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Observatories across Europe”

Documentation

Practical Approaches of Youth Monitors in Regional and Local Labour Market Observatories

Results of the 2nd Second Conference of the Initiative for Networking Regional Labour Market Observatories across Europe

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This document is based on the presentations and working group results which are available under www.regionallabourmarketmonitoring.com

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The promotion of youth employment has for some years been a high priority topic in many European countries and at the level of the Commission, albeit even if currently overshadowed by wider economic issues. In comparison, youth employment, or the reduction of youth unemployment, remains on the daily agendas in localities and regions as a significant topic. As it is still difficult to generate new jobs at all, the situation is made more critical for youth, especially those groups which have, for individual or qualification reasons, difficulties successfully making the transition from school to work and in entering the labour market. Thus, the difficult integration of youth in the local educational systems and labour markets is not only a focal point for economic or labour policies, but is also one for the social policies.

Policy makers in regions and localities have recognized the necessity for targeted action. Only in this way can they succeed in remaining competitive over the long term and to help compensate for the consequences of demographic change. The development of a strategy customized to a region is greatly simplified if sufficient transparency exists in the current and future situation of youth. Regional and local labour market observatories can create this kind of transparency by conducting youth monitoring.

Regional or local youth monitoring is currently in an early developmental phase. To support the spread and differentiation of this monitoring, the “Initiative for Networking Regional and Local Labour Market Observatories across Europe” took youth monitoring as its annual theme for 2010/2011. Diverse activities focussing on this topic were initiated. These activities, their results and the perspectives derived from them, were presented and discussed at the European Day 2011. This was the second European conference of the Initiative, held on 6th October 2011 in Luxembourg. Attending were approximately 70 representatives of regional and local labour market observatories, as well as members of the European Network on Regional Labour Market Monitoring and other interested experts from the spheres of politics, administration and research. The main results of this conference are described below.

1. Assessment of the Current Situation from European Perspectives

Nicolas Schmit, the Labour Minister of Luxembourg, emphasised in his keynote address that in particular young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment. This is the case even in an economically strong country such as Luxembourg. One reason for this is the insufficient match between their qualifications and the needs of enterprises. In several countries with a high rate of youth unemployment – such as Spain, Greece and Sweden – the shortage of appropriate work places is a far more important cause. Although youth unemployment has consequences in the long run for society and the economy, it is still not a

major political issue.

This assessment was shared by Claude Denagetargal from the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). She emphasized the socio-political dimension of the issue. This is derived from the fact that when new jobs are created at all, these are primarily not permanent jobs. Limited contracts and internships, among others, are forms of precarious employment, to which young workers are disproportionately confronted with. Claude Denagetargal advocated building up a youth monitoring that not only captures headcounts of employed and unemployed, but rather delivers differentiated information on, for example, the types of employment and the protection of the employed as well as their transitions between education – employment – unemployment. According to her here it is important to consider, aside from the single phases and their durations, also the reasons for these movements in order to adequately assess the situations of young people.

Christiane Westphal from DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion argued that early school leaving is also an important topic that needs to be included in youth monitoring. She promoted the idea that it is important to bring the subject of youth employment into a broader discussion. A first success in this direction is the reference to improving youth employment in the Euro Plus Pact and in the Council. In addition to the presence of this topic in discussions, it is critical to create sufficient transparency on the site where the actual junction between education and employment occurs. Relevant data from Eurostat provides a good depiction at the national level, but there still needs greater efforts to make analogue information available in the regions. Regional and local youth monitoring is the right way to achieve this. However, there are still challenges to be mastered in the development of standards, necessary for allowing comparisons between regions and guaranteeing high quality data,

2. State of the Art in Regional and Local Youth Monitoring

2.1 The Initiative for Networking Regional Labour Market Observatories across Europe has developed a set of indicators that can be used to create a comprehensive youth monitoring. The indicators cover the areas of school leavers, youth employment, youth unemployment, school to work transition, and skills match and measures. The indicator set was made available at the beginning of 2011 to the 520 regional and local observatories known to the Initiative. This should place them in a situation where they can reflect on how far they are already able to depict the situation of youth in their regions or localities. This also enables them to determine how to either create or expand a corresponding youth monitoring. In August 2011, an electronic survey was performed with all 520 regional and local observatories. The goal of the survey was to find out which regions and localities have established youth monitoring and how these

approaches are equipped. **Coverage of Regional and Local Youth Monitoring across Europe**

The survey results show that currently only about half of all regional and local observatories have indicators related to youth situations. In most cases (63%), this is data on employment and unemployment for youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years old. In a fourth of the observatories, they also have additional indicators on school graduates. The selected indicators concern the unemployment or employment rates or the numbers of graduates from general educational institutions. More detailed or explanatory indicators, even of a qualitative nature, are not currently included. In almost every case, the indicators do not constitute an actual youth monitoring system, rather they are a part of a more general description of the local labour market in which a differentiation has been made for age groups. Only a small number of the regional labour market observatories conduct their own comprehensive youth monitoring.

