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NEGOTIATE

Overcoming job-insecurity in Europe

NEGOTIATE – Negotiating early job-insecurity and labour market exclusion in Europe

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1 Introduction

As a Non-EU member Switzerland is not obliged to implement the Youth Guarantee scheme. As such, the national resonance regarding this EU programme is very modest and there is little benefit in measuring the discourse on the Youth Guarantee in Switzerland. In search of a comparable policy event we decided to focus on a public referendum from the year 2003 that advocates the improvement of young people's prospects in education and in the labour market, which would enable us to draw some equivalent conclusions on the discourse surrounding youth policy in Switzerland. Similar to the EU's Youth Guarantee, the Swiss referendum *Apprenticeship Initiative* ("*Lehrstelleninitiative*") – proposed a state-regulated guarantee on Vocational Education and Training (VET).

First we will provide a summary and analysis of the national discourse on the *Apprenticeship Initiative* that was clearly rejected in 2003 in section two. The discourse involves the opponents arguing from an economically liberal point of view, showing reluctance to give more power to the central state and the proponents emphasising the decrease in the amount of apprenticeship positions in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Since no national department for youth exists in Switzerland, the authorities responsible for youth policy are located on a cantonal or local level. Hence, we propose to take a look at the cantonal implementation of some youth policies in section three. The Canton of Jura as one of the only two Swiss cantons, which have a youth guarantee in their cantonal constitution, will be analysed as a case study.

Three Swiss Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) measures for young people will be presented in section four. The focus will be on the horizontal and vertical coordination of these measures, how they are implemented in different cantons, and the evaluation of these programmes.

2 The Swiss Apprenticeship Initiative

2.1 History and Claims of the Apprenticeship Initiative

The *Apprenticeship Initiative* was submitted on the 26th of October 1999 by the *Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund)* in cooperation with left-wing youth parties.¹ Its basic claim was to establish a constitutional right for a sufficient amount of apprenticeship positions, for which the federal government and the cantons should be responsible. In order to do so, the federal government ought to establish a fund, which is financed by contributions from all employers. In consideration of the expenses caused by offering training positions, employers who already provide training positions of high quality would contribute less. The allocation of the fund amongst the cantons would be

¹ In Switzerland with its semi-direct democratic system, any group or individual is able to force a national referendum on a certain topic if they are able to collect 100'000 valid signatures of Swiss citizens that are entitled to vote.

coordinated by the federal government and the cantons would be responsible for developing and implementing the measures in cooperation with the social partners. How the specific measures would be carried out is not defined in the initiative's text.²

The similarities to the EU's Youth Guarantee lie in the constitutional right for sufficient vocational education and training (which, as a binding promise, is a key point of the Youth Guarantee concept) and in the mixture of vertical and horizontal coordination: The federal government has the responsibility of creating a sufficient amount of training positions, by arranging the establishment of the VET fund and organising the allocation of its resources. In cooperation with the social partners, the cantons are in charge of budgeting the resources. One crucial difference is that the *Apprenticeship Initiative*, although implicitly aimed at adolescents, does not have an age limit as is the case with the EU's Youth Guarantee.

The referendum on the 18th of May 2003 was clearly rejected with 68.4% of votes against it (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 2003). The approval rate was distinctively higher in the French-speaking Switzerland with 43% and in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland with 39% than in the German-speaking part (24%). Such a gap is not unusual for Switzerland since the French-speaking part is traditionally less critical towards proposals initiated from the politically left side of the political spectrum. It is in line with this insight that the voting behaviour was largely polarised based on the positions on a left-right scale and party membership respectively. Accordingly, only members of the Socialdemocratic Party (SP) supported the initiative with an approval rate of 74% within the party. The share of supporters within the other parties lay around 20% or less³ (Longchamp et al. 2003: 5f).

Six years after the rejection of the *Apprenticeship Initiative* a separate cantonal apprenticeship referendum took place in Canton St. Gallen (27th of September 2009). The initiative – submitted by the Young Socialist Party (JUSO) – demanded the creation of a fund similar to the fund suggested in the *Apprenticeship Initiative*. The St. Gallen referendum was also rejected with a high share of 62.6% of votes against it (Giezendanner 2009). The discourse was comparable to the one on the national *Apprenticeship Initiative*, which is outlined in more detail in the following section. This outcome demonstrates that in 2009, shortly after the peak of a shortage of apprenticeship positions in the country, at least in Canton St. Gallen, people's attitude was still very much against towards a more centralised regulation of the apprenticeship market.

² Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei. Eidgenössische Volksinitiative 'für ein ausreichendes Berufsbildungsangebot (Lehrstellen-Initiative). <https://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis284t.html>. [18.08.2016].

³ One must mention that the Swiss population has always been much more critical towards left-wing initiatives and referenda and that there has been a long overall tendency to vote 'No' against people's initiatives in general. In general, this makes it harder to assess people's contentual attitude towards a subject that was voted on.

2.2 Discourse on the Apprenticeship Initiative

2.2.1 Federal Council and Parliament

The Swiss Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) recommended that both the people and Parliament vote against the *Apprenticeship Initiative*. Despite appreciating the idea of providing more training positions, the Federal Council rejected the initiative, reasoning with two arguments: First, it was assumed that the implementation of the initiative would lead to more bureaucracy and administration. Second, the initiative's approach was seen as undifferentiated, since different professional branches require different measures. The Council also expressed its concern that the firms' incentives to provide training positions might be lowered by a state-based educational institution and that the strong practical relevance of the existing dual-tracked VET system might therefore be threatened (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 2000: 98). Furthermore, the Federal Council asserted that existing laws and guidelines already provide sufficient ground to enable all people to have access to an appropriate education in Switzerland. According to the Council, education is connected with individual choice and should not become a universal right (ibid.: 112). Generally, the Federal Council embraced the existing system of horizontal cooperation between the administration, the firms and the social partners and was clearly against a more top-down approach of vertical cooperation with more power being given to the central state.

As an indirect counterproposal to the *Apprenticeship Initiative* the government and parliament put the freshly revised *Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET)* to the vote. This law was passed from the government to the parliament in September 2000 and was accepted in December 2002 with a slight modification (note the strategic deferral by two years aiming with the aim of using it as an instrument against the *Apprenticeship Initiative*). It came into effect in 2004, after the *Apprenticeship Initiative* in May 2003.⁴ The Federal Council and the parliament used the *revised Federal Act on VPET* as an argument against the initiative. The council promoted the new law in its campaign against the initiative by highlighting the following characteristics: First, the new law allows more flexibility and lowers the fees for businesses by increasing the federal share of public expenses from 20 to 25 per cent, and second, it creates the possibility to force industry-specific solidarity contributions (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 2000: 112). One could conclude that with the establishment of the *revised Federal Act on VPET* Swiss politics reacted to the shortage of apprenticeship positions in the 90s. An important new feature was the above mentioned possibility to establish industry-specific cantonal solidarity funds. In the cantons Fribourg, Neuchâtel and Geneva such solidarity funds were already in force before the revision of the Federal Act and in other cantons, such as Canton Zurich, it was implemented as a result of the revision. Nationwide professional and industrial associations are now able to force all of the associated firms to contribute to a solidarity fund if at least 30% of the

⁴ Der Bundesrat. Das Portal der Schweizer Regierung: 412.10. Bundesgesetz vom 13. Dezember 2002 über die Berufsbildung (Berufsbildungsgesetz, BBG). Chronologie. <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20001860/history.html> [22.08.2016].

firms (with at least 30% of an industry's employees) already contribute to an existing fund (Fleischmann 2004: 1). Providing the people give their consent in a vote, cantons may establish a solidarity fund. Until now, 30 associations and eight cantons have established such a mandatory fund.⁵ In chapter three there will be an overview of the cantonal measures.

