

Europeanisation and the Youth Guarantee: The case of France

Bussi M., Graziano P. Europeanisation and the Youth Guarantee: The case of France

In 2013, the European Council approved the Youth Guarantee (YG) to counteract youth unemployment. Because of its specific features, the YG is useful for understanding whether the EU has triggered policy change in national youth unemployment policies. Contrary to most of the literature on similar topics, we focused in this study on the effect of this specific European measure rather than on broader EU strategies or policies. The study contributes to the literature by qualifying the degree of fit/misfit and suggesting a counterfactual analysis, using the case of France. We first situate the article within the broader Europeanisation debate and present our research design. The second section introduces the policy structure of the YG and investigates youth unemployment policy in France, prior to and after the European initiative. The third section discusses whether the French youth unemployment policy would have been developed in the same way without the YG. A final section concludes.

Margherita Bussi^{1,2}, Paolo Graziano^{3,4}

¹ University of Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

² European Trade Union Institute, Brussels, Belgium

³ University of Padua, Padua, Italy

⁴ European Social Observatory, Brussels, Belgium

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Margherita Bussi, Institut de Sciences Politiques Louvain-Europe (ISPOLE), Université catholique de Louvain – UCL, 1/7 Place Montesquieu, Bte L2.08.07 B-1348, Louvain-la-Neuve/Belgique – Belgium.

E-mail: margherita.bussi@uclouvain.be

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Introduction

Youth unemployment has attracted renewed attention in recent years because of the dramatic impact of the crisis on youth unemployment rates. The political and policy issues concern not only reducing the skyrocketing unemployment rates, but also avoiding long-term inactivity which, according to some authors, has led to a 'lost generation' (Scarpetta, Manfredi, & Sonnet, 2010). With a rising proportion and heterogeneity of long-term unemployed and inactive young people, the design of current active labour market policies (ALMPs) has been questioned. Although several actions have been undertaken since the early 2000s to address the issue of youth unemployment (Cinalli & Giugni, 2013), the overall deterioration of young people's situation in the labour market has led European institutions to adopt youth-specific measures, such as the Youth Guarantee (YG). After years of limited European initiatives, the Youth Guarantee consolidated the increasing attention of European institutions on youth unemployment.

This article assesses whether the introduction the YG (Council of the European Union, 2013) has brought about a policy change at the national level. At the EU level, the YG has benefited from an initial transversal support across relevant actors who engaged in several initiatives to support its

implementation.¹ The political and policy relevance of the YG makes it particularly interesting for testing the main hypothesis developed within the Europeanisation literature, that is, the fit/misfit hypothesis. More specifically, despite the vast body of literature on Europeanisation, employment and social policy change, the role played by various specific measures and their impact on national policies has rarely been investigated. For this reason, and because of its recent national implementation, the analysis of the YG in terms of Europeanisation seems to us particularly promising.

In our contribution to this Special Issue, we have focused on several specificities of the policy structure of the YG in order to understand whether the policy

¹ Some examples: The European Socialist Party initiated a raising-awareness campaign on the need for a YG <http://www.youth-guarantee.eu/>; the European Social Partners put youth unemployment on their 2012–2014 Joint Work Programme (http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/EUSD_work_prog_2012-2014.pdf) and also engaged in negotiations for agreeing on a Framework of Actions on Youth Employment aiming at supporting the implementation of transition measures at the national and local levels (<http://www.etuc.org/framework-actions-youth-employments>). European Youth Forum produced several publications on the YG, including a position paper http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-brussels/documents/genericdocument/wcms_175788.pdf.

at the EU level has generated any policy change in domestic youth unemployment policies. In addition, elaborating on Graziano (2011), our contribution provides an analytical grid that helps to qualify the type of policy change, induced to the policy structure by Europeanisation. Before presenting the empirical analysis, we briefly describe the research design and how this study contributes to the literature.