As the situation for youth in the labour market is strongly influenced by regional conditions, a comprehensive youth monitoring would have to include information on those conditions. Under 20% of all regional observatories consider such indicators. There are however some general factors that are included, such as the economic measures and population changes. Data on youth-relevant infrastructure is not a part of the youth monitoring. In summary, it can be said that youth monitoring is currently implemented in Europe only in a very fragmented fashion and allows only limited insights into the current actual situation of youth. In the context of the Conference, working groups examined the reasons for this situation.

2.2. Reasons for the Limited Implementation of Regional and Local Youth Monitoring

A major reason is the unavailability of usable data. In this subject area, data from educational statistics and labour market statistics are used. The data is largely held by various organizations. One consequence of this is that time, financial and personnel resources have to be utilized in order to bring the data together. However, this alone does not mean that the data fits together since the topical, geographical and time-related bases of the data can be very different. Differentiated data; for example, reasons for dropping out of school or the legal forms of employment; exist in many regions and localities in the form of single surveys. However, there are insufficient resources available to regularly conduct such surveys and to generate the necessary time-series for monitoring. Other qualitative data are available in the personnel files of the labour and social administrations, but these cannot be used for monitoring due to protections of personal information. Furthermore, much of the survey data, such as the Labour Force Survey, exists only at the national level. The sample sizes are too small to be broken down into representative subsets at the regional level.

The marginal consideration of the contextual factors can be traced back to the operators of the observatories feeling themselves to be not fully competent in this area, and therefore do not collect appropriate data. Another possibility is that in presentations of the central local findings, the contextual factors are considered in qualitative descriptions and, thus, no indicators within the monitoring are considered to be required.

The data situation in the regional and local observatories is fundamentally determined by the resources that are made available. Almost all regional and local observatories experience that the demands are higher than can be met with available resources. Against this background, the majority of regional observatories maintain above all the indicators used by the primary users (which are often also the primary financers). These are very often the policy makers and the administrative bodies. They tend to require general indicators, which allow a first glance at the situation, but do not allow specific insights. While the monitoring systems are hence well directed to the informational needs of the current users, other interest perspectives, also necessary for employment – such as enterprises, schools and other NGOs – are hardly considered. In order to achieve sustainable success in youth employment in the localities, these actors are necessary strategic partners. They need transparency for their spheres of action. Here, there is a very clear need to act.

2.3 Improving the Current Situation

Which strategies could be used, so that regional and local observations come in the future to a position, despite restrictions in their resources, to maintain differentiated data stores for youth monitoring, also to allow servicing a broader spectrum of users than it is currently the case.

Contributions from Regional and Local Actors

Close cooperative relationships between the regional or local organizations that have the relevant data and knowledge and with organizations that need this information, can be of great help in obtaining appropriate information with little to no additional expense in resources and to communicate with target groups. Furthermore, it should be possible for these organizations to contribute some of their own resources in the monitoring process. Such organizations could come from higher education, vocational training, labour administration, branch associations, unions, regional governments or NGOs. Especially with consideration to the developing skilled labour shortages, employers' organizations should have a special interest in a closer cooperation with regional observatories.

Many of the holes in the data related to youth monitoring – especially with respect to more detailed and also qualitative information – can be filled with help of the knowledge of experts in the regions. Expert interviews, expert circles and even up to Delphi methods can be

utilized to generate and perpetuate such information with a minimum of resources over time.

Regional and local observatories can also form into networks within single extra-regional areas or at the national level. Through the focus on different regional and topical segments, a richer data pool can be drawn upon by all network members.

Eurostat also provides regional data collections. However, this is currently seldom used in the observatories. A training manual for accessing the data and its use would be a useful support for many observatories.

