



European Youth Forum's Shadow Report on the implementation of the European Youth Pact

What is the European Youth Forum?

Independently established by youth organisations, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) is made up of more than 90 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, which are federations of youth organisations in themselves. It brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe, organised in order to represent their common interests.

Representation, internal democracy, independence, openness and inclusion are among the main principles for the functioning of the European Youth Forum and its Member Organisations.

The European Youth Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in the shaping of Europe and the societies in which they live, and in improving the living conditions of young people as European citizens in today's world.

Foreword

The European Youth Pact represents a key European instrument in order to achieve the elaboration of policies that answer complex needs of young people in the European Union. It is a milestone in the amplification of youth policy at the EU level, even though it presents a number of limitations both in terms of content and context. However, if realised at the national level, it can give tangible results in terms of improving the living conditions of young people in the EU.

The European Youth Forum is presenting this shadow report on the implementation of the European Youth Pact in order to present the perspective of youth organisations at the moment that the EU Member States report on their implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The aim is also to make the YFJ findings public and visible while encouraging the EU Member States to do the same. The European Youth Forum hopes the EU Institutions and Member States will take into account the – sometimes critical – perspective put forward in this report by the YFJ and its Member Organisations, and address the indicated shortcomings and build on the good practices emphasised by some National Youth Councils.

This Shadow Report is the result of the work of several actors at the European level. The YFJ made a preliminary assessment of the youth dimension present in the national reports, as produced by 25 EU Member States within the Lisbon National Report Programmes (LNRP) framework. Furthermore, some of the National Youth Councils that are members of the YFJ commented on the abovementioned analysis and enriched the reflection on the implementation of the elements relevant for youth in the LNRPs.

The message of this shadow report is clear: more needs to be done in order to reach the ambitious objectives of the Lisbon Strategy in what concerns youth and especially the fulfilment of the commitments taken by the EU Member States in the European Youth Pact. Moreover, the YFJ analysis presented in the beginning of this report clearly shows that a number of instruments already exist at the level of the EU and can be put at the service of the implementation of the Pact. To that effect, what is most of all needed is political will.

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I. The YFJ general analysis on the implementation of the European Youth Pact at the EU level

1. Introduction

Since 2001, the framework for cooperation in the youth field improved significantly, notably thanks to the white paper process “a new impetus for youth”; the consecutive launch of the Open Method of Cooperation in the youth field; the adoption by the Council of common objectives in the youth field; and the ensuing decision of the Heads of States and Governments to consider youth as a priority target group within the Lisbon strategy for “growth and jobs” through the adoption of the European Pact for Youth.

Despite progress towards a genuine cross-sector youth policy, European youth policy coordination have yet been unable to significantly improve the situation of youth in society and in employment. To that end, it is indispensable to establish closer links between the actions taken by the youth policy makers as stakeholders - governmental and non-governmental - and the instruments they have at their disposal to progress towards commonly identified objectives.

Whereas this contribution considers the whole spectrum of European youth policies it pays special attention to improving the implementation and monitoring of the European Youth Pact, as this policy process inscribed in the Lisbon strategy for “growth and jobs” offers the highest potential to make progress towards the better “social and professional integration of young people”, which was set as the central theme of work for the Council during the 18 months covering the current Presidency team.

2. Involving all relevant policy processes and instruments is key to a successful European Youth Pact implementation strategy

The realization of the European youth Pact’s objectives calls for the involvement of a series of processes and policy instruments both at European and national levels.

While aiming to achieve the better integration of young people in employment and in society; to adapt education to the needs of a knowledge-based economy; and to facilitate the reconciliation of young people’s work and family life, the European Youth Pact implementation relies on a wide range of:

- Processes: The Lisbon strategy on “growth and jobs”; the Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion and Social Protection; the Education & Training 2010 Work Programme; the Open Method of Coordination on Youth
- Programmes and Funds: PROGRESS; the European Social Fund; 7th Research Framework Programme; Life Long Learning; Youth in Action.
- Policies and legislations: The relevant directives in the field of employment - working time; protection of young people at work; part-time work; fixed-term work; the relevant communications, studies and reports published by the European Commission in the fields of education, youth employment and social inclusion; the relevant Council resolutions addressing the situation of youth in education, in employment and their role as active citizens.
- Other international institutions’ related initiatives: The United Nations (UN), International Labour Office (ILO) and World Bank (WB) Youth Employment Network; the ILO’s Youth Employment Programme; the ILO decent work agenda; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Council of Europe Revised European Social Charter; The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Education Outlooks: the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Education for All Monitoring Report

3. Establishing a new working method to achieve the Lisbon strategy’s objectives on youth

The future capacity of the European youth policy to deliver outcomes for young people largely depends on the development of a new working method aiming to improve the monitoring of the implementation of youth policy from all levels of decision-making, notably through better cooperation and accountability of youth policy makers.

It is not enough for the Council of Ministers of Youth to make periodic statements on integrating policies or sporadic recommendations to other Council formations. Its role should be, together with the Informal Forum of Youth Ministers and Youth Organizations, to continually assess how youth policies are being implemented and on the basis of its assessment, to make decisions on how to achieve better outcomes. In order to play its full role, the Council of Ministers of Youth should be regularly informed on the

implementation of the European Youth Pact at both national and regional levels.

At the national level, the Commission's announced efforts to increase the monitoring of youth employment in the Member States and promote best practice exchange are to be welcome. In addition, the Commission's invitation to the Member States to give more attention to youth in the Lisbon National Reform Programmes as well as to establish flexicurity strategies, which include a specific focus on youth employment objectives are also positive developments enabling better monitoring of implementation.

At the regional level, the European Social Fund (ESF) and other relevant structural funds have a major role to play to improve young people's transitions between education and work and promote better conditions for youth entrepreneurship, which was identified as one of the two main priorities of the Portuguese Presidency programme in the area of youth and which would fall under the context of the European Year for Creativity and Innovation in 2009 which was proposed by the European Commission. Regional implementation strategies on the European Youth Pact and new reporting mechanisms on the use of ESF resources can also help exchanging good practices at the European level and therefore build future youth policies on what has been proven to succeed.

4. Adopting a strategic approach to the European Youth Pact implementation

Whereas the Lisbon Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs are currently being revised by the European Council the future success of the European Youth Pact indeed relies on an improved cooperation of policy makers and other relevant stakeholders from all levels at both political and technical levels.

At the political level, more clarity is needed on who takes the responsibility of coordinating the implementation of the European Youth Pact. This applies both at the European and national levels. Leadership, transparency and accountability are keywords to improve the cooperation of actors and therefore achieve greater outcomes at the grass-roots level. Inter-institutional Forums on the European Youth Pact implementation gathering the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, youth organizations and the social partners should be convened every third year to feed into the newly established EU report on youth. In addition, the European Youth Forum would very much welcome that a joint Council on Education and Employment could be set up in order to address this issue.

In order to ensure the ownership and integration of civil society in the implementation of the European Youth Pact , youth organizations should be continuously associated, through the structured dialogue in the youth field, to the work of the European institutions and of the Member States related to the European Youth Pact implementation, from the setting of the agenda to the monitoring of the implementation of policies. The informal Forums and the meetings of the Directors General for Youth have provided a good step to this end.

For the structured dialogue in the youth field to become serious tool for participation of civil society and policy development, the European Youth Forum renews its call for more commitment from the EU institutions and the Member States in making such dialogue success. *The European Youth Forum welcomes the recent proposal of the European Economic and Social Committee to convene a dialogue meeting gathering all relevant Directorates-General of the Commission, representatives of the Council and European Parliament and youth civil society to lay down a joint roadmap on how to address youth issues in cross-sectoral manner.*¹ The implementation of the European Youth Pact could be well followed through such dialogue meeting.

At the technical level, an effective monitoring of the European Youth Pact implementation requires the mobilization of the various policy processes identified earlier in this document. At the national level, the Lisbon National Reform Programmes, the bi-annual National Reports on progress under the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme and the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion and Social Protection should all include youth specific measures under the Youth Pact heading. The Council's Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee would then give yearly reports on the European Youth Pact implementation to the relevant formations of the Council. Based on this work, the Lisbon Progress Report, the Joint Employment Report, the Joint Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection and the Joint Interim Report on progress under the Education & Training 2010 Work Programme would all take stock of the work done at the national level to implement the Pact. Lastly, in order to optimize the Youth Pact implementation and avoid possible duplications and possible insufficient use of resources an inter-agency coordination between the relevant Community Programmes' managements would usefully be set up.

Additionally, if the Lisbon Treaty is adopted it will be introduced the Council of Ministers for General Affairs. The central goal of this new Council would be to

¹ See Opinion of the EESC on Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society SOC/289 - CESE 76/2008, point 6.6.

develop and coordinate national and European level policies together. Considering the cross-sectoral nature of the European Youth Pact and the need to involve various compositions of the Council in its follow-up and implementation the *European Youth Forum considers that the European Youth Pact should be discussed regularly, e.g. at the occasion of the publication of the Commission's three-yearly Youth Report, in the Council of Ministers for General Affairs and not only in the Education, Youth and Culture Council formation.* The General Affairs Council could give the necessary political impetus for the other relevant Council formations to discuss the Pact. The Education, Youth and Culture Council should continue in providing the key sectoral expert input to the follow-up of the Pact and subsequently the governance of the Lisbon process in the youth field.

II. Assessment of the 25 Lisbon National Reform Programmes 2006

France

The structure of the French LNRP attempts to combine national priorities with the objectives fixed in common at the European level in the framework of the Lisbon strategy. The Lisbon Guidelines are not used as a reference framework.

The French LNRP is presented as being the outcome of a broad public debate, having involved the French Parliament, the social partners and the civil society at large. The participation of civil society organizations has mainly been achieved through the French Economic and Social Committee. When it comes to youth issues, the French Economic and Social Committee developed a series of workshops throughout 2006 and further elaborated the final contribution of youth organizations to the French LNRP through organizing the first “*assises de la jeunesse*” in the end of September 2006. Youth organizations were mainly represented through the French Conseil National de la Jeunesse (CNAJEP was not directly mentioned but certainly took part as 65 organised youth were also invited to attend).

A series of instruments have been developed to promote youth employment and social inclusion, for instance through the promotion of apprenticeships (374000 apprentices in France in 2006), the development of a series of employment contracts (Contrat d’Insertion dans la Vie Sociale (CIVIS); “*contrats de professionnalisation*”; “*contrat jeune en entreprise*”; and other Public Employment Services’ operations aiming to meet the needs of marginalized youth (long-term unemployed and young people from deprived areas (suburbs). The promotion of youth entrepreneurship is also included through the programme “*envie d’agir*” and the national competition “*initiatives jeunes*”.

The French LNRP also reports on actions to improve the outputs of education and training systems, along the “*Education and Training 2010*” OMC, notably through the promotion of basic knowledge, the fight against early school leaving, the development of Life Long Learning and adult trainings as well as the “*validation des acquis de l’expérience*”.

Although France is one of the Pact’s promoters, the European Youth Pact is only mentioned once in the French LNRP. Lacking a strategic approach under the Youth Pact heading, the Commission nevertheless assessed the youth coverage of the French LNRP very positively as the promotion of youth employment has been introduced as one of the 5 governmental priorities within the “*bataille pour l’emploi*”.

According to the French LNRP, early school leaving would represent 6% (European target: 10%) of a generation and 82% (European target: 85%) of French young people are said to have achieved secondary education. Youth unemployment is not quantified in the French LNRP but long-term youth unemployment (more than one year) is said to concern 14% of the young unemployed (36% for the 25-64) with a decrease of 9.7% in 2006. The “new start” target is not referred to in the French LNRP although it reports on actions aiming to accompany young unemployed people to find a job.

Sweden

The structure of the Swedish LNRP corresponds to the Lisbon Guidelines and is well in line with the objectives of the European Employment Strategy. Separate guidelines describe in more details the various measures adopted in Sweden to achieve the overarching objectives in line with the priorities at EU level.

The preparation of the Swedish LNRP has involved the Swedish Parliament, most ministries in the Government Offices, the social partners as well as organizations and interest groups in the civil society. Young people and youth organizations were not explicitly involved in the process. No governmental actor was given the responsibility to coordinate the implementation of the Youth Pact, although the main responsibility for the Reform Programme lay within the Prime Minister’s Office.