The counterproposal contributed to the *Apprenticeship Initiative* being rejected by the voters and both chambers of the parliament. The former Secretary of Commerce Joseph Deiss (member of the Christian Democratic People's Party), an opponent of the *Apprenticeship Initiative*, interpreted the result of the vote as the people's rejection of a more top-down, centralised form of political regulation. Despite agreeing with the voting result and his belief that the existing system of cooperation works well, he urged the firms to keep to their responsibility, to provide more apprenticeship positions and contribute more to the financing of VET. In the same vein, the parliament also supported the horizontal cooperation between the involved actors and objected to a more vertical cooperation with the concern of too much centralised state intervention. Personal responsibility and market mechanisms are seen as well functioning and the *Apprenticeship Initiative* was outlined as aiming towards functioning the same ways as a planned economy. The *revised Federal Act on VPET*, which was initially designed independently of the initiative, was promoted. Furthermore, it was considered as being exaggerated to enshrine the right to VET in the constitution. Altogether, it was said that the need for action on a small scale was acknowledged, more financial aid for VET was needed, but that state-operated measures should not be at the centre of these measures (Raths 2003: 4f).

2.2.2 Economic Associations

Besides the Federal Council and the parliament, the major economic associations and the farmers' association were also against the *Apprenticeship Initiative*. Two months before the referendum *Economiesuisse* (*Swiss Business Federation*) presented arguments from an economic perspective. *Economiesuisse*, the *Swiss Employers Confederation* (*Schweizerischer Arbeitgeberverband*) and the *Swiss Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises* (*Schweizerischer Gewerbeverband*) warned against too much state intervention, bureaucracy and overregulation. They were concerned that the initiative would lead to disincentives: First, they claimed that firms would rather financially contribute to the proposed fund than provide training positions. Second, they warned that pupils would not strive for good school grades anymore if training positions were guaranteed. Furthermore, they asserted that the state-run educational institutions would be the main beneficiaries (Raths 2003: 3f). *Economiesuisse* was also concerned that the practice-oriented dual VET system would be threatened by the initiative and favoured the *revised Federal Act on VPET* (ib.: 6).

The economic associations as powerful opponents of the *Apprenticeship Initiative* took up a liberal position in the state-versus-market discourse by expressing the fear of increasing

⁵ Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation SBFI:
<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/de/home/themen/berufsbildung/berufsbildungsfonds.html> [17.10.2016]

state regulations and the increasing imposition of financial burdens on the economy. They were hardly addressing the guaranteeing quality of the initiative with its central aim of fixing the right to education within the constitution.

2.2.3 Proponents

Within their discourse, the proponents of the *Apprenticeship Initiative*, led by the *Swiss Federation of Trade Unions*, focused primarily on practical, descriptive arguments such as the provision of training positions or the financing of the VET system. They argued that there had been a shortage of apprenticeship positions since the mid-1990s and the adaptation of the VET system to the structural transformation of the employment situation (towards more IT and communication technology jobs as well as other new services) was seen as deficient. Further, they put forward that between 15 and 20 per cent of yearly school leavers lack accredited VET qualification. Businesses that provide training positions have an additional financial burden in comparison to those that don't. The so-called "free riders" should be obliged to pay a compensatory fee to the national fund (Jans 2001: 7). Peter Sigerist, the former secretary for VET and youth of the *Federation of Trade Unions*, claimed that the financial contributions of the federal government and of the businesses are not high enough for the VET system to function sustainably. He proposed to enforce a liability for VET contributions for all enterprises in order to lower these structural imbalances (Sigerist 2002).

Answering the opponents' concerns, the proponents denied that the *Apprenticeship Initiative* would harm the Swiss dual VET system, which is based on the horizontal cooperation between the administration and businesses. The opponents' arguments concerning more bureaucracy and an increase in state intervention were answered with a principal denial and with the claim that the new approach would be possible within the existing administration (Sigerist 2003). There was no explicit demand for giving more power to the central state. The discourse was lively, even if only due to the necessity of responding to the opponents' arguments. All in all, the proponents approved of the existing horizontal cooperation.

2.2.4 The voters

The voting behaviour was in line with the political left-right juxtaposition. A VOX post-vote analysis gave the following summary: The arguments of the supporters of the initiative referred to the responsibilities of the economic actors, the country's and youth's future perspectives, the general importance of education, and the contemporary need for more training positions. Opponents mostly referred to the personal responsibility of both economic actors and adolescents, the fact that the initiative is not viable and that its aims cannot be forcibly implemented (Blaser et al. 2003:4). Researchers from the political department of the University of Bern confirmed that it was rather the voters' political attitude than their social position that was crucial for their choice (Institut für Politikwissenschaft 2003).

2.2.5 Conclusion

After looking at the discourse and the arguments on the proponents' as well as the opponents' side, it becomes clear that there was a classical political distribution according to the left-right divided, which is not untypical for Swiss votes. The pivotal questions in the predominant discourse were: First, should there be a centralised solution with more state regulation(s) rather than a liberal economy with more personal responsibility and a stronger market. Second, is there a need for a new paradigm or would changes within the old system of horizontal cooperation between businesses, the administration, and social partners be more fruitful? Although the proponents defended the old horizontal paradigm and denied that too much state intervention and bureaucracy would be the consequence if the initiative were accepted, they did not manage to define the discourse. In general, there was a consensus regarding the fact that cyclical economic developments can lead to less training positions, but opinions concerning how to alleviate the problem diverged across different interest groups.

3. Youth Guarantee on the Cantonal Level

Although national aspirations to fix the right for VET in the constitution failed with the rejection of the *Apprenticeship Initiative* in 2003, there are two cantons in Switzerland that have enshrined the right to VET in their cantonal constitutions: The French-speaking cantons Geneva and Jura. This section consists of an overview of the cantonal legal situations and a small case study on the cantonal experience in the Jura. The latter is primarily based on an interview with the head of the *Directorate of Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education (Service de la formation des niveaux secondaire II et tertiaire [SFO])*, which is part of the department of education, culture and sports in Canton Jura.

