

COST Action CA17114

**Transdisciplinary solutions to
cross sectoral disadvantage
in youth (YOUNG-IN)**

WG5



Working paper series

Youth-oriented policies beyond ideal-typical welfare regimes in Europe:

Situation and initiatives from the perspective of youth transition regimes

Conclusion

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This WP series contributes to the main aims of YOUNG-IN and WG5 (Knowledge-based social investment policy for youth) by aiming to:

- 1) Describe today's situation of youth in our nine case countries based on characteristics perceived to be the most relevant by the literature of Youth Transition Regimes (YTR);
- 2) Give an overview of the main policy initiatives targeted at youth within key policy areas relevant for YTR.

This WP is structured as follows: Part I gives a harmonised comparative overview of the existing situation in the analysed nine countries in comparison with EU28 (the analyses cover period before Brexit, thus kept EU28 instead of EU27). Part II consists of nine chapters about youth-oriented policy initiatives in those countries in two recent decades across policy areas especially relevant for youth (education, labour market, social inclusion, participation and housing). Part III concludes with an executive summary that compares the countries' youth-oriented policy directions in the modified framework of YTR.

The structure and authorship of respective chapters are as follows (current chapter highlighted):

- Part I: A comparative introduction of situation of youth, Triin Lauri
- Part II: Country reports on youth oriented policies:
 - Youth-oriented policies in Bulgaria (BG), Veneta Krasteva
 - Youth-oriented policies in Switzerland (CH), Berihun Wagaw, Matthias Drilling, Semhar Negash
 - Youth-oriented policies in Estonia (EE), Anu Toots and Triin Lauri
 - Youth-oriented policies in Spain (ES), Francisco Javier Moreno-Fuentes, Pau Marí-Klose
 - Youth-oriented policies in Lithuania (LT), Daiva Skučienė, Natalija Mažeikienė
 - Youth-oriented policies in Latvia (LV), Anna Broka
 - Youth-oriented policies in Moldova (MD), Crismaru Mariana
 - Youth-oriented policies in Malta (MT), Sue Vella
 - Youth-oriented policies in Turkey (TR), Hande Barlin, Nilufer Korkmaz Yaylagul
- **Conclusion, Anu Toots, Triin Lauri**

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Part III: Conclusion

Anu Toots, Triin Lauri

This Working Paper Series aimed at understanding the current situation of youth in nine European countries (Bulgaria, Switzerland, Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Malta and Turkey) based on characteristics perceived to be the most relevant by the literature of Youth Transition Regimes (YTR). The primary aim was not to define the YTR type for each country but to see whether recent policy initiatives across countries tend to advance a certain YTR type. Since each type has its own negative effects, this approach allows to predict where cross-sectoral disadvantages for youth lie and what preventive measures would be needed. Table 1 visualises the renewed model of youth citizenship regimes initially proposed by Chevalier (2016) and Pohl and Walther (2007). Besides mapping 4 main YTR types/clusters, it also highlights the main policy problem intrinsic for each cluster.

		ECONOMIC DIMENSION	
		Individual Focus	Structural Focus
SOCIAL DIMENSION	Indivi- dualised	Second Class YTR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Independent access to benefits but benefits mainly mean & lean ▶ LM entry with low structural barriers but performance depends on individual efforts MAIN NEGATIVE EFFECT: High socio-economic disparities among youth	Enabling YTR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Independent access to benefits ▶ LM entry with low structural barriers and supported by strong education & ALMP MAIN NEGATIVE EFFECT: Overall increase in cost of living may hamper youth wellbeing
	Familia- lised	Denied YTR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Familialised access to benefits ▶ LM entry with high structural barriers and not supported by education and LMP MAIN NEGATIVE EFFECT: Youth is neglected by policies	Monitored YTR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Familialised access to benefits ▶ LM entry with high structural barriers (dualisation) but supported by VET education and LMP MAIN NEGATIVE EFFECT: Autonomy (both in private and working life) constrained

Table 1: Policies that advance a certain YTR type and the main negative effect of those policy choices

Source: Chevalier 2016 and Pohl and Walther 2007 amended by authors.