LSU (National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations):

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) has not been involved in the process of preparing the LNRP. In 2005 there was a dialogue seminar between youth and the youth-minister but since there has been no consultation between the youth organisations and the ministry that LSU is aware of. The youth unit at the integration ministry is the governmental body in charge of the implementation of the youth pact together with the National board of youth affairs. The National Board of youth affairs has had the task of suggesting how the municipalities in Sweden should work with implementing the youth pact on a local level and in this process LSU has been involved.

Various measures to increase the employment rate of young people have been developed. These include lower social security contributions for young people between 19-24; the introduction of the ‘New start jobs’; and a job guarantee for young people under 25, which can include training or internships. In addition to this, young people will be offered a personal coach and an individual action plan within 30 days of being registered as unemployed. In 2005 and 2006 the Swedish Labour Market Committee (AMS) has concluded a project ‘On Track for a Job’ in

cooperation with 9 folk high schools. The target group is young unemployed people aged 20-29. The courses include internships, studies and other individual measures. While safeguarding the Swedish model of labour legislation and employment security, the Government wants to increase the scope for fixed-term contracts and seasonal contracts, to facilitate young people's entering into the labour market.

LSU:

The job guarantee that came in place during 2007 replaced a series of other programmes for young people and the labour market. The old programmes have not proven to be successful but it is unclear what the difference will be with this new reform. The social security assuring students support after graduating for some period while looking for their first job has been withdrawn and is no longer in place. LSU has not been involved in these processes but we participated in a side event in the parliament on youth employment which was a part of its preparatory process leading to the job guarantee. "On track for a job" is unknown for LSU.

It is already possible to hire people on fixed term contracts and seasonal contracts and it is unclear if the reforms planned by the government to increase the scope of this will facilitate young people entering the labour market or if this will increase the age when young people settle on the job market and through this be counter productive to the aim of facilitating the transition from youth to adulthood. Also the governmental support to municipalities of giving young people in secondary schools a job during summer vacation has been withdrawn.

The Swedish LNRP also reports on actions to improve the quality of education systems, notably through increased resources, more frequent quality controls, the improvement of teachers' competence, adult opportunities for lifelong learning, better coordination between schools and the business and various support measures for those in need of extra support. Social cohesion was not addressed but would be looked at during the year.

LSU:

There have been many reforms on the education system, aiming to improve the quality and the results. There is, however, a wide debate on these reforms, and they are far from a result of consensus. Reforms to improve the handling disorder and disciplinary problems among students are discussed from the perspective of protection against intrusions on personal integrity.

We have no outspoken view on them but we can note that the possibility of having a majority of pupils in the school board has been abolished and the possibility of improving your results in secondary school after graduation through extra studies has decreased fundamentally. The government mention, specially the importance of the teachers' professional freedom and parents' freedom of choice. Here we miss the importance of students and pupils participation and influence in schools.

As one of the Pact's promoters, the Swedish LNRP includes a separate section on the Youth Pact. Measures for young people are being taken in areas such as: education, labour market, social inclusion and young people's participation. In addition measures are being implemented to improve young men and women's opportunities to combine working life with private and family life. Measures are also being implemented to make it easier for young people's establishment in the housing market and for their health and safety. The role of civil society in these processes is not mentioned. Information on how these measures will be implemented is not provided, although Sweden specifies in which Guidelines measures linked to the Pact can be found.

LSU:

Not to say that this hasn't been done; while looking through the guideline measures referred to in the separate section on the youth pact we note that it is difficult to link some of the measures mentioned to the content in the LNRP.

According to the Swedish LNRP, early school leaving represents 8,6 % (European target 10 %). The youth education attainment is 87,8 % (European target: 85 %). Youth unemployment is currently at 22,6 %. Sweden reaches the 'new start' target that every unemployed young person is offered a new start within 6 months. In 2005 5,1 % of young men and 3,7 per cent of young women had not received a new start.

LSU:

The early school leaving has the last year increased to 12 % and Sweden is by that over the European target. It is also an increase with more than 50% since the 1990s. The Youth unemployment rate has decreased the last years, in some part due to the positive business cycle and to some part due to some of the reforms of the Swedish Government. 29 000 young people got a job during 2007. The age when young people settle on the job market is at 27 and it's an increase from 22 years, 15 years ago. 43% of the young people who register themselves at the public employment service are unregistered within 100 days. 42% of those are registered again within another 100 days. According to the National coordinator for young people to the labour market the most common reason for this is that young people get tired of the bureaucratic system. The same agency have published statistics showing that when a person turns 29 years old he or she has been registered in average five times at the public employment service and during a total time of three years.

Spain

The structure of the Spanish LNRP attempts to combine national priorities with the objectives fixed in common at the European level in the framework of the

Lisbon strategy. The report consists of the main reforms contained in the seven Pillars² making up Spain's LNRP. The Lisbon Guidelines are not used as a reference framework, although details of all the measures taken (or in progress) corresponding to the guidelines can be found in an *appendix*.

The report was drafted by a Permanent Lisbon Unit (under the coordination of the Spanish Prime Minister's Economic Office), and a network of Ministerial Interlocutors comprising Representatives of 11 departments. It also benefited from contributions by the Regional Governments and the social partners, who have participated in the drafting and preparatory meetings. The involvement of young people in this process was not mentioned.

The goal of increasing employment opportunities is reflected through measures agreed in the framework of the Social Dialogue. These include a new subsidy for hiring young workers on permanent contracts, the promotion of occupational professional training, the increase of training opportunities in EU Member States. There is also a commitment that registered job seekers will receive an offer of orientation, training or work within at most 6 months, which is said to be implemented for young people in 2007. The aim is to reduce the youth unemployment rate into line with the EU-25 average.

The Government implemented a number of measures, designed for people aged 18-35, to improve the quality of education and training systems, for instance through ensuring equitable access to education, the learning of foreign languages (mainly English), the fight against failure and early school leaving, initiatives to improve teachers' training and the promotion of life-long training for all citizens. An increase in the number of grants and the creation of a student loan programme will enable more young people to obtain post-graduate education.

Although Spain is one of the Pact's promoters, the European Youth Pact is only mentioned once in the Spanish LNRP. It is, however, treated as a separate header in the annex: 'Measures to increase employment of young people in response to the demands of the European Youth Pact' which covers the measures taken (see above) corresponding to Lisbon guidelines 17 and 18.

According to the Spanish LNRP, the early school leaving rate is 30,8 % (European target 10 %). The youth education attainment is 61,3 % (European target: 85 %). The youth unemployment rate is 19,7 % which is very close to the NRP target for 2010 (18,6 %), but still being one of Europe's highest. No latest figures regarding the attainment of the 6 month target are provided.

² 1 - 'Reinforcing Macro economic and Budget Stability', 2 - 'Infrastructure', 3 - 'Increasing and enhancing Human Capital', 4 - 'R&D and Innovation Strategy', 5 - 'More Competition, Better Regulation, Efficiency of the Public administrations, and Competitiveness', 6 - 'The Labour Market and Social Dialogue', 7 - 'Entrepreneurship Programme'.

Germany

The essence of the reform policies seems to be fully in line with the Lisbon Guidelines, although these are not used as an overall framework. The annex, listing all the measures and their implementation status, does however indicate which Lisbon Guidelines they correspond to.

The report was prepared under the guidance of the Federal Government, with the federal states involved in the preparation. The industry associations, trade unions and local government associations received the report before it was submitted to the European Commission. No specific involvement of young people, or civil society for that matter, was mentioned in the drafting of the report.

DNK (National Council of German Youth Organisations):

The German National Committee for International Youth Work (DNK), representing the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR), the Council of Political Youth Organizations (RPJ) and the German Sports Youth (DSJ), regrets that it did not have the opportunity to contribute to Germany's implementation and progress report 2007 before it was submitted to the European Commission.

To improve the situation of young people on the labour market, special Skills Agencies (*Kompetenzagenturen*) are set up to assist disadvantaged young people. The "Ausbildungspakt" (2004 - 2010) aims to provide young people more in-house training places. In line with the Introductory Training for Youths (EQJ) programme, aimed at promoting the access to apprenticeships, the industry has undertaken to create 30 000 new training places and 25 000 skill-building and integration placements per year. The Jobstarter Programme (2005-2010) is set up to create additional apprenticeship opportunities at a regional level. Young job seekers in need are given a personal adviser to support them in gaining training or work, alongside extensive assistance with finding accommodation and managing debts or drug addiction. The Act on Part-Time Work and Fixed-Term Contracts also aims to contribute to more employment opportunities.

DNK:

In spite of the positive economic development in 2007 and the Job-starter Programme ("Ausbildungspakt") there were still not enough apprenticeship places for all applicants. There are still too many young people in "waiting lines" who don't find an apprenticeship place right after school, who might participate in one or the other qualification programmes but who will reapply the next year in order to obtain an apprenticeship place. Evaluations of the Introductory Training (EQJ) programme show that it does hardly reach any disadvantaged young people. Instead youngsters who have a good education and are ready to

start a real apprenticeship participate in EQJ and have to complete a cost-saving probationary year. Considering these experiences more and different actions need to be taken to integrate young people into vocational education and the labor market: The bonus system proposed by the federal government in January 2008 is one step in the right direction - it foresees to sponsor apprenticeship places for those applicants who did not succeed finding a training opportunity within the dual vocational education system during their first year of applications. Further steps need to follow in order to provide all young people who are willing to start their career with an apprenticeship with the opportunity to do so. Only then the Youth Pact's aim that employers and businesses display their social responsibility in the area of vocational integration of young people can be achieved.

A lot of the measures taken so far in order to improve the integration of very disadvantaged young people are positive - at least for those disadvantaged young people who are lucky enough to get the opportunity to participate, e. g. concerning the Skill Agency who live in an area where there is a Skills Agency and who are "discovered" by case managers from the Skill Agency. Structures to give extremely disadvantaged young people a chance have to be improved all over Germany.

DNK regrets that youth organizations are not systematically included on the different political levels in the implementation of the Youth Pact concerning employment, integration and social advancement.

As part of Germany's active promotion of the knowledge society and qualification level of the German workforce, several measures are being introduced to enhance the educational sector: the improvement of the vocational training, with specific pre-work measures for the transition from school to training, as well as the facilitation of the transfer between different segments of the educational sector. The federal 'Second Chance for School Dropouts' programme aims to fight early school leaving. Several projects for mobile youth work and political youth education (with the aim of acquisition of social skills and vocational integration of youth) will be implemented alongside the establishment of regional youth agencies (for the promotion of youth projects). In line with the planned 2020 Higher Education Pact, different measures aimed at making higher education more attractive and ensuring the supply of study places will be implemented.

DNK:

DNK welcomes the federal programme "Second Chance for School Dropouts" but asks not only for selective but for country-wide engagement against early school leaving.

To ensure that young people's knowledge matches the needs of a knowledge-based economy, efforts taken to make higher education more attractive with a 2020 Higher Education Pact will be more effective if they are accompanied by the further extension of scholarship programs.

The mobility projects provide great opportunities for the participants but their scope still has to be enlarged and their social selectivity needs to be decreased.

The federal programme for all-day schools is an important step towards the reconciliation of family and working life, although it has existed before the creation of the Youth Pact.

DNK regrets that youth organizations (and as far as high-school education is concerned school student representatives or as far as university education is concerned student representatives) are not systematically included on the different political levels in the implementation of the Youth Pact concerning education, training and mobility.

Although Germany is one of the Pact's promoters, the European Youth Pact is only mentioned once in the German LNRP. There is no special section on the Youth Pact. The German LNRP does however state that the cross-links between the political measures in the relevant fields (training, mobility, employment and social integration) have been strengthened and that young people and youth organisations are involved in many ways in the implementation of the Pact. However, it doesn't specify further in which ways youth are involved.

According to the German LNRP, youth unemployment would represent 15 %. 71 % of German young people are said to have achieved secondary education (European target: 85 %). The Federal Government is implementing a wide range of measures to ensure that no young person remain unemployed for more than three months, thus already exceeding the European target of 6 months. The early school leaving is not quantified in the German LNRP.

DNK:

As a cross-sectorial initiative the European Youth Pact has the potential to tackle the challenges that young people in Europe (including Germany) are facing today. From DNK's point of view a number of good policies have been developed which contribute to the implementation of the European Youth Pact

in Germany. Several measures cited in Germany's progress report 2007 to fulfil the aims of the European Youth Pact have existed already before the European Youth Pact was created (e. g. the federal programme promoting all-day schools, the Voluntary Social or Ecological year).