3.1 Overview of Cantonal Legislative Situations

Table 1 illustrates the cantonal diversity regarding the legislative regulation of Vocational Education and Training (VET). The first column indicates whether a cantonal solidarity fund has been established for VET that was enabled through the *revised Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training* as of 2004. The following columns describe the content of the cantonal constitutions that concerns VET: The second column indicates whether the right for VET is enshrined in the cantonal constitution. The third column indicates whether there are any other forms of promises (*"Gewährleistung"*) that ensure VET, but are not strictly legally binding. The fourth column indicates whether there are any measures that remotely promote access to VET (*"fördert die berufliche Ausbildung"*). The fifth column indicates whether there is a constitutionally based promise to organise full-time schools for vocational education (this does not mean that cantons with no such constitutional declaration do not organise such VET schools). The sixth column shows whether financial contributions to VET are ensured by the canton (again, this does not mean that cantons with no such constitutional declaration do not provide financial funding).

Table 1: Legislative compilation of cantons regarding VET

Canton	Cantonal fund	Guarantee	Assurance	Promotion	VE schools	Funding assured	Not specified
Aargau				x			
Appenzell A				x			
Appenzell I.							x
Basel-Land			x				
Basel-Stadt			x				
Bern				x			
Fibourg	x		x				
Geneva	x	x					
Glarus				x	x		
Graubünden			x				
Jura	x	x					
Luzern							x
Neuchâtel	x		x				
Nidwalden				x	x		
Obwalden				x			
Schaffhausen						x	
Schwyz			x				
Solothurn				x	x		
St. Gallen						x	
Tessin	x						x
Thurgau					x		
Uri				x			
Vaud	x		x				
Valais/Wallis	x						x
Zug							x
Zürich	x			x			
Total	8	2	7	9	4	2	5
<p><i>Sources: Der Bundesrat. Das Portal der Schweizer Regierung⁶, Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation SBFI⁷</i></p>							

⁶ <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/13.html> [27.10.2016].

⁷ <https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/de/home/themen/berufsbildung/berufsbildungsfonds.html> [17.10.2016].

The column “not specified” indicates that there is no reference to VET in the respective cantonal constitution. The table shows that there are eight cantons that have established a cantonal fund for VET, which was one of the *Apprenticeship Initiative’s* basic claims: Firms in these cantons have to pay a contribution to a cantonal solidarity fund that will be redistributed towards measures that concern VET. Two of these eight cantons have included the right to VET in their cantonal constitutions, which is another basic claim of the initiative.

The firms’ contributions to these compulsory funds vary between 1 per mille (Zurich) and 8 per cent (Valais/Wallis) of the total wages that they pay. In some cantons the local authorities contribute to the funding (e.g. in Fribourg with 50% coming from the municipalities, 25% from the canton and 25% from the employers). Depending on the canton-specific regulations, the fund can amongst other aspects include the financing of infrastructure needed for VET, inter-company courses for students, courses for instructors, and contributions to educational centres – regardless of the respective sector (Kägi et al. 2008: 15f). Enterprises that already make essential contributions to VET, e.g. by contributing to an industry-specific solidarity fund or by making adequate payments regarding VET are by law not obliged to additionally contribute to the cantonal funds for VET.⁸ Before the enactment of this regulation there were complaints about double payments. According to this evaluation, in some cases there were unclear distinctions between different funds on the one hand and between industries on the other hand. This has led to coordination problems and has given rise to administrative efforts. Yet, the overall acceptance of industry-specific funds that promote VET with respect to branch- or industry-specific needs is high and the solidarity is generally valued (Kägi et al. 2008). The basic idea of the cantonal and industry-specific funds, which is to create solidarity between enterprises that contribute to VET by educating apprentices and others that do not contribute (the so called “free-riders”), can generally be considered to be implemented.

3.2. Case Study: Canton Jura

Jura together with Geneva are the only cantons in Switzerland with a VET guarantee enshrined in their constitution. We focus on Jura, the youngest of the Swiss cantons, which is a largely rural canton with only 72’800 inhabitants. In an interview, the Head of the directorate of Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education (SFO) of the Canton Jura (Expert 1), described the article that has been in the constitution since 1977 - after the Jura split up from the Canton Bern at the end of a long-lasting dispute – as a “humanistic idea” that probably never had a fundamental impact, not least because there have been few problems providing enough apprenticeship positions in Canton Jura. At the moment the number of young people neither in education, employment or training (NEET) after compulsory education amounts to 0.5%. According to Expert 1, because of such a low level, it is not a subject of any significance for the public debate and there has never been a

⁸ Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation SBFI:
<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbf/de/home/themen/berufsbildung/berufsbildungsfonds.html> [17.10.2016]

discussion about the article in the constitution. Currently, in 2016, there are actually more apprenticeship positions than young people seeking a placement and the vast majority of adolescents are enrolled in a post-compulsory education.⁹ An important factor that contributes significantly to the high success rate of post-compulsory education and the low rate of adolescents without an apprenticeship place after compulsory education in the Canton Jura is what Expert 1 labels as “cooperation culture”: The geographical and personal proximity of the involved actors including the representatives of the administration, executive members of the cantonal government, business owners, social partners and apprentices creates informal personal relations and trust, which facilitates the process of finding solutions. He stresses the benefits of this informal type of horizontal cooperation that leads to a high level of personal responsibility of the different actors. Altogether, the federalist model of dual tracked VET is seen as a “success story”. The proximity between the involved actors leads to a certain degree of mutual trust. Many firm owners regard the state or the canton as “helping” as a help. Despite the overall success, Expert 1 admits that this rather conservative system could result in a low level of innovation and a lack of vision. However, the limited education budget of the small canton he represents may foster creativity that could support the process of solving such a problem.

The expert assumes that the businesses’ trust in the administration is strengthened by the existence of a cantonal VET fund. The fund was established in 2007 and was accepted with the large support of about two-thirds of the population. Although the youth unemployment rate has not changed (staying approximately at the same very low level) he sees the establishment of the fund as a general success. He says that after a certain initial opposition from firms that were reluctant to pay an extra fee, business owners that train young people started to realise that they occasionally get benefits from the additionally paid money, for example in form of courses for businesses or professional associations, specific training infrastructure needed for training, extra wage contributions for examiners who participate in VET exams, or the partial financing of exchange projects. To conclude, in the Canton of Jura there have been few problems concerning VET from the beginning, as the youth NEET rate after compulsory school has always been very low. Hence, there is no measurable impact of the VET guarantee enshrined in the constitution.

⁹ In early 2016 a working group that focuses on refugees was established. The group aims to clarify how refugees can be integrated into VET-structures more easily in order to facilitate their entrance into the labour market. Directly involved actors are the directorate of vocational education and training and higher education (SFO), the directorate of compulsory schooling, the vocational information centre (BIZ), the social welfare office and the asylum reception centre (Association jurassienne d’accueil des migrants (AJAM)).

4 ALMP Measures for youth

The Swiss Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) landscape shows great diversity and there is a lack of statistics that summarise and evaluate these ALMP measures. Since the federal government has no youth department, youth policy is located at the cantonal and the local levels. Due to Swiss federalism, the cantons are relatively free to implement their own youth ALMP measures. Hence, comparing different measures at a national level presents itself as a challenging task. Despite the cross-cantonal diversity, there are a few national programmes that are centrally defined by the federal government. The relatively loose framework defined by the federation allows the actual implementation of the programmes to vary from canton to canton. Hence, a comparison is nevertheless possible to some extent. In the following we present three national ALMP measures for youth, analyse their coordination structures and evaluate their impact.

