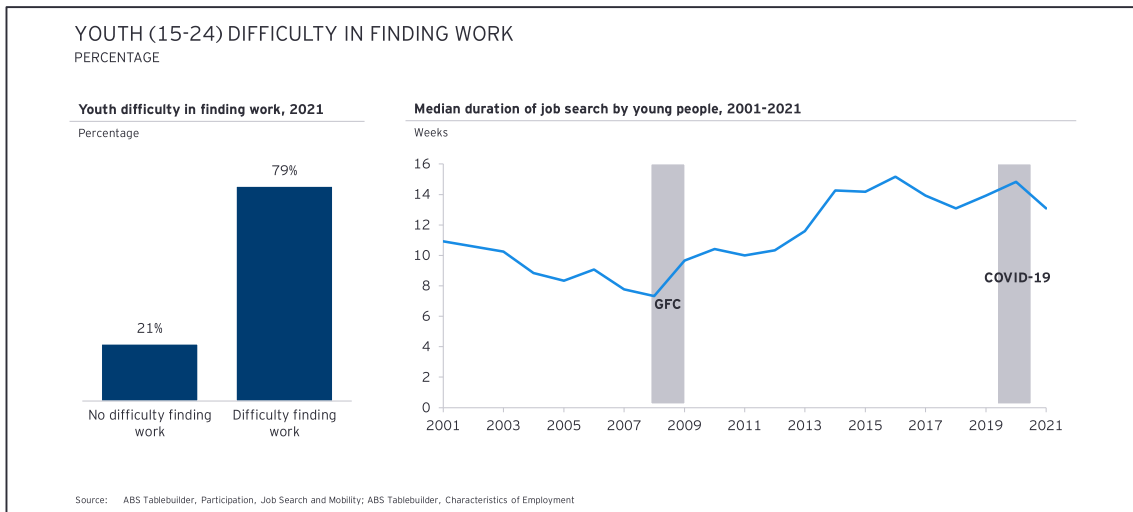
In 2021 it was taking young people 1.5 to 2 times longer to find work than before the GFC.⁶

⁴ ABS, Labour Force

⁵ ABS, Labour Force

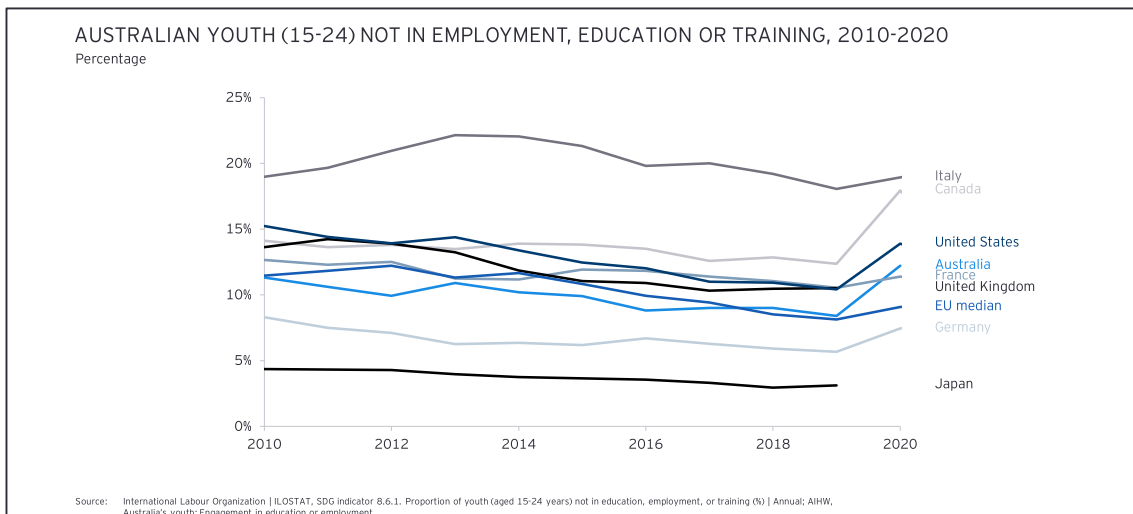
⁶ ABS Tablebuilder, Participation, Job Search and Mobility; ABS Tablebuilder, Characteristics of Employment

Figure 2: Median duration of job search by young people, 2001-2021



Of even more concern is the proportion of young Australians who are not in employment, education or training – which rose from 8.8% in 2016 to 12% in 2020.

