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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

Youth unemployment is negative from many perspectives. Not only is it personally challenging for individuals in a vulnerable transitional phase of life, but affected youth lose out on important entry-level work experience that is essential for career progression. The cost for both youth and society is immense.

Since 1979, Norway has attempted to meet this challenge by offering youth further education, training or a job after a certain period of unemployment. This policy measure is known as the *Youth Guarantee*, although it will be more precisely referred to in the plural in the following, as there are three different measures applicable to different age and needs groups (see 1.1.2 below). With youth unemployment rising to record levels in the rest of Europe, the EU was inspired by such guarantees and introduced a European Youth Guarantee in 2013.

The Norwegian labour market has fared well during the current economic crisis compared to most other European countries (Schøyen and Vedeler 2016:1). However, even Norway has seen an increase in youth unemployment since 2008, and young people's transition from education to the labour market is on the political agenda here as in other parts of the world (Schøyen and Vedeler 2016:5). A particular concern is the fate of youth with mental or physical disabilities that influence their work and earnings capacities, as well as the fate of young people who drop out of upper secondary education (for information on the Norwegian educational system, see: Statistics Norway 2016). In Norway, the number of inactive youth is higher than the number of job-seeking unemployed youth, with 4.5% of youth between the ages of 15 and 29 inactive and 2.3% unemployed in 2013 (Hardoy et al. 2016:11). As in other countries, NEETs in Norway are a heterogeneous group, since the term encompasses persons of ill health, school dropouts and people with care responsibilities. NEET rates are higher among youth with disabilities than among the general youth population (Halvorsen and Hvinden 2014), and also higher among upper secondary school dropouts (Hardoy et al. 2016:85). Within the youngest NEET groups, there are few or no gender differences, but there are more women than men in the age group 25 to 29. In Norway, this difference has largely been attributed to the number of women giving birth without being eligible for parental benefit (which in Norway depends on having been

gainfully employed for at least six of the ten months prior to giving birth) (Hardoy et al. 2016:12).

After a major administrative reform in 2006, the social security service, the national insurance service and the employment service were merged to form one, big public service in Norway. The reform aimed to create a one-stop service for Norwegian citizens in their interaction with the government. Originally named New Labour and Welfare Administration, NAV is now the standalone name and brand. Today, NAV manages a third of the national budget through, among other things, the administration of public old age pensions and a range of social benefits (including unemployment, sickness, disability and child benefits) (NAV 2016d). These are administered by local offices and regional and central units, which have been jointly given the often difficult task of lifting youth and young adults through the Youth Guarantees.

For this national report, we have used secondary literature, research and governmental reports. In addition, we have conducted interviews with experts in the field: representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research (*Kunnskapsdepartementet*), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (*Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet*), and of NAV, as well as a NAV case worker in upper secondary school in Østfold (one of 19 Norwegian counties). We will also draw on interviews conducted in NEGOTIATE WP 4 and 5. These conversations with youth affected by job insecurity and unemployment have provided insights into the subject we address in this report.

The national report summarises the Norwegian Youth Guarantees by examining their implementation, political debate and existing research. It examines two measures under the Youth Guarantees, *Arbeidstrening* (Work Training) and *Oppfølgingstjenesten* (the Follow-Up Service), and implements a preliminary categorisation of the Norwegian approach to youth unemployment and the guarantees. The paper concludes tentatively, based on the little research available, that the Norwegian guarantees are a partial success, but with some limitations. There are some good reasons to revise the current approach to the youth guarantees, and reform is indeed on its way – somewhat surprisingly by replacing the old guarantees with a new ‘Youth package’ introduced in the national budget for 2017. In our

concluding remarks, we can only speculate on what this new policy will mean in practice for the important work of combatting youth unemployment in Norway.

2 The Norwegian Youth Guarantees

2.1 *The History of the Youth Guarantees*

The then Labour Party government introduced the Youth Guarantees in 1979. The guarantees granted unemployed youth aged 16–19 either 1) a job/apprenticeship, 2) further education, or 3) labour market measures. In 1995, another Labour Party government extended the guarantee to youth aged 20–24. While the younger age group was covered by the guarantee from day one, the guarantee only applied to the older group after six months of unemployment (Sosial- og helsedepartementet 1994-95). In 1998, a new coalition right-wing government abolished the reform from 1995, once again limiting the guarantee to youth aged 16-19 (NOU 14 2011:145). Eleven years later, in 2009, the coalition centre/left-wing government breathed new life into the Youth Guarantees by guaranteeing youth aged 20–24 an offer within six months. In the same government's second period, in 2013, the government made a final change to the Youth Guarantees. Under the name *Ungdomsløftet (the Youth Commitment)* they allocated NOK 30 million to measures aimed at reducing the period it takes for youth up until 25 years of age to be given an activity plan (referred to in a letter from the Norwegian Minister of Labor 2014). To put this number in context, labour market measures covering all age groups in society, cost NOK 7 billion, which was 0.5% of the National Budget in 2015 (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet 2015-16:4.9). The current right-wing coalition government plans another reform of the guarantees as set out in the National Budget for 2017 (for elaboration, see 2.3).

2.2 *How do today's Youth Guarantees work?*

As mentioned, because several reforms fall under the umbrella of the Youth Guarantees, several different guarantees apply depending on age and ability. None of these guarantees grant any legal or social rights, but rather reflect a political ambition to protect youth – and society as a whole – from the negative consequences of unemployment at a young age. The one legal right the measures entail is the legal right to upper secondary education.

The Norwegian Youth Guarantee has been redesigned several times over the years, and at present covers all Norwegians up to the age of 24 (up to the age of 29 for those with

disabilities). It does not operate within a specific programme, but rather functions as a time limit within which youth are guaranteed various measures. Effectively, it puts youth at the front of the line at the NAV offices.