Theory and hypothesis

Although there are examples of literature that have examined the Europeanisation of employment and social policy (see e.g., Caminada, Goudswaard, & Van Vliet, 2010; Graziano, 2011; Heidenreich & Bischoff, 2008; Kvist & Saari, 2007), often Europeanisation has been considered more in an evocative way rather than in an analytical one. In the more promising accounts, a broad consensus can be detected in the literature. One of the main innovative aspects of theorising on Europeanisation concerns the ‘fit/misfit’ hypothesis (for a survey, see Graziano & Vink, 2012). This hypothesis implies that there may be a differentiated ‘adaptational pressure’ towards national (and regional) policies in cases where the policy differences among the different policy models (or structures) are at their peak (Börzel & Risse, 2003; Graziano, 2011). In our contribution, we have focused on the policy dimension of Europeanisation rather than on the institutional dimension (Graziano & Vink, 2007). Our hypothesis concerns policy diffusion: the greater the policy misfit, the more probable is the pressure towards policy change and – in cases of domestic support by national political and institutional actors – the more likely there will be a policy change.

More in general, following Graziano and Vink (2012) and Moumotzis and Zartaloudis (2016), we adopted an innovative approach with respect to the original literature on Europeanisation (such as Risse, Green, Cawles, & Caporaso, 2001) in order to unveil Europeanisation mechanisms by looking at the Youth Guarantee measure, a measure that is rather novel and has not yet attracted sufficient scholarly attention in connection with Europeanisation. More specifically, from a methodological standpoint, we used the notion of ‘policy structure’ in order to consider the various dimensions that build a public policy (Graziano, 2011). We then followed the suggestions provided by Haverland (2007) and Moumotzis and Zartaloudis (2016) for tracing causality in Europeanisation, that is, to ‘focus on the following dimensions of the policy-making process: 1) the definition of the policy problem; 2) the alternative courses of action considered; and 3) the manner in which the latter were assessed’ (Moumotzis & Zartaloudis, 2016, p. 339).

To be sure, our theoretical contribution is not limited to having tested the fit/misfit hypothesis. Rather, our aim has been to: (i) further specify the link between

Europeanisation and policy change, too often theoretically overlooked in the literature; and (ii) explore how such causality links can unfold and what specifically is the Europeanisation potential with respect to other competing potential explanations.

Research design: data and methods

In terms of case selection, we focused on a case study, taking advantage of the virtues of case studies in heuristic terms (Yin, 1984). Following Seawright and Gerring (2008), we selected France because it represents what we consider to be a deviant case. In research on Europeanisation, France has a record of ‘resistant policy adaptation’ (Graziano, 2011) and thus deviates from the general model of causal relations identified in the literature. Hence, if policy change is detected in the French case, the mechanisms valid for France may be, *a fortiori*, considered as valid for other less ‘resistant’ countries.

The analysis in this article proceeds as follows. First, we describe the specificities of the European YG which are likely to trigger change, and we define key dimensions of the policy structure (objectives, principles, procedures and financial instruments). Second, we focus on the French case prior to and after the introduction of the Youth Guarantee while discussing the role of national actors in triggering or hindering change, thereby testing the fit/misfit hypothesis. We conclude by discussing the results in light of the existing literature.

To understand the role of key domestic actors involved in youth unemployment policies, we used domestic policy reports to the EU Commission, national policy documents, positions of governmental institutions (Government and Parliament), social partners (both in their own capacity and in institutional fora such as the national Social, Economic and Environmental Committee), and the civil society (i.e., social policy providers). Documents were selected in response to several essential criteria. They had to deal with activation policies targeting young people (particularly when referring to the YG or the European level); they had to come from a stakeholder involved in the policy-making process; they had to include information on the dimensions of the selected policy structure dimension; and they had to have been produced in a selected time frame extending from 2010 to the present in order to include the ‘before and after’ launch of the YG.

The EU policy structure of the Youth Guarantee

The focus on youth unemployment is not new at the European level (Lahusen, Shultz, & Graziano, 2013), although, so far, the YG has not been thoroughly studied. Tosun, Treib, and De Francesco (2019) in this Special Issue contribute to this research effort

by applying a policy convergence analysis across member states implementing the YG. Following the onset of the 2008 economic crisis, in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy, the 'Youth on the Move' initiative brought forward the idea of a Youth Guarantee, but mainly as a means to ensure that all young people are in a job, education or activation (European Commission, 2010). This definition differs slightly from the broader definition of the YG presented in the Youth Employment Package adopted in 2012 (European Commission, 2012). This Package included several initiatives. However, the Youth Guarantee represented the most comprehensive response to youth unemployment at that time. The Council Recommendation, adopted in April 2013, called on EU countries to establish a YG that would ensure that 'all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education' (pp. 2–3).