Figure 3: Australian youth (15-24) Not in Employment, Education or Training, 2010-2020



Young people may have difficulties in the labour market because of transitory life periods they are going through, their limited or lack of professional experience or because they face other barriers to participation (for e.g. living with disability or long term complex health conditions, experiencing structural racism or discrimination, access to secure housing, transportation costs, or caring responsibilities). Around half of young people surveyed in the most recent Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia Survey (HILDA) refer to a lack of skills, education and experience, competition and distance as their main challenges in securing a job.

Youth unemployment and inactivity can have long term adverse effects, such as increased risk of future unemployment, reduced levels of future earnings, loss of human capital and intergenerational transmission of poverty. These translate into individual hardship, but also create direct and indirect costs for society at large. They can also add to regional inequalities,

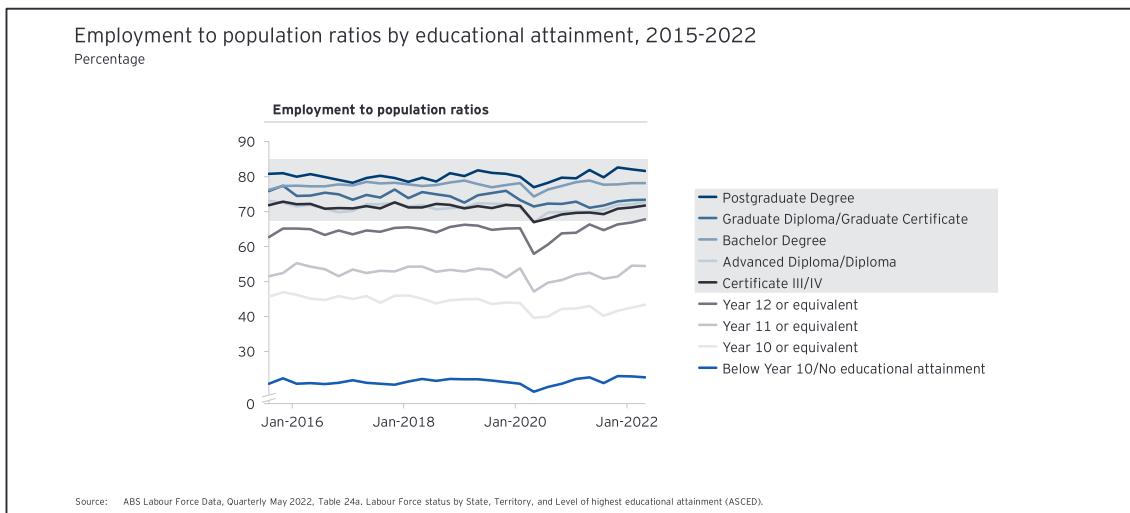
with young people unable to find secure work leaving regional or remote areas to try and find opportunities elsewhere.

For those youth who do find a job, their employment has been increasingly precarious. Between 2017-19, over 40% of young new entrants to the labour market who had left full time education in the last year were employed on a casual basis.⁷ The proportion of 15-24 year-olds who were underemployed was 15%.⁸

HILDA survey measures of subjective wellbeing highlight the negative effect of casual employment on overall life satisfaction, job security, employment satisfaction and financial wellbeing. Casual and insecure work makes it that much harder to buy a house, accumulate savings or progress in a chosen career. There is also a significant risk of being trapped in insecure work. The percentage of casual employees transitioning to permanent employment within 5 years has been falling since 2001 to around 38%.⁹

The positive trend has been the increase in young people participating in full-time education. This had grown from 31.9% in 1988 to 53.1% in 2020. People with post-school qualifications are more resilient to labour market shocks, while people with low education and skill levels are less likely to be employed even as labour markets tighten.