However, the measures so far taken to implement the European Youth Pact are not enough reach its aims and to meet the challenges young people in Germany are confronted with today. In the German political debate about those policies the European Youth Pact does not play any role. For young people in Germany it therefor remains intransparent what European youth policy has to do with their everyday lives. There is no systematic consultation of youth organizations on the implementation of the European Youth Pact in Germany yet.

Lithuania

The Lisbon Guidelines are not used as a reference framework, although details of all the measures taken (or in progress) corresponding to the guidelines can be found in the appendix.

LIJOT (National Council of Lithuanian Youth Organisations):

The structure of the LNRP in comparison to the Lisbon Guidelines 2005-2008, according to LIJOT is correct.

The drafting of the Lithuanian LNRP is said to have taken place with wide involvement of social and economic partners, the academic world, representatives of public authorities and politicians. To inform the public about the implementation and monitoring process, regional support centers have been set up. At this level close links are said to be maintained with local social and economic partners. The involvement of young people is not mentioned at all.

LIJOT:

The way in which the Member States have involved the civil society including youth organizations in the drafting of the LNRP is correct. LIJOT is apprehensive that youth NGO's are not mentioned as partners and stakeholders.

Measures to increase opportunities for the employment of youth are focused around the promotion of business capabilities of the youth. A National Youth Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme is planned and under development. The measures will cover education and training at school, non-governmental youth organisations, awareness-raising and financial support to young people starting their own business. A research project "Improvement of the Opportunities for

the Establishment of Youth in the Labour Market of Lithuania” will assess the impact of cooperation between public and non-governmental youth organisations on the ability of young people to establish themselves in the labour market. Within the framework of non-formal education programmes, consulting services will introduce young and unemployed people to different professions. Apprenticeship is being introduced as a new form of vocational training.

LIJOT:

The measures of the Member States in the field of youth employment are correct. LiJOT does not see cooperation between governmental bodies and NGOs.

To improve the quality of education systems, the implementation of a “Lifelong Learning Strategy” is continued. Measures include the promotion of vocational training, improved conformity of education and training to market needs and increased accessibility and quality of different education systems. More attention is being paid to education of children from migrant families and minorities. Early school leavers are one of the three target groups in the Project “Improved Youth Employment Development Society”, prepared and implemented by the Lithuanian Youth Organisations Council (LiJOT). The project aims to help socially excluded youth to reintegrate into the labour market and society, through the assistance of youth NGOs and youth labour centres. The project is financed through the EC EQUAL initiative. In the framework of the Special Program of the European Social Fund, five institutions were supported in their efforts to introduce mechanisms reducing drop-outs from the consecutive learning system.

LIJOT:

The measures of the Member States in the field of education are correct. The name of LiJOT is Lithuanian Youth Council, not the Lithuanian Youth Organizations Council. The program “Improved Youth Employment Development Society” is almost finished. LiJOT is going to offer the program to the Government.

The European Youth Pact is not mentioned at all in the Lithuanian LNRP. Youth issues are being treated separately and lacking a strategic approach.

LIJOT:

The way in which Youth pact is presented in the LNRPs is correct. LiJOT is not satisfied with present situation.

In spite of all the focus of school drop outs, the early school leaving rate is not quantified in the Lithuanian LNRP. Neither was the youth education attainment. The unemployment level of youth in 2006 is reported to have diminished to 9.4% (in second quarter of 2005 it was 16.5%). The “new start” target was not referred to in the Lithuanian LNRP.

LIJOT:

The latest figures about early school leaving, educational attainment and youth unemployment, as introduced in the LNRPs 2006 are correct.

Poland

The Polish LNRP combines national priorities with the Lisbon Guidelines. The Lisbon Guidelines are not used as a reference framework. When specific references are made they are not very elaborate and they often lack details. The Commission assessed the progress in implementing Poland's NRP as limited, and mentioned the implementation of employment reforms as insufficient, especially regarding older persons and youth.

The Government claims it has involved social and business partners in the process of preparing the NRP, mainly through conferences and internet-based consultations. The Polish NRP and materials concerning the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy are available at a web-site, where comments and opinions of the partners can be directly submitted. The involvement of young people in the drafting and implementation is not mentioned at all.

The Polish LNRP reports on various services and instruments for activating young unemployed people. These include Individual Action Plans, activation classes, training in job-search skills, job placements and professional development, general and vocational training and counselling, subsidised employment as well as increased employment flexibility through reduction of labour costs and diversification of employment forms. County labour offices grant funds for starting one's own business, and give a bursary for young people continuing their education. Co-operation between public employment services and schools and youth organisations is said to be developed. The Government undertakes supporting measures to promote entrepreneurship and knowledge of economic processes among pupils and students, including promotion of micro-enterprises run by young people.

There are plans for adopting and (during 2007-2008) implementing a supra-sectoral Lifelong Learning Strategy. However, this was, at the time of writing, still very much at the conceptual stage. As regards the university level, special measures are planned to develop skills and competencies of students, for instance through including practical training periods. On education in general,

the Polish LNRP only states that education and training system will be adapted in response to new competence requirements, that the quality of the educational offer will be assessed and improved, but without much concrete suggestions on the matter.

The European Youth Pact is not mentioned at all in the Polish LNRP. Youth issues are being treated separately and lacking a strategic approach.

The educational attainment of young people (aged 20-24) is reported to be 90.0 % in 2005 (European target: 85 %). The early school leaving rate is not quantified in the Polish LNRP. The youth unemployment rate in 2005 is reported to be 37,8 % (compared to the total unemployment of 17,7 % the same year). The "new start" target is not referred to in the Polish LNRP.

Portugal

The essence of the reform policies seems to be in line with the Lisbon Guidelines, although these are not used as a framework. References to the Lisbon Guidelines are only made occasionally. Most reforms consists of sectoral programmes of a transversal nature.

The civil society is said to have been extensively involved in carrying out the reform programme. In addition to the participation of the social partners, evaluation and supervision meetings have been carried out with several members of the Standing Committee for Social Dialogue, the Plenary of the Economic and Social Council. A further 300 hearings and explanatory sessions were held at universities, companies, municipalities and associations. The involvement of young people in this process was not mentioned, but it can be assumed that young people were reached at some of the hearings.

To improve the situation of young people on the labour market, special programs have been launched. The Intervention Programme for Young Unemployed between the ages of 15 and 22 years, focuses on those who do not have the 12th school year, or who are integrated in dual certification training courses. In 2005, this Programme covered about 51,000 young people. The Socio-Professional Intervention Programme for Young People aged between 23 and 30 years reached about 40,000. The Professional Work Placement Measure covered about 20,000 young people. Specific actions in the field of Vocational Training of the Active Workforce are said to target young unemployed. No special incentives for employers to hire young people were mentioned. Key commitments are said to have been undertaken in a framework of flexicurity, based on the development of a strong climate of social dialogue. Key objectives include the modernisation of the labour relations system, the reduction of the segmentation of the labour

market, the encouragement of innovative and adaptable ways to organise and modernise work; and the boosting of workers' continuing training.

A number of measures have been launched targeting students in the various levels of the formal education system. Their aims range from generalising the supply of pre-schools; the valorisation of Basic Education; to diversifying offers in secondary schooling. The European Community identified the reduction of early drop-out rates from the formal education system as one of three critical areas for action. In order to win back people who have left the education system without concluding Secondary School, the New Opportunities Initiative have been created. One of the integrated measures is the System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies.

The European Youth Pact was not mentioned at all in the Portuguese LNRP. Youth issues are being treated separately and lacking a strategic approach.

The youth unemployment rate was not referred to. The educational attainment of young people (aged 20-24) was reported to be 48.4 % in 2005 (European target: 85 %). The early school leaving rate was reported to 38.6% in 2005 (European target: 10%). Progress is being made for achieving the new start target. The rate of young unemployed, who within 6 months had not received support to find a job, had decreased to 6.1% in the second half of 2006.

Denmark

The Danish LNRP focuses mainly on changes and initiatives undertaken in the last 12 months before October 2006. The connection between the Danish strategy and the EU's integrated guidelines is not illustrated through references to the guidelines, which have not been included in the present progress report. They are, however, available in the form of an annex.

Contributions by the social partners, the Danish National Employment Council and the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People have been included as an Annex. The involvement or consultation of young people and civil society in large is not mentioned. Civil society is not mentioned at all in the Danish LNRP.

In line with the Lisbon Agenda, a comprehensive political agreement was reached in June: the Welfare Agreement. A globalisation fund will be initialised for increased investments in education, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and adult vocational training. Moreover, a series of additional initiatives are expected to be implemented as part of the Welfare Reform. These include better opportunities for the recognition of prior learning acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The Government will endeavour to strengthen the private sector's involvement in the Entrepreneurship Fund. The Fund should to a greater extent facilitate cooperation between schools and the business sector, and develop teaching material, competitions and entrepreneurship games for young people. A strengthened effort is said to be implemented aiming at enabling young people between the ages of 25 and 29 to gain access to the labour market or obtain an education, gain improved guidance and follow-up, gain access to additional trainee-ships, etc. These propositions are very vague and unspecified.

The objective to enable more young people to complete a youth education will mainly be achieved through a reinforcement of the business-related youth educational programmes - such as vocational training and education, and training programmes. In February 2006 a new Act on apprenticeship was passed. This contributes to the objective by giving young people the opportunity to acquire a practical training in an enterprise. The social partners agreed to increase the number of trainees in the state sector by 25 percent by the end of 2007.

The European Youth Pact is not mentioned at all in the Danish LNRP.

In May 2006, the youth unemployment amounted to 2.9 % (16-24-year-olds). It is among the lowest in the EU and lower than the average unemployment in Denmark. 80% of a youth generation are said to complete secondary education (European target: 85 %). The early school leaving is not quantified in the Danish LNRP. The new start target is achieved in Denmark. If individuals do not have a job after three months, a number of activation offers must be presented in order to help the unemployed to gain access to the labour market³.

UK

The essence of the reform policies seems to be fully in line with the Lisbon Guidelines, although these are not used as an overall framework. Implementing Lisbon-oriented reforms in the UK is presented as a shared agenda across Government, with each department taking ownership of its particular policy area. The Cabinet Office leads on coordinating policy.

The policy measures set out in the UK's LNRP are said to have been subject to transparent scrutiny and consultation, through activities such as a web-based consultation run jointly by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). In terms of implementing these policies, stakeholders are said to have played an important role. The specific

³ As of the 1st of July 2003, the youth group was extended to include people up to the age of 29 who are entitled to a job plan within six months of unemployment.

involvement of young people in the drafting and implementation is not mentioned at all. Civil society is not mentioned either.

The UK's reform agenda aims to deliver security throughout the lifecycle by balancing flexibility and fairness. Moreover, a development of a culture of self-reliance and not dependency is said to underpin policies to deliver the Lisbon goals. The British LNRP claims to focus on active labour market policies; policies that make work pay; and policies that reduce barriers to work. They are rather unspecified, though. A "social bridges" approach is said to equip individuals to move from one job to the next, through measures like skills and retraining; help while unemployed; "conditions suitable for high levels of job creation"; and policies such as child care to make it easier to work. The British LNRP refers to intensive efforts to support young people into work with its New Deal for Young People (NDYP). So far, it has helped over 660,000 young people into work, and contributed to a two-thirds reduction in young people claiming unemployment benefits for more than six months.

The Government is committed to ensuring that all young people reach the age of 19 equipped to enter higher education or skilled employment, and aims to raise participation in education and training from 75 per cent today to at least 90 per cent at age 17 by 2015. A key factor in achieving this commitment would, according to the LNRP, be to provide more flexible pathways through education, combining academic and vocational routes. The Government launched several initiatives in April 2006 to improve access to skills for young people. The Government extended Education Maintenance Allowances to young people on an Entry to Employment Programme, to further help removing financial barriers faced by young people wishing to continue in vocational education or training.

In September 2005, the World Bank ranked the UK as having the least burdensome employment law of any EU Member State. In order to help young people develop the enterprise skills and to start up and grow their own business, and in order to bring a more innovative approach to the workplace, the Government has in 2006, amongst other actions created a Schools Enterprise Education Network (SEEN).