In terms of policy structure, the overall policy objective is to bring all young people back into a recognised integration path as soon as possible after leaving school/training or being unemployed. Avoiding long periods of NEET (Not in Employment Education or Training) is expected to reduce the risk of long-term inactivity and the ensuing 'scarring effect' (Emmenegger, Marx, & Schraff, 2017; Eurofound, 2017). A more far-reaching policy objective is to achieve systemic improvements of school-to-work transition systems, the creation of comprehensive information systems and the reduction of the segmentation of the labour market.

Undoubtedly, the prevailing policy principle of the YG is 'activating the unemployed', which is to be promoted, via a mix of an enabling approach (training and education) and a work-first approach (emphasis on benefit conditionality and labour market integration), to activation (Dingeldey, 2007). The Council Recommendation also indicated the preferred policy procedure: a multilevel governance structure at the national level, where vertical coordination is complemented by strong development of horizontal coordination at the local level, the so-called 'partnership-based approach'. This approach is meant to bring together all relevant stakeholders (e.g., public and private employment services, education and training institutions, social partners) with the aim of better adapting their services and delivery.

The financial instrument used to implement the YG differed from other EU employment policies insofar as, in 2013, the Council set a total budget of €6.4 billion for the period 2014–2016; €3.2 billion coming from allocated budget line called the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) granted at the regional

level, and €3.2 billion originating from the European Social Fund (ESF). National resources co-fund the ESF component. Moreover, YEI resources are to be granted against ex-ante and ex-post conditionality, while a performance-based test ensures money flow at a later stage. Most of the ex-ante criteria regarding the YEI funds were already mentioned in the Council Recommendation; their inclusion in the ESF regulations institutionalises them and links them to financing. Moreover, their inclusion makes member states accountable and allows sanctioning (i.e., money is not granted). These legal constraints would not have been possible via the non-binding Council Recommendation and because labour market policies do not fall under exclusive EU competence. The role of monitoring is also of key importance and takes place at the EU level through different channels and not only via the ESF. Member States are expected to regularly inform on developments concerning the design, implementation and results of the YG within the Employment Committee and report on a set of specific indicators specifically created for the YG (EMCO, 2015). Further, the observations made by the Employment Committee feed into the European Semester and the Country-Specific Recommendations addressed to Member States, which are expected to report back on the implementation the following year.

Defining the dimensions of the fit/misfit of the Youth Guarantee

The YG's policy structure features presented above inspired the analytical grid below that we used to test the fit/misfit hypothesis in the case of France (Table 1). Table 1 is informed by a *policy structure approach* by adding two specific sub-dimensions of analysis: *policy design* and *institutional structure*. The policy design includes the dimensions of 'objectives' and 'principles' of the YG, while the institutional structure includes 'procedures' and 'financial instruments'. To assess the fit or misfit of the policy objective, we chose to focus on the definition of NEET. For the policy principle, we restricted the broad principle of 'activation' to one of its aspects: the timing intervention, that is, the *4-month timeframe for service delivery*. As for the policy procedure, we considered that adopting a 'partnership approach' across relevant stakeholders partially synthesises the multilevel governance fostered by the European YG recommendation. Lastly, 'implementing evaluation and monitoring procedures' was considered a suitable feature to assess an accountable use of the financial instrument.

Table 1 shows how the fit/misfit hypothesis was assessed and qualified. First, for each dimension of the policy structure, we looked at the degree of fit/misfit.

Table 1. Assessing the degree of fit/misfit.

Categories of the policy structure	Dimensions of the policy structure	Full fit	Partial design fit	Partial institutional fit	Balanced fit (one possible combination)	Misfit
Policy design	Objective: targeting NEETs	c	c/p	p/m	c/p	m
	Principle: activated in a 4-month timeframe	c	c/p	p/m	p/m	m
Institutional structure	Procedure: partnership approach	c	p/m	c/p	c/p	m
	Financial instrument: monitoring/evaluation process	c	p/m	c/p	p/m	m

Notes: Letters in the cells represent the degree of fit/misfit; 'c' for complete, 'p' for partial and 'm' for misfit. When they appear together, it means it can be either or. By 'Policy design fit' is meant that there is a complete or partial fit mostly on the two policy design dimensions. 'Institutional fit' refers to a complete or a partial fit mostly on the two institutional structure dimensions. 'Balanced fit' means there is complete partial fit in one dimension of each category of the policy structure. For the sake of clarity, only one possible example of a balanced fit is shown in the table.