As a representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs noted in one expert interview, the Youth Guarantee is more of a guarantee that youth will be followed up than a guarantee that youth will get jobs. Strand (2005:17-19) has summarised the different guarantees divided by age groups:

16—19: Unemployed youth in this age group were, from day one, offered 1) a job/apprenticeship, 2) further education, or 3) labour market measures. The agency supervising upper secondary school dropouts, the Follow-Up Service (*Oppfølgingstjenesten*), automatically registers everyone in this age group who is not in upper secondary education. This agency cooperates with NAV to develop a strategy to ensure that the Youth Guarantees are followed up. The majority of youth in this age group undertake Work Training organised by NAV before re-entering upper secondary education (Strand, Bråthen, and Grønningsæther 2015:17).

20—24: The guarantee for this age group includes the same offers, but it works slightly differently in practice. Firstly, within one month of registered unemployment, the youth should have an activity plan. This is a strategy plan drawn up in cooperation between the youth and the local NAV office. The NAV office is encouraged to work with other government agencies and the private sector when creating activity plans and to take youths' individual differences into consideration. Secondly, if the youth remains unemployed after six months, he or she is offered a labour market measure under the so-called guaranteed measure arrangement (*tiltaksgaranti*). This age group should also have individual follow-up (*oppfølgingsgaranti*) within three months (NOU 14 2011:14). Compared to the guarantee for 16—19-year-olds, for whom Work Training is normally organised through NAV, the 20—24-year-olds are normally found a job through the use of activity plans (Strand, Bråthen, and Grønningsæther 2015:18).

20—29: In 2013, a goal of having 90% of youth aged 20—29 with *reduced work capacity* on an activity plan was introduced, with a similar goal for youth aged 20—24 years with normal work capacity. Reduced work capacity is defined as the person either having difficulty

meeting the requirements required in a work place or needing considerable assistance from NAV to become employed (Strand, Bråthen, and Grønningsæther 2015:18).

2.3 Proposal for a reformed Guarantee in 2017

The current right-wing coalition government has drafted a reform of the Youth Guarantee, which it presented in its white paper on a general reform of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet 2015-16). The reform outlined so far includes two important changes to today's guarantees. Firstly, following Strand's (2015) recommendation, all of today's three guarantees will be merged into one guarantee for youth aged 16—29. The reformed guarantees will comprise the same kinds of measures for all age groups. The time before the guarantee must be met is not stated in the white paper, but two months has been the time period communicated to the media (Amundsen 2016). Secondly, the government proposed that the reformed guarantee should only guarantee youth an offer within two months of becoming unemployed, without granting any rights to specific measures, for example activity plans within one month. The aim of this proposal is said to be to give NAV case workers more freedom to decide what measures are necessary for each individual youth. So far, there has been little political debate about the proposal – the first glimpses of how it will work became public through the national budget presented in October 2016.

2.4 The difference between the EU's and Norway's Youth Guarantees

The Norwegian and the EU's youth guarantees are similar in principle. Both guarantees aim to reduce youth unemployment by guaranteeing measures such as a job, apprenticeship or further education within four months (EU) and six months (recently proposed changed to 2 months) (Norway).

Despite being similar in principle, there are several technical differences between the European Council's general Recommendation and the Norwegian guarantees (European Commission 2016). Firstly, Norway includes participation in labour market measures as an offer to unemployed youth, while the Council's Recommendation does not. It is worth noting that the individual Member States decide the details of their guarantees, which means that individual EU states can include labour market measures. Secondly, the Norwegian guarantees have no European dimension in terms of youth mobility, an aspect included in

the EU's guarantee (European Council 2013). Thirdly, the EU's guarantee emphasises that youth should receive a *good quality* offer within the guarantee period. This is not a requirement under the Norwegian guarantees, something that was criticised in Strand's research (see 1.3.3). Fourthly, the EU's guarantee includes innovation as a solution to unemployment, while the Norwegian guarantees does not.

2.5 Political debate

This section summarises recent parliamentary debates on the Youth Guarantees from its expansion in 1995, reintroduction in 2009 to its final expansion in 2013. A section on other parliamentary debates about the guarantees is also included. It is found that the political debate on the Youth Guarantees has changed over time. The guarantees were first criticised by the right-wing parties during the Labour government's expansion of the scheme in 1995 reflecting an ideological divide about positive rights. After being abolished and then reintroduced in 2009, the guarantees gave rise to little debate. This shift to a cross-party consensus on the guarantees is based on a general understanding that the guarantees are a useful measure for combating youth unemployment. This shift has been bolstered by the current right-wing coalition government drafting a reformed guarantee instead of abolishing it (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet 2015-16:3.2.2). Overall, the guarantees have not met much opposition, nor been highly debated. However, none of the political parties proposed making the guarantees a legal right.

2.5.1 Expansion of the Guarantee to 20—24-year-olds: 1995

In 1995, the Labour government proposed an expansion of the Youth Guarantee to include 20—24-year-olds, guaranteeing a job, further education or labour market measures within six months of becoming unemployed. The proposal differed from the already existing guarantee for 16—19-year-olds, which offers such measures from day one.

Two conflicting interests were voiced in the debate on the proposal in the Storting's (parliament's) Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs (Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs 1995). On one side, the Christian Democrats (KrF), the Socialist Left Party (SV) and the Centre Party (Sp) were in favour of the Labour Party's proposal, but questioned the length of the period before the guarantee must be met (six months). The parties argued that unemployment measures should be granted from day one.

However, the parties did not propose a guarantee from day one like that for the 16—19 age group, but instead recommended that the government should consider comprehensive measures to assist the unemployed 20—24-year-olds. On the other side, the Conservatives and the independent representative Stephen Bråthen were opposed to the guarantee in principle, arguing that the government should create jobs instead of introducing positive rights.¹ An empirical counter-argument against the government's proposal was also added, namely that unemployment was higher in other age groups than among 20—24-year-olds, and that this age group should therefore not be a special priority. In the plenary session, the Labour government's proposal passed by majority vote. To sum up, when the guarantee was expanded in 1994, there was an ideological divide between the left-wing and right-wing parties.