The UK national overall employment rate figure was reported to be 74.6% (August 2006). The youth unemployment rate was not referred to. Neither was the educational attainment of young people or the early school leaving rate. The new start target or the Youth Pact was not referred to in the British NRP.

Czech Republic

The Czech LNRP corresponds well to the Lisbon Guidelines (content-wise), but these are not used as a reference framework. A Horizontal working group and

three inter-department working groups (each responsible for a relevant part of the NRP) were set up to co-ordinate elaboration and implementation of the NRP.

The Czech LNRP is said to have been prepared in partnership with all stakeholders (ministries, central state administration authorities, economic and social partners, regions and non-governmental organisations). A number of projects, notably in the area of employment and education, are said to have been carried out in co-operation with civic and professional organisations (nothing specified). The specific involvement of youth organisations was not mentioned.⁴

The Commission assessed the general orientation of the Czech reform process as good, specifically referring to the increasing flexibility of the labour market. The NRP reports on actions to facilitate business start-ups and promote co-operation between employers, employees and educational and professional institutions. Decreasing the unemployment of young people under 25 is mentioned as a specific target. Within the framework of the 'First Opportunity' programme, aiming to increase employability of job-seekers under 25 within 6 months from their registration, labour offices have contracted individual action plans with 19 477 young job-seekers. This was the main action reported directly targeting young unemployed. The "Social Integration and Equal Opportunities" priority, aimed at increasing employability of socially disadvantaged people and people threatened by social exclusion, mentions children and young people living in disadvantaged surroundings as one of the eight most endangered group.

A series of actions are aimed at improving the output of and access to educational systems, mainly: increasing the number of university graduates, increasing co-operation between employers and education institutions, promoting the inclusion of early school-leavers as well as the setting up of an external monitoring and evaluation system in primary and secondary education. 13 158 young people (under 25) participated in retraining measures, aimed at solving the mismatch between employers' demand on the labour market and job-seekers qualifications. The government is creating a formalised system for recognition of non-formal education and informal learning, as a first step to improve the interconnection between primary and continuing education.

The European Youth Pact was not mentioned at all. Youth issues are being treated separately and to a rather small extent.

The youth unemployment rate was not referred to with 88 600 people under 25 years being said to be unemployed in 2005. The overall unemployment rate was 7.1% (second quarter of 2006). Educational achievement and early school leaving were not quantified in the Czech LNRP.

⁴ It was deemed as necessary to improve consultation mechanisms addressed to the general public. This might be indicative of the extent to which civil society has been consulted in the preparation of the Czech LNRP.

The structure of the Greek LNRP is highly in line with the Lisbon Guidelines, although these are not used as an overall framework.

The preparation of the LNRP appears to have involved extensive dialogue with various partners. Contributions were made by the Social Partners, the Regions and NGOs representing the Civil Society. The Implementation Report 2006 was going to be presented and discussed at the Standing Committees of Economic and European Affairs. The specific involvement of young people was not mentioned.

Special programmes for unemployed young people are being implemented, focusing on providing opportunities to acquire necessary work experience. From January 2005 to March 2006 15,000 young people benefited from these programmes. As for the objectives and priorities set by the Council for young people (no more info on this structure), an integrated action plan is being designed under the new operational programme 2007-2013 in the framework of the European Social Fund (ESF). Every young unemployed person should be offered a job, apprenticeship, additional training or other employability measure. Specific action is taken in the field of youth entrepreneurship. Actions are being taken as to simplifying the procedures for setting up a business and reducing red tape. Additional actions are being promoted by the General Secretariat of Youth, with the aim of encouraging young entrepreneurs to set up their own business. Entrepreneurship clusters, providing young entrepreneurs with information and assistance on legal and marketing issues, will now be expanded throughout the country.

The Greek LNRP also reports on actions aimed at developing disadvantaged regions, tackling social exclusion, strengthen social cohesion and modernise the social protection system (as set out in the National Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion).

A number of actions are being promoted through the Operational Programme - in the framework of the ESF - "Education and Initial Vocational Training", aimed at improving the effectiveness of the educational, training and life-long learning systems, as well as improving the international competitiveness of Higher Education Institutions. Distance Learning schemes have been employed or developed in pilot projects, alongside a modernisation of education and training curricula to reflect the real needs of the market. A system of Career Offices, providing vocational guidance and placement opportunities to graduate students, is established in the Institutes of Vocational Training. Following the Commission's assessment that better links are needed between training and the

needs of the labour market, programmes of continuous vocational training are said to be implemented.

Youth issues are being treated in a separate manner.

The rate of unemployment among the young (15-24) in 2005 was 26 %, (as compared to the general unemployment rate of 9.8 %). This was a slight reduction from the 2004 figure of 26.9 %. Special emphasis is also given to combating school drop out, but the rate of early school leaving is not quantified. Neither is the youth educational attainment. The new start target or the Youth Pact was not referred to in the Greek NRP.

Netherlands

The structure of the Dutch LNRP corresponds well to the objectives in the framework of the Lisbon strategy, and uses the Lisbon Guidelines as a reference framework. The National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Inclusion in the Netherlands (NSR) have also been included in the report.

Regional and local governments are said to have been involved, through the regular consultation bodies, in drafting the LNRP. The social partners were given the opportunity to react to various drafts. No specific involvement of young people is mentioned.

Measures that the cabinet has taken in the context of the Youth Pact are discussed in more detail in chapter 2 of the NRP. Operation Young, (mentioned above) launched in 2004 as a joint operation by the Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sport, Education, Culture and Science, Justice, Social Affairs and Employment, Foreign Affairs and Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, is designed to increase the cohesion of the youth policy. The Youth Unemployment Task Force has launched the Second-Chance Vocational Education in 36 municipalities, targeting unemployed youths under the age of 23 without basic qualifications. Youth issues appear to be treated in a transversal and serious way, with the stated objective of streamlining and improving the integrated management of services.

Policies aimed at preventing early school leaving are being intensified. Young people that do not have a basic qualification will be obliged to remain in school until their 18th birthday. There is a planned introduction of compulsory dual programmes combining study and work for young people between 18 and 23.⁵ Other measures include initiatives targeted at employers, such as tax incentives for offering places in work-study programmes.

⁵ This obligation is not being imposed at national level. It is up to the municipalities to decide whether or not to introduce it. The obligation is intended to ensure that young people in this age group are working or studying or engaged in a combination of the two.

There is a separate section on the Youth Pact. Under this heading, it is reported that the cabinet has implemented measures to combat early school leaving (as set out in the memorandum Assault on school drop-outs). Moreover, Operation Young was launched to counter social exclusion among young people. The programme is intended to strengthen the cooperation in the youth chain, for example through Care and Advice Teams with representatives from schools and social services. Another initiative associated with the Youth Pact is the establishment of the Youth Unemployment Task Force. The target was to find 40,000 extra jobs for young people, before the middle of 2007. By the summer of 2006, more than 32,000 extra jobs had been created.

The youth unemployment rate is not quantified in the Dutch NRP. The early school leaving rate is said to be 13.6% (2005) (European target 10%). The educational attainment is said to be 74.7% (European target: 85%). 16% of young people unemployed for more than 6 months had not been offered a new start (2005, provisional figures). The target is still respected, though.

Belgium

The structure of the Belgian LNRP corresponds well to the Lisbon Guidelines (content-wise), but these are not used as an overall reference framework.

Not much is being said about the drafting of the LNRP, or the actors involved in it. All that is said is that consultations and cooperation between the federal government, the regions and the communities have been carried out. No specific involvement of young people or civil society is mentioned.

The Solidarity between generations pact is aimed at strengthening the vulnerability of young and old workers respectively. The Pact comprises three parts: moving more young people into work, promoting active ageing and making the social security system stronger and more viable.

In the light of the European Youth Pact, which is only mentioned once and lacking a separate heading, the Belgian authorities have implemented measures to promote the integration of young people into the labour market. In Flanders, measures focus on increasing the number of places available for work experience. The introduction of the 'full-time commitment' aims to ensure that pupils in part-time education are given the opportunity to gain work experience. The French Community and the Walloon Region are increasing the number of young people in part-time education. A service has been set up that makes it possible to use the same vocational standards for the training systems as for the system of recognising acquired skills. The federal government has created extra starter jobs. Wallonia supports recruitment by SMEs and spin-offs by low-skilled school-leavers. Flanders is bolstering its approach to youth unemployment via a

system of covenants with the inner cities, and the German-speaking Community is working in close collaboration with the construction sector.

A further cut in social security contributions has been awarded to young people aged between 19 and 29 in the low-income category. A programme of in company placements for young people is being promoted via a tax incentive initiative.⁶ Measures have been taken aimed at speeding up the classroom-to-workplace transition, by encouraging employers to recruit school-leavers. Moreover, young people will be entitled to a start-up bonus and companies to a training bonus. Actions to promote youth entrepreneurship are also reported. When beginning self-employment, young people can still receive the benefit allocated for job-seeking school-leavers and will be given longer support when they arrange a start-up loan.

In line with the "Education and Training 2010" OMC, efforts are being made as to guarantee equal access to education; upgrade technical and vocational education; streamline the training on offer and promote the formal recognition of the skills for everyone who pursues lifelong learning.

The proportion of young people who after 6 months of unemployment had not been offered a new start is 16.2%. The level of school drop out is reported to be 12.9% (European target: 10%), while 85% of 20-24-year-olds have successfully completed their secondary education (European target: 85%). The youth unemployment rate is not quantified. The general unemployment reached 8.6% in 2006.

VJR (National Council of Belgium Flemish-speaking community Youth Organisations):

Although regions are not obliged to make LNRPs, the Flemish region has elaborated a regional reform program, attached to the LNRP. The structure of the Belgian LNRP corresponds well to the Lisbon Guidelines (content-wise), but these are not used as an overall reference framework.

Not much is being said about the drafting of the LNRP, or the actors involved in it. All that is said is that consultations and cooperation between the federal government, the regions and the communities have been carried out. No specific involvement of young people or civil society is mentioned. Neither young people, youth organizations nor the Flemish youth council have been consulted in the drafting of the LNRP. Although the youth sector (the national agency JINT, the Flemish administration of youth and the Flemish youth council) demanded on several occasions for some participation concerning the implementation of the youth pact, no youth organizations have been consulted until now. So it's safe to

⁶ Employers will be able to deduct 120% of the salary paid to young people on work placements as operating costs.

say that the youth perspective is absent in the LNRP. On the contrary the social partners were involved in the drafting of the LNRP.

Moreover, the cabinet of the Flemish minister of Youth didn't engage in the drafting of the Flemish reform program, that served as a basis for the LNRP. Nevertheless in the Flemish policy plan the Minister of Youth states his intention to work together with all the actors involved in the youth pact in the best possible way.

The Solidarity between generations pact is aimed at strengthening the vulnerability of young and old workers respectively. The Pact comprises three parts: moving more young people into work, promoting active ageing and making the social security system stronger and more viable.

In the light of the European Youth Pact, which is only mentioned once and lacking a separate heading, the Belgian authorities have implemented measures to promote the integration of young people into the labour market. In Flanders, measures focus on increasing the number of places available for work experience. The introduction of the 'full-time commitment' aims to ensure that pupils in part-time education are given the opportunity to gain work experience. The French Community and the Walloon Region are increasing the number of young people in part-time education. A service has been set up that makes it possible to use the same vocational standards for the training systems as for the system of recognising acquired skills. The federal government has created extra starter jobs. Wallonia supports recruitment by SMEs and spin-offs by low-skilled school-leavers. Flanders is bolstering its approach to youth unemployment via a system of covenants with the inner cities, and the German-speaking Community is working in close collaboration with the construction sector.

A further cut in social security contributions has been awarded to young people aged between 19 and 29 in the low-income category. A programme of in company placements for young people is being promoted via a tax incentive initiative. Measures have been taken aimed at speeding up the classroom-to-workplace transition, by encouraging employers to recruit school-leavers. Moreover, young people will be entitled to a start-up bonus and companies to a training bonus. Actions to promote youth entrepreneurship are also reported. When beginning self-employment, young people can still receive the benefit allocated for job-seeking school-leavers and will be given longer support when they arrange a start-up loan. By raising the number of places in childcare structures by 13000 the communities want to increase the female employment rate and facilitate the combination of work and private life.

In line with the "Education and Training 2010" OMC, efforts are being made as to guarantee equal access to education; upgrade technical and vocational education; streamline the training on offer and promote the formal recognition of the skills for everyone who pursues lifelong learning.