4.1 SEMO – Motivation Semester

The Motivation Semester (*SEmestres de MOTivation*, abbreviated as *SEMO*) is one of the most important labour market integration measures for young people who are eligible for Unemployment Insurance (UI). Launched in 1996, the target group of this measure consists of people between the age of 15 and 24 years who have not yet completed their upper-secondary education. In September 2014, 5'367 out of 22'811 young people, who participated in an Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) programme in Switzerland, were enrolled in a SEMO. At the end of the programme (by August 2015) 51% of the participants were enrolled in a VET programme, 10% found another solution (internship or job) and 39% were still without any transitional solution (Villiger 2015: 12).

4.1.1 Responsible Actors

The basic conditions of SEMO are defined by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), while the measure is financed by the UI and carried out by the cantons. Each canton takes care of its own projects, which in turn are administered by different associations, foundations and businesses. Due to Switzerland's federal system, the particularities and the relative autonomy of the cantons, the guidelines set by the SECO are intentionally formulated in a vague way and there is a great diversity between the SEMO programmes of the various cantons.

4.1.2 Financial Structure

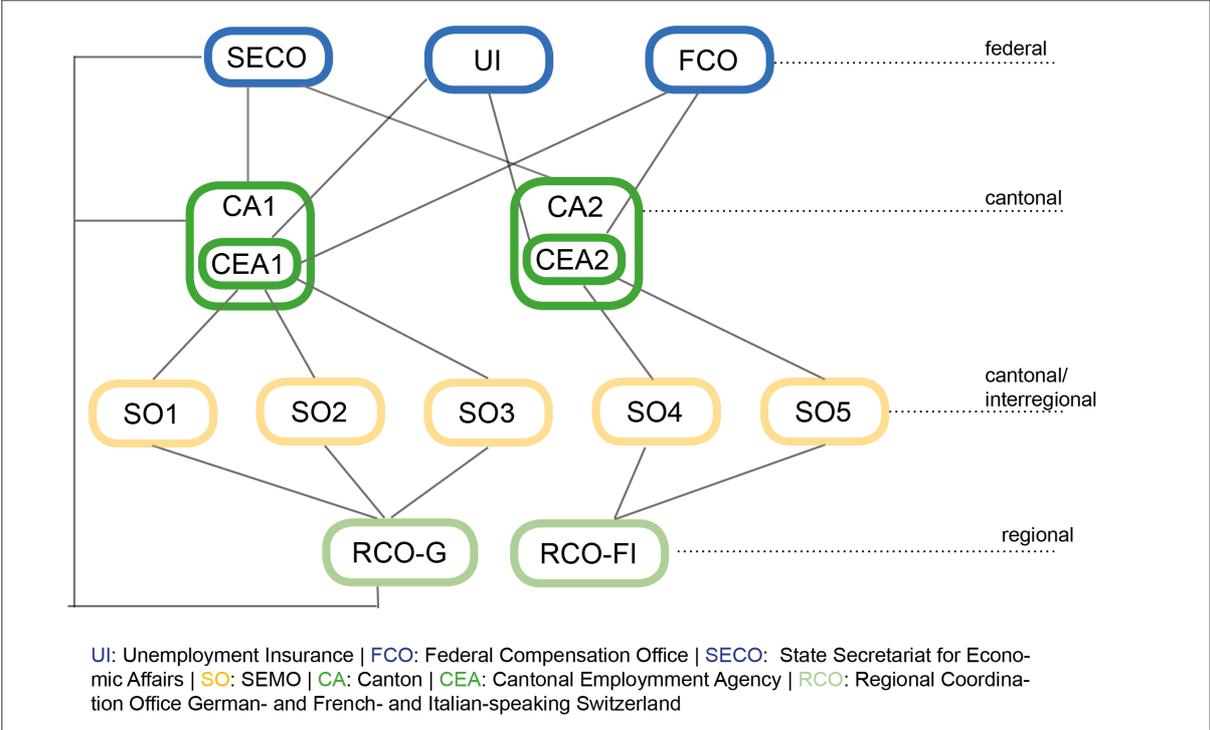
The funding of SEMO consists of two parts. According to art. 97b of the unemployment insurance ordinance AVIV the UI is legally obliged to contribute to SEMO and assumes the responsibility for the main financing (93%) of the SEMO. The other 7% are contributions from other institutions such as social services (Villiger 2015: 12). This means that all financial regulations regarding SEMO that are financed by the UI are part of Swiss federal law. In order to receive financial support from the UI, which is distributed by the cantonal employment agency, the programme applicants as well as the local actors such as the social agencies or private companies that offer SEMO programmes have to conform with the laws

stated in the unemployment insurance act (AVIG). Based on the calculation of 24'000 CHF per person and depending on the number of job seekers, each canton receives a share of the total amount of 68'500'000 CHF that the UI spends annually on SEMO. Once the money is distributed amongst the cantons, the cantons are free to decide how and on what programmes they want to spend the budget: For example, on the *Regional Employment Centre (RAV)*, on ALMP programmes for adults, or on ALMP for young people such as SEMO.

4.1.3 Coordination of Public Actors at the Local Level

The local SEMO programme providers are obliged to involve the cantonal employment agencies during the planning phases of their projects (art. 98a AVIV). This was made mandatory by a written petition, which was submitted by the cantonal employment agencies to the *Federal Compensation Office* (see Figure 1 below). In order to be funded by governmental money, the local actors need to sign a contract with the *Regional Employment Centre (RAV)*. On a regional level, the local SEMO programmes are intercantationally coordinated by one coordination office of the German-speaking part and one of the French- and Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. Both are in contact with the individual SEMO programme providers in the according region. Because of the unique nature of every canton the content as well as structure of SEMOs differ significantly. Facing this diversity and lack of unity, the SEMO coordination office organises meetings, workshops and coaching training courses aiming to facilitate the communication between the various SEMO organisations and to create an intercantonal network, from which the organisations can benefit (Expert 2, SEMO coordinator in German-speaking Switzerland, Canton Zug). The coordination office

Figure 1: Coordination and Organisation of SEMO



also offers to represent the SEMO organisations when contacting the cantonal authorities when there is a need for communication or a crisis situation going on. Further, the coordination office is in contact with State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and sends it annual activity reports about its performance.

4.1.4 Coordination and Organisation

The requirements for the implementation of SEMO programmes are specified in the unemployment insurance law and the unemployment insurance ordinance (AVIG/AVIV) and include the regulations issued by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). SEMOs are primarily coordinated by the cantons and are in contractual relationships with different local actors. 14% of them are individual businesses, limited companies or incorporated companies. The other 86 % consist of the public administration, associations and non-profit societies. The variety of organisational forms can be demonstrated by the example of Canton Basel-Stadt, where the Office for Economy and Work has signed contracts with five different local actors who coordinate different SEMO programmes and appear in different legal forms.