2.5.2 *Reintroduction of the Youth Guarantee for 20—24-year-olds: 2009*

The centre/left-wing coalition government reintroduced the Youth Guarantee for 20—24-year-olds in the National Budget for 2009. This reform was similar to the expansion in 1995, guaranteeing youth aged 20—24 either a job, further education or labour market measures within six months of becoming unemployed.

In the parliamentary debate on the labour market part of the National Budget, in which the guarantee was introduced, the guarantee was not debated, neither in the Standing Committee on Labour and Social Affairs nor in the plenary session (Committee of Finance 2009). Outside the debate on the National Budget, the Youth Guarantee was only mentioned a handful of times by the left-wing parties in the Storting in 2009, as a detail in more comprehensive debates on unemployment. Not only did the right-wing parties not respond to the left-wing parties mentioning the guarantee, but one representative from the Progress Party (a far right party) even praised the results of the guarantee in the 1990s (Kjos 2009). All in all, the reintroduction of the Youth Guarantee for 20—24-year-olds was not a controversial issue.

¹ Stephen Bråthen was a former member of the Progress Party (a far right party). When he became an independent representative. The Progress Party had no representatives on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

2.5.3 *The Ungdomsløftet expansion: 2013*

As a part of the National budget for 2013, the left-wing coalition government proposed what it called *Ungdomsløftet (the Youth Commitment)*, an expansion of the Youth Guarantee. In practice, this expansion consisted of NOK 30 million earmarked for measures ensuring faster individual follow-up, such as activity plans, for youth aged 20—29. All the political parties except the Conservatives and the Christian Democrats voted for the proposal in the debate on the National Budget in the Storting's Standing Committee on Labour and Social Affairs (Arbeids- og sosialkomiteen 2012). The topic was not debated.

2.5.4 *Other parliamentary debates since 2009*

Other parliamentary debates since 2009 also show that the guarantee has not been controversial. The guarantee is mostly mentioned by the Socialist Left Party and the Labour Party as one of many measures to combat youth unemployment. The right-wing parties have mentioned the guarantee a few times, but only as a detail and without making concrete criticisms. One recent example that illustrates the consensus on today's Youth Guarantee is the debate on the Socialist Left Party's proposal from 2014 to reduce the period before the guarantee must be met from six to three months of unemployment for 20–24-year-olds. All parties except the Socialist Left Party voted against the proposal and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs (Progress Party) stated in an official letter that youth unemployment was better dealt with by increased cooperation between different departments, not by issuing guarantees (Minister of Labour 2014). However, the right-wing coalition government, represented by the Progress Party minister, has changed its position on the Youth Guarantee after Strand's (2015) findings. Consequently, the government has suggested merging all of today's guarantees and reducing the period before the guarantee must be met to two months. The relevant parliamentary committee will discuss this reform in October 2016 and the plenary session will vote over the proposal in January 2017. The reform has received little media coverage, probably because the reformed guarantee is still on the drawing board.

2.6 *Research*

The three main academic studies of the Norwegian Youth Guarantees are presented below. Briefly summarised, Egge's comprehensive study looks at whether and how the Youth

Guarantees worked for 16—19-year-olds between 1995 and 1998 (Egge 1998). Her findings are that the guarantees had positive effects in terms of getting more youth to complete upper secondary education, while the effects were minimal in terms of reducing youth unemployment. Hardoy's (2006) study assessed whether the guarantees worked for the older 20—24 age group between 1995 and 1998. It concluded with the opposite result. For the older age group, the guarantees had minimal effect on getting more youth to complete upper secondary education, while the results were positive in relation to reducing unemployment. Third, Strand (2015) looks at how the Youth Guarantees work within NAV. She concludes that the guarantees are quantity rather than quality-driven and that today's many different guarantees cause confusion among NAV employees.

2.6.1 The Youth Guarantee, Egge (1998)

Egge's (1998) report is the most comprehensive study of the Norwegian Youth Guarantees. The study does not just assess whether the Youth Guarantees have reduced youth unemployment, it also analyses the different measures offered under the Youth Guarantees. Even though the latter provides insightful information into how the Youth Guarantees work, since the data material is almost 20 years old, there is reason to believe that the measures function quite differently today. Egge's empirical data were extracted from interviews with 623 youth aged 16—19 who graduated from secondary school in 1995, combined with interviews with Social Security personnel dealing with Youth Unemployment in all Social Security offices in Norway. All of Egge's interviews are retrospective, covering the period 1995 to 1998. Her most important findings that are relevant to this paper are:

1. The Youth Guarantee's labour market measures and adapted education (*tilrettelagt opplæring*) had motivated more youth to complete upper secondary education.
2. The labour market measures did not reduce youth unemployment, but individualised education did. The guarantee had little effect, however, on getting more youth into employment.
3. Giving youth a guarantee was helpful, but stronger measures that aimed to motivate unemployed youth were necessary to effectively reduce youth unemployment.
4. The cooperation between different government agencies was generally experienced as positive by the youth.

2.6.2 The Youth Guarantee for 20–24-year-olds – Has it worked? Hardoy (2006)

Hardoy (2006) assessed whether the guarantee reduced youth unemployment for 20–24-year-olds by comparing data from 1995 with data from 1999, the year after the guarantee was abolished (it was reintroduced in 2009). Hardoy concluded that the guarantee was effective in reducing youth unemployment, especially for the long-term unemployed (6 months or more). Moreover, the study also showed that youth stayed longer in employment as a result of the youth guarantee, while there were no indications that the guarantee resulted in more youth completing upper secondary education. Hardoy used two different analyses to reach these results:

The first analysis was a *difference in difference analysis*. Hardoy compared two different groups, 23–24-year-olds and 26–27-year-olds, from the *Aetat's* (the former employment service) unemployment register. These age groups were chosen because they are quite close in age and face similar challenges in the labour market, while only the younger group was covered by the Youth Guarantee. Hardoy compared these groups in 1997, when the Youth Guarantee was in place, and 1999, a year after the abolition of the guarantee for 20–24-year-olds. The results showed that, after the Youth Guarantee was abolished, 18% fewer youth took part in labour market measures, showing that the Youth Guarantee did achieve its purpose. Moreover, the analysis also showed a slight decrease in wage levels and length of employment after the abolition of the guarantee.