The proportion of young people who after 6 months of unemployment had not been offered a new start is 16.2%. The level of school drop out is 12.6% (between 10 and 12% in Flanders) (European target: 10%), while 82.4% (86.5% in Flanders) of 20-24-year-olds have successfully completed their secondary education (European target: 85%). Moreover the rate of early school leaving of immigrants is 40% in Flanders. The youth unemployment rate in Flanders has lowered from 14.5% in June 2005 to 9.9% in June 2007. The general unemployment reached 8.2% in 2006. Increasing human capital is crucial, since 70% of all young unemployed are low-skilled. Employers are encouraged to recruit school-leavers, even those who are less qualified. Reforms in education systems have been launched in order to tackle segregation and to reduce early school leaving. Technical and vocational education is being reinforced and alternating learning further developed. These reforms are ongoing and have not yet delivered results.

CRIJ (National Council of Belgium French-speaking community Youth Organisations):

Within the context of the European Youth Pact, the Belgian authorities have taken different measures to promote the integration of young people into the job market, firstly by reasserting the value of technical and vocational training. Equipment in the schools concerned has been benefiting from important investment. Specialised centres (3) have been established thanks to partnerships between employment services and other actors; which has allowed investment in high technology equipment. These centres are also open to schools and are developing training initiatives for both teachers and pupils.

These processes are, for the French-speaking community, still only in their early stages: the creation of advanced technology centres, investment in school equipment, partnerships between employment sectors and education, etc.

In Flanders, alternating learning has been strengthened by the increase in the number of offers of work experience, in consultation with professional sectors and within the administrations themselves (4). The principle of "full time commitment" has been adopted: one can no longer accept pupils attending school on a part time basis without complementary work experience. If need be, a specific course could be set up including some supplementary training and some assistance with interview skills. This should be achieved in the short term for three-quarters of Flemish school students.

Moreover, the French-speaking community and the Walloon region have set themselves the objective of increasing the number of young people undertaking alternating learning by improving training personnel; by opening up public administrations and large companies to these young people, and by simplifying

the systems in place to guide the alternation. They have established a service which will on the one hand enable them to provide the different types of teaching and the system used to recognise skills with common professional systems of reference, and on the other hand to reinforce links with the world of work. This will guarantee more clarity and coherence to the training schemes.

The social partners have been blocking the reform of the systems guiding alternating learning: they are asking, primarily, for clarification of the status of young people as well as the certification of this type of training. Indeed, there is considerable competition between training centres and contracts which is harming the development of quality alternating learning. The Walloon government planned to revise the grants system for employers, trainers and young people; this was also blocked. The social partners are asking firstly for an evaluation of the existing system and for a clarification of its objectives: support to alternating learning or recruitment with no conditions?

In Brussels, alternating learning has also been strengthened. The French-speaking community and the French-speaking Community Commission have thus striven to bring education and adult training closer.

The Centres for Competences (in collaboration with the Advanced Technology Centres) in the Walloon region, the Reference Centres in Brussels, and the Regionale Technologische centra in Flanders.

4. The newly created "Centra Leren en Werken" is playing a key role here. The German-speaking Community has well developed alternating learning. Though it has, however, decided to extend by one year the stay of a pupil in full education before they are allowed access to alternating learning.

The three Communities are also working on the finalisation of a full diploma for those who have followed alternating learning. This will be further fostered, as of the school year 2006-2007, by the provision of a federal grant to both the employer and to the young person themselves.

This allowance has been a mitigated success: around a half of young people and employers have requested it. Moreover, the grant discriminates between young people below 18 and above 18, while supporting all kinds of contracts, no matter their quality.

In order to promote the acquisition of work experience via other avenues than simply alternating learning, the opportunities available to students in 2006 were enlarged and a database was created in Wallonia and Flanders, to put in contact potential interns and companies which have internships to offer. Both databases were to be operational as of autumn of 2006. A similar initiative was also put in place in Brussels. Moreover, the French-speaking Community Commission finances private-sector internships for job-seekers who have completed a training qualification, or secondary vocational or professional

education. This database has not yet been put in place; and while student work has been reformed, it penalizes the student in terms of social rights and it increases the competition of this type of work with other contracts, notably with part time work which is very common in the commercial sector.

Projects with a social dimension also contribute to the integration of young people in the employment market. As such, the federal authority financed the creation of additional jobs (through the first job Conventions, also called 'Rosetta'), notably within the social economy. Brussels also took similar initiatives in the public sector (through the first job Conventions), but put a particular emphasis on training to achieve sustainable integration into the sector or to encourage transition to the private sector. Wallonia supports the employment by SMEs and new businesses of low-skilled school-leavers, in order to encourage their integration into the job market and the development of their skills (APE Jeunes, approx. 200 contracts by the end of 2007). These measures are very costly in terms of the reductions in social security contributions and lead to rather weak outcomes. There are more than 245 government-run job centres in Belgium, but no one can make sense of them any more: a simplification is needed as well as a redefinition of their objectives.

Flanders strengthened its fight against youth unemployment and the creation of youth jobs in the social economy through a system of Conventions agreed both with communes and with cities of specific importance. In the German-speaking community, similar initiatives have also been developed in consultation with the construction sector.

This falls within the "Plan for the employment of Bruxellois" established by the Brussels authorities in 2006 and which was concretised in the "Contract for economy and employment 2005-2010".

Young people who despite everything find themselves unemployed are subject to a strengthened assistance by the unemployment services, who come into contact with almost 100% of these young people before they reach their sixth month of unemployment.

Italy

The Italian LNRP combines national priorities with the objectives set in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. The Lisbon Guidelines are not used as a reference framework. For each national priority the main Integrated Guidelines are said to be indicated, in an annex not to be found.

The report was drawn up by a high-level *ad hoc* technical committee, under the supervision of a committee of ministers co-ordinated by the Italian Ministry for EU affairs (acting as National Lisbon Co-ordinator). Central and regional

administrative authorities were also taking part in the process. The political direction for the Lisbon Strategy has been taken over by the inter-ministerial committee for EU affairs, chaired by the Italian Minister for EU Policies. Regional authorities and central administrations have participated in the preparation of the Report. No involvement of young people or civil society is mentioned. It was deemed as crucial to resume forms of dialogue with the social partners.

A new form of governance is being defined which will see both institutional and non-institutional parties involved in social inclusion policies. The government says it is committed to strengthening co-operation between the different levels of responsibility, and re-launching dialogue with the social parties, the social private sector and with representative associations.

The main action undertaken by the government in order to support employment growth and reduce regional disparities is to reduce the costs associated with employment through the so-called "tax wedge" for the cost of permanent employment. Costs in relation to apprenticeships, employment of persons with disabilities, staff with employment training contracts and staff engaged in research and development are also deductible for tax purposes. These actions are all aimed at opening up paths to flexibility.

There is also an aim to increase the interaction between university and business in order to facilitate young people's entry to the work place.

Improving the quality of education and training, and ensuring a high degree of social cohesion, are said to lay at the heart of Italy's educational and employment policies. Among the initiatives aimed at raising the number of young people completing their secondary school education, the government has invested in constructing a system of guidance for young people, strengthening apprenticeships and developing alternate school-work options. Policies to support children's and young people's rights have also been launched, with special projects to combat poverty and violence. Initiatives have been devised to fight early school leaving, to strengthen language, IT and maths skills at adult as well as child level, to improve teaching facilities and equipment, to facilitate teachers' career development, to encourage the interface between work and school and to provide opportunities for life-long learning.

The new start target is not referred to in the Italian NRP. Neither were the youth unemployment rate, the educational attainment or the early school leaving rate. Overall, the Italian NRP lacks concrete measures and time tables. There are, however, at the end of the report, some rather detailed examples of best practices and regional experiences, as well as an elaborated overview of the Coordination between the NRP and the structural funds. The Youth Pact is not mentioned at all.

Latvia

The Latvian LNRP combines national priorities with the objectives set in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. Focus seems to be on national priorities. The Lisbon Guidelines are not used as a reference framework. An annex with a list of all the measures, their implementation status, the financing, timeframe and responsible ministry, is included, as well as examples of good practice and characteristics of the use of the Structural Funds.

LJP (National Council of Latvia Youth Organisations):
LJP believes the previous assessment is correct

The Report was developed by the Ministry of Economics in co-operation with other relevant Ministries. A Supervisory Board of the Lisbon Strategy has been established, chaired by the Minister of Economics, as the co-ordinator of implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. Local governments and social partners, who are connected with the Lisbon process, are included in the Board. The involvement of young people or civil society in the drafting of the Latvian LNRP is not mentioned.

LJP:

Communication from the Ministry on Economic Affairs stated that one of the problems in developing Latvian LNRP in 2005 was the short deadline for preparations, which would not allow proper involvement of the society. The Supervisory Board of the Lisbon Strategy includes representatives from the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia and Employers' Confederation of Latvia and no other non-governmental actors.

The Youth Pact is not mentioned, but the Latvian LNRP reports on actions aimed at targeting youth unemployment and promoting an inclusive labour market. The PCCSA⁷ provides individual and group consultations in the choice of education and career planning. The State Employment Agency is said to organise active employment measures for young people. Several European Social Fund projects were implemented in 2005, said to increase young people's opportunities to get included in the labour market. "Ensuring work practices for unemployed young people" (27 projects) was started in 2005. Employment measures during summer holidays for students, initialised in 2004, is being continued. According to the LNRP, Latvia is paying special attention to measures related to inclusion of young people. The report stresses the necessity to allocate more resources to business start-up measures and to promotion of geographic mobility in economically weak territories. The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for youth employment measures.

⁷ Professional Career Counselling State Agency

LJP:

Work in this field is not structured according to Youth Pact or Lisbon Guidelines; however, as can be seen from the report, it contributes to the aims indirectly - although not always clear - how much and how effectively.

The Latvian LNRP also reports on expanding opportunities for education and training, and increasing opportunities of student mobility. Actions include providing training places and subsidising employment measures for unemployed young people. The government intends to strengthen co-operation between public administration institutions, education establishments and employers, improve availability of education at all levels (including lifelong learning) and reduce the early school leaving. 34 catch-up education programmes were carried out in the academic year 2004/2005, giving an opportunity for pupils, who graduated from the 9th grade without necessary qualifications to get a certificate of basic education within one year. Increased student loan is one of the actions intended to expand the range of people acquiring higher education. The number of study places financed from the state budget in 2006 was increased by 553 places, in the fields required by the labour market. Projects for integration of young people with special needs into the education system are being financed in the European Social Fund framework. Overall, youth issues are being treated in a rather separate manner.

LJP:

One of the biggest problem in education and training field is the lack of non-formal education recognition. Latvia has a rather good system for interest and hobby education, and many actors regard this as 'the' non-formal education, disregarding youth initiatives. One example of this is the project of Guidelines for Lifelong Learning where starting age for non-formal education in most discussions has been considered 25 or 30.

Despite the increased student loan and number of study places financed from the state budget, the cost of higher education is rapidly increasing. This often forces students to work during studies, which often significantly decreases the quality of studies.

The new start target is not referred to in the Latvian NRP. The level of school drop out was 5.7% in 2005/2006 (European target: 10%). The youth unemployment rate has decreased from 18.1% in 2004 to 13.6% in 2005. The educational attainment is not quantified.

LJP:

Based on Eurostat data, educational attainment level in Latvia - percentage of people aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education not in education - is very

unstable. In 2004 it was 15.6%, 2005 - 11.9%, but in 2006 - 19.0% (albeit it is a provisional value). These numbers for men were accordingly 10.7%, 8.2%, 16.1%. For women these were 20.5%, 15.5%, 21.6%.

Hungary

The Hungarian LNRP is clearly built on the domestic situation and focus on national priorities. However, still in accordance with the integrated guidelines, the Hungarian Government presents the objectives and measures of the strategy in three parts (macro-economy, micro-economy, employment). The integrated guidelines are being used as a reference system.

The Government Commissioner responsible for development policy acts as the National Lisbon Co-ordinator, and harmonises the activities of the ministries. The wider public had the opportunity to express their opinion on the homepages www.eum.hu and www.magyarorszag.hu/zoldkonyv. Social and political negotiations are said to have preceded the approval of the Convergence Programme (which is a part of the realisation of the strategy). Young people's involvement in the drafting of the LNRP or in the implementation of it is not mentioned.