The Contribution of the Initiative for Networking Regional and Local Labour Market Observatories across Europe

Within the Initiative a repository could be created as a kind of meta-data base. This should provide concepts, definitions, applications in various countries, good practice examples, and more. The various documents should provide short commentaries with information on the time applications require and what other resources are necessary therefor. Contact persons should also be provided with relevant experience in the application. Access should be made possible for all interested observatories. In this way, various definitions or concepts can be compared with each other. To complement these documents, a manual for the creation and operation of regional and local youth monitoring could be provided. Such a manual would define what is necessary to create a monitor. This refers to the single phases, the relevant actors and organizations as well as the necessary time, personnel and financial resources that would be required. In addition, the indicators that should be included will be outlined. The manual would be a fundamental document describing a basic model for regional labour market monitoring and can help all operators of labour market observatories to clearly define what they need to create a sustainable monitoring and keep it in operation. The existence of a well build website can provide a good starting point for the creation of such a repository. There is a large readiness on the part of the observatories and the members of the European Network on Regional Labour Market Monitoring to support such a repository of relevant documents with contributions. Further external financial resources will be necessary, however, to actually create and operate this repository. These are still to be raised.

As a further step, the forum installed on the website can be reactivated to promote exchange between the observatories. The content of this exchange could be the common continuing development of concepts and analysis or consulting for new observatories by operators of already well-established and operating observatories

Once or twice a year, surveys could be conducted. These would capture, for example, the developmental status of youth monitoring. This would also provide an avenue for starting targeted offerings from the Initiative for improving specific situations. Through periodic

surveys, the communication between the observatories and the Initiative can be maintained and, on a regular basis, the top topics reviewed. This can provide an annually published list of the top topics and a fact sheet could be produced by the Initiative for each of these themes.

The suggestions for how the Initiative for Networking Regional and Local Labour Market Observatories can give support will be further examined by the Scientific Committee, which is supporting the Initiative. Ideas and strategies will be developed here, also in connection with single observatories and European organizations, of how to implement these suggestions.

3. The Next Steps for the Initiative

The large interest in the European Day 2011 and the very active participation of all attendees in the working groups and the Keynote discussions, through to the concrete suggestions of how the Initiative can support the work of the observatories, clearly state the need of the regional and local observatories for exchange and mutual learning. It also shows that regional and local monitoring is increasing in importance for the regions. More clearly, a decisive role is being given to youth monitoring in many regions. On this basis, it was decided that the topic of youth monitoring will be developed further within the Initiative.

3.1 Working Group Youth Monitoring

A Working Group will further develop and distribute across European regions primarily applications for regional and local youth monitoring. The core of the Working Group will be representatives from several regions in Poland. They have already formed a network in Poland for mutual exchange. Within this network, obligatory standards for indicators and data will be developed for all Polish regions, which permits benchmarking. The standardization of the indicators is already planned for the coming months. Following this, the necessary data will be specified for these indicators. The next phase includes their implementation as well as their testing in the individual regions and an evaluation of these steps. The end of these activities will see a youth monitoring that is already tested and should be carried over into other regions. The steps described will be prepared in the Working Group, which will also accompany their realization. Regular meetings are planned, which are open for other interested observatories and experts. As experts, representatives from Cereq, the Marchmont Observatories and from IWAK, among others, will participate. Cereq is planning to create an expert Delphi with monitoring experts to formulate input for the Polish observatories' specification process. In the newsletter of the European Network on Regional Labour Market Observatories, the progress of the Working Group will be reported. The dates for coming Working Group meetings will also be publicized. Beyond this, the Working Group

will present their results at the European Day 2012, which will take place in Krakow in October. The first contact point for the Working Group is the Initiative Secretary, Ruth Hasberg.

3.2 Annual Theme for the Initiative in 2011/2012

The Initiative will occupy itself until the next European Day in October 2012 with the topic of “geographical mobility”. The Initiative will present in the coming weeks concepts and applications, developed by members of the European Network on Regional Labour Market Monitoring, on the subject of geographical mobility. The 520 known regional and local observatories should familiarize themselves with these concepts and applications. They are invited to adapt them to their own situations and test these. A survey in August 2012 will be conducted to gather their experiences. The analysis of the survey data will be presented and discussed at the European Day 2012 in Krakow.

Further information on the results from the European Day 2011 can be obtained through the Initiative Secretary, Ruth Hasberg (Mail: Hasberg@em.uni-frankfurt.de).

Timetable for the “Initiative for Networking Regional and Local Labour Market Observatories across Europe”

December 2011	Start of working group on “Youth Monitoring”
January 2012	Invitation of all Regional and Local Labour Market Observatories across Europe to explore concepts for measuring geographical mobility in regional labour market monitors
June/ July 2012	Survey among all Regional and Local Labour Market Observatories to access experiences with exploring concepts of geographical mobility
11 October 2012	3 rd European Day in Krakow