The second analysis was an event history analysis using a *hazard model*. This method incorporates several dummy variables, acknowledging that decisions are made on the basis of a vast pool of information. The analysis, as in the difference in difference model, compares the situation before and after the guarantee was abolished in 1998. In terms of short-term unemployment, the event history analysis shows that 11.76% more youth took part in labour market measures before the abolition of the guarantee and 3.92% more youth started working during the period the guarantee was in force. For the long-term unemployed (6 months or more), the guarantee was even more effective in reaching its goal: 33.77% more youth took part in labour market measures during the guarantee period than in the period after the guarantee was abolished, while 11.65% more started in employment. In terms of education, the results showed no significant effects of the guarantee.

2.6.3 NAV's supervision of young clients, Strand (2015)

Strand (2015) researched how the Youth Guarantee worked in NAV through interviews with employees. Her findings led to the government proposing a reform of the guarantee merging all of today's three guarantees.

Two main findings led to this proposed reform. Firstly, Strand found that the guarantee is quantity rather than quality-driven. The guarantee sets clear goals for how long a time it should take before youth receive an offer, but sets no standards for the offer. In the interviews, most employees answered that most youth receive an offer within the guaranteed time, but only 58% of those under 20 are given a relevant offer. Secondly, the interviews showed that employees confuse the different guarantees and did not know their exact function apart from their concrete goals, e.g. activity plans within one month. NAV employees found that the concrete goals were too strict, preventing them from tailoring their follow-up to the individual needs of the clients. Strand explains this situation as caused by the case workers, who all know the specifics of the guarantees, adopting the guarantees as strategy goals. To respond to this confusion, the report suggests merging all today's guarantees.

2.6.4 Norwegian Official Reports

In Norwegian Official Reports (NOU), which are expert reports produced for policymaking purposes, the Youth Guarantee is rarely mentioned and never analysed in the period from 1994 until today. However, three reports are worth noting. First and most comprehensive is the report on *Youth, Wages and Unemployment* from 1994, which states that the Youth Guarantee 'likely is the reason for' the low unemployment rate in the 16—19 age group (NOU 3 1994). However, this statement is backed by poor data that only look at the decrease in the unemployment rate for this age group between 1989 and 1992. Moreover, the report also states that the Youth Guarantee is a success since over 80% of youth aged 16—19 spend less than 12 weeks getting a job or continuing their education after becoming unemployed. It is worth noting that, in 1994, the Guarantee had not yet been expanded to include 20—24-year-olds. Second, the report on *A Strategy for employment and wealth creation* from 2001 referred to an OECD report from 1998, which concluded that the Youth Guarantee was a very efficient tool for tackling unemployment among youth under the age of 20. The report

emphasised a combination of education and work as the main factor in the Guarantee's success in Norway (NOU 21 2000:12.4.4). Third, the report *Education for the future* from 2008 went as far as recommending that the Youth Guarantee should be reintroduced (as noted, the guarantee was abolished between 1998 and 2009 for the 20–24 age group). This position was backed by Hardoy's (2006) research showing how the Youth Guarantee was effective in addressing unemployment, especially for the long-term unemployed (NOU 18 2008:6.3.4).

2.7 Conclusion and the future of the Norwegian Youth Guarantee

The Norwegian guarantee is similar to the EU youth guarantee in that it has the same goals and uses most of the same measures. However, the history of the Norwegian Youth Guarantees is longer than its European counterpart. This history is complex and it is not clear whether it has achieved its goal of reducing youth unemployment.

Responding to the criticism in Strand's research, the current coalition right-wing government has proposed merging the different guarantees to simplify the system. In terms of political debate, there has been a shift from an ideological divide to a consensus that the youth guarantee is an effective policy measure. This shift can be seen in the parliamentary debates and it is exemplified by how the current right-wing coalition government, which was previously opposed to the guarantee, has proposed reforming the guarantee, rather than abolishing it.

The older research, using data from the 1990s, concludes that the Youth Guarantee reduces long-term unemployment for youth aged between 20 and 24, and gets more youth aged 16 to 19 to complete upper secondary education. Newer research shows that the guarantee is quantity rather than quality-driven, resulting in poor individual follow-up. All in all, the Norwegian Youth Guarantee may be a useful tool for combating youth unemployment, but reform of the guarantee would be welcome. There is also an obvious need for more research to be certain about which mechanisms work.

With the proposal for the national budget for 2017 only recently presented, it is not yet clear how the proposed changes will be implemented. The government underlined the need for more work placements and other work training measures, and allocated NOK 30 million more to what they framed as an *Ungdomssatsning*, a Youth Initiative (Regjeringen 2016). An

important part of the changes is that the three different guarantees are to be merged into one, while giving NAV greater freedom to determine what measures are best in each case. However, several organisations have interpreted (and criticised) the proposed changes as a termination of the Norwegian Youth Guarantee, and the funding of the system for being too weak (Unio 2016).

3 Two measures relevant to the Youth Guarantees in Norway

To study the effects of the Youth Guarantee in Norway, it is necessary to look at specific labour market measures, and how they affect youth. We have chosen to concentrate on one of the most widely used measures: Work Training, where youth are placed in an ordinary job under the guidance of NAV. In addition, we will look at a service that targets pupils who drop out of upper secondary education, the Follow-Up Service. This service targets young people aged 15–21 who are neither in education nor in employment. The intention is to guide and counsel youth at risk of quitting or failing upper secondary school. School dropouts and youth with little education are more vulnerable to job loss and scarring effects (OECD 2016:16).

3.1 *The Work Training measure*

Today, young unemployed people and dropouts from upper secondary school in Norway primarily participate in one of three measures: Work Training, Wage Subsidies, and classes of different kinds aimed at upskilling or otherwise qualifying participants for employment. Of the three, the most widely used measure is Work Training (von Simson 2012:80).