Compared to Canton Basel-Stadt, its neighbour Canton Basel-Landschaft does not offer any SEMO programmes. The cantons enjoy extensive freedom in developing their own labour market measures. Each canton has its own guidelines regarding the content of their programmes: In canton Zurich, school-based training must not exceed one day a week, whereas in canton Zug the young people enrolled in SEMO have school-based training two days a week. In an interview with the coordinator of the *SEMO coordination office of German-speaking Switzerland* (Expert 2), it was emphasised that promoting a syllabus with requirement standards amongst all cantons is hardly possible. The problems that arise from such a loose vertical coordination are manifold: The *Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology* (BBT, new SERI¹⁰) stated in a document released in 2011 that this leads to various problems such as a lack of sharing knowledge, overlapping and dysfunctions (BBT 2011: 36). As a response to this coordination problem, a new interinstitutional form of cooperation was created: The *VET Case Management programme* (CM BB), a centralised organisation for vocational education and training (for detailed information about CM BB see section 4.3). Yet, despite new attempts to introduce more regulation, the decisions concerning how to build a network with CM BB and other ALMP measures or with the educational system and potential employers lie in the hands of the individual actors and are organised locally. The cooperation between the different actors varies greatly from canton to canton. In Canton Zug for example SEMO has a well-functioning cooperation between the CM BB and the institution responsible for career counselling, whereas in Canton Zurich the CM BB is overburdened and does not have the capacity to be in intensive communication with the SEMO office (Expert 2).

¹⁰ As part of an institutional reform, BBT changed to SERI in 2013. The State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI, <https://www.sbfi.admin.ch>) is in charge of the strategic governance and development of vocational and professional education and training. In this article the BBT is equated to the SERI.

4.1.5 Conclusion

The SEMO is defined by a loose vertical coordination and the horizontal coordination lies in the responsibility of the cantons i.e. the cantonal employment agencies and other cantonal departments. The programme is financed largely by the UI and to a small part by social services. Until 2015, the success rate was defined as the success of SEMO participants finding any transitional solutions and has been persistent over the past years. In 2015 the success rate was 61%. In the new evaluation as of 2016, the definition of the success rate is differentiated between a full and a partial transitional solution. A partial transitional solution is given if the SEMO participant is able to find an internship or a job and is therefore no more dependent on the UI. A full transitional solution, which is the actual aim of the SEMO, is to enable the participants to enter a VET programme (or a grammar school), which would enable them the acquisition of a degree that would allow them to find a qualified job. Yet, the new evaluation criteria do not measure “soft factors” such as subjective well-being or personal growth. This could be seen as a shortcoming of the evaluation statistics, as since the level of the admission criteria of the SEMO is very low compared to other ALMP programmes for young people, SEMO participants often show difficult life trajectories, not uncommonly involving drug abuse or criminal activities (Expert 2). Including “soft factors” in the evaluation scheme could serve a better understanding of the impact of the SEMO.

4.2 “Praxisfirma” – Practice Firm

Praxisfirma is a scheme, which offers work at hypothetical companies to people with a VET certificate. These companies can mainly be found within the field of administration. It is a national programme executed by the local cantonal employment agencies. This measure has enabled 23'000 people to be trained in 17 years, with an overall placement rate of 51%.¹¹ In 2012, 2'441 young people participated in this programme and its costs amounted to 20 million CHF (SECO 2015: 3). Besides the SEMO, this is another numerically important labour market integration measure for young people who claim UI. The guiding principles of the strategy of the programme are learning by doing and improving professional skills. Skill improvement and the introduction to work life should ease the entrance into the labour market. The practice firms trade with fictional products and services and the participants receive a monetary compensation for six months. They act like real businesses and comprise different departments like sales, marketing, and administration. Young people who have already completed a VET programme are given priority in this ALMP.

4.2.1 Responsible Actors

The implementation of a new *Praxisfirma* and its administrative lead is executed by an *organising institution*. The *organising institutions* are under the supervision of the *cantonal employment agency*. They manage the project funding, define the field of activity in which the practice firms operate (e.g. sport, furniture, services), choose the practice firms' names, build the structure of the organisation and define the legal form of the practice firms (i.e. Public Limited Companies, Limited Liability Companies, associations etc.). The goals of a

¹¹ <http://www.helvartis.ch/en/data/> [05.01.2017]

Praxisfirma are based on a performance agreement, which is signed by the *cantonal employment agency* and the *organising institutions* (SECO 2014: 2).

4.2.2 Structure of Financing

Praxisfirma, financed by the *UI*, counts as an educational measure and is one of three measures against unemployment that are listed in the unemployment insurance law (Art. 59c bis. and 60 AVIG). *Helvartis* (<http://www.helvartis.ch>), a non-profit organisation¹², is responsible for the coordination of the different (approx. 60) practice firms. It hands in a petition for the funding of practice firms to the *Federal Compensation Office* (ZAS) once a year. This petition is examined by the *Federal Compensation Office*, who decides to which extent the financing will take place. In 2014 the financial costs amounted to 13.5 million CHF (SECO 2015: 3).

4.2.3 Coordination of Public Actors at the Local Level

Helvartis coordinates the work of multiple practice firms (Jugendsession, 2014). Local actors do not have the ability to create a *Praxisfirma* on their own. All practice firms are affiliated with *Helvartis*, who is the head of each firm (see Figure 1 below). *Helvartis* itself is controlled by the *Federal Compensation Office*, which determines its goals in the form of a performance agreement. The *Federal Compensation Office* is supported by an elected¹³ workgroup called *Arbeitsgruppe Praxisfirmen*, which is composed of four members of the participating cantons (*cantonal labour market authorities*): one member from the *Federal Compensation Office*, one representative from *Helvartis*, two representatives from the responsible bodies (i.e. social agencies or private companies) and four representatives from different practice firms (Seco 2014: 3).