We determined whether the national YG respected each dimension completely, partially or not at all. Second, depending on whether the fit/misfit was in all, several or none of the dimensions, we classified the *type of fit/misfit* respectively as full fit (a self-standing category), partial fit (either design-oriented or institutional-oriented), or misfit. A full fit means that the national YG complied with all the policy structure dimensions. A design-oriented fit means that two sub-dimensions of the design and at most one of the institutional structure dimensions fit the model. The reverse is true for the institutional-oriented partial fit. A balanced partial fit indicates that equal efforts were made at design and institutional levels but, because the degree of fit was not complete, it could not be considered a 'full' fit. The last column indicates that none of the relevant dimensions was actually clearly accounted for in the national implementation of YG.

Europeanisation and the French youth unemployment policy

In the following section, we explore whether the seeds of the YG were already sown in France. We then take stock of the youth unemployment policy change in France. This section is structured around Table 1.

The French youth unemployment policy structure prior to the Youth Guarantee

In 2009, France experienced a rapid increase in young NEETs. In 2012, the rate was still as high as 15.1% and only in 2016 did the trend reverse. The *Garantie pour la Jeunesse* (the French Youth Guarantee) did not develop in a vacuum. Existing measures were already addressing disadvantaged young people (aged 16–25 years old) and included apprenticeships, subsidised employment and intensive coaching (Aeberhardt, Crusson, & Pommier, 2010). We consider here the most similar measures in force before the implementation of the YG: CIVIS, *Contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale* (contract for social inclusion) and the PSAD,

Plateforme de suivi et d'appui aux décrocheurs (platforms for early school-leavers).

Introduced in 2005 as the follow-up of the programme TRACE (*Trajectoires d'accès à l'emploi*), CIVIS is delivered by well-established institutions, that is, *Missions Locales* or *Permanence d'accueil, d'information et d'orientation* (Office for information and guidance) providing social assistance and guidance to young people. CIVIS is one of the main policy measures used to target young people aged 16–25 years old with low qualifications or who are long-term unemployed (Aeberhardt et al., 2010; Recotillet, 2018). Young people who are at least 18 years old and are taking part in CIVIS may receive an allowance if they have no income from work. Young people receive guidance for up to a year until they obtain a sustainable job in the labour market (permanent or temporary job of at least 6 months). The contact is renewable until the individual action plan is achieved. Several actions, including qualifying training, can be provided.² A monitoring procedure has made it possible to assess the impact of CIVIS in successive years (see data and reports from DARES – Ministry of Labour). CIVIS, which reached more than a million young people between 2005 and 2010 (Aeberhardt et al., 2010), fits in with some of the dimensions included in our assessment grid (see Table 1). The PSAD were developed in 2009 and aimed to guarantee young school-leavers aged at least 16 years old the right to resume their education. These platforms, although they set up an out-reaching programme to a very specific group, improved the horizontal coordination among partners that were not accustomed to working together. However, these newly created synergies have not been immune to a progressive disengagement of certain partners (*Court des Comptes*, 2015).

Using our table informed by the policy structure of the YG to jointly assess CIVIS and PSAD (see Table 2),

² <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/emploi/insertion-dans-l-emploi/mesures-jeunes/article/contrat-d-insertion-dans-la-vie-sociale-civis-201167>; date last accessed August 2017.

Table 2. Assessing the fit/misfit, French national youth activation policies before the YG: Partial institutional fit.

Categories of the policy structure	Dimensions of the policy structure	Partial institutional fit
Policy design	Objective: targeting NEETs	p
	Principle: activated in a 4-month timeframe	m
Institutional structure	Procedure: partnership approach	p
	Financial instrument: monitoring/evaluation process	p

we found that two elements were mainly underdeveloped. First, there is no clear information about the horizontal partnerships, particularly with employers, that local providers are asked to set up in order to help young people holistically. However, Missions Locales, in the case of CIVIS, has a long tradition of partnership at the local level which varies according to the local policy and stakeholders (Muniglia & Thalineau, 2012). One would then expect that existing partnerships might be implicitly included in the policy delivery. Second, early intervention is not a feature of the existing measures. Even though there is an emphasis on rapid intervention in the early school-leaver programme, young people are to be reached within one year, that is, a much longer timeframe than the one foreseen by the YG. In general, there is rather a tendency to favour a long-term intervention targeting young people's wide range of obstacles to the labour market. Therefore, we regarded the policy structure of this measure as showing a partial degree of fit with respect to the institutional dimensions (i.e., monitoring and partnership) and the target group dimension. Misfit is registered for the early intervention dimension. As for the overall type of fit, we defined the French situation before the adoption of the YG at the European level as partial institutional fit with that of the YG.