Part I showed that regarding the severity of youth disadvantages, Bulgaria, Spain, Moldova and Turkey have the highest share of NEET, unemployment, risk of poverty and early school leaving. Thus, in those countries youth have the biggest challenges in coping with social risks. While early school leaving is high also in Malta, other indicators are better compared to the group of countries listed above. While youth activation measures are relatively well mitigated in Baltic countries, very low social expenditures seem to cause problems with housing affordability, for example, in Latvia and Lithuania but also in Bulgaria. There are also huge differences in family residential models (i.e. youth tendency to live together with the extended family) across our case countries but our approach does not allow tackling the potential endogeneity of that indicator, i.e. analysing to what extent this is a consequence of bad policy options vs a culturally induced choice. However, the explorative and descriptive Part I hints that neither the prevalence of extended family nor the maturity of general welfare expenditures guarantee buffering of social risks for youth *per se*. Such is the case for young people in Spain, for instance, who are struggling across many indicators despite high shares in the extended family model and compensatory expenditures of the welfare state.

We proceed with the overview of policy initiatives in our case countries, placing more focus on the key YTR areas such as education, labour market and social inclusion policies. However, we extend the latter by also covering social housing, a growingly relevant issue in analysing welfare policies in general and youth in particular.

Education policy initiatives

In analysing education policy from the perspective of YTR, the questions of utmost importance (A1) are VET importance (e.g. skill specificity) and educational stratification (e.g. the indicator to reveal whether children of various social backgrounds have similar educational opportunities; in YTR it tends to take a more broader scope in focusing on school to work transitions and labour market opportunities of youth of various social backgrounds). In the YTR model, low-skill specificity combines with low stratification in the Enabling YTR; high specificity with low stratification in the Monitored YTR; low skill specificity with high stratification in the Second Class YTR; and high skill specificity with high stratification in the Denied YTR. Starting with the importance of VET, all analysed countries, except Switzerland, are struggling with the low share of VET. In Central- and Eastern European (CEE) countries, i.e. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova it can be interpreted as a heritage path dependence from the Soviet era, a period of strong preferential treatment of VET education, which has caused a certain counter-reaction after the Soviet system collapsed. Still, in the last decades EU initiatives and the mismatch between the educational production and the labour market needs have resulted in relatively high political saliency of VET education and intense policy initiatives (see A1). While some delay in VET development in CEE countries is a general trend, inclusivity and quality of education differs remarkably across those countries. Starting with similarities, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova all rely on a dominantly public education system, thus, the commodification is low. However, in terms of quality and stratification, Estonia and Latvia have relatively good results in both, Lithuania and Moldova are struggling with quality, and Bulgaria with both quality and high stratification. Educational disparities are relatively

high also in Switzerland, Turkey and increasingly also in Spain. Thus, the importance of VET might ease the school to work transition depending on its design and result in educational disparities (Switzerland).

Out of nine countries, education policies and recent policy initiatives fall into the type of Second Class YTR in five countries (Bulgaria, Spain, Moldova, Malta and Turkey, see B1). These countries tend to apply the 'work-first' strategy, meaning that educational stratification is high and skill specificity low, thus, young people might have problems with both educational access and drop-out, increasing the risk that youth have to accept low-quality jobs. Switzerland falls into the Denied YTR with high educational stratification and high skill specificity without explicit mechanisms to support school to work transitions. And finally, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania fall into the Enabling YTR, as all three have low stratification and low specificity but recent policy initiatives lean toward Monitored YTR, as VET education has been facilitated. However, LMP entry is not supported in those countries at a level we know from literature (Chevalier 2016; Table 1) and despite of policy initiatives with a strong VET emphasis, the image of VET is still low either in terms of the share of students, the level of students or the wage premium of VET graduates.

A1. Overview of policy directions (effective situation/policy initiatives): Post-Compulsory Education

	BG	CH	EE	ES	LV	LT	MD	MT	TR
Drop-outs / early school leaving	High / de-commodification	Low, prevention	Low, prevention	High, retrenchment	Low	Low	High	High	High
Educational stratification (access / outcome)*	High, gap between low and high quality schools / ignored	High (migrants), prevention	Low (however ethnic educational gap), stagnation	High and increasing, reinforced	Low	Low, but stagnation	High, gap between public and private schools	High, gap between public, church and private schools	High, gap between public and private schools
Importance of VET vs academic education	Low, extension	High	Low, extension	Low, stagnation	Low, extension	Low	Low	Low, extension	Low
Employers' involvement in VET	Low, extension	High	Low	Low	Low, extension	Low	Low	Low, extension	Low
School to work transition**	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak

* Low stratification means that different social groups have similar educational opportunities (it can be both access and outcome) whereas high stratification means that these opportunities are different. There are several channels via which educational stratification emerges and/or reinforces in education system, the most known are private schooling without public funding, different tracks (e.g. immigrants and natives separately; VET and general track separately) and uncontrolled school choice.