The European Council concluded in March 2006 that the improvement of the labour market situation of young people is imperative. In order to increase the employability of young people, the START Programme (launched in 2005) is going to be extended. This measure offers a reduction of the employers' contributions when hiring young people (about 9,000 young people are said to have found employment under this programme in the first half of 2006). The Financial Support programme for the youth, launched in 2000, gives subsidies to young entrepreneurs. The government and social partners have reviewed the Labour Code with the aim of adjusting it more in line with the flexicurity framework.

In order to improve the effectiveness and quality of educational and training services, the Hungarian LNRP mentions the development of vocational counselling, orientation and monitoring systems and their link with the labour market information systems, in line with the approved Strategy on Life-Long Learning. Measures for recognising knowledge previously acquired within or outside the formal training system are said to be implemented. The Hungarian LNRP also reports on educational reforms. The objective of the public education reform is to reduce inequalities, to ensure equal opportunities, and to reinforce basic skills. For the higher education reform the aim is to improve the quality of education and to make it capable of adapting to the changing structure and level of labour demand. A series of measures aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system and promoting equal opportunities for children with unfavourable social background, are referred to, but not specified.

As a result of measures focusing on the reintegration of the early schools leavers, preparatory courses for vocational training have been organised in 21 vocational schools with the participation of more than 300 students. The *'Viaticum' Scholarship Programme for disadvantaged pupils* is said to have supported 20 045 pupils in 2005.

The Youth Pact is not mentioned at all in the Hungarian LNRP.

According to the Hungarian LNRP, the youth unemployment rate (19-24 year-olds) is 19,42 %. The educational attainment amounted to 83.3% (European target: 85%), while the proportion of 18-24 year-old early school leavers was reported to be 12.3% (European target: 10%). The new start indicator amounted to 31,3% (youth under 25 unemployed for more than 6 months, and without offer of a new start).

Ireland

The Irish LNRP combines national priorities (such as tackling the physical infrastructure deficit) with the objectives set in common at the European level. The Lisbon Guidelines are being used as a reference framework.

A new social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, has been negotiated with the social partners in 2006. It is said to be based on a lifecycle framework approach to the development and delivery of social policy, services and supports. Government policies are said to be more streamlined and outcome focused. Most new initiatives and developments are said to have been the subject of detailed engagement with the social partners. Young people are not mentioned in this process.

Referring to the social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*, increased emphasis is said to be placed on engaging with unemployed 16-24 year olds. However, there are no indications in the LNRP as of how this will be carried out.

While a series of measures are reported related to female participation at the labour market, disabled people, older workers and travellers, no specific employment activation measures for young people are reported. The Irish LNRP does however report on 8,304 new apprentices being registered in 2005, giving a total apprentice population of 28,600. The Trainee-ship Programme provides occupation specific training to job-seekers through a combination of off-the job and workplace training. Approximately 2,000 persons are said to have completed trainee-ships in 2005. None of these measures are specifically directed towards young people, although they can be assumed to have reached them.

The National Reform Programme highlights key priorities in the context of ensuring an integrated approach to addressing skills needs across the education

and training sector, addressing issues such as barriers to access and progression, promoting life-long learning, investment in higher education, fostering entrepreneurship among students and tackling early school leaving.

Measures under the action plan for educational inclusion DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools - include pre-school interventions, supports for tackling children's literacy problems, and measures to tackle early school leaving. Programmes such as Youthreach and the Bridging/Foundation Programme, designed to enable early school leavers access the labour market, are said to support approximately 4,600 persons annually. The School Completion Programme (SCP) targets persons aged 4-18 at risk of early school leaving and arranges supports to address inequalities in education access, participation and outcomes.

Actions undertaken to increase the participation in education are said to reflect the policies outlined in the European Youth Pact. Lacking a separate heading under the Pact, this was the only mentioning of it. No examples of actions were given.

The Irish youth unemployment rate of 8.2% is said to be the second lowest in the EU. Eurostat data for 2005 shows that 86.1% of the Irish population aged 20-24 have completed at least upper secondary level education (European target: 85%). The rate of early school leaving amounted to 12.3% (European target: 10%). The new start indicator for young people under 25 (not having been offered a new start within 6 months) is said to be 3,3 % for men, and 2,9% for women.

Estonia

The structure of the Estonian LNRP corresponds well to the Lisbon Guidelines although these are not used as a reference framework.

In order to ensure a well-coordinated national implementation, the Government has created a Strategy Director, responsible for coordination of the preparation and implementation of the Action Plan for Growth and Jobs. The Strategy Director also fulfils the tasks of National Lisbon Coordinator. To ensure an active cooperation between all counterparts, an inter-ministerial working group has been set up, responsible for preparing the Progress Report. Social partners and other non-governmental stakeholders are said to be actively involved in the implementation and preparation process.

The Youth Pact is not mentioned at all, but in order to better coordinate the activities aimed at young people, a Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 has been drafted. It stipulates for the first time the bases and principles of youth policy in Estonia. Central to this is the involvement of youth participative and representative bodies in youth-related decision-making (for education,

employment, health, culture and social affairs). At national level the Student Advisory Chamber deals with educational issues while the Youth Policy Council is responsible for youth policy issues. Young people participated in drawing up the strategy in the framework of preliminary local forums of the Third Estonian Youth Work Forum, as well as in various area-related round tables through youth associations. Foreseen measures include the strengthening of youth work institutions and youth work networks by fostering the programs for open youth centres, information and counselling centres, and diversification of activities aimed at young people.

Measures aimed at improving the employability of young people include the creation of opportunities for acquiring voluntary work and informal learning experiences (introduced 1 January 2006).

In order to make educational opportunities more flexible and effective the Minister of Education and Research has approved an e-learning development plan. A lifelong learning strategy was adopted at the end of 2005. Funds allocated for the mobility of researchers and students are said to have grown steadily. Development projects aimed at improvement of the vocational education, introduction of the methods of active learning among teachers, individual support of students and teachers by way of psychological counselling, and in-service training of teachers and principals are supported through the European Structural Funds. Following the introduction of vocational education in secondary schools, the education allowance has been extended.

The unemployment of young people remains relatively high, reaching 15.9% in 2005. The educational attainment amounted to 80.9%⁸ (European target: 85%). The share of early school leavers (among 18-24 years) amounted to 14% in 2005 (European target: 10%). 42% of young people between 7 and 26 are said to be involved in youth work. 3% are said to participate in youth associations. The new start target is not referred to in the Estonian NRP.

Cyprus

The structure of Cyprus' LNRP corresponds well to the Lisbon Guidelines, while most effort is put on addressing national challenges. The Lisbon Guidelines are used as a reference framework in the accompanying Annex 13: Inventory Table of NRP Measures, where the implementation status for every measure is listed.

The government has set up a unit under the Ministry of Finance, responsible for monitoring and promoting the implementation of the NRP and co-ordinating the work of the technical committees. The minister of Finance also acts as the

⁸ With regard to the falling educational attainment, the government has planned measures aimed at more individual counselling of students and amendment of the marking system of schools.

National Lisbon Co-ordinator. Consultation and engagement of the national parliament, social partners, local authorities, and other stakeholders is said to be actively pursued. A National Advisory Committee has been set up for the LNRP with the participation of the social partners, political parties, local authorities, NGOs and organised groups of the private sector. Young people are involved in the implementation through the Youth Board of Cyprus participation in the Technical Committee for Employment Issues.

With regard to the actions to promote employment pathways for young people, who suffer an almost twice as high unemployment rate as the national average, the Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship has been continued. The Scheme for the Promotion of Training and Employability of Young Secondary Education School Leavers, co-financed by the European Social Fund (with a tentative participation target of 550 persons), is about to be launched, with the aim to provide creditworthy alternatives to general education and to contribute to the European Youth Pact (still lacking a separate heading). Increasing the flexibility of the labour market is identified as one of the main challenges faced by Cyprus (in Relation to the European Employment Strategy (EES)).

As regards the promotion of quality of education and the flexibility of the educational system, Cyprus's LNRP reports on actions aimed at increasing opportunities for university studies (by introducing new departments and establishing private universities); introducing modern technology in education; promoting access to lifelong learning for all; support the training infrastructure of institutions and enterprises; strengthening the quality and attractiveness of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE); as well as introduction of an Appraisal and Certification System of training providers. A series of measures aimed at tackling early school leaving are being implemented.

A number of individual measures are presented rather vaguely. Youth issues are being treated in a separate manner, and without much attention.

The youth unemployment rate amounted to 13.9% in 2005. The educational attainment was reported to 80.7% (European target: 10%). The early school leaving rate amounted to 18.2% (9.8 if adjusted to include Cypriots studying abroad and military conscripts, and to exclude non-nationals - European target: 10%). Concerning the "new start" target set by the Spring European Council, the modernisation of the Public Employment Services (PES) will put in place a system for monitoring the issue and for referring young people to suitable vacant jobs. The upgrading of the apprenticeship scheme and the various training schemes targeting the youth are also aimed at achieving the target.

Slovenia

The reforms presented in the Slovenian LNRP are firmly integrated with the Slovenian Development Strategy, which sets out the main developmental goals based on the Lisbon Strategy's objectives. The Lisbon Guidelines are used as a reference a framework. The measures set out in the LNRP also provide feedback on the EU's recommendations.

The social partners and other stakeholders are said to have been involved in the preparation of legal amendments for the implementation of the planned reforms through social dialogue and channels of public participation. The Government is said to hold talks with student organisations representatives to discuss the planned reforms in the area of higher education. In order to promote social dialogue, the government has introduced public debates, the web portal 'Slovenija jutri' (Slovenia Tomorrow), publications and other events at the national, regional and local levels. In order to tackle drop-outs the government is implementing special measures in schools aimed at greater individualisation and support to individual students.

Young people under the age of 26 have been identified as a priority target group for participation in the Active Employment Policy Programme's activities of in-service training, integrated training programmes and the reimbursement of employers' social contributions. The measure aims at improving the employability of youth and facilitate their transition from the education process into the labour market. The Slovenian LNRP also reports on subsidising employers' costs of apprenticeship programmes for secondary school pupils. Measures aimed at increasing youth employability are focused around providing information and counselling.

As regards job creation for people with low employment opportunities in general (thus not targeted to youth in particular), the main measure reported is the creation of public works. A total of 5,368 people with the lowest prospects of finding regular employment were included in public works programmes in 2005.

Measures for better co-operation between universities and the business sector have been included in the new resolution on the National Higher Education. A new lifelong learning strategy is being prepared. Further, a number of activities were carried out in 2005 aimed at increasing employment opportunities by evaluating and acknowledging non-formal education and informal learning. With the aim of promoting entrepreneurship, the Government has raised the funds for the Young Researchers for Business and Industry programme. With regard to enhancing training opportunities The National Development Programme 2007-2013 will provide financial incentives for employers offering practical training to students at all levels of secondary and tertiary education.

The European Youth Pact is not mentioned at all.

The youth unemployment rate is not quantified in the Slovenian LNRP (for 15-64 year-olds it is 6.5%). The employment of young people (15-24) is only reported to be below the EU average. Youth education attainment level was reported to be 90.6 % (European target: 85%), 2005. In June 2006 the share of young people without a vocational education was said to be 7.2%. The “new start” target is not quantified, but it is said to be a priority.

Austria.

7 strategic key areas have been identified, in response to Austria’s specific national challenges and objectives. The Economic Report, (included as an annex) contains details of each individual measure, and is structured so as to reflect the Integrated Guidelines. But apart from that, they are not being used as a reference system.

ÖJV (National Council of Austrian Youth Organisations):

The Austrian LNRP is not buildt along the Integrated Guidelines. Only the summarized measures (which are mentioned in the Economic Report) are associated with the Guidelines.

The Austrian LNRP is presented as being the outcome of an internal consultation process between the Federal Government and all of the stakeholders, and especially with the social partners. The ministries involved are said to have included stakeholders from the NGO sector. Nothing is being said about young people’s involvement. The appointment of Austrian Federal Minister Martin Bartenstein as national Lisbon coordinator is said to reflect the high importance Austria attached to the implementation of the Lisbon strategy.

ÖJV:

The National Youth Council is not only an important stakeholder regarding the Youth Pact but also a social partner by law in Austria. We were not involved in drafting the LNRP and we only get our information within the inter-ministerial working group (see below for detailed comment).