Figure 4: Employment to population ratios by educational attainment, 2015-2022



Australia’s future workforce will need to be able to easily upskill and reskill as job roles change. The quality of early work experiences matter in building and embedding the social and technical skills necessary to be adaptable, think critically, solve problems, communicate effectively and perform non-routine cognitive tasks.

COVID-19 further entrenched youth employment inequality

Young Australians have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Education, training and work-based learning have been disrupted. Many young people have faced even greater barriers

⁷ HILDA Statistical Report, 2021

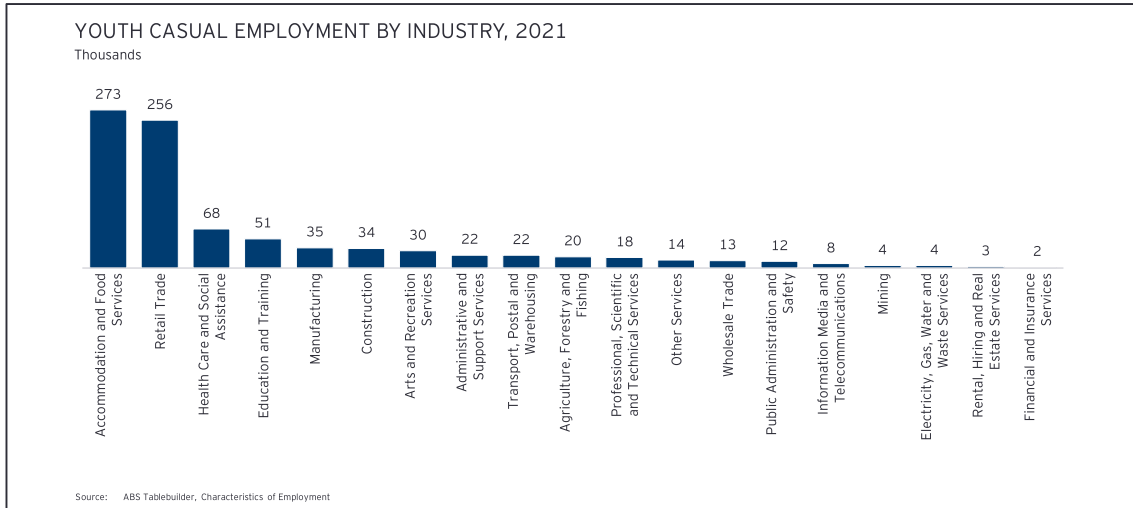
⁸ ABS Labour Force

⁹ HILDA Statistical Report, 2021

to entering the labour market. And the quality of available employment opportunities has deteriorated.

The sectors that are the largest employers of young Australians - including accommodation and food services and retail services have been hit by lower aggregate demand. This has made young Australians disproportionately vulnerable to declines in working hours, incomes and jobs.

Figure 4: Youth casual employment by industry, 2021



This disproportionate effect on employment, underemployment, NEET and inactivity is affecting young people’s mental health and well-being and risks their long-term employment and career trajectories.