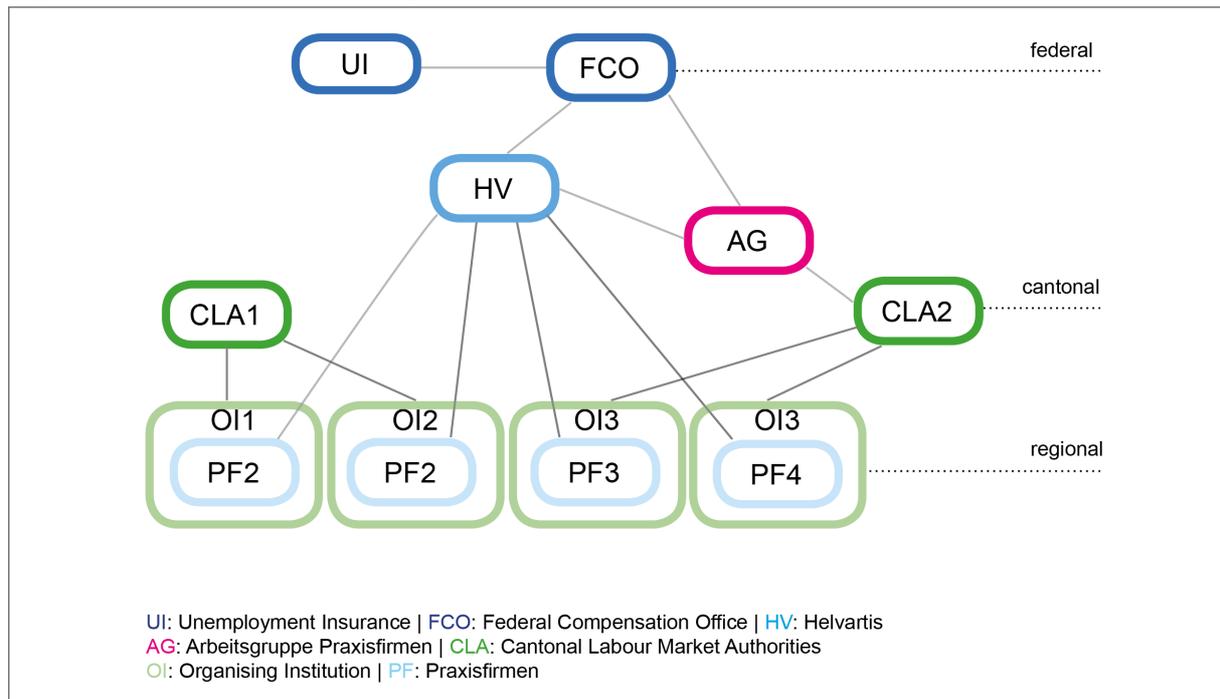
4.2.4 Coordination and Organisation

In total, there are seven actors who are involved in this measure (see Figure 1 above): the *UI*, the *Federal Compensation Office*, *Helvartis*, the *Arbeitsgruppe Praxisfirmen*, the *Organising Institutions* inside the cantons, the *Cantonal Labour Market Authorities*, and the *practice firms* themselves. The strategic leadership is divided into four areas in which different stakeholders are involved: (1) The *Federal Compensation Office*, that is responsible for the assessment of the funding; (2) the *Cantonal Labour Market Authorities*, who supervise the execution of this measure through performance agreements contracted with the organising

¹² Helvartis is a member of an international network of practice firms coordinated by EUROOPEN-PEN International (PEN, <http://www.penworldwide.org>), a non-profit association that administers a worldwide network of over 7'500 practice firms in schools, colleges, universities, vocational training institutions, companies, and training centres in over 40 countries. This measure is implemented in numerous European countries, such as in Bulgaria (BUCT, <http://www.buct.org/intro.php>), the Czech Republic (CEFIF, <http://www.nuv.cz>), Germany (ZUEF, <http://www.die-zentralstelle.de>), Luxembourg (Jonk Entrepreneuren, <http://www.clee.lu>), Poland (CENSYM, <http://www.cku.zgora.pl>), and Spain (Fundació Inform, <http://inform.es/en>).

¹³ The workgroup is elected by VSSA (Verband Schweizerischer Arbeitsmarktbehörden)

Figure 2: Coordination and Organisation of Practice Firms



institutions and the practice firms; (3) the *Arbeitsgruppe Praxisfirmen* in cooperation with *Helvartis*, who work together as a central administration office for the different practice firms; and finally (4) the *practice firms* with their organising institutions which are jointly responsible for the implementation of this measure. Once a year, a *Praxisfirma-Fair* is organised, where the exchange of experiences and networking between the different stakeholders takes place. The participation at this fair is optional for the different practice firms and costs 3'500 CHF.

4.2.5 Conclusion

Praxisfirma is a well-organised, internationally established programme, and the cooperation between the involved institutions seems to work well. The implementation is divided into four categories: The financing (*Federal Compensation office* and UI), the administration/coordination (*Arbeitsgruppe Praxisfirmen* and *Helvartis*), the supervision (*Cantonal Labour Market Authorities*), and the execution (*organising institutions* inside the cantons and the practice firms). This distribution of competencies plays a key role in the well-functioning cooperation of this measure. Regarding the number of participants in 2014 (1900), the expenditure, which amounted to 13 million CHF, is relatively high. Impact-wise, the job placement rate after completing training in a *Praxisfirma* has dropped constantly in the past years from about 80 % in 1995 to about 30% in 2013.¹⁴ The significant drop of placements might be linked to rising structural unemployment for recent graduates in the commercial field, due to the increasing digitalisation and linked decrease of routine office work. To sum up, *Praxisfirma* can be described as an innovative and well-organised

¹⁴ <http://www.helvartis.ch/de/angaben/arbeitslosigkeit.php> [14.12. 2016]

unemployment measure with “best practice qualities” under favourable economic labour market conditions.

4.3 CM BB – VET Case Management

The *VET Cases Management* (“Case Management Berufsbildung”, abbreviated as CM BB), launched in 2007 at the peak of the apprenticeship shortage of the 2000s, intends to recognise young people with academic problems and social stresses early and support them until they graduate from the upper-secondary level. This national measure, which is executed by the cantons, targets pupils from the eighth grade up to 24-year-olds (BKS 2015: 4). It does not result in a particular skill improvement and is not a support measure itself. Instead of creating new measures, it aims at connecting the established programmes, persons, and institutions such as career advisory services, vocational supervisors, cantonal employment agencies, migration departments, and social departments, in order to support the coordination of individual cases with an inter-institutional team. The launch of the CM BB was initially justified with existing socio-political problems as well as capacity problems and dysfunctions in the VET system and its preceding transitional measures (Kraus 2010). The CM BB concentrates on adolescents who are socially disadvantaged or low academic achievers. From 2008 to 2015 it was funded by the Swiss Federation with 35,5 million CHF and is now financially carried by the participating cantons (Ernst 2015: 9). In 2012, 1’630 young people participated in a CM BB measure. Approximately 50% of them managed to complete a vocational training course. 18% found an interim solution, 13% started work in a profession and 21% were still seeking a solution (Egger, Dreher & Partner AG 2015, 151). Today, the CM BB has mostly disappeared and only remains functional in a few cantons.

4.3.1 Responsible Actors

Every canton is responsible for creating its own system that can recognise young people with early job insecurity and that supports them until they have achieved an upper-secondary education. The responsibilities include coordinating within the cantons and controlling the implementation of the measures across institutional borders (social services, employment agencies, schools etc.) (Ernst 2015: 4).