The French youth unemployment policy structure after the Youth Guarantee

As noted by some scholars (Aeberhardt et al., 2010; Recotillet, 2018), the attention to unemployed and inactive young adults is a long-standing feature of French labour market policies. In particular, the emphasis on the need to guide young people closely has been developed and strengthened over the last 30 years. Lima (2012) even claimed that guidance programmes tackling young people were the pioneers and have only recently been extended to all unemployed categories. Here, we briefly take stock of the French panorama of initiatives tackling youth unemployment after the launch of the YG. In December 2013, the plan

for establishing a *Garantie pour la jeunesse* (Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, YGIP) was presented by the French authorities as the formal reply of the French Government to the Council's recommendation to establish a Youth Guarantee. Its launch also contributed to streamlining both the existing and the newly implemented measures undertaken between 2013 and 2016 (Recotillet, 2018).

Concerning the objective of the policy design *targeting NEETs*, the *Garantie Jeunes*, one of the newest initiatives included in the YGIP, is the most innovative. It aims to help vulnerable young people under 25 who are less likely to be effectively reached by existing measures as they do not qualify for insurance-based allowance or for means-tested benefit. A recent evaluation of the *Garantie Jeunes* found that it has actually reached the most vulnerable young people, that is, those who come from low-income households and are facing family, socio-economic and/or school difficulties (Loison-Leruste, Couronné, & Sarfati, 2016). The strong focus on the young NEETs of the *Garantie Jeunes* extends fragmented actions aiming at outreaching young people, an example being the PSAD's targeting of early school-leavers (*Cours des Comptes*, 2015). The European Commission's recent evaluation of the measures under the YG shows that in France 80.5% of the NEETs are reached by existing measures (European Commission, 2016). Hence, we regarded the French approach to NEET as fitting the European YG features insofar as several of the measures take into consideration a broader concept of precarity – namely personal financial resources – when assessing young persons' need for support.

As for the 4-month timeframe for intervention in the case of young NEETs, existing activation policies after the implementation of the YGIP are still imprecise. Although the importance of an early intervention was underlined in the measures set up since 2009 that target early school-leavers (*Cours des Comptes*, 2015), this did not match the 4-month framework. At the Public Employment Service, young people who have been unemployed for 4 months receive one of the measures under the label of *Garantie pour la Jeunesse*. These measures are not necessarily part of the four options included in the YG definition (Premier Ministre, 2013). Similarly, for Missions Locales, the 4-month timeframe is generally regarded as a time limit within which an action should be taken. A recent evaluation published by the European Commission reports that the approach to early intervention does not seem to have been uniformly applied to measures targeting young NEETs (European Commission, 2016). We considered that, on this dimension, French activation policies targeting youth only partially fit the European benchmark,

because, despite some general statements, it has not been fully implemented and generalised.

Regarding the partnership, our assessment is rather mixed. Both the State (Premier Ministre, 2013) and social actors³ regarded the YG as an opportunity to reinforce the coordination of interventions at various levels of government. However, in terms of horizontal institutional cooperation, a recent research commissioned by the Senate reported that the guidance programmes for young people set up by Missions Locales and PES partially overlap, thus raising doubt about the efficiency of their coordination (Sénat, 2017). Along similar lines, in 2015, the *Court des Comptes* underlined the lack of a unified and coherent strategy that addressed the needs of low-qualified young people (2015). Moreover, some doubts have been raised about the complementarity of institutional actions that was supposed to be reached under the *Garantie pour la Jeunesse*. For example, the *Garantie Jeunes* is attracting an increasing number of young people at the expense of other existing tools (e.g., second-chance schools, *écoles de la deuxième chance*). This might be due to the reinforced financial support that is granted to young people who take part in the *Garantie Jeunes*, which is more generous than other programmes. As for vertical coordination, an inter-ministerial Committee on youth (*Comité Interministériel de la Jeunesse*) was also reactivated, bringing together more than 24 state actors at different levels involved in young people's first labour market transitions. However, this Committee did not last, and its latest report dates back to 2015.