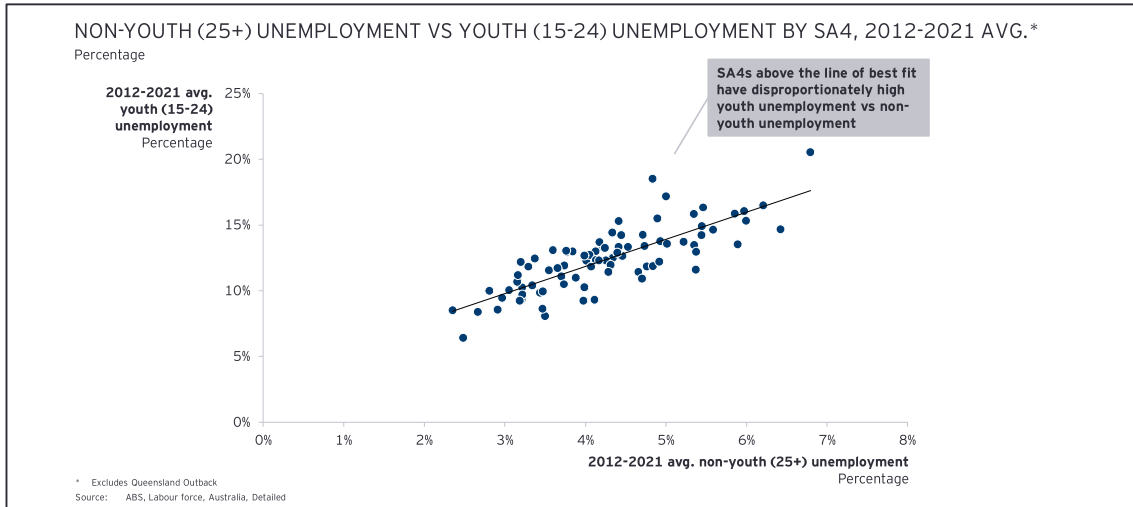
Ongoing developments such as automation and digitalisation of production and services will continue to reshape the world of work. Young people are at higher risk than other to lose their jobs to automation, as entry-level jobs tend to have a greater proportion of automatable tasks. At the same time, digital technologies create new jobs and increase the demand for skills needed for the digital transformation in many sectors of the economy.

Without deliberate intervention, these shifts and the opening of international borders and resumption of skilled migration are likely to reinforce the long-term decline in the quantity and quality of jobs available to young Australians.

Youth employment outcomes have been persistently worse in some parts of Australia

The unemployment rate for those under 25 is higher throughout Australia than for those over 25. There are significant variations, with some regions experiencing disproportionately high youth unemployment rates. This includes both metropolitan hotspots and parts of regional Australia.

Figure 5: Non-Youth (25+) unemployment versus youth (15-24) unemployment by SA4, 2012-2021 AVG.*



Lessons from the EU

The European Youth Guarantee is designed to reduce unemployment and inactivity amongst young people by preparing them better for the labour market

In 2013 the European Union introduced a youth guarantee to arrest similar trends in youth unemployment, under-employment and inactivity.

The guarantee required every young person (aged 15-24) in Europe to receive a good quality offer of employment, further education or an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed.

When the youth guarantee was agreed, the youth unemployment rate (among those aged 15-24) was 24.4% in the EU on average, with over 50% in some member states. In addition to youth being unemployed, 6.5 million young people were not in employment, education or training.

The guarantee was accompanied by significant investment. Between 2014 and 2020, the European Union's Youth Employment Initiative and European Social Fund contributed almost 9 billion euros to growing and improving youth employment across the whole European Union.¹⁰ This investment was directed towards subsidised training and employment, tools to support adaptation and implementation by member states and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Prior to COVID-19, an improving macroeconomic context contributed to improved youth employment outcomes across Europe. Evidence suggests that the youth guarantee, coupled with dedicated funding, has had a major transformative effect on employment services, education systems and the quantity and quality of available jobs.