Administered by NAV, this measure gives all unemployed people an opportunity to gain work experience for up to one year. They are placed in an ordinary company or business, while being followed up by their NAV case worker. It should be noted that there is also a modified version of the standard measure aimed at youth with reduced work capacity (NOU 6 2012). This modified measure gives the unemployed youth a chance to prolong her stay in Work Training, staying in the placement for up to six months longer. However, the present report will focus on assessing the ordinary Work Training measure.

Even though the Work Training measure is similar for all age groups, there are certain specifics worth noting for youth in the two age groups 16–19 and 20–24. For the age group

16—19, 70% of participants in labour market measures in 2016 were in Work Training (NAV statistics 2016). To put the number in context, the average for all age groups is 30%. The main reason for this high percentage is the aim of the Youth Guarantee to give this age group practical work experience before (re-)entering higher education (Strand, Bråthen, and Grønningsæther 2015). Essentially, Work Training gives upper secondary school dropouts something meaningful to do while waiting for the next academic year to start. In terms of the 20—24-year-olds, the Norwegian Youth Guarantee sees labour market measures as a ‘last resort’ solution only to be used if the person has not found a job or entered further education within six months. Looking at the statistics, 46% of youth in this age group taking part in labour market measures participate in Work Training. Although a smaller percentage than among the younger unemployed, Work Training is by far the most used labour market measure for this age group (NAV statistics 2016). Overall, when studying the effect of labour market measures on youth under the Youth Guarantee, Work Training is the most important measure to understand.

Work Training has a long history as a labour market measure in Norway (Zhang 2016:46). It involves the unemployed participant being placed in an ordinary workplace. The participant is supposed to work out a plan for what is to be achieved during the Work Training period, in cooperation with her NAV supervisor. The employer commits to mentoring the newcomer in a way that makes the participant better qualified (Zhang 2016:46). The measure has been known under several names over the years, including Work Placement and Work Traineeship. Many Work Training placements are organised almost as apprenticeships.

3.1.1 Institutions and actors

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for administering labour market measures. The Work Training measure, like other labour market measures, is implemented through the Ministry’s agency, NAV. The local NAV offices report to the ministry, while the latter sets goals and requirements for the local NAV offices.

3.1.2 Financing

In addition to getting work done for the employer and rewarding the employee through work experience, NAV’s Work Training measure has clear economic incentives for all parties.

Work Training entails no expenses for the employer as no wages are paid. In addition, the employer can apply for an allowance of up to NOK 115 200 a year to cover documented expenses relating to the employment (NAV 2016c:§11). The Work Training is not supposed to replace the work of a regular employee and is limited to one year. However, some people have claimed that some Norwegian employers take advantage of the system to get free labour (Heyerdahl 2016, Aarhus 2012).

As already mentioned, the employer pays no wages to the participant in Work Training. However, the participant will keep her subsistence benefit; for instance, sickness benefit, work assessment allowance, or unemployment benefit in the form of a daily allowance (*dagpenger*). Entitlement to such allowances is generally acquired if the person has earned more than NOK 135 000 in the previous year. The amount is 62% of the person's previous income (For details, see: NAV 2016b). When conducting interviews for NEGOTIATE WP4 with people who have been unemployed in their youth, it was clear to us that their experience of Work Training was mixed, at best. While some had done Work Training at a company of their choice and described it as useful experience, sometimes even leading up to a job, others had been placed in companies that never intended to hire them afterwards. Some had not even received any guidance or mentoring. Some particularly negative experiences worth mentioning here were young Work Training participants being left with sole responsibility for a business or institution, with neither supervision nor pay.

If the participant in Work Training has not earned a right to unemployment benefit, she can apply for *tiltakspenger* amounting to NOK 257/day for people under the age of 19, and NOK 355/day for people above the age of 19 (NAV 2016a). An extra allowance of NOK 44/day is paid for each child under the age of 16, and the participant can also apply for reimbursement of expenses related to the Work Training (for instance travel expenses). The remuneration aims to cover living expenses including housing. Even though the allowance is not subject to income tax, the amount does not represent a comfortable budget seen in relation to the high living costs in Norway.

3.1.3 Cooperation with other actors

NAV administers and organises the Work Training measure, but is dependent on cooperation with (preferably) local businesses and other employers willing to take on people who are

inexperienced in relation to working life. Furthermore, there are employment-training providers who work in cooperation with NAV to provide Work Training.

3.1.4 Organisation and operability

The Work Training measure is implemented at the local level, and overseen at the national level. At the local level, the individual NAV employee takes the decision about whether to offer Work Training and what kind of Work Training the registered unemployed person should take part in. The client can also find Work Training himself subject to approval by NAV. The potential employer has a right to reject any Work Training applicant. Moreover, all Work Training relationships should be regulated by a plan or contract stating the personal goals of the client and how the employer will assist the client in reaching these goals. The local NAV office follows up the client and the employer during the entire training period. At the central level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for reaching the goals set by the Storting for combating unemployment.

An expert committee consisting of researchers and stakeholders reviewed this structure and criticised how the Ministry sets goals for the amount of unemployed people taking part in measures rather than setting goals for the reduction in unemployment (see Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet 2015-16:4.9.2). Hence, the committee recommended granting the local NAV offices more freedom and judging the offices by their results instead.

3.1.5 Horizontal and vertical coordination

In the current government's white paper that argues for the need for a more efficient NAV, they refer to the above-mentioned expert committee, which highlighted two difficulties encountered in coordinating the Work Training measure (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet 2015-16:4.9.2). Firstly, local NAV offices in small municipalities have a hard time fulfilling their obligations. Not only do these offices struggle because of few resources, it is also difficult to find relevant Work Training placements for their clients. Secondly, based on the committee's comments, the government suggested in the white paper that NAV should find better ways to cooperate with private recruitment and staffing agencies (Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet 2015-16:4.10). Despite not being mentioned in the white paper, recent research shows that unemployed youth working temporarily through intermediaries – that is, through private employment agencies – have a 34% higher chance of permanent

employment than other unemployed youth (von Simson 2012). These agencies were previously only allowed to employ office and administrative workers, as the rules regulating temporary employment have been quite strict in Norway. After the relaxation of the regulations in 2000, the number of agencies and the variety of jobs offered through them soared. Although still a marginal element in the Norwegian labour market, this development will be interesting to follow. For a discussion of the recent liberalisation of the rules governing fixed-term contracts in Norway, see Hardoy (Hardoy et al. 2016), or the relatively detailed description of the changes in the national report attached to D3.4.