** The link between education and labour market

Labour market policy initiatives

All analysed countries have an insurance-based system of unemployment protection that is unfavourable for young people since they hardly have a sufficient contribution or employment record to qualify for the benefits. The recession and its aftermath have led to an overall retrenchment of unemployment protection schemes and, as a result, there are no optimistic perspectives for youth here. In some countries, the protection policies for young people have even been retrenched – Estonia introduced a longer waiting period for unemployment allowance; Bulgaria made social assistance benefits conditional on accepting any job offer, Latvia and Lithuania require registering at a Public Employment Office to receive social assistance benefits.

Active LM policies, on the contrary, have been expanded in all countries but Spain. Spain continues to struggle with high youth unemployment rates, and the policy seems to remain very rigid with few path-breaking initiatives to advance the employability of youth. In EU member states, the explicit effect of the Youth Guarantee program (2013) is evidenced, although non-EU members (Switzerland, Turkey and Moldova) follow a similar line. Besides individual counselling, LM training and extra programs for the most disadvantaged youth, several measures for employers (wage subsidies and tax exemptions for young workers) have also been rather common. This is especially true for all Baltic countries, Moldova and Malta. As result of this orientation towards employers' support, some Second Class YTR countries (Estonia, Bulgaria) have slightly moved towards Monitored YTR (see A2 and B1). In the majority of countries, work and occupational safety regulations for working youth have been introduced or specified, ensuring sufficient time for studies and recreation. Wage and tax policies are specific to young workers only in a few countries (Bulgaria, Malta).

In sum, the dominant YTR in labour policy seems to be the Second Class type, represented by Estonia, Bulgaria, Moldova and Turkey. Malta, Latvia and Lithuania belong to the cluster of Monitored YTR due to more systematic focus on the integration of VET into the labour supply and an emphasis on employers' support instead of direct support to young people.

A2. Overview of policy directions (effective situation/policy initiatives): Labour market

	BG	CH	EE	ES	LV	LT	MD	MT	TR
Unemployment benefits	Un-favourable/stagnation	Un-favourable/extension	Un-favourable/stagnation	Un-favourable/retraining	Hard to understand	No data (insurance)	Un-favourable/stagnation	Un-favourable/stagnation	Un-favourable/stagnation
LM services: Training	Un-favourable/extension	Favourable	Un-favourable/extension	Stagnation	Extension	Slight extension	Extension	Extension	Extension
LM services: Employers' support	Un-favourable/limited	(No data)/stagnation	Favourable/extension	No data	Extension	Extension	Extension	Extension	No data
Labour relations	Favourable/extension	Favourable/extension	Extension	No data	No data	Extension	Favourable/stagnation	Favourable/extension	No data

Legend:

Unfavourable: Either *indirect*, i.e. existing policies does not account for youth-specific needs (e.g. assume insurance record) or existing (not-targeted) policies do not have impact; or *direct*, i.e. set unfavourable eligibility rules (e.g. students cannot apply for unemployment status)

Favourable: Country has targeted programs for youth to take into account youth specific social risks

Social welfare & housing policy initiatives

A country comparison of social welfare policies is always difficult, since these measures typically fall into the responsibility of the regional or local levels and, therefore, are fragmented and uneven even within one country. Furthermore, social assistance serves all disadvantaged categories, which makes distinguishing special youth-targeted programs complicated.

Despite that, we revealed some clustering among the nine analysed countries. The majority of them (6 countries) follow the familialistic approach, according to which young people are treated as members of their parents' families for rather long periods, up to 24 years of age (or until personal family formation). Three countries – Switzerland, Moldova and Bulgaria, oppositely belong to the individualised tradition, where young people become autonomous subjects for social welfare earlier, usually at age 18. However, the latter does not automatically lead to the Enabling type of YTR. Only Switzerland can be labelled as a mix of Second class and Enabling clusters, because there is a broad spectrum of various services to support youth welfare (allowances, counselling, and accommodation). When we include to the cluster assessment also housing policy, Moldova emerges as an enabling type thanks to the wide range of youth-oriented initiatives and programs in the public housing sector.