Between 2014 and 2017, around 3.5 million young people received a youth guarantee offer. Around two-thirds of participants accepted an employment or training offer, with 73% accepting an offer of employment, 9% returning to formal education and around 18% accepting a traineeship or apprenticeship.¹¹

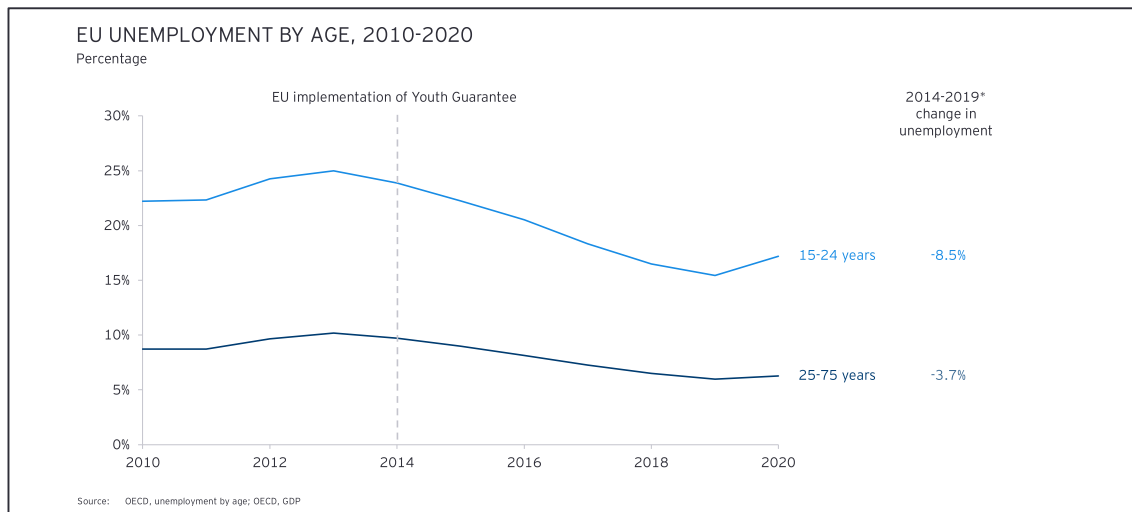
¹⁰ European Commission proposal - A Bridge to Jobs, Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee: 2020

¹¹ Data collection for monitoring of Youth Guarantee Schemes: 2017

While around half of the employment options were fixed term, feedback from participants after the program has been positive that the experience and skills they gained would be helpful in securing another job.¹²

Between 2014 and 2019, the EU managed to significantly close the gap between youth and general unemployment.

Figure 6: EU unemployment by age, 2010-2020



By February 2020 there were approximately 1.7 million fewer young people who were not in employment, education or training (NEETs) across the EU. Youth unemployment had dropped to 14.9% on average compared to its peak of 24.4% in 2013.¹³

The fall in youth unemployment over this period significantly exceeded that of G7 countries, with the reduction in NEETs also exceeding all G7 countries other than the United States (see Figures 7 and 8 below).