Although it is not mentioned in the LNRP there was a form of (inappropriate) involvement of young people: during summer 2005 a questionable and unreliable online survey was undertaken which brought no significant results. Stakeholders in the inter-ministerial working group criticised the survey and its setting,; this might be the reason why it did not appear in the LNPR maybe that’s why it doesn’t appear in the LNRP.

The fact that Minister for Economics and Labour, Martin Bartenstein, is the national Lisbon coordinator has no consequences for the Youth Pact process. The inter-ministerial working group e.g. is coordinated by the Ministry for Health, Family Affairs and Youth. The Ministry for Economics and Labour is member of the working group but not permanently present in the meetings and therefore not as much involved as it should be from our point of view.

The Austrian LNRP includes reports a series of measures aimed at increasing the employability of young people, such as "Jobs4Youth" (one of the focus areas within the Employment Promotion Act) is an employment and qualification programme for youth under 25. About 65% of those completing support measures are said to be able to take on non-subsidised employment within 6 months. About 15,900 youth participated in this programme in 2005, with an additional 22,000 foreseen for 2006. "Giving young people a chance", a job coaching and placement programme, was initiated in 2005 as a contribution toward eliminating long-term unemployment of youth. "Project 06 - Blum bonus" enables subsidies for companies employing apprentices, with the aim to encourage the creation of additional apprenticeships. More than 10,500 people had participated in this measure as at 30 April 2006. As of early 2006, additional funds in the amount of roughly €285 million were made available for qualification and employment measures. Approximately half of this additional funding is being spent on young people. Moreover, apprenticeship agents actively promotes the open up of additional training places. The Youth Training Consolidation Act offers training places as well.

ÖJV:

Although the figures look very well we do not consider the undertaken measures to have sustainable effects on the situation of young people on the labour market.

However, we do not want to criticise the measures of the last years without mentioning recent positive developments. Many of our demands articulated during our campaign against youth unemployment in 2006 were fulfilled in a decision taken in January 2008 by the government and the social partners. An apprenticeship guarantee and a reform of the subsidies contain amongst others the following important steps:

- young people who do not find an apprenticeship will not only have the possibility to attend courses for a limited time but can graduate in apprenticeship workshops not run by a single company
- subsidies for employers who create jobs for young people in their enterprises/companies will become linked to quality criteria (e.g. "Blum-Bonus")
- subsidies will encourage young women in men-dominated professions
- employers who train slow learners will be subsidised

We sure will have an eye on the concrete implementation of this decision during the next months.

As regards education and training, the Austrian LNRP reports on actions aimed at improving the quality and funding of the different educational systems, with an increased focus on the needs of children and young people. A strategy paper on implementing a coherent lifelong learning strategy is currently in the consultation process. The introduction of a volunteer card for recognising informally and non-formally acquired skills and abilities have been put into practice. Entrepreneurship is promoted particularly by embedding the principle of “entrepreneurship education” in the obligatory curricula of vocational schools.

ÖJV:

In our opinion only a reform of the education system in general could create the possibility to give equal chances to all young people in Austria and to improve the transition from school to labour market. At the moment there is no sufficient funding of our education system and we do not see the government’s willingness to spend more money needed for sustainable reforms.

When talking about life long learning and non-formal education in Austria most of the time the work of children and youth organisation is not recognised .

Therefore we try to bring this holistic point of view to the consultation process of the life long learning strategy.

The volunteer card mentioned in the LNRP can not be used as a recognition tool for informally and non-formally acquired skills because the card does not reflect skills but the mere membership in an organisation. Furthermore, a lot of open-ended questions regarding administration, distribution and measurable benefits are still not answered.

The European Youth Pact is not mentioned, but in order to develop effective cross-sectoral strategies for young people, an inter-ministerial working group including the *Länder*, social partners and the Austrian National Youth Council has been set up.

ÖJV:

We welcome the fact that the inter-ministerial working group has been set up. But we want to accent a few important details:

- The members of the group do not, however, constantly participate in the meetings, which makes continuous work difficult.

- The approach of the group is more or less cross-sectoral - only four ministries (Health, Family Affairs and Youth; Education, Arts and Culture; Science and Research; Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management) attend the meeting regularly. We consider it to be a major problem not to have the Ministry for Economics and Labour in the inter-ministerial working group constantly.

- As mentioned above, the inter-ministerial working group is not within the competencies of the Ministry of Economics and Labour but within those of the Ministry of Health, Family Affairs and Youth. We consider this to be a constructional error. We are convinced that the Youth Pact would have more political importance/power if the Ministry of Economics and Labour would have the leading role in the inter-ministerial working group.
- In the beginning the inter-ministerial working group needed a lot of time for raising awareness of youth issues and the Youth Pact in general. Recently we see new initiatives to work on topics. Unfortunately the chosen strategy (finding a framework for internships of high-qualified young people) is not that much Youth Pact oriented.
- From our point of view the main problem of the inter-ministerial working group is that the members are civil servants and not political decision makers. Therefore the work of this group will always be in danger to become stuck on its level and to remain without consequences.

What we criticise about the LNRP in general is that we see no programme and no strategy behind it. The document was only a summary of intended measures of different political sectors.

As at August 2006, the youth unemployment rate (15 to 24 year-olds) was reported to be 9.8%. This puts Austria among the leading states in the European Union behind the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland and Lithuania. Austria meets the target of a new start within six months by 2007. The new Start indicator was 2,08 in 2005. The Youth education attainment level (aged 20-24) was 85.9 in 2005 (European target: 85%). The early school leaving rate was not quantified.

ÖJV:

Latest figures about early school leaving, educational attainment und youth unemployment (as introduced in the LNRP 2006)

We know that in comparison to other European countries the situation in Austria seems to be not that dramatic. But we want to emphasize that the number of unemployed young people is twice as high as the number of unemployed in general. We think that there is a high potential to implement more sustainable and sufficient measures for those young people who still need them.

Finland

The structure of the Finnish LNRP corresponds well to the Lisbon Guidelines, although references to them are only made in the appendix to the LNRP.

When it comes to consultation, the approach adopted in preparing the reform programme has allowed Parliament and other stakeholders to comment on the key contents on several occasions. Representatives of NGOs are said to have been consulted in the drawing up for the programme. A coordination group from the Ministry of Finance together with representatives of government and key ministries were in charge of drafting the report. Nothing is said about young people's involvement.

The Youth Pact is only mentioned once, in the appendix of integrated guidelines, and without a separate header. Economic, employment, educational and social policies are all said to be streamlined. Young people are said to enter the labour market late in life.

The Finnish LNRP reports on several measures aimed at improving young people's employment opportunities. Under the scheme of a social guarantee for young people, whereby young unemployed people are offered a training or workshop place within three months of unemployment, services are said to be intensified. Under this plan the young job applicant will be offered training in job-seeking, preparatory or vocational labour market training, work try-outs, work placement opportunities, training for working life, a start-up grant or subsidised work. The primary objective of the scheme is to get unskilled youths into training and education, and to increase the coverage of workshop activities from the current level of 7,000 youths (aged under 29) to 8,000. Activities are coordinated through an inter-administrative employment policy programme.

Compiled under the header "Entering the labour market earlier", education policy measures aimed at facilitating young people's education choices, improving their access to education, and reducing study times, are listed. All measures are said to have been implemented according to plan. Steps are also being taken to increase and intensify the use of voluntary additional basic education and to develop tutoring and counselling for comprehensive school leavers. An action programme has been launched in 2006 to increase well-being at school and to prevent social exclusion among young people, underlining the importance of early intervention. Structural reforms introduced in universities and polytechnics are said to focus on better quality, greater impact and effective internationalisation.

By international comparison young people in Finland have a high level of education, and Finland has reached the EU targets with respect to educational level and dropout rates for young people. The unemployment rate 2005 was 19.9 for 15-24 year olds (as compared to 8.4 for the age group 15-64). The rate of early school leaving was 9.3 in 2005 (European target: 10%). 84.8% of 22-year-olds are said to have attained at least upper secondary Education (European target: 85%). The "new start" target is achieved.

The structure of the Maltese LNRP combines national priorities with the Lisbon objectives. The Lisbon guidelines are not used as a reference framework. The Maltese LNRP include Best Practice examples for Employment. There would also seem to be an “Appendix 01 - Assessment Grid” included, but apart from the header However, this is empty.

The Maltese LNRP is said to be a result of an extensive public consultation, involving public sector, social partners, civil society and the Parliament. The Management Efficiency Unit (MEU) within the Office of the Prime Minister, is the National Reform Programme coordinator at administrative level. MEU is responsible for drafting the NRP and coordinate its’ implementation. Social dialogue is said to play important part, both in formulation and implementation. The consultation of the social partners is mainly achieved through the Council of Social and Economic Development. The involvement of young people is not mentioned.

When it comes to promoting youth employability, Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) offers different schemes targeted at youths. The Job Experience Scheme is a 13 week work experience placement for school leavers. Participants receive an allowance from ETC. The eligibility criteria was extended to include registered unemployed youth without relevant work experience. At the time of writing, 85 youths (32 men, 53 women) were said to benefit from the scheme. The Active Youth Scheme provides unemployed youths with a six month work experience placement with a non-profit making organisation. This measure is said to have reached 31 young people. The Maltese LNRP also reports on actions aimed at fostering entrepreneurship amongst unemployed people, as well as measures to make work pay.

There is a special section on “Assisting youths” under the Best practice section. In order to improve the employability of young people lacking qualifications, the Basic Employment Training Scheme was created, with duration of approximately 200 hour of training.

As regards educational systems, the launching of the strategic policy document “For all Children to Succeed” aims at strengthening the compulsory educational system and make it more responsive to children’s needs. It aims to create networks between schools, promoting high standards of performance, ensure sharing of good practices, promote the concept of life long learning and promote a culture of evaluation and internal audit. The Government is also providing teachers training, in order to ensure higher quality of educational systems. Actions are also taken in order to strengthen the provision of higher education, widen the access, improve participation rates and promote life long learning. An accreditation process for formal and informal learning, by the

Malta Qualification Council, is being designed and expected to be completed by 2007.

The Youth Pact is not mentioned.

The youth unemployment rate is not quantified in the Maltese LNRP. The general unemployment rate is 7.3%. The rate of early school leavers between 18-24 amounts to 45% (European target: 10%). However, educational attainment in the upper secondary level, there has been increase from 40.7 to 53.7 between 2000 and 2005 (European target: 85%).

Luxembourg

The structure of Luxembourg's LNRP corresponds well to the Lisbon Guidelines. These are used as a reference framework.

CGJL(National Council of Luxembourg Youth Organisations):
The Structure of the LNRP in comparison to the Lisbon Guidelines 2005-2008
The Lisbon Guidelines were used as a reference framework, so that the structure of Luxembourg's LNRP corresponds to them

The social partners are said to have been asked to participate actively in drawing up the reforms package, as well as the implementation report. Consultations were held with the Economic and Social Council. A public hearing on the implementation of the National Plan for Innovation and Full Employment was held on 24 October 2006 in Parliament in order to ensure the involvement of civil society in the subject (aired on Chamber TV). The involvement of young people is not mentioned.

CGJL:
The way in which the Member States have involved the civil society including youth organisations in the CGJL:
The way in which the Member States have involved the civil society including youth organisations in the drafting of the LNRP
The consultation with the civil society, took place in several different ways for instance in the different existing social and political commissions and committees and through a public hearing, that took place in October 2007, to which all the actors of the civil society had been asked to attempt. The NYC Luxembourg was invited to this public hearing, that took place in the national parliament and which was broadcasted on the parliament TV channel. Due to the vast discussion youth has unfortunately only been a minor subject. The hearing was organised on the 24th of October, so it took place at the very last minute. The attendants were immediately informed that amendments and comments had to be sent in at the latest, the day after the hearing in order to drafting of the LNRP

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The hearing was organised on the 24th of October, so it took place at the very last minute. The attendants were immediately informed that amendments and comments had to be sent in at the latest, the day after the hearing in order to be inserted in the official document that was still to be approved by the government. Due to these circumstances the *CGJL* did not have the necessary time to consult all of its member organisations, in order to prepare comments. Future consultations with the civil society should be organised a reasonable period before the national reports are due, to give umbrella organisations the chance to consult their members.