Although much research has been done on Work Training as a labour market measure, we do not at present know much about how this measure is actually carried out by the local offices, or how particular forms of coordination, involvement of social partners etc. affect the parties involved.

3.1.6 Outcomes and conclusions

Despite being the most used labour market measure, research concludes that Work Training has small or negative effects on combating youth employment. Firstly, Simson's research, which compares the effects of private intermediary firms to NAV's Work Training measure for upper secondary school dropouts, concludes that taking part in NAV-organised Work Training results in a 30% lower probability of becoming employed during the Work Training period. There is no effect after the measure. This conclusion is reached by applying a hazard model to NAV's unemployment data register from 1992 to 2007 (von Simson 2012). It should be noted that the two groups – those on Work Training through NAV and those employed on short-term contracts through private firms – are self-selected and from very different groups.

Secondly, Hardoy reaches a similar conclusion using older data from 1989 to 1993. Compared to Simson, Hardoy looks at youth up to the age of 25 and concludes that the Work Training only works positively for girls aged 16–20 (Hardoy 2005). Thirdly, by using an event history analysis of everyone registered as unemployed in the period 2003 to 2012, Zhang concludes that Work Training has minimal effect on reducing unemployment (Zhang 2016). It is worth noting that Zhang does not separate out youth as one group in his data.

Overall, research tends to conclude that NAV's Work Training has negative or little effect in terms of reducing youth unemployment.

Despite seemingly defeating its purpose, there are certain positive sides to NAV's Work Training measure. In the case of the youngest unemployed youth, Work Training may provide something meaningful to do while waiting to re-enter school or higher education, preventing them from becoming socially isolated through staying passively at home.

3.2 The Follow-Up Service

The Education Act Section 3–6 and the Regulations to the Education Act (effective from August 2006), Chapter 13, regulate the Follow-Up Service (*Oppfølgingstjenesten*), a service provided by the county authority. The Follow-Up Service was established in 1994 when a statutory right to upper secondary education and training was introduced in Norway. The 1994 reform included a reorganisation of upper secondary education. The service is responsible for following up young people who are covered by the statutory right to upper secondary education and training, but who are neither in education nor employment. They are referred to as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). The Follow-Up Service is responsible for following up the target group until they are 21 years old.

The purpose of the Follow-Up Service is to ensure that people in the target group are offered training, employment or other related activity. Thus, one of the Follow-Up Service's main tasks is to monitor and maintain an overview of everyone who is neither in training nor in employment. The measures offered by the service should lead to completion of a general education or vocational education, or to partial competence.

3.2.1 Institutions and actors

The Follow-Up Service is responsible for ensuring that relevant agencies at municipal, county and state level (which includes NAV) cooperate to provide support for youth in the target group. Services at the municipal level can include health and care services and child welfare services.

There are 19 county authorities in Norway, and they organise the Follow-Up Service in different ways, although the basic model can be illustrated as in Figure 1, which shows the main model for the service (Grøgaard, Midtsundstad, and Egge 1999:65):

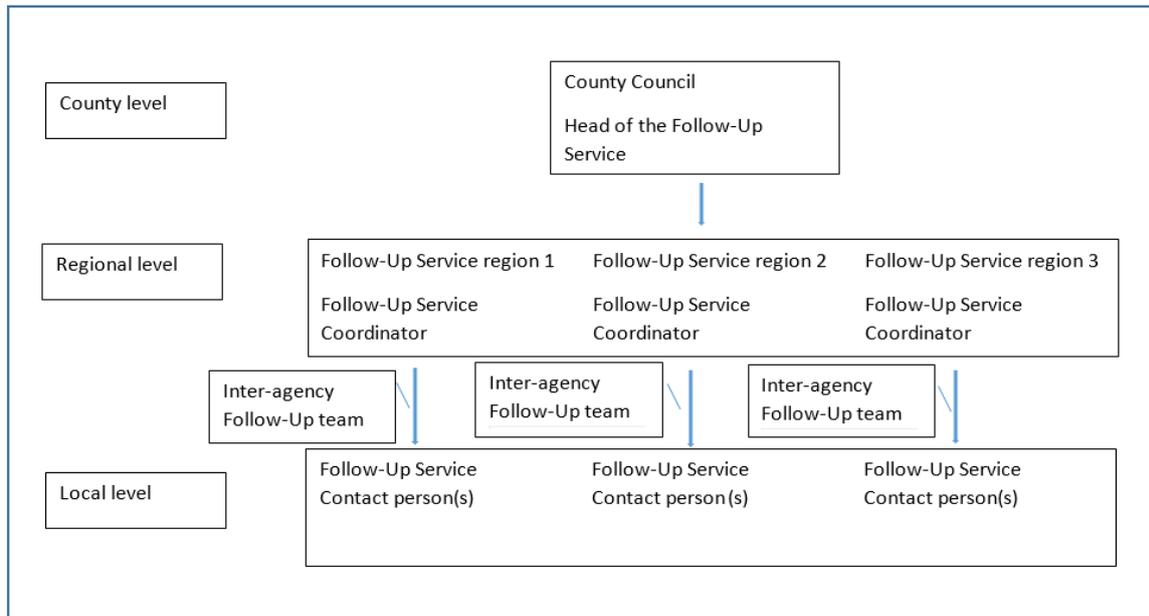


Figure 1: The main model for the Follow-Up Service (Grøgaard et al 1999, p. 65)

The target group for the Follow-Up Service comprised 19 200 young people as of June 2015 (UDIR 2016). That is equivalent to 9% of all young people who have a statutory right to upper secondary education and training. Prior to a national programme that was launched in 2010 (see below), a white paper estimated that one-third of the target group was unknown to the Follow-Up Service (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2011). Being unknown in this case means that the Follow-Up Service has not been able to establish contact with the young person, and does not know what the young person is doing (Riksrevisjonen 2016:60).