¹² Data collection for monitoring of Youth Guarantee Schemes: 2017; Eurostat

¹³ European Commission website: 2022

Figure 7: Youth (15-24) unemployment by country, 2010-2020

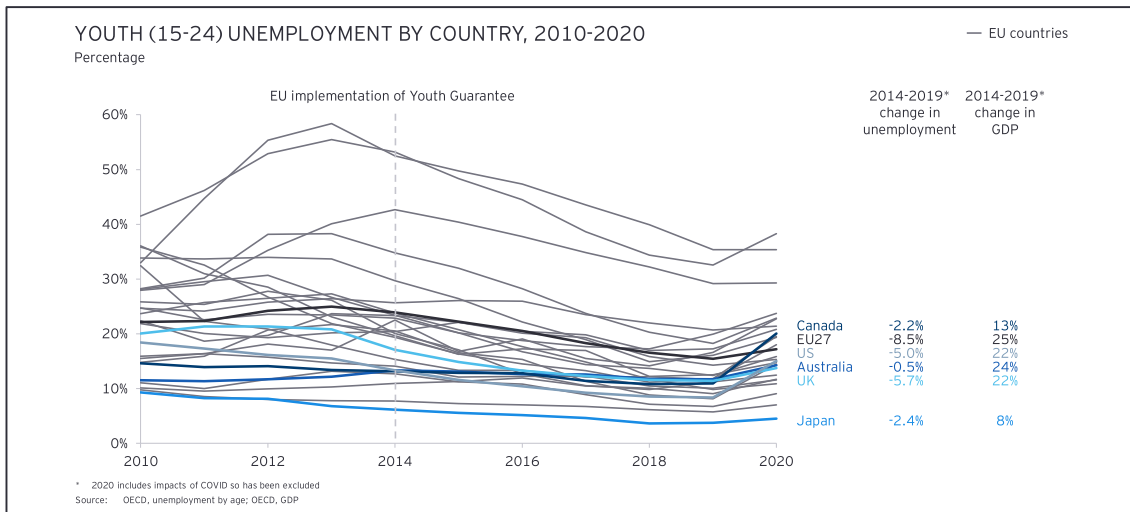
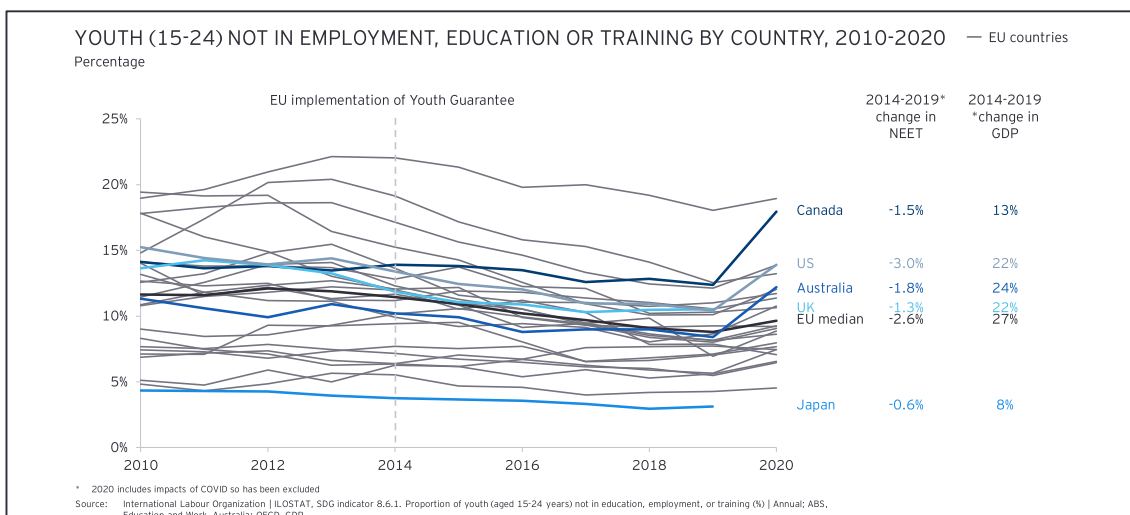


Figure 8: Youth (15-24) not in employment, education or training by country, 2010-2020



While all EU members agreed to implement the youth guarantee, there has been considerable variation in implementation features. Almost all countries rely to some extent on their national public employment service to provide youth guarantee services, while some do so exclusively. Employment Services have improved their reach and service offerings as a result.

Some countries opted for different target timeframes that were shorter or longer than the recommended four months from leaving education or becoming unemployed as well as different age cut offs for eligibility. Not all countries included apprenticeships and traineeships in their youth guarantee offer.

In 2017 the International Labor Office (ILO) identified six key success factors for the youth guarantee¹⁴:

¹⁴ International Labour Office, European Youth Guarantee: A systematic review of its implementation across countries; The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on

- **A tailored approach:** Developing support in line with specific needs of sub-groups, e.g. sociological or psychological support, including through better data sharing, co-ordination and partnerships between employment, education and social services
- **Early intervention:** Support within first few months to mitigate impacts of prolonged unemployment
- **Integration policies:** Combination of education and training, improving school completion, labour market intermediation and labour market policies (direct employment creation, incentives, subsidies)
- **Institutional frameworks:** Modernisation of public employment services (PES), including through outreach strategies to bring people into youth guarantee schemes and a single point of contact helping to meet needs of participants
- **Sufficient resources:** Administrative and operational budgets for programs, and a role for government in sharing the risk to an employer in taking on a young employee

A Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the youth guarantee

In October 2020 EU member states agreed to extend the youth guarantee up to the age of 29. They also agreed to a more specific program model to reflect the changing realities of labour markets and embed a stronger focus on NEETs. The new program model is summarised at Appendix 1.