4.3.2 Structure of Financing

Governmental funding initially provided support for the cantons to build and implement an independent body, which carries the CM BB within the cantonal structures. This should guarantee the measure to continue after the government stops financing it (BBT 2010: 11). The financing of the CM BB is based on the *Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training* (BBG Art. 54 and 55), which means that the government is responsible for financing it for a maximum period of five years (BKS 2007: 7). In total, there are three periods of funding: The initiation period (2008-2011) during which the government invested 20 million CHF in total, the consolidation period (2012-2015) during which the government provided up to 15.5 million CHF, and the “continuation” period, during which the cantons are fully responsible for the financing. During the period of consolidation the

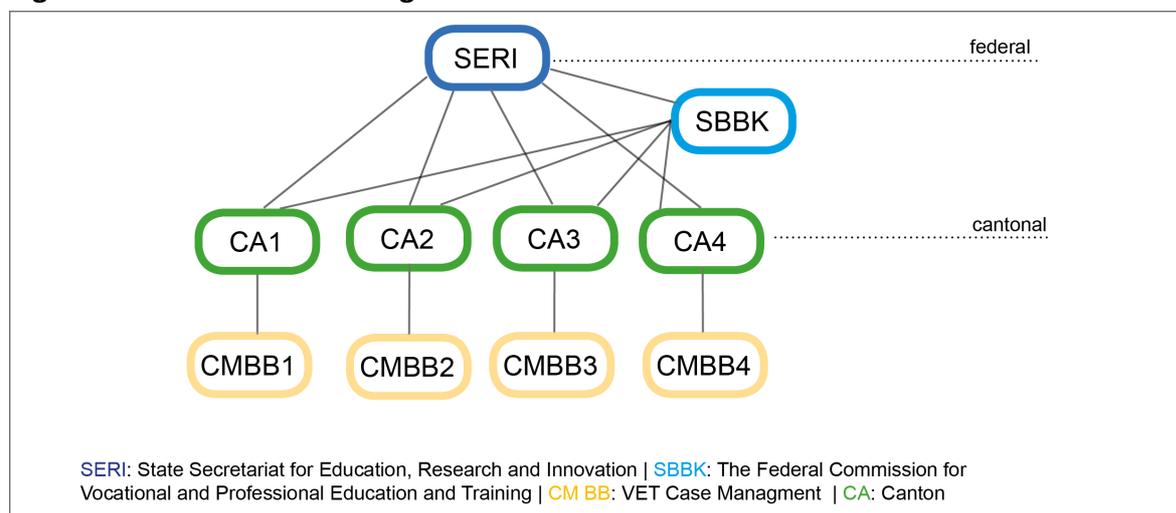
cantons had to take part in the financing by increasing their funding to the same degree that the government decreased theirs (Lüthi 2013: 19).

4.3.3 Coordination of Public Actors at the Local Level

The main goal of the CM BB is that the cantons develop an organ of surveillance, which can be organised and run by itself. In order to receive funding from the government the cantons had to hand in an overall concept to the former BBT/SERI¹⁵ (BKS 2007: 5). The BBT/SERI evaluated the concept and decided whether and to which extent the funding proposal would be approved.

Once the cantons had completed this evaluation process, they managed the measures on their own. It has been shown that the cantons with the best results in managing the CM BB were those with a centralised control over the measures. Interdepartmental collaboration and the positioning of the CM BB on a relatively high hierarchical cantonal level can be seen as the two key factors for success (Landert 2011: 7, 56).

Figure 3: Coordination and organisation of CM BB



4.3.4 Coordination and Organisation

In order to develop a strategy for the CM BB the cantons orientated themselves towards the former *Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology* (BBT) guidelines. The BBT (SERI) helped the cantons to implement the CM BB and supported them financially (BKS 2007: 5). The *Swiss Conference for Vocational Training* (SBBK) provided counselling for the cantons for the implementation of the CM BBs and offered best practice advice. After the cantonal implementation of the CM BB the federal government continued to support the cantons within the framework of the so-called *Interinstitutional Cooperation* (IIZ)¹⁶. While

¹⁵ BBT was integrated into the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) in 2013. SERI is in charge of the strategic governance and development of vocational and professional education and training.

¹⁶ The *Interinstitutional Cooperation* (www.iiz.ch) is a national initiative(,) aimed at improving the cooperation of state institutions in the areas of labour market integration, educational integration, social security/social aid, and the early recognition of public health problems.

the coordination within the cantons works well, an extensive horizontal cooperation does not exist due to the cantonal differences. A web-based platform called “CM Online” was created as a further cantonal support measure. A few cantons used this platform to manage their own cases and to provide evaluation data for the Swiss government. A cross-cantonal comparison or evaluation is very difficult to achieve due to the social, economic, political, and managerial differences between the cantons. Nevertheless, for this report two cantons, Canton Basel-Stadt and Canton Aargau, were evaluated as case studies. The CM BB evaluations of both cantons were studied and an interview with Expert 3 (responsible for the coordination of the VET commission at the Swiss Conference for Vocational Training – SBBK) was conducted.

Four points – the *starting conditions*, the *political positioning*, the *cooperation culture*, and the *political process* – are analysed and compared between the Basel-Stadt and Aargau.

4.3.4.1 Starting Conditions

Before the CM BB programme was initiated in 2007, in 2005 the Canton BS already started to target and take care of young people, who are prone to job insecurity in a programme called GAP (the CM BB programme of the Canton Basel-Stadt). In 2007 the guidelines and impulses from the BBT concerning the CM BB were integrated in their own already developed programme structure. In contrast, Canton Aargau started developing their CM BB programme *Fachstelle Team 1155* (www.1155.ch) without any previously existing infrastructure. With the federal funds, Canton Aargau experimented with different ideas and developed a structure almost from the scratch (BKS 2015: 15). Hence, when evaluating new national programmes, it is important to keep the cantonal differences that existed before the implementation of the programme in mind.

4.3.4.2 Political Positioning

The success of the implementation of a CM BB depends to a great degree on the hierarchical positioning of the CM BB within the cantonal political structure and its accordingly awarded authority (Landert 2011: 56). Canton Basel-Stadt successfully entered the consolidation state in 2016 with the CM BB (GAP) as an independent operating unit placed within the educational department. The strategic governance of the GAP, including executives from educational, social, economic, and the security departments, works interdepartmental and is placed in a high hierarchical position (Haller, Hümbelin 2011: 80). In canton Basel-Stadt the CM BB is endowed with considerable political authority, which enables this programme to be sustainable.

In the Canton Aargau, it is slightly different. With the CM BB agency *Fachstelle Team 1155*, a cantonal unit was created which can act interdepartmentally. This group is placed inside the section *Vocational Preparation, Consultation and Further Training* (BBW), which was reorganised in August 2014 (BKS 2015: 6). The CM BB agency in the Canton Aargau does not operate from a position, which involves as many executives from different departments as in

Basel-Stadt. Only two departments are directly involved: *Fachstelle Team 1155* is supervised by the section for the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (BM) and the *Department of Education, Culture and Sport* (BKS). In the evaluation report of 2015 it was stated: “The relationship between the cooperation partners is in many cases personal and not binding for the organisations. There is a lack of binding commitments from the involved organisations...” (BKS 2015: 15).

4.3.4.3 Cooperation Culture

Interdepartmental exchange and cooperation within the canton facilitate the access for participants to the CM BB on the one hand. On the other hand, they decrease the pressure on single actors by sharing it with other actors that are involved, which enhances the acceptance of the measure. In cooperation with the lower-secondary education schools, the Canton Basel-Stadt created a tool that systematically detects risk groups. They also created tools, which simplify the cooperation between the social and educational departments, that work with young people in upper-secondary education (Haller, Hümbelin 2011: 81). Today, Basel-Stadt has successfully established an interdepartmental exchange with 50 partner organisations (EDBS 2015: 22). An interinstitutional cooperation agreement regulates the coordination between the partners as well as the transfer of the participants’ cases (EDBS 2015: 22).