There are geographical differences as regards the share of young people being followed up by the Follow-Up Service – the share is lowest in Oslo and highest in the northern part of the country. This mirrors the general pattern as regards completion and dropout rates.

In the academic year 2012/2013, about half of the 19 900 youth and young adults that the Follow-Up Service registered had re-entered activity by the end of the year (UDIR 2014:15). However, the numbers differ significantly from region to region within Norway. For the 2011 cohort, for instance, the numbers varied from 53% in the county of Vest-Agder to 79% in the northernmost county of Finnmark. Finnmark is unique in that it is a county with high dropout rates as well as high re-entering rates. Youth classified as re-entering are engaged in education, training or employment. For those in the target group who are still in a NEET situation, the reasons vary widely. Some are in a life situation where re-entering school is

too difficult. Some have health issues and are too ill to work or study. Others are in non-formal training or have care responsibilities (UDIR 2014:115).

Within the Follow-up Service target group, some are dubbed 'regulars', meaning that they are registered with the service in two consecutive years. They may have been in employment, training or education for shorter periods in-between, but have again become NEETS. They may have only been in employment for short periods, or they may have quit school for a second time. The percentage of such 'regulars' was estimated to be 15% in June 2013 (UDIR 2014:115)

3.2.2 Financing

The county authority is responsible for financing the Follow-Up Service. According to the expert interview with the representative from the Ministry of Education and Research, the service has slightly fewer than 200 full-time equivalents, although many more staff since many of the employees work in part-time positions. The service is financed over the counties' ordinary budgets, i.e. there is no earmarked funding from the state, and the counties are free to organise the Follow-Up Service as they see fit.

3.2.3 Independence and cooperation

Although the county authorities are required by law to have a Follow-Up Service in place, there are few common denominators between the Norwegian regions in how the Follow-Up Service is organised. The freedom enjoyed by the county authorities as regards how to govern means that the state is not able to require that the service be organised in a particular way. Some counties have Follow-Up Service coordinators placed in upper secondary schools, while others have a more centralised position. The interviewed representative from the Ministry of Education and Research reflected on the challenging task of carrying out preventive work when not placed in schools. A representative from NAV—Directorate of Labour told of counties that expressly stated that their mission is not to cooperate with other institutions and measures to reduce dropout rates. Lack of resources forces these counties to prioritise the task of monitoring. Other counties place the Follow-Up Service directly in schools – in other words, there is great independence and variety in ways of implementing this measure.

3.2.4 Cooperation organisation

The aim of the Follow-Up Service is primarily to identify and seek out upper secondary school pupils who exit early. In following up this target group, the service cooperates with and coordinates work done by other governmental agencies. What the state offers this age group is primarily education through upper secondary schools, and the aim of all measures will normally be to help youth complete their education. However, NAV (through benefits, social security, training for employment and all its other services) also offers important support to youth in this position.

3.2.5 Horizontal and vertical coordination

Prior to 2010, annual reports from the county authorities to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training revealed that the Follow-Up Service had not been able to establish contact with all NEETs (see above). It became evident that the county authorities were not doing the job they were instructed to by law. The representative of the Ministry of Education and Research said that political awareness had been growing that the number of 'unknowns' needed to be dealt with. Thus, in order to meet the challenges that the Follow-Up Service faced and increase the completion rate in upper secondary education and training from 70 to 75%, the Ministry of Education and Research established partnerships with the county authorities in autumn 2010. Two partnerships were established, one administrative and one political: a partnership between three ministries (Ministry of Education and Research, Labour and Social Affairs, Children and Equality) and all 19 county authorities, and a political one between the Minister of Education and Research and all county mayors. They launched a programme called *Ny GIV*, which translates as New Possibilities. The main measures in this programme included:

- 'Intensified follow-up of pupils with the poorest results in the 10th grade and in Upper Secondary Education and Training
- Courses for teachers from all over the country in how to develop pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy
- Teacher networks to orient teachers' classroom practice in a more practical manner for the common core subjects Norwegian, English and Maths

- Pupils who are in danger of dropping out are offered summer jobs or summer school in order to make the transition between different school levels easier to handle.
- A common set of indicators has been established, offering valid and credible statistics based on figures from all county authorities.
- Improved collaboration between the Follow-Up Service and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration to help young people between the ages of 16 and 21 who are neither in school nor at work to return to school or an apprenticeship
- Extensive dialogue with the social partners to ensure more apprenticeships in both the private and the public sector
- More relevant and practice-oriented vocational education and training (VET), for example via:
 - The Certificate of Practice: a 2-year VET education programme (Lower Level Craft/Journeyman`s Certificate)
 - Training Candidature: an individually adapted education and training measure based on a reduced package of competence objectives, often both workplace and school based (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2010).

The regulations governing the Follow-Up Service were amended upon start-up of the New Possibilities programme in 2010. The representative of the Ministry of Education and Research also pointed out that the amended regulations emphasise that the Follow-Up Service is expected not only to get in touch with youth, but to establish contact with the appropriate institutions . The Follow-Up Service is also instructed to inform the parents of these youths. The need to provide measures that include competence objectives, not just provide youth with some kind of activity with no purpose, was also emphasised.

New Possibilities comprised three sub-projects in which the Follow-Up Project (*Oppfølgingsprosjektet*) targeted NEETs aged 15 to 21 and had a particular focus on the Follow-Up Service (see Sletten, Bakken, and Andersen 2015 for a brief summary of the two others). In an evaluation of the Follow-Up Project, three main findings emerged. Firstly, in line with the core intention of the Follow-Up Project:

‘there has been an increase in the proportion of young people neither in education nor in regular employment who have attended training modules that combine work experience with learning objectives in upper secondary school. [However], there has been no corresponding change for those at greatest risk of being outside school and work on a permanent basis, i.e. the young people who have been outside school and work for more than one year’ (Sletten, Bakken, and Andersen 2015:161-162).