Six countries that practice the familialised approach to the youth social welfare rights fall into clusters of Denied YTR, which is characterised by a low/absent focus on youth in social welfare and housing policy (see similar finding for Turkey in Yilmaz 2017). Existing programs and policy initiatives target families but not young people *per se*. In countries with liberal housing markets (Estonia, Malta), we see a mixture of two clusters (denied + second class) whereas in case of greater state intervention (Spain) we see a combination of denied and monitored YTR. Lastly, Latvia and Lithuania demonstrate strong family orientation also in the housing policy, which clearly classifies them in the denied YTR cluster.

A3. Overview of policy directions (effective situation/policy initiatives): Social welfare and housing

	BG	CH	EE	ES	LV	LT	MD	MT	TR
Age of individual applications	18	18	25	23	25 for students/ 18-20 otherwise	18/25 for students	No data	23	25
Services available specifically for youth	No data	Discount in transport	Free/discount transport	No data	Transport	Transport discount	Assisted social houses	Discount in transport; shelters	Free/discount transport
Initiatives to combat youth poverty / exclusion	No	"More affordable homes" was rejected on February 2020 by public referendum	No	Yes; policy programs against poverty; State Housing Plan 2018-2021 to facilitate access of vulnerable groups (youth) to housing market	Family policies, but not specifically youth targeted		Yes, Government degree (2017) on extension of access to social housing	Yes, state subsidy for people under 40 in mortgage	
Access to (social / subsidized) housing	Not likely	No data	Not likely	Not likely (yet)	No likely	No data	Available from age 18	Not likely	Not likely, age threshold - 30
Access to mortgage market	Important; Mortgage costs deductible from income tax (for young)	No data	Important sector; support for VET + HE specialists up to 35 of age	Youth Assistance program – to buy/rent property in smaller towns/ rural areas	State grants to families with children	Support only for families with children	No data	Important sector	Modestly important

Pending issues and further research avenues

The country chapters collected an impressive amount of factual information, including some data not yet used in international research. Seeing patterns or clustering behind this mass of details proved to be a hard challenge. While combining and amending Chevalier's (2016) and Pohl and Walther's (2007) frameworks of YTR to the untypical welfare regimes within the EU and beyond, we revealed expected matches with the framework, but also unexpected patterns. The analyses also revealed substantial differences across policy fields – the oldest policy area, social protection, tends to neglect youth needs most; the youngest policy area, housing, in contrary places rather intensive emphasis on youth problems although cross-country variance here is significant.

The country chapters also collected some information on youth-oriented policies in health, but these data do not allow making meaningful a generalisation here. In order to decide upon a YTR cluster in health, more and internationally comparable data on mental health and preventive health programs is needed beyond traditional indicators such as access to free healthcare.

The second avenue for future research concerns youth agency in policy processes. We see a relatively diverse picture in terms of youth religious and civic activism across countries, but existing data and resources do not allow making any predictions about the link between youth activism and the intensity of youth-oriented policies. These associations are more complex, often context dependent and emphasise the importance of local constellations in youth participation regimes (Walther et al. 2021). However, aligned with the MOU of YOUNG-IN we admit that in order to understand how well young people navigate various life domains and where tendencies for accumulations or a spill over of disadvantages exist, multidisciplinary knowledge is needed. Existing literature (Soler-i-Martí, Ferrer-Fons 2015; Chevalier 2019) suggests that there is a close interrelationship between youth transition regimes and patterns of youth political activism, so this WP Series provides a good platform for furthering the topic of youth agency.

B. YTR types in policy areas*

	BG	CH	EE	ES	LV	LT	MD	MT	TR
Post-compulsory education	Second class	Denied	Enabling	Second class	Enabling	Enabling	Second class	Second class	Second class
Labour market	Second class [†]	Enabling	Second class [†]	Denied	Monitored**	Monitored**	Second class	Monitored	Second class
Social welfare	Second class	Second class → Enabling	Denied	Denied	Denied	Denied	Second class	Denied	Denied
Housing	Second class	Denied [‡]	Second class	Monitored	Denied [‡]	Denied [‡]	Enabling	Second class	Denied [‡]

* YTR types (Second Class; Enabling; Denied; and Monitored) are defined based on Chevalier (2016) and amended by authors. Look Table 1 in this summary for details of the YTR dimensions and specific problems

** While there are plenty of youth oriented initiatives, most of them are employers' incentives not training oriented

[†] Have slightly moved towards Monitored type, especially under Youth Employment guarantee and EL safety at work regulations

[‡] All initiatives children or family dependent

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