Canton Aargau has acknowledged that it is crucial to regulate competencies, which enable the definition of goals, advisories, and assignments with cooperation partners (BKS 2015: 10). An interdepartmental commitment is considered an opportunity if the CM BB is given a leadership position in the canton (BKS 2015: 10).

4.3.4.4 Political Process

As already stated above, the CM BB is a national measure with loose vertical coordination due to Swiss federalism. Since 2015 the cantons are supposed to consolidate the CM BB on their own. The *Swiss Conference for Vocational Training* (SBBK) played a role as a counsellor for the cantons regarding the implementation of the CM BBs and gave best practice advices, but had no legislative power. The withdrawal of national funds after the consolidation period (2012-2015) was criticised by Expert 3 who stated that it can be seen as a lack of sustainability: “This was a critical situation (...). Some cantons dropped the CM BB and others removed the funding for this measure from their cantonal budget”. Expert 3 also suggested that sustainability could have been ensured by a binding commitment on the part of the government to maintain its funds. However, facing the presence of different interest groups the initiative to establish the CM BB would not have passed the national council. Learning from the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the CM BB, Expert 3 made three recommendations, which may be considered in the future. First, to develop a binding plan that goes beyond the point of time when the national funding ends. Second, the allocation of responsibility once the programme ends. Third, to organise a lobby group for the sake of the CM BB that includes members from academia.

4.3.5 Conclusion

The CM BB has been institutionalised in some cantons. Some of them used the CM BB to screen and optimise their previously existing surveillance and support structures for young people who suffer from early job insecurity. Whereas at CM BB's peak in 2012/2013, 21 cantons used CM-Online, it is foreseeable that by 2017 only six cantons will continue to using it. Today this tool has mostly disappeared, which makes a cross-cantonal comparison and evaluation even more difficult. Nevertheless, 15 out of 21 cantons stated that the implementation of the CM BB has improved case-focused interdepartmental cooperation and exchange. Seven out of these 15 cantons included the CM BB in their standard operations.

5 Conclusion

As a non-EU country Switzerland is not obliged to implement the EU Youth Guarantee scheme. Nevertheless, a similar national discourse on ensuring young people's access to training and education positions took place in a Swiss context in the early 2000s, when there was a shortage of apprenticeship positions in the country. The previous public initiatives concerning the provision of a sufficient amount of apprenticeship positions with the aim of implementing a youth guarantee in the constitution in 2003 (nationwide) and 2009 (Canton St Gallen) were both rejected. The results of the votes reflect that there was little room for more centralised state regulation and that the apprenticeship market was generally perceived as well-functioning despite its shortage. Nevertheless, the revised *Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training*, passed in 2002, enabled the cantons to establish solidarity funds, which could be spent on the development of infrastructures for the apprenticeship market. With the revised Federal Act the cantonal authorities are able to force industries to make contributions to their respective solidarity funds. Because of Swiss federalism the implementation of the revised VET law in the cantons is diverse. While all French-speaking and Italian-speaking cantons have established a cantonal solidarity fund, almost none of the German-speaking cantons have done so. Jura and Geneva are the only cantons, which have the right to vocational education and training enshrined in their constitutions, other cantons have less binding regulations regarding VET or no regulations at all.

Similarly, the Swiss Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) landscape differs across the cantons, each of them having their distinct political and economic situation. In order to adapt to the cantonal diversity, the federal government has set up a loose framework for ALMP measures with few binding guidelines and the cantons develop their own measures and implement the programmes. A plurality of actors from the federal, cantonal and local levels can be involved in single ALMP programmes and as a result the horizontal as well as the vertical coordination oftentimes present the biggest challenge. While in some cantons the coordination works well, others struggle with establishing and maintaining the programmes. In the case of the CM BB it is obvious that without binding guidelines and with the discontinuation of federal financial aid, many cantons are not willing or not able to continue such a scheme. SEMO and

Praxisfirma on the other hand are well established ALMP programmes in most cantons. Still, the implementation of SEMOs and *Praxisfirma* is organised at a cantonal level, which makes nationwide evaluations difficult. However, a positive overall evaluation of SEMOs and *Praxisfirma* seems possible. The success of the two programmes is not least due to the overall well-organised horizontal and vertical coordination, despite the difficulties and challenges expressed by some actors involved. Despite the praise for the ALMP measures, there are also critics that suggest that most programmes overly emphasise the labour market integration of the adolescents, but to a lesser degree the personal development of the individuals. This reflects the policies' concentration on economic growth, which is sometimes promoted at the expense of individual well-being (Leppanen 2015; Imdorf et al. 2016).

The CM BB on the other hand will not be continued in many cantons now the financial support from the Federal government has stopped. It has been criticised that the planning for the implementation of the CM BB wasn't sustainable from the beginning. Due to the vast differences between the political, economic, and historical situations of the cantons, the successful implementation of a new national programme such as the CM BB varies accordingly. Ignoring the differences of the pre-existing situations can lead to difficulties in implementing and carrying on a political measure. Hence, the Swiss situation can be seen as mirroring the EU landscape to some extent: A political programme is initiated by a central institution, the Federal government or the EU government, and its implementation lies in the hand of the cantons or the EU countries. Looking at the Swiss case can therefore contribute to a better understanding of the implementation of policies in the context of the EU.

To conclude, the focal points of Swiss youth employment policies depend on the stage at which individual cases find themselves at in their transition from school to work and different policies take effect subject to the successful completion of a first upper-secondary education. Young people with only compulsory education are recommended to make use of ALMP programmes that primarily follow an enabling approach, aiming to help young people find an apprenticeship place or to enrol for a continuing middle school. However, the young unemployed who have achieved an upper-secondary degree (VET or general education) will be supported with "job first" (ALMP) measures, which aim at preparing them for their entrance into the labour market regardless of their education-employment match. In fact, the individual is considered to be responsible for any further education or retraining in order to improve their labour market chances and find employment that is adequate for their education. Finally, the employment assistance model is not offered to the unemployed by default. Instead, selective counselling measures that offer guidance for target subgroups are offered on a local level (e.g. mentoring programmes for female immigrant adolescents or for disabled people).

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Interview partners

Expert 1

Function and Institution: Head of the directorate of Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education (SFO) in Canton Jura

Location of the institution: Canton Jura

Link: <http://www.jura.ch/DFCS/SFO.html>

Date of interview: 25.10.2016

Expert 2

Function and Institution: Coordinator at SEMO Coordination German-speaking Switzerland

Location of the institution: Canton Zug

Link: <http://www.ch-semo.ch/default.asp?PROJECTID=120>

Date of interview: 18.10.2016

Expert 3

Function and Institution: Person in charge for coordination of the VET commission at the Swiss Conference for Vocational

Location of the institution: Canton Bern

Link: <http://www.sbbk.ch/dyn/19669.php>

Date of interview: 11.10.2016