Member states also agreed to improve data collection and monitoring of youth guarantee schemes to better track the gender and diversity of young people who are being targeted.

The decision to enhance the youth guarantee recognised the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the quantity and quality of job opportunities for young people and continuing levels of inactivity, particularly among youth facing additional barriers to employment and training.

It builds on the 2017 ILO findings to reflect insights on design and implementation risks evident in different member states.

The policy brief recommending adjustments to the youth guarantee notes:

- Gains in employment had not been evenly distributed among EU member states and regions
- Certain groups of the young population continued to be at disproportionate disadvantage (e.g. those with low skills, living in rural areas or remote areas, young people with disabilities, migrant backgrounds or belonging to racial and ethnic minorities)
- European labour markets were being reshaped through automation and digitalisation of production and services, with new risks of young people being trapped in precarious non-standard jobs (such as platform or “gig” work) without adequate social protections
- Young people were also at higher risk than others to lose their jobs to automation, as entry-level jobs tend to have a greater proportion of automatable tasks

The European Commission also noted emerging job opportunities in the transitions towards a more digital and greener economy.

To benefit from these new opportunities, they noted that young people would require the right skills to adapt to evolving job requirements. Alongside digital skills and skills needed for the green transition, soft skills - such as entrepreneurial and career management skills - were identified as priorities.

The Pact for Skills initiative contributes to the quality and relevance of skills development

In November 2020 the EU launched the '*Pact for Skills*' initiative to deliver on ambitions of green and digital transitions and foster collaboration between public and private organisations to improve skills development.

450 organisations have subsequently pledged to upskill and reskill 1.5 million people (youth and adults).

Within 14 distinct industrial eco-systems, individual companies, education and training providers, industrial and industry bodies and government authorities (including employment services) have participated in structured round tables and formed partnerships to advance skills and workforce strategies.

These partnerships are taking concrete actions to:

- improve access to education and training
- make qualifications and certificates more transparent and accepted across borders
- identify the skills needed for the labour market of today and tomorrow
- support local and regional growth strategies (including through green and digital transitions)

Applying a youth guarantee to an Australian context

Previous examples of a jobs and training guarantee

Australian national and state and territory governments have previously implemented versions of a youth guarantee. For example, in 1990 the Australian government implemented an employer training levy, the Training Guarantee scheme, that required Australian enterprises to contribute some of their income to employee training of a government fund for the development of training programs.

During the four years of its operation the guarantee contributed to increases in training effort and assisted in protection of training activity during the recession of the early 1990s. However, it was criticised by small business and was dismantled prior to the completion of a systematic evaluation.

A number of States and Territories have also included social procurement obligations in major project contracts, for example through targets for apprentices and disadvantaged hires.

The impact of these initiatives has been limited by:

- Philosophical views on active labour market interventions by some governments
- A lack of enforcement of social procurement obligations
- Limited data sharing and a lack of a structured approach to collaboration between education, employment and social services

Some industries have invested in building the adaptive capacity of their workforce and providing training support and more secure employment for young people. Over the past 20 years, the dairy industry has invested in more progressive HR capabilities to attract and retain a younger workforce. Defence and health industries have been more consistent in developing educating workplaces with dedicated positions, such as clinical nurse educators, and systematic programs of skills and career development.