Concerning the cooperation with non-state stakeholders, the National Plan Against Poverty set up in 2012, the *Conférence Sociale* (i.e., a tripartite conference on social dialogue) and the ad hoc group for the creation of the *Garantie Jeunes* are testimony to the shared concern and willingness to take action to fight youth unemployment. However, not all non-state actors mentioned in the European YG have been involved in the same way and to the same degree. For instance, French trade unions reported that they were not directly involved, as were business representatives, in the working group for designing the *Garantie Jeunes*. Instead, they were consulted to give an opinion. Furthermore, even in the context of the design of the YG, trade unions reported that they were not involved directly in the management of the YG nor its monitoring (ETUC, 2014). Although they acknowledged that their opinions were generally taken into consideration, they objected to having a lower level of involvement in the implementation of the *Garantie Jeunes*, the flagship initiative of the *Garantie pour la Jeunesse*, than their institutionalised participation in

inter-professional agreements on youth employment policies. On the same occasion, several trade unions reported that they were part of the broader process of the design of the *Garantie pour la Jeunesse*. However, they argued that the procedure was less inclusive compared with other consultations on similar topics (e.g., the *contrats de generation*, i.e., generation contracts). The consultation was done mainly in the framework of the *Conférence Sociale*, during Hollande's presidency, in order to relaunch social dialogue. However, this ad hoc conference was not an institutionalised arena of social dialogue, but rather a time-bound political move linked to political willingness and government agenda. For these reasons, we regarded the French youth unemployment measures as only partially fitting this dimension of the policy structure.

As for the monitoring system, the existing monitoring systems of each specific measure were strengthened in October 2016, and potentially brought to the next level after the creation of a new monitoring tool called TRAJAM. This data collection programme was set up at the national level⁴ with the aim to gather longitudinal data on the transitions of young people who take part in ALMPs delivered by private and public providers. This would potentially allow for a longitudinal analysis of young people's outcomes in connection with specific activation measures, such as the *Garantie Jeunes*. This comes in addition to the imposed set of indicators designed by EMCO and the ESF data collection required for payments. The monitoring system encompasses the most important providers and, because it makes it possible to gather specific data on the young person's background as well as on the activation measure used, we regarded it as a full fit.

To conclude, we found that the main change that the YG brought about in France concerns the introduction of early intervention, strengthened cooperation at the horizontal level and an increased role for the *Mission Locales* as coordinating actors. Moreover, the introduction of the YG and, in particular, of its most innovative component – the *Garantie Jeunes* – has reinforced the focus on young NEETs, elaborating specific interventions to tackle multidimensional barriers, and has reinforced the tools for monitoring. As for the type of fit, it changed from an 'institutional fit' (Table 2) to a 'balanced fit' (Table 3).

Counterfactual reasoning through the analysis of domestic facilitating factors

The analysis of policies before and after the implementation of the YG shows that there has been rather an accommodation of existing policies to the European

³ As an example: <https://www.force-ouvriere.fr/garantie-jeunes-garantie-pour-la-jeunesse-civis-et-service>; date last accessed 16 April 2018.

⁴ <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/arrete/2016/10/6/ETSW1629134A/jo>; date last accessed 30 April 2018.

Table 3. Assessing the fit/misfit, French national youth activation policies after the YG: Balanced fit.

Categories of the policy structure	Dimensions of the policy structure	Balanced fit
Policy design	Objective: targeting NEETs	c
	Principle: activated in a 4-month timeframe	p
Institutional structure	Procedure: partnership approach	p
	Financial instrument: monitoring/evaluation process	c

YG. Although some existing features were strengthened and brought new working methods to the foreground, they did not change the essential features and the underlying collective understanding attached to them (Boerzel & Risse, 2000).

At the same time, the policy-tracing approach proposed by Moumotzis and Zartaloudis (2016) suggested a kind of counterfactual analysis by exploring whether, at the national level, the Youth Guarantee or similar policies would have been implemented anyway at the national level, even in the absence of the European initiative that established the YG. This analysis would enable us to at least partly respond to the criticism often lodged against research on Europeanisation, of being too deterministic in assessing national policies against the European benchmark.