An intense debate of the issues though, took place in the *Conseil supérieur de la Jeunesse*, a national commission constituted by different representants of the youth sector, who meet on a regular base in order to discuss issues related to youth.

A structured dialogue with luxembourgish youth did not take place in this matter.

CGJL:

The measures of the Member States in the field of youth employment

In order to assure a better coverage of early school leavers, the *Service d'orientation professionnelle (SOP)* of the *ADEM (Administration de l'Emploi)* offers consultations for young people and adults. The service provides documentation on different professions, the education system and organizes at the request of teachers or schools vocational guidance, information and discussion sessions, especially in lower classes, in order to help the young people in finding their future professional orientation.

Young people having left the school without qualification can consult the *SOP* by their own initiative. One can thus not speak about a systematic coverage of the young people having left school early. The initiative to consult the Service of vocational guidance is to be made by the young person him/herself.

In order to coordinate the different services of vocational guidance, the guidelines mention an "*organe national des services d'information et d'orientation*". This national organ has been created in 2007 and is currently working on a national strategy for orientation throughout the whole life, axed on the fact that employers need much more flexibility to subsist on the labour market and that life-long learning plays a very consistent role. This forum is constituted by all important actors in the vocational orientation area (including Action Locale des Jeunes, SOP and soon the department of the Ministry for Family and Integration responsible for youth).

The *Action Locale pour jeunes (ALJ)* is a service of the Ministry of Education, with several regional offices, which has been established in the 1980's. Apart from many other prevention, information, training and follow-up activities supporting young people aged between 15 and 25 years in the transition from school to active life, the *ALJ* has lately been making efforts to systematically take charge of all young early school leavers. The regional offices receive a monthly bulletin of the early school leavers and try to contact them in order to determine the reasons for having quit school and offer them an individual accompaniment and follow-up with the objective to help them in the process in finding their own way to get back on track, either by going back to school or apprenticeship or by finding an employment. According to the Ministry of Education, this measure is already showing effect; unfortunately they could not yet provide the latest numbers.

The *Cours d'orientation et d'initiation professionnelles (COIP)*, a specific type of vocational school year that addresses young people who do not fulfil the criteria to reach the professional regime of the technical secondary education or who haven't acquired the necessary skills yet to enter the labour market. The objective of this course is either to prepare the young person for active life, to reintegrate him/her in the professional regime of the technical secondary education or to reinstate him/her in a class of the lower cycle of the technical secondary education.

To facilitate the integration of young people in terms of employment, a law established on the 1st of July 2007, limits the number of the measures for young job-seekers in terms of integration or definitive reinstatement in the labour market. The existing measures are replaced by the *CAE (Contrat d'appui-emploi)* and the *CIE (Contrat d'initiation à l'emploi)*, which especially aim at non-qualified young people, aged less than 30 years. Their specificity is that the young job-seeker receives a specific frame and an individual follow-up and training at his needs. The *CAE* gives young people the possibility to get an initiation, practical and theoretical training in an institution in the public sector. The *CIE* has as the ambition to offer a definitive occupation to the young person. The contract addresses the private sector and is signed with the young candidate on the condition of offering a real perspective of hiring at the end of the measure.

The *CGJL* appreciates the fact that things are finally evolving in the area of youth employment. The statistics state that most of the employment-seekers are people with low or no qualification. The presented new measures finally aim at this group and try to offer new perspectives to young employment seekers. We welcome that the old *CAT (Contrat d'Auxiliaire temporaire)* measure, which was not working properly has finally been replaced by new measures that promise to be much more effective. A very beneficial novelty surely is the individual follow-up and training at the specific needs of the young person. The private sector receives several benefits, when hiring a young

candidate, which should encourage companies to employ more young people. The project for the law around these new employment measures has been very controversial and made Luxembourg's youth gather for several protest activities.

Through these protests, youth was in the very centre of attention, made itself heard and called for reasonable action and support, activities that surely helped to finally get a focus on youth.

Many structures have been created in order to support early school leavers in finding their own way on the labour market or back to school. At this point the *CGJL* especially wants to point out the systematic individual follow up for early school leavers offered by the *ALJ*, which according to the Ministry of Education, although no concrete numbers are known so far, has already had a positive effect on the numbers of young people leaving school without qualification.

Since all these measures have just been established a short while ago, it is unfortunately not yet possible to evaluate their outcomes. Time will show how effective they are.

When it comes to improving the output of education and training systems, several endeavors are mentioned. These include the promotion of consistency and effectiveness of lifelong learning strategies; reformation of training content, introduction of quality assurance, and the setting up of a skills validation concept for informal learning. A number of certifications in the area of informal education have been granted by the Consulting Commission for training of leaders and managers in the leisure field. "A dozen or so" youth organizations participated in this pilot project. A set of measures for preventing academic failure and for increasing skill levels have been outlined in the framework of the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

The Government has launched several initiatives to increase informal apprenticeship opportunities, such as developing a volunteer service and promoting a bill on volunteer work that includes a specific measure on "volunteer work as guidance". This measure targets disadvantaged young people and has the objective of either motivating them to complete their school education or professional training, or to support them by offering a personalized professional guidance program. Measure 9 of the National Plan for Social Inclusion (2003) for which the objective was to double the portion of internships in companies from 2 to 4%, was more than achieved 2005, as internships accounted for 13% of active labor market measures. A new bill concerning professional training courses introduced at the National center for continuing vocational training (CNFPC). The courses are directed at young people who do not meet the criteria for entering the professional sections of technical secondary education. Unskilled youths who have left school will perform volunteer service. Luxembourg's LNRP also reports on new requirements of ADEM to offer an individual activation agreement to each young person no later than their third month.

CGJL:

For a century, the immigration has played a determining role in the economic development of Luxemburg. Luxemburg's population is characterized by a high percentage of foreigners; about 40 % of the global population does not have the luxembourgish nationality. The rate of pupils of foreign origin in the school system was 37, 9% in 2005/2006. For these pupils the bilingual system in the schools is often at the cause of difficulties and at the origin of numerous inequalities. One of the priorities of the educational system is to take care of this increasing heterogeneity and to reduce the impact of the social and cultural differences during young peoples' educational career.

One of the measures proposed by the Luxemburg LNRP in this context is the "*Cellule d'accueil scolaire pour nouveaux arrivants (CASNA)*". It has the mission to make integration in schools easier for young people of foreign origin, aged older than 12 years, by receiving their families and by informing them as far as possible in their mother tongue about the luxembourgish school system. Based on a student file, the young newcomer is guided towards a secondary school corresponding to his/her profile. The CASNA offers teachers the possibility to consult didactic materials.

In this context the "*Service de la scolarisation des enfants étrangers*" of the Ministry of Education has a department of intercultural mediators at the service of schools and parents. These mediators are supposed to facilitate communication between school institutions and the families of foreign origin.

Over the last years the educational system has undergone some basic changes. It turns away from the importance of the capacity to reproduce knowledge towards the acquisition of basic competences in order to make the system more flexible. These and other changes will make it possible to switch from one educational branch to another and allow more young people to access higher education. A pilot project has been launched in September 2003 (*PROCI - Projet pilote cycle inférieur, 2003-2007*), which focused on a better professional orientation, a specific follow-up of the pupil, a more nuanced evaluation and a network between participating schools. Some of the elements of the PROCI have already been transferred to national level, the overall evaluation proving their positive effect.

The Ministry of Education has proposed a reform of the school law in which the Ministry suggests a new structure for primary education. It is supposed to set the frame in order to better respond to the needs of every child with the objective to give every young person the opportunity to succeed and underlines the importance of preventive action especially aiming at young people in a difficult situation, who are more susceptible of leaving school early.

To widen the offer of possibilities in the field of non formal education and in order to give new perspectives to young people who do not know what professional career they would like to aim at, the National Youth Service (SNJ) has launched on the 1st of October 2007, the voluntary Service for orientation (Service volontaire d'orientation (SVO)). The SVO addresses all young residents, aged between 16 and 30, who finished compulsory education and who are motivated to make a commitment in a project of public utility in a cultural, socio-cultural, socio-educational domain or in the area of environmental protection. The SVO offers young people a practical experience in an organisation where they receive a personalized follow-up.

Since October 2007, forty young people are to make their SVO in one of the approved organisations.

Within the framework of the fast evolving labour market, it is important to consider the skills young people can acquire during voluntary activities, as essential basic competences to the active participation in society and as key qualifications in the frame of the employability of young people. In this context the SNJ and the FNEL (Federation des Eclaireurs et Eclaireuses du Luxembourg) elaborated a device to provide young volunteers with a certificate of skills they acquired within the framework of non-formal education (Attestation des compétences acquises dans le cadre de l'éducation non formelle). This certificate can be delivered to all young people, at the age of at least 18, who have continuously and at least for a year been active, in an organisation or a youth movement, or within the framework of a project and who did a training course in the youth sector. In the same context the SNJ and the CIJ (Centre Information Jeunes) have created the internet platform "doit4you.lu", which works sort of like a stock exchange for information about student jobs. The website has met enormous success. Since its launch approximately 4500 young people joined the community and in 2007 more than 1200 jobs have been offered.

The CGJL deeply welcomes all measures taken in order to finally improve the integration of young people of foreign origin. It is time to overcome the inequalities these young people often face in the educational system. The Ministry of Education has herefore offered quite a few initiatives, by making

the school system more flexible, by focussing on a more personalized follow-up of the pupils and by preventive action against early school leaving. The planned law on education will probably strengthen this process and give young people in difficult situation from primary education on a frame where they find support.

A very interesting initiative appears to be the lately initiated SVO. It offers young people the interesting opportunity to explore their fields of interests in the framework of a recognized voluntary service with all attached benefits. The individual follow-up as well as the received training opens new perspectives to young people, who so far did not know what professional career they want to choose. The actual interest to participate in this SVO shows that

there was a definite need for this offer that at the first glance appeared to be a measure aiming at reducing the percentage of young employment seekers. An evaluation will show if the overall objective of the measure can be reached. The official recognition and certificating of the skills acquired during a voluntary activity is an evolution the NYC Luxembourg highly welcomes. It should be promoted and lobbied for as far as possible in all employment sectors, so that it really helps young people in reaching their professional aims.

The Youth Pact lacks a separate heading, but four objectives under the “Guidelines for employment policies” chapter, are referred to as an implementation measure of the Pact.⁹

CGJL:

The European Youth Pact is not mentioned as such in the LNRPs, but youth is present in many of the sections treated. Employment, education, work-life balance and volunteering as some of the main priorities of the European Youth Pact are referred to in the guidelines. Even though the CGJL is satisfied that these issues are referred to, a mentioning of the European Youth Pact would certainly give a bigger weight to youth related issues.

The youth unemployment rate and the early school leavers rate are not quantified. The youth educational attainment (20-24) is 71.1 (European target: 85%). The “new start” target is not referred to.

CGJL:

There have not been any late statistical numbers about early school leaving. In 2005 the rate of early school leavers as been 12,9% according to a report of the Ministry of Education. A report¹⁰ published in September 2006 tries to give newer information, but which can not be considered as statistical reference. According to this report in between the 1st of November 2004 and the 30th of April 2006, 2422 young people, aged less then 24 years, have left school without certification, this would be 6,5% of the young reference population.

⁹ These objectives are “Re-evaluation of assuming responsibility for school children outside of classroom hours” “Meeting more of the cost for young people and flexible instruments for getting in and out of the labor market”, the “Certification of skills acquired in the area of informal education” and “Increase the number of informal apprenticeship possibilities”.

¹⁰ “Le décrochage scolaire au Luxembourg. Parcours et caractéristiques des jeunes en rupture scolaire. Raisons entraînant l’arrêt des études, Ministère de l’Education nationale et de la Formation professionnelle, Septembre 2006

Some of these early school leavers went back to school (14,2%)¹¹ another 10,7% registered in a school outside the luxembourgish borders.

The area of youth unemployment also lacks precise statistics. According to a *STATEC (Service central de la statistique et des études économiques)* report from July 2007¹², 5% of all young people aged between 15 and 29 years are unemployed.

Following the latest statistics of the *ADEM*, the unemployment rate of young people under the age of 30 years has been 29,4% of all unemployed people in December 2007.

¹¹ The percentage out of those 1702 young early school leavers that the researchers managed to contact.

¹² Bulletin du Statec N°7-2007 : Les jeunes face au marché du travail. Version provisoire. Statect.