Secondly:

‘There has been an improvement in the collaborative relationships between the actors who are responsible for young people not attending secondary school. The follow-up service in the counties now has a better overview of their target group than before the intervention, there has been closer and better cooperation between the schools, the follow-up service and NAV, and, according to employees of these agencies, the management has given more priority to dropout prevention in the counties. A large proportion of the employees in these agencies believe that they have become better at this work’ (Sletten, Bakken, and Andersen 2015:162).

Thirdly: ‘The training in skills to improve how employees work has primarily strengthened their [employees in the counties and in NAV] cooperation competence,’ but to a lesser extent improved the involved actors’ knowledge about available measures relevant to reducing dropping out (Sletten, Bakken, and Andersen 2015:162).

3.2.6 Outcomes and conclusion

After the introduction of the New Possibilities programme in 2010, the share of young people that the Follow-Up Service was unable to contact fell from 23% (4 700 young persons) in 2011 to 8% (1 500 persons) in 2013 (UDIR 2014:115). In the school year 2014/2015, it was down to 5% (Riksrevisjonen 2016:60). In the report by the Office of the Auditor General of Norway, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training states that making the county authorities’ records of ‘unknowns’ public has contributed to an increase in efforts aimed at establishing contact with these young people. The Follow-Up Service has made more active use of the help from NAV offices, counsellors in upper

secondary education and the youth outreach service (*utekontakten*²) to get in contact with its target group. There is nonetheless still great variation in the number of unknowns in the counties. For instance, in Oppland and Nord-Trøndelag there were no unknowns, whereas in Oslo there were 14% unknowns at the end of the 2014/2015 school year.

The programme New Possibilities was superseded by another programme, the Programme for enhanced completion of upper secondary education and training (*Program for bedre gjennomføring i videregående opplæring*). With the same aim of increasing completion rates in upper secondary school, the Ministry of Education and Research has worked with the counties and established 'a framework for improving completion rates. The framework will help county authorities to be more systematic in their efforts to provide appropriate assistance to the target groups' (Ministry of Education and Research 2015). The programme ends at the end of 2016 – the funding of two coordinator positions in each county, which has existed since 2010 when New Possibilities was launched, expires at the beginning of 2017. The Programme for enhanced completion of upper secondary education and training also includes research on different measures implemented in upper secondary schools with the objective of reducing dropout rates and increasing pupils' presence in school.

In parallel with New Possibilities and the Programme for enhanced completion of upper secondary education and training, NAV—Directorate of Labour and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training have funded a pilot project in which NAV case workers are present in upper secondary schools. The target group for these case workers is the same as for the Follow-Up Service, but the primary aim is to prevent dropping out by making use of measures and services available in the NAV system, and using them in combination with adapted education and training. From autumn 2015, in every county, at least one NAV case worker has his/her office in upper secondary school for four days a week; the fifth day is spent in the local NAV office. At school, the case worker is part of the Pupil Service (*elevtjenesten*) while in the local NAV office, they are part of the office's work targeting youth. The pilot project has been evaluated by the Work Research Institute at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences. Preliminary findings suggest that NAV

² *Utekontakten* is a public health and social service that does outreach work among young people aged 13 to 20.

case workers have an important role in providing assistance because of their competence and use of NAV's measures (Schafft and Mamelund 2016). The evaluation also suggests that case workers should to a greater extent emphasise follow-up of Work Training and assistance through work training in ordinary employment.

The Office of the Auditor General of Norway (Riksrevisjonen 2016) recommends that the Ministry of Education and Research implement further measures to strengthen the county authorities' work targeting youth who have dropped out of school, and their reporting on the quality of the follow-up work they provide. Furthermore, they recommend that the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs assess how the Follow-Up Services and NAV offices can strengthen the cooperation on follow-up to include more youth in measures that contain both work training and curriculum objectives. The two ministries are also urged to stimulate the Follow-Up Service and NAV's cooperation with municipal and county agencies and the health care services to provide a more holistic follow-up approach. In this context, it is necessary to explicitly define who has responsibility for coordinating the follow-up of individual youths. According to the representative from the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry has started drawing up a plan to follow up these recommendations.

4 Typologising youth policies

Since Norway is not part of the EU, and the Scandinavian countries have had some version of a Youth Guarantee in place for much longer than other European countries, a discussion of change in Norway's case must begin with domestic issues rather than common European developments.

However, some changes in policies may be attributed to broader European and even EU developments. An obvious example is the relatively recent liberalisation of the rules governing temporary employment.

5 Policy improvements

The Youth Guarantees in Norway are about to change, which makes it difficult to make recommendations about further policy improvements. We do not know at this point what will happen to the measures discussed above.

The previously mentioned report by the Office of the Auditor General of Norway focused on the years between 2011 and 2015 and examined whether the Follow-Up Service and NAV offices provide young people who drop out of upper secondary education and training with good support to return to education or obtain employment (Riksrevisjonen 2016). The main conclusion is that there is great variation in the quality of support available to young people. A minority of the young people who are participating in a measure participate in a measure that includes curriculum objectives. Cooperation between relevant services still does not work well enough to provide the follow-up and coordinated services young people need.

In relation to coming developments in Norway's Youth Guarantees, it does seem to be in line with the Auditor General's recommendations that the government has decided to merge the different guarantees into one common system for all unemployed youth. There is definitely a need for both broad, common measures and more specialised, individual adaption to get more youth and young adults into employment. Nonetheless, it is somewhat disconcerting that the government has chosen to remove the notion of a 'guarantee' from their budget proposal. Even though the guarantees were never framed as legal rights, the concept of a guarantee gave a certain protection against abrupt changes.

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