We tackle these two important theoretical aspects in this section. A chronological mapping of the main stakeholders' actions has the advantage of showing whether domestic actors appropriated YG's features, how successfully they exploited the implementation of the YG and whether similar labour market policies would have been implemented anyway without the YG.

First, there was widely shared concern about the high level of young people's unemployment at both national and European level (Lahusen et al., 2013). This implied that domestic actors, namely trade unions, did not experience any major cognitive dissonance with the European claims. The YG, with its intense support to young people, resonated with the long-standing claims of national stakeholders, particularly trade unions and associations dealing with labour market integration (CESE, 2012). These actors wisely exploited the call for a YG in order to extend eligibility for the RSA (*Revenu de solidarité active*, that is, means-tested social assistance allowance) to persons under the age of 25. This was not a main feature of the YG, but was a long-standing claim of several trade unions and political parties, ever since the introduction of the RSA in 2009. Similarly, the project of a *Garantie Jeunes* – the flagship initiative of the *Garantie pour la Jeunesse* – favoured the implementation of the right to a first work experience, a claim that dates back to the early 2000s (Erhel & Gautié, 2018).

Furthermore, the Presidential elections in May 2012 and the high level of youth unemployment and

inactivity fuelled a strong domestic support for change in youth unemployment policies. Influenced by the call of ALMP providers for more action in favour of young people, François Hollande included young people high up in his political agenda. This contributed to creating a favourable ground for the introduction of measures such as the *Garantie Jeunes* and the *Garantie pour la Jeunesse*, because building policy consensus was relatively easy in a successful post-electoral period.

As mentioned earlier, the idea of a Youth Guarantee was first formulated at the European level in 2010 in the Youth on the Move flagship initiative and then, more precisely defined, in the Youth Opportunities Initiative (European Commission, 2011). In June 2012, after the European Parliament's adoption of a European Commission resolution on the issue,⁵ the European Council⁶ included in its conclusions a call for the establishment of a YG. By the end of 2012, the European Commission had established a Youth Employment Package which defined the YG and called for the formal support of the European Council. The recommendation arrived in early 2013 together with the allocation of a specific budget line, the Youth Employment Initiative, the financial ESF channel fund for youth-targeting measures. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) had already declared its support of the YG in September 2010.⁷ This is not a trivial matter insofar as, from 2011 to 2013, a young French national representative of the CFDT (one of the major trade unions in France) was the president of the ETUC Youth Committee and advocated for the YG in national forums. For instance, in September 2012, the Social, Economic and Environmental Committee (CESE) published an opinion addressed to the newly elected government on youth unemployment in which clear reference was made to the Youth Guarantee and to the European Parliament's resolution. On this occasion, the CFDT's position specifically backed the adoption of a *Garantie Jeunes*, including the right to RSA, that is, the social assistance allowance (CESE, 2012). The other main trade unions, CGT, FO, CFTC and CFE-CGC, supported the overall CESE opinion which encouraged the adoption of a YG, inspired by the European measure and the conditional RSA allowance to persons under the age of 25. In contrast, employers disagreed with, among other things, the proposition to extend eligibility to RSA to persons under the age of 25 (CESE, 2012).

⁵ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2f%2fEP%2f%2fTEXT%2bMOTION%2bB7-2012-0233%2b0%2bDOC%2bXML%2bV0%2f%2fFR&language=FR>; date last accessed October 2018.

⁶ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/fr/ec/131408.pdf; date last accessed April 2018.

⁷ <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/youth-employment-etuc-calls-youth-guarantee>; date last accessed October 2018.

Extending social rights to young people under 25 was not a new issue. Already in 2009, Martin Hirsh, high commissioner for youth, together with social partners, students, youth representatives and local authorities, had published a Green Paper on Youth. It presented 57 suggestions, including the extension of the RSA to young people. This idea was further elaborated in December 2012 at the 'Conference against Poverty and for Social Inclusion' together with early intervention. In preparation for this conference (on 25 November 2012), one of the working groups presented the idea of guaranteeing support within 6 months to young people (Barbaroux & de Faucould, 2012). Stressing the importance of early intervention echoed the urgency of activating without delay that had already been advocated by the European institutions some months earlier. In fact, by that time, the idea of the YG had already been circulating at the European and national level thanks to the link established between the very active ETUC Youth Committee and its French president, although it was formalised only some days after the publication of the above-mentioned report. It is likely that this national report had been partially inspired by previous European initiatives (European Commission, 2010, 2011) as well as by the long-standing national discussions on the need to target the most disadvantaged (Commission sur la politique de la jeunesse, 2009 and FO's declaration⁸). The proposition of the working group finally gave birth to the *Garantie Jeunes* in January 2013 within the Multiannual Plan against Poverty and for Social Inclusion.