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Appendix 1 - European Youth Guarantee - standardised program model

Under a more standardised program model for NEETs, the starting point for delivering the youth guarantee is registration with a youth guarantee provider. The four phases of the program are summarised below. While particularly focused enhancing the program's impact for NEETs, there are features of the program (related to case management, participant preparation and post placement support) that are relevant to all participants.

Mapping	Identify the target group, available services and skill needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping systems to provide understanding of the diversity of NEETS, including those newly affected by COVID-19 but who face lower barriers to labour market entry, as well as long-term NEETS who may belong to vulnerable groups • Mapping the services available for different support needs, while using local skills forecasts (informed by big data labour market intelligence) to identify skills demanded on the labour market, with particular attention to regional labour market specificities and barriers faced by young people living in rural, remote or disadvantaged urban areas
	Enabling prevention through tracking and early warning systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen early warning systems and tracking capabilities to identify those at risk of becoming NEET, while contributing to preventing early leaving from education and training (e.g. through more flexible learning pathways and more work-based learning), in cooperation with the education sector, parents and local communities, and with the involvement of youth policy, social and employment services
Outreach	Raising awareness and targeting communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt modern, youth-friendly and local information channels, using online and face to face opportunities and ensuring the involvement of young people and local youth organisations • Use a recognisable visual style for all communication
	Stepping up outreach to vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the focus on longer-term NEETS (including those with disabilities), in co-operation with partners that are in contact with specific groups of young people

Preparation	Using profiling tools to tailor individualised action plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve profiling and screening tools to match needs and responses, adopting a gender-sensitive approach and a young person's preferences and motivations, barriers and disadvantages, including reasons for being unemployed or inactive • Ensure that Youth Guarantee providers have appropriately trained staff to operate and improve profiling and screening tools and to develop individualised action plans that take into account person-centred needs and responses
	Performing counselling, guidance and mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide person-centred counselling, guidance and mentoring by trained advisors that responds to the needs of the individual concerned and pays due attention to gender bias and other forms of discrimination. Prepare participants for the changing nature of work, through career advice or entrepreneurship support, while adoption one-to-one support, motivational work, advocacy and/or peer support for longer term NEETs • Allow for a more holistic approach to counselling, guidance and mentoring by referring young people to partners (e.g. education and training institutions, social partners, youth organisations) who can help them overcome other barriers to employment
	Enhancing digital skills with preparatory training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess digital skills of all NEETs who register in the youth guarantee by using the European Digital Competence Framework and the available (self) assessment tools, and on the basis of gaps identified, offer all young people a dedicated preparatory training to enhance their digital skills • Use validation arrangements embedded in education and training systems to validate and recognize non-formal, informal learning outcomes, as well as micro-credentials to enable a more modular approach to accumulating learning outcomes
	Assessing, improving and validating other important skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the preparatory phase facilitates upskilling and re-skilling geared towards green skills, entrepreneurial skills and career management skills, using existing competence frameworks, (self) assessment tools and validation tools to help young people seize the opportunities of growing sectors and prepare them for the needs of the changing labour market

Offer	Making employment and start-up incentives work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use targeted and well-designed employment incentives - such as wage subsidies, recruitment bonuses, reduction of social security contributions, tax credits or disability benefits - as start-up incentives to create good-quality opportunities for the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market
	Aligning the offer to existing standards to ensure quality and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align employment offers to the relevant principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, assuring the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training, reasonable duration of probation periods and prohibiting abuse of atypical contracts • Ease young people's way back into education and training by diversifying the continued education offer (with e.g. flexible learning pathways, work-based learning, bridging programs and second change programs) ensuring the validation of non-formal and informal learning • Intensify support to apprenticeships and make sure offers adhere to the minimum standards laid out in the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships • Ensure that traineeship offers adhere to the minimum standards laid out in the Quality Framework for Traineeships
	Provide post-placement support and implementing feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand continued post-placement support to adjust individualised action plans where needed, using the opportunity of post-placement feedback to ensure a quality offer supported skills acquisition, job security and progression pathways

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