Hence, slightly before the formal launch of the YG at the European level in 2013, France had already elaborated its own Guarantee. In May 2013, by the time the ad hoc working group for the *Garantie Jeunes* delivered its final report, the European Youth Guarantee was already a well-known scheme and the *Garantie Jeunes* was to be developed within its framework (Premier Ministre, 2013; Wragon & Gurgand, 2013). Since the very beginning of the *Garantie Jeunes*, funding was a priority issue and alternative sources of funding were necessary to make the new policies effective (Barbaroux & de Faucould, 2012). On top of providing the broader consensual framework within which it could develop, European funds and, in particular, the Youth Employment Initiative boosted the growing idea of *Garantie Jeunes*. European money strongly contributed to making the *Garantie Jeunes* a viable programme that could be extended to the national territory as from 2017. Without the YG, the institutionalisation of the measure would have been more cumbersome, particularly because employers were not

keen on extending social allowances to the under 25 target group (CESE, 2012). Further, the inclusion of the *Garantie Jeunes* in the latest Labour Bill (*Loi 8 août 2016, Loi 'El Khomri'*) is a testimony to the political willingness to make the *Garantie Jeunes* a long-term programme to tackle youth inactivity. This indirectly contributed to strengthening the *Garantie pour la Jeunesse* in the French ALMPs panorama.

Another domestic factor that helps to explain the 'easy absorption' of the YG in France is the specific political momentum at that time. In the first half of 2012, France was in the midst of a presidential campaign. A collective platform named 'for a BigBang of youth policies' (*Pour Un BigBang des politiques de jeunesse*, Gautié, 2018) called for urgent actions in favour of young people. The call was aimed at creating policies that guarantee access to a first work experience. This 'right to a first work experience' is currently embedded in the *Garantie Jeunes*. This action was particularly successful in that it contributed to including young people as a priority in the newly elected president's political agenda (Erhel & Gautié, 2018). Important civil society representatives were at the origin of this call, among them the *Union Nationale des Missions Locales* (UNML) – the main institutional local actors helping young NEETs – and the *Comité pour les relations nationales et internationales des associations de jeunesse et d'éducation populaire* (CNAJEP). The latter is also one of the two French members active at the European level under the umbrella organisation European Youth Forum (EYF). The EYF was on the front line in promoting the adoption of the YG. It is not surprising, then, that ideas have trickled down to the national level.

Conclusion

Our study has focused on the Europeanisation of a policy instrument rather than on a comprehensive social policy. It has shed new light on the impact of European measures on domestic policy menus: insofar, as we have detected innovative traits with respect to the existing literature. In our case study, we found that, in agreement with our fit/misfit hypothesis, the YG has had only a slight effect on domestic policy. The change has been modest because the French policy structure prior to the YG was already very similar to the EU policy structure. Our findings also suggest that, despite the little initial misfit, the modest yet existing change is likely to be driven by, on the one hand, French government representatives at the EU level who were also particularly active in the drafting of policy at the EU level and, on the other hand, the YG has been used as a window of opportunity by domestic actors who consolidated and further legitimised domestic policies in line with EU policies. In other words, it seems that

⁸ <https://www.force-ouvriere.fr/garantie-jeunes-garantie-pour-la-jeunesse-civis-et-service>; date last accessed April 2018.

Europeanisation has made similar domestic policy initiatives irreversible and provided specific legitimising opportunities for domestic 'creative appropriation'.

More specifically, our analysis shows that France is a good example of limited EU-induced policy change in that the initial condition of partial fit made it easier for the French policy menu to incorporate the few divergent policy elements. Our findings confirm that with regard to employment policy, the French government is still capable of formulating EU policies and implementing them in a selective manner via domestic appropriation where also the trade unions have played a significant role. Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, our contribution to the Special Issue shows how qualifying the misfit in terms of degree (complete/partial/misfit) and type (institutional or design) allows a more fine-grained analysis of policy change.

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